THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

DEUTERONOMY.

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OR,

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

BY

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DEUTERONOMY.

London:
FRANCIS GRIFFITHS,
34, MAIDEN LANE, STRAND, W.C.
1904.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY.

THE NAME OF THE BOOK.—The ordinary name of the book is derived through the LXX (*Δευτερονόμιον*) and Vulgate (*Deuteronomium*), from the one sometimes employed by the Jews, *mishneh hattōrah*, "repetition of the law." This name was probably suggested by the text xvii. 18, in which the expression rendered "a copy of this law" was anciently construed as referring to Deuteronomy only. This is probably not the right sense of the phrase, but the title borrowed from it indicates correctly enough the character and contents of the book. From another point of view, some of the rabbinical writers have styled Deuteronomy "the Book of Reproofs"; whilst others denoted this, as they did the other Books of Scripture, by the first two Hebrew words occurring in it. (*T. E. Espin, D.D., in "Speaker's Commentary."*)

THE CHARACTER OF THE BOOK.—The speeches exhibit a striking unity of style and character. They are pervaded by the same vein of thought, the same tone and tenor of feeling, the same peculiarities of conception and expression. They exhibit matter which is neither documentary nor traditional, but conveyed in the speaker's own words. Their aim is strictly hortatory; their style earnest, heart-searching, impressive, in passages sublime, but throughout rhetorical; they keep constantly in view the circumstances then present, and the crisis to which the fortunes of Israel had at last been brought. Moses had before him not the men to whom by God's command he delivered the law at Sinai, but the generation following which had grown up in the wilderness. Large portions of the law necessarily stood in abeyance during the years of wandering; and of his present hearers many must have been strangers to various prescribed observances and ordinances. Now, however, on their entry into settled homes in Canaan a thorough discharge of the various obligations laid on them by the covenant would become imperative; and it is to this state of things that Moses addresses himself. He speaks to hearers neither wholly ignorant of the law, nor yet fully versed in it. Much is assumed and taken for granted in his speeches; again, on other matters he goes into detail, knowing that instruction in them was needed. Sometimes, too, opportunity is taken of promulgating regulations which are supplementary or auxiliary to those of the preceding books; some few modifications arising out of different or altered circumstances are now made; and the whole Mosaic system is completed by the addition of several enactments (chaps. xii.–xxvi.) of a social, civil, and political nature. These would have been wholly superfluous during the nomadic life of the desert; but now, when the permanent organisation of Israel as a nation was to be accomplished, they could not be longer deferred. Accordingly the legislator, at the command of God, completes his great work by supplying them. Thus he provides civil institutions for his people accredited by the same Divine sanctions as had been vouchsafed to their religious rites. (*Ibid.*)

THE DATE AND AUTHORSHIP OF THE BOOK.—*The difficulties:*—The difficulties in the way of accepting the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy, contained in Deuteronomy itself, are of two classes—1. Those passages which plainly bear to have

been written after the time of Moses, and after the people had settled in Canaan. (1) The very first passage in the book, "These are the words which Moses spake to the whole of Israel on the other [A. V., *this*] side of Jordan," &c. The writer of this passage, according to the literal meaning, wrote on the west or Canaan side of Jordan; and Moses spoke "the words" on the east or Moab side. Therefore, inferentially, Moses was not the writer. (2) The passage which gives an account of the death and burial of Moses—xxxiv. 5 and 6. (3) The passage (xxxiv. 1) where the Lord is said to have showed Moses "all the land of Gilead unto *Dan*"—Dan, it is maintained, was not known as Dan at that time, but as Laish (Judg. xviii. 27–29). 2. Other passages, which though not distinctly anachronisms, yet in their natural meaning imply that a considerable time had elapsed between the period at which the events happened and that at which they were recorded. (1) Thus iii. 14, "Jair the son of Manasseh took all the country of Argob unto the coasts of Geshuri and Maachathi, and called them after his own name, Bashan-havoth-jair, unto this day." The time that elapsed between the taking of the Bashan cities, or "Jair's livings," and the date of Moses' speech was at most only a few months. Moses could hardly have used such an expression as "to this day" in such a case. (2) Again, xxxiv. 6, "No man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day"; and ver. 10, "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses." (3) "The Horims also dwelt in Seir beforetime; but the children of Esau succeeded them, when they had destroyed them from before them, and dwelt in their stead, *as Israel did unto the land of his possession*, which the Lord gave unto them" (ii. 12). The natural inference from the words in italics is that the whole passage was written after Israel had "destroyed" the Canaanites and "dwelt in their stead." (4) "Only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of giants; behold his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; *is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon?*" (iii. 11). The natural inference here is that the writer was "referring to an antiquarian curiosity" instead of something which had been quite recently in use, and probably *seen*, as Og himself had been seen and slain by the people whom Moses was now addressing. These anachronisms, real or apparent, present no serious difficulty *when taken by themselves.* Apart from possible individual explanations, there is nothing unnatural in the supposition that a later inspired writer, or writers, should have re-edited the book, contributing explanatory notes, and, after the manner of the time, inserting them in the text instead of putting them in the margin—nay, that such writer, or writers, should have compiled both the beginning and the end of the book, or the whole historical setting of the Central Law Book (chap. v. 1 to xxvi. 16). II. The difficulties which we encounter in attempting to reconcile the law as given in Deuteronomy with the law as given in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers are not in themselves very serious matters. They are considerably more serious, however, in their combined, or cumulative, than in their individual aspect; and then they are much less easily disposed of than the first class, because they are of a more systematic character, and inhere in the substance of the work. 1. The chief differences in the legal provisions are almost all connected with the priests and the Levites—their position with respect to each other, and the tithes and dues or perquisites by which they were maintained. (1) The emoluments of the priests are to some extent different from those which are assigned to them in the previous books. (2) The emoluments of the Levites are different, their habitations also, and their general position. (3) But what differs most, and is most significant, is the relative position of priests and Levites in Deuteronomy and in the former books. In the former books the priests are "the sons of Aaron"; in Deuteronomy they are "the sons of Levi," or the Levites. In the former books the priests are the servants of Jehovah—they "stand before Him to minister unto Him." The Levites are the servants of the priests, given to them to minister unto them. In short, in Leviticus "there is a sharp distinction drawn" between the priests and the Levites; in Deuteronomy there is no distinction whatever. All priests are Levites, and all Levites may become priests. There is apparently no danger now, as there was in the days of Korah, of the earth opening her mouth and swallowing up a Levite who "sought the priesthood." 2. The tone of the laws in Deuteronomy, it seems to be admitted on all hands, is different from that of the laws in the previous books—being more advanced, more humane, more merciful, more spiritual. 3. Then the style of Deuteronomy differs undoubtedly from the style of the former books of the Pentateuch, in a way that gives the impression that the book is the work of a different writer, and of a somewhat different age. It is more rounded, more flowing and sustained, more cultivated, more modern—displaying, if with reverence it may be

spoken, more literary art. The diction also, though not differing much from that of the previous books, is nevertheless marked by certain frequently recurring phrases which are not to be met with in those books. Explanations of all these discrepancies have been offered. It cannot be said, however, that any one of them is altogether satisfactory. Most of them are hypothetical or conjectural—drawn from what is probable rather than from what is known. 1. With regard to the discrepancies in the legal provisions—(A) It is argued generally that these are such as, from the nature of the case, are likely to be found in a summary of the law delivered in a short parting address. On such an occasion it was only to be expected that the great lawgiver should overlook minute details and nice distinctions, and dwell only on the leading provisions. (B) It was natural also, for two obvious reasons, that Moses should at the last opportunity make some alterations in the law and some additions to it. (*a*) After forty years' experience of their working some modifications in the laws would suggest themselves. (*b*) Then the entire change in the condition and circumstances of the people consequent on the approaching change from the wilderness to Canaan would almost necessitate some corresponding changes in the laws. What suited the one condition would not suit the other. 2. A change in the *tone* of the laws was also most natural. The people were being gradually educated up to a higher moral and spiritual level, and forty years must have produced a considerable difference in their state. 3. As to style, there are two obvious reasons why the style of Deuteronomy should differ from that of the previous books, though the whole were written by Moses—(*a*) The style of most writers changes with age and experience, and that of Moses could hardly be the same at the close of his long career as it had been in his earlier days. Certain improvements in the matter of ease and flow, and strict accuracy of expression were almost inevitable. (*b*) Further, the solemnity of the occasion—that of Moses' final address to the people at the close of their long wanderings, and on the eve of his own death, could not fail to lend a colour and complexion to his style, imparting to it increased warmth and flow. These reasons for a difference in the laws and in the style and tone of Moses' address seem so natural and probable that we are apt to take it for granted that they are, of themselves, quite sufficient to account for any apparent discrepancy or incongruity. But the critic takes nothing for granted. He examines the different books with the exact methods, and the great and ever-growing interpretative aids of the present day; and he inquires if the apparent discrepancies are such as are likely to have been caused by the above preconceived causes. His answer, in most cases, is in the negative. 1. As to the discrepancies in the Laws—(A) The compression necessary in an abridgment would cause the occasional omission of details, but not the substitution of one thing for another. Nor can it be said that any space is saved by calling—(*a*) The priests "sons of Levi," instead of "sons of Aaron"; (*b*) Or by stating the priests' portion of a peace-offering as "the shoulder, the two cheeks, and the maw" (Deut. xviii. 3), instead of as "the breast and the right leg" (Lev. vii. 31–34); (*c*) Or by enacting that the people should eat the firstlings in a feast at the sanctuary (Deut. xiv. 23, xv. 20), instead of assigning them entirely to the priests (Numb. xviii. 8). Such discrepancies cannot be explained as omissions of unimportant details due to compression. (B) Neither can they be accounted for as alterations of the laws or additions thereto necessitated by the transition from the wilderness to Canaan. (*a*) There is nothing in the nature of the discrepant provisions to give colour to such an assumption. (*b*) Neither is it consonant with the tenor of the history of the legislation to expect that any changes should be made in the laws; those in the middle books as well as those in Deuteronomy were given for the use of the people when they entered Canaan; many of them, in fact, were incapable of being put in force in the wilderness. 2. As to the different, the more humane and spiritual tone of Deuteronomy, this, it is maintained, can hardly be accounted for on the supposition that the interval between the writing of the books was so short, as it must have been, if they were all written in the wilderness. 3. The difference of style, again, is such as to infer not only a much greater difference of time, but also a difference of writer. The last chapters of Numbers date from the same place (the plains of Moab), and within a few weeks of the same time as Deuteronomy. (*a*) The style of these chapters differs as much from the style of Deuteronomy as does that of any other part of the middle books, and agrees with the latter rather than with the former. (*b*) But again, it is denied that in point of fact the style of Deuteronomy does differ from the style of the middle books, as the style of an old man differs from the style of the same man when young, or as the style of the same man differs on an ordinary and on a solemn and affecting occasion.

On the contrary, it differs rather as the style of one man differs from the style of another man of a different cast of mind, of a different degree of culture, and also of a different and probably a somewhat later age. III. Difficulties which arise from the books which follow Deuteronomy in the canon. The argument here falls naturally under two heads—1. The books which, so far as they refer to the law as given in Deuteronomy, appear to agree with the hypothesis that Moses was the giver of that law, and delivered it much as we now have it, to Israel at the close of the forty years' wanderings. (1) The Book of Joshua, which is a sort of continuation of Deuteronomy, and is now generally by critics classed with the five books of the Pentateuch (the whole being spoken of as the Hexateuch), is the book to which we naturally turn first for proof that the law which Deuteronomy represents as having been given by Moses to the people, was known and in force among the people. Such proof we do find, though it is not quite sufficiently distinct and definite, nor yet so free of doubt as to the date of the passages, as to be altogether conclusive. Besides undoubted references and quotations, there are two important instances of agreement. The first is the carrying out by Joshua (Josh. viii. 30 seq.) of the command given by Moses in Deut. xxvii. 2 seq., as to what the people should do when they passed over Jordan. The second is the prompt and determined resistance made by the majority of the tribes of Israel, to an attempt made by the two and a-half trans-Jordanic tribes to break the most important and distinctive law of Deuteronomy—the law of the one Altar. The commandment of Moses in Deut. xxvii. embraces a great many particulars: the setting up of great stones on Mount Ebal, and plastering them; the writing upon them of "all the words of the law"; the building an altar to the Lord of "whole stones" on which no iron tool should be lifted up; the placing of six tribes on Mount Gerizim to bless the people, and six upon Mount Ebal to curse them. This command is carried out to the letter in almost every particular by Joshua,[1] and the reason assigned is that it was a command of Moses "written in the book of the law of Moses" (Josh. viii. 31). Joshua read on the occasion all the words of the law. "There was not a word of all that Moses commanded which Joshua read not" (34–35). This passage is, as it stands, one of undoubted weight. It bears clear witness apparently to the existence in the time of Joshua of a part of Deuteronomy which is quoted as the Book of the Law of Moses. The natural inference is that the whole Book of Deuteronomy was, at the time, in the keeping of the priests, to whom Moses in Deuteronomy is represented as having committed it; and that Joshua had it before him when he was thus carrying out its instructions to the very letter. This is the natural inference, but it does not amount to a certainty. The language is not sufficiently precise. "The Book of the Law of Moses" may have been considerably different from the present Book of Deuteronomy. "The Law of Moses," which Joshua wrote "upon the stones," may have differed considerably from the present law book of Deuteronomy (v. 1 to xxvi. 16). It may have been only the short law of Sinai (Exod. xx. to xxiii.); or even but a part of the same—little more possibly than "the ten words." Then, it is affirmed, there is an element of uncertainty as to the date of the passage which tends to detract from its authority. The passage does not accord well with its present position in the book, and it is found in a different place in the Septuagint, and hence it has been argued that, judging from analogy, it is possibly an interpolation from Deuteronomy by a late writer; and that anyhow its authority is doubtful. (2) The only other books which appear to manifest anything approaching to a distinct agreement with Deuteronomy as to the Mosaic authorship of that book are certain books of the New Testament. There are two passages of Deuteronomy, each of which appears to be referred to in two places of the New Testament, namely, Deut. xxiv. 1 and Deut. xviii. 15. Deut. xxiv. 1 contains a precept regarding divorce—strictly speaking, forbidding re-marriage of a divorced woman with the man from whom she has been divorced. This passage seems to be cited by our Lord as Moses' permission of divorce (Matt. xix. 8). St. Mark's (x. 5) report of our Lord's words makes the citation still more distinct, for it contains the words, "he (Moses) wrote you this precept." Again, the passage, Deut. xviii. 15, is quoted almost *verbatim* twice in the Book of Acts (iii. 22, vii. 37) by St. Peter and St. Stephen, as the words of Moses—"Moses truly said," &c. Now the natural con-

[1] The only material difference between the injunction and the execution lies apparently in *the stones*. Moses enjoins for the inscription of the Law the erection and plastering of "great stones" different from those of the altar. Joshua seems to inscribe the Law on the stones of the altar.

clusion undoubtedly is that all these sacred authorities are quoting Deuteronomy as the actual composition of Moses. Yet the conclusion, though natural, is not inevitable. It may be that Moses wrote "that precept," but yet did not write that book; he may have delivered that prophecy, and yet, if he wrote it down at all, he may have done so in a book which has been embodied in or superseded by the present Book of Deuteronomy. 2. The books following Deuteronomy in the canon, and which do not exhibit an agreement with it, are the historical books, which give account of the affairs of the people from the period of their settlement in Canaan by Joshua till the time of Josiah, and also the prophetical books which date from the same period. The difficulty is that the practice of Israel, as seen even in its leading men, its prophets, priests, judges, kings, does not accord with the precepts laid down in Deuteronomy, either in ecclesiastical or in civil matters. If the Deuteronomic law was known at all, it appears to have been almost entirely *ignored* in practice. (1) In ecclesiastical matters the chief rules laid down in Deuteronomy regarding sacrifice, the great act of solemn worship, the meeting point between Jehovah and His people, appear to have been almost entirely neglected. (i) Instead of there being only one altar for the nation, the people continued to offer sacrifice as they had done all along at a multitude of shrines—such as Shechem, Mizpeh, Bethel, Gilgal, Hebron, Bethlehem, Beersheba, Kadesh, &c., and all this while there was a central sanctuary at Shiloh, afterwards at Nob, and finally at Mount Zion. (ii) And the offering of sacrifice, instead of being confined to the Levite priests, appears to have been practised almost indiscriminately by men of all the tribes — by kings, by leaders, by judges, by fathers of families. Separate answers are given by the upholders of the old views to each of the critical objections. Most of these answers, however, are purely hypothetical, based chiefly on the state of unsettlement and confusion which prevailed in Israel during great part of the period in question. As to the use of a plurality of sanctuaries, Keil and writers of his school refuse to admit the alleged fact, explaining away the instances which are cited in proof—some of them as being doubtful, others as being exceptional, "justified by the appearance of an angel of God"; but Principal Douglas, one of the very latest writers on that side, does not dispute the fact, though he explains it in a way which is not altogether satisfactory. He maintains that this sacrificing at a number of the old patriarchal shrines was an irregular expedient, to which Samuel and other pious men were driven by the necessities of the times, in order to prevent the total cessation of all public worship—a temporary falling back on the old law, when the new law had, by the fall of Shiloh and the captivity of the ark, become impracticable. It is possible that this explanation may be the true one; but it is altogether hypothetical. There is nothing in the history to afford it any distinct countenance or support. As to the offering of sacrifices by men not belonging to the Levitical priesthood, the natural impression which the history leaves on the mind is that this was the case. There are two general arguments, however, which to some minds appear sufficient to dispose of most of the cases in point. (*a*) When a king or a prophet is said to offer sacrifice, this may mean no more than that he did so through the regular Levitical priest. (*b*) Again, the greater includes the less. Prophets like Samuel, Elijah, and even David—men inspired by God, and in continual direct communication with Him—were more than priests, and were exempt from ceremonial laws which bound ordinary men. They might at any moment obtain the Almighty's direct command or permission to offer sacrifice, or perform any sacred rite. The Almighty can at any time dispense with His own laws. There are, of course, some cases which do not come distinctly under either of the above heads, such as that of the sons of David, who are called priests (2 Sam. viii. 18), and who performed sacrifice. Probably, however, the main defect in the evidence for the prevalence at this period of a knowledge and practice of the Deuteronomic law lies here, as under the last head, in the absence of all indication in the sacred text that there was in any of the cases referred to the slightest departure from law or ordinary practice. (2) Besides these Deuteronomic rules regulating the essentials of sacrifice, there are at least other two rules bearing on sacrifice which seem to have been equally unknown to the writers and actors of the middle period. (i) There is the prohibition (Deut. xvi. 22) against the erection of a maççeba, or sacred pillar, or stone set up like Jacob's pillar, in connection with a sanctuary, yet Joshua (Josh. xxiv. 26) erects such a maççeba at Shechem. Samuel erects one between Mizpeh and Shen (1 Sam. vii. 12). Solomon erected two in the porch of the temple (1 Kings vii. 21). Isaiah foretells the erection of such a maççeba as a sign of the conversion of Egypt (Isa. xix. 19).

(ii) The permission given (Deut. xii. 15) to kill and eat animals without first offering them in sacrifice. It is inferred from what Hosea says (chap. ix. 3 and 4) that that prophet had no knowledge of any such permission. Thus far as to the disagreements in these books, between the ceremonial practice of the people and the ceremonial law laid down in Deuteronomy. 3. In civil matters the only very important disagreement regards the law of the kingdom, which appears to have been altogether unknown. The law in Deuteronomy (chap. xvii. 14) not only sanctions the appointment of a king by the people of God, but lays down rules to regulate the appointment. Yet when, in course of time, the people demand to have a king appointed, the demand is treated as an unheard of thing, and a grievous insult to the majesty of Jehovah, who is regarded as the proper king of His people. The demand is so treated not only by the leaders of the people—Samuel and Gideon—but also by Jehovah Himself (Judg. viii. 23; 1 Sam. viii. 7). *Unlooked for agreements:*—Thus far as to the disagreements that are met with in the subsequent books where agreements are looked for. The agreements that are met with, where not agreements but rather disagreements or contrasts are looked for, are the following—1. Style. The style of Deuteronomy, instead of differing from the style of these later books, agrees wonderfully with the style of certain of them that date seven or eight hundred years after, or about the time of the captivity, especially with the style of Jeremiah, and the Books of Kings. It is the lofty, impressive poetical style of Jeremiah. 2. Diction and phraseology. There is a striking resemblance between the diction and phraseology of Deuteronomy and those of these books. The number of phrases and images common to both sets of books may be seen at full length (with chapter and verse) in several critical works (Davidson, Colenso). 3. Then apart from laws—The subjects on which Moses dwells by precept and prophecy and warning seems to indicate that many of the events in the history of the kingdom of Israel and Judah had already happened, and were known to the writer as facts—such as, for example—(*a*) "The reference to the danger likely to arise to the state from the king multiplying to himself 'wives' and 'silver and gold' and 'horses.'" This warning, it is thought, was suggested by the case of Solomon. (*b*) The reference to "the worship of the sun and moon and the host of heaven." This again is believed to have been suggested by the idolatries of Manasseh's reign. (*c*) Then Deuteronomy iv. 25-28 is thought too distinct a reference to the captivity of the ten tribes to have been written before that event. The ten tribes were then "scattered among the nations, and left few in number among the heathen," &c. *Explanations:*—These alleged agreements are thus explained by the critics on the other side. 1 and 2. The agreement between the style, diction, and phraseology of Jeremiah and Deuteronomy arises merely from imitation. The Book of Deuteronomy had been rescued from its long neglect by Hilkiah when Jeremiah was a comparatively young man. It doubtless made a great impression upon him, as it did upon others, and nothing was more natural than that he should seek to form his style in every way upon such an excellent model. 3. As to the apparent references to events in the history of the kingdoms, they are simply prophecies. Moses, as an inspired prophet, saw into the future, and knew what transgressions the people would fall into, and warned them beforehand of the consequences. *Rejoinders:*—1 and 2. To these answers the critics rejoin that if Jeremiah was so great an imitator of Deuteronomy, it is strange that he makes no direct reference to the book—a fact which, however, would be very natural on the supposition that he was himself the writer of it. 3. As to the explanation of the historical allusions by prophecy, it is maintained that it is contrary to prophetic practice to predict with any circumstantiality of detail things which are yet in the womb of the far future. "A prophecy springs out of, or directs itself to meet, the circumstances of the time." *The theories:*—1. The Interpolation theory. This theory assumes that Moses is the original author of Deuteronomy, and also of the other four books of the Pentateuch, yet the books have undergone many and great alterations since they left his hand; other inspired men having at different times introduced additions and modifications of the laws, to adapt them to changed times. This theory has probably been seldom carried beyond the stage of suggestion, and some of those who suggest it would apparently shrink from admitting its applicability to the explanation of any particular discrepancies. It is difficult to see how interpolation can be denied, except by the admission of the much more radical alternative of late authorship. Interpolation must, in fact, form part of any adequate theory that may be devised; but of itself, interpolation cannot explain some of the difficulties, such as the discrepancy between the style of Deuteronomy and that of the foregoing books,

and the discrepancy between the precepts of Deuteronomy and the practice of the following books. The theory of interpolation may, however, be supplemented by what may be called—2. The late Codification theory, generally known as the theory of Delitzsch, though in substance it was suggested two hundred years ago by Witsius. This theory assumes that Moses spoke and wrote down the Deuteronomic law, as in Deuteronomy he is represented to have done, but maintains that he did not write down the law as given in the foregoing books, having only delivered it orally to the priests, who, as several passages show (Deut. xvii. 11, xxiv. 8, xxxiii. 10; Lev. x. 11, xv. 31), were bound to keep up and communicate to the people a knowledge of the law. The priests either committed the laws to memory, or took notes of them. In whatever way the laws were preserved, however, they were not fully written out, or reduced to a system, or "codified," till some time after the people were settled in Canaan—perhaps "ages after." Before the time for codification came, a number of changes may have been made in the laws by Divine authority; and thus there is shown a probable cause for the difference both of style and of law between Deuteronomy and the previous books. There are two facts which lend great probability to the chief assumption on which this theory rests, namely, that Moses did not himself write the law in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. (*a*) In the text of these books Moses is only said to have written small specified portions of them (Exod. xxiv. 4–7, xxxiv. 27, xvii. 14; Numb. xxxiii. 2). (*b*) The very fact of his delivering to the people and writing down the law in considerable detail on the eve of his death, seems to imply that he had not written it down before. The only serious difficulties which this theory does not account for are the discrepancies between Deuteronomy and the subsequent books, namely, the want of agreement between the practice of the people and the precepts of Deuteronomy, and the want of contrast between the style of Deuteronomy and that of the subsequent books. The two sets of discrepancies pointing in the same direction, the latter set is regarded as corroborative of the former; and the united witness of the two is held by a large proportion of critics to be conclusive as to the late composition and authorship of Deuteronomy. This conclusion, it is admitted, is at first sight undoubtedly startling and unsettling. To deny that Moses is the author of a book, great part of which consists professedly of verbatim reports of Moses' speeches, written down by Moses himself, is apparently to offer a flat contradiction to the plain testimony of the book itself. It is maintained, however, that this difficulty is, in reality, much less serious than at first sight it appears, and that in judging of it we are too apt to be misled by our modern notions and traditional prejudices. The difficulty is capable, it is argued, of an explanation which is in no way derogatory to the authority or the inspiration of Scripture. The mode of this explanation constitutes—3. The literary expedient, or literary fiction theory. According to this theory, the chief part of Deuteronomy is put into the mouth of Moses—not because Moses actually spoke or wrote it, but because the laws are substantially the laws of Moses—laws for which "Moses left the materials," and which it was expedient to continue to publish under the name of Moses. Some prophet (probably Jeremiah) was commissioned by the Almighty to prepare this new edition; and of course he was authorised and instructed to make certain alterations in the laws to adapt them to the changed times. Now ancient writers, in expounding a man's ideas or principles, naturally threw their exposition into the form of a speech delivered by the man himself. Hence the many eloquent speeches in Livy and other ancient historians, which are plainly the composition of the historian himself, no report having ever been preserved of them. Again, ancient writers had no idea of the modern expedients of notes and appendices; and hence an editor simply interwove his corrections and additions with the text of his author, just as the author would have done had he re-published his work himself. Thus the modern prophet or editor re-cast the laws of Moses much as Moses himself would have re-cast them had it fallen to him to publish a new edition of them during his own lifetime; and the editor wrote them in Moses' name, both because Moses was, under God, the real author of the laws, and because Moses' name would carry greater weight than his own. If we have difficulty in accepting this view, it is because we are "guilty of the mistaken practice of taking our modern notions of literary form and propriety, and thrusting them back into the simplicity of early times." No doubt there is much force in this reasoning. Yet this theory is so opposed to our modern notions of fitness and propriety, that only the most rigorous and conclusive demonstration of its truth will ever secure for it general acceptance by the Church. In the opinion of the writer the time has not yet come for pronouncing with any confidence on the

comparative merits and claims of these three theories, far less for deciding that any one of them supplies a full and adequate explanation for all the complex facts. 1. It may, however, be safely assumed that the first or Interpolation theory will never be generally accepted as entirely adequate by itself. 2. The *late* Codification theory of Delitzsch, as accounting for a large proportion of the facts without any startling assumptions or bewildering reversal of established beliefs, commends itself naturally to all candid and earnest men who have weighed carefully the difficulties of the question. To see this theory established by irrefragable proofs would afford undoubted satisfaction to many anxious inquiring minds. 3. It must not be concealed, however, that the third or literary expedient theory is by far the more popular amongst critics. With them the Deuteronomic question becomes merged in the general question of the origin of the whole historical books. The writer of Deuteronomy, according to these authorities, was only one of at least four or five writers, who at different periods, as original writers or as supplementers, took part in the composition of the historical books, and he, like the others, can be tracked by peculiarities of style, diction, and phraseology through most of the books, from the commencement till near the period of the captivity. This theory is of a more sweeping character than any of those which have been framed for the solution of the Deuteronomic difficulty; but in reality it cannot be said to involve much if any additional difficulty. It is of comparatively small importance to what author or authors we are, under the guidance of the Spirit, indebted for the composition of those books which claim for themselves no particular author, one inspired writer being, for purposes of revelation, as good as another. Then as to the composite nature of the books—the alleged fact that different parts have been written by different prophets and at different times—this fact, keeping inspiration in view, can in no wise detract from the authority of the books; while it helps greatly to explain apparent anomalies and contradictions. In short, it is rather in its wider divergence from traditional belief than in any necessary consequences which are involved in it that the alarming feature of this theory consists. (*W. Walker, LL.D.*)

THE CONTENTS OF THE BOOK.—(*a*) A title (chap. i. 1–5 inclusive). This title is twofold, and states (1) that these words were spoken to all Israel by Moses between Sinai and Kadesh-barnea, in view of their first attempt at the conquest of Canaan. (2) That all this law was declared (*i.e.* apparently re-delivered and written (chap. i. 5)) in the eleventh month of the fortieth year, immediately before they actually entered the country, and after Sihon and Og had already been overcome. (*b*) An introductory discourse (chaps. i. 6, iv. 40 inclusive), followed by the appointment of three cities of refuge on the eastern side of Jordan, in the territory conquered by Moses. In this discourse Moses reviews Israel's journey from Sinai to the banks of Jordan, for the purpose of exhortation, dwelling upon those points only which bear directly on the enterprise in prospect—the passage of Jordan, the conquest of the seven nations, and the position of the chosen people in the promised land. (*c*) The Deuteronomy proper, or repetition of the law (chap. iv. 44 to end of xviii.). This contains—(1) A title (chap. iv. 44–49). (2) Repetition of the Decalogue (chap. v.). (3) Its exposition, and this (*α*) generally, as creating a certain relation between the people of Israel and their God, who had given them this law (chaps. vi. to xi.); (*β*) particularly, in relation to the land which God was giving them. This land is considered—(i) As the seat of the worship of Jehovah (chaps. xii. 1 to xvi. 17). (ii) As the seat of His kingdom (chap. xvi. 18 to end of xviii.). (iii) As the sphere of operation of certain particular rules of person, property, society, and behaviour (chap. xix. to end of xxvi.). (4) Its enactment, as the law of the land of promise, written on Mount Ebal, and enforced by blessings and cursings (chap. xxvii.). (5) Its sanction in Israel, for all time, by a most tremendous denunciation of rewards and penalties, in force even to this day (chap. xxviii.). (*d*) The second covenant, which is to follow the Sinaitic covenant, and to redeem Israel from its curse, "the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which He made with them in Horeb" (chaps. xxix., xxx.). (*e*) Conclusion. Moses' resignation of his charge to Joshua. Delivery of the law to the priests and elders, and of the book to the Levites (chap. xxxi.). Moses' last song (chap. xxxii.), blessing (chap. xxxiii.), and death (chap. xxxiv.). (*C. H. Waller, M.A.*)

GOSPEL HINTS IN THE BOOK.—Hastily reading the whole book, it may be described as a Book of Law, and little else; yet, reading it more attentively, it will

be found that even in Deuteronomy there are evangelical lines full of the very love and tenderness of God. The cities of refuge may be described as Gospel cities; the protection of the birthright as an interposition of mercy; the very battlement upon the house is the law respecting the neighbour exemplified rather than merely uttered in words; the protection of the dam is full of evangelical suggestion; and the measuring of stripes, so as not to exceed forty, shows that the law was restrained by wisdom and mercy. Unquestionably, the curses pronounced upon disobedience in the twenty-eighth chapter are like a very storm poured down from the heights of heaven; but in the same chapter the blessings pronounced upon obedience show that high above all law there reigns the spirit of love and pity. In the thirty-first and following chapters Moses prepares to give up his leadership, and, in doing so, he tenderly encourages the people to persevere, and in paternal tones cheers the heart of Joshua in view of the tremendous task about to be assigned him. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

THE BOOK VIEWED IN CONNECTION WITH THE PERSONAL CHARACTER OF MOSES.—No examination of this latest portion of the Pentateuch can possibly be satisfactory which omits to view it in the closest connection with the character of Moses himself. The personality of the great lawgiver is never absent from the pages of his work; and that personality is, with one only exception, the grandest in all history. Those rarest of characters among men, who appear at the great crises of human action—Noah, Abraham, Moses, St. Paul—are all characters of slow growth and late ripeness; and, which is remarkable, they are at their best at the very last. The slow growth gives toughness of mental fibre, just as the oak requires a century to attain its maturity, but then may last for five hundred years or more, whilst the quickly growing pine as quickly decays. So it is with men. The smaller and shallower the nature, the more quickly and easily it reaches its best. Rapid, precocious, facile, the performances of such are the wonder of their contemporaries. But in a few years, when the *perfervidus vigor* of youth, and the restless impulse which it gives, is spent, they subside into very ordinary specimens of human nature; whilst the larger and deeper nature goes on with added power and accelerating force till it reaches the confines of the end. Of such, it may be emphatically said, was Moses. His training had been long and various. He was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," and shared doubtless every advantage of that hieratic culture of which modern research has come upon so many traces of late. The rich and varied life of the governing class in Egypt—the most highly cultured, probably, then existing throughout the world—in which he had luxuriated for forty years, must have drawn out and stimulated his faculties as the heat of the forcing-house does flowers. His nature must have been fully developed by the end of this period. Nursed by indulgence and popularity and splendour into its fullest growth as it was, it says a good deal for its essential nobility that it bore without sourness or permanent distortion the piercing blast of adversity. Two shocks came upon him one after another—the utter and instant failure of his attempt to unite Israel under himself as their leader; and then the compulsory exchange of wealth and rank in Egypt for the solitary life and the humble labour of a shepherd wandering from oasis to oasis in the Arabian desert at the back of Midian. The one had developed, the other braced, his powers. And after this came to him the cares of leadership—the endurance of that vast strain of anxiety and care which attends the re-shaping of a nation. Such responsibilities make men grey before their time, and by this consideration we may judge in some degree of the magnificent elasticity and vital force of the nature of the man who was called by God to bear all this for forty years, and even then have it recorded of him that "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated." It is the outcome of all this long and arduous experience that we are to see in the addresses which make up the Book of Deuteronomy. The patriot, the legislator, the founder speaks there in almost every line no less than the bearer of the law and messenger of Jehovah. The reminiscences of experience common to the speaker and his hearers; the *quorum pars magna fuimus*, which form the burden of almost every chapter, are characteristic—too characteristic to be overlooked, too natural and persistent to have been invented. The book forms unconsciously the *éloge* of the speaker. And therefore, let us say in passing, it is that we feel small sympathy with those who find in the supposed inability of Moses at the outset of his mission to *speak* to Pharaoh, the proof that these lengthy and rhetorical discourses cannot be his. It is not Moses the fugitive, the adventurer, it is not Moses the untried, or rather the unsuccessful, whom we have set before us

in the opening words of Deuteronomy; it is Moses the aged, the tried in war and peace, the ruler over Israel for forty years—a king in all but name. Such responsibilities as he had borne crush feeble natures indeed, but they ennoble strong ones. And therefore, even had it been the case that Moses was originally a man of slow and hesitating speech (Exod. iv. 10), we must look upon that weakness as having been eradicated by the slow lapse of years, by the habit of command, and the steady growth of all his powers. . . . The Book of Deuteronomy may be called a popular digest of the Mosaic Law. It includes a good many details, and all the great principles upon which that law is constructed. It is plain, simple, popular, not showing continual repetitions, because its author knew the exceeding density and "slowness of heart" of the people with whom he had to deal. If we compare one of the earliest of the Mosaic institutes, the Ten Commandments, with the "curses" in Deut. xxvii. 15–26, which are one of the latest, and are obviously modelled upon them, we shall see how great was Moses' skill in statecraft, and how much he appreciated the advantages of perfect plainness, teaching by concrete instances and continual repetition. It is a further proof of this practical wisdom that the book is directed to be read aloud once every seven years at the Feast of Tabernacles before the assembled tribes (xxxi. 10, 11), *i.e.* in the Sabbatical year, when the usual culture of the land was intermitted, and the Israelites had leisure to assemble for the purpose. We cannot, indeed, suppose that this far-seeing intention of the lawgiver was carried out. This beneficent provision also, like so many parts of the Law, probably remained inoperative. But that such an expedient should have been enjoined is sufficient of itself to constitute an extremely strong *prejudicium* in favour of the early date of the book. Quite other modes of publication were in vogue by the time, *e.g.*, of the captivity; the Sabbatical years themselves had ceased to be observed; and we may ask what conceivable forger would have invented a mode of publication of the Law of which no one (on the rationalistic hypothesis) had ever heard, and which would strike him as altogether inadequate to the requirements of a great, and by that time widespread, population? Similarly, the requirements to be fulfilled by a king of Israel, which are often quoted as a proof of the lateness of the date at which it was composed, seem to us, on the contrary, a proof of its antiquity. For in what age could such a list of *postulanda* have originated if not in the Mosaic? In the days of the early kings? But it is the exact point of the rationalistic case that the Law was then entirely unknown; and we presume no one would seriously maintain that a forger would compile the book with such great care and skill, and then put it by for a hundred and fifty years to mellow and get aged, as sham antiques are buried, with the intent that it should come out, say a hundred years later, after the writer himself was dead, to deceive every one into the belief that it was authentic. Nor could it well have originated under the later kings, who, for the most part, violated in their ascent to power and in their lives every one of its prescriptions. It would hardly have been a safe undertaking during those times of sudden and illegal violence, when the royal power was literally (like the Turkish power has always been) without any check save that of superior force, to have been known to have thrown a sort of doubt over the royal title in a book to appear during the life of the writer. If it did not appear at once, then motive would, as in the former case, be wanting; and besides, we come upon admitted historical notice of the book by that time. And thus one line of investigation after another leads us back to the earlier date which the book itself claims. (*Church Quarterly Review.*)

THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

DEUTERONOMY.

CHAPTER I.

VERS. 1–8. **These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan in the wilderness.**—*Moses' discourse to Israel*:—I. THE DATE OF THIS SERMON WHICH MOSES PREACHED TO THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL. A great auditory no question he had, as many as could crowd within hearing, and particularly all the elders and officers, the representatives of the people; and probably it was on the Sabbath day that he delivered this to them. 1. The place where they were now encamped was in the plain, in the land of Moab (vers. 1, 5), where they were just ready to enter Canaan, and engage in a war with the Canaanites. Yet he discourseth not to them concerning military affairs, but concerning their duty to God; for if they kept themselves in His fear and favour, He would secure to them the conquest of the land; their religion would be their best policy. 2. The time was near the end of the fortieth year since they came out of Egypt. So long God had borne their manners, and they had borne their own iniquity (Numb. xiv. 34); and now a new and more pleasant scene was to be introduced, as a token for good, Moses repeats the law to them. Thus, after God's controversy with them for the golden calf, the first and surest sign of God's being reconciled to them was the renewing of the tables. There is no better evidence and earnest of God's favour than His putting His law in our hearts (Psa. cxlvii. 19, 20). II. THE DISCOURSE ITSELF. In general, Moses spake unto them "all that the Lord had given him in commandment" (ver. 3), which intimates, not only that what he now delivered was for substance the same with what had formerly been commanded, but it was that God now commanded him to repeat. He gave them this rehearsal and exhortation purely by Divine direction. God appointed him to leave this legacy to the Church. He begins his narrative with their removal from Mount Sinai (ver. 6), and relates here—1. The orders God gave them to decamp and proceed in their march (ver. 6, 7). "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount." That was the mount that burned with fire (Heb. xii. 18), and gendered to bondage (Gal. iv. 24). Thither God brought them to humble them, and by the terrors of the law to prepare them for the land of promise. There He kept them about a year, and then told them they had dwelt long enough there, they must go forward. Though God bring His people into trouble and affliction, into spiritual trouble and affliction of mind, He knows when they have dwelt long enough in it, and will certainly find a time, the fittest time, to advance them from the terrors of the spirit of bondage to the comforts of the spirit of adoption (Rom. viii. 15). 2. The prospect He gave them of a happy settlement in Canaan presently: "Go to the land of the Canaanites" (ver. 7). Enter and take possession; it is all your own. "Behold, I have set the land before you" (ver. 8). But when God commands us to go forward in our Christian course, He sets the heavenly Canaan before us for our encouragement. (*Matthew Henry, D.D.*) **Moses spake . . . according unto all that the Lord had given him.**—*A God-given sermon*:—Moses spoke what the Lord had commanded him; in other words, Moses gave the people what God had given him (Acts iii. 6). Though the words were Moses', the thing uttered was of God. Some speak according to the wisdom of the world: they can tell much about its craft, villainy, hollowness; and they preach selfishness, more or less refined, as a means of personal defence, and the true source of success. Some

speak according to one thing, others according to something else. Moses spoke according to what God had given him. He therefore spoke God's truth. I. BECAUSE MOSES SPOKE GOD'S TRUTH HE UTTERED WHAT WOULD BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE PEOPLE. The path of happiness is the way of wisdom. Wisdom is happiness as well as pleasant (Prov. viii.). True wisdom is the fear of God (Job xxviii. 28). The man who declares God's truth instructs in wisdom and leads men to happiness. Happiness is what men are seeking. Those who conduct others into happiness meet an universal want. II. Because Moses spoke what God gave him, HE COULD SPEAK—1. With courage. 2. With power. III. Because Moses spoke what God gave him to speak, HE RELIEVED HIMSELF OF RESPONSIBILITY. 1. Commissions are sometimes entrusted to men by God which they are afraid to execute. They thereby entail calamity upon themselves and all connected with them (Jonah). 2. Duties imposed by God, if neglected, bring desolation on the man and his family —Achan (Judges vii.). 3. Knowledge, wisdom, visions of the Divine glory are vouchsafed to men to be used for the improvement of the world, the upholding of the Church, and the honour of God. 4. Money, influence, opportunity is entrusted to many in these days. Such is not to be lavished on ourselves. God gave it; He expects it to be used in His service. (*J. Saurin.*) **On this side Jordan, &c.**—*The worth of the present*:—Moses repeated the law as soon as he had opportunity, and circumstances required it. He did not wait till the promised land was entered. The work of to-day was not delayed till the morrow. It was done at once. He did it where he was—in the land of the Gentiles—surrounded with heathen—in the country of foes. Trapp with no little humour remarks on these words, "And he was not long about it. A ready heart makes a riddance of God's work, for being oiled with the Spirit, it becomes lithe and nimble and quick of despatch." Three practical hints—I. WHAT IS TO BE DONE DO AT ONCE. Moses on this side of Jordan began to speak. Had Moses been a boy at school he would not have put off his prayers till he got home, where there were no schoolfellows to chaff. He would have said them then and there. II. DO NOT THINK THAT THERE WILL BE A MORE PROPITIOUS TIME THAN THE PRESENT. 1. Dallying with duties does not diminish difficulties. 2. Delay positively increases difficulties. Power unused decreases. If duty is deferred a day we are a day's wasted strength the weaker. (3) We know what is to be done now; to-morrow it may be forgotten. Cares of life may usurp attention. The duties are pushed aside—choked down—killed. Weeds grow faster than corn. Cares and duties come quicker than time. III. DO SOME GOOD THINGS IN THIS LIFE—IN THE DESERT, SO CALLED, ON THIS SIDE JORDAN. Do not wait till heaven is reached, that angels alone may be witness of your good deeds. Moses did not defer till the promised land was reached. He did what he was able out of the promised land. It was well he did. He never reached Canaan. Had he put off all till then, nothing would have been done. (*Ibid.*) *God's address to His people*:—I. God, in His address to His people, ENJOINS ACTION. "Not slothful" is the apostolic command. "Ye have dwelt long enough." The time of inactivity is over. "Turn you, take your journey." God enjoins on His people to be like Himself. He is ever active. The whole seven days round His energies are going forth in creating and blessing. Not less active than the Father is the Son. Week-day and Sabbath He exerted Himself to make man happier and the world brighter. His reason for this He gives in John v. 17. It is not unnatural, therefore, that God seeks in His people qualities so largely developed in Himself. God does not want idlers in His vineyard. Man was put into the garden of the world to work (Gen. ii. 15). However, God permits some rest. Life is not all work. Storm and calm, battle and peace, make history. But still the law of life and growth is, the more we do within certain limits the more we are able to do. This is true both physically and spiritually. People of impaired health by proper exercise become strong. The morally weak are strengthened by the exercise of trial. The more kind a man tries to be, the more he is. So with faith, patience, hope. II. GOD ADVISES WITH REGARD TO THE NATURE, DIRECTION, AND EXTENT OF THIS ACTION. 1. Nature of the action. Let it be action with a purpose in view. Have an aim in life. "Go to the mount of the Amorites." 2. Direction of the action. Two hints with regard to that—(1) Let it go forth. It does not do for a man's action to turn in on himself. Uniform selfishness is as injurious as constant introspection; and ceaseless introspection is as ruinous as unmixed selfishness. Live for others as well as self; work for others. (2) This is modified by another hint. Go to what is near first. 3. Extent of the action. Begin at the near, then proceed to what is more remote, till the whole world is affected by your life, *e.g.*—(1) First to the plain. Read part of

the Bible easily understood and applied. Interpret providence as far as you can trace a Father's hands. What cannot be understood leave for a future day and clearer lights. (2) After this go to the hill. Do not mind a difficulty sometimes. A little adversity strengthens the soul. Trust is perfected in suffering. (3) Now you may proceed to the vale. There is the "valley of the shadow of death"—"the valley of humiliation"—"the valley of vision." Here the soul is quickened and brought into that region of experience that Paul designates as being "hidden with Christ in God." (4) Thus prepared with "the whole armour of God," go to the "south." Here were hills infested with foes. So the Christian, after mounting the Hill of Transfiguration with Christ, where for a moment the Divine glory is manifested, has to go back again to a world where man has to contend with demons (Matt. xvii. 14–18), where he has to grapple with many a spiritual foe, wolves in sheep's clothing, the lion that seeks to devour, the subtle serpent. (5) Then comes the reward. Having gone to the "south," the people might turn aside to the sea. So does God bring the Christian after long and hard toil to gaze into those depths of love and grace which are as oceans mirroring the midnight skies. (6) After such revelation of God's glory and power the people of God can go forth to war with the Canaanite. The kingdom of Christ is extended to Lebanon (the far north)—to the river (the far east). The whole world is filled with the glory of the Lord. III. GOD, IN HIS ADDRESS, POINTS OUT HOW RIGHTLY DIRECTED ACTION WILL BRING ITS OWN REWARD. "Behold, I have set (Heb. 'given') the land before you: go in and possess." 1. True work is sure to bring recompense of some kind. It brings external reward. A day's work brings the day's wages. The sowings of spring are followed by the harvests of autumn. It brings an internal reward in a man's own nature and being. 2. Show what work is. Distinguish work from pleasure. Pleasure is the expending of energy without any end or purpose save the sensations caused by the act of waste, whereby pleasure has been defined as "dissipating enjoyments"; work is energy expended for a purpose. In its idea it is conservative. Work is action to get a return for the energy so spent, both to recuperate and increase the power thus employed. Pleasure seeks nothing save the sensation; work demands a recompense. God promises to work its recompense. "Go in and possess." (*Ibid.*) *The discourse delivered by Moses*:—The faithful servants of the Lord, with advancing years and experience, frequently acquire increasing reputation for wisdom, integrity, and disinterested philanthropy, as well as pious zeal for the glory of God. While they draw nearer to the heavenly world they often seem to breathe a purer air, and all their words have a heavenly savour; their motion accelerates as they approach their rest; their earnestness increases, when they can be influenced by no earthly motive; and their confidence and comfort acquire strength in defiance of the approaching king of terrors. Under such circumstances their instructions are doubly impressive, and frequently have a durable effect upon the survivors. They should then seize every occasion of reminding the people of the wisdom, power, truth, and love of God, as manifested in His dealing with them: and there are times when they may also, consistently with deep humility, speak of their own conduct, their love to souls, their faithful labours, their self-denial, and patient sufferings in the arduous work about which they are engaged; in order to obviate prejudice, and to obtain a more favourable attention to further exhortations. But it is likewise necessary to show the people their transgressions, that they may be duly humbled; to warn them against the fatal effects of unbelief and sin; to point out the advantages of confidence in God and obedience to Him; and to unite confessions of their own imperfection and sinfulness, both to avoid giving needless offence, to suggest encouragement, and to excite personal humiliation. (*Thomas Scott.*) *Ordered from the mountain*:—God knows, then, how long we have been here or there. He keeps the time; He knows when we have been "long enough" in one place. "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount." We may get tired even of mountains. Wherever we live we need change. We are ordered down off the mountain. Soon after we have said, It is good to be here, the Leader proposes that we should go down again. He will not have any heaven built upon earth; He will never allow us to build permanently upon foundations that are themselves transitory. There are many mountains to come down—mountains of supposed strength, when the very robustest man must lie down and say, "I am very weary, tired to exhaustion"; mountains of prosperity, when Crœsus himself must come down, saying, "I am a poor man; let the meanest slave serve me, for I cannot longer serve myself." Then there is the coming down that is inevitable—the time when God says to every one of us, "You have been long enough on the mountain

of time; pass through the grave to the hills of heaven, the great mountains of eternity." Sometimes we think we have been too long on the mountain, and wonder when He will come whose right it is to bring the sheep into the fold; we say in our peevishness—not always impious, but rather an expression of weakness—Surely we have been forgotten; by this time we ought to have been with the blessed ones; the night is coming on quickly, and we shall be drenched with dews. So long are some men kept outside, on the very top of the hill, where very little grass grows—bare, rocky places. But God cannot forget; we must rest in His memory; He puts Himself even before a mother who may forget her sucking child, but He has pledged Himself never to forget His redeemed Church. But, having ordered His people away from the mountain, where can they take up their abode? We find the answer in the seventh verse. God has many localities at His command, so He disperses the people, setting them "in the plain," "in the hills," "in the vale," "by the seaside," and "unto the great river, the river Euphrates." What space God has! "In My Father's house are many mansions"—in My Father's house are many localities. Why do we choose our own place? Did ever man dispute the Divine sovereignty without regretting his encounter with the Eternal Will? Why have any will? Were we serving wooden gods, mechanical deities, divinities of our own creation or invention, we might dispute with them, point out what possibly they may have overlooked, and draw bolder programmes; but if God is the only-wise, if God is love, if God is light, if God died for us in the person of His Son, why not say, Not my will, but Thine be done: take me to the mountain or the plain, the hills or the vale, the seaside or the river; the taking itself shall be as a vision of heaven? (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *A stationary position degrading*:—I remember hearing a naturalist describe a species of jelly-fish which, he said, lives fixed to a rock, from which it never stirs. It does not require to go in search of food, because in the decayed tissues of its own organism there grows a kind of seaweed on which it subsists. I thought I had never heard of any creature so comfortable. But the naturalist who was describing it went on to say that it is one of the very lowest forms of animal life, and the extreme comfort which it enjoys is the very badge of its degraded position. **Go in and possess the land.**—*The blessedness and glory of the promised land*:—I. TO GIVE A SPIRITUAL DESCRIPTION OF THE LAND WHICH JEHOVAH HATH PROPOSED AS THE END OF OUR PILGRIMAGE, AND OF WHICH WE ALL PROFESS TO BE IN SEARCH. 1. It is a land to whose delightfulness, beauty, and fertility Jehovah Himself had borne the most ample and undoubted testimony. 2. But the land of Canaan was not merely a country known by description, however magnificent and encouraging, as well as unchangeably true, the testimony of God might be concerning it. The spies who had been sent, in whatever guilty unbelief their mission originated, had searched it out, from Dan even to Beersheba; and they had brought with them of the grapes, and pomegranates, and figs, that the people might see, and taste, and judge for themselves. And what was this except a type of Christ, the true Vine, some clusters of which the searching eye of faith may see? 3. It is, moreover, a land of promise; and here is the leading feature of its peculiar preciousness. Jehovah saith not that Canaan is a country which His people might inhabit, if they could win it in their own strength; for then, where were the weapons of their successful warfare, and where the might in which to overcome their enemies? But it is a land which, in the exercise of His free and sovereign grace, He made over to them—not giving it to them because they were a great nation, for they were the fewest of all people, but because He loved them. II. THE INJUNCTION GIVEN BY JEHOVAH TO HIS PEOPLE —"Go in, and possess the land"; and, as it is added in the twenty-third verse, where the command and promise are repeated, "Fear not, neither be discouraged." The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. Never imagine that the Canaan which you profess to seek will be your own without a warfare. Fight valiantly, pray fervently, trust implicitly, and you will be made more than conquerors. Neither doubt nor distrust the sure promise and inviolable covenant of an unchangeable God. Oh, how keenly should this Scripture rebuke all loiterers in the holy war! We profess to love and follow Jesus, but when He cries "Go up and possess the land," we willingly linger in the desert of our own coldness and worldly love. (*R. P. Buddicom.*) *Enlargement—a New Year's address*:—John Foster, in one of his admirable essays, speaks of truth as presenting to the inquirer's view a beautiful and spacious landscape, divided into delightful gardens, green meadows, so that wherever he casts his eyes he beholds some beautiful plant or flower of truth. You have entered into this goodly land of truth, "Go in and

possess it"; extend this year your knowledge of it, make its riches your own priceless possession. God has given unto us intellectual power; and, having bestowed this blessing upon us, He requires that we do our utmost in order to secure mental culture. Truth has many departments, but truth in its highest form is presented to us in Holy Scripture. What a realm of beauty and fertility is presented to us here! Let us "go in and possess this land." And let us "go in" feeling that we are entering a large land; not mistaking for the whole a little tract we have traversed, but convinced that there are unexplored regions yet to be brought to light. Oh, to be delivered from all narrowness in reference to our conceptions of truth, and specially of truth bearing upon our spiritual weal! There are, I know, certain teachings which are to be regarded as foundation teachings, as, for instance, the Divinity and Incarnation of Christ, the Atonement of Jesus, His victory over death, His resurrection, &c. But whilst holding these great verities of eternal truth unswervingly, let us come to the study of this Book of God believing that there are hidden treasures here, and which He will reveal to us by His Spirit if we carry on our investigation in the spirit of patience, thoughtfulness, courage, and prayer. One of the most beautiful conceptions of heaven we can possibly form is that of its being "the land of uprightness"; perfect purity, complete rectitude prevailing. And whilst it is true that heaven "remaineth to the people of God," it is also true that they who have believed enter it even here. The blessings flowing to us through our union to Christ are present, and the elements which constitute the character of the glorified in heaven are to mark, in a growing measure, God's servants who are still on earth. Be it ours, then, to go on developing in all the excellencies of the Christian character. There is a realm which must be described as one of sin and death, of bondage and darkness. Oh, to possess that land, and to transfer it to Christ, that thus, under the influence of His Spirit, its evil may give place to purity, its slavery to liberty, whilst through its chambers of death life may spread! This is our mission as the followers of the Lord Jesus. In calling us into union with Himself He calls us, in fact, into sympathy with Him in His glorious purpose of effecting the ultimate deliverance of the world from the captivity of evil. When we speak of possessing the world for Christ, what difficulties present themselves to our view! How vast is the territory yet to be covered! How inapproachable many of its tracts, so that noble lives are sacrificed by the way, or reach their destination only to die! How unhealthy the climates, and how unyielding the superstitions! How the work is impeded, too, by the policy of governments, taking the carnal weapons where we would use the spiritual, and introducing the soldier where we would plant the missionary. Truly, there are many hindrances. But we will not despair. It is the cause of God in which we are enlisted. When He works, who shall hinder? (*S. D. Hillman, B.A.*)

Vers. 9–18. **And I spake unto you at that time, saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone.**—*The promised increase pleaded*:—I. THE GLORIOUS BEING ADDRESSED. "The Lord God of your fathers." 1. In His essential character as Lord God. (1) In creation. (2) In providence. (3) In redemption. 2. In His relative character. "Lord God of your fathers." (1) Literally in its application to Israel. The Lord God, who called Abraham, blessed Isaac, and named Jacob; who delivered His people from the proud yoke of Pharaoh; guided, guarded, and supplied them in the wilderness; gave them the rich land of promise. Surely Israel might well sing, "There is no God like unto the God of Jeshurun." Then let us apply it—(2) To many of our fathers after the flesh. Many of our fathers served and trusted in the living God. How they spake of God, "Behold I die, but serve God, and He will be with you." Is not their memory still sweet? 3. The subject has a general application to our spiritual predecessors. Those early Christian fathers who had to witness before the pagan world, and who passed through horrid persecutions, and yet were supported and made successful in spreading the Gospel through the world. II. THE COMPREHENSIVE PETITION PRESENTED. "Make you," &c. In the petition are two parts, multiplication of numbers and the Divine blessing. III. THE GROUND OF ENCOURAGEMENT ADDUCED. "As He hath promised." Now, God did promise Abraham. Observe some of the traits of these promises. They are—1. Absolute in their nature. He has not said He will multiply the Church if—(1) Her friends are active and willing. No. But He will make His people willing in the day of His power. (2) If the governments of the world and the great of the earth are favourable; but it is written, "They *shall* bring the gold of Sheba," &c. 2. They are numerous. Scattered over the whole extent of revelation.

3. They have been principally made to Christ. 4. Partially fulfilled. APPLICATION. 1. The divinity of our religion. 2. The benevolence of our religion. 3. The final triumphs of our religion. 4. The bearing of our subject on the religious instruction of the rising generation. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *The blessing of a numerous progeny:* —I. THAT CHILDREN OUGHT TO BE ESTEEMED BLESSINGS, and that he who has a numerous offspring ought to be thankful to God for them. This is a blessed thing, for—1. Such a man is a public blessing to the kingdom in which he lives; for the riches of a kingdom consists in the number of its inhabitants. 2. A numerous offspring is a valuable blessing with respect to private families, and that mutual comfort and support which those who came originally out of the same loins yield to one another. These bonds are inseparable when the same interests are bound by natural affection. 3. A numerous offspring is a valuable blessing to the parent himself. The Jew looked forward to the Messiah being born of his family; the Christian can see a new heir of righteousness. There is joy in their birth; there is pleasure in their after-life if the child is trained aright. II. GOD IS THE SOLE AUTHOR AND DISPOSER OF THESE BLESSINGS (Psa. cxxvii. 3). This blessing is called an heritage. An heritage is an estate got by ancestors, and descends to us lineally without our painstaking. God is our Ancestor, from whom we enjoy all favours. Three lessons are gathered from the subject of this verse. 1. Let those who have no children learn from hence to wait with patience the Divine pleasure, to continue in prayer and alms-deeds, and to be fruitful in good works; and if they have not children after the flesh, they will have a multitude who will call them blessed, and who in the endless ages of eternity will be to them as children. 2. Let those who have a numerous family of children be thankful to God for bestowing these blessings on them, and use their utmost endeavour to make them blessings indeed, by grounding them in the principles of religion, and bringing them up soberly and virtuously to some lawful calling. 3. Those who have had children and are deprived of them, either by natural death or, which is worse, by any unfortunate accident, may hence learn to resign themselves to the will of God, and entirely to depend on His good providence. (*Lewis Atterbury.*) *Numerical increase:*—In this part of his narrative he insinuates to them—1. That he greatly rejoiced in the increase of their numbers. He owns the accomplishment of God's promise to Abraham (ver. 10). You are as the stars of heaven for multitude; and prays for the further accomplishment of it (ver. 11). God make you a thousand times more. This prayer comes in a parenthesis; and a good prayer prudently put in cannot be impertinent in any discourse of Divine things; nor will a pious ejaculation break the coherence, but rather strengthen and adorn it. But how greatly are his desires enlarged when he prays that they might be made a thousand times more than they were! We are not straightened in the power and goodness of God; why should we be straightened in our own faith and hope, which ought to be as large as the promise? It is from the promise that Moses here takes the measure of his prayer, the Lord bless you as He hath promised you. And why might he not hope that they might become a thousand times more than they were now, when they were now ten thousand times more than they were when they came down into Egypt, above two hundred and fifty years ago? Observe, when they were under the government of Pharaoh the increase of their numbers was envied, and complained of as a grievance (Exod. i. 9); but now, under the government of Moses, it was rejoiced in, and prayed for as a blessing, the comparing of which might give them occasion to reflect with shame upon their own folly when they had talked of making a captain and returning to Egypt. 2. That he was not ambitious of monopolising the honour of the government and ruling them himself alone as an absolute monarch (ver. 9). Magistracy is a burden. Moses himself, though so eminently gifted for it, found it lay heavy on his shoulders; nay, the best magistrates complain most of the burden, and are most desirous of help, and most afraid of undertaking more than they can perform. 3. That he was not desirous to prefer his own creatures, or such as should underhand have a dependence upon him; for he leaves it to the people to choose their judges, to whom he would grant commissions; not to be turned out when he pleased, but to continue as long as they approved themselves faithful (ver. 13). We must not grudge that God's work be done by other hands than ours, provided it be done by good hands. 4. That he was in this matter very willing to please the people, and though he did not in anything aim at their applause, yet in a thing of this nature he would not act without their approbation. And they agreed to the proposal (ver. 14). The thing which thou hast spoken is good. This he mentions to aggravate the sin of their mutinies and discontents after this, that the government they quarrelled with was what they themselves had

consented to; Moses would have pleased them if they would have been pleased. 5. That he aimed to edify them as well as to gratify them; for—(1) He appointed men of good characters (ver. 15), wise men, and men known—men that would be faithful to their trust and to the public interest. (2) He gave them a good charge (vers. 16, 17). Those that are advanced to honour must know that they are charged with business, and must give account another day of their charge. (3) He chargeth them to be diligent and patient; hear the causes. Hear both sides, hear them fully, hear them carefully, for nature hath provided us with two ears; and he that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame to him. The ear of the learned is necessary to the tongue of the learned (Isa. l. 4). (4) To be just and impartial: judge righteously. Judgment must be given according to the merits of the cause, without regard to the quality of the parties. The natives must not be suffered to abuse the strangers; no more than the strangers to insult the natives, or to encroach upon them. The great must not be suffered to oppress the small, nor to crush them; no more than the small to rob the great, or to affront them. No faces must be known in judgment, but unbribed, unbiassed equity must always pass sentence. (5) To be resolute and courageous. You shall not be afraid of the face of man. But not overawed to do an ill thing, either by the clamours of the crowd, or by the menaces of those that have power in their hands. And he gives them a good reason to enforce this charge; for the judgment is God's. You are God's vicegerents; you act for Him, and therefore must act like Him; you are His representatives, but if you judge unrighteously you misrepresent Him. The judgment is His, and therefore He will protect you in doing right, and will certainly call you to account if you do wrong. And lastly, he allows them to bring all difficult cases to him, which he would always be ready to hear and determine, and to make both the judges and the people easy. (*Matthew Henry, D.D.*) *The execution of a nation's laws:*—The constitution of a man's body is best known by his pulse; if it stirs not at all, then we know he is dead; if it stirs violently, then we know him to be in a fever; if it keeps an equal stroke, then we know he is sound and whole: in like manner we may judge of the estate of a kingdom, or commonwealth, by the manner of execution of its laws. (*J. Spencer.*)

Ver. 19. **That great and terrible wilderness.**—*Memorable experiences:*—There are some things that are never to be forgotten in life. There are troubles whose shadow is as long as life's whole day. The troubles are past, but the shadow is still there; the victory is won, but the battle seems still to be booming in our ear. We are miles and miles away from the desert—yea, half a continent and more—but who can ever forget "all that great and terrible wilderness"? Yet life would be poor without it. The memory of that wilderness chastens our joy, touches our prayer into a more solemn and tender music, and makes us more valiant, because more hopeful, in reference to all the future. There cannot be two such wildernesses in the whole universe. We are the better for the wildernesses of life, and we cannot escape them. Oh, that great and terrible wilderness! It comes after us now like a ghost; it darkens upon our vision in the dream-time; we repeat the journey in the night season, and feel all the sleet and cold, all the dreariness and helplessness of the old experience. How many a joy we have forgotten; but we cannot play with "that great and terrible wilderness." The very pronouncement of the words makes us cold. It was "great"; it was "terrible"; it was a "wilderness." But, rightly trodden, its barren sand made us men; taken in the right spirit, we thought we saw in it the beginning of the garden of God. Every man does not pass through exactly the same wilderness; it is not needful that he should do so in order to confirm this doctrine—namely, that in all lives there are great dreary spaces that we approach with fear and traverse almost with despair. What are the thoughts that such a review should excite? Can we look back upon that way, through all the great and terrible wilderness, without remembering the Divine help which we received? God was God in the wilderness; God looked at us through the darkness, and there was no blaze of anger in His eye. Who can forget the touch that came upon our burning brow in the night-time? Who can forget the ever-branching tree just by the side of the bitter pool? Who can forget the clump of palm-trees where no palm-trees were expected? Who can cease to remember the voice of leadership—the strong, authoritative man who came amongst us like a revelation from God, and spoke broad words in broad tones, and was a tower of strength to us in the time of our weakness, and wonder, and fear—the sympathetic pastor, the mighty preacher, the kind friend, the one who understood us wholly through and through? Then, is there no Divine purpose, the

recollection of which may sustain us in traversing wildernesses and lonely deserts? Who made the world? Is the world a fatherless thing, a self-rounded thing that may split up at any moment, or is there method in it? Is there a God above it? Is there a throne anywhere? And the King, is He but a name or an echo? I see purpose in my life; I see it now—"Thou hast done all things well." I did not think so at the time; I should have made the wilderness a mile shorter, but it was on the last mile that I saw the brightest angel. I would have come to honour and renown sooner; but I see now that the very movements were ticked off, and that a moment earlier would have been a mistake. "I would have come," says another Christian man, "to a sense of competency, and comfort, and household security ten years ago; but in my soul I see that ten years ago I could not have borne what I now carry gracefully." Thou hast done all things well. I would not have had seven graves in the cemetery, nor two, nor one; but I see now that I am the richer for the seven; I would not now have it otherwise. They are my best estate; I have property in them; I grow my choicest flowers there; there I meet with the angels that understand me. There is a method in all this; I accept it; I will bow down before it; I will kiss the rod that lacerated me to the bone; it was in my Father's hand. Then is there to be no human gratitude springing out of all this? Is ours to be a false life — an unsympathetic existence? As we have received help of God, let us give help to others. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The utility of sandy deserts*:—If we do not at once see the use of a thing which is unbeautiful, we are apt to disdain it altogether. Utility or beauty we demand as a characteristic of everything. But let it be constantly remembered that our limited vision and knowledge often prevent our discerning the uses which exist in things. Do not be deceived by the mere appearance. The sandy deserts which one might have been inclined to consider as mere encumbrances on the earth are of high importance in creating winds. They send off vast streams of hot air into the higher regions of the atmosphere, and hence the cooler air off the coasts is sucked away in an opposite direction. The deserts, indeed, may be regarded as vast suction-pumps placed at certain stations on the earth, to create useful winds and help the transport of moisture to lands that are in want of it. But for the Thibetan deserts there would have been no south-west monsoon; and without the monsoon the fertile plains of Hindostan would have been a waste of sand. (*Scientific Illustrations.*)

Ver. 21. **The Lord . . . hath set the land before thee.**—*The heritage of grace*:—There is a heritage of grace which we ought to be bold enough to win for our own possession. All that one believer has gained is free to another. We may be strong in faith, fervent in love, and abundant in labour; there is nothing to prevent it; let us go up and take possession. The sweetest experience and the brightest grace are as much for us as for any of our brethren. Jehovah has set it before us; no one can deny our right; let us go up and possess it in His name. The world also lies before us to be conquered for the Lord Jesus. We are not to leave any country a corner of it unsubdued. That slum near our house is before us, not to baffle our endeavours, but to yield to them. We have only to summon courage enough to go forward, and we shall win dark homes and hard hearts for Jesus. Let us never leave the people in a lane or alley to die because we have not enough faith in Jesus and His Gospel to go up and possess the land. No spot is too benighted, no person is so profane as to be beyond the power of grace. Cowardice, begone! Faith marches to the conquest. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The folly of unbelief*:—Moses recounted what had occurred in the wilderness of Paran about two years after the Israelites went out of Egypt. They had reached Kadesh on the verge of the Negeb or South Country. They resolved to send spies before them to reconnoitre. This resolve, as the sequel proved, showed a want of faith on the part of many, and even a determined desire on the part of some to find an excuse for returning to Egypt. The majority of the spies, while extolling the country, magnified the difficulties which seemed to be on the path to its conquest. Only two of the spies were on the Lord's side. But the latent unbelief of the people brushed aside their arguments. Only too late the people repented of their folly, and were driven back before the Amorites to their forty years of wandering. Moses dwelt on this incident because it showed the folly and punishment of unbelief, and was thus a warning example. So it is to the Christian Church (1 Cor. x. 6). It shows—I. SOME HINDRANCES TO FAITH. 1. The history is typical of what often occurs in the Christian life. Many come to the borders of the kingdom of God and

fail to enter. 2. The causes of failure are similar, the chief cause is unbelief. Because of this the Israelites could not enter. The proofs God had given of His power and willingness aggravated this unbelief. Every step of the journey proved the Divine goodness. But they forgot all God had done. Unbelief frustrated all. 3. So is it with individual men. Barriers to entrance to the Divine kingdom are raised by themselves. They do not trust in the Divine promises. They are troubled by the thought that they are too sinful—that they must repent, prepare themselves, &c. But salvation does not depend on these things, though they may show that our hearts are set on it. The slave who is offered freedom does not need to attempt to purchase it. So sinful men may enter the strait gate in the Divine strength, through Christ. It was not their preparedness that entitled the Israelites to enter into the land of promise, but their faith in the Divine promises. II. DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY OF SPIRITUAL PROGRESS. (1) The desert life, the hardship of conquest, were not to the taste of many of the Israelites. In Egypt they enjoyed many luxuries now denied them. So not a few wished to return to Egypt. But this was folly—the way to death, to fall into the hands of the enraged Pharaoh. (2) This is a faint type of those who turn their backs on the spiritual kingdom, lured by the pleasures of the world. (3) Do not let any think, as some in Israel seemed to do, that if God intends us to overcome He will enable us to do so without effort. Israel could not possess Canaan till the Amorites and other foes were overcome, the strong cities overthrown, &c. This the Israelites in unbelief thought could not be accomplished. (4) This is the plea of many at the entrance of the spiritual life. The way is too difficult, the enemies are too strong, we cannot overcome. But the New Testament word is, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Christ has commanded us to strive and agonise to enter. (5) Let no man be deterred by this. Every noble life is a struggle. Good men, from the very constitution of things, must suffer. Even goodness incarnate was rewarded by the world with a cross. These difficulties are raised by the adversary. (6) There are some events peculiarly saddening. A ship wrecked at the harbour mouth—a runner fainting when close to the goal—an heir bartering his inheritance for a mess of pottage. But sadder still—a sight fit to make angels weep—is it to see an heir of immortal glory turning from his father's house back to the far country and the swine troughs! (*W. Frank Scott.*)

Ver. 28. **Our brethren have discouraged our heart.**—*Do not be discouraged*:—To be discouraged is to lose one's energy and vitality. When a man is discouraged he is of no use; his power has gone out of him. Courage is a large and noble quality, and necessary in all the relations of life. It is not merely shown in the boldness which confronts danger and is self-possessed in peril. It also is needed to face other difficulties promptly, to do one's duty cheerfully when the hope of success is small; to stand alone for the truth and right; not to be discouraged by disappointment, nor by the censures and reproofs of the hostile, nor by the indifference of the unsympathising. In short, courage is the quality which is opposed to all discouragement. No wonder people admire courage. It is indispensable to nobleness of life. How much courage some men and women display in taking on themselves new responsibilities, in going promptly to perform untried and difficult duties, in keeping up the struggle of life amid many discouragements. Courage is a virtue needed by women no less than by men. How many poor women there are who work on to support their families, rising early and going late to bed, and eating the bread of care. They keep their children tidy and neat, keep them at school, exhaust every contrivance to maintain themselves, try every possible means of overcoming the daily difficulties of life, and so hold on, year after year, when strong men might have been discouraged and have given up. I think as much heroism is shown every day in such ways as by the soldiers who hold an important position in a battle against overwhelming odds. There is no more important work in this world, no greater duty, than to help others to keep up their courage. He is our best friend whose words of cheerful confidence give more life to our heart, and he is our enemy who by his words of doubt and his spirit of fear saps this ardour, and takes from us our courage. And yet how many there are whose habit it is to look at the dark and discouraging side of life. They dwell on the faults and follies of men; they retail every petty scandal they hear; they exaggerate the amount of evil in the world; they suggest a low and selfish motive as the root of good actions; they quench the ardour of generous enthusiasm by a cold scepticism. Whenever we have talked with such persons we have been inclined to say, "Our brethren have discouraged our heart." (*J. F. Clarke.*) *Discouragers*:—Here is a man like a cloud, and a cloud without any silver lining. He

gets between you and the sun. He makes everything dark. He puts the worst constructions, and attributes the worst motives, and takes the darkest view. You do not like to meet the murksome man. You do not wish to be overcast. Perhaps to-day you are hopeful. You have difficulties, but by God's blessing you can work out. Your church is struggling, but you think you see a brighter day. You have some sorry apples in your basket, but you have gotten the big ones on top. You have a skeleton or two in your closet, but they are out of sight. The sun is shining to-day up on the high places and valleys of your landscape. And here comes that human cloud, with his shadow creeping on before him. You avoid him. You take the other side of the street. Because you know in ten minutes he would get all the small apples on the top of your basket. He would have all the skeletons out of your closet, because he likes their company. You escape him, because you do not want him to cool your iron, for it is hot and you have made up your mind to strike it. Such a man may be a Christian; but he has a great besetting sin, which he must watch and pray against. Let him add this petition to his litany: From all blue devils; from all dismal dejection; from all bilious despondency; from all funereal gloom, and from all unchristian hopelessness—good Lord, deliver us. (*R. S. Barrett.*)

Ver. 31. **The Lord thy God bare thee as a man doth bear his son.**—*The paternal upholding of God:*—These words are part of a discourse delivered by Moses to all Israel, in the plain over against the Red Sea. Some of the most tender Divine utterances are to be found in the books of Moses. The subject of the text is the paternal upholding of God. I. Glance first at what we may call OUR HISTORY. There is a history appertaining to each of us, a story of our life. It has been written, though not with a pen, and it is inscribed on the mind of God. We study the biographies of others, and neglect the story of our own lives. II. The next thing is, GOD IN OUR HISTORY. The chief agents in our history are God and ourselves. God is in a good mother, God is in a wise father, God is in a competent tutor, God is in useful companions, God is in holy social influences, and God is in the ministry of angels; while bad parents, and bad teachers, and evil companions, and devils, have acted upon us by God's permission. God is, on these grounds, in all our history. Those passages which seem to present prominently the mother contain God, and they contain more of God than they do even of the mother. From no portion of the story of life can we exclude God. His purpose and thought and will are in each part and in the whole. Every step we take works out some part of the plan of life which He has laid down for us, so that God is in our history, in a certain sense, far more than we ourselves are in it. III. Now, seeing that God is in our history, WHAT DOES THAT HISTORY EXPRESS WITH REFERENCE TO GOD? It shows God's upholding of us. God bare thee when thou seemedst to thyself to walk alone. There are seasons in which you appear to design and arrange, but you have only been rough-hewing, as the mason sometimes rough hews for the sculptor, and even this rough-hewing has been under Divine direction. God bare thee when thou wast carried by others, and the Lord thy God bare thee when thou wast thyself inactive, and no fellow-creature seemed to be ministering to thee. Then He held thy soul in life, and kept thy feet from falling. He has also borne with thee. A most important part of bearing thee is this. IV. The great point, however, of this passage is, THE PATERNAL CHARACTER OF THE DIVINE SUSTENANCE. We each have a history, and God is in it, and the upholding of God is expressed by it. But that upholding is paternal. "The Lord thy God bare thee as a man doth bear his son." Now let us break this up a little. We may say that a man bears his son by taking charge of him, and by being responsible for him. We may say that a man bears his son by working for him, and by being a sort of subordinate providence over him. We may say that a man bears his son by teaching him, in due time, to act and to work for himself. We may say that a man bears his son when he shows patience towards his ignorance and folly, pity towards his sorrows, forbearance towards his faults, and love for his person. And thus does God sustain those who trust and fear Him. V. THERE ARE OBLIGATIONS AND DUTIES THAT SPRING FROM THESE TRUTHS. 1. In the first place, if "God bears us as a man bears his son," we ought to be quiet from the fear of evil. Real evil, while God is bearing us as a man his son—evil in the sense of real calamity—cannot happen to us. 2. If "God bear us as a man his son," we ought to be careful for nothing. God cares for us. What have we to do with care? What have we to do, in many circumstances, with responsibility? We are responsible

for finding out God's will, and for doing that will with all our might, but beyond where is our responsibility? Are we responsible for consequences? Is the husbandman, for example, responsible for the harvest? He is responsible for breaking the clods of the field, and for ploughing, and for tilling the ground; he is responsible for the choice of the seed, for the way in which it is sown, for the treatment of the field after seed is sown; but is he responsible for the clouds? Is he responsible for the rain? Is he responsible for frost? Is he responsible for light or for darkness? Is he responsible for the calm or for sunshine? The man may plough to perfection and sow most carefully and treat his ground most scientifically, but there is something more than that which man can do required for the increase of the earth; and that something more is God's care, not man's. 3. If "God bear us as a man his son," we ought lovingly to trust Him. Obey Him and honour Him, and when God tries your confidence in Him take care that this confidence comes forth from the trial like gold purified seven times. Eventually you shall be free from such trials, but now God often exposes you to them. The results of God's guidance and the results of God's upholding are now, in some respects, or at least in some of their results, very much like unripe fruit—green, sour, bitter, but as months roll on these results will become like ripened fruit, beautiful, sweet, and mellow, a picture to the eye, and as honey to the taste. (*S. Martin, D.D.*) *God's fatherly care*:—There is nothing of which men know less than of themselves. They do not understand how their own characters are formed; they stand in great doubt as to their own moral states before God. They cannot judge or take account of themselves, much less of their fellows. It is a great comfort to know that there is One who perfectly knows all that is in us, and all that concerns us, and who will take us for just our real worth. It is a comfort to trust in God. Oh, when a little child is weary, marching through a desert towards his home, when he feels that he has no longer strength to travel, nor wisdom to direct his way, how glad is he to have his father take him in his arms to rest him! And when the child, just before falling asleep, raises his eyes for one more glance at the face above him, and sees it firm and calm and set for home, how sweetly he resigns himself to slumber, confident that all is well! And thus do we, in the weary march through life, sometimes love to recline upon the bosom of the Eternal Traveller, and take our hour of rest confiding in our God. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Ver. 32. **In this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God.**—*Partial truth*:—These are the great battles of the world. Not the clang of swords and the roar of kingdoms, but the conflict of man with God,—man calling God a liar; these are the disastrous and fatal wars. We think ourselves refined because we shrink from the taste of hot blood, and then go and secretly disobey the God that made us. We are often called upon to contemplate what may be called partial faith. We have faith in spots; we are mainly bruises of unbelief, wounds of unconfessed but deadly atheism; yet here and there, leopard-like or zebra-like, we are studded with pieces of detached piety. How true this is let every man bear witness on his own account. We do believe some things, but generally they are things of no importance. We believe things that cost us nothing. Who believes the thing that has a Cross, wet with red blood in the middle of it? We are all partially religious, whimsically religious, religious after a very arbitrary and mechanical fashion. It is marvellous how the conscience is trained in little dots and short lines, and how the total manhood is left in a practically atheistic condition. We see what is meant by partial faith when we contemplate a vision which comes before us every day of our life, and that is the vision of partial character. Where is there a man that is all reprobate? The son of perdition occurs but now and then in the rolling transient centuries. Who is there who has not some good points about him? How we magnify those points into character. The chain is no stronger than its weakest link. Would you trust a chain thirty links long if you were sure that one of the links was very weak? You are no stronger than your weakest point; study that weak point; repair, amend, or remove it, or replace it by some point worthy of the rest of the character. That would be common sense, that would be downright logic worthy of the market-place. Why not accept it and realise it? We all believe in providence. Which providence? how much providence? in what seasons do we believe in providence? We are great believers in blossoming-time, but what faith have we when the snow upon our path is six feet deep and the wind a hail and frost? The Lord has many fine-day followers. When a man has had ten thousand

pounds unexpectedly left to him, he is prone to sing, "God moves in a mysterious way." He is mayhap, notwithstanding his psalm-singing, a hypocrite; he does not understand the meaning of faith, which is self-transformation into the very bosom of God. We often hear of some persons who are remarkably sound on certain doctrines. I dread to hear of any man who is particularly sound on any one doctrine, because I have the suspicion that he is magnifying his soundness upon that doctrine that he may ingratiate himself into my confidence so far as to inoculate me with some peculiar heresy of his own. As we have said before, what would be thought of any man who was partial to certain letters of the alphabet, and remarkably sound upon the consonants, or who held two of the vowels with most pious and clinging faith, who would lay down his intellectual life for the vowel *a* and for the vowel *o*, but who would take leave to cherish his own suspicions with regard to the soundness of the other vowels? What of the man who is strong upon the letter *b*, but a little heretical upon the letter *z*? This is God's charge against us by the mouth of His prophets and apostles—"Yet in this thing ye did not believe." We must not only be careful about what we do believe, but about what we do not believe. Do we really believe in providence?—in the shepherdly God, in the fatherly God, in the motherly God, in the God of the silent step, who comes with the noiselessness of a sunbeam into the chamber of our solitude and desolation? Do we really believe in the God who fills all space, yet takes up no poor man's room, and who is constantly applying to broken or wounded hearts the balm that grows only in old sweet Gilead? Do we believe that the very hairs of our head are all numbered? I am not so old in faith as mighty Habakkuk, I could see many trees blighted without losing my faith; but there is one tree, if aught should happen to any single branch or twig of that tree, my soul's faith would wither. What, then, can be my faith, if it is true, and it is true, that a chain is no stronger than its weakest link? We believe in prayer. How much? At what time do we believe in prayer? Are there not periods of agony in life in which we dismiss all around, and look with dumb sorrow upon the unheeding heavens? It is in vain that we say we believe in prayer, and that we lament for those who do not pray, if our prayer does not stand us in good stead in the hour and article of life's extremest agony. Remember the possibility of our having a partial faith, a partial faith in providence, a partial faith in prayer, and remember that the chain is no stronger than its weakest point; and if in this thing or that we do not believe the Lord our God, we may strike the rest of our faith dead as with a sword-stroke. Lord, save me, or I perish! What we want, then, is an all-round faith; in other words, what we want is an all-the-year-round faith. But our faith comes in fits and starts. Perhaps this may be accounted for by the fact that we have confounded the word creed with the word faith. Creed is weather, faith is climate; creed is a variable alphabet, faith is an eternal poetry. We live on faith, we walk by faith; without faith we have no life. As to our creed, take it, leave it, read it, despise it, adopt it, do what you like with it, but faith abides for ever, sometimes requiring new words and new modes, but never changing its inward and Divine substance and meaning. Let every man apply this text to himself. Let no man charge another about this merely occasional or spasmodic faith. Now and again we hear men say, My faith could not rise to that height. Sometimes I may ask for a little patience, now and again I may say, Give me time. Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee. That is the true faith. So long as that love lingers in the heart hell shall not have thee, nor the gates of hell prevail against the rock on which you build. This is very serious. This reflection makes life very solemn. Some of us have thought too much that we could take up our faith and set it down, that we may believe a little of this and a little of that; some of us have not thought much of the roundness of the orb of faith. Let us not give way to censoriousness upon others. You do not know how hard it is for some men to believe. It may be comparatively easy for you and me to believe. But we who are strong should bear the infirmities of the weak; we should be patient with the slow, we should desire that other men may know the joy and the blessedness and the triumph and the glory of the full life. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 33. **To show you by what way ye should go.**—*The Bible like the pillar of cloud and fire*:—I. AS THE PILLAR OF CLOUD AND FIRE WAS A BLESSING TO THE JEWS, SO IS THE BIBLE A BLESSING TO ALL AGES. 1. Consider the characteristics of the Bible as set forth by those of the pillar. That pillar had its own history. (1) It was Divine in its origin. It was not a common cloud, nor yet an exhalation

from the marshy ground. It was evidently, from the history, a supernatural phenomenon. Does not the Word of God give light, and show the path of duty when all is dark around? Is not its glorious guidance given in the perplexities of this wilderness? All the raging storms of this life diminish not its lustre. (2) The Bible, like the pillar, is exactly fitted for the object for which it is designed. "It is a light to my path and a lamp to my feet," said the Psalmist. "Oh, how I love Thy law; it is my meditation all the day." "How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (3) The pillar had two sides, and so has the Bible. The pillar was the same to all in itself, but it looked light and gave light to the Lord's hosts, and it looked dark and cast a deep shadow as seen by their opponents. Such, too, is the Bible. To the child of God it is all good, all cheering; to the ungodly it is all dark and terrible. It speaks of God's power. The power of God is the hope of the Christian, for it is power to help; but the power of God is the terror of the ungodly, for it is power to punish. 2. Consider the general influence of the Bible on the world as illustrated by the influence of the cloud upon those who went with it. The cloud benefited many who never knew or felt its value. In the camp of Israel there were many who were very thoughtless, as there are many in every age, yet did they enjoy the light and heat and guidance. They owed much of their comfort to that mystic cloud, but never felt or even thought of their obligation. Just so is it in reference to the Bible. Its influence is found in many a home where it is not acknowledged. II. SOME OF THOSE WHO WERE BLESSED BY THE LIGHT AND COMFORTS OF THE MYSTIC CLOUD WERE BARRED AT LAST FROM CANAAN, AS SOME WHO HAVE BEEN BLESSED BY BIBLE TRUTH WILL NEVER FIND THEIR WAY TO HEAVEN. When that man on yon northern hills was surrounded by thick mist—when in that mist he lost his way and was overtaken by the chill, dark night, and lost his footing on the narrow ledge along which the path led him, and fell headlong into the deep abyss and was killed—the sight was very sad. But I can point you to a sadder scene than that. It is to see a man walk over some terrible precipice when the sun of heaven is shining to show his danger, and his eyes are open to it. But the saddest sight of all is to see, lost for ever, men and women who have been instructed in the Bible. Many who know the way to heaven come short of it through unbelief. III. THOSE WHO WERE FAITHFUL TO GOD WERE LED BY THE MYSTIC CLOUD TO CANAAN; SO SHALL ALL BELIEVERS BE LED BY THE WORD OF GOD TO HEAVEN. Out of all the people who left Egyptian bondage only two entered the land of promise, Caleb and Joshua. The benefits of the fiery cloud were lost upon the rest. The cloud led them over Jordan, and left them safe in possession of the land. Thus it ever is. Those who are faithful to God find His Word their guide and comfort to the end. Its promises turn their darkness into day, and calm all storms of inward fear. (*Evan Lewis, B.A.*)

Ver. 36. **Because he hath wholly followed the Lord.**—*Following the Lord fully:*—You want to be a Christian, meanwhile your heart is set upon getting riches. You would store your mind with the learning and wisdom of the world, you wish to gain repute as a good talker in company, and a convivial guest at the social board. Ambition prompts you to seek fame among your fellows. Well, I shall not denounce any of these things, but I would use every persuasion to induce you who are believers in Christ to renounce the world. If Christ has redeemed you He has henceforth a claim on you as His servant, and it is at your peril that you take up any pursuits that are inconsistent with a full surrender of yourself to Him. Why many Christians never attain to any eminence in the Divine life is because they let the floods of their life run away in a dozen little rivulets, whereas if they cooped them up in one channel and sent that one stream rolling on to the glory of God, there would be such a force and power about their character that they would live while they lived. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Following the Lord fully*:—It ought to be the great care of every one of us to follow the Lord fully. We must follow Him universally, without dividing; uprightly, without dissembling: cheerfully, without disputing; constantly, without declining; and this is following Him fully. (*Matthew Henry.*) *Self-concentration on God*:—No man makes progress in any branch of human thought or science without this first condition—the habit of pinning himself down wholly to the subject in hand, and rigidly restraining all other thoughts. You must bring your instrument to a point before it will penetrate, to an edge that it may cut; and only firm concentration of oneself on the matter before us will do that. Alas! how little of this patient prolonged

concentration of interested thought on our dear Lord do even the best and devoutest of us employ! And as for the ordinary Christian life of this day, what a sad contrast does it present to such an ideal. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 31. **Joshua . . . Encourage him.**—*Encourage your minister*:—Joshua was a young man in comparison with Moses. He was about to undertake the onerous task of commanding a great people. He had, moreover, the difficult enterprise of leading them into the promised land, and chasing out the nations which possessed it. The Lord commanded Moses therefore to encourage him, that in the prospect of great labour he might not be dismayed. I. GOD, EVEN OUR GOD, IS GRACIOUSLY CONSIDERATE OF HIS SERVANTS, and would have them well fitted for high enterprise with good courage. He does not send them as a tyrant would send a soldier upon an errand for which he is not capable, nor does He afterwards withhold His succour, forgetful of the straits to which they may be reduced; but He is very careful of His servants, and will not let one of them perish. The Lord our God hath strong reasons for being thus considerate of His servants. 1. Are they not His children? Is He not their Father? Does He not love them? Now, none of us would send a child of ours upon a difficult enterprise without being anxious for his welfare. We would not put him upon a trial beyond his strength, without at the same time guaranteeing to stand at his side and make his strength equal to his day. 2. Moreover, the Father Himself is concerned as to His honour in all that they do. If any servant of God shall fall, then God's name is despised. The daughters of Philistia rejoice, and the inhabitants of Ekron triumph. His honour is too much concerned ever to permit this. Ye feeble ones, to whom God hath given to do or to suffer for His name's sake, rest assured that He hath His eye upon you now. He cannot leave you, unless He can cease to be "God over all, blessed for ever." 3. Observe well how far the tender consideration of God for His servants extends! He not only considers their outward state, and the absolute interests of their condition, but He remembers their spirits, and loves to see them of good courage. II. GOD USES HIS OWN PEOPLE TO ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER. He did not say to the angel, "Gabriel, there is My servant Joshua, about to take the people into Canaan—fly down and encourage him." God never works needless miracles. Gabriel would not have been half so well fitted for the work as Moses. A brother's sympathy is more precious than an angel's embassy. To whom, then, should this work of encouraging the people be committed? 1. Surely the elders should do it; those of riper years than their fellows. I know of nothing more inspiriting than to hear the experience of a grey-headed saint. I have found much spiritual comfort in sitting at the feet of my venerable grandfather, more than eighty years of age. 2. Not the aged only, but the wise in the family should be comforters. All believers are not equal in knowledge. Oh, ye that have searched the Scriptures through and know its promises, be sure to quote the promises of God to trembling hearts, and especially to those engaged in arduous labour for the Master. Comfort them. Repeat the doctrine of God's faithfulness; say to them, "He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed." Oh, that the wise-hearted in the Lord's family would be thus employed at all times. 3. Nor can I doubt that the happier sort of Christians ought always to be engaged in comforting the mournful and sorrowing. You know whom I mean; their eyes always sparkle; wherever they go they carry lamps bright with animation, sunshine gleams in their faces, they live in the light of God's countenance. 4. Let the brother of low degree be likewise encouraged by those who are rich among you. You may frequently breathe comfort into a desponding spirit by seasonable help. III. I advance to THE OBJECT that is uppermost in my mind. I believe there is a special occasion for the exercise of this duty of encouraging one another in the case of the minister and Church in this place. It is a fresh enterprise surrounded with peculiar difficulties, and demanding special labour. It is a work so solemn that if you do not encourage your minister your minister will probably sink down in despair. Remember that the man himself needs encouragement because he is weak. Who is sufficient for these things? To serve in any part of the spiritual army is dangerous, but to be a captain is to be doubly exposed. The most of the shots are aimed at the officers. There are all sorts of discouragements to be met with. Professing Christians will backslide. Those who do remain will often be inconsistent, and he will be sighing in his closet, while you, perhaps, are thanking God that your souls have been fed under him. Encourage your minister, I pray you, wherever you attend—encourage him for your

own sake. A discouraged minister is a serious burden upon the congregation. When the fountain gets out of order you cannot expect water at any of the taps; and if the minister be not right it is something like a steam engine in a great manufactory—everybody's loom is idle when the motive-power is out of order. See that he is resting upon God and receiving His Divine power, and you will all know, each Sabbath day, the benefit of it. This is the least thing you can do. There are many other things which may cause you expense, effort, time, but to encourage the minister is so easy, so simple a matter, that I may well press upon you to do it. Perhaps you will say, "Well, if it is so simple and easy, tell us, who are expecting to settle down in this place, how we can encourage the minister here." Well, you can do it in several ways. 1. You can encourage him by very constant attendance. Those who are going from place to place are of no use to anybody; but those are the truly useful men who, when the servants of God are in their places, keep to theirs, and let everybody see that whoever discourages the minister, they will not, for they appreciate his ministry. 2. Again, let me say, by often being present at the prayer-meeting you can encourage the minister. 3. Again, you can all encourage the minister by the consistency of your lives. I do not know when I ever felt more gratified than on one occasion when, sitting at a church meeting, having to report the death of a young brother who was in the service of an eminent employer, a little note came from him to say, "My servant, Edward ———, is dead. I send you word at once that you may send me another young man; for if your members are such as he was, I never wish to have better servants around me." I read the letter at the church meeting, and another was soon found. It is a cheering thing for the Christian minister to know that his converts are held in repute. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Encouragement:*—I. The text supposes that DIFFICULTIES WILL BE ENCOUNTERED. In the Christian life there are many obstacles. 1. Difficulties made by ourselves. 2. Difficulties arising from the conduct of others. 3. Difficulties expressly sent by God to test His servants. II. The text gives a command to SURMOUNT THESE DIFFICULTIES. We should encourage our fellow-Christians. 1. To meet their trials with patience. 2. Steadily to fight till they conquer them. 3. To profit by them. III. The text contains A LESSON FOR EVERY CHRISTIAN PREACHER AND TEACHER. "Encourage"—1. The penitent sinner. 2. The young believer. 3. The well-tried saint. (*J. W. Macdonald.*) *The Christian pastor encouraged by his flock:*—You need not be told that those clergymen who enter into the spirit of their office are oppressed with discouragements of various kinds. These it is incumbent on you to anticipate, and as far as lies in your power to prevent; a measure far more easy to effect than a removal of them after they have actually taken place. I. HE IS LIABLE TO DISCOURAGEMENT ARISING FROM FEAR AS TO THE INEFFICACY OF HIS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LABOURS. 1. "Encourage him" by your regular attendance on the public worship of God. Let it ever be remembered that attendance on the House of God is not a matter of choice, but a sacred duty. 2. "Encourage him" by endeavouring to derive personal benefit from his ministry. 3. "Encourage him" by endeavouring to counteract his fears—in manifesting your readiness to co-operate with him in all his efforts to do good. It is heartless work to labour alone. 4. "Encourage him" by praying for him. 5. "Encourage him" by informing him of the success of his labours, whether on yourselves or on others. II. A SECOND SOURCE OF MINISTERIAL DISCOURAGEMENT REGARDS THE UNFAVOURABLE IMPRESSIONS LIKELY TO BE MADE ON SOME MINDS BY THE FAITHFUL DISCHARGE OF HIS PROFESSIONAL DUTIES. Let it be your delight to "encourage" your minister by following him with patience and docility in all his researches into the inexhaustible treasures of inspiration. III. ANOTHER SPECIES OF MINISTERIAL DISCOURAGEMENT SOMETIMES ARISES FROM FEAR RESPECTING THE FAILURE OF THE AFFECTION OF OUR PEOPLE AND THE DIMINUTION OF OUR OWN USEFULNESS SHOULD WE CONTINUE LONG TO LABOUR AMONGST THEM. There are some who will show less forbearance to a minister than to others; and who, not satisfied with exciting the hostility of their families, labour by partial statements of their own case to create a general prejudice against him. Contentions in parishes and in churches have often caused clergymen to sigh for a place in the desert, that they might leave their flocks and go from them; indeed, they have made them long for that place "where the wicked cease from troubling and where the weary are at rest." Encourage your minister, therefore, by endeavouring to be "all of one mind." As Christians, you must walk in love. (*T. Gibson, M.A.*) *Salutary encouragement:*—A gentleman travelling in the northern part of Ireland heard the voices of children, and stopped to listen. Finding the sound came from a small

building used as a school-house he drew near; as the door was open he went in and listened to the words the boys were spelling. One little fellow stood apart, looking very sad. "Why does that boy stand there?" asked the gentleman. "Oh, he is good for nothing," replied the teacher. "There is nothing in him. I can make nothing of him. He is the most stupid boy in the school." The gentleman was surprised at his answer. He saw the teacher was so stern and rough that the younger and more timid were nearly crushed. After a few words to them, placing his hand on the head of the little fellow who stood apart, he said, "One of these days you may be a fine scholar. Don't give up; try, my boy—try." The boy's soul was aroused. A new purpose was formed. From that hour he became anxious to excel, and he did become a fine scholar. It was Dr. Adam Clarke. *A minister's encouragement:*—I remember to have preached, years ago, at a watering-place in the Virginia mountains, at the dedication of a new church. The people were all strangers to each other; and as he went away my friend said (who had a right to speak so familiarly), "I wonder, my dear fellow, that you could be animated at all to-day; for we are all strangers, and things were pretty cold I thought." "Ah, but," the preacher replied, "you did not see old brother Gwathmey, of Hanover, who sat there by the post. The first sentence of the sermon caught hold of him, and it kept shining out of his eyes and his face, and he and the preacher had a good time together, and we didn't care at all about the rest of you." *Timely encouragement:*—As Luther was passing to the assembly-room of the Diet a noted commander, George Von Frundesberg, touched him on the shoulder, and said, "My dear monk, thou art now about taking a step the like of which neither I nor many a commander on the hardest-fought battlefield has ever taken. If thou art right and sure of thy cause, proceed in God's name, and be of good cheer; God will not forsake thee." (*Little's Historical Lights.*) *Encouragement needed:*—Lord Lytton, in his essay on the efficacy of praise, tells a story of Mr. Kean, who, when performing in some city of the United States, came to the manager when the play was half over, and said, "I can't go on again, sir, if the pit keeps its hands in its pockets. Such an audience would extinguish Ætna." Upon this the manager told the audience that Mr. Kean, not being accustomed to the severe intelligence of American citizens, mistook their silent attention for courteous disappointment, and that if they did not applaud Mr. Kean as he was accustomed to be applauded, they could not see Mr. Kean act as he was accustomed to act. Of course, the audience took the hint, and as their fervour rose, so rose the genius of the actor, and their applause contributed to the triumphs it rewarded.

CHAPTER II.

VERS. 1–7. **Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward.** —*A sermon for the new year:*—Such were the words which the Lord spoke to Moses, after the children of Israel had been compassing Mount Seir "many days." There are a great many "mountains" which a great many people "compass" in the present day. Some of them mountains indeed—mountains of doubt and difficulty and sin; some of them molehills, which the very pilgrims in their blindness verily believe to be mountains; some of them little hills of pride and obstinacy, the paths round which have become all beaten down because the pilgrim feet have so long trod them. "Turn you northward" is the command required. Anything is better than the old going round and round and coming to the same place again. "Northward" may mean hard fighting, but it will mean great victory. I. MONOTONY THE ORDINARY CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. 1. See it as regards the Christian life. How many Christians have much the same experience year after year. We talk about "growth in grace," and trust we are making some "progress," but if many of us were to examine ourselves should we not find that our experience differed little from that of our early Christian life? Thousands of people are lapsing into a monotonous experience. "There is no standing still in the Christian life," we hear it said. That may be true, but it is also true that there is a great deal of moving round and round. Compassing the mountain is the experience of not a few. 2. See it as regards Christian work. The ideal of Christian work is the same in all ages. It is the conversion of the world. But the

method of its accomplishment varies with times and peoples and circumstances. And the Church or worker is wise which adapts the method to the requirements of the hour. But how we like to keep to the old work and do it in the old way! And how apt we are also to keep to the very same kind of work. There is work, I grant, which can best be done by the man who has done it for many years, but there is other work which would be done all the better if the worker were changed sometimes. The question is, are we putting the same enthusiasm into our work which we put into it at the commencement? But there is danger lest "compassing the mountain" should become monotonous. Even the most holy occupation needs varying at times, as every preacher will testify. A change often benefits both worker and work. Then monotony is near akin to sluggishness. Somehow or other that "mountain" of work takes longer and longer to "compass." I long that God's voice should speak to them as it did to Moses, "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough." See it as regards Christian thought. The great verities of our holy religion do not change. Truth is eternal as God Himself. But how apt we are to live and move round a little "mountain" of thought of our own. We made it ourselves years ago, and were very pleased with it then. We do not stop to think whether it suits us now. Surely we should always be having grander, newer thoughts, nobler impulses from the Most High. He has ever greater truths to teach, ever fresh secrets to tell. There are ever fresh treasures of learning to be ransacked. Ideas of Christian life and thought are ever maturing. "Turn you northward" is the needed cry. II. PROGRESS THE PROPER RULE OF LIFE. Says Godet, "Man was made in the image of God. He is not therefore condemned, like the lower animals, to move incessantly in the same circle. His progressivity has no limit but that of the absolute good to which he aspires." The emblem of human life is a spiral, not a circle! Just so! Man must continually "move on." If he goes round he must at the same time go up. It will be easy to show that this is God's purpose concerning us. 1. Monotony is contrary to the constitution and course of nature. These point to progress. New forms of life, of thought, of government are being continually evolved. Nothing continues the same but God and His eternal truth. 2. Monotony is contrary to God's dealings with the human race. God has not dealt with us in a circle. He has ever led His people forward. 3. Monotony is contrary to the spirit of the age. The age is one of progress. New inventions are showered upon us week by week. 4. Monotony is contrary to the teaching of God's Word. There are three things among many others which I may point out are contrary to monotony, but analogous to progress. (1) Growth. This is self-evident, and I have no need to do more than mention it. "Grow in grace" is the command of Scripture, and all kinds of growth should be seen in the character of the true Christian. There should be inward growth, the life becoming firmer and stronger; there should be outward growth, the life developing in all the more visible graces of the Spirit; there should be upward growth—upward to God, to holiness, to heaven; there should be downward growth—the roots of the Christian life becoming even more firmly planted in the soil of God's love. (2) Enthusiasm. I can imagine that when first the children of Israel commenced to "compass" the "mountain" they did so with a great deal of interest. But after this "compassing" the "mountain" had proceeded "many days," interest would decrease and enthusiasm would disappear. The summons "Turn you northward" would, however, call out all the old interest and enthusiasm, and would come as a grateful relief from the monotony of the past. And in our weakness our enthusiasm requires something new. Further, the command "Turn you northward" not only generated enthusiasm, but required it. It was much easier to continue the task of "compassing the mountain" than to "turn northward." They had become accustomed to the old circular progress. There were difficulties "northward." And so it is with us in the present day. To "turn northward" requires enthusiasm. It would be much easier and pleasanter to go the old round, to live the old life. (3) Enterprise. This is another thing contrary to monotony, but analogous to progress. It required no enterprise to compass the mountain after they had been engaged in that task "many days." But when they began to "turn northward" enterprise was implied and required at once. And surely enterprise is required to-day. In every sphere of our life in this world it is to be found. And yet in work for Christ by some it is hardly known except by name. Why should we be content to go along the old beaten tracks? Why should we not strike out new ones for ourselves, or follow without hesitation where the Guiding Hand indicates?

A thing has not always to be because it has been. (*W. E. Sellers.*) *A new departure:*—The story with which this order is connected in the annals is found in Numb. xxi. 12–35. I. THE NEW DEPARTURE IN ISRAEL'S WANDERING. Only a few particulars will be necessary in order to show us the pertinency to an anniversary service which the ancient narrative will bring. 1. Past experience was in the word "compassed." 2. Future experience was in the word "northward." For they all knew that in that direction lay Canaan. The time was complete, the retribution was fulfilled, a young generation had arrived upon the stage of action. So another forward movement was ordered, this time in the line of progress towards the Jordan and the covenanted land of promise. Evidently a great historical crisis is reached at last. The deadlock of rebellious will is broken. Humanity shows a quickening of life once more. This is what in modern times is called "a new departure"; and this is what renders the incident suggestive as a religious symbol for our present employment. II. THE NEW DEPARTURE IN OUR WORK TO-DAY. The last week in December is what merchants call "inventory time." Thoughtful religious people use it often for taking account of spiritual stock. Let the past be left behind; our hopes are all in the future; we have compassed that mountain with its twelve peaks long enough; it is time to "turn northwards." III. THE NEW DEPARTURE IN EACH BELIEVER'S HISTORY. So vivid appears this illustration that it might easily be made to serve for a permanent exhortation to the churches. Three grand principles in ordinary spiritual life are exhibited in the image employed. 1. All true Christians have mountains to compass. Sometimes our duties are mountains, sometimes our trials. Some have more mountains than others have. Some have harder ones than others have. Some make mountains out of what would be only molehills to those who are braver than they are. But this will be the lesson: God gives all His children mountains to compass. 2. All true Christians must compass their mountains. There can be no rebellious refusal of the task God sets for us. There is no room for any ingenious evasion of His commands. There can never be permitted any sudden leaping over or flying across the difficult ridge of duty. There can be no changing mountains with each other in the hope of getting easier ones. 3. God's sovereignty decides when the mountain is compassed long enough. There is a period set for continuance and for cessation. Long enough—for the mountain's sake. Real work has to be done slowly and patiently. Some tasks there are which cannot be at all hurried. (1) Long enough—for our own sakes. Certain disciplines must be wrought out upon our characters. Dispositions, like finest wines, require what can be done for them only by time and silence. Jehovah was preparing these people for Canaan before He suffered a single one of them to enter. (2) Long enough—for others' sake. The principle of division of labour is here involved. Vicarious suffering is the rule for the redeemed race who follow Christ, who was cut off, and not for Himself. These young Israelites were held back to give the older people decorous space in which to die (chap. ii. 14). (3) Long enough—for the Lord's sake. He asks us to labour on and wait till He tells us what it is all for. IV. THE NEW DEPARTURE IN CHURCH LIFE. Our admonitions grow rapidly now, for the field of application for the figure is wider. 1. To some who now hear this call it will be the language of rebuke. "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough." It is of no use to stay here any longer; the chance is lost. It is like Jesus saying to His disciples in slumber, "Sleep on now." Duty is sometimes neglected until the man is withdrawn from the charge. 2. To some who now hear it this call will be the language of comfort. "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough." Oh, how fine a thing it is to look back upon a hard work carried well and patiently through into grand success! Leave the old toil now; let the bent form straighten up; let the tired shoulder rest. 3. To some it will be the language of command. "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough; turn you northward." Yes; turn northward straight to another mountain, and another; for there is no discharge in that war! Is it your birthday? Then one mountain is well compassed; take a new one. Is it the anniversary of your first communion? One good mountain compassed; now again! And the soul is all alive with fresh exhilaration from the hill-climbing. 4. For to some this call is the language of encouragement. "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough; turn you northward." And northward lies the land of covenant promise; every mountain now passed brings us nearer to the end of them. It grows a little gladder in the sunshine and clearer in the atmosphere; it seems like attaining the last hill and catching the gales from beyond the river.

(*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The Divine recall to duty*:—I. IF WE DO NOT FOLLOW GOD'S PLAN, IF WE NEGLECT OUR DUTY, WE ARE LOSING TIME. The Israelites lost thirty years by disregarding the call of duty, and we too are always losing time when we obey not God's commands. II. BY COMMANDING THE ISRAELITES TO LEAVE THE MOUNTAIN AND TURN NORTHWARD, GOD WAS TEACHING HIS PEOPLE THAT THERE IS NO BETTER DEFENCE TO A LIFE OF OBEDIENCE THAN LIFE ITSELF. It is evident that the children of Israel stayed by the mountain partly for purpose of self-defence. III. By commanding the people to leave the mountains and turn northward, GOD WAS TEACHING THEM THAT THEIR WORK WAS NOT DONE UNTIL THEY HAD CONQUERED THEIR ENEMIES. IV. GOD SAID, "TURN YOU NORTHWARD," FOR THAT WAS THE WAY TO CANAAN. (*J. L. Williams, B.A.*) *A short account of the long story of Israel in the wilderness*:—We compassed Mount Seir many days (ver. 1). Nearly thirty-eight years they wandered in the deserts of Seir; probably in some of their rests they stayed several years, and never stirred: God by this not only chastised them for their murmuring and unbelief, but—1. Prepared them for Canaan, by humbling them for sin, teaching them to mortify their lusts, to follow God, and to comfort themselves in Him. It is a work of time to make souls meet for heaven, and it must be done by a long train of exercises. 2. He prepared the Canaanites for destruction; all this time the measure of their iniquity was in the filling; and though it might have been improved by them as a space to repent, it was abused by them to the hardening of their hearts. 3. Orders given them to turn towards Canaan. Though God contend long, He will not contend for ever; though Israel may be long kept waiting for deliverance and enlargement, it will come at last. 4. A charge given them not to annoy the Edomites. (1) They must not offer any hostility to them as enemies (vers. 4, 5). Meddle not with them. (*a*) They must not improve the advantage they had against them by the fright they would be put into upon Israel's approach. They shall be afraid of you, knowing your strength and numbers, and the power of God engaged for you; but do not you think that their fears making them an easy prey, you may therefore prey upon them; no, take heed to yourselves. There is need of great caution, and a strict government of our own spirits, to keep ourselves from injuring those we have an advantage against. Or, this caution is given to the princes; they must not only not meddle with the Edomites themselves, but not permit any of their soldiers to meddle with them. (*b*) They must not revenge upon the Edomites the affront they gave them in refusing them passage through their country (Numb. xxiii. 21). Thus before God brought Israel to destroy their enemies in Canaan He taught them to forgive their enemies in Edom. (*c*) They must not expect to have any part of their land given them for a possession; Mount Seir was already settled upon the Edomites, and they must not, under pretence of God's covenant and conduct, think to seize for themselves all they could lay hands on. Dominion is not founded in grace. 5. They must trade with them as neighbours: buy meat and water off them, and pay for what they bought (ver. 6). Religion must never be made a cloak for injustice. The reason given (ver. 7) is, because God hath blessed thee, and hitherto thou hast lacked nothing; and therefore—(1) Thou needest not beg; scorn to be beholden to Edomites when thou hast a God all-sufficient to depend upon. Thou hast wherewithal to pay for what thou callest for, thanks to the Divine blessing; use therefore what thou hast, use it cheerfully, and do not sponge upon the Edomites. (2) Therefore thou must not steal. Thou hast experienced the care of the Divine Providence concerning thee; in confidence of which for the future, and in a firm belief of its all-sufficiency, never use any indirect methods for thy supply. Live by thy faith, and not by the sword. (*Matthew Henry, D.D.*) **For He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness.**—*Comfort in the wilderness*:—I. A FACT GENERAL. He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness. Wilderness and a complete barrenness are not synonymous in Scripture. There were palms of Elim, and wells of Marah, and beautiful withdrawn places where the grass grew; and yet it was a wilderness great and often terrible. After all, like such a wilderness is life. It is not all a wilderness. There are pleasant places in it, and homes, and loving hearts. This is the fact general—that the usual human life has a good deal of wilderness in it. Life is a wilderness because—1. Of its mystery. 2. Of its discipline. 3. Of its unreached ideals. 4. Of its transitoriness. 5. Of its enemies—Egyptians, Amalekites, Midianites, Edomites, Moabites, Amorites throng against it. II. A FACT PERSONAL. He knoweth THY walking through this great wilderness. The personal fact is that you must thread your way through this strange, great wilderness of a life. Nobody can tread the path for

you. The decisions of it you must make. The results of your decisions you must abide. III. THE GIRDING COMFORT FOR US. He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness. 1. He knoweth sympathisingly. It is such meaning God's knowing always carries in the Scripture. 2. He knoweth in detail. Thy walking; precious truth this of the Divine omniscience of us. 3. He knoweth, taking account of thy weakness. How tender God was toward these Israelites! 4. He knoweth, wisely providing. Think how all the various discipline of the wilderness wandering issued in the change of the Israelites from a mob to a nation. IV. WHAT THEN? 1. I can walk the way. 2. I shall not be lost. 3. I shall reach Canaan. 4. I have comfort for the journey. (*W. Hoyt.*) **These forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing.**—*Forty years*:—I. LOOK BACK UPON THE PAST. 1. What strikes me in Moses' review is this, the prominence which he gives to God in it. Here let me note that our own retrospect of the past will, if we are genuine Christians, have in it many bright lights of the conspicuous presence of God, making the pathway here and there like holy ground. 2. A very leading point is the blessing which God gave. Our text says He has blessed all the works of our hand. I suppose that alludes to all that Israel had a right to do; the Lord multiplied their cattle, He increased their substance, He guided them in their marches, He protected them in their encampments. There were some things in which He did not bless them. They wanted to go up into the promised land against His commandment, and the Amalekites smote them; He did not bless them there. God does not bless the sins of His people, for if He did it would bring on them the tremendous curse of being happy in the ways of evil. 3. Again, in our retrospect of the past we should notice the perfection of the Lord's sympathetic care. Observe the words, "He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness." He has known our rough paths and our smooth ways, the weary trudging and the joyous marching; He has known it all, and not merely known it in the sense of omniscience, but known it in the sense of sympathy. 4. We have had also what is better than this during our forty years, the special presence of God. "These forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee." He has not been ashamed to be with us, though we have been despised and ridiculed. Whenever we have prayed we have had audience with Him; when we have worked we have seen His mysterious hand working with us; when we have trembled we have felt the tender arms sustaining us; when we have been in bodily pain He has made our bed in our sickness. The best of all is God with us, and in this sign we conquer. 5. Again, we have had much cause to bless the Lord for the abundance of His supplies. "Thou hast lacked nothing." Some things which we could have wished for we have not received, and we are glad they were denied us. Children would have too many sweets if they could, and then they would be surfeited or be ill. Walking on in the path of Providence, trusting in the Lord, what have we lacked? II. But now we must take the second head, which is—Forty years in the wilderness should teach us much of service for the PRESENT. I do not say that it will do so, for we do not all grow wiser as we grow older, but it ought to be so. Folly is bound up in the heart of many a man, and it takes much of the rod to whip it out of him. 1. Experience is a noble teacher, but we are dull scholars; yet at any rate we ought to have learned to continue trusting in God. 2. Experience should also give us greater ease in confiding in the Lord. Use is said to be second nature, but in your case grace has given you in very deed a real second nature, and this by use should have grown stronger and more prevalent. 3. Forty years of Divine faithfulness should teach us also a surer, quicker, calmer, and more joyous expectation of immediate aid in all times of strait and trial: we should learn not to be flurried and worried because the herds are cut off from the stall, and the harvest is withered, for we know from abundant proofs that "The Lord will provide." 4. Forty years of blessing should teach each of us to believe in holy activity. "The Lord thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand." Some people believe in God's blessing the dreams and theories of their heads, and their prayers are unattended by action. They believe in His blessing them when they are scheming and putting fine plans on paper, or when they meet at a conference to talk about how to do Christian work. I believe in God's blessing the actual work of our hand; He waters not the seed which we talk of sowing, but that which we actually scatter. 5. Forty years' experience ought to have taught us to avoid many of the faults into which we fell in our early days. It is a great pity when advancing age teaches men rather to avoid their virtues than their follies. 6. You will have observed that the text mentions twice "The

Lord thy God." All through the chapter it is always that—"Jehovah thy God." Here we have mention of His covenant relationship, in which He is ever most dear to us. Shall we not at this time renew our own personal covenant, and take our God to be ours afresh? We read that Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebecca. Let us have a new wedding-day ourselves, and give ourselves over again to the Husband of our souls, even Jesus the well-beloved. III. THE FUTURE. Having come so far on our journey as to have reached forty years, we are bound to feel a powerful influence upon us as to the future. How? I will borrow our remarks from the context. 1. Read in the second chapter, second verse, "And the Lord spake unto me saying, Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn ye northward." What way was northward, then? Why, toward Canaan. Forty years wandering up and down in the wilderness is enough, now turn your faces towards Canaan and march heavenward. It is time we all had our faces turned heavenward more completely. The time past may suffice us to have wrought the will of the flesh, now let us cry, "Heavenward, ho." Pull up the anchor, spread the sails, and let us away to the fair country whither Jesus has gone before us. 2. The next thing we should learn is indifference to this world's heritage. The next verse says, "Ye are to pass through the coast of your brethren the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir; and they shall be afraid of you; take ye good heed unto yourselves, therefore: meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth; because I have given Mount Seir unto Esau for a possession." Esau sold his heritage, and had his mess of pottage, let him have it; keep you the birthright, and never think of putting your spoon into his mess. The world is for worldlings. What do you want with it? 3. Let us learn from the past to cultivate independence of spirit. "Ye shall buy meat of them for money, that ye may eat; and ye shall also buy water of them for money, that ye may drink." He is indeed a man of God who has learned to walk uprightly, and no longer leans upon the creature, nor practises policy to win his way. 4. Once again, after forty years in the wilderness God would have His people learn generosity of spirit. The Edomites were very much afraid of the Israelites, and would, no doubt, have bribed them to let them alone, but Moses in effect says, "Do not take anything from them; you have no need to do so, for you have never lacked anything, and God has been with you. They are afraid of you; you might take what you please from them, but do not touch even the water from their wells without payment." Oh, that we had a generous spirit, that we were not for oppressing others in any degree whatever, feeling that we have too much already given us by God to be wanting to tax any man for our own gain. 5. The spirit of freedom from murmuring should be in us after forty years of blessing. Jarchi tells us that this exhortation meant that they were not to pretend to be poor. You know how many do so when it is likely to save their pockets. 6. Lastly, we ought for the future to show more confidence in God if we have had forty years of His love: we should have more confidence in working for Him that He will bless us, more confidence as to our personal weakness that He will strengthen us, more confidence as to the unknown future, that through the great and terrible wilderness He will be with us, and that through the last cold stream He will still be our companion; more confidence that we shall behold the light of His countenance, and more confidence as to the supply of all our needs, for as we have lacked nothing, so all things shall be freely supplied till we cross the river and eat the old corn of the land. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

CHAPTER III.

VERS. 1-11. **So the Lord our God delivered into our hands Og also, king of Bashan.**—*Mastery of formidable enemies:*—SEC—1. How they got the mastery of Og, a very formidable prince. (1) Very strong, for he was of the remnant of the giants (ver. 11). His personal strength was extraordinary; a monument of which was preserved by the Ammonites in his bedstead, which was shown as a rarity in their chief city. You might guess at his weight by the materials of his bedstead; it was iron, as if a bedstead of wood were too weak for him to trust to. And you might guess at his stature by the dimensions of it: it was nine

cubits long, and four cubits broad; which, supposing a cubic to be but half a yard, was four yards and a half long, and two yards broad; and if we allow his bed to be two cubits longer than himself, and that is as much as we need allow, he was three yards and a half high, double the stature of an ordinary man, and every way proportionable; yet they smote him (ver. 3). When God pleads His people's cause He can deal with giants as with grasshoppers. No man's might can secure him against the Almighty. His army likewise was very powerful, for he had the command of sixty fortified cities, besides unwalled towns (ver. 5); yet all this was nothing against God's Israel, when they came with commission to destroy him. 2. He was very stout and daring; he came out against Israel to battle (ver. 1). It was wonder he did not take warning by the ruin of Sihon, and send to desire conditions of peace: but he trusted to his own strength and so was hardened to his own destruction. Those that are not awakened by the judgments of God upon others, but persist in their defiance of heaven, are ripening apace for the like judgments upon themselves (Jer. iii. 8). God bid Moses not fear him (ver. 2). If Moses himself was so strong in faith as not to need the caution, yet it is probable the people needed it; and for them these fresh assurances are designed, "I will deliver him into thine hand." Not only deliver thee out of his hand, that he shall not be thy ruin; but deliver him into thy hand, that thou shalt be his ruin, and make him pay dear for his attempt. He adds, "Thou shalt do unto him as thou didst unto Sihon"; intimating that they ought to be encouraged by their former victory to trust in God for another victory; for He is God, and changeth not. 2. How they got possession of Bashan, a very desirable country. They took all the cities (ver. 4), and all the spoil of them (ver. 7); they made them all their own (ver. 10), so that now they had in their hands all that fruitful country which lay east of Jordan, from the river Arnon unto Hermon (ver. 8). Their conquering and possessing of these countries was intended not only for the encouragement of Israel in the wars of Canaan, but for the satisfaction of Moses before his death; because he must not live to see the completing of their victory and settlement, God thus gives him a specimen of it. Thus the Spirit is given to them that believe, as the earnest of their inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. (*Matthew Henry, D.D.*) *Review and prospect:*—Is it not remarkable that good causes and good men should meet with constant opposition? We are now perusing the history of a journey which was undertaken by Divine direction, and again and again we come upon the fact that the journey was from end to end bitterly opposed. Were this matter of ancient history we might, in a happier condition of civilisation and in a happier mood of mind, dispute the theory that Israel travelled under Divine direction and guidance; but this very thing is done to-day in our country, in all countries, in our own heart and life. Never man, surely, went to church without some enemy in the form of temptation, suggestion, or welcome in other directions, seeking to prevent his accomplishing the sacred purpose. He who would be good must fight a battle; he who would pray well must first resist the devil. This makes life very hard; the burden is sometimes too heavy; but the voice of history so concurs with the testimony of conscience, and the whole is so corroborated by the spirit of prophecy, that we must accept the discipline, and await with what patience God Himself can work within us the issue of the tragic miracle. Is there no compensatory consideration or circumstance? The Lord Himself must speak very distinctly in some conditions and relations of life. "And the Lord said unto me." That is how the balance is adjusted. In the one verse, Og, king of Bashan; in the next verse—Jehovah. Thus the story of our life alternates—now an enemy, now a friend; now the fight is going to be too severe for us and we shall certainly fall, and now the Lord of hosts is in the van, and kings are burned by His presence as stubble is burned by the fire. What was the Divine message? It was a message adapted to the sensitiveness of the circumstances: "Fear him not; for I will deliver him, and all his people, and his land, into thy hand." Get rid of fear, and you increase power. He who is strong in spirit is strong all through and through his nature; he who is only muscularly strong will fail in the fight. The brave heart, the soul alive with God—that will always conquer. Let us live and move and have our being in God. What was the consequence? We read the story in the fourth verse: "And we took all his cities at that time, there was not a city which we took not from them, threescore cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan." Opposition to God always means loss. There is no bad man who is successful. Do not let us interpret the word "successful" narrowly and partially, as if it were a term descriptive of mere appearances or momentary rela-

tionships. In the partial acceptation of the term the proposition will not bear examination; but in discussing great spiritual realities we must take in the full view; and, fixing the attention upon that view, the proposition remains an indestructible truth—that no bad man is really prosperous. He has no comfort. He eats like a glutton, but he has no true enjoyment; out of his bread he draws no poetry, no thought, no fire; it is lost upon him, for he is an evil eater. In his apparent wealth he is miserably poor. If it could be proved that a man can oppose God and be truly happy, the whole Christian kingdom would be destroyed by that proof. The word of the Lord, as written in the Book, is against the possibility. But what became of Og, the king of Bashan? We read in the eleventh verse, "Behold his bedstead," &c. What an ending! How appropriate! How bitter the satire! Og, king of Bashan, came out to fight the people of God; a few verses are written in which battles are fought and cities taken, and at the end the bedstead of Og is nearly all that remains of the mighty king of Bashan! This is worthless fame; this is the renown that is pitiable. But there is no other renown for wicked men: they will leave a name in history, but a name the children will laugh at; they will leave behind them a memorial, but the memorial itself shall be an abiding sarcasm. The Lord turneth the counsel of the wicked upside down; the Lord will laugh at the wicked man and have all his devices in derision. His bedstead will be remembered when he himself is forgotten; he will be spoken of in the bulk and not in the quality; he will be measured like a log; he will be forgotten like an evil dream. The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance. Who would be wicked? Who would oppose God? Who would not rather coalesce with the heavens, and pray that the Spirit of God would work in the human heart the miracle of reconciliation with things eternal and celestial? (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *King Og's bedstead*:—Why did not the Bible give us the size of the giant instead of the size of the bedstead? Why did it not indicate that the man was eleven feet high, instead of telling us that his couch was thirteen and a half feet long? No doubt among other things it was to teach us that you can judge of a man by his surroundings. Show me a man's associates, show me a man's books, show me a man's home, and I will tell you what he is without your telling me one word about him. Moral giants and moral pigmies, intellectual giants and intellectual pigmies, like physical giants or physical pigmies, may be judged by their surroundings. That man has been thirty years faithful in attendance upon churches and prayer meetings and Sunday schools, and putting himself among intense religious associations. He may have his imperfections, but he is a very good man. Great is his religious stature. That other man has been for thirty years among influences intensely worldly, and he has shut himself out from all other influences, and his religious stature is that of a dwarf. But let no one by this thought be induced to surrender to unfavourable environments. A man can make his own bedstead. Chantrey and Hugh Miller were born stonemasons, but the one became an immortal sculptor, and the other a Christian scientist whose name will never die. The late Judge Bradley worked his way up from a charcoal burner to the bench of the supreme court of the United States. Yes, a man can decide the size of his own bedstead. Notice furthermore, that even giants must rest. Such enormous physical endowment on the part of king Og might suggest the capacity to stride across all fatigue and omit slumber. No. He required an iron bedstead. Giants must rest. Not appreciating the fact, how many of the giants yearly break down! Giants in business, giants in art, giants in eloquence, giants in usefulness. Let no one think, because he has great strength of body or mind, that he can afford to trifle with his unusual gifts. King Og, no doubt, had a sceptre, but the Bible does not mention his sceptre. Yet one of the largest verses of the Bible is taken up in describing his bedstead. So God all up and down the Bible honours sleep. Adam, with his head on a pillow of Edenic roses, has his slumber blest by a Divine gift of beautiful companionship. Jacob, with his head on a pillow of rock, has his sleep glorified with a ladder filled with descending and ascending angels. Christ, with a pillow made out of the folded-up coat of a fisherman, honours slumber in the back part of the storm-tossed boat. One of our national sins is robbery of sleep. Walter Scott was so urgent about this duty of slumber that, when arriving at a hotel where there was no room to sleep in, except that in which there was a corpse, inquired if the deceased had died of a contagious disease, and, when assured he had not, took the other bed in the room and fell into profoundest slumber. Those of small endurance must certainly require rest if even the giant needs an iron bedstead. Notice furthermore, that God's people on the way to Canaan need not be surprised if they confront some sort

of a giant. Had not the Israelitish host had trouble enough already? No! Red Sea not enough. Water famine not enough. Long marches not enough. Opposition by enemies of ordinary stature not enough. They must meet Og, the giant of the iron bedstead. Do you know the name of the biggest giant that you can possibly meet—and you will meet him? He is not eleven feet high, but one hundred feet high. His bedstead is as long as a continent. His name is Doubt. His common food is infidel books and sceptical lectures, and ministers who do not know whether the Bible is inspired at all or inspired in spots, and Christians who are more infidel than Christian. You will never reach the promised land unless you slay that giant. Kill doubt, or doubt will kill you. Another impression from my subject. The march of the Church cannot be impeded by gigantic opposition. That Israelitish host led on by Moses was the Church, and when Og, the giant, he of the iron bedstead, came out against him with another host—things must have looked bad for Israel. Moses of ordinary size against Og of extraordinary dimensions. Besides that, Og was backed up by sixty fortified cities. Moses was backed up seemingly by nothing but the desert that had worn him and his army into a group of undisciplined and exhausted stragglers. But the Israelites triumphed. The day is coming. Hear it, all ye who are doing something for the conquest of the world for God and the truth, the time will come when, as there was nothing left of Og, the giant, but the iron bedstead, kept at Rabbath as a curiosity, there will be nothing left of the giants of iniquity except something for the relic hunters to examine. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The last of the giants*:—We, in our warfare, have many giants to contend against. As we go through our wanderings there are many places waste and wild as the tangled brakes and rugged rocks of Argob, in the land of Bashan. We have our wildernesses of temptation to pass over. In those wildernesses are many giants bigger than Og, more terrible than Anak, vaunting with greater insolence than Goliath of Gath. Perhaps you have conquered many of them. Is it so? Do they lie smitten and vanquished at your feet? Envious man, have you bound envy hand and foot and put him without your house and home? He is not dead, only chained. Beware lest in some unguarded moment he should be freed, and lead you captive with the accumulated power of long repose and the increased caution brought about by his former defeat. Is the evil spirit of anger vanquished which was formerly of such gigantic proportions? Or does it still rise at will from its bedstead to which, in prosperous sunshine, when nothing crosses us or thwarts us, it voluntarily retires? Is it bound there, or does it merely lie there in hiding, with no cords of religion to compel its slumbering inactivity? There are also Bunyan's giants, some dead, some living—giants Pope and Pagan sadly disabled, giants Maul and Slaygood also disabled—giant Despair, still living in his dark dungeon with Mrs. Doubting his terrible wife. Giant Despair tells men and women to kill themselves, tells them God will never forgive them, shuts them up in his grim castle, and how can they escape? Those pilgrims found a key called "Hope." With Hope in the breast adversity may be borne. The giant of Lust is a mighty giant also. And of all other giants the most dangerous to some natures. Many a sinner and some saints have found this the Og which has been last vanquished. God says, "Fear not." Will you fear when your Maker tells you not to fear? Shall we not rather go and do our best against the sin that still struggles in our souls and would fain bring us to destruction? (*S. B. James, M.A.*)

Vers. 23–26. **Thou hast begun to show.**—*Revelation always new*:—"Thou hast begun." That is all He can do. Always beginning, never ending—that is the mystery and that is the glory of the Divine revelation. When we come to see that all things are but in the bud, and can never get out of it, we shall begin to see the greatness of God. How pitiable is the condition of the man who has worn out anything that has in it real life, poetry, meaning, and application to the affairs and destinies of life! We must not take our life-line from such vagrants. We must be made to see and feel that everything has eternity in it. We shall be real students and worshippers when we say about the moors so desolate, and the sea so melancholy, and the forest even in December, "Lo! God is here, and I knew it not; this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." We should be wiser if we were not so clever. If we could consider that all things are yet in plasm and beginning and outline and suggestion, we should remit to a longer day the discussion and the settlement of questions which now constitute the mystery and torment of our intellectual life. A beautiful period of life is that in which a man begins to see the shaping of a Divine purpose in his own existence. Some

can remember the time when the meaning of words first came really to the mind. What a light it was, how content was the brain; the whole mind rose up and said, "This is something really gained, and can never be lost." A similar sensation comes to men who live wisely. In their childhood they did not know what God meant them to be, so they proposed many things to their own imagination; then early life came, and things began to settle into some kind of hazy outline; then manhood came, with all its experiences and with all its conflicts, and at last there was, as it were, a man's hand building the life, putting it into square and shape and proportion, and flushing it with colour. Then we began to see what God meant to be the issue of our life. He made us great, small, strong, weak, rich, poor; but if we have lain in His hands quietly, gently, obediently, and lovingly, we see that poverty is wealth and weakness is strength. A holy thought of this kind has sanctified the whole purview and issue of life, so that men can now say, "That is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." When the Lord undertakes the outbuilding and shaping of a life, none can hinder it. "O Lord God, Thou hast begun to show Thy servant Thy greatness." Throughout the Bible God is never represented as a dwindling quantity. God, in other words, does not grow less and less, but more and more. When our imagination is exhausted God's light has already begun to shine. Age after age has come and has written upon its record these words, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." God has always reserved to Himself the use of the instrument of education which we call surprise. We have never anticipated God. When we have gone out early in the day it has been by the assistance of His light. If He had not kindled the lamp we could not have taken a step upon our journey. God surprises us with goodness. We think we have partaken of the very best He can give us, and, lo! when we have drunk again of the goblet of Divine love we say, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now." It is in that spirit of hopefulness, in that everlasting genesis, we must live; then we shall be young for ever. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **I pray Thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan. . . . But the Lord . . . would not hear me.**—*Man's sin and God's will*:—When we read the history of a nation as we do in the Old Testament, we cannot but be struck by the extent to which a nation depends upon its representative men. Its ambitions, virtues, and hopes may be what you please, but they must find visible embodiment and capable instruction in some great and commanding personality. One lesson of the opening chapter of Deuteronomy is that nations, as a rule, are not very sympathetic with those on whom the burden of their affairs is laid. They heap responsibilities upon their leaders, and leave them to carry weights beyond human strength. They hardly think of their limitations as men like themselves, who, besides the public duties which they discharge, have a spiritual life of their own to care for, a conscience of their own to keep right with God, a spiritual ladder to climb, individual convictions, and a soul to save. They do not consider that God is looking on at the trial of a strong but weary spirit, while men may be doing their best to make the trial to turn out to his hurt. This passage shows us this great man in the last year of his life. The dying of Moses had been extended beyond the common measure of humanity, and his experience had been as various as his life had been prolonged. He had seen the courts of Pharaoh; he had dwelt in the tents of Midian for forty years, and for forty years more he had never escaped from the pressure of the tens of thousands of Israel. He knew the worry of his public position, and he knew also the awful message of God. The greatest figure in the Old Testament, as far as we can judge greatness, his heart was most deeply pledged to his people, and the promise God made to them. The day was long passed when he had identified himself with Israel for weal or woe. At the close of his long life—with the wonderful experience of what God had done lying behind him—what was the thought that rises to Moses' lips? It is that all this has only been enough to awaken hope—"O Lord God, Thou hast begun to show Thy servant Thy greatness and Thy mighty hand." The mysterious name of God, which our Bible translates, "I am," has been rendered by some scholars, "I will be; I will do what I will do. It is My very nature to be a God of unimaginable promise, doing for those who look to Me far more than they can ask or think." I believe that rendering is as legitimate as the more metaphorical one. At any rate, this is the conception of the Divine nature which experience has enforced upon Moses. At the end of his long life he can only feel that God has begun to show His greatness. If he is sure of anything, it is that God can do more and will do more than He has done yet. His very name is a name of promise. Now, that is a worthy spirit with

which to come to the close of one's life. Death is a decisive end for us—the close of all our work on this scene. But if we have been in the company of God and learned to know Him, we will not measure His work by anything we have seen. Though our strength is spent, He has no more than indicated His purpose and excited His people's interest and hopes. When St. Paul was ready to die he wrote to Timothy, "I have finished my course." But if he had been able to see what we see now, would he not have exclaimed, as Moses did, "O Lord, Thou hast begun"? There is a famous passage in Latin poetry in which the founder of the Roman race is taken to the end of the world and shown the fortunes of posterity. The grand figures of later history pass in magnificent procession before his eyes. But what Moses felt was far better than any such vision. He had faith that the work which had been so much to him was in God's hands, and that though his part in it was all but over, God's was only beginning. It is easier to apply this consideration to New Testament times. When the last of the Apostles died, what had God done in the world? He had kindled His little sparks of light here and there in the darkness of heathendom. But the whole framework, the whole spirit of society were pagan. A society like that in which we live, in which there is an instinctive recognition of Christ as final moral authority, in which children are baptized in His name—such a society was beyond the Apostles' vision, and perhaps beyond their conception. The Lord had more to do for the world than they had seen. It is the same now. Generation after generation passes, men grow old and grey and die in the work of the Lord, yet that work is ever beginning. We see the authority of Christ extending even in Christendom. We see the application of His will becoming more constant and thorough. They grow old, not to be pessimists, not to lose hope in the world because their own eyes are dim or their natural force abated, but with their hearts young within them; eager and interested in what God is doing; sure that the best is yet to be. Moses, with this noble faith in God's purpose, offered passionate prayer to God—"I pray Thee let me go over and see the good land." We can hardly imagine the interest of Moses in Canaan. It was the land of the fathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was the land God had chosen as the inheritance of Israel. It was the goal of forty years' wanderings. It was at length, for the second time, and after a faithless generation had perished in the wilderness, within their sight. It was not God's will that Moses should live to see the conquest of Canaan. There are people so deeply interested in the evolution of things—as to what practical applications electricity will be put, what Socialism will do in the way of reconstructing society, what will be the position of Christianity and the Church, what will become of the Chinese and Turkish empires—that they can pray to be kept alive to see the end. And if they are not they may leave the world with a keen sense of disappointment. What was the sin of Moses? At first sight it seems very strange. Moses has this testimony given him in the Bible—that he was meek above all men. Yet he was not always meek. He was hot and hasty in his youth when he slew an Egyptian, and the sin of his youth flared up one fatal moment as he struck the rock. At last his sin found him out, and excluded him from the Holy Land. I can imagine some one feeling that in this matter Moses was hardly dealt with, and that the inexorableness of God is painful to contemplate. No doubt it is meant to impress us that way. Believe it in time, all young men and women. There are good things, the best things, the only things you will one day care for, that sin makes impossible; a single bad action can forfeit hopes that you will never be able to redeem. It can draw an invisible line round about you—a line invisible to every one except God and you—that you cannot cross. Moses is presented here to us learning one of the hardest of all lessons—the acceptance of God's will as it is determined by our own sins. Often our repentance is no better than a desire to escape the penalty of our faults. But our hope lies in accepting, not in rebelling and struggling against, the consequences which God has attached to our sins. To learn humility, to learn that God knows the discipline which is best for us, to learn to walk softly and accept as His will restrictions and losses which our sins have brought with them—that is the secret for restoring the soul. Rebellion does no good. Unbelieving despondency does no good. What is required is that the punishment of our sin be recognised as what it is, and taken as God's will for our good. It is never pleasant, how could it be? The most awful thing in the world, it has been said, is the unpardoned sin, and the next is sin which has been pardoned. To accept the punishment of our iniquity is to have experience of both of these, and we need it to make us hate sin as we should. For remember, though Moses' prayer was not granted, we are not to suppose that his sin was not

forgiven. It is striking that in the New Testament Moses appeared in glory and talked with Jesus of the death He should accomplish in Jerusalem. Thus all the limits which sin had imposed upon his life had vanished; thus he saw how far the grand work of God had progressed. Thus his mind still looked forward to the great event in which that great work should be consummated in the death of Jesus on the Cross. Moses talked of that, for that was his hope as it is ours. It is not true that the consequences of sin are immutable. If that were so there would be no Gospel. By God's will they abide for a time, but there is a world in which curse shall be no more. It is not true that the limitations of sin and its deformities are seen even in heaven. But God's answer to Moses' prayer did not end with His refusal. "Charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him, for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see." The natural effect of despair is that we lose heart. We lose interest in our work when the accomplishment of it is a thing in which we have no interest. We are not going to be there, why spend ourselves as though we were? To speak like that is to forget that the work is not ours. It is God's. Our interest is not to be limited as if it were a private concern of our own. It is a mark of true goodness when a man can admire and encourage his successor, and keep up his interest and hope in the common cause, though active participation in its affairs has become impossible for him. We sometimes see men who have been great leaders retire with a bad grace. They looked askance at those carrying on their work. They are more ready to be critical and sulky than to cry, "Well done." They are under no obligation to encourage their successors! Over against this set these words of God to Moses, "Charge Joshua." Possibly there are some whose own sins have inflicted losses which are very hard to bear. We might have entered the land of promise. We might have been men and women infinitely different from what we are—brighter, happier, richer in our souls. Well, what does God say after our disappointments? He says what He said to Moses: Do not be selfish, do not sulk; do not let your disappointments, bitter as they are, cast a shadow over your family or over the church. Digest it in solitude. But beyond everything, get above Pisgah and see the goodly mountain of Lebanon, and then, with the glory of that prospect on your face, turn to those whose hearts are cold within them, whose spirits are broken, and cherish and encourage and strengthen them. Tell them what God has prepared for those who love Him, and rejoice with them that they will inherit the land which you have only seen from afar. (*J. Denney, D.D.*) *Moses unanswered:*—1. Our first consideration is that the case before us does not disprove God's willingness to hear and answer prayer. 2. Our second consideration is that God does not always answer in just our way. The two things which Moses wanted were these—(1) To enter the Promised Land. He did not, indeed, cross the Jordan into the earthly Caanan; but, closing his eyes, he opened them on a vision of heavenly beauty such as he had never dreamed of. (2) He wanted to see "the work of his hands established upon him" (Psa. xc. 16, 17). This also was given in manifold measure. The influence of Moses was, under God, the controlling factor in the theocracy. His name has always been revered among the Jews. 3. Our third consideration is that no prayer is true prayer unless it is offered in the filial spirit. Some supplications are unfilial in their presumptuous boldness. Other supplications are unfilial in their servility. (*Homiletic Review.*) *The prayer which God denied:*—1. OBSERVE THAT MOSES HERE CALLS HIS OWN SIN TO REMEMBRANCE. The plank which broke beneath one's weight is not apt to be kept as a sacred relic or treasured with fond affection. The place associated with some sin whose memory makes us blush, or some blunder so foolish as to be worthy only of an idiot, is not a place which we delight to revisit. Therefore it is the more remarkable that when Moses, in life's latest hour, reviews God's mercy to His people, he should not pass over the one great blunder and sin of his own career. But with the finger of transparent honesty he touches the sorest spot in his memory. II. OBSERVE WHY GOD DENIED MOSES' APPEAL. 1. We must not forget that what Moses sought from God was a temporal, not a spiritual blessing. 2. Perhaps, too, God may have refused the appeal of Moses because it humbled him and made him feel his complete dependence on God's grace to save him. 3. It may be, too, that the Divine refusal was only a part of the process by which God was fitting Moses for a better inheritance than Canaan. When the denial of his prayer was first made there were yet two years before him ere his earthly pilgrimage should end. Into those two years God was crowding the final work of preparation of His servant. Said Beethoven once of some famous musical composer, "He would have been

a great musician if he had only been terribly and mercilessly criticised." (*Bp. Cheney.*) *The petition of Moses to God:*—Here Moses teacheth us how to pray. He beginneth first and telleth God that He hath begun to show him favour; and well might Moses so say, for he was no sooner born but the Lord began to show him His greatness, in saving him when he was cast into the river, &c. If all that the Lord hath done for him till this time be considered he had great cause to say, "O Lord, Thou hast begun to show Thy servant Thy greatness." Herein Moses in some part showeth himself thankful for that he had received, trusting thereby to entreat God to continue His benefits and loving-kindness towards him, which is a thing which pleaseth God. He is not like one who sitteth in his door and seeth one day by day come by him and salute him, and yet taketh no acquaintance, so that if he stand in need of him, either he knoweth not where he dwelleth; or else, because he is not acquainted with him, he is abashed to ask anything of him. Moses is not such a one, but he is acquainted with the Lord, who so often passed by him; and therefore he now saith, "Thou hast begun," &c. Next, Moses challengeth all the idol gods, and telleth them, that amongst them all there is not one of them that can do like his God. So God, when He is opposed and set against His enemies, is then most glorious, and confoundeth them all (Psa. lxxxix. 6). Now, Moses proceedeth in his prayer, saying, "I pray Thee, let me go over," &c. Here Moses prayeth like one of us, who are always craving, but never hath respect to the will of God, to say, "Thy will be done." What is this mountain Lebanon? Surely Moses meaneth the place where the temple should be built, and God honoured; for after that Joshua had quietly possessed the land of Canaan, he only builded a tabernacle (Josh. xviii. 1) wherein to call upon the Lord. Now it followeth in the text, "But the Lord was angry with me," &c. So soon as Moses changed his prayer God turneth from him, and will not hear him; so soon we make God to forsake us, if we do not according to His will. Moses showeth the cause why God would not hear him; although he were a great man, and in high authority, yet he is not ashamed to confess his fault. So we see that where sin is, there prayer is not effectual; so that if we will hope to receive by prayer anything at God's hands, we must first remove and take away the cause of our hindrance, which is sin, before we can receive the thing we pray for. God, when Moses had prayed, did not grant his request, but was angry with him; but lest Moses should be quite discouraged, He straightways mitigated His anger, and biddeth him be content and speak no more unto Him of that matter. God doth not bid him that he should not pray any more unto Him, but that he should pray no more for that thing. First, God biddeth him to be content; as if He should have said, Although thou mayest not enter into the land, yet I will content thee otherways. Thus God would have us, in what estate soever we be, to be content with our calling, for it is His appointment. God is so merciful that, though we are not able to pray aright, yet He considereth our prayers, and turneth all to the best for our good; not granting our request many times, but a better thing than we do desire of Him. Who, then, will offend so merciful and loving a Father? Let us, seeing God is so merciful unto us, take heed that we abuse not His mercies, lest in so doing we provoke Him unto judgment. Now, God hath told Moses that he shall not go into the land, He beginneth to teach him how he shall do to see it, and biddeth him go up into the top of Pisgah, and cast his eyes eastward, and westward, and northward, and southward, and behold it, &c. As a bird stayed with a little string, or a strong man in swimming held back by a small twig, so a little sin stayeth this great captain, that he cannot come within the land of Canaan. First, God is angry with him, and envies him altogether, as though he were not worth so much as go up to the mount. Thus we may see how one of the least sins is able to turn from us all the goodness and all the favour which God beareth to us. After, God commands Moses to go up to the mount. Here, Moses obeyeth God's commandment; but if he had been like many a murmuring man he would have denied to go up to the mount, saying, What banquet is this to me, but a dainty dish set before one forbidden to eat? But Moses had rather die than anger the Lord again when He had bid him be content. This we may learn of Moses, to be content with our calling, whether we have little or much; for God contented Moses as well with the sight of Canaan as those who possessed it. So when God hath not ordained us to see great substance, as He hath some of our brethren, yet because we should not be discontent He will give us as much pleasure at the sight of them in others as though we ourselves enjoyed them. Many things might Moses have objected which might have hindered him from going up the mount; for surely it must needs be a grief to him, when he considered that great

pain which he had taken in bringing them through the wilderness, and conducting them forty years together; and now, when he had no farther to go, but even over Jordan, to be taken away then; and another, which never took any pains, possess all his labours: this, I say, must be a great and intolerable thing to flesh and blood; for when one hath laid a foundation and another comes and builds upon it, surely he will think himself hardly dealt withal. Such is our nature; and yet, notwithstanding all this, Moses is content. He knoweth that God doth him no wrong, but is just and merciful also. He blesseth all alike, as Jacob's children were blessed (Gen. xlix.). Moses, so long as he was upon the plain ground, could not see the type of heaven; but when he was upon the mount he saw it before he came to heaven itself. So let us even now scale the mount as Moses did, that we may see and consider those joys; which thing shall serve to reclaim our hearts from earthly matters. As Peter went up the mount to see Christ's glory, and Moses went up the mount to see the land of promise, so let us ascend from these earthly things to the contemplation of heavenly. Now, Moses is in his prospect as David was in his tower. Here he must prepare himself to die, while he is looking upon the land which so long he hath been in coming to. Who would not have grieved at this, that, after so long as forty years' travel in hope to possess it, he should now in the end be content with a sight of it, and so vanish away! Yet Moses, for all this murmureth not, but, like Job, taketh it patiently. And as he was upon the mount where God vanished, so here he is upon the mount and vanisheth away himself; as it appeareth (chap. xxiv. 6). So good rulers are taken away in a time when death is least suspected. As Lot was taken away before the people of Sodom knew, as is showed (Gen. xix. 10); so we see that when our time is come, and our glass run out, that neither our riches, nor our wits, nor our friends, nor anything that we have in this world, can carry us any further. No, no more than Moses could go over this Jordan. (*H. Smith.*) *The good land that is beyond Jordan*:—It is there, a seer has seen it; and God gave him words to paint the vision for us. A good land; glorious in beauty, yet homelike; familiar in every form and feature, but still a transfigured world. It is the hope that lights the way of the wilderness—the hope that we may one day behold the glories of a creation which has been "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God." None believe that the present is final. Men, dreaming of a delivered humanity, have dreamed, too, of a delivered world. A world, a home to dwell in, not cursed as this is, with all its prophetic beauty—a world without wastes, marshes, lava-floods, blights, famines, plagues—a world that will fit a redeemed, as this fits a fallen, nature—a world whose paths shall be the pathways of angels, whose sun shall be the face of God. In Egypt, man's toil is the prominent feature; man made its fertility: in Canaan, God's bounty is the prominent feature; "It drinketh water of the rain of heaven." Egypt is the field in which a man, by the low form of labour, might exist amply; Canaan the home in which a man, by joyful concert with God, might nobly live. I. It was a LAND, a good land, the slope of that goodly mountain, even Lebanon, which Moses looked upon; it was a land of promise, which God had prepared. Canaan was in a sense the heaven of Israel's hope; the more heavenlike, perhaps, because it was so fair a feature of our world; because it was a home in which a man, a family, a nation, could nobly dwell. A world behind the veil is the instinctive belief of every human spirit; a world, with all the attributes of a world like this, in which all the promises of this fractured creation shall be realised, wherein no hope shall be frustrated, no cord of association broken, which has been consecrated by holy communion here. This is man's vision, inseparable, too, from his condition here. Imagination! we may say; blank dreams, no more! and pass it by. Imagination surely! but who inspired the imagination? Who but the Being who is the Maker of the reality, which He has kept for ages before the imagination of the world? I accept imagination here as a witness to reality. The wise here are the wise for ever, for to be wise is not simply to know; wisdom takes cognisance of what is common to the two worlds. Nothing which has been truly, reverently learnt will need to be unlearnt. The faithful students of God's hand in the visible are learning to know His mind through the whole sphere of the invisible; they are familiar here with the things which the angels desire to look into; and pass at once from the training school of the Spirit into the inner circle, the elect spirits which are next the throne. "A goodly land beyond Jordan." A real, substantial, homelike world. II. The images which are employed by the sacred writers as most expressive when they are treating of heaven

ARE ALL BORROWED FROM THE HIGHER FORMS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF MAN'S SOCIAL AND NATIONAL LIFE. All that society on earth aims at and misses, the grand order of human relations, the majestic procession of human activities, of which, marred and crippled as they are on earth, the wisest and noblest have not ceased to dream, shall there be realised, with Christ the King visibly in the centre of it, and the angels attendant to watch the actors and applaud the results. III. THAT GOOD LAND BEYOND JORDAN HAD SOME HEAVEN-LIKE FEATURE HEREIN; it was to be the theatre of the highest and holiest human association, under conditions most favourable to the most perfect development, and in an atmosphere of life which God's benediction should make an atmosphere of bliss. This is joy, this is glory, to dwell nobly, purely, faithfully with men under the smile of God. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*)

Heaven upon earth:—We take the words of Moses before us as appropriate to indicate the earnest aspiration of the Christian heart after "the rest and the inheritance of the saints." I. Now observe, THIS CRY MAY BE, AFTER ALL, MERELY SENTIMENTAL, AND IN SUCH A CASE IT CANNOT BE TOO STRONGLY CONDEMNED. One of the great dangers to which we are exposed in the religious life, in our songs and prayers and utterances, is that of cherishing high, forced, fictitious emotions, and of going altogether beyond our real feelings. What we want is holy feeling, transmuted into Christly living and Christly service. The prospect of a bright life beyond should have the effect upon us of making the present life very happy. II. Again, THIS CRY MAY BE THE RESULT OF MATURITY AND RIPENESS, AND THEN THE SPIRIT PROMPTING IT IS BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL. I see one who is a great sufferer. It has pleased God, in the order of His inscrutable Providence, to lay him aside from the activities of life for months, or even years. And the sorrow has been sanctified. He has not sought relief in cherishing a stoical spirit or by looking to earthly sources, but with a full consciousness that suffering is wisely and graciously designed, he has looked upwards and has found in God almighty strength. Despite adverse influences, he has been moving onwards towards the haven of eternal rest. And thus he has become ripened and matured, thoroughly weaned from earth; his heart has long been in heaven, his treasure lies there, and fittingly he longs for the hour of full release, and cries, with a chastened spirit, wholly resigned to the Divine will and full of expectant hope, "I pray Thee, let me go," &c. III. And now let us specially notice that there is an aspiration after heaven which may be fittingly cherished at any and every stage of life: even ASPIRATION AFTER THOSE MORAL EXCELLENCES WHICH CONSTITUTE THE PERFECTION OF THE HEAVENLY LIFE. 1. Heaven is "the good land," for it is free from sin. Then be it ours to desire heaven's purity, and even here to break away from the enthralment of evil. 2. Heaven is "the good land," for it is the realm where there is realised in all its perfection the vision of God. Then be it our desire to have granted unto us here this vision; let us seek, through Divine help, to become possessed of a heart right loyal to the Divine will, in which evil passions and desires have been dethroned, and in which has been set up the spiritual kingdom of God; that so, being renewed and sanctified, God may even now be apprehended by us. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." 3. Heaven is "the good land," for it is the realm of light. Endless progression in knowledge characterises its inhabitants. Then be it ours to cry for "more light" here, and to seek the influences of the Revealer of truth, that under His guidance we may "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 4. Heaven is "the good land," for it is the land of rest and peace—rest from sin, rest from temptation, rest from care, rest from harassing and perplexing doubt; calm, unruffled, perfect rest. Then let us see if we cannot get an earnest of this even whilst we sojourn in this world, by accepting the gracious invitation of Him who has said, "Come unto Me all ye that labour," &c. 5. And heaven is "the good land," for it is the land where prevails concord and love. No note of discord is heard there, no strife of parties prevails there; unity and love reign, and shall reign there eternally. Be it ours to aspire here after this characteristic of the heavenly life. Let us avoid all narrowness and exclusiveness, and cherish the spirit which finds expression in the benediction—"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Whatever lack of charity others may show towards us, let there be no lack of this on our part towards them. (*S. D. Hillman.*)

Longings for the land:—1. MOSES' DESIRE TO ENTER. 1. It was strong and deep; the strongest desire of his soul in regard to anything earthly. Is our longing for the heavenly Canaan as vehement as his for the earthly? 2. It was a holy desire. There was nothing carnal

in it; nothing of self. It was the desire of a holy man for a share in the fulfilment of the Divine promise. 3. It was a patriotic desire. Canaan was his true fatherland, though he had never dwelt in it. 4. It was a natural desire. Though brought up in ease, for now eighty years he had been a dweller in tents in the wilderness, a man without a home. How natural that he should be weary of the desert, and long for a resting place! 5. It was a desire connected with the welfare of his nation. Israel was to be blest in that land of blessing, and he desired to see his nation settled in the Lord's land. 6. It was a desire connected with the glory of God. He knew that God was about to choose a place wherein to set His name, and to show His glory. He had once before pleaded, "Show me Thy glory"; and what could be more desirable in his eyes than that he should see the manifestation of this glory, and witness the mighty power of God in the land which he knew was to be the centre and stage of all these? II. HIS ARGUMENTS (ver. 24). The first part of his argument is, "Thou hast showed me the beginning, wilt not Thou show me the end?" It is natural, even in man's works, when we have seen the beginning, to desire to see the end, and to expect that he who has shown us the one will show us the other. Moses feels as if he would be tantalised, almost mocked, by not seeing the end. He argues that God's willingness to show him the beginning is a pledge of His willingness to show him all. We may all use this argument. Thou, who hast forgiven me past sin, wilt Thou not forgive all present and all future sin? (Phil. i. 6.) The second part of his argument is, that to stop here would leave so much undiscovered of His greatness and mighty hand, that, for the sake of the glory to be unfolded and the power to be revealed, he might expect to be allowed to enter. So great is the undiscovered glory of God, and so desirous is God to reveal it to us, that we may use this argument with Him respecting anything we desire. The third argument looks at the very little already seen—only a glimpse. Moses pleads this little, and because of it asks to enter Canaan. He had seen much of God's power, yet he speaks as if it were little; not as if undervaluing the past, but still feeling as if it were comparatively nothing. So all that we have tasted hitherto is small. It is in the ages to come that He is to show the exceeding riches of His grace; and hence we may call the past a little thing, and use it as an argument with God. III. GOD'S ANSWER. It sounds stern; yet is the answer of wisdom and love. 1. The anger. 2. The refusal. 3. The prohibition. IV. GOD'S CONDESCENDING GRACE. Entrance is denied, but a full vision of the land is granted (ver. 27). He strains His purpose (if one may speak so) as far as possible, without breaking it. The actual request is denied, but something as like it and as near to it as might be is accorded. What a favoured child does Moses seem, even in this very scene of apparent sternness! O love that passeth knowledge! O condescension of God, to what depths of indulgent tenderness wilt Thou not stoop! 1. What one sin can do. One sin cost Adam Paradise; one sin costs Moses Canaan. In the case of Moses it is the more startling, because it is a forgiven sin, and he is a forgiven sinner. His sin is forgiven, yet it leaves a stain behind it; it traces a testimony to its unutterable evil on the person of the sinner. 2. What God's inflexibility is. He cannot change. He cannot call that no sin which is sin; nor that a small sin which is a great sin; nor that a private sin which was a public sin. His purpose is not the easy, pliable, changeable thing which ours is. He is the God only wise, only righteous, only mighty, and is therefore above all such vacillations. 3. What the grace of God is. Many waters cannot quench it, nor the floods drown it. To what lengths it will go in order to pardon a sinner or to bless a saint! (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *Consolation*:—There are many things in a man's life which he desires; but these may come and go, and yet leave the real life of the man little touched. But there are few men who have not had once and again in their life, certainly once at least, some great object on which they set their whole heart—some vision that towered over all others, as Lebanon now did to the eye of Moses—some ideal, some supreme good, that kindled their brightest and most impassioned hours. I. WHAT GOD REFUSES TO GRANT. Take a man who has set his heart on some plan of life. It may have been one of ambition. He has worn himself out to attain it. Every line of his life converges to it; but at length comes his Waterloo, and he is dethroned for ever. It may be some creation of learning or genius. He has brooded over it in chaos, he has gathered slowly all the materials, he is about at last to shape them by the skill and vivify them with the light of the soul within him; but the fire grows dim, and at last dies out, and the great design and the yearning desire stand apart

for ever. It is unachieved, and he carries the broken plan to the grave with him; he himself is cut down, while the harvest of his life is left to waste ungathered in the darkening fields. Or it may be some post of honour and influence. But when the time comes to seize it another steps in, and you are left empty-handed. Then, too, there are higher visions—visions of the moral and spiritual order—left unfulfilled. Who has not felt times, say, of conversion, when there rose upon the soul the sweet Divine dawn of Christ's salvation, trembling over its calmed waves and revealing transcendent worlds of beauty; or of revival, when at a new turn on the road some heavenly vision met us and blessed us with "a joy unspeakable and full of glory"; or of comfort, when hope sprung immortal out of some dark grave beside which we sat crushed and alone; or of a strange strength from on high, when we had almost altogether perished? Such seasons have been; but see how some failing to pass over the temptation that crossed unexpectedly our path, some mean passion laying its arrest on our onward march, some looking away from the great Lebanons of nearness to God, and fellowship with the very death and resurrection of Christ, kept us from our last crowning step; and the supreme attainment of our lives was, on this side the grave at least, lost for a while, it may be for ever. II. WHY GOD REFUSED TO GRANT THE PRAYER OF MOSES. 1. The sin of Moses. 2. It was the last stroke of God's chisel that Moses needed to clear away his last infirmity. 3. It lifted Moses to a nobler elevation of character—more unselfish, more Divine. 4. It was an opportunity such as Moses never had before of honouring God, in the midst of disappointment, before all. IV. WHAT, BECAUSE OF REFUSAL, GOD THE MORE GRANTS. 1. A larger outpouring of grace into the heart of Moses. Grace of forgiveness, grace of restored joy of God's salvation, grace of broken bones rejoicing, grace of fresh communion. 2. The speedier crossing the Jordan of death into the life everlasting. (*Prof. W. Graham, D.D.*) *God's refusal of desire*:—1. Natural to wish to enter Canaan as an object of curiosity, of which he had heard so much; still more as an object of hope, which had been promised so long with every enhancement. This animated the people to leave Egypt, and encouraged them in the desert. This was the end, the recompense of their toils for forty years, and now they had nearly reached it. How painful to miss the prize when the hand was seizing it—to have the cup dashed even from the lip! 2. Yet the desire was refused. God sometimes refuses the desires of His servants, even the most eminent. He does this in two ways. 3. Sometimes He does it in love. What is desired might prove dangerous and injurious. In many cases must a wise and good parent distinguish between wishes and wants! A child may wish for liberty, and want restraint; for a holiday, and want schooling; for dainties, and want medicine. Here the parent must act, not according to the wish, but the welfare of the child. How much better for the Jews had God turned a deaf ear to their importunity! Who knows what is good for a man in this life? No one but God—the good God. 4. He sometimes refuses in anger. Wrath is incompatible with love; but anger is not: anger may even flow from it. Though Christians cannot be condemned, they may be chastened: and the law of the house is, that if the children obey not, He will visit with the rod. Hence those saved eternally may fall under present rebuke, and be refused many things on which they set their heart. By such conduct Providence teaches submission to His people, and the evil of sin to others. 5. Yet his desire was partially indulged. The command to get on the top of Pisgah was not to tantalise him, but to be a mitigation of the severe sentence. The preservation of his sight fitted him for the gaze—the prospect showed him how worthy the country was of all that had been said about it; and would give him high views of the truth and goodness of God in His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. With this also was the influence of Divine grace which satisfied him and made him content with his condition. While his mind was raised to things above, in type and emblem, to a better country, into which he was immediately to enter—and there would be no want of Canaan. Thus in judgment God remembers mercy, and though He cause grief yet will He have compassion. (*W. Jay.*) *The long journey*:—1. We learn from this, first of all, that one sin may shut us out of heaven. Moses had committed a sin long ago; since then he had done God good service, yet that sin was not forgotten, it shut him out of the promised land. Sin always brings its own punishment, at some time or other, and in some way or another. Some sins, like some seeds, grow up and bear their bitter fruit very quickly. Others lie hid for a long time, but they bear fruit. 2. Learn next, that doing good does not atone for a past sin. "All our obediences,"

says an old writer of the Church, "cannot blot out one sin against God." When we have forgotten our sins, God remembers them, and though not in anger, yet He calls for our arrears. If Moses died the first death for one fault, how shall they "escape the second death for sinning always"? Do not think that the old sins of your past lives are of no importance because you may have been living decent lives of late. "I pray thee, let me go over, that I may see the good land that is beyond Jordan." Some of us, who have wandered these many years in the wilderness, long very eagerly for that "rest which remaineth for the people of God." Many a one is tempted sometimes, when the sorrow is very sharp and the road very rough, to cry with David, "Oh! that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest." Many a one, whose earthly work is not yet finished, is tempted sometimes to say, "I pray Thee, let me go over, that I may see the good land that is beyond Jordan." Wishing for Paradise will not take us there. For us all there is a work to be done, and a given time to do it in. A quaint old writer tells us that "God sends His servants to bed when they have done their work." Our journey through this world must be one of watching, of fighting, of praying, and of waiting, and when that is over our Master will give His beloved sleep. When the American saint and hero "Stonewall" Jackson was dying, he said, "Let us cross the river, and rest under the shade of the trees"; so may we one day hope to cross the river of death, and to see the good land that is beyond Jordan, and to rest under the shadow of the Tree of Life, "whose leaves are for the healing of the nations." (*H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, M.A.*) *The request of Moses*:—I. IN REGARD TO THE PRAYER ITSELF, it may be remarked—1. That the desire it expressed was a very natural one. He had been looking forward, it may be, to years of honourable service and rich enjoyment, and he might mourn in the cutting off of his days, that he was to go to the gates of the grave, and say, as Hezekiah did under like prospects, in the sadness of his heart, "I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living. I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world." 2. The desire expressed was a benevolent one. It was dictated by his regard to the welfare of the people. It was a desire that he might be spared to assist in effecting their settlement in the land of Canaan, and in establishing such order as might promote their prosperity as a nation there. 3. The desire expressed may be regarded as a pious one, as having been prompted by devout affection. What he had already seen had convinced him that there is no god in heaven or in earth that could do according to His works and according to His might; but he felt that there were wonders yet to be shown in the introduction of His people into the promised land and their establishment there, which might fill his mind with increasing admiration and joy in beholding them. II. We proceed, then, in the second place to notice SOME OF THE REASONS FOR WHICH, AS WE MAY CONCEIVE, THIS PRAYER OF MOSES WAS DENIED. These may have been such as the following—1. To mark the Divine displeasure with a part of his conduct. 2. To convey a lesson of reproof and instruction to Israel. "The Lord was wroth with me," says Moses, "for your sakes." There was displeasure, then, with their conduct, as well as with that of Moses, manifested in his removal. And God, by taking him away, might design to tell them that they were not worthy of such a leader. 3. It was in order to satisfy in another manner, and more fully, the affections and desires which were expressed by His servant. The prospect of it showed him how worthy the land was of all that the Lord said concerning it. The reality exceeded, we may conclude, all that imagination had pictured. But there was more in the vision enjoyed than the gratification of a natural curiosity—there was what satisfied benevolent and pious affection. He saw the end of his cares and toils for the people attained, and the truth and goodness of God in His covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob vindicated. And the vision with which he was favoured may have been, as it were, the seal of his own reconciliation to the God whom he had offended, who now came to take him to a more glorious recompense than if he had been spared to reign there for long years over the tribes of Israel. And may we not conceive that when he saw the good land that was beyond Jordan he knew that he saw in type and emblem the better country—that is, the heavenly, which lies beyond death's dark river. The patriarchs who before sojourned in it as in a strange land showed that it was thus regarded by them, and the same faith by which they walked dwelt in him who recorded their history. (*J. Henderson, D.D.*) *Holy ardour after a heavenly state*:—I. FROM WHAT PRINCIPLE DOES THIS DESIRE AFTER A HEAVENLY STATE ARISE? 1. From having formed a right estimate of the present world. He has passed through the world not as a cynic. He has mixed in

the world's society, he has tasted some of its pleasures, he has acquired some of its riches, he has enjoyed some of its esteem; yet, by the grace of God, he has been taught to see that "vanity of vanities" is inscribed "on all the world calls good or great." 2. From having realised the blessings of true religion. 3. From strong faith in the unspotted honour and integrity of Him who has promised this good land to us. The Christian believes what God has graciously revealed of this heavenly state. II. WHAT ARE THE EVIDENCES OF YOUR TRULY DESIRING A HEAVENLY STATE. 1. Earth loses its attraction. 2. Religion assumes its personal importance. "Let *me* go." 3. There will be a restlessness of desire while absent from the Lord. They feel that this is not their rest. 4. Death will lose its terrors. III. LET ME NOW URGE YOU, BY SOME APPROPRIATE MOTIVES, TO AIM AT THE ATTAINMENT OF THIS HOLY ARDOUR AFTER A HEAVENLY STATE. 1. Be convinced that it is attainable. Oh, how many Christians there are who stop short of this holy state of mind! They seem to be quite satisfied if they can but arrive at heaven, and never manifest any anxiety to attain that perfection which is the great preparation for its enjoyment. 2. Be assured also, that this state is desirable. It is desirable that you should be thus dead to this world and alive to that which is to come, on several accounts. (1) Consider the personal advantage to the individual. (2) But you should aim for this holy ardour, because of the benefit likely to result to others. Can such a city be set on a hill, and not observed? Impossible. Such a city must be admired. (3) And by this you will also be an honour to the religion you profess. (4) Hereby God will be glorified. (*C. Hyatt.*) *Ardour after the heavenly Canaan:*—If we take this prayer in its spiritual sense we shall find in it much to elevate our hopes and views beyond the passing scenes of time, and to fix them on the more permanent realities of that eternal world to which we are all quickly approaching. "I pray Thee," says Moses to God, "let me go over and see the good land." The words of this prayer imply a strong desire, a heartfelt eagerness, on the part of the person uttering them, to see the good land, and not alone to see it, but to enter it and enjoy its pleasures. I. Now we are naturally led to the inquiry, FROM WHENCE ARISES THIS FEELING IN THE CHRISTIAN'S HEART—THIS EAGERNESS TO SEE THE GOOD LAND? I should say, from his having taken a proper estimate of the world. The Christian has been taught to look above it and its low concerns to nobler objects, to heaven and heavenly things, as the supreme object of his ambition and as his incorruptible and undefiled portion. II. NOW, WHAT PROOFS HAVE WE THAT WE ARE DESIRING THIS "GOOD LAND," THIS BETTER AND HEAVENLY COUNTRY? If we are looking forward to be with God in heaven we are now endeavouring—1. To sit loose to the things of this world. 2. Another proof of our earnestly seeking this heavenly country is, that we are now making religion our chief concern, that it is the most important matter we have at heart, that our worldly engagements, of what nature soever they may be, are all secondary to the interests of the soul. 3. Another evidence that we are advancing towards the heavenly Canaan is that sin is becoming a matter of habitual distaste to us. (*J. L. F. Russell, M.A.*) *The refusal:*—Disappointment—the very word has an unpleasant ring; but who is fully able to describe the painfulness of the reality which this word indicates? Just picture to yourself a traveller making his preparations in another portion of the world to visit his dearest friends once more before he dies. For years he has been making his arrangements with the utmost carefulness; at the appointed time he has embarked with all his property, and he has safely managed through the greater portion of his journey, though most dangerous. But suddenly there rises up a violent storm that makes the masts and tackling crack, the frail craft, though in view of the desired haven, sinks to the bottom, and the wanderer, who came expecting rest within the circle of his friends, finds but a grave down in the gloomy depths. "How sad a picture!" you exclaim. It is no sadder, we reply, than the reality of many lives on earth. The public life of Moses, as Israel's lawgiver and guide, is, as it were, a picture set within a frame of two great disappointments. The first is the occasion when, on slaying the Egyptian, he fancies that his brethren should acknowledge him as their deliverer, and finds himself most cruelly betrayed; the second, when he sees he is refused an entrance to the promised land. I. THERE KNEELS IN PRAYER A GODLY MAN TO WHOM, AS WE CAN SEE AT ONCE, SUCH INTERCOURSE WITH GOD IS NOT A DUTY MERELY, OR A HABIT, BUT A PLEASURE AND DELIGHT. Must we now picture Moses in the stillness of the tent of witness, or in the boundless temple of creation, or in the solitude of waking night? It is enough for us that he now ventures, all alone with God, to place upon his lips the prayer that had been already lying heavily upon his heart

for days and weeks, and he receives the answer which you know so well, but which produced, upon a heart like this, such an amount of grief. Well may we, first of all, speak of dark dealing in God's providence. For who is he whom we now see driven from the throne of grace with such inexorable severity? Is it a wicked man, to whom the wise king's words apply in all their force, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination"? Nay, but it is the special favourite of God, who often could succeed, by powerful intercession, in averting from a hundred thousand guilty heads the sword of justice when it had been raised to smite. What does he ask, that he thus stirs the wrath of Him to whom he speaks? Some special recompense, perhaps, for years of toil; or possibly, release from that most arduous post which he approached with such reluctance. Nay; he merely asked for a free entrance, a short stay, in the evening of his life, in that inheritance which God had promised to the fathers. How was that prayer expressed? Was it with an excessive urgency, unsteady faith, in an uncourteous tone? Nay; he himself is not afraid to own that he but asked a favour as a guilty one; and it is quite impossible to listen to his prayer without perceiving there the spirit of profound humility and the most hearty gratitude. . . . Are there not many who have had such an experience as Moses underwent? A lovely prospect smiled on you, a pilgrim on life's path; it seemed to you a very Canaan of terrestrial luxury; then you put forth your strongest efforts to attain that height and call the treasure yours. Alas! you see the palm-trees of Canaan, but it is not permitted you to rest beneath their shade. Where would I stop, even if out of the book of each man's life I wished to do no more than indicate the chief among the sealed-up pages bearing the superscription "Unanswered prayers"? Verily, the Lord did not without good reason say of old that He would dwell in the thick darkness. II. BUT IS IT REALLY HE, THE ONLY WISE, THE GRACIOUS ONE, THE GOD UNCHANGEABLE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHO DWELLS IN THIS DARKNESS? Before you hesitate to answer this in the affirmative, look back a moment from the valley opposite Bethpeor, where the conclusion of this chapter places you, to Kadesh, which you know so well. Such a refusal, which, viewed in itself, seems almost quite inexplicable, harsh, at once appears in another light, when you have heard not merely what the heart of Moses says, but also what his conscience tells. We know full well there is a thread—often, indeed, invisible, yet natural, and such as none can break—which forms a bond between our conduct and our destiny; and if the history connected with each one of you were accurately known to us, it would be far from difficult to prove that God has really good reason for the choice He makes of such steep paths for some. At one time, weak in body, you pray vainly for recovery of health and strength, and you exclaim, "How dark my path!" But did you not, in younger days, employ your powers, when they were fresh, as instruments of sin? May not your present suffering, besides, be a sharp thorn that must remind you, through the flesh, how deeply you once fell? Or yet again, some wretched father may be now beseeching God to bring his lost son back into his arms and to the home of God—but all in vain; the blinded one holds on in the broad path that leads to death. But have you ever thought upon the time when your own mother vainly urged you to forsake the sinful path? and have you also said within yourself, "I am but punished now, in my own family, for sins committed in my youth"? III. But our sphere of contemplation tends to widen out on every side. IT IS NOT MERELY TO THE PREVIOUS HISTORY OF MOSES, BUT ALSO TO THE NEEDS OF ISRAEL, THAT WE MUST LOOK TO FIND THE TRUE SOLUTION OF THE ENIGMA CONNECTED WITH THE FIRM REFUSAL TO ACCEDE TO HIS REQUEST. If we mistake not, the providence of God becomes apparent here after His righteousness; and when we take a step still further in advance, we find that we can readily extol Him for a wise arrangement in His providence. Moses was but a man; it is impossible that one man should do everything; it must, too, be acknowledged that he was more fitted to guide Israel through the wilderness than lead them into Canaan. When we so rashly raise a loud complaint because our prayers remain unanswered, do we not far too frequently forget that we are here not for ourselves, but with and for each other; and that He who makes provision for the wants of all, without respect of persons, frequently must quite withhold something from one, that the fulfilment of his wishes may not turn out for another's injury? How much more lightly would our disappointments press on us had selfishness less influence; and what a multitude of instances does history afford in which God often, in His wisdom, gave no answer to men's prayers—at least, delayed His answer—so that in what saddens us there might be found a germ of what would work for others' good. IV. BUT SOME ONE MAY REPLY, IT SURELY MUST HAVE SADDENED MOSES' HEART TO

THINK THAT HE HAD BEEN INCITED TO THE SACRIFICE OF HIS OWN PERSONAL, LEGITIMATE DESIRE FOR ISRAEL'S BENEFIT. Such an objection might be called a fair one, if the man of God, through what he was deprived of, had been really too great a loser in the case. But just as many a hard, uncomely shell often conceals a kernel of the sweetest fruit, so it is with God's chastisements; the very rods employed in smiting drop with blessing from the Lord. He is deprived of—yes, Canaan; and that word means—does it mean everything? No, in the eye of faith it is not everything; it merely seems so to the mind of Moses now. Canaan is—and how could it be otherwise?—his earthly ideal; but ideals seldom gain by being realised, and even the Land of Promise offers no exception to the melancholy rule that there is far more pleasure in desire than even in the actual enjoyment of prosperity. But will it be impossible to forfeit Paradise even in Canaan? Shall sin be unknown there? Shall death have no dominion there? Does it make such a mighty difference to one like Moses whether death takes place on Nebo or, a few months later, upon Zion hill? for surely to such minds and hearts the whole earth is a land of sojourning, where all is strange. Has he been thinking of the daily cross he must expect, because within the first few weeks he only looks upon sad scenes of blood and tears, and afterwards finds out that Israel has certainly changed for the better as regards their dwelling-place, but not in heart? Many an earnest prayer for longer life is utterly refused, that so the eye, closed ere the day of evil comes, may not perceive the misery to follow us. V. WE PLACE OURSELVES UPON THE STAND-POINT OF THE WORLD TO COME, AND THEN THE BLESSING IN DISGUISE APPEARS TO US AS AN ETERNAL GROUND OF GRATITUDE. But do you not yet feel convinced, with us, that Moses has received the punishment of his offence wholly within this present life, and that the temporary loss has been abundantly made up by God in heaven? Well may we rest assured that all the friends of God will have much cause for gratitude in heaven, but more especially for this—that He has said so often, in this world, through His strong love, "No more of this!" But do we not begin to find this out even on this side of the grave? Many of you, in silent admiration, must acknowledge that the principle of everlasting joy would never have been drawn out in your hearts had not the Lord been pleased to lead you through this world by paths where pains and crosses are familiar things. But the poor heart, that has been cured of lusting by the sorrow it has felt, finds constantly, in overwhelming measure, how the All-sufficient One, in a most wondrous way, makes up for what He has withheld by giving us Himself. (*J. J. Van Oosterzee, D.D.*) *The desire of Moses:*—The east side of Jordan had been conquered, Moses and the people had experienced the nearness and help of Jehovah; and Moses had exhorted Joshua to press on without fear. It was then that—I. THE DESIRE TO ENTER CANAAN AWOKE ANEW IN THE HEART OF MOSES—1. A prayer, coloured by deep emotion, came from his heart like a forest stream breaking its way through a narrowing ravine, and then dashing over the falls. 2. Was it possible that the man of God should cry out for what lay behind in a conquered desire? The power of earthly hopes over the heart must be remembered. Moses remained Moses—and his heart remained a man's heart, which only conquers after fresh struggles, which relinquishes hope only when the Highest unmistakably strikes through these hopes and uproots the desires of the heart. 3. It was the hour of conquest where joy filled the hearts of the Israelites. Was it not natural, then, that the old desire should awaken amid this outburst of joyful hope? and that his tongue should utter that of which his heart was full? The words of the prayer show that "the goodly mountain and Lebanon" were before his eyes; and it was in view of them that he again prayed and must again submit. II. MOSES' RECEPTION OF THE ANSWER TO HIS PRAYER. 1. We all understand this fluctuating of the human heart. "By the grave we stand in silence and sow the seed of tears." But the Easter sun rises, and in its brightness flowers bloom on the graves. Easter bells ring. In this Easter gladness sorrow is stilled and the heart finds peace. It conquers through Him who has swallowed up death in victory. 2. Yet does sorrow never return? We must remember that grace leaves the heart a human heart still. "Grace blameth not thy sighing, but makes it still and pure." The heart still retains its deep emotions, desires, love, hope, longing, and sorrow; and it would be an evil day for men when tears did not bring relief, nor the words of the tongue express the emotion of the heart. 3. When a fervent desire or deep sorrow fills the believing heart it finds relief in prayer—which sometimes bursts forth like a pent-up stream. So it was here with Moses. He entered on this conflict in prayer, and his heart found rest only when the clear answer came. 4. The poet is right when he thinks such

conquest impossible on the plane of the world. "The heart that here in sorrow sails by a storm-swept shore gains peace, but on that morrow when it shall beat no more." But it is otherwise in the kingdom of God. Moses, in his words to the people, showed that he had overcome and attained to rest. In his heart he was victorious when he was led by God in His answer to his prayer to the sepulchre of his earthly hopes. His heart did not break—the foaming waves and jagged rocks did not wreck his faith. We almost hear the words, "Not my will, but Thine be done." III. ARE SUCH DECISIVE AND UNMISTAKABLE ANSWERS, SUCH AS THIS GIVEN TO MOSES, GIVEN FROM ON HIGH NOW? 1. Answers in view of which all questionings and grievings cease, all petitions withdrawn, and prayer ends in submission, thanksgiving, and victory. 2. Not precisely as they came to Moses, who lived in such close communion with the Invisible, since only thus in that time could Divine Revelation progress; nor as in later times to the apostle (2 Cor. xii. 9). To the apostles as instruments of revelation the eternal world came nearer than to ordinary men. 3. Yet even to ordinary Christian men there come indications and messages from above which cannot be misunderstood. Not every day—not always when we desire, but in the events of life, in the ordering of circumstances, in the indications of the end of life drawing near, answers are often given as clear and definite as in the words, "Let it suffice thee," &c. And he who understands God's Word and has hid it in his heart, like Moses looks steadily towards Pisgah. The spirit overcomes and looks toward the earthly Canaan, but only to leave it. Let the heart turn, let the eye look upward to the Canaan above! (*W. Granhoff.*) *Unanswered prayers:*—I remember many years ago one Sunday afternoon I sat in an upper room by the side of a coffin in which lay the body of a dear child—no matter whose child. A small boy came to me with a deep feeling, and, showing how far sometimes children penetrate into the deep mysteries of life and spiritual things, said to me: "Uncle, I want to ask you something." I said, "Well?" Said he, "Does God always give us what we ask Him for?" And I hardly knew what to answer, and I said, "Why do you ask?" Said he, "Because I asked Him to spare my dear little cousin, and He didn't do it, and I do not know what to think about it." The child touched bottom. We have all had the same difficulty. I said to him, "Suppose that your father should send you off to boarding-school, and should say to you, as he bade you good-bye, 'Now, if you want anything, just ask me for it, and I will send it to you.' You do not suppose that he meant to say that he would send you anything that would not be best for you? Now, God says, 'Ask, and it shall be given you'; but He does not say that He will give us anything that is not best for us." And I said, "Does that help you any?" And he said, "I think I see." Now, that is just as far as I have ever been able to go—"I think I see." But do you not see that right here is the very privilege of praying to God? Why, if God should give us everything we ask Him for, the very best and wisest of us would almost be afraid to pray. How many times good people have prayed for certain things, and they did not get them. Many years afterwards they saw that it would have been a thousand pities if God had given them what they asked for. When we shall climb the shining steeps of heaven, and from the light of the eternal world look back on this enigma of human life, we shall have nothing for which to praise God more than for not having given us everything for which we asked Him here on earth. He knows how to give. He sees what is best. So what first may seem one of the greatest discouragements may be a blessing in disguise. (*J. A. Broadus, D.D.*)

CHAPTER IV.

VERS. 1–40. **Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land.**—*Moses' discourse:*—1. In general it is the use and application of the foregoing history. It comes in by way of inference from it (ver. 1). This use we should make of the review of God's providences, we should by them be quickened to duty and obedience. The histories of ancient times should, in like manner, be improved by us. 2. The scope of his discourse is to persuade them to keep close to God, and to His service, and not to forsake Him for any other god, nor in any instance to decline from their duty to Him. Now, observe what he saith to them

with a great deal of Divine rhetoric: First, by way of exhortation and direction; secondly, by way of motive and argument, to enforce his exhortations. I. See here HOW HE CHARGES AND COMMANDS THEM, AND SHOWS THEM WHAT IS GOOD, AND WHAT THE LORD REQUIRED OF THEM. 1. He demands their diligent attention to the Word of God, and to the statutes and judgments that were taught them. "Hearken, O Israel." He means not only that they must now give him the hearing, but that whenever the book of the law was read to them, or read by them, they should be attentive to it. 2. He charges them to preserve the Divine law pure and entire among them (ver. 2). Keep it pure, and do not add to it; keep it entire, and do not diminish from it. Not in practice; so some: Ye shall not add, by committing the evil which the law forbids; nor diminish, by omitting the good which the law requires. Not in opinion; so others: Ye shall not add your own inventions, as if the Divine institution were defective; nor introduce, much less impose, any rites of religious worship other than what God has appointed; nor shall ye diminish, or set aside, anything that is appointed as needless or superfluous. God's work is perfect; nothing can be put to it, or taken from it, but it makes it the worse (Eccles. iii. 14). 3. He charges them to keep God's commandments (ver. 2), to do them (vers. 5, 14), to keep and do them (ver. 16), to perform the covenant (ver. 13). Hearing must be in order to doing; knowing in order to practice. God's commandments were the way they must walk in, the rule they must keep to. What are laws made for but to be observed and obeyed? 4. He charges them to be very strict and careful in their observance of the law (vers. 9, 15, 23). Those that would be religious must be very cautious, and walk circumspectly. Consider how many temptations we are compassed about with, and what corrupt inclinations we have in our own bosoms. 5. He charges them particularly to take heed of the sin of idolatry, which of all other they would be most tempted to by the customs of the nations, were most addicted to by the corruption of their hearts, and would be most provoking to God, and of most pernicious consequence to themselves (vers. 15, 16). Two sorts of idolatry he cautions them against. (1) The worship of images, however by them they might intend to worship the true God, as they had done in the golden calf; so changing the truth of God into a lie, and His glory into shame. Let this be a caution to us to take heed of making images of God in our fancy and imagination when we are worshipping Him, lest thereby we corrupt ourselves. There may be idols in the heart where there are none in the sanctuary. (2) The worship of the sun, moon, and stars is another sort of idolatry they are here cautioned against (ver. 14). This was the first and most ancient idolatry of all other, and the most plausible, drawing the adoration to those creatures that not only are in a situation above us, but are most sensibly glorious in themselves, and most generally serviceable to the world. It is intimated here how strong the temptation is to sense; for the caution is, "Lest thou shouldst be driven to worship them" by the strong impulse of a vain imagination, and the impetuous torrent of the customs of the nations. Yet he shows how weak the temptation would be to those that would use their reason; for these pretended deities, the sun, the moon, and stars, were only blessings which the Lord their God, whom they were obliged to worship, had imparted to all nations. It is absurd to worship them, for—They are man's servants, were ordained to give light on the earth; and shall we serve those that were made to serve us? They are God's gifts; He has imparted them. Whatever benefit we have by them we owe it to Him. It is therefore highly injurious to Him to give that honour to them which is due to Him only. 6. He charges them to teach their children to observe the law of God (vers. 9, 10). (1) Care must be taken in general to preserve the entail of religion among them, and to transmit the knowledge and worship of God to posterity; for the kingdom of God in Israel was designed to be perpetual, if they did not forfeit the privilege of it. (2) Parents must, in order hereunto, particularly take care to teach their own children the fear of God, and to train them up in an observance of all His commandments. 7. He charges them never to forget their duty (ver. 23). Though God is ever mindful of the covenant, we are apt to forget it; and that is at the bottom of all our departures from God. Care and holy watchfulness are the best helps against a bad memory. These are the directions and commands he gives them. II. Let us see now WHAT ARE MOTIVES OR ARGUMENTS WITH WHICH HE BACKS THESE EXHORTATIONS. How doth he order the cause before them, and fill his mouth with arguments? And a great deal he has to say on God's behalf. Some of his topics are indeed peculiar to that people, yet applicable to us. But upon the whole it is evident that religion has reason on its side, the powerful charms of which all that are irreligious wilfully stop their ears to. 1. He urges the greatness,

glory, and goodness of God. Did we consider what a God He is with whom we have to do, we would surely make conscience of our duty to Him, and would not dare to sin against Him. He reminds them here that the Lord Jehovah is the one only living and true God. That He is a consuming fire, a jealous God (ver. 24). That yet He is a merciful God (ver. 31). It comes in here as an encouragement to repentance, but might serve as an inducement to obedience, and a considcration proper to prevent their apostasy. Shall we forsake a merciful God who will never forsake us, as it follows here, if we be faithful unto Him? Whither can we go to mend ourselves? 2. He urges their relation to this God, His authority over them, and their obligations to Him. The commandments you are to keep and do are not mine, saith Moses, not my inventions, not my injunctions, but they are the commandments of the Lord, framed by infinite wisdom, enacted by sovereign power. 3. He urges the wisdom of being religious (ver. 6). "For this is your wisdom in the sight of the nations." In keeping God's commandments they would act wisely for themselves. This is your wisdom. It is not only agreeable to right reason, but highly conducive to our true interest (Job xxviii. 28). They would answer the expectations of their neighbours, who, upon reading or hearing the precepts of the law that was given them, would conclude that certainly the people that were governed by this law were a wise and understanding people. 4. He urges the singular advantages they enjoyed by virtue of the happy establishment they were under (vers. 7, 8). (1) Never was any people so privileged in speaking to God (ver. 7). It is the character of God's Israel, that on all occasions they call upon Him, in everything they make their requests known to God. They do nothing but what they consult Him in; they desire nothing but what they come to Him for. Those that call upon God shall certainly find Him within call, and ready to give an answer of peace to every prayer of faith (Isa. lviii. 9). This is a privilege which makes the Israel of God truly great and honourable. What can go further than this to magnify a people or person? (2) Never was any people so privileged in hearing from God by the statutes and judgments which were set before them (ver. 8). Observe that all the statutes and judgments of the Divine law are infinitely just and righteous, above the statutes and judgments of any of the nations. The having of these statutes and judgments set before them is the true and transcendent greatness of any nation or people (Psa. cxlvii. 19, 20). It is an honour to us that we have the Bible in reputation and power among us; it is an evidence of a people's being high in the favour of God, and a means of making them high among the nations. They that magnify the law shall be magnified by it. 5. He urges God's glorious appearances to them at Mount Sinai when He gave them this law. (1) What they saw at Mount Sinai (ver. 11). They saw a strange composition of fire and darkness, both dreadful and very awful. He tells them again (ver. 36) what they saw, for he would have them never to forget it. He showed thee His great fire. It gave an earnest of the day of judgment, in which the Lord Jesus shall be revealed in flaming fire. As he reminds them of what they saw, so he tells them what they saw not; no manner of similitude from which they might form either an idea of God in their fancies, or an image of God in their high places. (2) What they heard at Mount Sinai (ver. 12). The Lord spake unto you with an intelligible voice, in your own language, and you heard it. This he enlargeth upon towards the close of his discourse (vers. 32, 33, 36). They heard the voice of God speaking from heaven. God manifests Himself to all the world in the works of creation, without speech or language, and yet their voice is heard (Psa. xix. 2). But to Israel He made Himself known by speech and language, condescending to the weakness of the Church's infant state. They heard it out of the midst of the fire, which showed that it was God Himself that spoke to them; for who else could dwell with devouring fire? They heard it, and yet lived (ver. 33). It was a wonder of mercy that the fire did not devour them, or that they did not die for fear, when Moses himself trembled. (3) Never any people heard the like. He bids them inquire of former days, and distant places, and they will find this favour of God to Israel without precedent or parallel (ver. 32). This singular honour done them called for singular obedience. 6. He urges God's gracious appearances for them in bringing them out of Egypt, from the iron furnace, where they laboured in the fire, forming them into a people, and then taking them to be His own people, a people of inheritance (ver. 20). This he mentions again (vers. 34, 37, 38). Never did God do such a thing for any people. (1) They were thus dignified and distinguished; not for anything in them that was deserving or inviting, but because God had a kindness for their fathers, He chose them. 7. He urges God's righteous appearance against them, sometimes for their

sins. He instanceth particularly in the matter of Peor (ver. 34). He also takes notice again of God's displeasure against himself (vers. 12, 22). "The Lord was angry with me for your sakes." Others suffering for our sakes should grieve us more than our own. 8. He urges the certain benefit and advantage of obedience. This argument he begins with, "That ye may live, and go in and possess the land" (ver. 1). And this he concludes with, "That it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee" (ver. 40). He reminds them that they were upon their good behaviour, their prosperity would depend upon their piety. If they kept God's precepts He would undoubtedly fulfil His promises. 9. He urges the fatal consequences of their apostasy from God, that it would undoubtedly be the ruin of their nation. This he enlarges upon (vers. 25–31), where God's faithfulness to His covenant encourageth us to hope that He will not reject us though we are driven to Him by affliction. If we at length remember the covenant, we shall find that He has not forgotten it. Now let all these arguments be laid together, and then say whether religion has not reason on its side. None cast off the government of their God but those that have first abandoned the understanding of a man. (*Matthew Henry, D.D.*) *God's dealings with His people*:—I. In reviewing the gracious dealings of God towards us, THE GREAT DIFFICULTY IS TO KNOW AT WHAT POINT TO BEGIN. As a people, and as individuals, to God alone are we indebted for the multiplied sources of hope and enjoyment. We live under a mild and well-balanced constitution, and under the shadow of equitable laws. We possess a fruitful soil and temperate seasons. We enjoy an open Bible, and therefore have the full light of Divine revelation. We are favoured likewise with a pure faith and the reformed religion. II. "HEARKEN THEREFORE, O ISRAEL," WAS THE INFERENCE OF MOSES ON A REVIEW OF THE DEALINGS OF GOD TOWARDS THE JEWS: "Hearken, therefore, to His statutes and judgments so as to do them." The Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, contain the records of God's will, and His statutes for us. To hearken to these precepts we are bound both by duty and by gratitude. These are the strongest forces which can be applied to the mind of man. III. BY OBEDIENCE ONLY CAN WE SECURE MERCIES YET TO COME. Of this Moses warned the Israelites: "Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers giveth you." The promises vouchsafed to them had reference to temporal things. These could only be secured by obedience. The promises granted to us in the Gospel relate both to time and to eternity, for "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (*H. J. Hastings, M.A.*) *Hearken!*—Moses called upon Israel to "hearken." Who can hear? Who has ever met a man, in any congregation, that could listen? What is wanted to-day may be described as good hearers. It is not given to man to rush away from his business, place himself down suddenly in the sanctuary, and call for revelations that he can appreciate. Men must be prepared to hear as well as prepared to preach. To "hearken" is not a mechanical exercise. The word "hearken" is charged with profound meaning; it represents the act of acute, vital, profound, fervent attention. He who "hearkens" is in an attitude of eagerness—as if he would complete the speech, anticipate it, or elicit from the speaker a broader eloquence by the gratitude and expectancy of his own attention. Would that they who say much about speaking would learn the elements of good listening!—so learned, they would be dispossessed of themselves, their ears would be purged of all noises and tumults and rival competitions; and importunity being dismissed, anxiety being suspended, and the soul set in a posture of expectation, would receive even from slow-speaking Moses statutes and precepts solemn as eternity, and rich as the thought of God. "He that hath ears to hear,"—not for noises to please,—"let him hear." Such hearing is almost equal to praying; such listening never was disappointed. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The Bible the wisdom of a nation*:—Consider—I. THAT THE BIBLE BRINGS GREATNESS TO A NATION; because —1. When received and obeyed, it brings God's blessing with it. 2. It elevates the national character. II. THAT IT IS THE DUTY OF ALL TO HAVE A PERSONAL ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE SCRIPTURES, AND TO INSTRUCT THE YOUNG IN THEM. (*S. Hayman, B.A.*)

Ver. 4. **But ye that did cleave unto the Lord your God.**—*The blessedness of cleaving to the Lord*:—Moses spoke like a father during the closing days of his life to those who "were then alive." There is a reference here to the multitudes who had fallen in the desert because they did not cleave, &c. They cared not for Him who had

delivered them. Moses reminds them of the declension of many to the idolatry of Baal Peor, to which they were tempted by those who wished to bring a curse on Israel. He recalls the terrible punishment which overtook the sinners (Numb. xxv.). But those who cleaved to the Lord remained in life. This was to be an example to the people to whom Moses spoke, when they realised in this how truly the Lord is a jealous God. I. THE SPECIAL REGARD OF JEHOVAH FOR THOSE WHO CLEAVE TO HIM. 1. He watches over their temporal existence, and does not permit it to be snatched away like that of many sinners, unexpectedly and before the times. 2. True, we do not now think that an early death is a punishment for falling away from God. With us it is not the same as with Israel. Their reward was first the earthly Canaan. To us is the promise of a heavenly inheritance. Then to die was to lose the promised land; now it is the way of entrance to the heavenly country. Therefore the Lord often takes some of those who cleave to Him early from earth, as if they were His specially favoured ones. 3. Still, one has often the impression that some are called hence sooner than should have been. And this may seem either a mark of favour or the reverse—of favour, since the poor sinner is saved from further sinning, and may be brought to himself before death's solemn advent; or of unfavour, since it seems as if it ought to have been otherwise. II. THE SPECIAL HELP AND DELIVERANCE GIVEN TO THOSE WHO CLEAVE TO GOD. 1. Those who cleave to Him experience deliverance from sickness, from trouble and death; in war and pestilence, so that they are not suddenly snatched away; whilst many others—although we dare not judge who—who are accustomed to live according to their lusts, have little safeguard. 2. At all events, what Moses says in regard to this life applies to us in regard to the future life. There it will be declared, "None is lost who have cleaved to the Lord, 'they are alive every one this day.'" 3. Whereas those will not be found who have never sought after God or His Son Jesus. 4. If we would *live* in time and eternity, then we must cleave to the Lord, "flee from idolatry" and all the abominations that cleave to it. (*J. C. Blumhardt.*)

Vers. 5, 6. **Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding.**—*The wisdom of being holy:*—Moses, the man of God, having, by the appointment of heaven, delivered to the Israelites most excellent laws and commandments, pathetically exhorts them in this chapter to keep those laws and observe those commandments. 1. That these laws and statutes, which God gave the Israelites, contained in them an inestimable treasure of wisdom, for those words, "This is your wisdom," may refer to the statutes and judgments, the wise and well-ordered laws which were given to the people. Or, secondly, these words may be applied to the keeping of those laws and statutes, "Keep them and do them, for this," *i.e.* this keeping and doing of them, "is your wisdom and your understanding." Your diligent observing and practising of these laws and statutes are an eminent part of wisdom. The best and chiefest wisdom is to be religious, and to live in the fear of God. And this is the sense of the great Lawgiver in my text, "Keep and do the statutes and judgments which I have taught you," saith he, "for this is your wisdom and understanding." As much as to say, he that lives a holy and godly life, he that walks innocently and uprightly, and conscientiously observes the Divine laws, doth truly deserve the name of a wise man. I will show you that a virtuous and righteous man is master of the greatest understanding and highest prudence, and that to be good and wise are one and the same thing. I premise this, then, that there are two essential parts of true wisdom. The first is to understand and judge aright of things, to think of them as indeed they are; the second is to act according to the appreciation and judgment of things, to shun the evil which we discover to be such, and to choose and embrace what we know to be right and good. This I offer as an exact idea of true wisdom; and accordingly you shall see that the person who leads a virtuous and holy life is the only wise man. First, then, he hath the truest notions and conceptions of things, he hath arrived unto a right discerning of what is just and good. His understanding (which is the basis of all religion) is duly informed, and his principles are the best and truest. Error and a depraved judgment being the source of the greatest immoralities in the world, a wise man first of all endeavours to lay aside all vitiated opinions. His care is therefore to remove all wrong opinions and mistakes about things. He labours to think aright, and to bring himself as soon as may be to true apprehensions. Now, then, holy and righteous men may be believed to have attained to this first part of true wisdom, because they have right notions of themselves, their souls and bodies, of the things of this world, and of God the Supreme Governor of all. The other

essential part of wisdom is to act according to this apprehension and judgment of things, to live according to these excellent notions and maxims. And here I shall further demonstrate to you that piety and wisdom are terms convertible, and that it is impossible to be wise unless we be religious. In general, then, I say this, for a man to act according to his knowledge, to live according to what he possesseth, is an argument of a wise man, and the contrary is great folly and weakness. Certainly, the Author of the Christian religion would not institute anything that is contradictory and inconsistent with itself; and yet such should Christianity be after the rate of some men's behaviour, who, glorying in the name of Christians, act in opposition to the laws and rules of Christianity. That is the best religion, and worthy of its heavenly Author, which displays itself in the actions and deportments of men, which restrains them from beloved vices, checks their most pleasurable lusts, and is ever visible and operative in their lives. Most men know and every day experience the world to be vain, vice to be dangerous, and integrity and honesty to be the choicest possessions; and yet herein they betray their prodigious folly, that their lives and practices are no ways suitable to those notions; for they inordinately love the world, and prosecute its vanities; they live as if there were no danger at all in the commission of sin, and they act as if honesty were the blemish of a man's life. Thus they walk antipodes to themselves, they run counter to their own persuasions, they baffle their own judgments, they contradict their own apprehensions. This is the guide of the world, and it savours of the highest imprudence and folly imaginable. It must be an act, then, of great wisdom to walk accurately and circumspectly. 1. He must needs be voted for a wise man who makes choice of the greatest good, and pitcheth on the chief and best end, and minds the things of the highest concernment. This no sober and intelligent person can deny; and by this it is that a godly man proves himself to be the possessor of true wisdom (Psa. iv. 6). The folly of men is seen in nothing more than in their huge mistakes about their chief good; and therefore here every good man is exceeding cautious, and with great deliberation chooseth that which he knows to be absolutely good and indispensably necessary. And what is that? Happiness. And what is that happiness? It is briefly this, to live in the enjoyment of God, to love Him and to be loved by Him, to partake of His favour here and of His glory hereafter. 2. He that is truly wise after he hath propounded to himself and chosen the chiefest good, will find out, and then use the best and fittest means for the attaining of that end. And on this account likewise, holiness is the best wisdom. The Christian man sits down and seriously considers the method which is prescribed him, in order to his happiness, recollecting that peremptory decision of St. Peter, "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby they must be saved." This is the method which the Gospel prescribes, this is the plain road to heaven, and he resolves to continue in it to the end of his days. 3. True wisdom teacheth us to regard this end and these means in the first place, and to employ ourselves about them betimes. Where delays and demurs may prove exceedingly dangerous a wise man counts it his interest to make haste, and to make sure of his happiness the first thing he doth. No prudent person will trust to that which is uncertain, frail, and flitting. 4. It is approved wisdom to part with a lesser good that we may make ourselves sure of a far greater, and to undergo some lighter evils to put ourselves out of danger of falling into those which are more heavy and grievous. The fencer receives a blow on his arm to save his head. In a great tempest the richest lading is cast into the sea, to secure the vessel and the passengers' lives. We are willing to recover health and prolong life by abstinence and great severity on the body. We are contented to be sick that we may be well. We submit, to save our life, to the loss of a limb; we let a part go to save the whole. All these actions are thought to be regulated by right reason, and were ever recorded as instances of human prudence. And on the same score must he that is truly religious be concluded to be the owner of singular prudence and discretion. He denieth himself the sinful pleasures of the world, and by that means assures to himself those pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore. 5. It is certain, and it will hardly meet with any gainsayer, that that person proves himself to be wise and prudent who, seeing the uncertainty and changeableness of this present state, makes certain provision for the future. This is the wisdom of a godly man; he takes a prospect of the other world whilst he stands upon this. 1. The poor pretenders to wisdom are baffled, and the mere shows and semblances of it in the world are utterly disgraced. You must know, then, that there is a seeming

counterfeit wisdom; and there is a real and substantial wisdom, which justly deserves that name. 2. From what hath been said there is a plain discovery of true and substantial wisdom. I have let you see that it is a very large and comprehensive thing: it consists both in knowledge and practice. It is not only a right judgment of those things which are Divine, and appertain to faith and obedience, but it is acting according to that knowledge and judgment of those Divine matters. 3. That hence we have a demonstration of the excellency of religion and a holy life, and consequently a prevalent motive to the embracing of them. There cannot be a greater incentive to godliness than this, that it is the greatest wisdom. This doctrine concerns us all. Seeing the fear of the Lord is the beginning, the head, the main part of wisdom, let it be our chief study how we may fear and worship God aright, and walk uprightly in the whole course of our lives, and let us be afraid of nothing so much as offending God and doing that which is sinful. (*J. Edwards, D.D.*) *The influence of revealed truth upon a nation*:—I. THAT THE POSSESSION OF THE REVEALED TRUTH OF GOD IS THE MOST DISTINGUISHED PRIVILEGE OF A NATION. 1. It is the duty of every man thus possessing the revelation which God has given to acquaint himself with it. 2. As God has thus made it the duty of every individual to inquire and to learn, so has He secured to them the means of instruction, by raising up an order of men whose business it is to teach; to make known the statutes and judgments which He has given. 3. We see this, likewise, in the solemn duty, binding on every parent, to teach these statutes and judgments to his children. II. THAT FROM THE GENERAL DIFFUSION OF THIS TRUTH THOSE PRACTICAL RESULTS CAN ALONE BE EXPECTED WHICH SHALL MAKE THESE SOLEMN WORDS APPLICABLE: "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." 1. You will all allow, that in proportion as a nation is made righteous, in that proportion it becomes wise and great. 2. We may calculate with certainty on another effect. Whenever the truth of God is extensively diffused through a nation its morality will be improved. 3. A nation will be thus made wise and understanding, because it will be preserved from dangerous errors, and especially from wasting infidelity. 4. Another great effect of the general diffusion of the truth of God is the establishment of civil order and peace. 5. The greatest happiness will result from this general diffusion of the revealed truth of God. (*R. Watson.*) *Britain's privileges and obligations*:—I. AS A NATION WE ENJOY VALUABLE ADVANTAGES AND BLESSINGS. 1. Liberty. 2. Political power and eminence. 3. Diffusion of God's Word. Number and influence of pious and holy men. II. THAT OUR VALUABLE ADVANTAGES AND BLESSINGS AS A NATION PLACE US UNDER MOMENTOUS OBLIGATIONS TO THE GOD BY WHOM THEY WERE BESTOWED. 1. An obligation to gratitude. 2. An obligation to repentance. 3. An obligation to the maintenance and diffusion of Divine truth. (*J. Parsons.*) *The Bible the wisdom of a nation*:—Parting words are generally impressive words. In this, the last of the books of the Pentateuch, Moses delivered to the people of Israel his parting counsels. He sets before them, in words of expostulation and warning, good and evil—life and death. And not only does he give them these impressive exhortations, but, foreseeing—for God was pleased to give him a revelation of it (Deut. xxxi. 16)—that their deceitful hearts would turn aside, he utters the plainest predictions of the judgments which have since overtaken them. We see, then, that Israel's safety was identified with her adherence to pure and undefiled religion. At the time when all the nations of the earth beside were in darkness, she was made the depository of the knowledge of the true and only God. Still, while these things are so, and while we cannot admit the idea of a peculiar people in the sense in which Israel was, it is impossible for those who acknowledge that "the Lord is King," and that He is "Judge of all the earth," to doubt that, as with individuals, so with nations, a high measure of Divine favour involves of necessity a proportionate degree of national responsibility. Holding those feelings, we shall be brought to acknowledge that, nationally, we have ourselves much in the sight of God to answer for. I. In the first place, then, THE BIBLE BRINGS GREATNESS TO A NATION, BECAUSE, WHEN RECEIVED AND OBEYED, IT BRINGS GOD'S BLESSING WITH IT. The glory of Israel was the presence of Jehovah amongst them. There was no nation—to use the words of Moses in the text—that had God so nigh them as had they. In their journeys through the wilderness He was visibly present in the pillar of cloud; and afterwards, in the temple which was founded on Mount Moriah to His praise, the Holy of holies sufficiently indicated to them His special abode with them. When He departed from them their safeguard was withdrawn: the enemy made Jerusalem, hitherto invincible, a heap of

stones. Similarly, our own land, at the period of the Reformation, received the Holy Scriptures, and since then, in their possession and use, has obtained from God innumerable blessings: religion has extended itself in renewed vitality amongst us; and this great nation has become a wise and understanding people. But, apart from the security which the fear of the Lord brings with it, we shall see that—II. THE BIBLE BRINGS GREATNESS TO A NATION BECAUSE IT ELEVATES THE NATIONAL CHARACTER. I do not seek to palliate our multitudinous sins. Still, even now, Britain I do believe to be the stronghold of pure, because scriptural, religion. The Bible is not yet dethroned from the affections of her people; and, for this reason, the basis of the national character is yet sound. III. THE DUTY OF PERSONAL ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE SCRIPTURES, AND OF INSTRUCTING THE YOUNG OUT OF THEM. (*S. Hayman, B.A.*) *Security of the established religion the wisdom of the nation*:—I. THE EXERCISE OF RELIGION IS THE PRINCIPAL END OF EVERY GOVERNMENT, AND CONSEQUENTLY AN ACT OF THE TRUEST WISDOM. 1. It is of no small advantage to the mutual correspondence of the members of a community that religion is agreeable both to the natural tendency of every particular man's mind, and the general consent of all nations interweaving it in their several constitutions. Because as, on the one hand, whatever notion is so universal cannot be destroyed without the greatest violence to human nature; so, on the other hand, it is an obvious fixed point in which all the members may the most easily be supposed to centre, and will in course, if duly cultivated, be not only a bond of union between God and man, but also between one man and another. 2. The many happy consequences and natural good effects of religion are so serviceable to a state as upon the most cogent arguments to recommend the exercise of it to every wise government as its principal end. (1) It was wisely ordained of our ancestors, that as well great pleadings as noble actions should begin with devotion, because without the aid of heaven nothing can be prudently undertaken or ever rightly succeed. For certainly as it is evident from reason that the power of the Almighty extends to the rewarding or punishing, the advancing or destroying every nation, as their actions please or displease Him, so will ordinary reading, and even common experience, assure us that God does actually interpose in all governments. (2) But further, religion is not only the truest support, and therefore ought to be the chief end of every government with respect to the unforeseen and unaccountable blessings of Providence which attend it, but also with respect to its own natural good effects in the influence which it has upon the several members of a society. (*a*) If we consider the governing part of a nation. As nothing can temper the greatness and power of a prince more than a just sense of religion, so neither can anything more recommend him to the love and reverence of his people. (*b*) If we consider what shall render people most tractable and obedient to governors, we shall find that Christianity must certainly have the most beneficial effect. II. A SETTLED FORM OF RELIGION IS, AS THE MEANS, MOST CONDUCIVE TO THAT END, AND THEREFORE AN IMPROVEMENT OF THE WISDOM. For however religion, naturally speaking, may not consist in form, and we may allow that a person supposed separate from all community may practise it without any form; yet, besides that, even in that case the want of a fixed method may create many inconsistencies, and in time destroy his religion. So that though forms are not always of the essence of the thing formed, yet, at least, they are the means of promoting and even preserving it; and accordingly in all acts of government, in the sessions of all great councils, there are settled methods of proceeding; and particularly in the practice of the law, there are forms of process, terms, garb, rules of court, and other formalities which, though not the essence of the law, yet are the means of the execution of it. The same reason therefore which prescribes a settled form to all other acts of society prescribes it to religion also. 1. It is to be feared lest too great a latitude of worship should destroy religion itself, and the liberty, as nowadays stretched beyond the design of the toleration of every man serving God in his own way, should end in not serving Him at all. 2. Supposing Christianity in general were not endangered from a boundless latitude, nor liable to be lost in the confusion; yet, at least, the better part of it, Protestantism, must needs run a mighty hazard from so unlimited a variety. 3. A boundless latitude of worship may not only prove destructive to religion in general, and Protestantism in particular, but, what even men of the loosest principles ought to be concerned for, will also disturb the peace of a nation. For as religion has not only the most universal, but even the most powerful sway over men's minds, so it will be heard wherever it pleases to exert its voice; and the very calves of Dan and Bethel shall be able to divide the

kingdom of Israel from that of Judah. III. A DUE PROVISION FOR THE SECURITY AND ADVANCEMENT OF SUCH A SETTLED FORM IS THE ONLY COMPLETION OF THAT WISDOM. With regard to this notion was it that our pious reformers established it by law, and for a further security did their successors appoint penalties and settle a test. (*John Savage, M.A.*) *The national greatness of Britain, its causes, dangers, and preservation:*—Canaan was evidently the glory of all the earth, and Israel the most renowned of all people; in wealth, in intelligence, in honour, and in victory the Hebrew nation exceeded all the nations by which it was surrounded. Now, England is a great nation, and compared even with enlightened countries, it assumes an imposing splendour; and if viewed in contrast even with the cultivated nations of the continent of Europe, it stands at the head of them all. Its commercial enterprise, its civil and religious character, its indomitable industry, its multiplied comforts, and the distinguished reputation which it has in all the nations of the earth, place it alone—far above any other country. It is natural for a man to look at England, and to ask, "How is this?" And having discovered the fact of this greatness, and the causes of it, the inquiry naturally suggests itself, "How is this greatness to be perpetuated and increased?" I. THE CAUSES OF BRITAIN'S GREATNESS. 1. The first thing mentioned in the text, and which is presented throughout this book, is that the nation's greatness consists in having the knowledge of the true God; and this is peculiar in respect to England. God is nigh unto this nation, and has given it the knowledge of Himself, and this is the foundation of our prosperity. 2. Another cause mentioned in the text, and which may also be ascribed to Britain, is our multitudinous and wonderful deliverances. If any one will open the pages of history and read them, he will see how this country has risen among the nations of the earth by the remarkable power of the hand of the Lord. 3. Another means which this text prescribes is the institution and preservation of the Christian ministry. This agency has distributed knowledge—this has nerved the people with right principles—this has taught them industry, benevolence, and all the social virtues—and, above all, it has exhibited to the people the way of salvation by Christ, and furnished motives to holiness, and to every kind benevolent act, of which even the learned amongst the heathen were all ignorant. 4. Again, the text points out another means of promoting this greatness, and that is the communication of religious knowledge to the young. 5. Another point is the influence of a praying community; "for what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is, in all things that we call upon Him for?" What a multitude of praying people—formed by the Gospel—live in Britain! This has doubtless been a greater security to her than all her wooden walls, or than all her large armies. Prayer is a benevolence which any man can confer on kings or on statesmen, and the only thing very many have to do with them is to pray for them. 5. I will mention one other source of her greatness, and that is her unrestricted possession of the Divine Word, and the laws of the land being largely founded on the laws of that book. What a blessing has the Bible been! Among our mercies are the statutes and laws by which we are governed taken principally from this book. Much imperfection, it is true, still remains in these laws; and many of us have grievous complaints to make about them; but, viewed as a nation amongst other nations, there are no laws like those of Britain, because they more closely conform to the laws of God than those of any existing nation; and they are being brought nearer to the blessed book of God; but still, as they are, they are looked upon with envy as the glory of the world. II. THE DANGERS TO WHICH THE POSSESSION OF THIS GREATNESS EXPOSES US. The first which Moses presents to them was self-conceit. If not very watchful over prosperity, luxuriousness, the indulgence of fleshly appetites, indolence, and neglect of others, come in with it—taking rest, and lying down in the nest which we have made so comfortable for ourselves, and never looking over it to see the miseries of those who have not got a nest, and for whom it is our duty to assist in making one, that they may be as happy as we are. See how these sins are abroad amongst us!—how prevalent are pride and forgetfulness of God, Sabbath profanation, rejection of the Gospel, luxuriousness, prodigality, and many other sins. III. THE MEANS OF PRESERVING AND OF PERPETUATING THIS GREATNESS. There are two modes of doing this, which are particularly referred to in the text. The first is personal piety, and the second the instruction of the rising generation. 1. Amidst the greatness and dignity of Britain there is reason to fear that personal piety is falling off. Never, as a nation, was Britain more exalted; yet observe, while this exaltation continues, all sections

of the Church are complaining of the want of vital fire. With a few exceptions the Churches represent trees that have not been rained upon—they want those showers from heaven which fill the heart with gladness and piety. It is of the utmost moment that your piety should be of the highest stamp, and that you may maintain and improve it, you must labour; it must be your ambition—your holy joy—to be a sort of being above everybody else in the Church. Nothing can compensate for the loss of communion with God in the closet; and if you are addicting yourselves to any of the fond pleasures of the day—mis-spending your time which has been taken by popular opinion from your employers, and, instead of devoting yourselves to the work of God, enjoying pleasures and amusements—if you are doing this, your poor soul will suffer, and you will require more heavenly grace to sustain you than before. 2. Another thing the text proposes is religious instruction in the family: "Teach thy sons, and thy sons' sons." The way to pardon and peace through the Cross must be made known; this great subject must not be kept back from the children. (*James Sherman.*) *The conditions of national greatness:*—You see from this that the fame and wisdom of Israel are to be tested solely by her obedience to the laws of God. For every nation under the sun there is no other criterion. Mankind has many tests: God has but one. If the ideal of the nation be righteous, she will be great and strong. If the ideal of the nation be base or evil, she will sooner or later perish because of her iniquity. I. The ideal of many nations has been delight in WAR. They have not cared to have any annals which were not written in blood. Such a people were the Assyrians of Scripture. In the hall of Sargon, that king has had himself represented stabbing and butchering his captives with his own hands; and, in the one domestic scene found among these sculpturings of horror and bloodshed (you may see it in the British Museum), the son of Sennacherib is seated in a vine-clad arbour at a feast, opposite to him is his queen among her maidens, and close behind the queen hangs from the branch of a palm-tree a ghastly human head, with an iron ring driven through the lip. Well, did it prosper, this bloody city? Read the prophet Nahum for answer, and you will see how soon it passed away in fire and sword, amid the wrath and hatred of the nations. And did war-loving Egypt fare better? We see the serried ranks of the numberless archers, we read the pompous enumeration of the victories of her Rameses; but Egypt snapped like one of her own river-reeds before the might of Persia, and the fellaheen have scooped their millstones out of the face of the Rameses, the most colossal statue in the world. II. But there has been another ideal of nations—not war in its cruelty, but general GLORY; not the tyranny and vengeance of armies, but their pomp and fame. This, until she learnt wisdom by bitterly humiliating experience, was the ideal of France. The nation which follows glory follows a "will-o'-the-wisp" which flickers over the marshes of death; the nation which follows duty has its eye fixed on the polar star. III. Again, many nations in the East, from natural slavishness and indolence of temperament, in the West from unwarrantable fetish-worship of the mere letter of Scripture, and even that grossly misinterpreted, have cherished the grovelling idea of ABSOLUTISM—the crawling at the feet of some royal house, the deification of some human divinity. So it was under the cruel despotisms of Asia; so it was under the wicked deified Cæsars; so it was for whole cycles in China; so it was till quite recently in Russia. From this debased notion—that mankind has no nobler destiny than to be made the footstool of a few families; that kings have a right Divine to govern wrong; that nations ought to deliver themselves, bound hand and foot, to the arbitrary caprices of men who may chance to be as despicable as a Sardanapalus, a Nero, or a John—the blood, and the good sense, and the God-fearing manhood, and the mighty passion for liberty in the breasts of our fathers saved us. IV. Other nations, again, many of them, have had as their ideal the GAINING OF WEALTH and thirst for gold. Of all false gods, at once the meanest, and the one who most assumes the air of injured innocence and perfect respectability, is Mammon. What has this kind of wealth ever done for men and for nations? Was ever any man the better for having coffers full of gold? But who shall measure the guilt that is often incurred to fill them? Men do not disbelieve Christ, but they sell Him. By individual superiority to Mammon, let us help England to rise superior to this base idolatry. "You glory," said Oliver Cromwell, "in the ditch which guards your shores. I tell you, your ditch will not save you if you do not reform yourselves." V. Once more; if some nations have had a false idea of absolutism, many, and especially modern nations, have had a false ideal of LIBERTY. There is no ideal more grand and inspiring than that of true freedom. But what is freedom? It is

the correlative of order; it is the function of righteousness. Its home, too, like that of law, is the bosom of God; its voice the harmony of the world. Liberty is not the liberty to do wrong unchecked. To be free is not synonymous with infinite facilities for drunkenness, any more than it is synonymous with infinite facilities for burglary; but to be free, as Milton said, is the same thing as to be pious, to be temperate, and to be magnanimous—

"He is a freeman whom the truth makes free;
And all are slaves beside."

The description "every man did that which was right in his own eyes," which is rapidly becoming our national ideal, is a description not of heroic freedom, but of hideous anarchy. A man's liberty ends, and ought to end, when that liberty becomes the curse of his neighbours. "Oh Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name!" VI. WHAT, THEN, IS A GREAT NATION'S ONE AND ONLY TRUE IDEAL, IF IT IS TO BE INDEED A WISE AND UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE? The frivolous may sneer and the faithless may deride, but it is duty and it is righteousness. That is as much the law of Christ as it is the law of Sinai. If a nation be not the uplifter of this banner it is nothing, and it is doomed in due time to fall. And that is why the Bible, when men will read it by the light of truth and not of pseudo-religious theories, is still the best statesman's manual. For it will teach him several things. It will teach him that progress is the appointed, inevitable law of human life, and that it is a deadly error to suppose that we are sent into the world only to preserve and not to improve; and it will teach him to honour man simply as man, and to regard all men, from the highest to the lowest, as absolutely equal before the bar of justice. It will teach him that always and invariably the unjust gains and the immoral practices of the class must be put down in the interests of the community, and that the interests of the community are subordinate always to those of the nation. And it will teach him that the true glory of nations lies, not in the splendid misery of war, but in the dissemination of honourable happiness, and the encouragement of righteousness, and the suppression of vice. And it will teach him that the true wealth of a nation is not in gold and silver, but in the souls of strong, contented, and self-respecting men. When statesmen have learnt all these lessons they will not be long in learning others. Nations will aim at only such conditions of life and government as shall make it easy to do right and difficult to do wrong. Statesmen will not toil for reward; they will hold allegiance to the loftiest ideal of their faith in Christ dearer than all the glories of place and all the claims of party. Like Edmund Burke, they will bring to politics "a horror of crime, a deep humanity, a keen sensibility, a singular vivacity and sincerity of conscience." Like Sir Robert Peel, they will, amid all the chequered fortunes of their career, be able to turn from the storm without to the sunshine of an approving heart within. They will not be afraid to cut against the grain of godless prejudice; they will not be sophisticated by the prudential maxims of an immoral acquiescence: they will sweeten with words of justice and gentleness the conflicts of party; they will be quick to the encouragement of virtue; and they will be firm and fearless to the prompt, inflexible suppression and extirpation—so far as powers of government can do it—of all open and soul-destroying vice. (*Dean Farrar.*)

Vers. 7, 8. **And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous?**—*A righteous Bible:*—The appeal of Moses is the eternal appeal of the Bible. That is the appeal to common sense and to common honesty. The commandments are not described as eloquent, marvellous intellectual conceptions, great advances in ethical thinking. Moses asks, What other nation can produce a Bible so righteous! Any Bible must go down that is not righteous above all other things, how high soever the varied attributes by which any book may be characterised. What is the moral tone of the Bible? Pure, righteous, true, holy. What are the great commandments of the Book? "Love," "love," —twice love. The first object?—"God"; the second?—"thy neighbour." This is the strength of the Bible; and we can all begin at this point to inquire into the remainder of the Book. Men may ask bewildering questions about the archæology and the so-called science of the Bible, and may even puzzle the uncultured reader with many a question relating to spiritual mysteries; but taken from end to end, the Bible is charged with righteousness: it will have the neighbour loved as the man himself; it will have the harvest like the seed-time; it will insist upon right

balances and full weights; it will have no concealed iniquities; it carries its candle of flame with fire never kindled upon earth into the secrets of the mind and the chambers of the soul and the hidden places of motive and purpose and ultimate, but unexpressed, intent. The Word of God is sharp, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow. It is a righteous Word. The Bible has a thousand weapons in its armoury: not the lightest, not the weakest is its magnificent morality, its heavenly righteousness, its incorruptible integrity. It shakes off the wicked man; it will have no communion with darkness; it strikes the liar on the mouth; it avoids the unholy follower. This is—let us repeat—the argument of Moses, and it is the eternal argument of Christianity. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The Bible and civilisation*:—Wendell Phillips once said: "The answer to the Shaster is India; the answer to Confucianism is China; the answer to the Koran is Turkey; the answer to the Bible is the Christian civilisation of Protestant Europe and America." (*J. S. Gilbert, M.A.*) *The national utility of the Bible*:—It is impossible to estimate the amount of evil which mankind would experience in their civil capacity were the Scriptures no longer considered of Divine origin, nor constituted the ultimate standard of all moral and political obligation. All reverence for the laws would cease, for the lawgiver would have only his own authority, or the mere glimmerings of the law of nature, to enforce his commands; while those who had to obey the laws would soon have every just and equitable principle banished from their minds, and every sacred feeling obliterated from their bosoms. The whole fabric of society would soon go to pieces if men were removed beyond the sphere of the public and private sanctions of scriptural morality. (*J. Blakey.*) *The glory of Israel*:—Moses reminds the people that God has chosen them as His special possession, and that this had been shown during forty years, and that if they would remain a people for ever blessed it must be under the protection and blessing of God. They were highly favoured above all other peoples—for Jehovah the true God was theirs, and would be known among His people by this gracious name. And all the peoples around saw how great things God had done for Israel—how gloriously and graciously He had led His people. This was one reason why Israel should cleave to the Lord, who would plainly thus reveal Himself as the true God, the Holy One of Israel. From all this Israel should have learned—I. To PRIZE HIGHLY THEIR RELATION TO GOD. 1. They should have learned to realise what it was to be under the peculiar care of God, and how great and glorious was their fellowship with Him. Theirs was not merely to be a great and glorious history in the past. God was not merely to be the God who had mightily manifested Himself to their fathers, and then withheld His presence. Rather there was the promise that if they continued to call upon Him wonderful manifestations of grace and help would be given. 2. How blessed Israel was so long as they continued to call on God, prayed for His protection in faith, and kept in the way of His commandments! It was no hard thing to draw near to God. Priest and prophet were given to prepare the way, and each Israelite might experience the truth of the text for himself. But it was otherwise with Israel. In them we see—II. THE DANGER OF NEGLECTING TO CALL UPON GOD. 1. Israel went on their own way, according to their own will; and in order that they might not be stopped by listening to the voice of reason they no longer called upon God; they no longer sought His near presence. 2. Therefore, however He would have been pleased to draw near to them, He could do so no more, because they desired it not. Thus did Israel, and even when they inquired of His way they did not follow it. 3. How speedily, therefore, were they brought low; for all depended on their calling on God, and Him alone. III. THE SPIRITUAL ISRAEL MUST CALL ON GOD. 1. Even among the early believers to whom with visible manifestation the Holy Ghost came, whose voice and counsel they might ever hear, there was the temptation to walk more according to the flesh than according to the Spirit. Some neglected to hear His voice, and gave themselves up to the lusts of the flesh. 2. Then true believing calling on God ceased, the Lord came no more nigh to them, and the Holy Ghost was grieved. 3. Let us learn in simple faith to pray to and call upon Him. Then should we hope that all things would again become new in us, would be otherwise with us; and how glorious could our lives become! (*J. C. Blumhardt.*)

Ver. 9. **Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen.**—*An important admonition*:—I. IN WHAT RESPECTS WE ARE BOUND TO "TAKE HEED TO" OURSELVES. 1. Take heed to your health. When this is gone, how tedious and tasteless is life! The wretched sub-

ject of disease is ready to exclaim (Job xii. 4, 13–15), Oh, what pain are some poor creatures doomed to bear! But in numberless instances some of the severest afflictions to which mankind are subject are the fruits of their own folly. Keep the body under: let your diet, your rest, your well-regulated tempers tend to the health of the human frame, not to its destruction. 2. Take heed to your character. "A Christian is the highest style of man." In this quality is associated every holy temper and disposition. There is faith with its eagle eye, love with its burning flame, peace with its placid smile, humility with its lowly aspect, patience with its soothing balm, and as much of the heavenly treasure as can be conveyed into an earthen vessel. Therefore "take heed to" attain this character; and then be careful to preserve it. (1) You may forfeit your Christian character by levity. Christian cheerfulness is widely different from worldly and unhallowed mirth. (2) You may forfeit your Christian character by a haughty, high-minded disposition. There is no evil in the world so hostile to religion as pride. (3) You may forfeit your Christian character by your tongue. (4) This may be done by neglecting your relative duties. 3. Take heed to your souls. They are dark, and must be enlightened; guilty, and must be pardoned; enslaved, and must be redeemed; polluted, and must be sanctified; in danger, and must be saved. 4. Take heed to your time. Time wasted is existence lost; used, is life. Therefore part with it as with money, sparing it, and never paying a moment but in purchase of its worth. 5. Take heed to your conduct. (1) Let it be consistent. See to it that you are in reality what you pretend to be. (2) In order that your conduct may be consistent, let it be regulated by the Word of God. In the balances of the sanctuary weigh your principles and actions (Isa. viii. 20). II. THE REASONS WHY THE ADVICE IN THE TEXT SHOULD BE FOLLOWED. 1. The character of the speaker is the first motive I will bring before you. It is the eternal Jehovah; "the God in whose hand your breath is, and whose are all your ways" (Dan. v. 23). 2. The reasonableness of the requisition is another argument why you should "take heed to" yourselves. Even animals which are governed by mere instinct "take heed to" themselves. In many cases they refuse to eat what would be injurious to them, and fly from danger the moment they perceive it; and shall reason fail to do for you what instinct accomplishes for them? (Jer. viii. 7.) 3. The dangers that await you afford another reason for the adoption of the advice in the text. Had you literally to walk in a road beset with snares, where you were liable to be entrapped every moment, would not the perils of your path be a sufficient inducement for you to "take heed to" yourselves? And do not more fearful dangers await you in your spiritual career? (*R. Treffry.*) *On experience—its use, its neglect, and its abuse*:—I. Under the first head, that of its use, it may be said, in general, THAT THERE IS NO KNOWLEDGE SO USEFUL AS THAT WHICH IS GAINED BY EXPERIENCE. 1. Events are better remembered than precepts, and indeed it seems but just that that acquisition should turn out to be valuable which is so often dearly paid for with tears. He who heeds not the warnings of his elders, or his books, to abstain from excess, may be taught by sickness a lesson of moderation which he will not forget. Severe losses may now induce him to be prudent and provident who never till now could be brought to believe that prodigality begat want, or that riches had wings. 2. Besides the great personal benefits which flow from experience, it is also the source of more extended usefulness. For the guidance of life and conduct, there is no kind of wisdom which we can so confidently and beneficially communicate as the lessons of experience. And it is the high gratification of the virtuous old man that the trials which he has borne, the successes which he has enjoyed, place at his disposal the best means both of ensuring his own security, uprightness, and of relieving the perplexities and guiding the steps of the young and inexperienced. He who has gathered wisdom from many years can impart to others the legacies which each year has left him, and live while they are enjoyed, nor grow any poorer by making others richer. II. It is a melancholy truth, THAT WISDOM WHICH MAY BE SO EASILY, I MIGHT SAY NATURALLY, ACQUIRED IS OFTEN NEGLECTED; wisdom, too, which, as we have seen, is so useful in the direction of our conduct, and in our intercourse with others. There is hardly a more pitiable object than a man who cannot, or will not, learn wisdom from experience; one who, to use the expressions of our text, forgets the things which his eyes have seen, and they depart from his heart all the days of his life. To brood over our cares, and too fondly to indulge our sorrows, and thus unfit ourselves for the active duties of life, is indeed unchristian and irrational; but both religion and reason require us to contemplate and force instruction from every wayward event for our future

security and quiet; like Jacob, to hold every heaven-sent grief with which we have wrestled, and not to let it go till it has blessed us. We are wrong in being always so very anxious to drive away unpleasant thoughts; we must let them remain till they have cured us; we might as well drive away the surgeon from our doors who came to perform a painful though necessary operation. We must learn to look upon the occurrences of life not as insulated facts, but as borrowing illustration from the past, and reflecting it upon the future. III. OF THE NEGLECT OF EXPERIENCE WE SHOULD SPEAK WITH CONCERN, WITH PITY, OR WITH REPROBATION,—OF ITS ABUSE WE CAN SPEAK ONLY WITH THE MOST UNQUALIFIED ABHORRENCE. By the abuse of experience I mean experience in the arts of the world employed not to warn, but to ensnare the simple and unsuspecting, and experience of its vices employed not to admonish but to correct innocence. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The spiritual benefits of retrospection:*—It is to be feared that to many (so habitually unmindful are they of what they have been permitted to witness, both in the wider sphere of public and the more contracted one of private life) experiences are somewhat like the stern-lights of a ship, which serve to illumine only that part of the water over which she has just sailed. It is far otherwise when, through the agency of supernatural grace communicated in answer to the prayer of faith, experience is sanctified, for it then becomes strongly conducive to spiritual health. If it be the province of Hope to paint the bow of promise upon the cloud, it is that of Memory to gather rays of the light of direction from the past, and to cause them to shine upon the path of religious duty, which is beset by so many temptations that every encouragement is needed, lest the travellers "faint because of the way." Now, in directing your attention to some of the functions which a religiously disciplined memory performs in connection with the life of faith—I. I would first ask you to observe THAT IT IS ONE OF ITS OFFICES TO TEACH CHRISTIANS TO KEEP A MORE ACCURATE REGISTER OF THEIR MERCIES THAN THEY ARE NATURALLY DISPOSED TO DO; to train them in resistance of the dangerous tendency to dwell with circumstantial precision, and often even selfish exaggeration, upon their trials. It is Memory's office to embalm their blessings, to preserve them from the decay to which time and the influence of an evil world would otherwise subject them. II. MEMORY HAS ALSO FUNCTIONS OF MOMENTOUS IMPORTANCE IN CONNECTION WITH THE TRUE REPENTANCE to which we are called by Him who alone can enable us to "sorrow after a godly sort." It is the office of a rightly trained memory to remove the concealments by which we seek to hide our delinquencies from ourselves, to dwell with emphasis upon passages in our history from referring to which we would naturally desire to escape, to keep the unwelcome but wholesome truth of our unworthiness before us that we may really feel our need of pardon and earnestly seek it where alone it can be found. In cases, too (which it is to be feared are very far from uncommon), in which spiritual declension has begun—cases of "backsliding in heart"—the memory of the past has much to effect in connection with the restoration of those who have so declined. The contrast which memory would lead them to institute between the comparatively happy time when they kept in the way of duty and the troublous time when they forsook it has been one which, rendered practically influential by the operation of the Spirit of Grace, has led them back to tread that path in which only rest can be found for the soul. Scripture is replete with testimony to the value of the past in preparing us for doing God's will in that portion of the future which may be granted us, teaching those who are to take our places when we are called away by the inevitable summons to be in their time ready to "serve their generation according to that will." To this consideration, namely, that of the responsibility which rests upon us to do all that lies in our power to bring up "the rising generation" in the service of Christ, we are led by the words of the final clause, "Teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons." If those addressed in the words of the text could refer their children to the past for lessons of spiritual wisdom, they who are living under the new and better covenant cannot fail to find counsels in the retrospect of their experience to impress upon youthful minds. They may tell how they have seen evidences, how the fond hopes of religious parents can be blighted by the ungodliness of children, how they have seen health shattered by intemperance, brilliant prospects clouded by yielding to the allurements of a world at enmity with God! They may tell how they have witnessed exemplifications of the truth of those words quoted by an inspired Christian teacher from an heathen author, "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Or they may turn from painful to pleasurable reminiscences. They may tell of instances of the beneficial results of "the nurture and admonition" in which children were

brought up to live for Christ. They may speak of homes lightened by the joy imparted to souls influenced by the grace of God. (*C. E. Tisdall.*) *Diligent soul-keeping:*—I. WHAT SOUL-KEEPING IS. It is the keeping of a living being, and not of a mere inanimate thing. To have the charge of a priceless jewel is only the matter of wrapping it carefully up, putting it away in a safe place, and giving it an occasional look. But it is an altogether different matter to have the charge of a child. That means constant attention, perpetual claim on wisdom and self-denial. And soul-keeping is the charge of a living being. Keeping a living creature, so as to help it to maintain vigour and grow into its very best, means—1. That we must get to know and understand it; and such a knowledge includes the peculiarities of the individual as well as the general characteristics of the class or species to which it belongs. It means—2. That we must adapt our ways to it, putting ourselves upon all efforts and upon all restraints that may be necessary in order to do our very best in its behalf. But it also means—3. That in some things we make it take our ways, for it is the most serious responsibility of our trust that we have to put the impress of our own will and our own example on the living being we have in charge. We must, in some things, adapt ourselves to it, and in some other things make it shape its conduct to our wish. If we can take the deeper view, we may apprehend that the soul is the self. But just now another view will be more suggestive to us. We are to think of the "soul" as a trust from God—a "self" given to ourselves to keep for God, a living being put into our charge, as men put an animal from foreign climes, or a plant, into our care. And this becomes our chief life-concern—to keep, in health, in vigour, in all due activity, that living thing, our soul. A figure may be taken from the ways of our doctors. It is true that they are concerned with the forms and features and expressions of positive disease; but they have a trust which is of far more importance. Our vitality is committed to their care. And mothers follow along the same lines. They are watchful, indeed, of every spot on the body or weakness in the limb of their children; but wise mothers are most anxious about keeping up the vitality, nourishing the very springs of life. There are the possibilities of throwing off the germs of disease, and unfolding into ideal completeness of beauty, in manhood or womanhood, if only the life can be kept in health and vigour. And so the Christian should be supremely concerned about the trust he has from God, and keep "his soul with all diligence." II. WHAT KINDS OF CARE IT INVOLVES. 1. We must be watchful of what goes into it. We put injurious things out of the way of children; but we too often fail in the equally important duty of putting evil things that seek entrance out of the way of our souls. But our Lord reminded us—2. That we should be equally watchful of what comes out. He said, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, . . . and these defile the man." This is the complication of our "keeping." We have to check the soul from giving expression to the bad things that are in it, because they grow strong by expression. But the kind of care involved in soul-keeping may be put in another way. It includes—1. Taking care of the soul's atmosphere. We say of plants and of persons, "The climate does not agree with them: they never will be healthy while they remain in it!" Our scientific teachers tell us that there is one element in the air we breathe which is absolutely essential to our bodily health and vigour; they call it "ozone." He who would keep his soul must find for it atmospheres of trust, and reverence, and humility, and love. 2. Taking care of the soul's food. The soul-life may be regarded as partly emotional and partly intellectual. The proper food for the emotional is all that goes under the name of prayer. The proper food for the intellectual is all that goes under the name of truth. Add this, that there is a practical side to the soul-life, the food of which is duty, and we know that which it is fitting we should provide—prayer, truth, duty. 3. Taking care of the soul's neighbours. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." They who would "keep their souls" should not even "stand in the way of sinners": much less can they venture to "sit in the seat of the scornful." III. WHAT DIFFICULTIES HAVE SOUL-KEEPERS TO OVERCOME? Their name is "Legion." But we may profitably fix our attention on two. 1. The outwardness of men's interests nowadays. We live in the street, and the hall, and the drawing-room, rather than in the prayer-chamber, and the "tower of vision"; and this makes soul-keeping so hard. 2. The pressure of bodily, and business, and family claims. Like Dr. Chalmers, we are "bustled out of our spirituality." Our time is seized upon by the "world," and when he has done his daily will with us we are weary, too weary for the things of God. He who would keep his soul must meet and master these difficulties, and persistently set first, in his seekings, "the kingdom

of God and His righteousness." (*The Weekly Pulpit.*) *On the benefits of experience and reflection:*—The great source of all human knowledge is experience; and that experience which teaches us practical wisdom, and informs us of the many evils that constantly wait on life, is acquired chiefly by observation and reflection. The historian makes it his peculiar glory that, by faithfully recording the fates of kingdoms, by delineating the virtues which raised some to magnificence, and the vices which brought others gradually to destruction, he anticipates the future by a true representation of the past, and teaches men wisdom by the examples of others. But though, from the short period of human life, the narrowness of our views, and other causes, we are obliged to recur to the experience of those who went before us for almost all our knowledge; yet the few events that happen to ourselves, or that fall within the circle of our own observation, make a far more lasting impression on us, and have a much greater influence over the heart. I. First, let me exhort you, when you "ponder in the path of life," not to let the remembrance of your DISAPPOINTMENTS, whatever they might have been, "depart from your hearts." If the sufferance of them has been grievous, let the remembrance of them be profitable. If they have crossed your inclinations, or withheld from you fancied pleasures, let them not die away without producing their proper effect in moderating the passions and inspiring that patient fortitude which, aided by prayer, will enable us, amidst all the storms of life, to maintain a character of dignified composure, resignation, and contentment. II. Next to the disappointments of life, I wish you to reflect on the SORROWS which you might have experienced. As the land is more grateful to the mariner after his vessel has been dashed against the rocks, and he himself has struggled with the waves of life, so is the recovery of peace to those who have escaped the storms of adversity. Many are the advantages we derive from this severe monitor, if we knew how to enjoy them. She seldom fails to soften and improve the heart. III. Let me now direct your attention to a subject in which we are all equally interested—I mean "THE HOUSE OF MOURNING" AND THE CHAMBERS OF DEATH. Here also let us endeavour to learn what lessons experience would teach us. It is not in the giddy and fantastic scenes of pleasure that the mind improves in wisdom or in virtue; these, for the most part, are acquired by habits of reflection, and by taking such views of human affairs as dispose the soul to thought and meditation. For this cause the "house of mourning" is a house replete with instruction, and is on that account wisely preferred to the "house of feasting." It is there that our religious principles acquire an energy not to be derived perhaps from any other source. It is there that those truths which were announced to us as glad tidings from heaven, and those duties which are founded on reason and contemplation, are strengthened and improved by the softest and most powerful emotions of the heart. In these melancholy moments we feel our own weakness and see the vanities of life. Temptations to guilt and misery no longer court us under the delusive forms of pleasure, and sin appears in all its native deformity. We confess the vice and folly of every mean pursuit, and the mind flees to the religion of Christ for comfort and support. (*J. Hewlett, B.D.*) "*Take heed to thyself,*" *&c.*:—In the business of life there are three parties concerned, three parties of whose existence it behoves us to be equally and intensely conscious. These three are God on the one hand and our own individual souls on the other, and the one Mediator, Jesus Christ, who alone can join the two into one. 1. There is all the difference in the world between saying, Bear yourselves in mind, and saying, Bear in mind always the three, God and Christ and yourselves, whom Christ unites to God. For then there is no risk of selfishness, nor of idolatry, whether of ourselves or of anything else; we do but desire to keep alive and vigorous, not any false or evil life in us, but our true and most precious life, the life of God in and through His Son. But what we see happen very often is just the opposite to this. The life in ourselves, of which we are keenly conscious, never for an instant forgetting it, is but the life of our appetites and passions, and this life is quite distinct from God and from Christ. But while this life is very vigorous, our better life slumbers; we have our own desires, and they are evil, but we take our neighbour's knowledge and faith and call them our own, and we live and believe according to our neighbour's notions; so our nobler life shrinks up to nothing, and our sense of truth perishes from want of exercise. 2. In combining a keen sense of our own soul's life with the sense of God and of Christ there is no room for pride or presumption, but the very contrary. We hold our knowledge and our faith but as God's gifts, and are sure of them only so far as His power and wisdom and goodness are our warrant. Our knowledge,

in fact, is but faith; we have no grounds for knowing as of ourselves, but great grounds for believing that God's appointed evidence is true, and that in believing it we are trusting Him. (*T. Arnold, D.D.*) *Israel admonished*:—I. THE EVIL ANTICIPATED—forgetfulness of their own past experience of God's gracious dealings. "Lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen," &c. 1. We cannot suppose that Moses thought it possible they should so far lose all traces of these events as that they should not, by any circumstance, be brought to remembrance. 2. But these things might be so forgotten—so little and so lightly thought of, as to depart from "their hearts," so as to have no influence there. No correcting influence; error might be corrected by a heart-affecting remembrance of God's distinguishing judgments and mercies (vers. 3, 4), but such remembrance would be necessary. No chastening influence, such as that intended in vers. 5–20; consequently no cheering influence, such as vers. 36–40 might impart. In short, "the things which their eyes had seen" might be so forgotten as to produce no saving effect. 3. And Christians are as liable to this calamity as the Israelites were. 4. The greatness of the evil may be inferred from the greatness of the punishment threatened—the loss of God's gracious presence for direction, defence, &c. (ver. 7); the loss of Canaan (ver. 27); and the heaviest of temporal calamities (ver. 26, and xxviii. 16). II. THE PREVENTIVES RECOMMENDED. "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul," &c. The text suggests the necessity of—1. Holy jealousy. "Take heed; keep thy soul." Nothing is more dangerous than self-sufficiency and presumption; a vain confidence in what is called "a good heart." Moses intimates that the soul needs watching and keeping. 2. Holy vigilance. Only take heed, and keep thy soul diligently. This advice is necessary because of our natural disposition to wander, and because of the allurements to which we are exposed. Grace may raise and sustain us. The soul may wander on wicked things; and such is its weakness that no man can say into what sin he may not fall. David fell into adultery and murder. Therefore "keep thy soul diligently." Resist beginnings. But we are, perhaps, in greater danger from things which do not shock our sense of propriety, &c., but which serve, nevertheless, to divert our minds, and so to prevent a steady attention to "the one thing needful," such as business, company, amusement, literature, &c. Therefore "keep thy soul" within proper bounds. Watch her motions, and check them ere they become irregular or excessive. 3. Holy exercises. Indolence is at once disgraceful and injurious. Satan finds the idle employment. What has been already advised includes much of exercise. But in addition we may say, Diligently meditate on God's gracious dealings with you in former days, and examine what progress you make (chap. viii. 2, 11–18). Diligently pray for a continuance and increase of His favours. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *Memory in religion*:—Let us just a moment longer think about memory, and what we owe to it. Our sense of personal identity is due to memory. If we had no memory of the past our lives would be a series of links not joined into a chain, and a host of beads without anything to string them together; there would be nothing to show us or make us feel that our life yesterday or to-day had any special connection, or were pages in the same book of history of the same person; and with the loss of this sense of personal identity would go all sense of personal responsibility and of continuous or energetic action. We would always be falling back again to our old starting-point, and would lose every night what we gained every day. But memory is the subtle weaver that weaves all the various movements and events of every day into one continuous whole, into one conscientiously responsible and permanent life. The memory, then, is most necessary for the acquisition of wisdom. It is by the golden grain of experience treasured up in memory that we grow rich in practical wisdom. Some people, indeed, never seem to learn by what they pass through. They live in the present moment, without thought of yesterday and without hope of to-morrow, and all that happens is apparently forgotten just as soon as it is over. It is a precious gift, then, that God has given to us in memory, and its cultivation is indispensable and its proper use for all manhood and for all useful life. And now in our text Moses seeks to enlist this great power of memory on the side of religion—"Lest thou forget," he says. And if Moses could thus appeal so forcibly to the people in his day, calling upon their memories to witness what God had done for them in Egypt and the desert, entitling Him to their grateful and obedient services, how much more may our memory be appealed to in these days. While it is true, however, that the memory to which Moses appeals has such a marvellous power, yet diseases and defects of memory are very common. There is no part of our complex

mental system which is so liable to get disordered as memory. Certain events of the past seem, at times, to pass from the spirit's vision when disease is beginning, even things which we should fancy a man could never forget—his own home, his relatives, and his ordinary work. Even when there is no actual disease, yet serious and dangerous defects of memory are very common. A slovenly and unreliable memory is a very common fault. We forget things because we are not interested in them. As we hear a fact which appeals to something in us, satisfying some desire, supplying some want, we appropriate it at once, we allow the tendrils of affection and desire to twine around it, and we fondly treasure it in our hearts. Then we will remember it for ever, and can recall it in every hour of need. We might say, in fact, that defects of memory arise from improper training. We do not learn to concentrate our mind upon our work; we do not know how to fix our attention; we do not make an effort to understand things we read and hear. Take the reading of a book. Many readers turn over page after page, having read each of them, as they assure themselves, but nothing on any page makes any impression upon them, or only some striking incident or accident. Now, such defects of memory can be cured to a very large extent before they run into permanent weakness or mental disease, and while we have the opportunity surely it is worth our while to make an earnest and continuous effort to try to do it. And so with regard to religion. The root of much error and evil, of many difficulties in life and transgressions in action, lies in sins of memory. We remember, all of us, the facts of Bible history, but we have never cared to acknowledge their application. Now there are many things which tend to increase the defects of memory when we have to do with religious things. There is often no one to remind us of the lessons we have learned or the promises we have made; there is often no one to check us for our forgetfulness and wanderings, no voice from heaven speaks to us, no instantaneous punishment falls upon us for neglecting and forgetting them. Besides, the things that it is necessary for us to remember often produce pain when they are recalled, and the fear of pain paralyses our memory, while the rush of the world and of life sweeps us on to other thoughts and other things. If we only felt the importance of remembering these things the work would be half done. I know a lady, a Sabbath-school teacher in the town of Newport, who has had the unique record that, as scholar and teacher, she has attended a school in that town for fifty-two years without a break. To her it was a matter of supreme importance to be in her place Sabbath after Sabbath, and everything in her week's work was arranged accordingly. There was no danger that she would ever be absent or forget her Sabbath school when the hour for going to it arrived. If we get into the habit of forgetting our duty and the promise of God we are at the mercy of foes and in danger of the wrath of God, as Moses said; for God does not forget. But even to remember well is not enough. It is but a means to an end. There are some people who have prodigious memories, and they are very proud of it; some even make their livelihood by it. They can repeat a whole book after they have once read it. Often such a memory is only a wonder passing across the sky of life like a comet, and leaving no light and blessing behind. Sometimes it is a sign of mental disease, so that the other faculties of mind will soon be clouded. A splendid memory is a good thing, but it needs to be balanced by good judgment and needs to be actively used if it is to be the blessing it ought to be. When we turn to religion we find that there are many people who can remember well religious facts and doctrine, and arguments to prove them, but what use is it to them? Does it lead them to exercise self-control or self-denial? Alas, no! If memory is to be of use to us we must be true to memory as to conscience, we must be warned by what has happened in the past in the spiritual world; it must never be forgotten, so that we never go wilfully into the same temptation or commit the same mistake twice. In the verse out of which our text is taken, and at the end of it, there is one thing specially mentioned as necessary if memory is to be of use, and that is, that the things we remember we must teach to others. "Teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons," and thus help to fix them in our mind in an accurate and orderly fashion. There is not one in this audience, I fancy, to whom the text does not appeal. It appeals to the young, "Lest thou forget." You are strong and hopeful, and ever pushing up. There are some things a man can never forget with safety. "As a man sows, so shall he reap: for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." This text appeals to the prosperous. You look back with honest pride upon the days when others started side by side with you, with all the advantages you had, but they have fallen far behind and you have gone right ahead. Everything you have touched has turned to gold. Oh, the text appeals to you,

There is no spot on earth more slippery or dangerous than the mountain-top of prosperity. It is God who has given thee the power to get wealth and all these blessings, and He will continue them to you as a blessing as long as you use them to the glory of His Name. Our text appeals to the poor and lowly. The hand of God has been heavy upon you. Through no fault of your own you have fallen behind in the race of life. The text comes home to you, "Lest thou forget." It may be that sometimes bitter thoughts take possession of your heart, envious thoughts against your fellows, and you are tempted to wrap yourselves up in selfish misanthropic thoughts, and then you lose all the benefit of all the lessons that God has been taking so much trouble to teach you. But there is no danger if you will only remember that God rules the world, that God makes no mistake, that God has promised to make all things work for good to those who love Him. (*W. Park, M.A.*)

Lest we forget:—How good a gift is memory! Of all the gracious benefits conferred on mortal men by God there is none more useful, none more precious. By memory we are enabled to lay by a store of precious thoughts and gracious reminiscences against the days to come. By memory we can stud our minds with promises and precepts from the Word of God, as the midnight heavens are studded with the twinkling of stars. But alas! memory has fallen with the rest of our powers. Do you not know from sad experience how readily evil is retained? When you would fain erase it from the page, the dark letters still appear. Things that we thought we had with a tenacious grip are torn away from us, or slip from our grasp, and the place that knew them knows them no more. Our memories have failed us. By a good memory I mean a memory that lets slip that which is not worth holding, and holds as with a death-grip that which is most worth preserving. I. Notice first, that GOD GRACIOUSLY GIVES WARNING OF THE DANGER. Is not this right good of Him? 1. He knows us thoroughly—better, far better, than we know ourselves. The people of His choice were prone to forget Him, therefore did He constantly sound this warning note. To them, I suppose, it seemed impossible, certainly improbable, that they would forget the things that their eyes had seen. Forget Egypt, the furnace of iron? You would have thought that these experiences had been burned into them by the very fire of the furnace through which they passed. Forget their redemption and deliverance, the night of the Passover, and the passage of the Red Sea? Forget God, who had delivered them times out of number, who had spoken to them out of the midst of the fire? This same sad principle holds good to-day. We used to think that the experiences of our early Christian life would linger with us and influence us for good through all our days. As one who says "I will remember," and makes a knot in his handkerchief in order to assist his memory, and then forgets why he made the knot, so our efforts to remember God and the things of God have proved fruitless. Are you not aware—let it be a matter for sorrowful confession if so—that you have sometimes forgotten that you have been purged from your old sins? You have been indulging in them again. That looks as if you had forgotten the cleansing from them. The peril still exists, but to be forewarned is to be forearmed. Moreover, God knows just when and where this peril is likely to be greatest. If you will turn to Deut. vi. 12 you will understand my meaning better. There is much meaning in the "then." You must read what precedes it in ver. 10. There is no season so perilous, in this particular, as the season of prosperity. The fear is that when all things are crowding into us, God should be crowded out. You will find it comparatively easy to remember God and to recollect His dealings with you in the past when laid upon a bed of sickness, or when bereaved or troubled. Sometimes God permits these dispensations to give us a pause in the rush of life, and opportunity to call to remembrance. II. HE SUPPLIES VALUABLE INSTRUCTION. He does not content Himself with waving a red flag before us; He stops the train, and gives instructions to the driver and the guard. "Take heed to thyself." It means literally, "Be watchful." This is just where we fail, as a rule; the watch-tower is deserted. Strengthen the guard rather than reduce it, and see to it that everything that would enter the mind is challenged as it approaches, and that all that would go out that should remain within the walls is prevented from passing through the portals. "Keep thy soul diligently." It is the same idea as we have already mentioned. As one might call to another whom he saw to be in danger, "Look out,—look out!" Here is a further instruction, "Teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons." "For whose benefit, think you, is this instruction given? for that of the sons and of the grandsons? Yea, verily; but do *they* reap all the benefit? I tell you, sirs, one of the best ways to remember things that are most worth remembering is to pass them on to others. III. I have

this further to say, that HE PROVIDES WELCOME AIDS TO MEMORY. He remembers our frame, He knows that we are but dust; therefore does He come to our assistance. He calls us like little children to His kindergarten school, and makes the learning easy. There are ways of schooling the mind and training the memory; there are certain aids and helps. The law of association serves a good purpose in this respect, and object lessons lend always a pleasing succour. Certainly it is so in the things of God. To Israel God gave the Passover, constantly repeating it to remind them of that wondrous night when He brought them out of the house of bondage with a high hand and an outstretched arm. To Israel He gave the varied ritual of the Mosaic dispensation, that they might never forget the doctrines of sin and of salvation, and that without the shedding of blood there is no remission. To Israel He gave the ark, in which was the pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of stone. All these were aids to memory. After just this fashion God deals with His spiritual Israel, providing aids to memory, lest we forget. Heavenly influences are with us constantly, angel ministries work for our help and succour; holy exercises, if we do but engage in them in the right spirit, tend in the same direction. Prayer brings us to the mercy-seat, and sends us full-handed home. Praise puts a harp into our hands, and causes us to sing our thankfulness to God. The ordinances of worship and opportunities for service all help to keep us in touch with heaven, and to keep our hearts aglow with godliness. The Word is one of God's aids to memory. You can hide the Word of the Lord in your heart, lest you forget. I would have you remember, too, that the ordinances that the Saviour has established are for this same purpose. Think of believers' baptism. The Lord's Supper is instituted for this same purpose; it is a reminder of all that has passed in connection with our spiritual experience. "This do," said He, "in remembrance of Me." How often we pray the prayer of the dying thief, "Lord, remember me." It is a right good prayer. Mothers may forget their children rather than that Jesus should have us out of His mind, but I tell what is possible—that you and I should forget Him. (*Thomas Spurgeon.*) *Memory aided by sight and instruction*:—We may have no memory for words: had we committed the lesson to an intellectual recollection we might have been excused for forgetting somewhat of its continuity and exactness; the point is, that we are called to remember things which our eyes have seen. The eye is meant to be the ally of the memory. Many men can only remember through the vision; they have no memory for things abstract, but once let them see clearly an object or a writing, and they say they can hold the vision evermore. God's providence appeals to the eye; God's witnesses are eye-witnesses—not inventors, but men who can speak to transactions which have come under their immediate and personal observation; they have seen and tasted and handled of the Word of Life. What a loss it is to forget the noble past! How treacherous is the memory of ingratitude; all favours have gone for nothing; all kind words, all stimulating exhortations, all great and ennobling prayers—forgotten in one criminal act. To empty the memory is to silence the tongue of praise; not to cherish the recollection is to lose the keenest stimulus which can be applied to the excitement and progress of the soul. On the other hand, he whose memory is rich has a song for every day; he who recollects the past in all its deliverances, in all its sudden brightnesses, in all its revelations and appearances, cannot be terrified or chased by the spirit of fear; he lives a quiet life, deep as the peace of God. Can Moses suggest any way of keeping the memory of God's providences quick and fresh? He lays down the true way of accomplishing this purpose: "Teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons,"—in other words, speak about them, dwell upon them, magnify them, be grateful for them; put down the day, the date, the punctual time when the great deliverances occurred, and when the splendid revelations were granted; and go over the history line by line and page by page, and thus keep the recollection verdant, quick as life, bright as light. What a reproach to those Christians who are dumb! How much they lose who never speak about God! To speak of the mercies of God is to increase the power of witness at another point. We first see, then we teach. The teaching of others is not to come until there has been clear perception on our own part. The eye-witness is doubly strong in whatever testimony he may make: not only can he tell a clear story from end to end, he can sign it with both hands, he can attest it with the certainty and precision of a man who has seen the things to which he sets his signature. Our Christianity amounts to nothing if it is not a personal experience. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **Teach them thy sons.**—*Instruction of children*:—An Englishman visiting Sweden, noticing their care for educating children who are taken from the streets and highways and placed in special schools,

inquired if it were not costly. He received the suggestive answer, "Yes, it is costly, but not dear. We Swedes are not rich enough to let a child grow up in ignorance, misery, and crime, to become a scourge to society as well as a disgrace to himself." (*The Lantern.*) *Training of children*:—As Alexander the Great attained to have such a puissant army, whereby he conquered the world, by having children born and brought up in his camp, whereby they became so well acquainted and exercised with weapons from their swaddling clothes that they looked for no other wealth or country but to fight; even so, if thou wouldst have thy children either to do great matters, or to live honestly by their own virtuous endeavours, thou must acquaint them with painstaking in their youth, and so bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (*Cawdray.*) *The echo of childhood's years*:—One of the most memorable incidents of my boyhood was the hearing of a remarkable echo at a famous health resort. Long after the voice had sounded there came back the echo of it, so distinct and clear as to seem a response. Is not the echo a parable of life? Childhood's years cannot be recalled, nor its actions repeated; yet they will re-echo for us in the coming days sounds of gladness or of sorrow as their character may have been. Through the corridors of memory the melody of a pure, noble, and unselfish youth will be heard, gladdening the heart of age when the days of action have given place to the days of reminiscence. (*Great Thoughts.*)

Ver. 14. **That ye might do them.**—*Knowledge and practice*:—I. GOD IS THE ONE GREAT SOURCE BOTH OF TRUTH AND OF AUTHORITY. 1. The office of every true teacher is to unfold the revelation of the Eternal, whether in nature, in history, or in the written Word. 2. The office of every true lawgiver and ruler is to expound and enforce the precepts and commandments of the Lord of lords. There is no sound knowledge, and no law worthy of reverence, which does not emanate from the Supreme. II. TRUE RELIGION CORRESPONDS TO THE COMPOSITE NATURE OF MAN, AS A BEING POSSESSED OF INTELLIGENCE AND ENDOWED WITH WILL. 1. False religions are one-sided: they either embody certain theories and doctrines and neglect morality, or they prescribe certain services without basing them on eternal truth. 2. Judaism appealed to the understanding in its many statements regarding God and regarding human life; it appealed to the practical nature in its rigid prescriptions of duty, its rigid prohibitions of sin. 3. Christianity is the highest example of the combination of the doctrinal and the moral, laying a foundation of truth and love, and rearing upon it an edifice of obedience and holiness. III. ACCEPTABLE OBEDIENCE CONSISTS IN AT ONCE RECEIVING THE GOSPEL AND DOING THE WILL OF CHRIST. An empty profession of faith and a soulless conformity of conduct are alike repugnant to a heart-searching God. The true Christian shows his faith by his works. (*Family Churchman.*)

Ver. 20. **The Lord hath taken you . . . to be unto Him a people of inheritance.**—*The chosen of the Lord*:—I. THE PEOPLE ALLUDED TO. 1. The title they may claim. "The chosen of God." 2. The mercy shown. "The Lord hath taken you." 3. The practical result. "Hath brought you forth." (1) A wonderful work. (2) Miraculous. (3) Wise. (4) All-sufficient. (5) Complete. II. THE PLACE WHENCE REMOVED. "The iron furnace." 1. The rigour of the imprisonment. 2. The bitterness of the position. The land of Egypt is always used in Scripture to represent the kingdom of Satan. And so the idea here developed is the deliverance of God's Church (1) from the dominion of the devil, the power he exercises over the soul, and the rigour of his exactions; (2) from the servitude of sin, and its cruel, unremitting slavery of toil; (3) from the alienation of a distant land—a country which is not our home. God's grace and power has accomplished all this on our behalf. III. THE POSITION PROVIDED. It is worthy of notice that this position is not one of mere selfish gratification. It is one that promoted first and chiefly the glory of God. There are two particulars given. 1. God selected and delivered His people that they may be His people. This is a condition of high honour—to be the people of the Most High is worthy of an archangel. It is a condition of blessed security. The people of God are as the apple of His eye. He will guide and protect them as the most precious treasures. It is a position of glorious anticipation. 2. God selects His people that they may be His inheritance. (*Preacher's Analyst.*) *God's heritage*:—Israel was the only people on earth chosen by God of old. This came to pass because of the faith of Abraham. God was the God of Abraham's posterity. The choice was absolute and universal. All might go forth from Egypt.

Young and old, man and wife, sick and sound, &c., &c. In brief, all that pertained to the people might go forth over the Red Sea and sing God's praise. How great, then, was the Divine mercy! And what hope does this give us in view of the thought that there will be many received into the kingdom of heaven—a number greater and more comprehensive, it may be, than men sometimes think. I. ISRAEL WAS GOD'S HERITAGE. 1. He calls them His heritage. He desired at least to have one spot on earth whilst as yet all earth was subject to the prince of this world. Such could only come through a faithful man, who had become free from this servitude. Such was Abraham, who was commanded to sojourn in Canaan. This land God chose as His own; and the people to whom He gave it were to be inheritors of the land, and therefore a people of inheritance unto Him. 2. Thus Moses warned them that in this land, which was a consecrated land, no idolatry must find place. It was to be separated from all lands in which the prince of this world had sway. The land remained consecrated to God, His peculiar possession even when defiled by the people, *i.e.* when it took on the character of a heathen land, and because of this was, for a time, forsaken, as during the Exile. II. THE WHOLE EARTH IS NOW GOD'S. 1. Since Christ died Canaan ceased to be the especially holy land consecrated to God. Now the whole earth belongs to Him, for now the prince of the world has been ousted. Every spot is now God's holy land, where God's children gather together—where the true God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent are worshipped. Humanity is now God's heritage, purchased by the blood of Christ. 2. The idea, therefore, that Israel will again have to occupy Canaan as God's inheritance has no support, for the whole earth is the Lord's, all is equally His, as once Canaan was. God will have Himself to be acknowledged everywhere as once He was in Canaan. Wherefore, then, now a holy land in opposition to other lands? Now we sing with the angels, "Holy," &c., "the whole earth is full of His glory," *i.e.* the glory of God is to be extolled now everywhere as once in Canaan. Therefore the Lord said to His disciples: "Blessed are the meek," &c.—not only citizens of the erstwhile holy land only, but of the whole world. 3. May we, through our faith and our reliance on God and Him whom He has sent, make every place holy ground, as the possession of God's inheritance. For He fills all with the fulness of His Divine glory, or will yet fill all. (*J. C. Blumhardt.*) *God's deliverance of Israel out of the iron furnace*:—First, for the terms of their deliverance, to speak of them, which are here propounded two manner of ways, in the general and in the particular. The general, Egypt. The particular, the furnace of iron. I. We begin first of all with the general proposition, which, though it be last in order of Scripture, yet is first in order of nature, AND THAT IS EGYPT. This was the place which they were delivered from, which when we have considered how miserable a place it was, and especially to them, we shall see the greatness of their deliverance. The place, I say, in general was Egypt, which we find these Israelites to be very often put in mind of in Scripture upon all occasions (Deut. v. 15, xvi. 12, xxiv. 18, 22). 1. It was a place of exile or peregrination. This the Scripture does very much insist on. That they were strangers in the land of Egypt (Psa. cxiv. 1). The world to the children of God is but as the land of strangers. It is heaven which is their proper home and their Father's house. It should make them the more willing to go when God calls them by seasonable dissolution, in that here they are but in a land of strangers. That was not all, nor the main thing, which was considerable in Egypt. 2. It was, moreover, a land of idolaters. There is matter of pollution. It was hard for Israel to be long in Egypt, and not in a great measure to partake with them in their idolatries. Oh, it is a great mercy to be kept from sinful allurements, especially considering what inclinations are in ourselves to the closing with them, we have a nature in us which is like dry tinder to these sparks. And therefore to be prevented from the occasion is so much the greater advantage. As there is pollution in these things in regard of nature, so there is offensiveness in regard of grace. Evil examples and temptations, if they do not defile us, yet they cannot but offend and grieve us and expose us more to sin, so they trouble us and expose us more to grief, prove wearisome and tedious to us. There is also danger in them, too, in regard to the consequents. Danger both to body and soul. For ourselves, let us bless God that He has graciously given us the opportunities of knowledge, and delivered us from the Egypt both of Paganism and Popery. II. The second is as it is laid down in particular, AND THAT IS THE IRON FURNACE (1 Kings viii. 51; Jer. xi. 4). 1. First, here is affliction in general compared to a furnace (Isa. xlviii. 10). Afflictions are the fiery trial to test God's people, and purge away the dross (1 Pet. iv. 12). 2. For this affliction in particular which now happened to Israel, it

is called the iron furnace. Both in the letter and in the moral. In the letter. First, because those furnaces which they wrought in were such as in which iron was melted. And so from the work they were employed in, furnaces of iron. But then secondly, of iron in the moral. First, an hard and laborious employment. Iron is an emblem of severity. Then, secondly, as from the sharpness of it, so from the continuance of it likewise (Psa. cvii. 20). The use which we are to make of this observation to ourselves is therefore, first, not to wonder at it, or to think much of it, but to expect it. The refiner puts the gold into the furnace, and the potter puts the clay into the fire, and both of them to very good purpose; and so does God. Again, we should be careful to find afflictions to have this efficacy upon us, to wit, of refining us. III. THE AUTHOR OF THEIR DELIVERANCE, AND THAT IS EXPRESSED HERE TO BE GOD HIMSELF THE LORD. 1. First, it is He alone hath the bowels, it is He alone that hath the strength. Deliverance of others out of trouble is an act of pity and compassion. Now, none but only God has so much of this in them towards the Church; we shall see in the book of the Lamentations the complaining of the want of commiseration in others towards her; but this God hath in Him abundance. 2. Secondly, none but He hath the strength. The adversaries of the Church are potent, and therefore need to have one of power to deal with them. And this is God Himself; the Almighty and All-sufficient. Therefore still let Him be both repaired to, as also acknowledged in such providences as these are. IV. THE MANNER OF IT. This we have expressed in two words, "Taken you and brought you forth." Though one might have served the turn for the signification of the deliverance, yet two are made use of to make it so much the more emphatical. 1. First, an emphasis of appropriation, "taken you," that is, laid claim unto you, as a man that seizes upon that which is his own when it is in the hand of strangers. 2. Secondly, as there is in it an emphasis of appropriation, so likewise an emphasis of affection. "He hath taken you," that is, with a great deal of tenderness and regard unto you (Deut. xxii. 11). "Hath brought you," and this, as well as the other, hath a double force in it. 1. First, there is power in it. "Bring you forth," that is, forced you forth, whether your enemies would or no. 2. Secondly, there is also solemnity in it. "He brought them forth," *i.e.* in triumph, as with a strong hand so with a stretched-out arm, as the Scripture also expresses it (Deut. v. 15). Now, from both these expressions together we see the thing itself sufficiently declared, that God did at last deliver His people out of captivity (Psa. lxxxi. 6, 8, 13). Though God suffers His servants sometimes to fall into the hand of their enemies, yet He does at length free them from them. This He doth upon divers considerations. First, out of His own compassion (Psa. ciii. 9; Isa. lvii. 16). Secondly, out of respect to His people, lest they should be discouraged and provoked to evil (Psa. cxxv. 3). Thirdly, out of regard to the enemies, lest they should insult (Deut. xxxii. 26, 27). Let this, therefore, be the use which we make of it to ourselves. First, to expect it, whereas yet it is not. Secondly, to acknowledge it, and to improve it there where it is. And so much may suffice to have spoken of the first general part of the text, namely, the deliverance itself. V. THE END OR CONSEQUENT OF THIS DELIVERANCE, and that we have in these words, "To be unto Him a people of inheritance as ye are this day." In which passage we have again two particulars. First, the design itself, and secondly, the amplification of it. The design itself, "To be unto Him a people of inheritance." The amplification of it. "As ye are this day." I begin with the first, namely, the design itself, "To be unto Him a people of inheritance." This is that which God aimed at concerning Israel. Now, this may again admit of a double interpretation, either so as for Him to be their inheritance, or else so as for them to be His. The Scripture makes mention of either in sundry places. First, for Him to be theirs. This is the privilege of God's people. That the Lord Himself is their portion and inheritance, and so expresses Himself to be to them (Psa. xvi. 5). David, speaking of himself, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup: Thou maintainest the lot." And so of Levi it is said, that the Lord is his inheritance (Deut. x. 9). And the Church, (Lam. iii. 24) "The Lord is my portion," &c. This is a great comfort to the godly, and to those which are most destitute amongst them, to live upon the power of this truth, what though they have none of the great inheritance of the world. Yet as long as they have a portion in God they have that which may abundantly satisfy them, and keep them from dejection, forasmuch as from henceforth no good thing shall be wanting unto them, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." How so? It follows in the next words, "And I will be his God," &c. (Rev. xxi. 7). The second is for them to be His. This is another thing which the Scripture makes

mention of (Psa. xxxiii. 12; Deut. xxxii. 9; Psa. xxviii. 9). An inheritance contains three things in it. First, some good and advantage. Secondly, peculiarity and propriety of interest. Thirdly, succession and derivation of it to posterity. Now, according to all these notions of it does God make choice of His people to be an inheritance to Himself. This, therefore, first of all teaches us what we ourselves should be, namely, such as are wholly devoted and consecrated to Him (1 Cor. vi. 20). We are the inheritance of God, therefore we should not suffer Satan to get possession of us, nor any evil to prevail upon us. Secondly, here is matter of comfort to the true Church and people of God, that being His inheritance He will therefore take care of them and protect them, and keep them from evil. I desire now, further, to enforce it as a duty which is belonging to you to take care of it especially; we should all in our several opportunities endeavour the continuance of the Church in succeeding time. That God may have to Himself a portion and people of inheritance, even when we are in our graves. This is done, first of all, by being good in our own generation. Secondly, by taking care of others, and educating them in His fear. Now, further, we may look upon it also as a consequent, and so see the connection of these two both together. How did God, bringing His people forth out of Egypt, make them to be to Him a people of inheritance, namely, thus far, as they had now larger opportunities for the serving of Him afforded unto them than while they were in Egypt, they were there restrained in regard of the idolatrous people, which they were mingled withal, but now being escaped they were more at liberty. This, therefore, is the advantage which we should still make of such opportunities (Luke i. 74, 75). And so much of the first particular observable in this second general, namely, the design itself to be, &c. The second is the amplification of it. "As ye are this day." In which clause we have three things especially hinted to us concerning God. First, the accomplishment of His purposes. Secondly, the certainty of His promises. Thirdly, the continuance of His performances. Now, from hence will follow another point as our duty, which is here also to be observed, and that is, that we are accordingly to call them to our minds, and so from thence make them fresh unto us, as if done at this present time. It is that which Moses endeavours to make these Israelites do here in the text, who reminds them of a mercy which was done many years ago for them, as if it had been done for them just at that time. This is the scope of this narration, and this also hath been the practice of the saints of God in other places (Psa. lxxviii. 1, 6). (*T. Horton, D.D.*)

Vers. 21, 22. **I must die in this land.**—*The death of Moses:*—1. Though a life may appear to us to receive the crown of failure, it may for all that be acceptable in God's sight. No life on earth is complete, for its completion and fulness is destroyed by sin. Just as a man in things temporal often falls short of being successful, so does a man in things eternal. But the latter knows his life will receive its completion hereafter. 2. God is very strict with His children. The service of God is not to be trifled with. If we are careless we may prevent ourselves from obtaining some spiritual success in this world which might be a crowning point to our life. 3. Moses was alone at his death. We must die alone. Our friends cannot pass through the dark valley with us. But stay—must we be really alone? The Prince of Life will be with us with His rod and staff, if we ask Him. 4. Moses could not lead the Israelites into Canaan; that was the work of Joshua. Moses, by giving us the moral law, cannot lead us into heaven. The moral law in the hand of Moses is unable to accomplish that which the precious blood of Jesus alone can do. Is Jesus our Leader? (*The Weekly Pulpit.*)

Ver. 24. **Even a jealous God.**—*The jealousy of God:*—The assertion that such a quality as this belongs to God as one of the attributes of His moral character involves a number of deep and awful considerations; they seem to include the love as well as the holiness and justice of the Deity in one complex idea; and to form, from the union of these qualities in one attribute of jealousy, a touching, as well as a tremendous, picture of His feelings towards us. For let us remark, first, that the existence of jealousy in God implies the previous existence of love. If He had not loved us Himself He would have been indifferent to our dispositions towards Him. If He had not felt that love was due from us to Him, as a return for love already exercised towards us, He would not have resented its being withheld, nor made use of this phrase as declaratory of the state of His affections. In agreement with this idea we find that jealousy in God is never spoken of except

with a reference to those whom, in one sense or other, He has called and chosen as His own; whose love therefore He has a right to claim as due to Himself, in virtue of some covenant relation; and whose love He has excited by some previous exercise of favour and benevolence. Any wandering of affections, any deviation from the truth of allegiance, however slight it may seem to the eye of indifference, carries wounds and provocation to that of jealousy, and we may therefore say that such behaviour as this, when existing in the people of God, is calculated to excite in Him a feeling of resentment analogous to that which unrequited love and infidelity excite in the heart of man. Let us also remark that this attribute is peculiar to the true God, to the Jehovah of our worship. The idols of heathenism were imagined to be ready to share their honours with another, and were never supposed to object to the devotions which were paid to deities of other names or of other lands. They felt that they had no exclusive prerogative to power. They felt, or rather their worshippers felt, that even while they were the objects of adoration, they had no absolute dominion. And what was then true with regard to them is equally true with regard to the idols and idolaters of the world at present. They have no jealousy of one another. They are only jealous of God, and exhibit no feelings of the sort except when He is the object of attraction. Again, let us remark that the natural objects of jealousy are the affections of the heart. Justice may, in some respects, be thought to fulfil the object of jealousy, but justice is a gross and inactive feeling in comparison with jealousy. The slights and wanderings which inflict anguish unspeakable on the heart cannot be put into a balance and have the extent of their criminality noted by weight. How, then, can we imagine that justice is the only attribute with which those are concerned whose duty it is to love God with all their heart, and who are directed to worship Him in spirit and in truth, if they would worship Him acceptably at all? Under faith in this attribute of God it is not merely actual sin that we are told to deprecate in ourselves, or in others, but it is the love of other things than God. Have we gone, for instance, to seek pleasure in the company of His enemies? Have we sought our bread in ways which are not His? Have we looked for comfort and peace and enjoyment in other objects than in His favour? Have we been betrayed into forgetfulness of His love in the hour of trial? Have we felt coldly in His service? Whatever our own opinions may have been on such subjects, and whatever may be the system of the world, we cannot deny, and we cannot doubt, that these, and all such wanderings of the heart, must be provocations to a jealous God. It is perhaps from considering in this manner the attribute of jealousy in God that we are best able to appreciate the danger of what is commonly called the world. The world sees the justice of God, and the world fears it, and therefore it is cautious of advising anything which may seem to provoke it. But if the words of our text be true—"If the Lord our God be a consuming fire, even a jealous God," what are the terrors of His justice compared with those of His jealousy? Compared with jealousy, justice seems a cold, deliberating principle. It comes, but its very name implies that it comes slowly and maturely. It comes, but it may be pleaded with; it may be reasoned against; it may be retarded or mollified by our reasonings. But jealousy is like fire. It comes to act, to consume; and little has the world gained for its votaries by teaching them to try not to offend the justice of God, while it encourages them daily to provoke His jealousy. For, lastly, let us remark on this subject the violence of those feelings which jealousy brings into action. Do we not see that among ourselves it bursts at once the tenderest ties of which the heart of man is conscious? Founded on justice as its principle, but quickened by resentment in its action, it seems the most tremendous quality which we are capable of provoking against ourselves; and indeed, as it is peculiarly directed against that which is thought to be of all sins the most offensive—the sin of ingratitude—and of ingratitude, not for favours, but for love—it may well excite terror in those against whom it may be directed from our Maker. Let us close this subject with considering the degree in which we ourselves may be in danger of experiencing its exercise. If jealousy, which arises from love and proceeds only from love, is to be in proportion to that love which it proceeds from, what jealousy can be compared to that with which God is jealous now towards His people? (*H. Raikes, M.A.*)

Vers. 29–31. **If from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God.**—*Conversions encouraged*:—I. First, then, there is A TIME MENTIONED. "If from thence thou shalt seek the Lord. . . . When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are

come upon thee, even in the latter days." 1. The time in which the Lord bids you seek Him, O you unforgiven ones, is, first of all, "from thence"—that is, from the condition into which you have fallen, or the position which you now occupy. To-day, even to-day, He bids you seek Him "with all your heart and with all your soul." 2. With regard to the time of turning, it is well worthy of our notice that we are specially encouraged to turn unto the Lord if we are in a painful plight. Our text says, "When thou art in tribulation." Are you sick? Does your weakness increase upon you? Are you apprehensive that this sickness may even be unto death? When thou art in such tribulation, then thou mayest return to Him. A sick body should lead us the more earnestly to seek healing for our sick soul. Are you poor, have you come down from a comfortable position to one of hard labour and of scant provision? When thou art in this tribulation, then turn to the Lord, for He has sent thee this need to make thee see thy yet greater necessity, even thy need of Himself. 3. Notice further, when you feel that the judgments of God have begun to overtake you, then you may come to Him: "When thou art in tribulation and all these things"—these threatened things—"are come upon thee." 4. There is yet one more word which appears to me to contain great comfort in it, and it is this, "even in the latter days." It is a beautiful sight, though it is mingled with much sadness, to see a very old man become a babe in Christ—to see him, after he has been so many years the proud, wayward, self-confident master of himself, at last learning wisdom and sitting at Jesus' feet. They hang up in the cathedrals and public halls old banners which have long been carried by the enemy into the thick of the fight. If they have been torn by shot and shell, so much the more do the captors value them: the older the standard the more honour is it, it seems, to seize it as a trophy. II. But now look at THE WAY APPOINTED. To find mercy, what are we bidden to do? "If from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God." 1. We have not, then, to bring anything to God, but to seek Him. We have not to seek a righteousness to bring to Him, nor seek a state of heart which will fit us for Him, but to seek Him at once. Salvation is not by doing, nor by being, nor by feeling, but simply by believing. We are not to be content with self, but to seek the Lord. Being ourselves unworthy, we are to find worthiness in Jesus. 2. We are also to grasp the Lord as ours, for the text says, "Thou shalt seek the Lord thy God." Sinners, that is a part of saving faith, to take God to be your God; if He is only another man's God, He cannot save you; He must be yours to trust and love and serve all your days, or you will be lost. 3. Now, mark God's directions—"If thou seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul." There must be no pretence about this seeking. If you desire to be saved, there must be no playing and trifling and feigning. The search must be real, sincere, and earnest, intense, thorough-going, or it will be a failure. 4. The text further adds that we are to turn to Him. Did you notice the 30th verse—"If thou turn to the Lord thy God"? It must be a thorough turn. You are looking now towards the world—you must turn in the opposite direction, and look Godward. It must not be an apparent turn, but a real change of the nature, a turning of the entire soul; a turning with repentance for the past, with confidence in Christ for the present, and with holy desires for the future. Heart, soul, life, speech, action, all must be changed. 5. Then it is added, "and be obedient to His voice," for we cannot be saved in disobedience; Christ is not come to save His people in their sins, but from their sins. III. Thirdly, the text contains VERY RICH ENCOURAGEMENTS. How does it run? 1. "For the Lord thy God is a merciful God; He will not forsake thee." Catch at that, sinner,—"He will not forsake thee." If He were to say, "Let him alone, Ephraim is given unto idols," it would be all over with you; but if you seek Him, He will not say, "Let him alone," nor take His Holy Spirit from you. You are not yet given up, I hope, or you would not have been here. 2. And then it is added, "Neither destroy thee." You have been afraid He would; you have often thought the earth would open and swallow you: you have been afraid to fall asleep lest you should never wake again; but the Lord will not destroy you; nay, rather He will reveal His saving power in you. 3. There is a sweeter word still in the 29th verse, "Thou shalt find Him if thou seek Him." What more, poor sinner, what more dost thou want? 4. Then there are two reasons given: "For the Lord thy God is a merciful God." Oh guilty soul, the Lord does not want to destroy you. Judgment is His strange work. Oh soul, God has such a care for man. He waits to be gracious, and His Spirit goes forth towards sinners; therefore return to Him. 5. Now dwell upon that last argument—"He will not forget the covenant of thy fathers." The covenant always keeps open the path between

God and man. The Lord has made a covenant concerning poor sinners with His Son Jesus Christ. He has laid help upon One that is mighty, and given Him for a covenant to the people. He evermore remembers Jesus, and how He kept that covenant; He calls to mind His sighs and death-throes, and He fulfils His promise for the great Sufferer's sake. God's grace has kept His covenant on the behalf of men; God is even eager to forgive, that He may reward Christ, and give Him to see of the travail of His soul. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Seeking God*:—I. WHAT IS INVOLVED IN SEEKING GOD? 1. A sense of dissatisfaction with distance from Him. When men have all they want they do not set out upon a quest. Only the heart that feels the destitution and misery of being without God will address itself to this quest. 2. A conviction that God is to be found. Men do not seek for fruits and grain upon the ocean, but they seek them with assurance from the soil they till. Doubtless many, searching in the wrong direction, have exclaimed, "Who can, by searching, find out God?" But those who look for the Eternal in His Word, and especially in the person of His Son, cannot look in vain. 3. The seeking for God to be successful must be sincere, earnest, diligent—*i.e.* "with all thy heart and with all thy soul"—more eagerly and resolutely than men in the East sought for hidden treasure, than men seek for health, knowledge, wealth or fame. Those who thus seek for Christ—"the pearl of great price"—are not far from Him. III. WHAT IS PROMISED TO THOSE WHO THUS SEEK GOD? 1. They shall find the Object of their desire: "They that seek Me early shall find Me." Not like the search for the philosopher's stone, which men foolishly wasted life in endeavouring to find. 2. They shall find God in Christ. 3. In Christ they shall find "rest to their souls," joy, life eternal. They who find Christ find Him never to lose Him, or aught that He bestows. (*Family Churchman.*) *Great sinners encouraged to return to God*:—I. A FEW CASES TO WHICH THIS LANGUAGE APPLIES. 1. "I have gone great lengths in sin. I was a drunkard and blasphemer. God has now brought me into trouble; I cannot live long, and yet fear to die." "But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord," &c. 2. "I was born of religious parents; I was long weary of religion, and wished to be free. At length my father died, and I gave myself up to evil, and now no one cares for my soul." "But if from thence," &c. 3. "My conduct has been correct and orderly; but I have prided myself upon it; I have lived a Pharisee. Now I feel the need of something with which to appear before God." Well, "If from thence," &c. 4. "I have made a profession of religion and thought well of my state, but indulged in secret sins, and afterwards in outward transgressions, and now I am an outcast; every one shuns me." "But if from thence," &c. 5. "Though I have not lost my character, yet I have lost my peace of mind; I am a backslider." "But if from thence," &c. II. THE GROUNDS ON WHICH THIS ENCOURAGEMENT RESTS. (*A. Fuller.*) *The penitent certain of acceptance*:—I. Now, the first thing that strikes us in this address is, THAT IT IS BASED UPON THE ANTICIPATION THAT THE JEWS WOULD ABUSE THEIR MAKER'S BLESSINGS; that comfort would breed luxury, and luxury would wean the heart from God; that His place would be usurped by idols, till He should be provoked to withdraw His favour and protection. All this is foreseen as the natural propensity of the human heart. And yet, though evil is spoken of as the inevitable consequence of sin, the case was not desperate; however disgraced they might be by the tyranny of men, or degraded by the bondage of Satan, they might still find mercy from the Being they had incensed. But there is another feeling which is met by the gracious assurance of our text, which is very apt to prove a stumbling-block to those whose eyes are newly opened to their sins. II. We might persuade ourselves that God will not utterly cast off those who seek Him in sincerity and truth; BUT HOW CAN WE TELL WHETHER OUR FEELINGS ARE EARNEST ENOUGH, AND PURE ENOUGH, AND ABIDING ENOUGH TO PREVAIL WITH HIM TO LISTEN TO OUR PRAYER? As long as we thought we might trifle with safety we put off religion to a more convenient season; and it was not till our fears became intolerable that we besought Him heartily that He would save us; but terror is not conversion, and who will ensure that the present feelings will be lasting if the danger be withdrawn? or who can tell whether, indeed, they are anything but a foretaste of eternal torment? Again, would not the world continue to be dear to us if its gifts were not embittered by Providence? We turn to God in our trouble; but it is the mere selfishness of those who find that they have no other comforter. Will He be satisfied with such a worthless offering as this? Oh! well may Scripture say that "His ways are not as our ways," when it declares at the same time that such applications are welcome to Him. We bring to Him little

but disappointed hopes and blighted feelings and enfeebled health; we have tried every broken cistern before we would apply to the fountain; and even when we come at last, we come rather to escape impending punishment than from any regret for having violated our duty towards Him; and yet He scorns us not. The aged sinner, who is tottering towards the tomb, he may bring the poor remains of an ill-spent life, and find himself received at the eleventh hour. The widowed mourner, who placed all her happiness below till death snatched it from her, she may turn to the God of all consolation, and find Him a husband to herself, and a father to the fatherless around her. The convert, in all his new-born indignation, though he is sensible that he is more anxious to escape the wrath to come than the evil which provokes it, shall be accepted according to that he hath, and more shall be imparted for his improvement. I do not say that such motives are the purest or the strongest by which we can be actuated; but I say the question is whether our hearts are really changed or no, and not in what motive the change may have originated. Do you ask, then, whether your feelings are such as will prevail upon God to listen to your prayers? Prove them by acting immediately and perseveringly upon them. The tree is known by the fruit which it produces; and those, be sure, are proper feelings which bring you in a state of humiliation to the Cross of Christ. (*J. Stainforth, M.A.*) *God to be found by seeking:*—I. NOTICE A FEW CASES TO WHICH THIS LANGUAGE APPLIES. 1. The openly profane and immoral. 2. Those who were religiously educated. 3. The formal professor. 4. The backslider. The dying sinner. II. OBSERVE THE GROUNDS ON WHICH THE ENCOURAGEMENT RESTS. 1. The character of God. 2. The work of Christ. 3. The promises of the Gospel. 4. Scriptural examples of pardoned and accepted sinners. III. IMPROVE THE SUBJECT. 1. It takes away all ground of excuse from the impenitent. 2. It takes away all ground of despair from the contrite. (*G. Brooks.*) *Those that seek God shall find Him:*—At one place to which I went I saw a dear soul to whom I put the question, "Are you converted?" "I was once"—given with, oh, such a disconsolate aspect!—"I was once, but that is all gone. I was a worker for Him once," he said, with a sob, "but it is all different now." My heart went out to that one. Why? There is a fire in a room, and you are crouching in a cold corner, far away from the fire. You do not say that the fire has forsaken you. Oh no, you have left the fire; conscious of that fact, you go back to it, and are soon again basking in its warmth. Ah, those who seek Him find Him, and He is so loving and so forgiving, in spite of all the hard thoughts which you had of Him. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (*W. Haslam.*) *Earnest seeking successful:*—Success in this world comes only to those who exhibit determination. Can we hope for salvation unless our mind is truly set upon it? Grace makes a man be as resolved to be saved as the beggar was to get to Jesus and gain his sight. "I must see him," said an applicant at the door of a public person. "You cannot see him," said the servant; but the man waited at the door. A friend went out to him and said, "You cannot see the master, but I can give you an answer; "No," said the importunate pleader, "I will stay all night on the doorstep, but I will see the man himself. He alone will serve my turn." You do not wonder that, after many rebuffs, he ultimately gained his point. It would be an infinitely greater wonder if an importunate sinner did not obtain an audience from the Lord Jesus If you must have grace, you shall have it. If you will not be put off you shall not be put off. Whether things look favourable or unfavourable, press on till you find Jesus, and you shall find Him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Trouble often drives people to God:*—There is a story told that in the olden time Artaxerxes and another great king were engaged in a furious fight. In the middle of the battle an eclipse happened, and such was the horror of the warriors that they made peace then and there. Happy will you be if your trouble will cause you to fly to the arms of God. If you tell your troubles to Him you put them into the grave; if you roll your burden anywhere else, it will roll back again like the stone of Sisyphus. The springs at the base of the Alpine mountains are fullest when the summer sun has dried and parched the verdure in the valleys below. The heat that has burned the arid plains has melted mountain glacier and snow, and increased the volume of the mountain streams. Thus when adversity has dried the springs of earthly comfort, the saint has the fulness of the springs of salvation. *The heart reached by adversity:*—The four seasons once determined to try which could quickest reach the heart of a stone. Spring coaxed the stone with its gentle breezes, and made flowers encircle it, and trees to shoot out their branches and embower it, but all to no

purpose. The stone remained indifferent to the beauties of the spring, nor would it yield its heart to its gentle caresses. Summer came next, and caused the sun to shine on the stone, hoping to melt its obdurate heart; but though the surface of the stone grew warm, it quickly became cold again when not under the influence of the summer sun's rays. Summer thus being unable by any degree of warmth to penetrate the flinty nature of the stone, gave place to autumn. Believing that the stone had been treated with too much kindness, the autumn withered the flowers and stripped the trees of their leaves, and threatened and blustered, but still the stone remained impassive. Winter came next. First it sent strong winds, which laid the stone bare, then it sent a cold rain, and next a hard frost, which cleaved the stone and laid bare its heart. So many a heart, which neither gentleness, warmth, nor threats can touch, is reached by adversity. (*A. Freeman.*)

Ver. 32. **Ask now of the days that are past.**—*Inquiry of the past*:—1. The past may refer to—(1) General history. So in context. (2) Individual life. So we take it now. 2. Inquiry of the past. (1) Some do not think of the past. This arises from—(*a*) Thoughtlessness. (*b*) Guilt. (*c*) A false philosophy. (2) It is our wisdom to "ask of the days that are past." (*a*) Because the past is in existence now. (*b*) Because for the past we are responsible. (*c*) Because the past is full of useful lessons. I. Ask of past BLESSINGS. How have they been received? 1. The blessings. (1) Material. (2) Spiritual. Prayers answered, inspiring and uplifting influences imparted, help rendered, soul's need supplied, strength in trial, light in darkness, wisdom in ignorance, discipline to purify and perfect. 2. Their reception. Have they been received—(1) As from God? (2) As undeserved mercies? (3) In a thankful spirit? II. Ask of past OPPORTUNITIES. How have they been used? 1. Opportunities of getting good. (1) Mental good. (2) Moral good. Have they been turned to profit, or lost for ever? 2. Opportunities of doing good. (1) To the bodies of men. (2) To the souls of men. Instructing the ignorant, guiding the perplexed, comforting the sorrowful, rebuking the sinner, reclaiming the erring, speaking the word in season, &c. III. Ask of past SINS. Have they been repented of and pardoned? 1. Sins of omission. 2. Sins of commission. (1) Against God. Irreverence. Unsubmissiveness. Ingratitude. Unfaithfulness. (2) Against man. Injustice. Untruthfulness. Uncharitableness. (*Homilist.*) *The days that are past*:—An imperial philosopher, having divided time into the past, the present, and the future, says, we should give the past to oblivion, the present to duty, and the future to Providence. Now, we admire two of these admonitions. We readily give the future to Providence, and we ought to give the present to duty; so that "whatsoever our hands find to do, we may do it with our might." But we can never consent to give the past to oblivion. "God requires that which is past," and He requires us to remember it. I. THE PAST DAYS OF OTHERS, THOSE WHO HAVE LIVED BEFORE US. 1. See that your aim in this be not only, or principally, mere amusement; but endeavour to derive lessons mental and moral, and religious instruction, from the characters and the events recorded. 2. Secondly, beware how you place implicit confidence in history. Endeavour to distinguish between fiction and truth. 3. Relinquish the prejudice which Solomon assails when he says, "Ask not why the former days were better than these, for thou dost not wisely concerning this matter." No, the thing is not true; we ought to be wiser than the ancients, for we are much more ancient than they. Certainly, the world is older now than it was ages ago. Surely mankind are not incapable of intellectual or moral progression and improvement. II. THOSE OF YOURSELVES: THOSE WHICH YOU HAVE PASSED THROUGH IN YOUR OWN HISTORY AND EXPERIENCE. These come nearer home, and are more easily reviewed and compared. There is something very solemn in the thought of days that are past; past, never to return, while their moral results remain for ever as subjects of future responsibility. And who has not to reckon upon days that are past? for time, like tide, stays for no man. 1. Let us ask, then, what they have to say concerning the world. Mr. Savage has strikingly remarked, "I never knew any of the people of the world praise it at parting." Nor need we wonder at this: we should wonder if they did. They have been too much in it, they have seen too much of it, they have been too much deceived by it, to recommend it to others, when dying, from their own history and experience. 2. "Ask the days that are past" what they have to say concerning yourselves. Have they not shown you many things with which you were formerly unacquainted, and filled you with surprise and regret? Ah! how many convictions have you violated, how many resolutions have you

broken? Instead of the paradise you promised yourself, you have found yourselves in a wilderness. Have not your dependencies often proved broken reeds—not only unable to sustain your hopes, but which have "pierced you through with many sorrows"? And yet will not these "days that are past" also tell you something else? Will they not tell you that life has been at least a chequered scene? If you have been in the wilderness, have you not found grace in the sanctuary? Have you not had there the fiery, cloudy pillar to guide you? Have you not had the manna to sustain you? Have you not had the waters from the rock to refresh you? Have you not had some of the grapes of Eshcol? 3. "Ask of the days that are past" what they have to say concerning the Scriptures. (1) Have they not tended to confirm them? (2) Have they not tended to explain them? (3) Have they not tended to endear them? 4. "Ask the days that are past" what they have to say concerning our Lord and Saviour. Ask them whether He has not been a good Master; whether you cannot say at the end of ten, or twenty, or thirty, or forty, or sixty years, "Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant, O Lord." Ask them whether He has not been your powerful Helper and your kindest Friend. Three conclusions are derivable from this:—(1) The first is, that you commit yourselves to God by prayer, that you may be prepared for all your future days, whatever may be their complexion. (2) Secondly, that you should beware of presumption; that you should leave off devising, and say, "The Lord shall choose my inheritance for me." (3) Thirdly, you should equally guard against despondency; for though you know not what your future days may be, you know that nothing they contain in them will happen by chance. One thing you know, that "all the way of the Lord" towards you will be "mercy and truth." One thing you know, that "all things work together for good to them that love God." (*W. Jay.*) *The voice of the past*:—Time is a great mystery. "Time," says Carlyle, "is for ever very literally a miracle—a thing to strike us dumb; for we have no word to speak about it." Strictly speaking, it is we who move, and time stands still, although the contrary appears to be the case; as to travellers in any speedy kind of locomotion, the objects close at hand seem to flit rapidly past them, whereas they know that it is themselves that are in motion. Of nothing are we more slow to think than of the nature and value of time, both as regards its highest present uses and its relation to that eternity from which, by Divine fiat, it was first drawn, and into which it shall finally return. "The past" is a very solemn word. It is irrevocably gone, marked on the part of us all by manifold follies and sins; replete with painful accusations of conscience. Although the past is so irrevocably gone from our reach that it cannot be used for the purpose for which it was originally given,—that of living in its duration to God,—yet a serious review of the past year, for instance, may and, if rightly made, must, be productive of profit to us all. Just as the ship which has been totally wrecked, although it can no more traverse the sea, yet its shattered planks may be rendered serviceable for many useful purposes. Let us ask of the days that are past—I. THAT WE MAY ENTERTAIN A HUMBLING CONSCIOUSNESS OF OUR OWN UNPROFITABLENESS IN THE USE WE HAVE MADE OF OUR TIME. Constituted as we are, it is imperative upon us that we should give much of our attention to the care of the body and to the regulation of our temporal affairs; yet it is a humbling reflection that beings possessed of such amazing capacities as those enfolded in every human soul, should have so much of their attention engaged in things which bear unequivocal marks of insignificance. Much of the past year has passed in sleep, in providing and partaking of food, in humble domestic arrangements, in the dull routine of business or the idle lassitude of relaxation. And who amongst us can plead guiltless to such charges as these? Who can say of the past year, "Its time has gone just as I could have wished; I could not desire any future year to be better spent than this has been"? Alas! none. II. THAT WE MAY HAVE A GRATEFUL SENSE OF THE DIVINE GOODNESS AND FORBEARANCE. III. THAT WE MAY, BY DIVINE HELP, RESOLVE TO CORRECT IN THE FUTURE THOSE THINGS WHICH HAVE BEEN EVILS IN THE PAST. (*J. Foster.*) *The goodness of God displayed in creation, providence, and redemption*:—I. View the text as the language of a contemplative and spiritual mind, retired from the cares of the world, SURVEYING WITH PIOUS DELIGHT THE WONDERS OF CREATION, and tracing in all the works of God the glory and goodness of their Almighty Maker. Universal nature proclaims the glory of God. This earth which we inhabit, the ground upon which we tread, declare to us the greatness and mercy of the Almighty. How great is its beauty! How beneficial its fruits! By its liberal provision all former generations have been supported, and from its unexhausted magazines and varied resources

all nations are supplied with food and raiment. When, from the inanimate creation, the Christian turns his views to the animal world, he traces there the footsteps of the Almighty, and the operations of His hand. The beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea, their shape and figure, their infinite variety, the fit season of their production, their skill in procuring food, and especially their utility to man, all testify that the earth is replenished with the Creator's goodness. Man himself is the perfection of this lower world. Let the Christian, from himself and the wonders around him, rise to the contemplation of the heavenly bodies. These celestial luminaries instruct as well as shine. And perhaps, could we wing our way "beyond this visible diurnal sphere," and soar above these rolling planets, we should discover other suns, other stars, other and perhaps nobler systems, established through the boundless regions of space. But here inquiry stops; here our views terminate; yet from such a survey of the heavens and the earth we feel an elevating impulse: we are lost in wonder and admiration. II. Consider the text AS THE REFLECTION OF A CHILD OF PROVIDENCE, after a serious and devout review of the dispensations of God to himself and to others. Nothing yields us so certain a conviction of the providence of God, or evinces so fully its extent, equity, and care, as the consideration of the experience of it which we ourselves have had. It will therefore be the frequent and delightful employment of good men to recall the memory of God's great goodness, and to reflect upon the measures of His providence with them in former years. They gratefully contemplate the Divine care which protected them from many dangers. But with still greater satisfaction the Christian reflects upon the care of providence extended to his spiritual concerns. To Thee, my God, I ascribe all the glory and the praise of all that I am, and all that I enjoy! To the silent, secret, effectual influences of Thy Spirit I owe the pleasures of religion which I experience; to the unseen hand of Thy providence conducting me through the mazes of the world I ascribe that comfortable situation in life which I have attained. But the Christian confines not his contemplations upon providence to himself, or the inconsiderable transactions of his own life. He extends his prospect, and sees God ruling over all; he views the Almighty sitting upon His throne of justice and judgment, dispensing to every man a just proportion of good and evil, according to the counsel of His sovereign will. Numberless events in the course of providence, indeed, are to him dark and intricate; he cannot penetrate into their causes, nor assign any satisfactory reason for them. But he checks every hasty, unguarded thought and expression upon the subject. He knows that only a small corner of the plan of Divine administration is made known to him; how these partial evils shall promote the general good, and display the glory of the sovereign Disposer, he cannot now explain. But a scene far more bright and joyous opens upon the Christian's view in the conduct of the Almighty respecting the redemption of man. He contemplates, with astonishment, that plan of wisdom and grace into which angels desire to look. He views the kingdom of Christ advancing in the world, mean and contemptible in its origin, opposed in its progress by the hostile persecuting spirit of the rulers of the world, yet gathering strength from every wound, spreading far and wide, including, in process of time, a great part of the habitable world, and now established on such solid permanent foundations as affords warrant, even upon principles of human probability, for believing that no weapon formed against its interests shall finally prosper. These are subjects which, to the pious, contemplative Christian, afford inexhaustible matter of delightful meditation and praise. III. Consider the text AS THE BREATHINGS OF THE CHRISTIAN WHEN ADORING THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST JESUS, and ascribing all his salvation to unmerited sovereign grace. This is the noblest theme of all. A Christian beholds with delight the Supreme Judge passing an act of indemnity, and acquitting the sinner from the charge of guilt, restoring to favour and adopting him into His family. I conclude with a few practical inferences:—1. Consider how unsearchable must be the greatness, and how ineffable the glory, of that God who does so great things for the children of men. 2. Observe the ingratitude, the guilt, and danger of impertinent sinners, who remain at ease without God and without Christ in this life. 3. Let the children of God give glory to their heavenly Father for all His mercies. (*A. Bonar.*) **Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire?**—*The speciality of the Bible:*—This is the eternal challenge of the Bible. The appeal may be regarded as a call to the study of comparative religion. There are many religions in the world; gather them up into one view, extend the inquiry far and wide, through time and space, and see whether the Bible does not separate itself from all other books by

miracles that cannot be rivalled and by excellences that cannot be equalled. The Bible simply wants to be heard, to be read, and to be understood. It asks nothing from its ablest teachers but a paraphrase true to its own spirit and tone. It will not have addition; it will have expansion: it will not be decorated from the outside; it asks that its root may have full scope to express in leaf and blossom and bud and fruit all the bloom of its beauty and all the wealth of its uses. This is the position Moses occupies: we cannot amend the position; we accept it. Note the speciality which Moses fixes upon. He asks a question—"Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?"—if so, prove it. The challenge is not a lame one. The Bible awaits the evidences. We, if earnest men, should be in quest of the best book, without asking who wrote it or by what authority was it written. If it speak to us as no other book can speak, we are bound to accept it. Christianity says in effect—What other religion is there that deals with sin as I deal with it? I do not ignore it; I do not hasten over it; I do not treat it as a mere incident, or a cutaneous affection which superficial means may subdue and which proper attention may remove. What other religion, theory, philosophy, grapples with sin as Christianity does? It will penetrate it, cleave it asunder, analyse it, search into it, and never rest until it gets out of the soul the last fibre of the bad root, the last stain of the fatal poison. Let us be fair to facts; whether we are in the Church or out of the Church, whether we belong to this section or to that section, do let us in common decency acknowledge that Christianity, come whence it may, does grapple with infinite energy with sin. The appeal of Christianity also is—"Ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other," whether any other religion tries to make the same kind of men that Christianity makes? Let us judge the tree by its fruit. We are not superstitious or fanatical or narrow-minded; we do ask the question, and insist upon an answer, Does any other religion make such men as Christianity makes? Here Christianity must be judged by its purpose, by its own written word and claim, and not wholly by the men themselves, because we are still in the land of bondage in many particulars: we are in the flesh; we suffer from a thousand weaknesses; Christianity, therefore, must be judged in its declared intention regarding the culture of manhood. What kind of men does Christianity want to make? Weak men? It never made one weak man. Strong men, valiant men, men of the keenest mind, men of the largest judgment, men of the most generous disposition; if that is the kind of men Christianity wants to make, where is the religion that can excel or equal Christianity in that purpose? Produce the men! Judge by facts. Where Christianity has entered into a life, what has it done with that life? Can it be proved that Christianity, fairly understood and thoroughly received, has soured the temper, narrowed the sympathies, dwarfed the noble ambitions of the soul? Has Christianity ever made unhappy homes, unrighteous parents? Let the challenge be thoroughly understood and frankly replied to. Christianity lives visibly in the Christian. Christianity wants to put away all other evidence, argument, and wordy encounter, and to be able to say, Judge me by my children; judge me by my believers; I am what they are. Therefore, if the Church of the Living God could stand up complete in the purpose of its Redeemer and Sanctifier, the snowy pureness of its character, the lofty dignity of its moral temper would abash every assailant and silence every accuser. Do not be harsh, or point with mocking finger to some poor weak soul, and say, If this man represents Christianity we do not want to know further what Christianity is. Christianity can only be judged by the Book which reveals it, by the Christ who founded it, and by the noble history which has surrounded it. So we accept and repeat this challenge. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 35. **Unto thee it was shewed.**—*All national and individual responsibility to God peculiarly applicable to Britain, both as a Church and State*:—I. THAT WHILE ALL NATIONS AND ALL PEOPLE ARE BOUND TO SERVE THE LORD, and are accountable to Him for so doing or not, according to the opportunities they possess and the privileges with which they are favoured for knowing His character and learning His truth and will, SOME NATIONS AND PEOPLE ARE MORE PECULIARLY ENGAGED THUS TO SERVE HIM, AND ARE UNDER A CORRESPONDENT DEGREE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR DOING SO OR NOT; because some nations and people are more highly favoured than others in all these respects, and are distinguished by greater privileges and opportunities for knowing and doing the Divine will than many

others, who are, notwithstanding, all accountable unto God. Now, in order to place this truth in its proper light, let us suppose a case whose propriety and certainty few, we expect, will be disposed to dispute. And, to begin with —1. Individuals, let us suppose the case of one man, born and bred a pure heathen; another, brought up with some degree of opportunity for gaining the true knowledge of God, &c., in civilised life; and a third, in the same condition, in full possession of the Word of truth and salvation. The great law of man's universal responsibility, amidst all this variety of condition, equally applies to them all. But the advantages which the one possesses over the other bind the one in a more powerful manner to the duty enforced. And when you arrive at the greatest measure of privilege, do you not behold its accompanying claims rising to the same point, and bearing an even requisition with the highest elevation? 2. Nations. Nations are nothing more than vast numbers of individuals, located in various parts of the earth, and cemented by certain laws and regulations in orderly and social compact. The same truths, therefore, which apply to one person will surely extend to ten thousand, or to as many millions, of the human family thus connected together. 3. Whether the doctrine we inculcate is founded upon, and stands in agreement with, the pure Word of God. Did not the very mercies and privileges which the Lord bestowed upon Israel lay them under peculiar obligations, and bind them in an especial manner to love and serve Him? II. WHERE DOES THE TRUTH THUS PROPOUNDED AND ESTABLISHED FALL IN ITS FULL WEIGHT; AND TO WHOM DOES IT MORE PECULIARLY APPLY IN ALL ITS AUTHORITY AND AGGRAVATION? The inquiry evidently regards the past and the present time. 1. The past time. Where, in the ages that are passed, are we to look for such a nation or people? Must we not at once fix our attention upon Israel of old, and say, Thou art that nation, and thou art that people? What wonders did God work on their behalf! What large and unmerited mercies did He bestow on them! What astonishing deliverances did He vouchsafe to them! But must our inquiries terminate here? 2. The present time. Many nations are presented to our view. Some great and strong; others weak and debased. Some altogether enshrouded in heathen blindness; others groaning under Mohammedan tyranny and delusion. Some rent with internal convulsions; others sitting down in comparative quiet. Some, once mighty and renowned, merged in the general streams of rival powers, and known no more as separate kingdoms, except in the records of their ancient exploits and fame. But amidst all this national and political chaos presented to our view can we fix on no spot which in a more especial manner is more highly favoured than any other? Yes, we can. Like some tall majestic oak amidst the underwood of the forest, or like the cloud-capped mountain contrasted with the hillocks of the plain, or like the stately man-of-war amidst the wharfage of the port, there is one nation amidst all the diversified tribes of man which stands thus conspicuous in the view, and thus crowned with privileges and blessings! Oh England, my beloved place and nation, thou wearest this crown! thou standest on this elevation! Not only in common with all others, but above and beyond all others, hast thou been blessed and crowned with loving-kindness and tender mercies! What hath not the Lord done for thee? (1) As a nation. Hath He not raised thee from small beginnings to unexampled greatness? Hath He not brought thee from a poor degraded state of heathen misery, in which thy forefathers were sunk, to be at once the mistress, the envy, and the glory of the world? And in the course of thy experience, from thy low original to thy present greatness, hath not the Lord often wrought for thee by a mighty hand and by a stretched-out arm? And art thou not bound, in proportion to what He hath done for thee? Oh! beware lest thou stand as conspicuous in ingratitude and guilt as thou art in privilege and blessing! But are national distinctions and advantages all that the Lord hath done for thee? Are not thy privileges—2. As a church, as great as thy mercies as a nation? He hath not left thee without witness; not merely, as He testified to the heathen, "giving rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, and filling our hearts with food and gladness"; but as He deals with His own inheritance, sending to thee the truths of His Word and the messages of His salvation. Do we, as a nation, church, or people, live up to these privileges, and bring forth the fruit which God so justly requires at our hands? Are the mercies we possess prized as they ought to be? Are they improved as they ought to be? Is God honoured and glorified as He ought to be? Is the Gospel of peace valued as it ought to be? Is the Word of life received as it ought to be? Do we walk in the statutes and ordinances of God as we ought to do? (*R. Shittler.*) *The revelation of God*:—I. IN HIS NAME. Is

it answered, "That is only a word"? But what are words? People do not forge and utter words as they please. They cannot be made or unmade by votes of assemblies or edicts of kings. They are chronic. They come into existence by a law of nature. They are carved out of unstable air by a supernatural power. To call God's Word or name "priestcraft" is itself cant. A set of priests could no more have created it than they could an ocean or a mountain range. Matthew Arnold says, "God means the Brilliant in the sky." But what makes it to shine, and to wear the blue firmament for a robe? There could have been no name if no Lord,—as no names for plant, beast, earth, sea, but that these things were, and to do aught in His name is to do it by His strength and for His honour. Cæsar may be a myth, and Eve in the garden a tale, but no appellations can overrate the Eternal. II. IN HIS WORK: what He does shows what He is. All the phrases which sceptics think so lightly of are but the labels of His wonders. "But all the Bibles," says the denier, are human compositions written in time: show me the sacred books that existed before the men did, I will admit they were from God!" But did the penmen, indeed, originate the subject of their books? Was not their stint set! We do not affirm a God out of us. What is out of us is not so easy to say. The whole creation is somehow in our thought. I have a feeling that fetches down from Orion. My imagination girdles the Pleiades. God is not less to me because He exists not externally but in the consciousness of my own bosom, and I cannot dismiss my guest. If no characters by Him were ever entered on a paper leaf, stone tablet from Sinai, or Egyptian column, do we not find His engraving in living organisms and on the vast layers of the globe? "Providence" is one of these obstinate, indestructible words in the daily discourse of mankind. A great, forthreaching, unbaffled, and unending plan, a purpose through the ages, one must be worse than colour-blind not to see, with a steady accomplishment,—style it fitness, adjustment, design, as you will. Not a nook of nature but is His workshop, not an event without His procedure. III. IN HIS NATURE, OR IMAGE. Had He left no sign-manual of His authorship in our frame all else were to us a dumb show. Why do beasts and insects not perceive the drift of the plot on this broad external stage? Because, even in their innocence, they cannot yet come to themselves, and in themselves find their Father. But what features of His face are unveiled to us? 1. First, of sincerity, the open look. Why can we not be free from this candid bond, but that the Divinity reveals within us His essence of truth, as a claim beyond convenience or uses of the hour, so infinite that no liar can be content till he has confessed? After what long and stubborn perjury, from at last being convinced by some co-conspirator that falsehood is kindest and best, a quickened conscience forces the wretched deceiver, man or woman, in mutual crime, to own at last even the forswearing, and throw off the disguise that hinders peace with God! 2. Next, the line of rectitude in this countenance we pray God to lift upon us, and which He never quite withdraws. Truth is right speech, and righteousness is true conduct. If your neighbour will not rest in any wrong you do him, you will be the last to be satisfied with your own unfairness, because Deity is equity in your vital parts. 3. There is one more lineament in that face whose glance we cannot escape: it is goodness. But the goodness must be more than doting on one person, however winsome and dear. I know an earnest love; but God save me from an exclusive one, and keep me from wishing or enduring the monopoly of a human heart! We may be partial to one person, like the sun flattering some mountain-top or blazing back from some windowed tower as he rises or sets; but be we also impartial as the sun, making the whole earth his reflection and flinging his radiance through the sky. IV. IN THE HEALTHFUL EXERCISE OF OUR POWERS. We find God in innocent pleasures as in solemn forms, as parents are as much pleased with their children's gambols as with their deferential requests. The little orthodox boy, repeating his prayers so punctually in his country cot, said one morning, "Good-bye, God: I am going to Boston to stay a fortnight"; he not having been taught how that sublime Presence would smile on him amid all the sights of the city, as when the soul was commended to Him in sleep. The small girl was pious in a more rational way who, going home from her first dance, ere she put off her pretty dress, fell on her knees to thank God for the pleasure He had given her at the children's ball. God is the problem whose last and clearest solution is in the corollary of duty, which, as Kant says, is the practical reason piecing out the ladder to climb to Him, where the speculative ends. In this transparency of conscience all the vexing riddles conclude. With a dogged satisfaction, in dire extremity, it helps us to stand at our post and do our office, as the old *Cumberland* still fired her guns when sinking to

her gunwale. There was something in those sailors, as in all faithful unto death, not going down! (*C. A. Bartol, D.D.*)

Ver. 39. **Consider it in thine heart, that the Lord He is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath.**—*The relation of man to God:*—We must have God before we can understand Him. We must receive Him into our loving trust before we can make any advance in knowing what He is, what are His qualities and His attributes, and what is all the meaning that is written in His infinite heart. I am delighted to tell again and again of the poor woman who, upon being interrogated by her minister concerning formal divinity, before she could be admitted as a guest at the Lord's table, was utterly unable to answer a single question; whereupon the minister informed her that she was not fit to be admitted to the table of the Lord. "Sir," said she, with womanly feeling and pathos, "I can't answer these questions, but I could die for Him." That is religion! Not answering questions only, not being able to enter into critical disquisitions, but sending the heart out to receive God into its trust and love. Hence the exhortation of the text, "Consider it in thine heart." You may consider the question in the intellectual region, and get little or nothing out of the considerations. When the heart knows its own hunger and its own bitterness, then, in that sad but holy hour, the heart may get some hold upon the idea of God. I can imagine the man of average education and intelligence, whom I am imaginatively addressing, asking me some such question as this, How is it that God does not show Himself more clearly to us than He does, and so put an end to all uncertainty concerning Himself? I answer, Are we capable of understanding what is and what is not the proper degree and method of Divine manifestation? Is it becoming in men, who cannot certainly tell what will happen in one single hour, that they should write a programme for God, and appoint the way of the Almighty? These things cause me to say that religious questions, if they are to be profitably considered at all, must be considered in a deeply religious spirit. You can make no advancement in this learning unless you bring a right heart with you. That is the beginning. There was a peculiar controversy or conversation in my garden the other day; it quite entertained me. There were, after those heavy rains, two worms that had struggled out of the earth, and found their way upon the wet green grass; and they began to talk in a very decided and mocking manner about myself. One, the elder and better-to-do of the two, said, "Eh, eh, eh! We have been told that this garden has an owner or somebody that takes care of it, that nourishes the roots of things, and that altogether presides over the affair. Eh, eh, eh, I never saw him. If there is such an owner, why doesn't he show himself more clearly?—why doesn't he come to the front and let us see him, eh?" And the leaner one of the two said, "That is an unanswerable argument. I never saw him. There may be such a being, but I care nothing about him; only, if he is alive, why don't he show himself?" They quite wriggled in contemptuous triumph; yet all the while I was standing there, looking at the poor creatures, and hearing them! I could have set my foot upon them and crushed them; but I did not. There is a way of wasting strength; there is also a way of showing patience. But the worms could not understand my nature. I was standing there, and they knew me not! What if it be so with ourselves in the greater questions? Proceeding with our statement respecting the revelation of God, I have now to ask you to believe with me, as a matter of fact—1. That we stand to God in the relation of dependants. That is our actual position in life. "What hast thou, that thou hast not received?" Let a man begin his studies there, and he will become correspondingly reverent. Have you genius? Who lighted the lamp? Have you health? Who gave you your constitution? Do you find the earth productive? "Yes." Who made it productive? "I did. I till it; I supply all the elements of nourishment needful; I did." Did you? Can you make it rain? Can you make the sun shine? If a man once be started on that course of reflection, the probability is, that he who begins as a reverent inquirer will end as a devout worshipper. 2. Then I ask you to believe, in the next place, that the very fact of being dependent should lead us to be very careful how we measure the sovereignty and the government of God. He has made us servants, not masters. We are little children, not old beings, in His household and universe. We are mysteries to ourselves. We need not go from home to seek mysteries. 3. I have to ask you, in the third place, to believe that the very fact of the mystery of our own life should be the beginning and the defence of our faith in God. Reason from yourself upwards. There is a way out of the

human to the Divine. It is a commendable course of procedure to reason from the known to the unknown. If you are such a mystery to your own child, if the philosopher is such a mystery to the uninstructed man, if you are such a mystery to yourself—why may there not be a power around more mysterious still, higher and nobler yet? Reason from yourselves—from your own capacities and your own resources. Is not the maker greater than the thing made? Take away the idea of God from human thinking, and mark the immediate and necessary consequences. This is a method of reasoning which I commend to the attention of young inquirers who are earnest about this business. The method, namely, of withdrawment. If a man doubts concerning God, I shall withdraw the idea of God from human thinking, and see the necessary consequences. If a man has any argument to adduce against Christianity, take Christianity out of the country, and see what will be left. Take out the doctrine, take out the practice, take out not only Christian theology, but Christian morality, and see how many hospitals would be left, and how many penitentiaries, infirmaries, schools, and asylums for the deaf and the dumb and the blind and the idiotic. So take away the idea of God from human thinking, and see the immediate and inevitable consequences. There is no God; then there is no supreme supervision of human life as a whole; for none could have the eye that could see the whole orbit of things. We see points, not circumferences. There is no God; then there is no final judgment by which the wrongs of centuries can be avenged; there is no heart brooding over us to which we can confide the story of our sorrow, or tell the anguish of our pain. Set God again on the throne, and all that makes life worth having, even imaginatively, comes back again. Set God upon the throne, and all things take upon them a new, true, beautiful meaning; there is hope of judgment, and a certainty that right will eventually be done. Shall I ask you to remember—observe, I still speak to my scholar whom I assume to be diligent and earnest—that our little day has been too short to know the full mystery of God? When an infant of yours has gone to school, do you expect the little one to come back at twelve o'clock on the first day and be able to read you a chapter even out of the simplest book? You are an old man; yes, but a young being, an infantile being. Very old indeed, if you think of insuring yourself, or buying another estate, or laying out a great sum of money—very, very old indeed; but if you are talking of the universe, you are the insect of a moment—hardly born! But you wish to read the book called the Universe through at one sitting, like a cheap novel. Thou art of yesterday, and knowest nothing; and I, thy teacher, what am I but a man who, having seen one ray of light amid thick and terrible gloom, come to thee and stand here that you may see the same beautiful revelation! All this shows us what our spirit ought to be. He who comes to school with this spirit will learn most and learn it most quickly. And this let me tell you, young man, the greatest men I have ever known have been the most humble, docile, self-distrustful. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 40. **Thou shalt keep therefore His statutes, and His commandments, . . . that it may go well with thee.**—*A command and a promise:*—I. MOSES ENJOINS AN OBLIGATION, WHICH IS REALLY THE HIGHEST PRIVILEGE. 1. Israel's relation to God. (1) In contrast with Gentile beliefs—polytheistic—each nation its own God; mostly debased forms of human passion. (2) Jehovah proclaims Himself *only* God, others His subjects (Jer. x. 7; Psa. xxii. 28); but they, His *one* people (chap. xxxii. 9). (3) Moses bids them realise that they *are* the prerogative nation of the world (Exod. xix. 6). (*a*) By His presence among them. (*b*) By keeping commandments. (*c*) Of this, love of God must be the root. 2. The grounds of this relation. (1) "Not thy righteousness." (2) "Love for thy fathers." II. MOSES HOLDS OUT A PROMISE. Each Israelite had—1. A full life—long share of temporal blessings. 2. Then partly realised by—(1) Rescue from Egypt (chap. iv. 20); and (2) Then their recent first victory, taking possession of the land (Numb. xxi. 33–35). 3. But partly in store. (1) Jordan to be crossed, and (2) Canaan won. 4. Thus, in spite of their dastardly unworthiness, promise ripened to performance. (*H. Hayman, D.D.*) *Penalty of disregarding commands:*—On the bridge of a good steamer was the captain giving the right course, N.-by-W. 67°. He had taken account of eddies and currents. The second officer, leaving, perhaps, the currents out of consideration, came and directed the helmsman to make it N.-by-W. 57°, but to bring the ship round so gently that the captain would not notice it. The result was a disastrous wreck. If we refuse to hearken to God's voice, and we disobey His commands, our lives will be wrecked, and all our hopes of happiness shattered.

Obedience indispensable :—Suppose I have a son, say ten years old, and I want him to go to school until he is fifteen or twenty years, but he has just set his will against mine. He says, "I refuse to go to school for another day." I tell you that that child will be unable to do one thing to please me until he goes to school. He may make all the sacrifices he may have a mind to, he may go out and earn two or three shillings a day, and bring every penny to me; but I do not want his money, I want his obedience. What God wants is obedience. (*D. L. Moody.*) *Obedience to God is conducive to our welfare :*—Another peculiar excellency of our religion is, that it prescribes an accurate rule of life,—most agreeable to reason and to our nature; most conducive to our welfare and content, tending to procure each man's private good, and to promote the public benefit of all, by the strict observance whereof we bring our human nature to a resemblance of the Divine; and we shall also thereby obtain God's favour, oblige and benefit men, and procure to ourselves the conveniences of a sober life and the pleasure of a good conscience. For if we examine the precepts which respect our duty to God, what can be more just, pleasant, or beneficial to us than are those duties of piety which our religion enjoins? What is more fit and reasonable than that we should most highly esteem and honour Him who is most excellent; that we should bear the sincerest affection for Him who is perfect goodness Himself, and most beneficial to us; that we should have the most awful dread of Him that is infinitely powerful, holy, and just; that we should be very grateful to Him from whom we received our being, with all the comforts and conveniences of it; that we should entirely trust and hope in Him who can and will do whatever we may in reason expect from His goodness—nor can He ever fail to perform His promises; that we should render all due obedience to Him whose children, servants, and subjects we are? The practice of such a piety, of a service so reasonable, cannot but be of vast advantage to us, as it procures peace of conscience, a comfortable hope, a freedom from all terrors and scruples of mind, from all tormenting cares and anxieties. (*I. Barrow.*)

Vers. 41, 42. **Then Moses severed three cities on this side Jordan, that the slayer might flee thither.**—*The cities of refuge :*—The cities here mentioned were called the cities of refuge. They were appointed by the command of God Himself; and, after the Israelites had crossed the river Jordan and entered the land of Canaan, three more were set apart on the other side of the river for the same purpose. I. WHAT THERE WAS REMARKABLE IN THEIR INSTITUTION, IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT DISTINGUISHED THEM. They were then so well chosen, with such attention to the design proposed, that no part of the country was more than half a day's journey from some one of them. II. BEHOLD IN THESE CITIES OF REFUGE AN EMBLEM OF THE REDEMPTION PROVIDED IN THE GOSPEL. See in the fugitive a fitting likeness of those who flee for refuge to the hope set before them in Christ Jesus. The ancient city of refuge stood on high, easy to be seen of all, holding out safety to those who needed it. Even so hath Jesus Christ been lifted up on the Cross, that the eye of faith may be turned to Him, and the hope of salvation arise in the heart of the penitent believer. The road that led to the cities of refuge was broad, plain, and straight; there was nothing to hinder the feet of him who fled along it. And is the highway of God's salvation less plain, less open, less direct? On the roads that led to the cities of refuge way-marks were set up to guide the feet of the fugitive. Even so are the ministers of Jesus now commissioned to guide the ignorant and warn the wandering, and to cry aloud to all, "This is the way, walk ye in it." The gates of the city of refuge stood open day and night. And so do the gates of the city of our God, the New Jerusalem. Christ ever stands ready to embrace in the arms of His mercy the soul that seeketh Him. The city of refuge was bound to support those who fled to it for protection. And in the house of the living God there is bread enough and to spare. The city of refuge was for all, as well for the stranger as for one born in the land. And in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female. III. THE CONDITIONS ON WHICH HE WHO FLED TO ONE OF THE CITIES OF REFUGE WAS ENTITLED TO THE PRIVILEGES THEREOF. First, leaving all behind, he must flee for his life, nor ever stop till sheltered within the appointed walls. Again, when once received within the city, he must not leave it, no, not for a moment, lest the avenger of blood fall upon him, and he die. Have you fled to Christ? Abide, then, in Him: forsake not the safe shelter of His fold: go not from under the shadow of His wing. (*C. Bleneowe, M.A.*)

VERS. 1–5. **The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb.**—*The promulgation of the law:*—God was ever wonderful in His works, and fearful in His judgments—but He was never so terrible in the execution of His will as now in the promulgation of it. Here was nothing but a display of grandeur in the eyes, in the ears of the Israelites, as if God meant to show them by this how dreadful He could be. In the destruction of the first world there were clouds—in the destruction of Sodom there was fire; but here were fires, smoke, clouds, thunder, earthquakes, and whatsoever might work more astonishment than was ever in any vengeance inflicted. And if the law were thus given, how shall it be required? If such were the proclamation of God's statutes, what shall be His tribunal? The trumpet of an angel called to the one—the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet of God, shall summon us to the other. Of the one, Moses, who alone witnessed it, saith, "God came with the multitude of His saints"; in the other, thousand thousands shall minister unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand shall stand before Him. In the one, Mount Sinai only was in a flame,—all the world shall be so in the other. In the one there were thunders and fires; in the other, a fiery stream shall proceed from Him, whereby the elements shall melt with fervent heat—the heavens and earth shall be dissolved—they shall flee away, and have no place. God would have Israel see that they had not a Governor whose commands might be neglected or trifled with; and therefore, before He gives His people a law, He shows them that He can command heaven, earth, water, fire, air, by the mere signification of His will—thus teaching them that it was a fearful thing to displease such a Legislator, or violate such statutes—while they beheld the elements examples of that obedience, which man should always yield to his Maker. O royal law, and mighty Lawgiver! How could they think of having any other God, that had such evidence of the Divine power of the God of Israel? How could they think of making any resemblance of Him, whom they could not see, but whom they knew to be infinite? How could they dare to profane His name, who proclaimed Himself to them by the incommunicable name of Jehovah? How could they refuse to observe His sacred day, when they saw Him command those luminaries by which days and years are measured? How could they refuse to render honour and fear to those who derive their authority from God, when they saw Him able to assert His own and maintain that of His vicegerents upon earth? How could they think of killing, when they were so strongly affected with the fear of Him who thus manifested Himself able to save and to destroy? How could they think of the flames of impure desires, who beheld such fires of vengeance? How could they think of stealing from others, when they saw who was Lord of heaven and earth, from whom their neighbour derived all his possessions? How could they think of speaking falsely, when they heard the God of truth speak in so tremendous a voice? How could they think of coveting what was another's, when they saw how weak and uncertain a right they had to what was their own? Lord, to us was this moral law delivered, as well as to them. The letter and ceremonial is passed away; the spirit remains, and shall remain to the end of time. There had not been such state in Thy promulgation of it, if Thou hadst not intended it for eternity. How should we, who comply with human laws to avoid some trifling forfeiture, how should we fear Thee, O God, who art able to cast both soul and body into hell! (*Bp. Hall.*) **Who are all of us here alive this day.**—*For the last day of the year:*—I. THIS TEXT APPLIES TO MANY THIS DAY TO WHOM IT WAS NOT APPLICABLE LAST YEAR. Thousands have been born in the course of this year. II. THE TEXT APPLIED TO MANY LAST YEAR TO WHOM IT IS NOT NOW APPLICABLE. They were then alive, but now they are inhabitants of the tomb, and their souls have entered the eternal state. Of these, many classes might be specified. 1. Some who were expecting it. Aged, infirm, afflicted, who were daily awaiting their dismissal. 2. Some who were reckoning on many years to come. Young, healthy, hearts full of life; but they perished as the flower. "Their sun went down while it was yet day." 3. Some, we fear, died unprepared. Aliens to God; strangers to repentance, faith, and holiness. 4. Many, we trust, died in the Lord. Race ended; warfare accomplished; crown received; for ever with the Lord. III. THE TEXT IS APPLICABLE TO ALL THOSE NOW ASSEMBLED. "We are all alive here this day." 1. And it is wonderful that we are so. Amidst so many dangers, diseases, and death. 2. Is entirely owing to the goodness and patience of God. 3. We are alive under

increasing responsibilities. Many blessings have been given to us this year, for all of which we must give an account: talents, time, opportunities, Sabbaths, sermons, &c. 4. Being alive should fill us with hearty gratitude to God. Our lips, hearts, and lives should show forth His praise. 5. As we are alive, let us now resolve to live more than ever to God, and for eternity. IV. IT IS HIGHLY PROBABLE THAT THE TEXT IS NOW APPLICABLE TO SOME HERE FOR THE LAST TIME. (*J. Burns, D.D.*)

Ver. 6. **I am the Lord thy God.**—*The mission of law*:—In a general sense law is the manner in which an act shall be performed. In civil life it is a legislative declaration how a citizen shall act; in morals it is a rule of conduct proceeding from one who has the right to rule, and directed to those who have the ability to obey. In this sense laws are mandatory, prohibitory, permissive, according to the object to be obtained, commanding what shall be done, forbidding what shall not be done, permitting what may be done. There is an antagonism prevailing in our country and in other lands against the authority of these old mandates received by Moses from the hand of the Almighty. It is difficult to understand that some who assert the uniformity of nature, or what they are pleased to call "material law," yet seek to emancipate themselves from moral obligation, which is natural law. They declare for absolute liberty; that man should be governed by his own tastes, desires, and passions; that he should gratify himself without interference from society or the restrictions of law. It is enough to say that man is not constituted for such conditions of liberty, for restraint seems to be as beneficial as law itself. Man is organised restriction, ever subject to consequences and penalties. He cannot pass a certain boundary without peril; he is a living code of law. Unlimited gratification is the right of no man. Such is his constitution that man can think so far, can see so much, can eat and drink to such a degree, can sleep so long, endure so much, and beyond this he cannot go. He is ever within the embrace of law—"Thus far shalt thou go, and no further." It is true of him in his worst and in his best estate. The law of limitation is as prevalent as law itself. Atoms and worlds, liquids and solids, plants and animals are bounded by limitations. Flowers bloom, trees grow, fish swim, birds fly, beasts roam, lightnings flash, thunders peal, winds blow, oceans roll, all within limitations. The gem is crystallised, the dewdrop is moulded, trees are carbonised, rocks metallised, clouds become rain, and the sun sends forth his wealth of health and beauty, all within limitations. Throw off this law of restriction, and the roots of the trees would take hold of the foundations of the earth and their branches would sweep the stars; throw it off, and man's growth would be perpetuated until his brow reached the heavens. Throw it off, and the planets would rush in wildest confusion. Man is no exception in this higher nature; excess is ruin. He must not encroach upon the domain of the Infinite. His vices are bounded by consequences and penalties. Excessive gratification multiplies his sorrows and hastens him to a premature grave. He is boundless in nothing but intelligence and virtue; in these he can approach the Infinite, but never reach Him. This is his highest ideal. Man hates restraint; his foolish cry is, "Give us liberty or give us death"; but such liberty is without order. Natural liberty is acting without the restraints of nature; civil liberty is acting with abridged natural freedom; moral liberty is acting within the limitations of moral law. There is a difference between the power to disobey and the right to disobey. A citizen may have the power to take the property of another, but not the right. There is nothing more wholesome for a man to realise than the certainty of law, immutable, inflexible, inexorable. Law is a Shylock; the consequences of violation are sure to come. There is nothing more majestic and solemn than the eternity of law. Human enactments are repealed, human obligations are for a term of years; but the obligations of the law of God will last while He is on the throne of the universe. In our aversion to restraint we are tempted to ask, Who is Jehovah, that we should obey? What is the ground of obligation to Him? Civil government has authority over us, because of the social relations which the Creator has established between man and man, and because of common consent; parental authority springs from relationship, but God's authority has its source in absolute possession. He made us, and not we ourselves; we are the offspring of His power—"Ye are not your own." Herein is the eternal fitness of things. From this is the greatest good. The power to enforce His commands may be the subordinate reason for obedience, but it is not the highest. A giant is not necessarily a ruler; might is not right. We must look for a more beneficent reason. Certain special duties may derive their apparent obligations from certain

relations. Endowed with intelligence, I should adore God for His wonderful works. Possessing life, reason, and affections and other sources of happiness incident to my being, I owe Him gratitude founded on natural sentiment and demanded by all that is reasonable. But these relations are not necessarily the reason of obedience, nor does His right to rule me and my duty to obey Him flow out of His will. Why has He the right to will me to do thus and thus? But if we look a little deeper, a little closer, we shall discover that His right to will and my duty to obey are from His absolute possession. That right has no limitation. It can never be transferred, or alienated, or destroyed. "The heavens are Thine, the earth also is Thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, Thou hast founded them." It is a law of nations that the first discoverer of a country is esteemed the rightful possessor and lord thereof; that the originator of a successful invention has unquestionable dominion of the property therein on the score of justice; that the author of a beneficent truth, whether in the domain of science, government, or religion, has priority of claim to the honour and benefits thereof. These things have reached the majesty of international law; hence the long and vexatious controversies touching the relative claims of Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci as to the discovery of this country; the rival claims of Gutenberg and Faust touching the invention of the art of printing; the first demonstration of the circulation of the blood, whether Harvey or Fabricius or Padua; who first identified lightning and electricity, whether Abbé Nollet or our own Franklin, and whether Darwin or Wallace is the author of the theory of natural selection. Men and nations have jealously guarded and vindicated this right of priority of claim; for its maintenance battles have been fought and empires have toppled to their fall. When a man comes into the possession of a block of marble by discovery or presentation or purchase, and adds to its value by his deft fingers with mallet and chisel, and sculptures thereon some bird, or man, or angel, it is the consent of mankind that he has an additional claim to that piece of marble growing out of the right of possession and the success of his skill. "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me." (*J. P. Newman, D.D.*)

God's laws of life:—In the present day we hear and read a great deal concerning law. "The laws of nature" is a much more common expression now than in the days of our forefathers; for the study of nature, the investigation of its wonders, and the examination of its phenomena are now more thorough and general and successful than they used to be; and the progress of science has made this expression very familiar to us. All things are in subjection to law, in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath; all things, from a world to a sand-grain, from a mighty constellation to a rounded pebble, from "the great and wide sea" to the tiny dew-drop, from the giant banyan tree to the lowly shrub, from "behemoth" to the insect, are subject to law. "The laws of nature," instead of excluding the God of nature, are the beautiful expression of His thought and will. The order of the universe has originated in the mind of Him who created it. As Hooker finely said, "Law has its seat in the bosom of God, and its voice is the harmony of the world." God's moral law was given to man as an intelligent and moral being. This law is written in man's nature. A philosopher said that two things "filled his soul with awe—the starry heaven above, and the moral law within." But if the law was already found in man's conscience, what need was there to proclaim it on Mount Sinai? 1. First, because the record was becoming obscure through growing depravity; the letters were defaced, the moral sense was blunted. Sir Walter Scott's "Old Mortality" renewed the inscriptions on the old moss-grown tombstones, cut out with his chisel and hammer the letters which time and decay had nearly obliterated. But there was no teacher among the heathen that could renew the inscription on man's nature, and restore the defaced letters, and remove the grime that had gathered around them. The conscience, like all the other faculties, needed education and training. 2. Secondly, it was necessary that Israel should have a Divine standard of conduct. Having just been delivered from the house of Egyptian bondage, and having been contaminated by the influence of Egyptian idolatry, it was necessary that they should have a rule of life that was clear and unmistakable. They needed a revealed and written standard of duty. 3. Thirdly, it was necessary, in order to preserve to all coming ages God's judgment of what man ought to be, God's ideal of man's life. A revelation by word of mouth would not suffice; for oral tradition would in time be corrupted. There are some human laws that are necessary for some peoples, and not for others; but this is the same in every climate and country—among the Esquimaux in the land of everlasting snows, and among the dusky tribes of Africa, among the civilised nations of

Europe, and among savages, among rich and poor, learned and unlearned, Jew and Greek, "Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free." And this law is unchangeable in its character. Physical laws may be suspended by other or higher laws; as animal food is preserved by salt, and gravitation is overcome by life. "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." I fear that in the present age we are in danger of losing sight of God as our Ruler. We dwell, and rightly, on the revelation of the Fatherhood of God. "Our Father." What name so attractive and beautiful and helpful as this? But He is also King; He sways a sceptre of righteousness; He exercises dominion; He claims obedience; He demands service. "I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." "And God spake all these words." God is the Eternal Home of righteousness, and He has made known His righteous will to men. "God spake." Sin had put an end to the communications between earth and heaven; but God broke the silence. It would be terrible to think of God dwelling in the heavens, and not saying a word to us. The Psalmist's cry was, "Be not silent to me, lest I be like them that go down into the pit." In this introduction or preface to the words of the law we see the grounds on which He claims authority over men, and demands their obedience and homage and service; these grounds are—His relation to them, and His merciful deliverance of them. I. HIS RELATION TO THEM. "I am the Lord thy God." He was the God of their fathers; He had called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees from among idolaters; He was the fear of Isaac; He was the helper of Jacob. And here He says to their descendants, "I am the Lord thy God," or "I am Jehovah, thy God." This was the name by which He made Himself known to Moses from the burning bush. God was now about to unfold the meaning of the name in the history of His people. It denotes His eternal self-existence. "I am Jehovah, I change not." Change is essential to finite beings; to their glory, and blessedness, and peace. Without progress—and progress implies change—a man's life anywhere would be wretched. Thank God we may be changed; for to be fixed in our present state of ignorance and sin and weakness would be untold misery. But God changes not; and this is His glory. He is so perfect that no change could make Him wiser, or holier, or more blessed than He is. Like the fire in the bush, His glory is flaming through the universe; but it does not depend upon the universe for its existence. And this name not only denotes essential existence, but it was also the covenant name of God, and contained the promise of future manifestation; and this was very appropriate on the threshold of Jewish history, when the horde of Egyptian slaves were about to be converted into an army of brave men. "I am Jehovah, thy God." He was entering into a close relation to them. And He is now entering into a covenant relation with all who trust in His name. Our God. Jehovah, our God! The Self-existent, our God! The Ruler of all things, our God! The All-sufficient, the Eternal on our side! What grander revelation can we have than this? The unity of the nation is indicated in the use of the singular pronoun, "I am Jehovah, thy God, which have brought thee out." The Psalmist said, "I will sing praise to my God." And this was the keynote of many of the Psalms, "My God"—mine personally, mine consciously, mine for ever. One man claiming God as his own! You may tell me that God is ruling the universe, guiding the stupendous worlds. But what about me? I have my sorrows, my burdens, my hopes, my grave before me. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none on the earth that I desire beside Thee." II. The other ground on which He claims authority over men IS FOUND IN THE MERCIFUL DELIVERANCE HE HAS WROUGHT OUT ON THEIR BEHALF. "Which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Egypt was the home of civilisation, of culture, of art, of power. Into Egypt Abram came in his wanderings; the children of Jacob went down there in time of famine; Joseph ruled as prime minister there; it was the nursery of Abraham's race; and there they grew to be a great people. What was the object of mentioning this event in the introduction to the law? Was it not to show that God's claims to obedience are based on His faithfulness, and that love is the parent of law? The people were first freed, and then they received the law. God manifests Himself on our behalf, and then claims our obedience. We cannot liberate ourselves from the bondage of sin; for this is a slavery which neither millions of money nor the exploits on battlefields can destroy, a slavery which no Emancipation Act can terminate. But One has interposed for us; the Paschal Lamb has been offered; "Christ our passover was sacrificed for us." According to the course of history, the law precedes the Gospel; but in the experience of the saved sinner the Gospel precedes the law. There is gratitude felt

for the redemption from bondage, and that gratitude leads to obedience and consecration. "His delight is in the law of the Lord." (*James Owen.*) *The preface to the Decalogue*:—I. HE MAKES WAY TO THE OBEYING OF HIS LAWS BY PROPOUNDING HIS SOVEREIGN POWER: I am the Lord thy God, I am Jehovah, the only true God; I am self-existent, and I give being unto all things. My essence is eternal and unchangeable; I do what I please in heaven and earth; My power and dominion are infinite. This is a very suitable introduction to the commandments. It is a prevalent motive, a powerful argument to induce us to yield obedience to whatever God shall be pleased to propound as our duty. Besides, "Thou" signifies the equality of the obligation; God speaking to all the people as to one man, that every person may think himself concerned to obey, and that no man may plead exception. This Lord, this Jehovah, who here speaks, is God over all; His authority and sovereignty are unlimited. II. Not only the sovereignty, BUT THE GOODNESS OF GOD IS MENTIONED HERE AS AN ARGUMENT OF OBEDIENCE—"I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." We have by the gracious undertakings of Christ been brought out of the house of bondage, delivered from that captivity and slavery wherein Satan and our own guilt had involved us. This Divine philanthropy, this transcendent beneficence, together with all the other blessings, mercies, and favours conferred upon us, are forcible engagements, yea, strong allurements to obedience. (*J. Edwards, D.D.*) *Introduction to the Decalogue*:—The Ten Commandments stand alone, not only in the Old Testament, but in the moral development and education of our race. They form the groundwork, the bed-rock, on which all goodness and morality are built. I. SOME INTERESTING PARTICULARS IN THE RECORD OF THESE TEN COMMANDMENTS. 1. There are two distinct versions, differing considerably in detail, yet in substance identical. Inspiration is concerned with great realities, not with trivialities; and both Exodus and Deuteronomy are right when they tell us these were the words God spake, if we do not interpret that statement to mean that it pledges us to believe the verbal accuracy of each record. Two accounts of the same occurrence may be absolutely true, and yet differ considerably in mere verbal correctness. 2. They are never called the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament, usually "The Ten Words," or "The Testimony." This fact is not unimportant, for the term "word" conveys a richer idea of a revelation from God than the word "commandment." A commandment is a law binding on those who hear it, but is not necessarily a revelation of the character of the person who gives it; but "the word of the Lord" is not merely an utterance of God, but a revelation from God. The same truth is conveyed in the name most frequently given to the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament, "The Testimony." It is God's own utterance of His will to His people, of His revelation concerning Himself, of what He bids them do. 3. The number of the commandments is significant. There are ten, and ten is the only complete number. After we count ten we begin again, for ten completes the number of the primary digits. (1) The law God gives to His people is a complete code of moral goodness. "The law of the Lord is perfect," as the Psalmist sings; it lacks nothing; it is full, and rounded, and complete; and if we keep this law we shall be perfect men. (2) The natural division of the number ten into two halves of five each suggests, I think, a second truth. If ten be the symbol of completeness, five must necessarily be an incomplete number, for it wants the other five to make it complete; and so the one half of the Decalogue is incomplete without the other. No one who is religious without morality is a good man; no man who is moral without being religious is a good man. 4. It is hardly correct to say that the first five commandments relate to duty to God, and the second five to the duty to man, for the Fifth Commandment touches the honour due to parents; but, on the other hand, there is another simple and underlying principle that explains and justifies the division of the Ten Commandments into two equal halves of five each. There was a well-known and rational division in ancient ethics between piety and justice. Piety always included in ancient morals the idea of filial reverence. Reverence itself is perhaps the better word for the goodness in the first five commandments; righteousness is the better word for the goodness commanded in the second five. If we bear this in mind we shall at once discern the reason for the division of the two laws into two equal halves. The first five inculcate reverence to God, and to those who on earth represent God in the human relation; the second five teach the duty of righteousness—that is, of right conduct as between man and man. And notice that not one of the commandments of the second table, as it is called, that which touches human duty, has any sanction attached to it. On the other hand, in the

first half, the commandments which concern reverence, we find a sanction attached to the second, third, fourth, and fifth laws, while in the second table there is none. The reason for this is obvious. All human duty and human rights are reciprocal. They need nothing more than their own statement to secure their obligation. II. THE LIMITATIONS, FROM AN ETHICAL STANDPOINT, OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS. 1. With the exception of the last, the Tenth Commandment, all deal with actions alone, and it is remarkable that the only one of the ten that does pass beyond external action, and forbids evil thought, "Thou shalt not covet," was the commandment that led to St. Paul's conversion, or at any rate to his conviction of sin (Rom. vii. 7). 2. The Ten Commandments, with two exceptions, are negative in form. "Thou shalt not" occurs eight times, "Thou shalt" only twice. To forbid wrong-doing is absolutely necessary, but the not doing of wrong is not the highest ideal of morality. III. The incompleteness and limitations and defects of the Ten Commandments are best seen if we TAKE ONE OF THEM AND COMPARE IT WITH THE LAW OF CHRIST. "Thou shalt do no murder," for example, is one of these Jewish laws as necessary and as binding to-day as when it was first spoken. But now compare it with the law of Christ, as declared in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v. 21, 22). We see at once the contrast. Christ's law is higher and more spiritual than the law of Moses. And so with all these Ten Commandments. The Decalogue does not from any point of view represent an ideal and perfect code of ethics. As moonlight or starlight is to sunlight, so the Ten Commandments are to the law of Christ. One often wonders what would be the effect on the moral life of the Church if at the regular services on the Sunday there was the recital, week by week, of the laws of Christ, or, at any rate, of some of them, followed each one, it may be, by the prayer, "Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law." IV. Notice the significant fact that THE LAW OF GOD WAS NOT GIVEN TO HIS PEOPLE UNTIL THEIR REDEMPTION FROM EGYPT WAS COMPLETED. This is the Divine order—redemption by the passover sacrifice, and shedding of the blood of the innocent lamb, then the giving of the law. This was the order in Judaism, and in Christianity the same significant order is preserved. We are first redeemed by the precious blood of Christ from the curse and power of sin, from death; and then we are bidden to keep the law of Christ. The Divine order is not, "Do this and live," but, "Live and do this": redemption first, obedience afterwards. This order is not an arbitrary and unmeaning one. It lies in the eternal necessities of our being. Can a dead man do anything? Can a corpse obey a single command? Can it even hear one? And if we are "dead in trespasses and sins," our first need is not a law, but a life: first deliverance from the doom of sin, first redemption, and then, and not till then, the sinner, saved from the prison-house of death, falls at his Lord's feet and cries, "Lord, I am Thy servant, I am Thy servant, Thou hast loosed my bonds." (*G. S. Barrett, D.D.*) *The preface*:—I. THE LAWGIVER IS THEIR GOD. Men are naturally religious; that is, they have a fear of, a reverence for, some powerful Being who has power to do them good or evil, and whose favour they wish to enjoy; that Being is their God, and they are His people. The gods of the heathen are false gods. There is but one living and true God, the God of the Bible, the God of Israel. Whom should Israel obey but their God? He has made them, rules over them, has care of them; He knows their nature, knows what is good for them, knows what they should do and be; He will seek only their good and their perfection; He will speak only what it is best for them to hear. II. THE LAWGIVER IS THEIR REDEEMER. This is an additional reason for obedience. For who can so well rule and govern the free as He who made them free? And whom are freemen bound to obey but Him who redeemed them? But some one may ask, Why should there be laws for the free? Why combine law and freedom? Is it for the mere exercise of arbitrary power as sovereign Lord? He is Sovereign, and is the source of all power and law. But He has man's good in view. Laws are needful for the imperfect. Children get rules; as they grow up into the mind of the father, minute and multiplied rules begin to cease, because the law is now in them, and is, as it were, part of them. III. THE LAWGIVER IS JEHOVAH. This name conveys a third reason for obedience. It indicates that God is self-existent, eternal, and unchangeable (Malachi iii. 6). Surely, then, Jehovah is a precious covenant for Israel's God, and for Israel to know Him by. It speaks of Him as the eternally unchangeable One, and therefore ever faithful and true, to be trusted most fully. Conclusion—1. Freedom and law are both of God, and therefore perfectly compatible and harmonious. 2. Freedom and holiness go together. (*Jas. Matthew, B.D.*) *The Decalogue*:—I. There is first to be noted

THE ASPECT IN WHICH THE GREAT LAWGIVER HERE PRESENTS HIMSELF TO HIS PEOPLE: "I am Jehovah, thy God, who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Jehovah, the unchangeable and eternal, the great I am; this alone, had it been all, was a lofty idea for men who had been so long enveloped in the murky atmosphere of idolatry; and if deeply impressed upon their hearts, and made a pervading element in their religion and polity, would have nobly elevated the seed of Israel above all the nations then existing on the earth. But there is more a great deal than this in the personal announcement which introduces the ten fundamental precepts; it is His faithful love and sufficiency for all future time, to protect them from evil or bring them salvation. II. Yet it did not the less on that account assume—being a revelation of law in form as well as substance, IT COULD NOT BUT ASSUME—A PREDOMINANTLY STRINGENT AND IMPERATIVE CHARACTER. The loving spirit in which it opens is not, indeed, absent from the body of its enactments, though, for the most part, formally disguised; but even in form it reappears more than once—especially in the assurance of mercy to the thousands who should love God and keep His commandments, and the promise of long continuance on the land of rest and blessing, associated respectively with the second and the fifth precepts of the law. But these are only, as it were, the relieving clauses of the code: the law itself, in every one of the obligations it imposes, takes the imperative form—"Thou shalt do this," "Thou shalt not do that"; and this just because it is law, and must leave no doubt that the course it prescribes is the one that ought to be taken, and must be taken, by every one who is in a sound moral condition. Still, the negative is doubtless in itself the lower form of command; and when so largely employed as it is in the Decalogue, it must be regarded as striving to meet the strong current of evil that runs in the human heart. III. Viewing the law thus, as essentially the law of love, which it seeks to protect as well as to evoke and direct, LET US GLANCE BRIEFLY AT THE DETAILS, that we may see how entirely these accord, alike in their nature and their orderly arrangement, with the general idea, and provide for its proper exemplification. As love has unspeakably its grandest object in God, so precedence is justly given to what directly concerns Him—implying also that religion is the basis of morality, that the right adjustment of men's relation to God tends to ensure the proper maintenance of their relations one to another. God, therefore, must hold the supreme place in their regard, must receive the homage of their love and obedience; and this in regard to His being, His worship, His name, and His day. The next command may also be taken in the same connection—a step further in the same line, since earthly parents are in a peculiar sense God's representatives among men. This, however, touches on the second division of moral duty, that which concerns men's relation to each other; and according to the particular aspect in which it is contemplated, the fifth command may be assigned to the first or to the second table of the law. Scripture itself makes no formal division. Though it speaks frequently enough of two tables, it nowhere indicates where the one terminates and the other begins—purposely, perhaps, to teach us that the distinction is not to be very sharply drawn, and that the contents of the one gradually approximate and at last pass over into the other. And finally, to show that neither tongue, nor hands, nor any other member of our body, or any means and opportunities at our command—that not these alone are laid under contribution to this principle of love, but the seat also and fountain of all desire, all purpose and action—the Decalogue closes with the precept which forbids us to lust after or covet wife, house, possessions, anything whatever that is our neighbour's—a precept which reaches to the inmost thoughts and intents of the heart, and requires that all even there should be under the control of a love which thinketh no evil, which abhors the very thought of adding to one's own heritage of good by wrongfully infringing on what is another's. Viewed thus as enshrining the great principle of love, and in a series of commands chalking out the courses of righteous action it was to follow, of unrighteous action it was to shun, the law of the two tables may justly be pronounced unique—so compact in form, so orderly in arrangement, so comprehensive in range, so free from everything narrow and punctilious—altogether the fitting reflex of the character of the Supremely Pure and Good in His relation to the members of His earthly kingdom. (*P. Fairbairn, D.D.*) *Rules for the understanding of the Decalogue:*—For the right understanding of the Ten Commandments these rules are to be observed—1. That the law is PERFECT, and bindeth every one to full conformity in the whole man unto the righteousness thereof and unto entire

obedience for ever, so as to require the utmost perfection of every duty and to forbid the least degree of every sin. II. That it is SPIRITUAL, and so reacheth the understanding, will, affections, and all other powers of the soul, as well as words, works, and gestures. III. That ONE AND THE SAME THING, IN DIVERS RESPECTS, IS REQUIRED OR FORBIDDEN in several commandments. IV. That as where a duty is commanded THE CONTRARY SIN IS FORBIDDEN, AND WHERE A SIN IS FORBIDDEN THE CONTRARY DUTY IS COMMANDED: so, where a promise is annexed, the contrary threatening is included; and where a threatening is annexed, the contrary promise is included. V. That WHAT GOD FORBIDS IS AT NO TIME TO BE DONE; WHAT HE COMMANDS IS ALWAYS OUR DUTY, and yet every particular duty is not to be done at all times. VI. That under one sin or duty, ALL OF THE SAME KIND ARE FORBIDDEN OR COMMANDED, TOGETHER WITH ALL THE CAUSES, MEANS, OCCASIONS, AND APPEARANCES THEREOF, and provocations thereunto. VII. That what is forbidden or commanded to ourselves we are bound, according to our places, TO ENDEAVOUR THAT IT MAY BE AVOIDED OR PERFORMED BY OTHERS, according to the duty of their places. VIII. That, in what is commanded to others, we are bound according to our places and callings TO BE HELPFUL TO THEM, and to take heed of partaking with others in what is forbidden. (*Thomas Ridglet, D.D.*)

Ver. 7. **Thou shalt have none other gods before Me.**—*Our duty towards God*:—The word "gods" in this passage may be regarded as denoting not only the various objects of religious worship, but also all the objects of supreme regard, affection, or esteem. To acknowledge Jehovah as our God is to love Him supremely, to fear before Him with all the heart, and to serve Him throughout all our days in absolute preference to every other being. As this is the only true, natural, and proper acknowledgment of God, so, when we render the same service to any creature, we acknowledge that creature as our god. In this conduct we are guilty of two gross sins. In the first place, we elevate the being who is thus regarded to the character and station of a god; and in the second place, we remove the true God in our hearts from His own character of infinite glory and excellence, and from that exalted station which He holds as the infinite ruler and benefactor of the universe. This sin is a complication of wickedness wonderfully various and dreadful. 1. We are in this conduct guilty of the grossest falsehood. We practically deny that Jehovah is possessed of those attributes which alone demand such service from intelligent creatures; and on the other hand, assert in the same manner that the being to whom we render this service is invested with these attributes. 2. In this conduct also we are guilty of the greatest injustice. This evil is likewise twofold. First, we violate the rightful claim of Jehovah to the service of intelligent creatures; and secondly, we render to a creature the service which is due to Him alone. The right which God has to this service is supreme and unalienable. He is our Maker and Preserver. The obligations arising from this source are not a little enhanced by the fact that the service which He actually requires of us is in the highest degree profitable to ourselves, our highest excellence, our greatest honour, and our supreme happiness. 3. We are also guilty of the vilest ingratitude. From the wisdom, power, and goodness of God we derive our being, our blessings, and our hopes. Learn—1. That idolatry is a sin of the first magnitude. 2. That all mankind are guilty of idolatry. Covetousness is styled "idolatry" by St. Paul, and "stubbornness" by the prophet Samuel. 3. With these observations in view we shall cease to wonder that mankind have been so extensively guilty of continual and enormous sins against each other. Sin is one undivided disposition. It cannot exist towards God and not towards man, or towards man and not towards God. It is a wrong bias of the soul, and of course operates only to wrong, whatever being the operation may respect. That which is the object of religious worship is, of course, the most sublime object which is realised by the devotee. When this object, therefore, is low, impure, when it is fraught with falsehood, injustice, and cruelty, it still keeps its station of superiority, and is still regarded with the reverence due to the highest known object of contemplation. Thus a debased god becomes the foundation of a debased religion, and a debased religion of universal turpitude of character. 4. Hence we see that the Scriptures represent idolatry justly, and annex to it no higher punishment than it deserves. 5. These observations teach us the wisdom and goodness of God in separating the Jews from mankind, as a peculiar people to Himself. 6. We learn hence also the malignant nature of atheism. 7. We see with what exact propriety the Scriptures have represented the violation of our immediate duty to God as the source of all other sin. Impiety is plainly the

fountain of guilt, from which flows every stream. Those who are thus false, unjust, and ungrateful to God will, of course, exhibit the same conduct with respect to their fellow-creatures. (*T. Dwight, D.D.*) *On the idolatry of the Hebrews:*—The proneness of the Hebrew nation to fall into idolatry presents to us a very extraordinary appearance. The Jews were, indeed, a gross people, but not more so than other nations in the same period of improvement. On the contrary, they appear to have been more civilised than their contemporaries, and the very foundation of the difficulty is that they were infinitely more enlightened. I. In the first place, we may believe that THE CAUSES, WHATEVER THEY WERE, WHICH INFLUENCED ALL THE OTHER NATIONS OF THE EARTH IN THAT PERIOD, AND LED THEM TO IDOLATRY, OPERATED ALSO UPON THE HEBREW NATION. One of the first errors of men in religion probably was that the Supreme God was too great to trouble Himself with the affairs of this lower world. Hence flowed easily all the other errors. The first idolatry was a mixed idolatry. It did not exclude the true God. It only associated other gods with Him. At last He was forgotten, while they continued to be remembered. Here, then, we may search for one cause of idolatry among the Hebrews. We must also mention the rage of the times as another cause. While the idea was yet new, mankind were universally employed in developing it; and while they were intent on fixing the administration, and marking the different departments of the supreme government, they received every new divinity who was offered to them with all the ardour of a new discovery. The pleasure of the process was correspondent. It gratified the imagination by peopling all nature with ideal beings, and it flattered men's ideas of the various and the vast by showing that their number, their natures, and their employments might be infinitely multiplied. We may join to these considerations the indulgence which this religion offered to the passions. II. But the Hebrews were not only influenced by causes common to them with all the nations of the earth in that period, BUT ALSO BY CAUSES WHICH WERE PECULIAR TO THEIR OWN NATION. 1. Their local situation. They were placed between two powerful empires, the Egyptian and the Assyrian. The fame of these two powerful nations was well known to the Hebrews, and they aspired to share it. Accustomed to ascribe everything to Divine agency, it would occur to them that the cause of their greatness must be owing to the gods whom they worshipped, and that, if they revered the same gods, they might have the same success. 2. But the chief cause of the repeated lapses of the Hebrews into idolatry lay deeper. We must search for it in their civil constitution and the political parties of their state. The institution of the kingly office produced a material change in the government of the Hebrews. It immediately gave rise to two great political parties, which continued to distract the state from the reign of Saul until the Babylonish captivity. The original government of the Hebrews was a theocracy. This was the legal principle from which their laws and constitution, both civil and religious, flowed. The kings of the Hebrews were not kings in any sense in which that word is now used. The Supreme Being was the real legislator; their kings were mere substitutes of the Sovereign, and were understood to act under His appointments. Whenever a king of bad principles arose, who wished to aggrandise his own power and to free himself from the authority of his superior, the first measure which he would adopt for this purpose would be to withdraw the nation as much as possible from the reverence which they owed to God Almighty. This he could not do better than by introducing a number of other gods and leading the nation to offer worship to them. Men arranged themselves on the one side or the other, not only according to their political views, but also according to their characters and dispositions. Idolatry would attract the young and the inexperienced, who admired the great empires, and would consequently be ambitious of imitating them. Idolatry would also attract all the vicious and the sensual, who were under the dominion of the grosser passions, and would therefore naturally lean to the religion which indulged them. The Hebrew idolaters did not mean to exclude their own God. They only joined other gods with Him. They might probably, too, admit that their own God was the greatest, or even that He was supreme God, and the rest His ministers. By these or other means they might reconcile idolatry to their own worship. (*John Mackenzie, D.D.*) *The First Commandment:*—The affirmative part is, Thou shalt have Jehovah for thy God. The negative part is, Thou shalt have no other God. This, therefore, is that which is the very substance of this commandment: There shall be unto thee a God, and I am that God. If you ask what is enjoined in this, I answer, no less than the whole service and worship of God, and our behaving ourselves towards Him as such. But more particularly to display the

contents of this commandment, it is requisite that we discourse both of the inward and outward worship of God, for both these are contained in this Divine precept. It enjoins that service which consists in the employment of the head and heart, and also that of the body and outward actions. Under the first are commanded these following duties—1. The believing of a God (Heb. xi. 6). 2. Being persuaded that there is but one God. 3. The believing of His Word. 4. Right apprehensions concerning God's glorious attributes and perfections. 5. Thinking and meditating on Him and His Divine perfections. 6. To the acts of our understanding must be added those of our will and affections, and consequently we are to have a high respect and observance of the Divine Author of our being, the glorious God; we are to admire Him, we are to rejoice in Him. But the chief of the affections which are most celebrated in the Holy Scriptures are fear, and hope, and love, of which therefore I am obliged more distinctly and amply to speak. (1) First, an awful fear and dread are due to God, and are the genuine issue of those conceptions which we ought to frame of Him. Fear is a passion that naturally flows from the serious contemplation of the greatness and power of God, and of His impartial justice in punishing offenders. He that hath this fear stands in awe of God, though no punishment should ensue, for he reckons that sin itself is a punishment. Filial fear is founded in love. Having thus briefly displayed the nature of the fear of God, I will in the next place show what are the natural effects and fruits of it. We owe it to this fear that we are not inconsiderate and rash and furious in our prosecutions. And on the other hand, we are kept by it from security, for it begets watchfulness and circumspection. Hereby we weigh all our actions and undertakings, and ask ourselves whether they will be pleasing to God. (2) To hope in God is another Divine affection which is included in this first commandment. He that hopes in God cheerfully expects that God will support him under and deliver him from evil, and at last glorify him. (3) Again, ardently to love God is another main thing enjoined in this commandment. And truly to love that Being who is most amiable and most perfect is but the natural effect which the contemplation of such loveliness and perfection should produce in us. But there is an outward service and worship which this commandment enjoins also. This is adoration, a religious reverence and homage performed by the body by all external acts of religion. This is a visible expression of the inward esteem we have of a person. So this worship we are now speaking of is an extrinsic sign of that inward reverence, fear, hope, trust, love which were mentioned before. And the conjunction of these is necessary, for first God's image was imprinted on the body as well as the soul, and therefore both must be sanctified, both must be instruments of religion. Besides, they are assistant to one another by reason of that intimate union which is between them, so that they jointly advance the concerns of religion. And then we are to remember that Christ redeemed not only our souls but our bodies; therefore we are to serve Him with both. (1) First, this must be done by our words and speeches. There must be a vocal expressing of the sense we have of God's perfections. The most notable instances of this kind of external and audible worship are these three—(*a*) A speaking reverently of God and all things belonging to Him. (*b*) Open profession of the name of God and of the holy religion which we have embraced. (*c*) Prayer, including confession, petition, praise, and giving of thanks. (2) Secondly, this worship must be discovered in bodily gesture (Psa. xcv. 6). (3) The true worship which is due to the eternal God is discovered by the actions of the life. The true adorer of the Divine Being is known by his frequent exercises of mortification and abstinence, his guarding himself from outward objects that may promote temptation, by watching over his bodily senses, his addicting himself to temperance and chastity, his acts of righteousness and justice towards his brethren. We must live according to that sense we bear in our minds of a Being so perfect and so worthy to be adored. To obey God, to live a pure and holy life, and to discharge a good conscience in everything, are the height and perfection of this duty, and are indeed the most acceptable worship we can perform to God. And, to sum up all, worshipping of God implies that we and they endeavour to be like Him. After all, I must add this, that the chief worship which is here enjoined is that which is seated in the inward man, the soul. Now, that this is chiefly here meant I gather from this, that the other three commandments of this first table relate most of all to outward worship, for they forbid bowing down to images, and taking God's name in vain, and profaning the Sabbath Day. Thence I argue that the inward and mental worship of God is that which is principally aimed at in this first precept of the law. I take it to be the great design of this commandment to enjoin

inward and spiritual religion. Next I come to the negative part of this commandment, *i.e.* to show what sins are forbidden by it. 1. First, atheism is directly opposite to the duty required of us in this first precept of the moral law. This atheism is—(1) In thought (Psa. xiv. 1). (2) There is atheism of the tongue as well as of the heart. There are those who openly disavow the belief of a deity, and are so impudent as to proclaim it to the world. (3) There are atheists not only in thoughts and words, but in actions. These are they that acknowledge a God, but yet live as if there were none. They behave themselves as if there were no omniscient eye to take notice of what they do, as if there were no Supreme Ruler to punish their miscarriages. Of these men the apostle speaks (Tit. i. 16). 2. Superstition, as well as atheism, is forbidden in this commandment. For this we are to know, that there are two extremes in religion, one in the defect, which is neglect and contempt of God and His worship, profaneness, and even atheism itself; the other in the excess, which is a vain and unnecessary worship, and this is superstition. The former proceeds from a fond conceit of reason without fear; the latter, from fear without right reason. The first is a defiance of religion; the second makes it a sordid thing. The one makes men irreligious and profane; the other fills them with false imaginations and needless terrors. We have seen in the general that superstition is an overdoing in religion; but more particularly to explain the nature of it—(1) It is doing more in religion than is required by God. (2) It is doing that which is in itself commanded, but with a false principle. (3) It is a being overconcerned about things that are merely circumstantial or indifferent. And withal, consider the pernicious nature of superstition. To conclude, this is a base and servile temper, void of all that generous freedom which should attend true religion. It is unworthy of a noble spirit, and unbecoming a true worshipper. It is one of the foulest blemishes that a person or a church can be defaced with. (3) Idolatry is condemned by this commandment. It is having that thing or being for a god which hath no divinity in it. Here, then, is a threefold idolatry forbidden—1. That which is moral, which is an immoderate affecting or prosecuting of anything that is not our chief good. It is setting our hearts wholly on any finite and worldly object. All wilful sinners, all those that delight in the practice of what is vicious, are such, for they make their lusts their chief good, and so in a manner make them their gods. This is moral idolatry. 2. There is polytheism, or pagan idolatry, *i.e.* the believing and worshipping of a multiplicity of deities, even among the works of the creation, as of the sun, moon, and stars, &c. As the atheist maintains that there is no God, so the Gentile worshipper is for making everything a god. 3. The last sort of idolatry is that which hath a mixture of the worship of the true God with it. From the sacred history in Exodus xxxii. 5 we may inform ourselves that the Israelites worshipped Jehovah and the golden calf at the same time. They sometimes worshipped the Lord and Baal together, which Elijah objects to them in 1 Kings xviii. 21. This medley of religious worship you will find among the strange nations which were transplanted into Samaria (1 Kings xvii. 41). They feared the Lord and served their graven images. (*J. Edwards, D.D.*)

The only true God:—The truth of the existence of the Supreme is always assumed in the Scriptures; it is not proved. For proof the Bible says, "See previous volumes." The universe and man's moral nature attest His existence. Sometimes "the wish has been father to the thought"; and men who "do not like to retain God in their knowledge" have said in their heart, "There is no God." The idea of God is universal. It has been said that some of the tribes of Africa are so degraded as apparently to have no idea of a Supreme Power; but if this were correct it would be the exception and not the rule. Some men are born blind, but the rule is that men should see. "If," says Professor Blackie, "there be races of reasonable beings who have no idea of a cause, it is just the same thing as if we were to find in any Alpine valley whole races of *crétins*, or anywhere in the world whole races of idiots; they are defective creatures such as no naturalist would receive into his normal description of one of nature's types; such as roses, for instance, without fragrance, horses without hoofs, and birds without wings. Any type of things, indeed, as well as man, may, by a combination of untoward influences, be curtailed and stunted into any sort of degradation." And Livingstone affirmed that among the most ignorant tribes in the interior of Africa may be found the idea of a Supreme Being. "There is no necessity for beginning to tell the most degraded of these people of the existence of a God, or of the future state, the facts being universally admitted. Everything that cannot be accounted for by common causes is ascribed to the Deity, as creation, sudden death, &c. 'How

curiously God made these things!' is a common expression, as is, 'He was not killed by disease, he was killed by God!'" The Israelites believed in the Eternal God; but they had just been delivered from a land where there were "gods many and lords many"; and this was the commandment that fell on their ears, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." It has been said that the existence of other gods is not denied in these words; but they mean that, while every nation had its own god, Jehovah was to be the God of the Israelites. Nothing is said of the existence or non-existence of other divinities; but "Thou shalt have no other gods." The prohibition addressed to them, "Thou shalt have no other gods," was tantamount to a declaration through the universe, "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning." There can be but one God. This truth may be contrasted with the dualism that was prominent in some of the heathen systems of religion. According to the old Persian belief, there were two co-eternal beings who divided the government of the world between them. One of them was regarded as the principle of light, the source of all good; and the other was the principle of darkness, the source of all evil. This was an attempt to solve the problem of the existence of evil in the universe. "To us there is but one God." When this word was spoken on Mount Sinai, polytheism was common among all nations. Among the heathen there were numberless divinities. The different parts of nature were presided over by different deities; different events in history were under the control of different rulers; different nations and tribes had their friends and enemies among the conclave of the gods. There was a god of the hills, a god of the valleys, a god of the rivers, a god of the seas. There was a god inflicting disease, and a god removing it; a god sending pestilence, and famine, and war, and a god arresting them; a god bestowing bountiful harvests and commercial prosperity, and another inflicting judgments and calamities. But we learn that there is one God of all the earth, of all its forces, and elements, and laws; one God in all events, in the fury of the storm, in the march of the pestilence, in the desolations of war; one God for all nations and realms. And this truth may be also placed in contrast with the pantheism found in ancient systems, and revived in some modern philosophical speculations. The idolater deifies parts of the universe, the pantheist deifies it all. The universe is God; there is nothing but the universe; everything is a part or modification of God. The distant star is a part of God; the flower at your feet is a part of God. You are a little drop from the ocean of the Godhead, and your highest bliss, your most glorious destiny, is to cease individually to be, and to be absorbed in the All, which is God. He is "before all things." When there was no material universe, when not a stone of the temple had been laid, when not a star had been kindled, He was "inhabiting eternity"; the worlds might be blotted out, the stars might be quenched, yet He would remain, the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega. It may be alleged that this truth of the unity of the Godhead also uproots the orthodox evangelical belief that acknowledges Christ as the incarnate God, and the Holy Spirit, not as a mere influence, but as a Divine Person. But the revelation of the unity of God is not more clear than that of God as Father, Son, and Spirit. "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory." We may say that the unity of the Divine existence is reflected in the unity of nature. There may be discords, and yet there is harmony underlying and pervading all, thus teaching that the universe in all its forms and changes is the product of one mind. "I will praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are Thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well." The style and expression and colours and characteristics of some of the great paintings have been studied so thoroughly by some artists, that they will immediately say of a picture, This is Rubens, or, This is Raphael. And the spirit and style of the writings of great poets are so well known to some enthusiastic students, that they will say of a new poem, This is Tennyson, or, This is Browning. So the works of God testify of Him; we see His hand, His signature; there is only One who could do it, the One God. And here let me say, accustom yourselves to associate the name and presence of God with nature around you. A flower is doubly precious when it is presented by a lover's hand. And the flowers would be to us more beautiful, and the bread we eat more sweet, if we felt that they came from an Infinite Father's hand. The unity of design in nature serves to emphasise the words spoken on Sinai, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." Now, this revelation of the Divine existence suggests to us many thoughts which I shall not enlarge upon. 1. It suggests to us the blessedness of

the Divine nature. There is no contrariety, no strife, no division of counsel. 2. Again, this truth invests with authority the demands made upon our service as intelligent and responsible beings. If there were more than one God, the question might be asked, What God are we to obey? 3. Also, we may learn that He demands the homage and affection of our whole nature. The one God requires the whole heart, united in itself in one love. The unity of our nature is secured only by our love to God. There is no other power that can do it. Self-interest may try, pleasure may try, ambition may try, but the nature is still divided; and conscience, instead of expressing its approval, is like Mordecai at the gate, refusing to bow the knee. The unity of Germany was a dream, until the enthusiasm of the different states was aroused by the menaces of a common enemy; and in the fire of that enthusiasm they were welded together into one empire. The unity of man's nature is a dream until, by the fire of God's love, all his powers and faculties and emotions are fused into one. The whole man is to be given to God. There are many who are ready to unite in the confession, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth," who are only uttering words, as a child first lisping his A B C, without attaching any definite meaning to the words, and without the heart's emphasis on the words. Is our belief in God a tradition, or a real living faith? Is He our God? Do we acknowledge His presence? Do we worship Him in truth? (*James Owen.*) *Duties required in the First Commandment:*—I. WE ARE OBLIGED TO KNOW GOD. This supposes that our understanding is rightly informed as to what relates to the Divine perfections, which are displayed in the works of creation and providence. But that knowledge which we are to endeavour to attain, who have a brighter manifestation of His perfections in the Gospel, is of a far more excellent and superior nature; inasmuch as herein we see the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; or behold the perfections of the Divine nature, as displayed in and through a Mediator; which is that knowledge which is absolutely necessary to salvation (John xvii. 3). By this means we not only know what God is, but our interest in Him, and the foundation which we have of our being accepted in His sight. II. We are further commanded TO ACKNOWLEDGE OR MAKE A VISIBLE PROFESSION OF OUR SUBJECTION TO GOD, AND IN PARTICULAR TO CHRIST AS OUR GREAT MEDIATOR. His name, interest, and glory should be most dear to us; and we are, on all occasions, to testify that we count it our glory to be His servants, and to make it appear that He is the supreme subject of desire and delight (Psa. cxlii. 5, lxxiii. 25). III. We are further obliged by this commandment TO WORSHIP AND GLORIFY GOD, PURSUANT TO WHAT WE KNOW, AND THE PROFESSION WE MAKE OF HIM AS THE TRUE GOD AND OUR GOD. 1. We must make God the subject of our daily meditation. 2. We are to honour, adore, and fear Him for His greatness. 3. As God is the best good, and has promised that He will be a God to us, so He is to be desired, loved, rejoiced in, and chosen by us. 4. As He is a God of truth, we are to believe all that He has spoken, and in particular what He has revealed in His promises or threatenings, relating to mercies which He will bestow, or judgments which He will inflict. 5. He is able to save to the utmost, and faithful in fulfilling all His promises, we are to trust Him with all we have from Him, and for all those blessings which we hope to receive at His hands. 6. When the name, interest, and glory of God is opposed in the world we are to express an holy zeal for it. 7. Since He is a God hearing prayer, we are daily to call upon Him, "O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come." 8. As He is the God of all our mercies, we are to praise Him for them. 9. His sovereignty and dominion over us calls for subjection and obedience, and a constant care to please Him, and approve ourselves to Him in all things. 10. As He is a holy, jealous, and sin-hating God, we are to be filled with sorrow of heart when He is offended, either by ourselves or others. 11. A sense of our unworthiness and daily infirmities should excite us to walk humbly with God. (*Thomas Ridgley, D.D.*) *The First Commandment:*—I. The most obvious lesson of this commandment is that IT FORBIDS POLYTHEISM, the worship of many gods. We are not to allow any god to share the throne of Jehovah. Although in former times idolatry was one of the chief perils of the Jews, and was the common religion of ancient Greece and Rome, polytheism is scarcely a peril for us. II. There is manifestly contained in this commandment AN IMPLICIT DENIAL OF ALL ATHEISM. The command, "Thou shalt have none other gods before Me," rests on the assumption that there is one true and living God. The law therefore forbids atheism as being a denial of God. Now, atheism is really of two very different kinds: one that is purely speculative or

theoretical; and the other, and a far more common kind, practical atheism. 1. Of that purely speculative atheism which denies the existence of God there is very little in the present day. There may be exceptional thinkers, both in this country and in Germany, who would commit themselves to a definite denial of the existence of God, but men like Darwin and Huxley, or Tyndale and Herbert Spencer, are never found asserting there is no God. They are too wise and, let me add, too reverent to commit themselves to such an unprovable assertion. The speculative atheism of to-day calls itself agnosticism. It does not say that there is no God; all it affirms is, we cannot prove that there is one. We know nothing whatsoever about the hidden and mysterious cause which lies at the back of all phenomena; we know that there is something, and this something is the only reality of the universe, but what it is we cannot tell. "The power," Mr. Herbert Spencer says, "which the universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable." "Such a power," he goes on to say, "exists, but its nature transcends intuition and is beyond imagination." Now, what I desire to say about this modified form of atheism, calling itself agnosticism, is that it is really as deadly a form of atheism as the coarser atheism which openly declared there was no God. The agnostic himself, such a man as Herbert Spencer, may be a man of all moral excellence, for men often live on the beliefs which they have denied, just as, to use Mr. Balfour's striking illustration, parasites often live on the trees which they have destroyed. But agnosticism itself, the assertion that if there be a God we cannot know Him, is as fatal to all human goodness as the denial that there is a God. During the reign of terror the French were declared to be a nation of atheists by the National Assembly; but a brief experience convinced them that a nation of atheists could not long exist. Robespierre then proclaimed in the Convention that belief in the existence of a God was necessary to those principles of virtue and morality upon which the Republic was founded. 2. There is another kind of atheism that is most common, the atheism that we find in the streets, in the homes, in the hearts of a large number of people, and that I have called practical atheism; and this is as sternly forbidden by the First Commandment as the intellectual denial of God. And when I speak of practical atheism I mean the atheism of the heart and not of the head, the atheism of the life and not of the reason, the atheism, in one word, of that man to whose daily life it would make no kind of difference if there were no God. III. THIS COMMANDMENT FORBIDS ALL IDOLATRY. Coarse and material idolatry is impossible to-day; but there are other kinds of idolatry than the worship of idols. 1. Consider the idolatry of pleasure; and this may take one of two forms, either the pursuit of sensual pleasure or the passion for amusement. Now, the coarse degrading pursuit of sensual pleasure is not unknown even in the present day. There are those, St. Paul tells us, "whose god is their belly"; and I suppose there are such men to be found in England to-day, men who have little pleasure beyond the pleasures of the table, whose appetite and taste are as sensitive to the delights of eating and drinking as the ear of the musician or the eye of the artist is to what delights them; and then again, there is the lower form of sensual pleasure, the fulfilling of the lusts of the animal nature; but the common form of the idolatry of pleasure is found in the pursuit of amusement. It is one of the most pressing dangers of the present day. When I see the eager race for amusement to-day, when I find young men alert and excited if a sailing match or a football contest or a tennis tournament or a cricket match is taking place, willing to give up any engagement so as not to miss their favourite pleasure; and when I see these same young men indifferent to all higher aims—the pleasures of reading, of music, of art, and above all of religion; when I notice how easily excuses are found for absence on Sunday from worship, how readily the house of God is neglected for the cycle ride, or the river, or the seashore, I cannot help saying to myself, the idolatry of pleasure is one of the commonest of all the idolatries of modern life. 2. Another form of idolatry is seen in the love of money, and of all idolatries it is the most frequent in our modern world; for the one idol that never lacks worshippers is the idol of gold. I remember in this city a man dying many years ago who was one of these lovers of money. He had amassed a large fortune, no part of which ever came to any charity; and as he was lying upon his deathbed he sent for his minister, who naturally thought the dying man wished to speak to him of heavenly things, of his own soul, of religion, of God. The minister went to see him, and when he reached the bedside, and almost before he could speak, the poor miserable idolater of money said: "Oh, Mr. ——, I am so glad you have come; I want to ask you if you can tell me the price of those shares to-day," mentioning some

company in which he was interested. I am not saying that the desire to grow rich is idolatry, or that a man who bends his energies to make money in the week is sinning against God. He may be sinless in all this, and he is sinless if he desires money, not for its own sake, not for self-enjoyment, but for the use and blessing it may be to others; if he puts God first, and money always second. None the less, there are many in peril of reversing this. 3. The last form of idolatry to which I shall allude is the idolatry of love. There is something so beautiful in human love that it seems hardly possible to speak of it as an idolatry; and yet none the less it may become so. There are those whom Satan could never tempt through the flesh, who have never felt a single sensual temptation, who have no interest, or little interest, in amusement, and very little care for money, and no desire to grow rich; but who, nevertheless, are tempted through the affections, tempted to make an idol of some human love, to put lover or husband or wife or child on the throne of the heart where God ought to be. "Love me," said a wise and devout girl to her lover,—"love me as fervently as you will, but take care you love God better than you love me." She knew too well the peril of this idolatry of the heart. Possibly the commonest form this idolatry takes to-day is seen in the worship of children. By a bedside a woman once knelt, praying with streaming eyes. On that little bed, cold and still in death, lay her only child. She had literally worshipped it, and now God had taken her child from her. Listen to what that kneeling, weeping, broken-hearted mother is saying, the words are only sobs: "Oh my God, it is hard, Thou only knowest how hard for me to bear it. I thank Thee Thou hast taken my darling to Thyself. I loved my boy too well—I loved him more than I loved Thee. I made him my idol; now Thou hast broken my idol, and I have only Thee to love. My God, forgive my sorrow. I will not love my boy any less. I will love Thee more, more than I ever loved him." (*G. S. Barrett, D.D.*) *No excuse for idolatry now*:—There is but one excuse for idolatry, namely, ignorance; and there are cases in which even that fails to justify us. If a man does not know God he cannot worship Him; but if he lives in a place where God has revealed Himself perfectly, and where he may have the light if he will, then the last excuse for idolatry is swept away. Take the commandment as applied to God's ancient people. Have you ever thought how much there was which might have excused idolatry in those days of old? Not only the coming of Jesus, but all the great discoveries of science during the last hundred years, have made idolatry more sinful than ever. In the days when the imagination of the superstitious peopled every windstorm with demons, when lightnings and thunders were mysteries unsolved and unsolvable, there was some excuse for the man who, in his ignorance of God, became a fire or devil worshipper; but in these days of analysis, when we get to the root of nature's sights and sounds, finding them to be, after all, not inexplicable and mysterious, but processes and manifestations of a system of rigid law, the excuse for our idolatry is gone. Natural phenomena being accounted for within the realm of law, man must acknowledge a law-giver; and every discovery of science, within the last fifty years, has made God more real to the hearts of men who are looking for Him and are willing to see Him. Every scientific explanation of the mysterious, and of that which savoured of witchcraft, makes the sin of worshipping anything in the place of God more heinous. The more brilliant the light of the Divine outshining, the more dark is the sin of idolatry. (*G. Campbell Morgan.*) *Sins forbidden in the First Commandment*:—The sins forbidden in this commandment may be reduced to two: atheism and idolatry. I. THE INSTANCES IN WHICH PRACTICAL ATHEISM DISCOVERS ITSELF. 1. They are chargeable with it who are grossly ignorant of God, being utter strangers to those perfections whereby He makes Himself known to the world, or who entertain carnal conceptions of Him, as though He were altogether such an one as ourselves. 2. When persons, though they know, in some measure, what God is, yet never seriously exercise their thoughts about Him, which forgetfulness is a degree of atheism, and will be severely punished by Him. 3. When persons maintain corrupt doctrines and dangerous heresies, subversive of the fundamental articles of faith and contrary to the Divine perfections. 4. When we repine at His providence, or charge God foolishly, and go about to prescribe laws to Him, who is the Governor of the world and may do what He will with the work of His hands. 5. When we refuse to engage in those acts of religious worship which He has appointed, or to attend on His ordinances, in which we may hope for His presence and blessing. 6. When we behave ourselves, in the conduct of our lives, as though we were not accountable to Him and had no reason to be afraid of His judgments. II. THE AGGRAVATIONS

AND DREADFUL CONSEQUENCES OF THIS SIN. It is contrary to the light of nature and the dictates of conscience, a disregarding those impressions which God has made of His glory on the souls of men. And in those who have been favoured with the revelation of the grace of God in the Gospel, in which His perfections have been set forth to the utmost, it is a shutting our eyes against the light, and casting contempt on that which should raise and excite in us the highest esteem of Him whom we practically disown and deny. It is directly opposite to and entirely inconsistent with all religions, and opens a door to the greatest degree of licentiousness. III. To consider this commandment as FORBIDDING IDOLATRY: which is either what is more gross, such as that which is found among the heathen, or that which is more secret, and may be found in the hearts of all. 1. As to idolatry in the former sense, together with the rise and progress thereof, in considering the first rise of it we may observe—(1) That it proceeded from the ignorance and pride of man, who, though he could not but know, by the light of nature, that there is a God; yet being ignorant of His perfections, or of what He has revealed Himself to be in His Word, was disposed to frame those ideas of a God which took their rise from his own invention. Accordingly the apostle says, "When ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which, by nature, are no gods." (2) When iniquity abounded in the world, and men cast contempt on the ordinances of God, they invented and worshipped new gods. (3) Hereupon God gave them up to judicial blindness, so that they worshipped the host of heaven, as the apostle says the heathen did. (4) As to what concerns the idolatry which was practised among the Israelites. That took its rise from the fond ambition which they had to be like other nations who were abhorred of God, counting this a fashionable religion. 2. That idolatry which is sometimes found among Christians. (1) Self may be reckoned among those idols which many, who make profession of the true religion, pay a greater regard to than to God. This we may be said to be guilty of; in which respect we are chargeable with heart idolatry—When we reject or refuse to give credit to any of the great doctrines contained in Divine revelation, unless we are able to comprehend them within the shallow limits of our own understandings. This is no other than a setting up our own understanding, which is weak and liable to err, in opposition to the wisdom of God, and, in some respects, a giving superior glory to it. When we are incorrigible under the various rebukes of providence, and persist in our rebellion against God, notwithstanding the threatenings which He has denounced or the judgments which He executes. This also discovers itself in our affections, when they are either set on unlawful objects, or immodcrately pursue those that would otherwise be lawful; when we love those things which God hates, or covet what He has expressly forbidden. There is a more subtle kind of idolatry, whereby self enters into religious duties. Thus when they attempt to perform them in their own strength, as though they had no occasion to depend on the Almighty power of God to work in them that which is pleasing in His sight. And we are further guilty of this sin when, through the pride of our hearts, we applaud ourselves when we have performed some religious duties, and expect to be justified thereby; which is a setting up self as an idol in the room of Christ. And lastly, when self is the end designed in what we do in matters of religion, and so robs God of that glory which is due to His name. (2) There is another idol which is put in the room of God, and that is the world. When our thoughts are so much engaged in the pursuit of it that we grow not only cold and remiss as to spiritual things, but allow ourselves no time for serious meditation on them, or converse with God in secret. When the world has our first and last thoughts every day. When we pursue the world, without depending on God for His blessing to attend our lawful undertakings. When our hearts are hereby hardened, and grow cold and indifferent in religion, or when it follows and disturbs us in holy duties, and renders us formal in the discharge thereof. When the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world have a tendency to quiet our spirits, and give us full satisfaction, though under spiritual declensions and destitute of the special presence of God, which is our greatest happiness. When we fret at the providence of God under the disappointments we meet with in our secular affairs in the world. When we despise the members of Christ because they are poor in the world, are ashamed of His Cross and refuse to bear reproach for His sake. (3) There is another instance of heart-idolatry, namely, when we adhere to the dictates of Satan, and regard his suggestions more than the convictions of our own consciences, or the Holy Spirit. Satan's design in his temptations is to turn us away from God, and when we are drawn aside thereby we may be said to

obey him rather than God. (*Thomas Ridgley, D.D.*) *Having God*:—I. OUR RACE must have a God. We cannot escape the sceptre and the supervision of the Creator. II. NATIONS must have a God. The words of this law were addressed to the people of Israel. Neither kings nor senates nor majorities can avoid national responsibility. Constitutions may not recognise Him, but the Divine administration is not dependent upon human enactments. III. THE INDIVIDUAL SOUL must have a God. The law of the universal holds the unit. I must have a God. Not one soul can drop out of the all-embracing government of God. IV. There are TWO WAYS of having a God. First, by the necessity of His government, which will not surrender one soul to any other authority; and second, by the voluntary choice of the soul who takes the God who is king by right of creation, to his heart as Father and Redeemer, delighting in Him as his all-sufficient portion. V. Man may have MANY GODS. 1. Through the perversion of the religious faculty, as when the powers that must worship something, having lost the perception of the true, invisible God, are directed towards visible things, first as symbols and then as substance—sun, moon, stars, statues, stones, birds of the air, beasts of the field, and loathsome reptiles of the ground. 2. Through the prostitution of all the faculties, as when the powers given us by the Creator to be used exclusively for His glory (which invariably includes our highest good) are employed with selfish aims, God being forgotten. Then are the objects of our love and delight the "gods" we serve. VI. Man should have but ONE GOD — the one Lord God — JEHOVAH. 1. Because of what this one God is: the Self-existent, the Almighty, the Eternal, the Unchangeable, whose throne is from everlasting, and whose power and glory are only equalled by His holiness and justice and love and mercy. 2. Because of what this one has done. He is our Creator, and has preserved us. But more than this, it is He who has redeemed us. 3. Because of what man needs. Honour, ease, friendship, wealth, power, are all insufficient to meet the wants of the immortal mind of man. In the midst of all their best benefactions man cries out for something better. Man, made for God, is in misery without God. 4. Because of the train of miseries which must follow in the service of many gods, or of any but the one God. In the Hebrew the expression "before Me" signifies "before, upon, or against My face." He who has any other than the true God, thereby—(1) Hides God's face from himself, so that He does not see God, nor look toward Him, nor rest assured of God's presence. He is full of doubts and uncertainties. The world is dark, for His face is hidden from which the light shines. (2) He hides himself from God's face—from the smiles of approval and the words of blessing. No "well-pleasing in My sight" comes with its sweet inspiration and consolation to his soul. He is seen by the Almighty as through a thick cloud, and the Almighty delighteth not in him. (3) His idolatries "before" or "against the face" of God antagonise God. He defies his Maker. He calls for His vengeance, and when the thrones of the idols perish before the indignation of the Almighty, all who bow at these thrones shall also perish. VII. Man in "having" God has ALL THINGS. He has infinite resources of wisdom, power, and grace at command, according to the "exceeding great and precious promises" of God, who is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." He has peace, deep and abiding. He has joy, full and unfailing. He has hope, clear and unquestioning. He has love, fervent, abounding, and all-controlling. He has "all things" of this world, and the "better things" of the world to come. VIII. Let us look at this "word" of the law—the first of the "ten words" IN THE LIGHT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. First, there were "ten words," or commandments. They were prohibitory, monitory, and minatory. "Thou shalt not" rings through the code of Sinai. In the New Testament these are reduced to "two." "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Nay, we find them all in one. One law! One word! and this one word is Love. IX. God led Israel out of bondage, but not out of the pains of DISCIPLINE AND TRIAL. He brought them out of Egypt to learn this law, but led them to Sinai by way of the Red Sea and the desert of Sin, and the perils of Rephidim, and through the midst of the fierce Amalekites. Thus are God's people led to-day to the heights where His law is revealed. The way is dark and desolate and full of danger, but He who leads us has lessons for us to learn: lessons about Himself; lessons which we are slow to receive and prone to forget; but He bears with us and brings us on our way—His way—sustaining and comforting and aiding us. (*J. H. Vincent, D.D.*) *Possessing God*:—If we are not to have other gods in His presence, then by every principle of logic we are to have Him. "I am the Lord thy God, and thou shalt

have Me." How? As the patriot has his country which is by birth or naturalisation the land he calls his own, wherein are the institutions in which he takes honest pride, and the principles for which he is willing to die; that is his country, so man is to have his God. As the woman has her husband, chosen from out all the sons of men, to whom she surrenders her all, a heart for a heart, a life for a life, a soul for a soul, and in whom she has placed implicit confidence, in the one who led her to the bridal altar and swore to be true to her in good report and evil report, "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death us do part," to the exclusion of all other men, so is she to have her God, to the exclusion of all other divinities. "Thou shalt have Me." (*J. P. Newman, D.D.*) *Lord, Thou alone art God*:—Every true head of a family lays down rules according to which the household is regulated. God, as the Father of all, here makes known the rules by which His great family are to regulate their lives. He introduces those rules with a brief but pregnant preface. "I am the Lord"—"a word of thunder," says Luther: "thy God"—a word of blessing—"thou shalt have none other gods before Me." It would seem as if the command must be self-evidently rational. But it means that we ought above all to fear, love, and trust God. God says: "Give Me thine heart"—thy whole heart. We keep this command when we—I. FEAR GOD SUPREMELY. 1. Each commandment is like a coin stamped on both sides. On the one side the image is forbidding, even terrible. It delineates the prohibition, "Thou shalt not." The other is beautiful—it gives the precept. Look at the first commandment on its two sides—the one shows the idolater, the other the child of God. 2. When men fear aught else but God they are idolaters. They bow before images of terror, *e.g.* want, sickness, death, the judgment of men, &c. 3. But we ought to fear God because "He is a great God"; "He commands and it is done," &c. He sends sickness and health, &c. In His hands are life and death. He is Judge. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Therefore "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." 4. But to fear God for this reason only would be not to fear Him, but His rod. This is a slavish fear: such "fear has punishment." But if children of God we must avoid what would offend Him. "How shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Let this fear ever be yours in every circumstance and condition in life. A proud sceptic wrote: "A poor miserable life it is to be constantly in fear! What will they ever accomplish who are always asking the question, 'Is this right that I have undertaken what I am doing?' How weakly and fearfully do such take their stand in a world where courage and quick decision are needed in order to achieve anything, who plague themselves with puerile scruples of conscience and stand ever in dread of an unseen Judge!" No, we say. The man who fears God is freed from every other fear. And true courage, endurance, &c., are to be found only among God-fearing men, *e.g.* the Swiss at Lempach praying. "They pray for mercy," said an Austrian, "but from God, not from us, and what that means we shall soon experience." The apostles: "We must fear God rather than men." II. LOVE GOD SUPREMELY. 1. When men love any person or thing more than God they are idolaters as much as those who serve idols, *e.g.* Mammon. 2. Others do not cherish mammon in their hearts. On the contrary, they squander what they possess to minister to their lusts and appetites. "Whose end is destruction." 3. Others cry out, "I deserve to have honour among my fellows, their esteem," &c. Ask yourself, do you esteem this more than the honour that comes from God? 4. Others cry, "My wife, child, &c., is the being most dear to me," &c. Try your heart as to whether they have a higher place in your heart than God, and whether, therefore, you are an idolater. 5. If you would escape from this idolatry hear what God says: "My son, give Me thine heart." Hear what David says of Him: "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength," &c. (Psa. xvii. 1, 2). If He is all this to us we must love Him. III. TRUST GOD SUPREMELY. 1. Manifold are the troubles and dangers we meet on the way through life; and in view of this not only heathens but Christians trust in dead idols. When men put their trust in aught but God they become idolaters. 2. When a poor man trusts in a rich friend alone, a sick man thinks only of the skilled physician, an embarrassed man trusts to his own unaided wisdom, or a dying man declares, "I have at all times lived righteously, I shall not be condemned," they are idolaters. "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom," &c. 3. Rather give God your heart, and rest all your hope in Him. In trouble look to Him as the true helper and be confident. Though the last handful of meal and drop of oil be reached, &c., trust, and all will be well. Remember His word, "I am the Lord THY GOD." This heavenly Father will feed,

help, &c., in due time; and even when His ways seem dark, remember His wonders of old. (*K. H. Caspari.*) *The First Commandment:*—This commandment may be regarded as settling the first principle, the fundamental article of the Jewish creed, and as prescribing the first of Jewish duties. And the article is of universal obligation. The article of faith is the Divine unity; the article of duty, the exclusive worship and service of that one God. There can be no doubt that idolatry on the part of Israel was the primary and most offensive breach of the covenant. 1. What dishonour it did to Jehovah, the one God! What must have been the impression on the minds of the heathen when their idols were preferred by Israel to their own Jehovah! 2. Such conduct was strongly interdicted, as involving in it the foulest ingratitude. 3. Idolatry stood not alone. The worship given to these other gods was, in itself and in its accompaniments, made up of all that was otherwise odious in God's sight. How just the designation of these idolatries by Peter, "abominable idolatries." (*R. Wardlaw, D.D.*) *Renouncing idolatry:*—The first time I went to Nelson River I was troubled while on my journey with violent attacks of the cramp, which caused me to fall forward, completely doubled up. Then one of my Indians would take hold of me by the shoulders, and another by the feet, and pull me out straight, then sit on me to keep me so. On such occasions I would say, "Well, if I get back from this journey, I'll never go to another. Neither the society, the Church, nor God demands it"; but as soon as I got all right I took back the cowardly words. When I got to the Nelson River I found that the people for miles around had gathered together, and there were hundreds awaiting my arrival. Poor people, they had never heard the name of Christ. I preached from John iii. 16 as earnestly as I could, then asked the people what they thought of my sermon. Immediately all eyes were turned towards the chief. He rose, and coming to the front, gave one of the finest orations it has ever been my lot to hear. He was a natural orator, and every time I heard him I was always filled with admiration. His speech was to the effect that for years he had lost faith in the pagan gods. When he saw God in nature, how He provided for His people, he said, "Surely that God cannot be pleased with the idle beating of a drum or the rattling of a conjurer's wand." And pointing to the conjurers and medicine men who skulked on the outskirts of the crowd, the only ones who did not welcome me, he exclaimed, "These medicine men can tell you that for years I have had no god; but this God whom you speak of, shows by His grace and goodness that He is the only living and true God, and Him only will I serve." That chief was worthy of the words he spoke, for ever after he was an earnest and consistent Christian, showing forth the power of the Gospel. (*Egerton Young.*)

Vers. 8–10. **Thou shalt not make thee any graven image.**—*The Second Commandment:*—The Second Commandment contains, like all the commandments, a great principle—the great principle that God can be sought and found, not by outward forms, but only by the clean hands and the pure heart. The First Commandment bids us to worship the one God exclusively; the Second Commandment bids us to worship Him spiritually. The First Commandment forbids us to worship false gods; the Second Commandment forbids us to worship the true God under false forms. What is the primary meaning of the Second Commandment? Did it forbid the arts of painting and sculpture? Probably to the Jews it did, as to this day it does to the Mohammedans, who adorn their mosques and temples only with patterns and arabesques. Among half-emancipated serfs it was necessary to discourage the plastic arts; they needed the teaching, not of painters and sculptors, but of prophets; nevertheless, the literal force of the words, "Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven image," not made with the idea of paying to it any sort of religious reverence, is therefore not against the letter of the commandments. But why was it necessary to say to the Jews, amid the thunders of Sinai, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image"; and why is it still necessary to republish that commandment to Christians? The answer to that question is, Because there is in the human mind a perilous tendency to worship idols which needs to be incessantly resisted. Men are too carnal, too sensuous, too inherently superstitious to be content with a pure, simple, spiritual religion. It is so much easier to bow the head than to cleanse the heart; so much easier to multiply outward services than to be kind and truthful and humble. The advent of Christ, so far from abrogating this Second Commandment, has re-enacted it with tenfold emphasis. And has Christendom kept it? I think that in two ways Christians have danger-

ously infringed upon its prohibitions. They have done so by material images. In many of the niches of this abbey we see that the statues have been removed from them. Who did it? The Puritans. And why? Because lamps had been hung and incense had been burned before those stony idols. Were they not right? The almost invariable result of the use of inferior means for producing religious excitement is to mistake the excitement for the religion, it is to substitute ultimately the excitement for righteousness, it is to base our religion upon a lie, that the gilded thing of our idolatry is necessary to make God any nearer to us than before. The crucifix, for instance, is, it seems to me, both a dangerous and unwarrantable material symbol. In the first four centuries Christians shrank from representing Christ at all. In the year 402 the highly orthodox and universally respected Bishop of Salamis tore down a curtain in a church in Palestine because it had woven on it an image of Christ; he declared that a picture of Christ was contrary to the Christian religion, and bade the astonished priest use it for a shroud of some pauper. The early Christians for many centuries shrank as from an impiety from representing Christ as dead, or at the moment of His death. Even when they began to use the symbol of Christ they made it a triumphant not a morbid symbol. It has been truly said by a wise teacher that the prostration of the soul before the mere image of the dying Christ makes our worship and our prayer unreal; we are adoring a Christ who does not exist; He is not on the Cross now, but on the throne; His agonies are past for ever; He is at the right hand of God. But without sinking into these errors, it is fatally possible for us to break the Second Commandment by making to ourselves a false ideal of Christ. The proper meaning of "idols" is that in which the great Lord Bacon uses the word—shadowy images, subjective phantoms, wilful illusions, cherished fallacies. There are idols, he says, inherent in the soul of man, which, like an unequal mirror, mingles its own nature with that which it distorts—idols of the market-place, false conceptions of God, which spring from men's intercourse with one another, and from the delusive glamour of words: idols of the school, false notions which come from the spirit of sect and system, and party and formal theology. And even the God-Man, Christ Jesus, may be monstrously misinterpreted to us. To Michael Angelo he was an avengeful, wrathful Hercules, hurling ten thousand thunders on the demon-tortured multitude for which He died. To many schoolmen His sole ideal was the self-absorption of the monkish cloister. Priests have offered us a dead Christ for the living Christ, an agonised Christ for the living Christ, an ecclesiastical Christ for the Divine Christ, a sectarian Christ for the universal Christ, a petty, formalising, pharisaical Christ for the Royal Lord of the great, true heart of manhood; a Christ far off in the centuries instead of a Christ ever nigh at hand; a Christ of an exclusive fold for the Christ of the one great flock; a Christ of Rome, or Geneva, or Clapham, or Oxford for the Christ of the eternal universe and of the heavens and all worlds. How then, in conclusion, are we to escape from these idols? When the Empress Constantina asked Eusebius, the most learned prelate of his day, to send her as a present a likeness of Christ, he replied, with hardly suppressed indignation, "What do you mean, Empress, by a likeness of Christ? Not, of course, an image of Him as unchangeable, not of His human nature glorified. Such images," he said, "are forbidden by the Mosaic law, that we may not seem like idolaters to carry about our God in an image. Since we confess that the Saviour is God and Lord, we prefer to see Him as God, and if you set a value on images of the Saviour, what better artist can there be than the God-Word Himself?" Thus he referred the Empress to the Gospels to learn what Christ really was. If you will search and read those Gospels diligently for yourselves, with minds washed clean of prejudices, private interests, and partial affections; if you will read them with open eyes and souls cleansed from idols, you will then see what Christ was, and will need no image or false human conception of Him; you will see Him, stern, indeed, to the Pharisee and to the hypocrite, yet large-hearted, human, loving, tender to sorrow with an infinite tenderness, merciful and compassionate even to the guiltiest of the children who would come with tears to Him. (*Dean Farrar.*) *God is a Spirit:*—"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image," &c. (Exod. xx. 4-6). The first word on Sinai declares that there is but one God; the second word teaches us that God is not to be worshipped under any visible representation or form. Isaiah asks, "To whom, then, will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto Him?" In the early ages of history there were no images of the Deity known. Herodotus, when writing of the manners and customs of the Persians, says, "They have among them neither statues, temples, nor altars; the use of which they censure as impious, and a gross violation of reason, probably because, in opposition to the

Greeks, they do not believe that the gods partake of our human nature. Their custom is to offer from the summits of the highest mountains sacrifices to Jove, distinguishing by that appellation all the expanse of the firmament." The worship of the heavenly bodies was the earliest form of idolatry, and Moses warns against it: "Take good heed lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them." The origin of idolatry may be traced to this fact, that men looked about for some visible representations of the invisible Deity, and that in course of time the image or the symbol became a substitute for the Deity Himself. Men looked for God everywhere, and they could not see Him; they could see the stars crowning the night with glory, they could see the sunlight flooding the universe, and they said, "The sun and the stars shall be to us an image of the all-glorious Deity, a symbol of His greatness, and power, and goodness." But, as time advanced, the symbols themselves were deified, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, were worshipped and served. The Israelites, then, were forbidden to set up an image of the true God; not only forbidden to worship false gods, but also forbidden to make any image of the true God. When Aaron made the golden calf, and Jeroboam the son of Nebat made similar images, in both instances it was the worship of Jehovah as represented by the image that was intended; and in both instances a connecting link with Egypt is afforded us in the sacred narrative. In the case of Aaron we have the fact of Egypt having been the birthland of the sinning people; while in the case of Jeroboam we have the fact that it was after a long residence in Egypt, in the court of Shishak, that he devised this worship. The prophets of Jehovah denounced it; and in the Second Book of Kings the fall of the kingdom is expressly attributed to the gods of Jeroboam. Animal-worship was common among the Egyptians; a multitude of beasts, birds, and fishes were regarded and served as representatives of their deities; the hawk, and the crocodile, and the serpent, and the lion, and the wolf, and other creatures, were the forms under which the gods were worshipped. We believe that the masterpieces of art, whether in painting or sculpture, have a refining and elevating influence on those who admire and study them. But art is not necessarily religious, and some of the ages in which art has flourished were not remarkable for their purity or refinement. Painting and sculpture were not forbidden by this second word of the law—and we read of the forms of the cherubim in the temple—but no image was to be set up as an object of worship; and the influence of this prohibition upon the history of the Jews is perceived in the fact that no painters or sculptors have ever risen among them. They have had poets and musicians, but no painters; and while among the Greeks Phidias and Praxiteles were carving the statues that became the wonders of the world, on the roll of Hebrew worthies we find the name of no painter or sculptor. It is remarkable that in the four Gospels we have no description of the person of our Lord, no hint as to His stature, or His face. Art has embodied its loftiest conceptions of that Divine face on the canvas, but Raphael's "Transfiguration," Holman Hunt's "Light of the World," Doré's "Christ leaving the Prætorium," Munkacsy's "Christ before Pilate," marvellous as they all are as works of genius, do not satisfy the soul that has entered into fellowship with the Perfect life, and who feels that there is an unspeakable, infinite beauty in Him. It is one of the strangest things in the history of the world that a rational, intelligent being should take a piece of metal, or of wood, and mould it into a certain shape, and then, investing it with the attributes of divinity, fall down before it, and pray to it, and worship it. Well might the inspired prophet wield the lash of satire when speaking of it. He says, "The carpenter stretcheth out his rule (Isa. xliv. 13), falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, deliver me, for thou art my god." This is done, not by a little child who nurses and talks to the doll as if it were a living creature; but by an intelligent man, who can conduct business, frame wise laws for a nation, discuss great moral problems, or speak eloquently in the forum or the school; this man falls down before the idol, the toy, the nonentity, and saith, "Deliver me, for thou art my god." Idolatry robs Jehovah of His honour, and it is therefore denounced as a crime, an injustice, an offence against the Majesty on high. "Ye shall bear the sins of your idols, and ye shall know that I am the Lord God." Would not a true patriot look with indignation upon a foeman's flag planted on England's shore? Would not his desire be to trample that flag in the mire, or tear it to ribbons, and unfurl the old English standard that "has braved a thousand years the battle and the breeze"? And the apostle looked upon idol-worship in Athens as the flag of an enemy on the territory

of God, as the occupation by an enemy of the palace that belonged to God. Idolatry was the sin to which the Jews were most prone. Surrounded by heathen nations, and forgetful of the mercies they had received from Jehovah, they were often contaminated with idol-worship; and even Solomon forsook the temple of Jehovah for an idol-grove. This image-worship is prohibited by this second word of the law; how, then, did Rome deal with this prohibition? With the cunning craftiness of men who lie in wait to deceive, it omitted this word from the Decalogue, and divided the last commandment into two, in order to make up the number ten. The idolatry practised in the Romish Church is one of the signs of its apostasy, and of the certainty of its doom; for, as Max Müller says, "One of the lessons which the history of religions certainly teaches is this, that the curse pronounced against those who would change the invisible into the visible, the spiritual into the material, the Divine into the human, the infinite into the finite, has come true in every nation on earth." Consider, then, the reasons by which this prohibition is enforced. 1. He is a jealous God. Our character will receive its form and impress very much from the notions we entertain of God. If we regard Him as an impassive, emotionless, heartless Being, who is too high to take any interest in this world, who is not affected by our sorrows, by our circumstances, by our entreaties, who requires not our worship, then the effect will be that we shall meet indifference with indifference, we shall lead careless lives, we shall not be watchful in the formation of a character that will never be inspected by the eyes of Divinity. "How doth God know? Can He judge through the dark cloud?" But if we regard Him as the righteous and merciful Father, who is looking with pity on His rebellious children, the effect will be seen in our penitential return to Him, and in our desire to please Him and serve Him. Now, this verse reveals to us something of the nature and character of God. He is a personal Being, not an abstraction, not a mere force; not a tendency or (as Matthew Arnold puts it) "a power not ourselves that works for righteousness," whatever such a phrase may mean. To worship a God who is nothing more than that would be like paying homage to a sum in algebra, or praying to a theorem in Euclid, or worshipping the Gulf Stream. He is a personal Being, who loves, who may be offended, who is jealous; not jealous lest He should suffer any diminution of His glory and blessedness through man's sin, but jealous lest sin should deface and destroy the nature He accounts so precious. His jealousy is His love on fire, love wounded, love insulted, love incensed. If your son were led astray by evil companions, if your daughter became the prey of the tempter, and fell from the fair Eden of purity to the hell of an abandoned life, would you not be jealous and angry? Man is God's child; and when the child is led astray, and becomes an Absalom, with the fire of defiance in his eye and the weapon of hostility in his hand, it is no wonder that God is jealous. 2. He punishes His enemies. "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation," &c. Right across the brightness of the world lies the dark shadow of suffering. It is there, whether you believe the Bible or not. We see everywhere that moral characteristics and physical infirmities and sufferings are transmitted from one generation to another. And this principle of hereditary transmission is recognised in the Bible. The Jews said, "Our fathers have sinned, and are not, and we have borne their iniquities." And these words of doom were pronounced by Christ, "That the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zecharias, who perished between the altar and the temple; verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation." Do you not see this principle illustrated in daily life? Children inherit the physical constitution, the propensities, the diseases, the wealth or penury, the glory or disgrace of their parents. Sometimes men are proud of their ancestors, and they "borrow merit from the dead," and if a baronet or lord has ever appeared in their family, they forget not to proclaim the fact. Good and evil are transmitted from one generation to another. But though a man may suffer on account of the sins of his ancestors, yet the suffering is never in the nature of retribution, unless the man's own guilt has called for it. If the penalty goes down to the third and fourth generation, then they are, God says, "the third and fourth generation of them that *hate Me*." And although innocent children may suffer the consequences of the sins of their parents, yet those consequences are temporal; in another world, and in the coming day of account, every one will be judged personally and separately; the son will not be punished for the sins of his parents, nor will he be excused on the ground of the righteousness of his parents. A man feels, and rightly, that he is not responsible for his grandfather's sins; but

he may be in some measure responsible for the conduct of his children, and even grandchildren. And men are entreated to act wisely for the sake of their descendants—to be good and to do good for the sake of others. The Israelites gathered round the base of Sinai were the founders of a new nation, a nation that was to play an important part, that would have a name in history to the end of time, and if the fountain-head were defiled, the streams would be muddy also. 3. And He blesses His friends. "And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments"—unto thousands of generations. "Where sin hath abounded, grace hath much more abounded." "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment." There is mercy shining even in the law. In the midst of the storms of Sinai mercy is appearing like a quenchless star. I have said that moral qualities are transmitted, as well as physical features. Lying had become so characteristic of the inhabitants of Crete that the apostle quoted the proverb, "The Cretans are always liars." And habits of industry and temperance and truthfulness may go down like healthy blood from one generation to another, even to thousands of generations. But do not think that the renewing grace of God in the heart may be transmitted from sire to son, or that the spiritual life will flow down with the natural life from fathers and mothers to their children. Inherited dispositions backed by education and example may do much to secure this result, but every child must seek for himself "the good part that shall never be taken away from him." It is not the godliness of the parents, but the mercy of God, that goes down unto thousands of generations, and converts them into generations that love Him and keep His commandments. (*James Owen.*) *The Second Commandment:*—I. WHAT IS STRICTLY AND PROPERLY PROHIBITED IN THIS COMMANDMENT? It is quite manifest that the prohibitory statute relates exclusively to religion—to such images as were made to be "worshipped and bowed down to"—nothing else, and nothing more. They were not only to have no other gods besides Jehovah, but were not to worship Jehovah Himself under any similitudes. 1. Such representations of the true God as are here interdicted were probably the origin of the whole idolatrous system. The Second Commandment, I apprehend, ought to be regarded both as a prohibition of what in itself was wrong; and, at the same time as a guard to the first, that they might not only be kept from embracing directly the idolatries of the surrounding countries, but also from introducing a practice in the worship of their own Jehovah which tended to lead them ultimately into the same errors. 2. The commandment was evidently designed to cherish just conceptions of the spiritual nature of Jehovah, and of the corresponding spirituality of the worship He required. 3. Spiritual conceptions of God's nature are connected with spiritual conceptions of His worship. The awfulness of felt incomprehensibility is an impression, in regard to the Infinite Spirit—the great object of our worship, incomparably more desirable and beneficial, than one of gross material familiarity. There is sublimity in it. And there is in it the impression of constant nearness. Whereas when the worship is associated with material emblems, the mind, from the force of habit, becomes incapable of realising the presence of the Deity when the emblem with which that presence is associated is absent. II. THE REASON ANNEXED TO THIS COMMANDMENT. 1. What is meant by Jehovah when He designates Himself "a jealous God"? 2. The manner in which this Divine jealousy operates, or manifests itself. "Visiting the iniquities." (1) The "visiting of the iniquities of the fathers upon the children" formed no part, nor was it at all a principle, of the judicial law in Israel. On the contrary, it was peremptorily interdicted (chap. xxiv. 16; 2 Kings xiv. 6). It was Jehovah Himself, in His own judicial and providential administration, that was to exemplify the principle in its actual application. (2) If Jehovah retained the principle and the application of it in His own hands, this shows it to have been a principle that could admit of being entrusted to none but Himself. He alone, the omniscient God, was capable of distinguishing in what cases it would, without a violation of equity, be put in practice. (3) Judgments and corrections of a national description, if they were to be executed at all, could not, in the nature of things, be executed otherwise. They unavoidably involved the children of the present generation; and, if continued for a series of successive years, involved all those of the generations following. (4) There were cases, they were frequent indeed, in which the children themselves persisted in the sins of their fathers. (5) It appears to be on this principle that Jehovah reasons with His ancient people, in the eighteenth chapter of the Book of Ezekiel, and vindicates His procedure from their capricious and sullen objections to it. In the spirit of pride, and dissatisfaction, and self-vindication, they were laying their own sufferings to the door of their fathers' sins. But Jehovah puts it to their

consciences whether, on the supposition of the sins of their fathers being put out of the account, and His "judging them after their own sins," their sufferings, as His judicial visitation, would be removed or lightened. (6) There are still cases remaining, and in them lies the principal difficulty, in which the innocent appear to suffer with the guilty; unoffending children with their criminal parents; families with their guilty heads (Josh. vii. 24, 25; Numb. xvi. 27–34, &c.). In regard to these, let the following considerations be attended to:—First, the retribution must be viewed as confined to the present life. Secondly, the number actually involved in the sin and its personal guilt, it is, in such instances as those referred to, difficult for us to ascertain—how far, in each of the two cited, for example, the wives, the sons, and the daughters, and others took part themselves, directly or indirectly, in the crime. We know that Ahab was stirred up by Jezebel; so might Achan by his wife, and so might Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Thirdly, when little children suffered, who could take no part in the trespass, and contract no personal guilt, it was in their case only temporal death coming upon them in another way and at an earlier time than it might otherwise have come. (7) It may further be observed, that the declaration is in harmony with numberless facts in the ordinary administration of Divine providence. How often do the vices of intemperance, incontinence, and extravagance entail disease and misery on a man's immediate and even more distant offspring! (8) How striking and delightful the contrast between the extent, respectively, of the visitation of iniquity and the showing of mercy. To all without exception—individually, who "love Him and keep His commandments," He "showeth mercy." But the contrast is between the third and fourth generation on the one side, and the thousandth on the other. The contrast is designed to intimate and impress the Divine delight in mercy. III. THE IDOLATRY, OR RATHER THE IMAGE-WORSHIP, OF THE SO-CALLED CHRISTIAN CHURCH. It is very strange, and shows the inconsistency of error, and how "hard bestead" it sometimes is for something to say for itself, that the setting up of the brazen serpent has been cited as an instance of reverence due to images, as if the command to the Israelites to look to it had been a command of worship to the object looked at. The best reply to this is simply to point to what became of the brazen serpent; what was done to it for the very reason of its having become an object of idolatrous reverence and superstitious reliance. (*R. Wardlaw, D.D.*) *The Second Commandment:*—I. WHAT IT FORBIDS. II. THE REASON FOR THE PROHIBITION. To ascertain this let us inquire why man makes an image or a picture to help him in his worship. The answer may be briefly stated—the spiritual sense in man, that which realises God, is dead. None who know what it is to live and walk with God amid the work of the week would derive help from an image placed in front of them when they worship. By the new birth of the Spirit they have had the spiritual consciousness restored: so that they know God, and are able to commune directly with Him. If a man crave help, it is thereby proven that he lacks spiritual consciousness. This very lack renders him incapable of creating anything which gives a proper representation of God. God knew that if men who had lost their sense of Him and His presence made something to represent Him, it would be a false representation, and men would thereby get false notions of Him, even as they sought to worship. Look at the matter from another point of view. In the instant that man sets up a representation of any description to help him to realise God he denies that which is essential in God. Limitlessness lies at the heart and centre of the thought of God, and the moment a man makes an image he denies the essence of God. The thought of God produced by a false representation of God will produce character that is false. In effect God says to man, "Thou shalt not attempt to liken Me to anything: because every effort of that kind must result in failure, and must re-act upon man to his abiding injury." III. WAYS IN WHICH THE COMMANDMENT IS BROKEN TO-DAY. What is the priest? An attempt to reveal God to my heart, in order that I may worship Him. Wherever a man gives his soul away to the priest, because he imagines that he is getting to know God through the priest, the latter become to the man an image and an idol. In every case where this has been done man's conception of God has suffered, and the result has been the degradation of the worshipper. The same danger is seen with regard to ritual. An ornate service, beautiful and æsthetic surroundings, are supposed to create the conditions of true worship. We ask what is the result of all this upon the spiritual nature of man? Are the men and women who go over to ritualism in any form becoming more spiritual? When ornate service is put in the place of the rights of individual souls we are as great idolaters as were the men of olden

days, who made graven images or painted pictures, and fell down to worship them. Turning from that higher level, we remember how much is said to-day about worshipping God through nature. I love the flowers, the valleys, the hills, the sunshine, the birds; but I say to you, that no man ever reaches God through nature. Men do get to nature through the God who made it. Let a man be right with God, and he will find the mystic key that unlocks all nature for him; but the men who try to climb to God through nature never succeed. The new cult of humanitarianism is really an attempt to worship God through human nature; but it is a sorry business. If this new idea of God is expressed in the individual or in the sum-total of the race, let it be remembered that God Himself becomes guilty of all the awful things which have blotted the page of human history—a terrible thought! IV. THE SOLEMN WARNING AND THE GRACIOUS PROMISE LINKED TO THE COMMANDMENT. If in your worship you put something in the place of God, if you come under the influence of worship which is an attempt to put something between God and man: then you are not only harming yourself but your child. The probability is that your idea of worship will be transmitted to your child, and your child's idea of worship will be transmitted to his child, so that the wrong that you do yourself when you misrepresent God is a wrong which you are doing to your child likewise. That, I believe, is the first and simple meaning of the words used in connection with this commandment. But we proceed to notice the gracious promise standing side by side with the warning: "Showing mercy unto thousands." That is to say, if a man sweeps the idols away, and gets into living connection with God, worshipping Him without anything between, the result will be that his child will thus worship, and his child's child will most likely so worship. (*G. Campbell Morgan.*) *The idolatry of civilised men*:—We sometimes wonder what to us instructed Christians, who cannot conceive ourselves, even in imagination, bowing down to a graven image, what can be any longer the lesson of the Second Commandment. What is the use of repeating it? Can we even imagine the temptation to do so? But are there no other things, the idols of refined and civilised men, no other "likenesses" than were known in old time, "of things that are in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth," to which worship is done, subtle, profound, and absorbing,—idols which occupy the place of God, or perhaps profess to represent Him,—idols which meet us at every turn, and which need and justify the reiterated command, "Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them"? 1. For instance, God is all-powerful, almighty, and we worship Him who is the Maker and Ruler of all things. But the world, as we know it and have to do with it, is full of forces and necessities, whose origin and law is lost in darkness, which we cannot trace beyond a little way back, which seem self-originated and self-acting. They are awful, tremendous, irresistible, irreversible. They seem blind and aimless. We are powerless in their grasp if we oppose them; if we can use and direct them, it is still as blind and deaf and unchangeable and senseless forces. They bind us fast in their chain; they cut across the field of human will and feeling and purpose, reckless of the havoc they make, of the hopes they disappoint. In the onward roll and tide of what seems a boundless ocean, comprehending all things, from the hypothetic atom or the microscopic cell and germ to the farthest sun, the moral world, as we know it, seems swamped and lost. They care neither for good nor bad. They bind us with bonds which oppress and crush us. This tremendous side of nature is an idea which enlarging knowledge has brought home to our generation with a sharpness and definiteness never recognised before. It fills and occupies minds, till even the consciousness of will becomes overshadowed and cast into the background, a phenomenon or a doubt. And with this dread image before men's minds there grows up a terrible religion of despair. Nature, in its garb of fate and necessity, has shut out God. 2. There is a religion of literature. Literature, the record and image of the thoughts, impressions, and feelings of men, in the most diversified conditions and in the most diversified expression, is one of the gifts which have been made to our time: a gift, a real and inestimable gift it is; a strange and new one, distributing without stint to the many what used to be the prerogative and treasure of the few; opening more and more the inexhaustible wonders of the intellect and the character of man; placing within increasing range access to all that is loftiest and wisest, most perfect and noblest in what men now and before us have thought and said; leaving us utterly without excuse if, with the very highest placed within our reach, we choose the refuse and the vile. But it is a dazzling gift, a gift which makes men think that there can be nothing to match it, nothing beyond it. Is not this enough for the heart and soul

of man, of man at least, cultivated, civilised, instructed, enlightened? Is it not enough for his meditations, his aspirations, his secret acts of devout homage and devout uplifting of the spirit? Will not the religion of great books and great thinkers, the religion of genius and poetic truth, be a sufficient religion? 3. There is a mysterious power in the world, a mysterious endowment given to man, one of the most wonderful and lofty of all his prerogatives—the sense of beauty. Is it surprising that art should almost become a religion—a worship and an enthusiasm in which the wondrous shadows of God's glory take the place of God Himself, in His holiness, His righteousness, His awful love? It is not surprising; but alas for us, if we yield to the temptation! The love of beauty, in work and speech and person, was the master-passion of the reviving intelligence of Italy: it attracted, it dominated all who wrote, all who sang, all who painted and moulded form. Out of it arose, austere and magnificent indeed, yet alive with all instincts of beauty, the *Divina Commedia*, the mighty thought of Lionardo and Michael Angelo, the pathetic devotion and deep peace of the Lombard, Tuscan, Umbrian schools; but to whole generations of that wonderful people—from the fresh sonnet-writers and story-tellers of the closing middle-age, Guido Cavalcanti and Boccaccio, to the completed refinement of the days of the great Venetian masters and Ariosto—the worship of the beautiful, as the noblest, worthiest devotion, stood in the place of truth, of morality, of goodness, of Christian life. This idolatry of beauty brought its own punishment, the degeneracy and deep degradation both of art and character. 4. Yes; the world in which we now pass our days is full of great powers. Nature is great in its bounty, in its sternness, in its unbroken uniformity; literature, art, are great in what they have created for us; beauty is great in its infinite expressions: but these are not the powers for man—man, the responsible, man, the sinner and the penitent, who may be the saint—to fall down and worship. They are to pass with the world in which we have known them, the world of which they are part; but man remains, remains what he is in soul and character and affections. They at least feel this who are drawing near to the unseen and unknown beyond; they to whom, it may be, these great gifts of God, the spell and wonder of art and of literature, the glory and sweet tenderness of nature, have been the brightness and joy of days that are now fast ending—they feel that there is yet an utter want of what these things cannot give: that soul and heart want something yet deeper, something more lovely, something more Divine, that which will realise man's ideals, that which will complete and fulfil his incompleteness and his helplessness,—yes; the real likeness in thought and will and character to the goodness of Jesus Christ. "My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Man has that within him which tells him in presage and parable of greater and more awful things than anything he can admire and delight in yet: he has that without him which certifies him that his hopes and aspirations are justified; that when these precious things of the present must pass with the world to which they belong there is laid up for him what "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, what God hath prepared for them that love Him,"—sinlessness, strength, peace, the vision of God. (*Dean Church.*)

For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.—*The Lord is a jealous God*:—1. First, He is so in respect of idolatry. "They moved Him to jealousy with images" (Psa. lxxviii. 58). "Behold at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy" (Ezek. viii. 5)—a more provoking place than if it had been in a less holy spot. Take Mohammedanism, where the idol of a false prophet stands in the place of the Lord's Anointed; or Socinianism, where the idol of human reason usurps the place of Divine Revelation; and these two are neither better nor worse than the idolatry of the pagan or papal falsehood: they are equally the erection of man against God, and of human reason as opposed to the Word of God. 2. God is a jealous God in respect of all the self-righteousness, worldly-mindedness, creature dependences, pride, formality, or whatever other carnal principle would exclude spiritual humility, and in fact set up idols in the heart, under the Reformed religion we profess, although in itself a purer form of Christianity than any other. 3. God is a jealous God in respect more especially of His honour among His peculiarly professing people. "What do ye more than others?" "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" The Lord looks here for proportionate fruit, which yet He finds not. An unsanctified carriage dishonours our heavenly Father, and provokes His jealousy. A barren and unfruitful walk does this also. A discontented and repining spirit has the same effect. (*Christian Observer.*)

Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children.—*The sins of the fathers*

visited on the children:—Among the several motives used by God to discourage men from breaking His most holy laws is the fear of punishment He is often pleased to inflict in this life. Let us offer some vindication of this way of God's dealing with mankind in visiting, upon some extraordinary occasions, the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, or the sins of one generation on succeeding ages. 1. Then it will be of some use to us, in order to free the doctrine of the text from the difficulties that may seem to accompany it, to consider the more than ordinary malignity of those sins which God is provoked to visit upon the offspring of wicked parents. The sin more particularly pointed at in the text is that of idolatry, which is a sin of a heinous nature. 2. Again, whereas it is said in the text that God will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, this visitation must be understood to imply no more than the infliction of temporal evils only. For as the virtues of parents, how eminent soever, will not be imputed for righteousness to a degenerate posterity, so neither will their vices. 3. And to proceed yet further, even the temporal evils denounced by God in the text against the offspring of notoriously wicked parents are there supposed (ordinarily, at least) to extend no further than to the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him; which period of time is therefore conceived to be mentioned to satisfy us that God primarily and more especially designs to punish sin in the immediate authors of it, since it may be presumed—and is often true, in fact—that wicked parents may live to see themselves thus punished in those that come out of their loins; whereas, on the contrary, the goodness of Almighty God is such an overbalance to His vindictive justice that He has likewise declared that He will show mercy unto thousands of them that love Him and keep His commandments. 4. Add to this, that the temporal curse pronounced in the text must ordinarily be allowed to be conditional only—that is, to take place no otherwise than as wicked parents shall continue obstinate in the practice or defence of those sins by which they had provoked the Divine vengeance—which condition, it must be confessed, may be superseded by a thorough repentance; and when it is so, it may please God to respite the execution of His sentence, or to mitigate, as there shall be sufficient reason, the severity of it. 5. Lastly, for a more clear and full vindication of the justice of God's proceeding in visiting, upon some special occasions, the sins of the fathers upon the children, it will be necessary that we consider further the character and qualifications of those persons upon whom He determines to visit, in the manner above mentioned, the sins of their forefathers. For we must not imagine that He punishes, even with temporal evils (according to the usual methods of His providence), the sins of guilty parents on a guiltless offspring. On the other hand, there are several ways by which the descendants from a wicked stock may make the guilt originally contracted by their fathers in some measure their own, either by treading in the steps of their ancestors—which is not unusual, considering the powerful influence of their bad principles and examples, strongly inclining them to such an imitation, by which and other means family vices, as well as diseases, become hereditary—or by presuming to justify or to palliate the malignity of the transgressions committed by them; or yet further, by not humbling their souls, under a just and lively sense of the heinousness of them; or lastly, by some personal crimes of their own, no less notorious, which may justly provoke God to take occasion from thence to visit both their own and the iniquity of their parents upon them. In which several cases we have no reason to arraign the justice of God's dealings with mankind. Also those judgments of God, how severe soever, may always be improved to the spiritual and often temporal advantage of those on whom they light, if they are not wanting to themselves in making a proper use of them; which is so evidently true, in fact, that temporal evils are sometimes the only means, under God, of reclaiming societies of men, as well as private persons, from the guilt of the most daring and presumptuous sins. (*John Pelling, D.D.*) *A jealous God*:—In this glorious description three points are misunderstood, and therefore demand explanation. He says, "I am a jealous God." In his learned book on the *Study of Words*, Dean Trench has given us a chapter on the "mutation of language," showing how a word may change its meaning through the lapse of years. Perhaps no word in our language has been more abused than the word "jealous." In the Scriptures it has a double significance. Primarily it implies, "I am sensitive of My rights and honour." And who is not? He who is indifferent to his rights and honour is unworthy of manhood; for underlying this sensitiveness is the appreciation of high-born character, out of which come those forces that make men good, powerful, and dignified. This is the meaning of Elijah, when he said, "I have been very jealous

for the Lord God of hosts"—that is, "I have been very sensitive as to Thine honour; I have proclaimed Thy majesty and declared Thy law on the plains of Esdraelon, on the summit of Gilboa, and on the heights of Mount Carmel; I have risked everything because I knew that Thou hadst Thy rights and honour, and that I was set for their defence." St. Paul uses the term in another signification, implying a solicitude and deep concern for the welfare of others: "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy"—that is, "I am deeply solicitous for your happiness; my concern is profound." It is in this endearing sense, as if the Almighty had said, "I cannot allow My creatures to place themselves in a position wherein I cannot love and bless them." Could we ask more of the Infinite Father than to be solicitous for His children, that they may not place themselves in the position of idolaters and thereby forfeit His gracious blessing? As a patriot, true and ardent, might say, "I cannot allow my country to be placed in a position, by a false administration, by the enactment of unrighteous laws, by the adoption of a foreign policy, whereby it would be excluded from the favour of Jehovah and the prosperity which springs from its principles and history." And so a true husband would say, "I cannot permit my wife to place herself in such a state wherein I cannot love and cherish her." No true man is indifferent to the welfare of the woman he has wedded, nor would he expose her love and person to companionship fraught with temptations and dangers; to do so would prove his unworthiness of husbandry and of honourable manhood. A husband is the eternal guardian of the wife of his bosom. He is to protect her to the last degree; to preserve her honour he is to sacrifice everything, even life itself. In this loftier sense Jehovah says, "I am a jealous God; do not worship idols, and thereby place yourselves beyond the limitations of My love and benediction." There is another declaration in this ancient law capable of an explanation reflective of a better and truer view of our sovereign Creator: "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." The old interpretation is both false and cruel, that "the Lord of heaven holds the children responsible for the sins of their parents." How monstrous this conception of the Creator! To vindicate Himself against such a degrading charge He has left on record this answer: "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin." What, then, is the meaning of this extraordinary expression? The term "iniquity" is not equivalent of punishment. He does not say that He visits the punishments due the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation, but simply declares a great truth, brought out distinctly by the most eminent scientists of our day, that the law of transmission is a fact, that the past is handed down, that virtuous and vicious tendencies are transmitted from generation to generation. The whole history of the world is in proof of this; every man is a living illustration of a fact which cannot be denied. Our physical, intellectual, and moral characteristics are an inheritance. Men are born liars, thieves, murderers, as others are born truth-loving, the soul of honour, and tender of the life of every living thing. Gibbs, the pirate, was a pirate from his mother's womb; the elder Booth, the famous tragedian, who could personate murder on the stage with such apparent actuality that his auditors cried "Murder, murder!" yet, from his birth to his death, was tender of everything that had life. It is one of the proverbs in all literature that men are born poets, orators, warriors. Julius Cæsar, Mark Antony, Columbus, Voltaire, and David Hume represent this great law of transmission, whose characteristics were inherited, and were as conspicuous in childhood as in their riper years. In these words of His law God only proclaims what He had already written on the whole order and constitution of nature. Herein He applies this law, in its operations, to the transmission of idolatrous tendencies to the third and fourth generation. The "third and fourth" may here be proverbial, as the terms "seventh" and "tenth" are proverbial; and it is a significant and historical fact that, in the history of the Jews, it requires three or four generations for the taint of idolatry to run its course and become extinct. The Hebrew captives, on their return from Babylon, were no longer idolaters. Whatever their offence may have been, charged against them prior to their exile, the generation who came from the banks of the Tigris and of the Euphrates, and who were of the third and fourth generations, were free from the sin which led to the captivity of their ancestors. Here, then, is simply a declaration of the operation of a law which we recognise in the dog that caresses us, in the horse which carries us, in the flowers that cheer us, in almost everything that lives. We have seen the son inherit the evil tendencies of his

father, and have witnessed the results of a vicious, prodigal life of a father through succeeding generations. If fault is found with the teachings of the Bible in this regard, fault must be found with the order of nature. And it is as remarkable as true, that what can be affirmed of individuals may be of nations; for this law of transmission binds national life as it does the life of individuality. What we are to-day we are under the operation of this fearful law, and what American generations may be, through unnumbered centuries, will be under the operation of this same marvellous law of heritage. It is in this light that when Jehovah speaks of visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations He speaks of the taint of idolatry, and utters a fact for which all history stands in proof. There is a third point in this wonderful picture worthy a moment's consideration—God declares Himself a discriminating judge, "that will by no means clear the guilty." And who would have Him clear the guilty? Out of this question grows the deeper one, Shall we have government or no government? A government without justice is unworthy the name thereof. Law that can be infracted with impunity, where no penalties are executed for the violation thereof, is unworthy the honourable designation of law. If the right to punish inheres in the family and in organised society, why may we not assume that it is in accord with the government of the Infinite Sovereign of the universe? A system of pains and penalties is everywhere prevalent. We may make a distinction between penalties and consequences, yet the issue is the same—pain attends transgression of law. The whole universe moves in orderly procession. The uniformities of nature declare that order is the first law of heaven. Man is no exception to this rule of administration. He is a living, walking code of law, and, whatever his religious faith or his purpose, he suffers if he sins. There is more beneficence in the prohibitions of law than in the permissions and mandates. Doubtless the Almighty had a choice, in the creation of man, whether His noble creature should be a machine, whose every act should be automatic and subject to another's touch, or whether he should be dignified with the sovereignty of liberty, to stand or fall for himself, to obey or disobey, to live in harmony or in dissonance with his Creator. Man's crown of glory is liberty. Liberty means free will, free will means government, government means law, law implies penalty, penalty implies pain. The Almighty could have been simply our Creator, and been indifferent to our acts and the results of our actions; but in the boundlessness of His beneficence He has placed us under the rule of justice, and in keeping thereof there is great reward. (*J. P. Newman, D.D.*) *Our twofold heritage*:—Let a man, righteous or unrighteous, be punished for a crime he has not committed, how his sense of justice is outraged!—what burning resentment springs up within him against those who inflict it upon him! His quarrel is with his fellow-men, with all the world, if it condemn him, innocent, to suffer with the guilty. There is nothing in the nature of things which decrees that that law shall be so, and not otherwise. Of all the laws framed by man, one thing only may be safely predicted, that by man they will be changed. The laws which are framed by any nation may be good, but they cannot stand for ever. They are the embodiment of that nation's conception of justice. But that conception must become larger as the nation's mind and heart grow greater. If we knew justice in the abstract, then the work of our law-makers would be comparatively easy; all their task would be to apply their knowledge to the concrete. But we cannot know absolute justice, therefore we should be content if our changing laws are steps ever leading upwards to our ideal of perfectly just relationship. But there are other greater laws than these—laws which do not denote the progress of time, but stand through time the representatives of the eternal; remain, amid a world of change, the symbols of the unchangeable, working themselves out unerringly and unpityingly. Surely to rebel against such laws is only to invoke despair. We are all proud to call ourselves the heirs of past ages. But to be the victims of them—does that not seem hard? The old theological dogma of predestination, the doctrine which taught that mankind was divided into elect and non-elect, that ere a man was his doom was, and he might not pass it, seems to us peculiarly revolting. The injustice of it could not but arouse and inflame the worst passions in a strong nature. It was the death-knell of striving and aspiration. That it was an evil doctrine few will be found to deny. Why, then, did it live so long and die so hard? Simply because there was a measure of truth in it. But the truth in it was pushed to an extreme and became falsehood. Science restated the law in her own terms. She does not pursue the unhappy individual beyond the grave and through all eternity with her doom of predestined

and unaltorablo ovil. She simply delivers him up to the law she has discovered, and repeats in language, and with proofs that cannot be gainsaid, "The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children." The law of heredity is one which is filling a larger and larger place in the science and thought of our day. Its influence is traced in our physical organism, in our mental endowments, and in our moral power. Men who have made mental diseases their special study tell us that our work, worry, violent grief or pain, all these and the many kindred ills which tend to induce madness, are not to be reckoned for number against the cases in which the influence of heredity can be clearly traced. And putting aside these cases of what we may call accidental insanity, and considering only the hereditary, we find that always the progenitor of it was sin. But not only do the sins of our fathers descend upon us in suffering of body, or in varying peculiarities of mind; they find us out in our moral nature as well, in a predisposition to like sins as our forefathers sinned, in a weakness of our will before certain temptations. It is an appalling thing. It wakes within us a new fear of our fellows and a new dread of ourselves. Is there a grown-up man or woman who cannot furnish an analogy from his own experience? After we have striven and agonised and prayed, and by sore trial and long strife have built up habits of virtue to ourselves, have we never seen them all fall off from us, and known ourselves stripped and naked of our virtue and our strength, one with the weakness and sin that beset us, knowing, even in the midst of our frenzied cry to be kept back from that sin, that we shall have surrendered our will to it? And so our sin-convicted souls let go their much-prized doctrines of free will, and own their will fettered by low desires, in bondage to the sins of the past; and in our misery we grasp at the truth in the doctrine of heredity that in the dogma of predestination we scoffed at and denied. But there is another side to the law. The second part of our text proclaims it to us—"showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments." The phraseology of the position of the two clauses leads us into an error which only thought on the subject can correct. The entire text calls up before our mental vision two distinct classes of people. On the one hand we see the suffering descendants of sinful progenitors working out the law unto the third and fourth generations; on the other hand we see the happy thousands who love God and keep His commandments, delighting themselves in His mercy, or, as the marginal note of the Revised Version permits us to put it, we see the mercy of God upon those who keep His commandments, descending through a thousand generations. But when we look at it more closely we see that we have been deceived into making such a division. In real life such a division is not possible. These are the two extremes between which all men are comprehended. Further, as there is not one, nor ever has been, who is wholly evil or wholly good, it follows that while there is not one of us who does not suffer in some degree from the sins of those now dead, also there is not one of us who is so poor as not to have the heritage of God's mercy bequeathed to us from some progenitor who has won it for us by loving God and keeping His commandments. Science tells us the self-same tale. It is not only evil that persists, but good also. We do not hear so much about it. We all know and think too much of the evil that is in the world, and too little of the good. And so we turn towards pessimism, and call our dark imaginings truths. The sins are visited unto the third and fourth generation. God's mercy extends unto a thousand generations. What a wealth of meaning and truth is hidden there! Think of the numbers merely. Three or four, even generations, we have no difficulty in figuring to ourselves. They exist at one time among us. But a thousand generations! The imagination exults in the comparison between three and four and a thousand. But let us consider the truth of it as attested by our reason and experience. Evil has two ends, and two only, which are possible to it. The one is that it shall be overcome of good, and by being so its history becomes merged in that of good, and its existence as evil is ended; the other is that it shall persist until it die. The inevitable tendency of evil is toward self-destruction. Evil repeated and repeated does not gain strength and power by every repetition. For a time it does, but by and by at every repetition it becomes weaker; each reproduction of itself means a fresh drain upon a vital power that has no perennial fount of life to draw upon, so that it becomes exhausted. The imagination even cannot conceive of a thing growing ever increasingly evil, till it is wholly so, and yet continuing to live. But we, who know good and evil struggling together within ourselves, are tempted to think the one as great as the other because it is as close to us. "The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation"—that is truth! Yes, the surface of truth. The mercy

of God is unto a thousand generations—that is truth!—yes, fundamental truth, the secret of our nature, the source of our undying hope. And that truth we find everywhere. If we examine our store of experience and observation we find it written there. And if we bid our intellect pronounce upon it, she divorces good from evil that we may see the nature of each. She shows us evil, cut off from the good to which it clings, hurling itself in headlong flight down to everlasting nothingness. She shows us good, following the law of its nature, climbing with slow, sure step the heights of heaven. (*A. H. Moncur Sime.*) *The law of heredity:*—Even moral qualities are often inherited, for the spring is poisoned at the fountain head, and the water is never pure again. Uncleanness, untruthfulness, passion,—how often we can too sadly trace in them the evil likeness of the sin of the parents. Let us not, however, exaggerate the truth. God never charges a child with the guilt of its parents' sin. The most awful result of sin, its guilt in God's sight, is never transmitted. It was on this point, amongst others, that the older Calvinism made shipwreck of itself. It taught that children were guilty before God because of the sin of their first parents; that we were chargeable with the guilt of Adam's sin, and were liable to eternal death for it; and in saying this Calvinism outraged the conscience of humanity, and it fell because of the outrage. God does make a child to suffer for the sin of his parents, but He never imputes guilt without personal transgression. Everything else that results from sin, its physical degradation, mental incapacity, moral infirmity of will, depraved tastes and appetites, inward bias to evil, all these are the evil legacy that sin hands down from father to child; and all are included in this solemn law: "for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children," &c. It may be said that this does not relieve the difficulty of this command. Why, it may be asked, does a righteous and loving God ever allow an innocent child to suffer for the sins of his parents? I answer that it may be impossible for us to give a complete reply to this question, but there are some considerations which serve materially to alleviate the difficulty. 1. Let us not forget that, however we may explain it, the facts remain. If there were no Bible, no revelation of God in Christ, the tragic effects of heredity would remain. 2. And still more let us bear in mind—and this seems to me profoundly important—that the law of heredity is not a law meant to curse, but rather intended to bless man. In other words, the fact that the iniquity of the fathers is visited on the children is only part of a wider law, that moral and physical qualities are transmitted, a law that was meant to secure an entail of blessing on posterity, and not a heritage of woe. A "godly seed," what a wealth of untold blessing there is in these words! If we read the Old Testament, nothing is more significant than to notice how this law of the inheritance of blessing is repeated again and again. (Gen. xviii. 19.) (Psa. cii. 28.) (Prov. xx. 7.) (Psa. xlv. 16.) May we not see this law in operation before our eyes to-day? Are there not homes we know which have been blessed for their parents' sake? 3. And thirdly, we may see that even in the solemn sanction to this law there is a larger inheritance of blessing promised than of evil. If we look at the margin of Revised Version we shall find the true rendering, not "thousands," but "unto a thousand generations." (Compare Deut. vii. 9.) We stand now in the full sunshine of this beneficent law. One question remains. Why is this sanction to this law introduced here? I think the reply is two-fold. First, there was in the solemn sanction to the law a special warning to the Jews against the peril of image or idol worship. It would descend to their children, and would involve them as well as their forefathers in its punishment. Unhappily, they found this only too true. Generation after generation of Israelites suffered from the idolatry of their parents. It was not until the fierce fires of the dispersion and the exile in Babylon had burned out the last remnants of idolatry from the heart of the nation that they obeyed this law. Then there was another and more general reason for this warning, and one that applies to all nations as well as the Jews. The worship of false gods, and the false worship of the true God are crimes against the holiness and majesty of the Eternal God, and as such are visited therefore with the most tremendous penalties. False religion vitiates the family and the nation as well as the individual. There are nations in Europe, for instance, which are suffering to-day because this law of God has been wickedly broken. (*G. S. Barrett, D.D.*) *Incitements to keeping God's commands:*—The "ten words" are prefaced with the declaration, "I am the Lord thy God"; now He declares, "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God—showing mercy." Our fathers declared that these words of God are "terrible to His foes, gracious to His friends." Consider—I. HOW THIS ZEAL OF HIS WRATH IS MANIFESTED TOWARD

THOSE WHO HATE HIM. 1. This is shown in various examples in the New Testament. Punishment follows, like a dark shadow, the footsteps of the criminal. Indeed, one has merely to look around on the world to see how true this is. What is the meaning of the proverb, "As men live so it fares with them"? It means that men had observed and noticed that when a man sinned by excess against a sound body and against reason, it fared ill with him! The body became sickly, the mind weak; that when a man is discontented with an honest calling, or manages carelessly the goods entrusted to him, it fares ill with him. His trade does not support him, his possessions vanish, his end is want, beggary, or crime. To the unfaithful, &c., will come home the proverb, "God punishes one rogue through another," &c. 2. Does this mean that sin is punished naturally? Yes. "Sin is the destruction of a people." God has so formed the world that this is the result. 3. But God's zeal against those who hate Him is manifested in ways which we cannot understand; *e.g.*, how often examples proving the proverbs, "Ill-gotten gain never prospers," "It does not come to the third generation," come before men! So, too, the saying, "The pitcher goes to the well until it is broken." Many begin a godless course apparently with success, until at some moment the word comes, "Thus far and no farther," and in a moment the fabric formed by evil deeds is shivered in fragments. "The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small." "They who drink deep must finish with the lees." 4. But God's hand often is seen, as it were, visibly in this terrible work. Duke Rudolph of Swabia, who rebelled against the emperor, over eight hundred years ago, when his hand was cut off in battle he cursed the bleeding stump, and said with a sigh, "This was the hand with which I swore fealty to the Emperor Henry." So with people: the Canaanites—the Romans under the late empire. 5. This word is terrible to God's enemies, and although many an evil-doer seems to prosper, yet could we see his heart! The evil man carries a tormenter within him. "An evil conscience is as a fire in the bosom"—it is a mirror that reflects every sin. With pleasure the prodigal leaves the father's house—with pain he must return, if ever he does. And to the evil man the thought of death is like the thought of the executioner to the criminal. 6. But suppose that punishment does not come here, that the sinner's conscience is hardened, and that he meets death suddenly without a thought of past or future—what then? Let who will call him happy. Not even the heathen did that, but considered that the reward would follow. And thus, too, Scripture declares that the reward of unrepented evil-doing shall follow the sinner into the invisible. Them that hate Me—and there are many who may not be classed with murderers, thieves, &c., who do so: mockers of religion, &c., despisers of God's revealed Word and law. 7. And that the sins of the fathers are visited on the children is a fact of actual experience. The enemy of the faith, who brings up his children to despise religion, &c., is taking the moral foundation from his child's life. The children of prodigals may be beggars, the children of the debauchee inherit a weak and feeble frame, it may be, &c. This is the order of the world. Yet to the children this is intended to be a salutary cross teaching them to avoid the sins of their parents, for God has also said, "The son shall not bear the iniquity," &c. (Ezek. xviii. 20). II. CONSIDER HOW THE ZEAL OF GOD'S LOVE IS SHOWN TOWARDS THOSE WHO LOVE HIM. 1. He shows mercy unto thousands—unto many generations—of those who love, and show their love in keeping His commandments. Not that we can gain or purchase the Divine mercy by keeping perfectly the Divine law. No man can do this. 2. But God shows mercy to them that love Him. It is well-pleasing to Him when men seek to keep His commandments out of love to Him—not from amiability of character merely, or from fear of punishment, or with a view to present or future reward, but from love to God. 3. If we love God because He has first loved us, and sent His Son, &c., because we know Christ and the riches of His grace, and seek to show our gratitude to Him by doing His will—these God sees in upright hearts which love Him, and because of this goodwill He spurns not our imperfect efforts to serve Him. "Thou, Lord, dost bless the righteous," &c. (Psa. v. 12). Many a pious man may be poor and of little account in the world—his life seems poor in joy, &c. Yet ask him how it fares with him, and you will find that amid his poverty he can rejoice in this blessedness of the righteous. 4. "Say to the righteous that it shall be well with him," &c. (Isa. iii. 10). It is not their lot to sow and not reap, to labour and yet lack bread, to build and yet be roofless, &c. A blessing shall rest on their labour, &c.; their children shall rise up and call them blessed; whilst the godless shall not see when good comes, and in the end shall be like chaff which the wind drives away (Psa. i.).

5. It is they who believe that "the blessing of the Lord maketh rich" who shall stand fast in evil days. They trust in God's friendship and fear not the world's enmity; they go not with the multitude to do evil, but walk in the ways of God. The Lord may prove and try them, but it is that they may stand more firmly in His strength; but He will make the crooked straight before them. The morning may be dark, but the day will brighten. "If I must choose," said a good man, "I had liefer sow in rainy weather, and reap in fair weather, than sow in fair weather and reap in rain" (Psa. cxxvi.). 6. And the blessing of the Lord shall continue on the house of the righteous—to a thousand generations. Of the tree planted by watercourses it is said "his leaf shall not wither." The righteous children of the righteous shall inherit the blessing. Well said the apostle, "Godliness is profitable unto all things," &c. (1 Tim. iv. 8). (*K. H. Caspari.*)

Ver. 11. **Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.**—*The Third Commandment:*—I. WHAT IS REQUIRED IN IT. This supposes that it is an indispensable duty for us to make mention of the name of God. II. THE SINS FORBIDDEN IN THIS COMMANDMENT; and accordingly we violate it by not using the name of God in such a way as it is required. This includes in it—1. The not making any profession of religion, as being afraid or ashamed to own that in which the name of God is so much concerned. 2. Persons take the name of God in vain, when, though they make a profession of religion, yet it is not in such a way as God has required, and this is done by using His attributes, ordinances, or works, in which He makes Himself known, in an unbecoming manner. 3. The name of God is taken in vain by blasphemy, which is a thinking or speaking reproachfully of Him, as though He had no right to the glory that belongs to His name. 4. This commandment is broken by not using religious oaths in a right manner, or by violating them; and, on the other hand, by all sinful and profane oaths and cursing. 5. This commandment is also broken by murmuring, curiously prying into, and misapplying God's decrees or providences, or perverting what He has revealed in His Word, *i.e.* when we apply things sacred to profane uses, and have not a due regard to the glory of God, which is contained therein. 6. This commandment is further broken by making use of God's name as a charm; as when the writing or pronouncing some name of God is pretended to be an expedient to heal diseases or drive away evil spirits. 7. This commandment is further broken by reviling or opposing God's truth, grace, and ways; whereby we cast contempt on that which is most sacred, and lightly esteem that which He sets such a value on and makes Himself known by. III. THE REASONS ANNEXED TO THE THIRD COMMANDMENT. And these are taken —1. From the consideration of what God is in Himself, as He is the Lord, whose name alone is Jehovah; whereby He puts us in mind of His sovereignty over us, and His undoubted right to obedience from us, and hereby intimates that His excellency should fill us with the greatest reverence and humility, when we think or speak of anything by which He makes Himself known. Moreover, He reveals Himself to His people as their God, that so His greatness should not confound us, or His dread, as an absolute God, whom we have offended, make us despair of being accepted in His sight. Therefore we are to look upon Him as our reconciled God and Father in Christ, which is the highest motive to obedience. 2. The observation of this commandment is further enforced by a threatening denounced against those that break it. (*Thomas Ridglet, D.D.*) *On taking God's name in vain:*—The "Name of God" meant much more than the mere breathing of an articulate word by which men spoke of Him. It meant God in His reality, in His immanence, in His eternity. To take His name in vain—that is, to no purpose—is to trifle with Omnipotence; it is to treat Him as though He were not. Thou takest His name in vain when thou triest to forget or ignore Him, to live without Him, more defiant than the very devils, to believe yet not to tremble. Observe, there is no menace here. It is the awful statement of an eternal fact. If by godlessness, and disobedience, and hypocrisy thou art taking God's name in vain, thou art guilty; and if responsible, thou must bear the consequences whatever they should be. Being guilty, how can He hold thee guiltless who seeth through all shams and is the very God of truth? But it is too sadly possible to make life itself one long act of taking God's name in vain. Take, by way of illustration, the great world of business with which so many of us are in one way or another connected. Is there a man whose work is scamped work? Is there a man who is engaged in the accursed branch of trade, which sells spirits to drunkards or savages, or the owning of low gin-shops, or tenements unfit for human habitation and often let for immoral purposes, or any-

thing which gravitates to the misery of mankind? Is there a man who sweats his workers, defrauds them of their wages, grinds the faces of the poor, excusing himself by custom, treating human beings as though they were mere chattels and implements of trade? Is there a man who has made large sums of money by plausible astute bargains, palmed off under the form of honourable agreement upon the unsophisticated ignorance of non-business men? Well, all such men spend their lives in taking God's name in vain, for they spend their whole lives in conditions which defy the fundamental laws of that Being whom they profess to serve. The Third Commandment is far more searching than this. A man may be utterly respectable, a woman may be perfectly moral, yet both of them guilty of this sin, and what one has called the great slugs of commonplace and cant may be leaving their slimy trails all over their lives. The human being who is rendering no single true and self-denying service to his fellow-men, the life that ignores God's essential requirement that we should love our neighbour as ourselves, is a life that He will not hold guiltless—a life that takes His name in vain. Nor does it matter in the least if in the man or in the priest this selfishness turns into the form of some religionism. Not only is that religion no religion which, loving its party more than the Church, goes on to love the Church more than God, and ends by loving itself more than all. Surely then, in conclusion, this is an intensely searching commandment. If we examine it, every one of us may well be afraid lest we, in not any slight or venial manner, but most guiltily, take God's name in vain. Let us search ourselves with candles and see whether by profanity, falsity, malice, sloth, self-indulgence, lust, worldliness, greed, or merely nominal profession, we in our whole lives have hitherto been taking God's name in vain; let us seek forgiveness where alone it can be found. (*Dean Farrar.*) *The Third Commandment*:—I. Has our CONVERSATION been always such, as that there was never anything dishonourable to His glory, and always everything suited to do Him honour? 1. Has there been nothing dishonourable to God upon our lips? Have we profaned God's name, taking it in our mouths lightly, irreverently, and without design of doing Him honour? Have you never treated irreligiously God's Word, and the truths it contains? And this, whether by disputing against what it saith, or by indecently using the expressions of it? Have you never spoken lightly of God's ordinances, His day, sacraments, His worship, and especially the preaching of the Word, wherein we are most apt to offend because it comes to us through the hands of men? Have you never spoken rashly of God's people; too hastily judging and censuring them; too readily receiving and propagating evil reports concerning them; running them down for their infirmities, and giving a malicious turn to their graces; and so miscalling the profession of Christ? Have you never spoken disrespectfully of God's providence and grace? (Chap. viii. 17, ix. 4.) Have you never spoken dishonourably of God's promises? 2. Has our conversation been always not only not dishonourable, but such as in everything was suited to glorify God? Have we always in circumstances required spoken for God? (Psa. cxix. 46.) Also, when we have been speaking of God, have we always done it with all that reverence which became us towards Him, so as to exalt Him, and express a lively sense upon our hearts of His being that glorious God we say He is? II. In CONDUCT have you not been guilty of taking God's name in vain? 1. Negatively: has there been nothing in your conduct dishonourable to that Jehovah whose servant you profess yourself to be? (1) Consider your general calling as Christians, have you done nothing dishonourable to the name of Jesus therein? Looking back on your past years can you say, "I am pure from the blood of all men"? Have you in no instances, at no time, set before the world an example dishonourable to your Lord? What, did you never show forth any pride, anger, envy, resentment? (2) Besides our general, we have all of us a special calling, and it is peculiarly needful we should all inquire if we have not, by our conduct therein, dishonoured God's holy name. Did you never betray your truth through idleness, vanity, company-keeping, desire of man's favour? Did you never pervert it to the ends of pride and vain-glory? Has the world never seen anything in your conduct respecting your calling which has been dishonourable to the Christian name? 2. The positive side. Have we so conducted ourselves always in our general and special calling as might most tend to glorify God's name? The Scripture is express (Matt. v. 16). (1) In our general calling, have we been always shining lights? Was the will of God our rule always, and our only rule? Have we been always examples of faith and heavenly-mindedness, hope and charity, meekness and humility, patience and contentedness, diligence and zeal? (2) Also, in our special callings, have we done all we might for God's glory? Have

we been faithful, diligent, cheerful, unwearied, upright day after day in our Father's work? Have we always said in our hearts, thus and thus shall God be glorified, and has this stirred us up to labour and not to faint? (*S. Walker, B.A.*) *The Third Commandment*:—I. THE NATURE OF THIS SIN may be advantageously unfolded by considering it as it respects the name and the works of God. The name of God is profaned, that is, treated with irreverence—1. In perjury or false swearing. 2. When the name of God is used in any light, irreverent manner, the same sin is committed. 3. We are guilty of this sin also when we invoke the name of God lightly and irreverently in prayer, or without that seriousness, humility, and religious awe which are indispensable to the acceptable performance of this duty. 4. A still more heinous transgression of the same nature is using the name of God irreverently in the solemn act of dedicating the soul to Him in the covenant of grace. 5. As this sin respects the works of God, or, in other words, whatever He has done, declared, or instituted, the profaneness, whenever it exists, is exactly the same in its nature, but different in the mode of its existence. In all instances included under that head, it is directed against God immediately; but mediately in those now referred to; the irreverence being pointed immediately against the works themselves, and through them against their author. God is often treated with irreverence—(1) In the works of creation and providence. The works of creation and providence are merely manifestations of their Author. In all of them His character is more or less visible; His wisdom, power, and goodness; His omniscience and immutability. Whenever we complain, murmur, or ridicule them, the ridicule is not against the works themselves, but their Author. (2) The same irreverence is abundantly exercised towards the Word of God. The Scriptures are not infrequently made the object or the means of sport and jesting. The same irreverence is exercised when the Scriptures are neglected. The same irreverence is exercised towards the Scriptures when we do not duly respect their authority. Of the same nature is the contempt, obloquy, and ridicule often cast upon the Scriptures. (3) This irreverence is, perhaps, not less exercised towards the institutions or ordinances of God. II. THE GUILT OF THIS SIN is evident—1. From the tenour of the command. 2. This sin is an immediate attack on God Himself, and is therefore peculiarly guilty. 3. Profaneness is in most instances a violation of peculiarly clear and peculiarly solemn inducements to our duty. 4. Profaneness is a sin to which there is scarcely any temptation. 5. Profaneness is among the most distinguished means of corrupting our fellowmen. 6. Profaneness prevents or destroys all reverence towards God, together with all those religious exercises, and their happy consequences, of which it is the source. III. THE DANGER OF THIS SIN. 1. Profaneness is eminently the source of corruption to the whole character. Almost all moral attributes and employments operate mutually as causes and effects. Thus irreverence of thought generates profaneness of expression, and profaneness of expression, in its turn, generates irreverence of thoughts. Thus, universally, the mind moves the tongue, and the tongue, again, in its turn, moves the mind. The person who speaks evil will always think evil. 2. Profaneness is a sin which is rapidly progressive. Every act of profaning the name, perfections, works, words, and worship of God, is obviously a presumptuous attack upon this glorious Being. The sinner, having once dared so far, becomes easily more daring; and passes rapidly from one state of wickedness to another, until he becomes finally hardened in rebellion against his Maker. That most necessary fear of God, which is the great restraint upon sinful men, is speedily lost. The sinner is then left without a check upon his wickedness. At the same time the tongue is a most convenient instrument of iniquity, always ready for easy use. We cannot always sin with the hands, and are not always sufficiently gratified by mere sins of thought. The sins of the tongue are perpetrated alike with ease and delight every day, and in every place, where even a solitary individual can be found to listen. Hence transgressions of this kind are multiplied wonderfully. 3. Profaneness, particularly that of the tongue, naturally introduces men to evil companions, and shuts them out from the enjoyment of those who are virtuous. 4. Profaneness exposes men to the terrible denunciation of the text. 1. These observations exhibit in a strong light the depravity of the human heart. 2. These observations teach us the goodness of God in alarming mankind concerning this sin in so solemn a manner. 3. Let me warn all those who hear me to shun profaneness. (1) To this end, fix in your minds a solemn and controlling sense of the evil and danger of this sin. Feel that you will gain nothing here, and lose everything hereafter. (2) Under the influence of these views, keep the evil always at a great

distance. Mark the men who are profane; and avoid their company as you would avoid the plague. (3) Carefully avoid mentioning His great name on any except solemn occasions; and in any manner which is not strictly reverential. 4. Let me solemnly admonish the profane persons in this assembly of their guilt and danger. (*T. Dwight, D.D.*) *The Third Commandment:*—I. THE NATURE OF THE SIN FORBIDDEN. 1. The abuse and violation of oaths. The command is clearly violated when we—(1) Swear to the truth of what we either know to be false, or to the falsehood of what we know to be true, or to the truth or falsehood of what we do not know to be either true or false. (2) When we swear to do what we know we cannot do, what we do not intend to do, or what we intend to do, but not in the sense in which we are aware our oath of engagement is understood by those who require it, and for whose assurance it is given. 2. Profanity of speech. 3. Hypocrisy in worship. And this hypocrisy may be either deliberate or thoughtless. All careless, heartless, irreverent worship of God, involves a taking of His name in vain. Is not the Lord's name profaned and taken in vain by every man who calls himself by it and belies his profession by his character—professing that he knows God, while in works he denies Him? 4. Irreverence of heart. The man who can laugh at another taking God's name in vain, virtually takes that name in vain himself. II. THE GUILT AND DANGER OF THE PROHIBITED SIN. "The Lord will not hold him guiltless," &c. (*R. Wardlaw, D.D.*) *The Third Commandment:*—I begin with the precept itself, and there first it will be necessary to show what is meant by the name of God. By this we are to understand—1. God Himself, His Divine being and essence; for in the holy writings name is put for the person or thing that is named. 2. That which is more strictly and properly called His name, *i.e.* the title of God or Lord which is given to Him. 3. The properties and attributes of God. 4. His works and actions. 5. His ordinances and worship. 6. His words, *i.e.* the Holy Scriptures. And in brief, all things appertaining to God. To take (or as the original word more properly signifies), to take up a name, is to mention or rehearse it. Thus the Psalmist saith with relation to false gods and idols, and the sacrifices and oblations which were offered to them, he will not take up their names into his lips (Psa. xvi. 40, and so in Psa. l. 16). And a name is then said to be taken in vain when it is used in an undue, unfit, and unlawful manner. 1. This commandment condemns those who question the being and essence of God. 2. By virtue of this commandment all irreverent mentioning of the very title or name of God is vicious. The common using of the name of God or Lord, as is done by most people, the asking of alms in God's name, or Christ's name, as is done by beggars generally, is a profanation of those holy names. 3. Then, this precept of the moral law lets us know that we must not by any irreligious manner of speaking profane the Divine attributes, for these also are meant by the name of God. A near approach to this blasphemy is the common deportment of men; they excessively fear them that can kill the body, but they disregard what the Almighty is able to execute; they do in effect say that the Divine power is inferior to that which is bodily and finite. God's purity and holiness are also blasphemed by those who assert Him to be the author of sin; or who lay their faults upon God Himself, or who maintain that He takes no notice of the sinful miscarriages of the faithful, and is never displeased with them. God's justice is profaned either by men's questioning it, or disputing about the equity of it, or by not expressing a sufficient fear of so terrible an attribute. God's mercy is abused on the one hand by presumptuous boastings of the benefits of it, and on the other hand by words of despondency and despair. God's infinite knowledge and wisdom whereby He directs all things to the best ends, are blasphemously dishonoured, not only by an atheistical disowning of them, but by preferring our own shallow conceits. God's truth and faithfulness are reproached by us, when we doubt of the reality of them, or when we speak unbecomingly of them, as if we gave no credit to the Divine word and promises. 4. The unlawfulness of speaking irreverently concerning God's works and actions (for they likewise are included in His name) is here discovered. First, it is a great sin to disparage the works of God's creation. It is related of Alphonsus, the tenth king of Castile (he that was called the wise, because of his skill in philosophy and astronomy), that he blasphemously bragged that he could have ordered things better in the heavenly bodies than God had. And Plempius, a physician of no mean account, seems to find fault with the structure of the eye, and pretends it might have been amended. Some have lately been so audacious as to blemish the make of the earth, and to represent it in several respects unworthy of its Creator. Others are heard to complain that there are a great number of creatures in the

world that are made for no use. But certainly this is a great degree of profanation, because whatsoever God made is the product of His wisdom. Therefore on that very account we ought to believe that it is some ways worthy of Him. Far be it from us then to disparage it. Secondly, it is an equal crime to speak ill of God's work of providence, to find fault with His conduct in the world. And yet this is a very common miscarriage, and sometimes the very best men are incident to it. Job cursed the day of his birth, and impatiently wished for death, and was very much dissatisfied with the afflictive circumstances he was under. David, Jeremiah, Jonah, and some others who have a good character in Scripture, are sometimes heard to murmur at the Divine dispensation; but these were but transient fits, and soon vanished. Those of a profane spirit retain this temper a long time, yea, indeed, upon all occasions (*i.e.* whenever their condition is dangerous or calamitous) their speeches discover the inward rancour of their minds, and their hellish disgust of God's dealings with them. But nothing can be more irrational, for as we are creatures we are dependent beings, and subsist by our Creator's bounty, and therefore we are to be wholly at His disposal. 5. So do they likewise who irreverently make their addresses to God in His worship and ordinances, for these are included in His name. How frequently is this commandment broken in men's prayers, whilst they profane this holy duty by rash and impertinent multiplying of words, by using vain repetitions (Matt. vi. 7) unbecoming this solemn exercise of devotion! In hearing, likewise as well as praying, men take God's name in vain when they receive the Divine message in a negligent manner, when they do it without attention and reverence, but especially when they take no care to practise what they hear. This is done in fasting and all other external acts of humiliation where there is not a real intention of glorifying God by abandoning their sins and reforming their lives. Then for the sacraments; how many take God's name in vain whilst they celebrate them without a right understanding of what they do, and without a sense of the great work they undertake, and without a desire to reap some spiritual benefit by them. 6. The Word of God, the holy writings of the Old and New Testament, whereby He makes Himself and His will known to mankind, are comprehended under His name, and the profaning of these are taking His name in vain. Again, God's Word is abused by perverting the meaning of it, and wresting it to wrong purposes. This is done by all heretics and false teachers. They constantly quote the Bible, but at the same time distort it and make it speak what they please. Lastly, seeing all that is sacred and religious and hath reference to God is expressed by His name, it follows that taking God's name in vain includes actions as well as words, and therefore takes in everything that is done whereby God's name is profaned. In this commandment, then, are forbidden all those actions whereby a dishonour is brought upon our religion, and the name of God is evil spoken of. Thus we see what sins are forbidden in this commandment, you see what vast numbers of men in the world take God's name in vain. And yet the chief transgression of this commandment is yet behind, which I will in the next place distinctly consider; and I purposely defer it till now, that I may discourse of it by itself and give a full account of it. The unlawful using of God's name in swearing is the more particular, special, and direct breach of this precept of the moral law. This in a more signal manner is taking God's name in vain. First, I will inquire into the true nature of an oath. Secondly, I will inquire what an unlawful oath is, or what that swearing is which is taking God's name in vain. 1. That it is unlawful to swear by any feigned deity or idol; for we must swear by the true God only. But if you ask, how is this properly an oath, seeing here is no swearing by the true God? I answer, there is an invocation of God even in the swearing by idols, for those that swear by these take them to be true gods, or they place them in the room of the true God. 2. To swear by any creature must needs be unlawful, because this part of worship is due only to God. 3. To swear by any gifts and endowments of the body or mind, or by the life and soul of ourselves or others, is utterly unlawful. 4. Seeing an oath is to be used only in some weighty matter, it follows that swearing in common discourse, or upon a trifling account, or rashly and unadvisedly, is unlawful. First, I say, it is highly wicked to swear in our ordinary conversation and discourse, which yet is the reigning vice of this age; for there are great numbers of men everywhere that can scarcely open their mouths without an oath. The only proof of these men's acknowledging such a being as a God, is their swearing by Him. And yet this swearing is a proof that they own no God; for if they did, certainly they would not be customary swearers, and

unhallow so sacred a thing as an oath. Secondly, therefore, it cannot but be very criminal to swear upon every trifling account, on every trivial occasion, in every ludicrous matter. In the most foolish occurrences God's name is made use of. Whilst they are at their recreations, in the midst of their jesting, they will not forbear to do this. Thirdly, to swear, though it be in a weighty matter, rashly and unadvisedly, is a great crime. For this being a religious act, it requires deliberation. Fourthly, seeing oaths must be in a lawful matter only, it follows that such oaths as these are absolutely unlawful. 1. To swear things that we know to be false. And accordingly you will find that the Hebrew word "shua" (which with a preposition before it is here rendered "in vain") is the same with "false" (Ezek. xii. 24; Hos. xii. 9). 2. To oblige ourselves by oath to do that which is not in our choice and power, is unlawful. 3. An oath which is prejudicial to our neighbour's right is unlawful, because the matter of it is so; for it is against the law of God and man to bind ourselves to anything that we know will prove injurious to another. "Thou shalt swear in judgment" (or justice) "and in righteousness" (Jer. iv. 2). Therefore to swear to do unjustly cannot be lawful. Lastly, to sum up all, you may conclude that to be an unlawful oath which engages you to commit any sin, anything that is derogatory to God's glory and honour. I proceed now to the third thing I undertook under the negative consideration of this commandment, namely, to endeavour to dissuade from the practice of unlawful swearing, by showing the heinousness of it. And here I will distinctly refer to both the kinds of oaths before mentioned: those used in common conversation, and those that are false and injurious to our neighbours. First, as to those which are used in ordinary discourse, think of it, how high a profanation they are of God's name, which ought to be used with all reverence. It has been well observed that there is no temptation to this vile sin. The corrupt nature of man can allege something for other vices, but the irreverent abusing of God's name hath nothing to tempt men to it. It satisfies no appetite, no vicious affection or inclination, as covetousness, lust, pride, ambition, revenge, &c. Which shows that it is an inexcusable crime, and that nothing can be pleaded for it. To this purpose consider further, that he that swears falsely injures God, his brethren and himself. He is injurious to the first, and that in general, because he profanes that name which ought to be sanctified; and more particularly, because when he appeals to God, and yet swears to a lie, he either imagines that the Divine Being knows not the truth, and so imputes ignorance unto Him to whose eyes all things are naked and open; or he persuades himself that He is not displeased with falsehood, and so he denies His holiness; or else he derogates from His power, and implies that He is not able to be avenged on the liar. Secondly, he is injurious to his neighbours, because hereby all converse is spoilt, or society ruined. Thirdly, a false swearer injures himself, he apparently hazards his own soul; for he binds himself over to the just judgment of the Almighty, yea, he solemnly calls upon God to execute this vengeance upon him. Thus having done with the negative part of this commandment, wherein hath been showed what the sins are which we are to abstain from, I proceed to the affirmative, where I am to show what is enjoined us. And what is it but this? namely, to perform the contrary virtues and duties. That is, we must vigorously assert the being and essence of God; we must reverence His holy name, and more especially when we have occasion to make use of it in lawful and necessary oaths. We must mention God's titles with seriousness and awe. His glorious attributes and perfections are to be discoursed of with reverence; and so are all His actions and works, whether of creation or providence, or redemption. In this commandment is required that we worship God with a due sense of His transcendent majesty, that we decently and solemnly behave ourselves in all parts of Divine adoration, that we celebrate the ordinances and institutions of Christ in a becoming manner, that we be reverent, hearty, and fervent in all our religious addresses, and that we worship God in spirit and in truth. But the main things which are more immediately contained in it are these two—1. Invocating of God's name by solemn oaths when we are called to it. 2. Performing the oaths we make. First, by virtue of this part of the Decalogue we may, and we ought to, swear on lawful occasions. It requires us to invoke God's name in the way of religious oaths. For these were always a part of religion; whence swearing is sometimes put for God's service and worship, and the open profession of it (Eccles. ix. 2; Jer. xii. 16). In an oath praise and honour are given to God; to His infinite knowledge and wisdom, that He knows what we say; to His holiness, that He loves truth and abhors falsehood; to His power and justice, that He

can and will avenge the latter. Thus swearing is a great act of piety and worship, if it be performed as it ought to be. Further to evince the lawfulness of this practice, I will appeal both to Scripture and reason. As to the former, it is evident that swearing is commanded as a duty. In Deut. vi. 13 it is not only said, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve Him"; but "thou shalt swear by His name." If you think yourselves obliged by this text to fear and serve God, you are equally engaged by it to swear by His name, namely, when you are lawfully called to it. This duty likewise is implied in the law (Exod. xxii. 27, 28). Again, this is grounded not only on positive commands in Scripture, but on the examples and practice of holy men recorded in those sacred writings. They swore themselves, and they caused others to swear. There are abundant instances of the former (Gen. xxi. 31, xxvi. 31, xxxi. 53; Josh. xiv. 9; 1 Sam. xx. 3, xxiv. 22). The latter is confirmed by several examples, as that in Gen. xxiv. 3. Secondly, not only Scripture but reason obliges us to make use of oaths in a pious and religious way. There are laudable ends of swearing which render it a reasonable service. I have already showed that it is an act of worship towards God, and it is as certain an act of charity and righteousness towards men. For it is sometimes absolutely necessary for discovering the truth, for the detecting of wicked actions, for helping men to recover their rights, and to be instated in what is their own. Oaths are (as the apostle observes, Heb. vi. 16) to be a remedy against disputes, and therefore are of great use in litigious cases. They are sometimes requisite as a badge of loyalty and subjection, and to express our obedience to princes. But notwithstanding this, I am clearly of opinion that these two things are included in the words of our Saviour and the Apostle James—1. That Christians should as much as possible abstain from swearing. 2. That these professors of the purest religion should attain to such an integrity, such faithfulness and sincerity, that an oath should be altogether unnecessary, and that Christians should be believed and trusted upon their bare words. Thus I have finished the first grand thing contained in the affirmative part of this commandment, namely, using God's holy name in solemn swearing. We are authorised by this precept to have recourse unto religious oaths on lawful occasions. The second great thing enjoined us is this, to perform our oaths, to do according to what we swear. Both the negative and affirmative branches of this commandment are thus represented to us by our Saviour, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself: thou shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths" (Matt. v. 33). This latter is that which I now urge, namely, that we take care, after we have sworn, to act according to that solemn obligation. Let us remember that there is no dallying here. An oath is an engagement of the highest nature imaginable, and therefore it must be a very heinous offence to neglect it, much more to violate it. Whatever we have by this sacred tie bound ourselves to we must punctually observe, unless it be these following cases—1. Unless it be in a matter that is unlawful in itself. 2. Unless it be of such persons who at the time of their swearing were not sensible of what they did. 3. In some cases an oath is not to be looked upon as obligatory, if it was imposed by mere violence and compulsion, and the party was not left at all to his freedom and choice; for then it is not a voluntary act, and consequently not a moral one, and therefore is of no force. 4. We must faithfully perform what we have sworn, unless the person or persons to whom the oath was made will remit the performance of it. We cannot release ourselves; but if he or they will recede from their right which they have in our engagement, then we are no further engaged. 5. Our oath binds us, unless there was a condition tacitly implied in it. The last thing I undertook to treat of, is the reason of this commandment, "For the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain." Which contains in it these two things—1. That God will not clear such a one of the fault; He will not look upon him as a pure, innocent person; He will reckon him a guilty person, one that is a great sinner. This being added to this commandment, and none of the rest, marks out this sin of taking God's name in vain as very heinous. 2. It is more plainly comprehended in this clause that God will not clear such an offender from punishment; He will be avenged on all that are thus guilty. There is a flying roll against swearers in Zech. v. 4 which is very frightful, for a dreadful curse is written in it: "I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of him that sweareth falsely by My name; and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof." Goods gotten by swearing falsely and by breach of faith are like the leprosy spoken of in the law that infected even the walls of the house; they are the ruin of the family, they

are a curse upon whatever is enjoyed or possessed. God will not be mocked, He will take notice of the profanation of His name, and He will not always let impunity be the attendant of it. Which is the purport of St. James's words (chap. v. 12). (*J. Edwards, D.D.*) *Against swearing*:—Now consider some of the reasons given for swearing, and some of the arguments alleged in its defence. 1. One of the most usual excuses of the common swearer is, that he has got such a habit of it, that he does not know when he offends. This may be said perhaps with equal truth of many other ill habits, but is in fact not the least extenuation of their guilt; it is, indeed, rather an aggravation of it, for to what a degree must we have offended before we become so hardened as not to be sensible whether we offend or not. 2. Another excuse of the common swearer is, that he really means no harm—this is a curious plea; he is daily perhaps insulting his God to His face, and he thinks to atone for it by saying that he means no harm! 3. A third set of swearers are those who profess that they are obliged to it; they say that their oaths are merely intended to procure belief to their assertions, or give importance to their commands, reproofs, and menaces. To say nothing of the reflection which, by such a defence, these persons throw on their own veracity and dignity, it is much to be suspected that the end, which they propose to themselves by the violation of a plain precept of their religion, is not attained. As to the plea—that the orders, the reproofs, or the threats of a person in authority, are more efficacious from being attended with imprecations, it is liable to the same objection which I have just made; when oaths and curses are used on every occasion, they are no more regarded than other words, they are looked on as coming of course, and those to whom they are directed are not influenced by them in any additional degree. 4. I shall conclude with observing that there are many to be met with who would be shocked at the idea of plain, downright swearing, with whom it is yet grown into a custom to approach very near to it; they dare not take the name of their Creator in vain in a direct manner, but show the badness of their intentions by disguising solemn words, till they are less disgusting to the ear, though equally offensive to the judgment. These half-bred reprobates prove that they would be wicked, if they durst; and I know not whether the consciousness of being wrong, which their caution declares, does not augment their criminality. (*G. Haggitt, M.A.*) *The law of reverence*:—This command is susceptible of a threefold violation—by sacrilege, by blasphemy, by profanity. Sacrilege is the desecration of things sacred to the Almighty. Blasphemy is the ill-treatment of the person of God. It is the aspersion of His glorious character, it is the denial of His existence, it is the attempt to alienate the affections of His friends from His person and His throne. Blasphemy is committed when His providence is held in contempt, His attributes depreciated, His creation set at nought, His wisdom ridiculed, and His claims treated with scorn. In the exaltation of His glorious person He is far beyond the insults of His creatures. He does not demand our reverence because it would add to His glory, but because of the reflex influence on the reverential mind and upon His intelligent creation. To reverence His glorious person is to exalt our own condition. How profound the reverence of Christ for the person of His Divine Father! What feelings of obedience, what entireness of consecration, what unfailing loyalty He displayed! There are three ways in which men profane the name of God—by false oaths, by useless oaths, and by profane oaths. And how many are the evils of this prevalent social vice! It destroys good taste, which naturally belongs to an accomplished gentleman; it is subversive of self-control. He is a slave to his passions who is a slave to his voice. How vast are the motives against this social vice! God has said, "I will not hold him guiltless that taketh My name in vain." This prohibition is benevolence acting by law; it is for man's sake. When the last profane tongue is silent in the grave, and the soul that used it is with the lost, then the glorious God will live surrounded by the highest hierarchy of angels; cherubim will fold their wings in reverence to cover their faces in His presence, and will banquet His ear with songs of praise. While He cannot be personally affected by the language of the profane, yet profanity traduces the soul, wrecks the stamina of our moral being, corrupts the fountain of life. (*J. P. Newman, D.D.*) *Hallowed be Thy Name*:—The name of an object is that by which we distinguish it from every other object. The name of a person is that by which we distinguish him from any other person. The name may be chosen without any thought of adaptation or fitness. It may be chosen arbitrarily, or it may be descriptive of the person or object. We read that, "Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam, to see what he would

call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof." The names of persons in the Bible are always significant. Abram, "the lofty father," became Abraham, "the father of a great multitude." Jacob, "the supplanter," became Israel, "the prince of God." There is unutterable importance attached, then, to the greatest, the Highest Name. Poor savages in their ignorance and superstition have been groaning, "Tell me Thy name." The Greeks and Romans, with their civilisation and culture and learning, were repeating the entreaty, "Tell me Thy name." And to-day, in Hindooism, with its unnumbered gods, in Buddhism with its dreams, and in other false systems of religion, there is the same sad undertone to be heard, "Tell me Thy name." In agony, in uncertainty, often in despair, the cry is uttered; and what more important question can come from the human heart than this, "What is the name of God?" There is very much, then, said in the Bible about the name of God. His name means His revealed character; it is not a mere title. The word "Highness" may be associated with great moral debasement. The word "Majesty" may be associated with meanness. The word "Grace" may be associated with conduct that is ungracious. The title may be a sign of dignity and honour when there is no dignity or honour in the person wearing it. The name of God is not a mere title of honour. Nor does it mean the entire character of God; for there is no name that can reveal it fully. Language is insufficient to reveal man's being fully; after all that is written and spoken, there is much still lying unrevealed. The channels of language are too narrow to hold the overflowing river of human thought and feeling. We may form some conceptions of God, but we cannot call the idea we have of Him, His name, except so far as that idea is in harmony with the revelation. Jehovah is the great name in the Old Testament; Father is the great name in the New. Eternal Being is Eternal Love. "I have declared unto them Thy name." "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me." 1. To take God's name in vain is to use it in confirmation of a falsehood. To take an oath is to declare solemnly that we are in the presence of God, and that He hears our words, and that in our testimony we appeal to Him as the searcher of hearts, and the judge of character. And to make this appeal in confirmation of a falsehood is a terrible crime against God and against society. To think lightly of an oath is to think lightly of God. Lying lips are an abomination unto Him. 2. This is also a warning against all profanity. This sin is not so common now as in olden times. Then a gentleman could hardly speak without uttering an oath; now a profane swearer is excluded from all decent society. It is said that this vice was so prevalent in the days of Chrysostom that he delivered no less than twenty sermons against it, and yet found it too hard for all his reason and rhetoric, till at length he entreated and begged his hearers to leave off that sin, if for no other reason, yet that he might choose another subject. 3. This word also forbids any unmeaning, thoughtless use of the Divine name. "The fear of the Lord" is the common Old Testament expression for true piety. I would rather have the reverence that borders on superstition than the boldness which glides into profaneness or blasphemy. Give me the reverence of Samuel Johnson, who never passed a church without uncovering, rather than the inconsistency of the man who says that all places are equally sacred, and acts as if there were no sacred spot on earth. Give me the solemn awe with which the Puritan spoke of the authority and righteousness of God, rather than the liberty which the religious demagogue takes with the great and holy name. God is jealous of the honour of His name. Every man's good name is dear to him; it is worth more than his property, worth more than his exalted position. And God's name is dear to Him. It was a frequent plea with ancient saints in their supplications for help, "And what wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?" Let us "exalt His name together." "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!" God be thanked for the promise, "From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto My name, and a pure offering; for My name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts." (*James Owen.*) *Profanity:*—Now, we have five reasons why the name of God should not be taken in vain. 1. It is useless. Did curses ever start a heavy load? Did they ever unravel a tangled skein? Did they ever collect a bad debt? Did they ever accomplish anything? Verily, the swearer is the silliest of all dealers in sin. He sins gratis. He sells his soul for nothing. 2. It is cowardly to swear. 3. To swear is impolite. Can he who leads every sentence with an oath or a curse, wear the name and garb of a gentleman? This reminds

me of that incident of Abraham Lincoln, who said to a person sent to him by one of the Senators, and who in conversation uttered an oath: "I thought the Senator had sent me a gentleman. I see I was mistaken. There is the door, and I bid you good-day." Profanity indicates low breeding. It detracts from the grace of conversation. It is an evidence of a weak brain and limited ideas. 4. Swearing is wicked. It springs from a mere malignancy of spirit in man against God, because He has forbidden it. As far as the violation of the command of God is concerned, the swearer is equally guilty with the murderer, the unchaste person, the robber, and the liar. Whose is this name which men roll off the lips of blasphemy as though they were speaking of some low vagabond? God! In whose presence the highest and purest seraphim veil their faces, and cry in notes responsive to each other, "Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of Hosts!" Every star in the heavens flashes rebuke into your face; every quivering leaf, every lurid shaft of lightning, every shock of thunder, all the voices of the tempest, the harping angels, and the very scoffing devils rebuke you. 5. Swearing is a dangerous sin. The Third Commandment is the only one in the Decalogue to which is affixed the certainty of punishment. It was a capital offence under the Levitical law (Lev. xx. 10). Profane swearer, whether you think so or not, your oath is a prayer—an appeal to God. Be thankful that your prayer has not been answered. The oaths that you utter may die on the air, but God hears them, and they have an eternal echo. (*M. C. Peters.*) *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain:*—With what the heart is full the mouth runs over. If in men's hearts there is the spirit of the idolator, &c. "Mouth and heart," says the proverb, "are but a span apart." "The heart is the spring, the tongue is the stream." I. THE TRANSGRESSION. 1. The name of the Lord. There are terms by which we speak of God—the Lord, Almighty, the Son, &c., &c.; terms, also, which remind us of Him, and tell of His power, &c.—the Gospel, &c., the sacrament, Cross, heaven, &c. All such terms we are not to misuse. 2. The command is against swearing. Swearers are to be found everywhere, of every age and condition. The young boy, the old man, greyheaded and feeble, &c., who curse about nothing and about everything—in wrath, at work or play, everywhere and in every position. Every street and lane witnesses the transgression of this commandment. How can it go well with any who curse more than they pray? 3. The command is against false swearing—against false oaths. In every oath conscience should speak. And it matters not whether the perjury is committed for self or for others, or in company with many, or whether it be in regard to a promise, to allegiance, &c. 4. The command is against needless oaths—men are not to swear about trifles. In common life the rule is "swear not at all." Will none believe you unless your words are clinched by an oath? Shame upon you, then! 5. The command forbids lying or deceiving in God's name; it is against hypocrisy. Every preacher of the Gospel should be penetrated with the spirit of the apostle (Gal. i. 8). Yet there are many who are false prophets (Jer. v. 31). They appeal to Scripture against Scripture, and destroy those weak in the faith. Those break this command who misuse the Bible and Bible phrases; who, *e.g.*, mock at the sin of a David and leave his repentance unnoticed; who read the Bible to oppose it—making the Word of Life to become a word of death; who, in common conversation, use as exclamations the name of God, Christ, &c.; who mock among themselves at the Christian faith, and yet in the presence of men approach the table of the Lord. To all such the command says, "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain." II. THE FULFILLING OF THE COMMAND. 1. Whilst we are not to misuse God's name, at the same time we must not neglect it. What kind of friendship would that be with one whose name is never on our lips? So with the name of God. It must not be used in cursing, &c., but in time of need we must call upon Him. 2. Not only in time of need, however. It were a poor friendship that would lead us to think of our friend only in hours of need. We must "call upon the name of the Lord" in all conditions and circumstances—in joy as in sorrow, in our outgoing and incoming, in our work as in our worship, &c. 3. But we must not only be led to call on God in prayer—at the memory of His goodness and grace, His might and majesty, we should "praise His great and holy name." And whilst those who break this command have their favourite oaths, &c., we shall have our favourite expressions in prayer and praise. 4. It is also oftentimes a sacred duty to praise God, as Polycarp saw it to be before his judges when he was asked to curse Christ. "How could I curse my King who has saved me?" So for thirty, forty, or fifty years He has followed us with blessing. Is it not our duty openly to praise His

name? 5. We should remember also God's name with thankful gratitude. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." In the world, in heaven and earth, in the history of humanity and of His Church, His praise is written—and in our individual lives. The centuries and millennia proclaim His praise; but so also do yesterday and to-day—the morning on which you awoke refreshed, and the night which brought you and yours peace and rest (Psa. xcii. 1, 2). 6. We must thank God for everything, even for the Cross He sends. Thus thanksgiving is often harder than supplication. When we can render both we have learned a noble art. If our life pass in prayer and thanksgiving, then it will follow a true course, and men will see therein how true it is.

"With thy God to begin—with Him to end,
This is the fairest way thy life can tend."

(*K. H. Caspari.*) *Connection of this commandment with what precedes:*—It is apparent how closely connected this third Word is with what has gone before. As if it were said, Jehovah alone is God: this one God Jehovah is to be suitably worshipped; nay, in the use of His name, and in all our transactions with Him, this God Jehovah is to be regarded most reverently. Surely all the knowledge we have of God, supplied to us by His names and titles, His Word and works, is calculated to convince us of His greatness and majesty, and how very worthy He is of fear and reverence from every one of us. This third Word is connected with the preceding also in the reason here assigned. For the shadow of God's jealousy is thrown over this command, as we read that God will not hold guiltless the breakers of it, or that He will not let such pass unpunished. Then, again, the fact that God is in covenant with Israel, and Israel in covenant with God—"Jehovah thy God"—does not make it at all the more becoming that they should take undue liberties with anything connected with Him. Even in this loving fellowship He is ever God, Jehovah thy God, and as such to be reverently regarded. We must make no use of our covenant standing to drag Him down, as it were; or in any way injure, or cause to be injured, His glory, and do Him gross irreverence. That is not how we do with even the friendships and the fellowships of earth. And if any one, especially a greater than ourselves, have made us his friends, we do not thus abuse the friendship or the fellowship. If we have due regard for our friend we never take advantage of the friendship to do him injury, to treat him with disrespect, or bring him dishonour. In Parliament it is esteemed extremely unbecoming to drag in the name of the king unnecessarily into party debate. Even if no misrepresentation be made it is an unbecoming and irreverent thing to do, and to be rebuked. If that be so as regards the great ones of this world, how much more is it to be the case in the relation of men to the mighty God! How unpardonable is irreverence towards Him, the wanton disregarding of His high and holy position, the tampering with the sacredness of His name, or of anything of His! (*Jas. Matthew, B.D.*) *The sin of profane swearing:*—1. It is a sin that points more directly than almost any other against the Supreme Lord of all, the Majesty of the universe. It is a direct affront put upon Him. Would men but think whose name it is they are abusing, by associating His purity with all that is vile, His truth with all that is false, and His greatness with all that is mean, there should no further argument be needed to impress the guilt of the practice upon their minds, and to make "their hearts meditate terror" at the thought of committing the trespass. 2. It is a sin eminently prejudicial to men. The swearer may think otherwise. His words, he may allege, are his own; and the guilt of it, be it what it may, lies with himself. On himself comes all the evil. But no mistake can be more palpable. The example is eminently pernicious, and especially to the young and inexperienced. And such language reduces in society the tone of that first and highest of principles, reverence of God. 3. It may be added further, that of all sins it is the most profitless, that to which, therefore, there is the least of tangible and appreciable temptation—the most "unfruitful" of all the "unfruitful works of darkness." (*R. Wardlaw, D.D.*) *Swearing a costly habit:*—The Rev. Professor Lawson, minister of Selkirk, had a medical attendant who used oaths. Dr. Lawson sent for the physician to consult him about his health. Having learned what his symptoms were, the M.D. exclaimed (with an oath), "You give up that vile habit of snuffing; unless you give it up (oath), you'll never recover." "It's rather a costly habit," replied Dr. Lawson, "and if it is injuring me, I must abandon it. But you, too, my dear doctor, cherish a bad habit—that of swearing—and it would

comfort your friends much were you to give it up." "It's not a costly habit like yours," rejoined the physician. "Very costly, indeed, you'll find it," said the professor, "when you receive the account." *Profanity a mean vice*:—Profaneness is a mean vice. According to general estimation he who repays kindness with contumely, he who abuses his friend and benefactor, is deemed pitiful and wretched. And yet, oh profane man! whose name is it you handle so lightly? It is that of your best Benefactor! (*J. Chapin.*) *Profanity a silly vice*:—Profaneness is an unmanly and silly vice. It certainly is not a grace in conversation, and it adds no strength to it. There is no organic symmetry in the narrative that is ingrained with oaths; and the blasphemy that bolsters an opinion does not make it any more correct. Our mother English has variety enough to make a story sparkle, and to give point to wit; it has toughness enough and vehemence enough to furnish sinews for a debate and to drive home conviction, without degrading the holy epithets of Jehovah. Nay, the use of those expletives argues a limited range of ideas, and a consciousness of being on the wrong side. And, if we can find no other phrases through which to vent our choking passion, we had better repress that passion. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 12–15. **Keep the Sabbath day.**—*The Fourth Commandment*:—I. HERE IS RESTING FROM ORDINARY EMPLOYMENTS. When a man does his work, his thoughts and tongue and hands are engaged in it. Consequently, on this day of rest, there must be not only a ceasing from the actual labour of the hands, but neither the tongue nor thoughts may be engaged upon our worldly matters and affairs. Examine what your Sunday thoughts have been. Have you always in thought and mind been in heaven that day, having left your worldly cares and affairs out of sight behind you? Then again, have you not spoken your own words on this day? Look back and see if there be no records against you in the book of God of worldly affairs negotiated on the Sabbath day. II. I go on to help you in the farther inquiry whether, supposing you have rested from worldly affairs, you have also SANCTIFIED THAT REST. According to the interpretation which common practice puts on this commandment, the words might run thus, "Remember the Sabbath day to take thy pleasure therein." In general, the Sabbath is sanctified when it is spent with God in humble and thankful acknowledgments of His love in creating us, and of His infinite mercy in redeeming us by Jesus Christ, who is gone into heaven to prepare a place for us. Then we should be examining our hearts and lives, humbling ourselves for our sins, stirring up the grace that is in us, exercising repentance, faith, hope, and charity; above all looking forward to the rest that remaineth for the people of God (Heb. iv. 9). And think you, is not one such day better than a thousand? Oh, what do they lose who make the Sabbath a day of carnal pleasure? But more particularly the sanctification of this rest lies within the compass of these three things. 1. Public exercises. 2. Private exercises. 3. Religious communication. III. The third thing contained in a due observance of the Lord's day is A RIGHT AIM IN CEASING FROM WORLDLY LABOURS, and in exercising the religious observances just mentioned. Now the righteousness of the aim is when there is a correspondence between our design in keeping and God's design in instituting the Sabbath. 1. Has, then, our design in the observance we have paid to the Sabbath principally been to glorify God? 2. Has your aim in sanctifying the Lord's day been the sanctification of your own soul? (*S. Walker, B.A.*) *The Sabbath was made for man*:—Herbert Spencer says, "Ask how it happens that men in England do not work every seventh day, and you have to seek through thousands of past years to find the initial cause. Ask why in England, and especially in Scotland, there is not only a cessation from work, which the creed interdicts, but also a cessation from amusement, which it does not interdict; and for an explanation you must go back to successive waves of ascetic fanaticism in generations long dead." Let us consider this "initial cause," and inquire whether this great thinker is correct in his statement in regard to what he calls "the creed," and its relation to amusement. There are some who say that the Jewish Sabbath, or the Puritan Sabbath, ought to be observed now. There are others who affirm that all distinctions of days have passed away; that all days should be spent in the fear of God. What would a friend think of your treatment of him if, when he visited you, you gave him one room in your house, and promised to see him an hour or two in the week, but would not let him come to your shop, to your office, to your family? It is thus many men treat God. The Sunday is one room in the house of life, into which they come professedly to commune with God for an hour or two;

and then they leave Him for the whole week. All days are to be spent in His service. Ellicott says, "The Sabbath of the Jews, as involving other than mere national reminiscences, was a shadow of the Lord's day; that a weekly seventh part of our time should be specially devoted to God rests on considerations as old as the creation; that that seventh portion of the week should be the first day rests on apostolical, or perhaps, inferentially (as the Lord's appearances on that day seem to show) Divine usage and appointment." Whether this is, as Alford says, "transparent special pleading," or not, and whether it is right to call the Jewish Sabbath "the shadow of the Lord's day," I stay not to inquire; but there is nothing in the apostle's language that is inconsistent with the Divine institution of the day of rest. The law was a shadow, Christ is the substance: He has fulfilled the law. We obtained salvation, not by obeying the law, but by receiving Christ; and then the law that was written on tables of stone is written on our hearts, and "love is the fulfilling of the law." A seventh portion of time for rest and worship is a right thing, not merely because we find it commanded in the law, but because our nature demands it. Idolatry was sinful before the lightnings of Sinai played around its granite cliffs; profanity was sinful, perjury was sinful, theft was sinful, before the voice of God was heard from that tabernacle of darkness. If no law had been written it would have been wrong to worship images, or bear false witness against a neighbour. And Christians observe the Lord's day, not simply or chiefly because this law of the Sabbath was given on Sinai, but because the law of love is written in their hearts; and they know they honour Christ and benefit themselves by such religious observance. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." The word "remember" must, I think, imply the previous existence of the institution. We have, however, no account of a Sabbath in the times of the patriarchs: the name is not mentioned; and the only reference to it, if we may take it as such, was in the special sacredness attached to the number seven, and in the custom of dividing time into weeks of seven days. But the name appears before the delivery of the law, and in a connection that makes it probable that the observance of the seventh day was already practised by the Israelites. In the account of the gathering of the manna, Moses speaks of "the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord." "And Moses said, Eat that to-day, for to-day is a Sabbath unto the Lord; to-day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none." The reasons assigned for the institution were—1. To commemorate the rest of God after His work of creation. This rest does not, of course, imply anything like fatigue or exhaustion; but it denotes that God's purpose was fulfilled, that His work in creating the universe was finished. 2. It was intended, also, to remind them of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt," &c. 3. And the Sabbath was also given as a pledge of the covenant between God and His people. "I gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctifieth them." Such was the Jewish Sabbath: its object and the manner in which it was to be kept were distinctly stated; and through many centuries, despite the periods of apostasy and judgment, it was "a delight, holy to the Lord, honourable." But before the advent of Christ the scribes had added to the law innumerable explanations and enactments, which were deemed as binding as the original; and we find that the Pharisees again and again submitted to Christ the question of Sabbath-keeping. They would not for much travel beyond the limit of a Sabbath-day's journey, and yet their feet were swift to shed blood; they kept the Sabbath, but they passed over the judgment and the love of God, and they persecuted the Holy One and the Just. What did Christ say in regard to the Sabbath? He said that it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath day; He said also, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Man was made to serve and glorify God; and all institutions that help him in the pursuit of this end are his servants. Man, with his two hands for labour, with his mind that can think of God, and his heart that can love God, is greater than all material nature, greater than forms of government, greater than religious ordinances. They are good, as they minister to him. The laws of the family are intended for the welfare of the family; the laws of the school for the welfare of the school: they are important as such. But the child is greater than the rules; they are meant to serve him, and are appointed for his sake. "The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath day." The Representative Man, the Head of humanity, the King of the race, is Lord also of the Sabbath day. He does not say anything about the repeal

of the Sabbath. His followers should meet on the first day of the week, to contemplate a greater work than creation, to celebrate a more glorious redemption than that of Israel from Egyptian slavery. On the first day of the week He rose from the dead, according to the Scriptures. On that day He manifested Himself to Mary Magdalene, to the other women, to Peter alone, to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, and to the assembled apostles in the upper room; and, a week later, to the apostles again, when the doubting Thomas was present, was convinced, and constrained to say, "My Lord and my God." Then the day of Pentecost in that year fell on the first day of the week, when the promise of the Father was fulfilled. Here, then, is the authority, the only authority, we have for the observance of the first day of the week. First, that the assemblies of Christians in the days of the apostles took place on this day. Secondly, the confirmation afforded by tradition and usage ever since. "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." 1. It is to be observed, then, as a day of rest from all unnecessary labour. The seventh day may be exchanged for the first; the minute details relating to its observance may pass away with the Mosaic economy; but it will remain for ever true that a seventh portion of time is to be employed as a Sabbath. Man the worker needs one day in the week for rest. Life is like a lamp; keep the light low, do not burn all the oil too soon. 2. It is also to be observed as a day of spiritual refreshment. The Sabbath was made for man, for the whole man; not only for bones and muscles, but also for mind, and heart, and soul. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day"; there are many who could say, "I was in bed on the Lord's day." But the soul cannot sleep, and provision should be made for its necessities. There is a religious instinct in man: it is not the result of education, it is not the creation of priestcraft, for the very existence of the priest proves that there was beforehand a religious element in the minds of the people. Our spiritual nature cries out for God, and God gives us a Sabbath to save us from becoming slaves of toil, and from burying our noblest thoughts and aspirations in a grave of materialism and lust. 3. And it is to be a day of gladness. It is to be a *Sun*-day, a bright day, and a day of holy gladness and rejoicing. What signal triumphs of the Gospel have been won on this day. It has often brought healing to the wounded heart, and joy to the sorrowful spirit, and succour to the tempted and timid. Its light has been as the light of seven days, and it has always come with healing in its wings. (*James Owen.*) *Observance of the Lord's day instead of the Sabbath*:—1. That it does not in the least derogate from the honour of God to change the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week. It would, indeed, derogate from the glory of God, if He should take away one Sabbath and not institute another; for then He would lose the honour of that public worship, which He has appointed to be performed to Him, on that day. Moreover, if there be a greater work than that of creation, to be remembered and celebrated, it tends much more to the advancing the glory of God to appoint a day for the solemn remembrance thereof, than if it should be wholly neglected. And to this we may add that if all men must honour the Son, even as they honour the Father, then it is expedient that a day should be set apart for His honour, namely, the day on which He rested from the work of redemption, or, as the apostle says, "ceased from it, as God did from His." 2. It was expedient that God should alter the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week; for—(1) Hereby Christ took occasion to give a display of His glory, and in particular of His sovereign authority, to enjoin what time He would have us set apart for His worship under the Gospel dispensation. (2) We, in the observation thereof, signify our faith, in a public manner, that Christ is come in the flesh, and that the work of our redemption is brought to perfection; and, consequently, that there is a way prepared for our justification and access to God, as our God, in hope of finding acceptance in His sight. 3. All the ordinances of Gospel worship have a peculiar relation to Christ; therefore it is expedient that the time in which they are to be performed, under this present Gospel dispensation, should likewise have relation to Him; therefore that day must be set apart in commemoration of His work of redemption, in which He finished it, and that was the first day of the week. (*Thomas Ridglet, D.D.*) *How the Lord's day is to be sanctified*:—I. THAT WE ARE TO PREPARE OUR HEARTS and, with such foresight, diligence, and moderation, to dispose AND SEASONABLY TO DISPATCH OUR WORLDLY BUSINESS, THAT WE MAY BE MORE FREE AND FIT FOR THE BUSINESS OF THAT DAY. That leads us to consider the duties to be performed preparatory to the right observing the Lord's day; and, in order hereunto, we ought, the evening before, to lay aside our care and worldly

business, that our thoughts may not be diverted or taken up with unseasonable concerns about it. This is a duty very much neglected. Thus many keep their shops open till midnight, and by this means make encroachments on part of the morning of the Lord's day. And to this we may add that all envyings, contentions, evil surmising against our neighbour are to be laid aside, since these will tend to defile our souls when they ought to be wholly taken up about Divine things. Moreover, we are to endeavour to bring our souls into a prepared frame for the duties of the Lord's day the evening before, by having our thoughts engaged in those meditations that are suitable thereto. II. We are now to consider WHAT WE ARE TO REST AND ABSTAIN FROM ON THE LORD'S DAY, namely, not only from things sinful, but what is in itself lawful on other days. 1. As for those things which are sinful on other days, they are much more so on the Sabbath. 2. We break the Sabbath by engaging in things that would be lawful on other days, and that in two particular instances here mentioned. (1) When we engage in worldly employments. (2) The Sabbath is violated by recreations, which we are therefore to abstain from. III. When it is said, in this Fourth Commandment, that thou shalt do no manner of work on the Sabbath day, there is an exception hereunto in WORKS OF NECESSITY AND MERCY. 1. Let the necessity be real, not pretended; of which God and our own consciences are the judges. 2. If we think that we have a necessary call to omit our attendance on the ordinances of God on the Sabbath day, let us take heed that this necessity be not brought on us by some sin committed. 3. If necessity obliges us to engage in secular employments on the Lord's day, as in the instances of those whose business is to provide physic for the sick, let us, nevertheless, labour after a spiritual frame, becoming the holiness of the day. 4. As we ought to see that the work we are engaged in is necessary, so we must not spend more time therein than what is needful. 5. If we have a necessary call to engage in worldly matters, whereby we are detained from public ordinances, we must endeavour to satisfy others, that the providence of God obliges us hereunto; that so we may not give offence to them, or they take occasion, without just reason, to follow their own employments, which would be a sin in them. IV. WE ARE TO SANCTIFY THE SABBATH BY SPENDING THE WHOLE DAY IN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EXERCISES OF GOD'S WORSHIP, AND HEREIN TO MAINTAIN A BECOMING HOLY FRAME OF SPIRIT FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE DAY TO THE END THEREOF. Therefore—1. In the beginning thereof, let not too much sleep make intrenchments on more of the morning of the day than what is needful, particularly more than what we allow ourselves before we begin our employments on other days. And let us be earnest with God in prayer, that He would prepare our hearts for the solemn duties we are to engage in. Let us consider the Sabbath as a very great talent that we are entrusted with; and that it is of the greatest importance for us to improve it, to the glory of God and our spiritual advantage. 2. While we are engaged in holy duties, especially in the public ordinances of God's worship, let us endeavour to maintain a becoming reverence and filial fear of God, in whose presence we are, and a love to His holy institutions, which are instamped with His authority. Let us, moreover, watch and strive against the first motions and suggestions of Satan, and our corrupt hearts, endeavouring to divert us from or disturb us in holy duties. Let us also cherish, improve, and bless God for all the influences of His Holy Spirit which He is pleased at any time to grant to us; or lament the want thereof when they are withheld. 3. In the intervals between our attendances on the ordinances of God's public worship we are to engage in private duties, and worship God in and with our families. 4. The Sabbath is to be sanctified in the evening thereof, when the public ordinances are over; at which time we are to call to mind what we have received from God, with thankfulness, and how we have behaved ourselves in all the parts of Divine worship in which we have been engaged. (*Ibid.*) *Sanctify the Sabbath*:—I. THE SINS FORBIDDEN. 1. The omission of the duties required. This is a casting away a great prize put into our hands. 2. The careless performance of holy duties; that is, when our hearts are not engaged in them, or we content ourselves with a form of godliness, denying the power thereof. 3. When we profane the day by idleness. II. THE REASONS ANNEXED. 1. It is highly reasonable that we should sanctify the Lord's day, since He is pleased to allow us six days out of seven for the attending to our worldly affairs, and reserves but one to Himself. 2. Another reason annexed to enforce our observation of the Sabbath day is taken from God's challenging a special propriety in it: thus it is called the Sabbath day of the Lord thy God, a day which He has consecrated or separated to Himself, and so lays claim to it. Therefore it is no less than sacrilege, or a robbing of Him, to employ

it in anything but what He requires to be done therein. 3. God sets His own example before us for our imitation therein. 4. The last reason assigned for our sanctifying the Sabbath is taken from God's blessing and sanctifying it, or setting it apart for a holy use. To bless a day is to give it to us as a particular blessing and privilege; accordingly we ought to reckon the Sabbath as a great instance of God's care and compassion to men, and a very great privilege, which ought to be highly esteemed by them. Again, for God to sanctify a day is to set it apart from a common to a holy use; and thus we ought to reckon the Sabbath as a day signalised above all others with the character of God's holy day; and as such, it is to be employed by us in holy exercises, answerable to the end for which it was instituted. (*Ibid.*) *Remember the Sabbath:*—The word "remember" is set in the beginning of the Fourth Commandment, from whence we may observe the great proneness, through worldly business and Satan's temptations, to forget the Sabbath. We may also learn from hence the importance of our observing it, without which irreligion and profaneness would universally abound in the world. And to induce us hereunto let it be considered—1. That the profanation of the Sabbath is generally the first step to all manner of wickedness, and a making great advances to a total apostasy from God. 2. The observing of it is reckoned as a sign between God and His people. It is, with respect to Him, a sign of His favour; and with respect to men it is a sign of their subjection to God, as their King and Lawgiver, in all His holy appointments. 3. We cannot reasonably expect that God should bless us in what we undertake on other days if we neglect to own Him on His day, or to devote ourselves to Him, and thereby discover our preferring Him and the affairs of His worship before all things in the world. (*Ibid.*) *The Fourth Commandment:*—Now you will observe that the Fourth Commandment is a twofold commandment of labour and of rest. There is nothing Judaic about it; it is a command for the whole race of man. "Six days shalt thou labour," but that thy labour may not be degradingly and exhaustively wearisome; that the man may not become a mere machine, worn by the dust of its own grinding; that the thread of sorrow, which runs through all labour, may never wholly blacken into despair; that the thread of joy entwined with it may be brightened into spiritual intensity and permanence—therefore, "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt do no manner of work." I need scarcely touch on the change from the seventh to the first day of the week; but whether we keep the Sabbath or Sunday, the Fourth Commandment, in its eternal and moral aspect, bids us to keep one day in the seven holy. And how are we to keep it holy? Let us look, first, at the Old Testament. Search it through, and you will find two rules, and two only, of Sabbath observance—rest and gladness. "In it thou shalt do no manner of work," and "This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." The Christian Sunday, then, like the Jewish Sabbath, is primarily God's gift to us of rest and joy. We need both. Blessed is drudgery; but blessed, too, is rest when work is done. The man that works seven days a week instead of six will pay the penalty in peevishness and enfeeblement, and will break down sooner and enjoy life less. Many a brain-worker has sunk into a premature grave or died wretchedly by his own hands because he despised God's law of rest. But, if we are agreed that Sunday should be a day of rest, it is still most necessary for us to understand that it must be a holy rest and not an ignoble rest. Let not ours be the Puritanic Sunday of gloomy strictness, for "This is the day the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it"; let not ours be the foreign Sunday of frivolity and pleasure-seeking; let not ours be the pharisaic Sunday, with petty rules and restrictions, for God has bidden us to stand fast in the liberty wherewith He has made us free. Bishop Hackett was content with this wise, beautiful, and manly rule: "Serve God, and be cheerful." Yet, if you ask for further principles, not details, I will offer four plain and simple ones which yet include everything—three negative and one positive. Negatively: Let not your Sunday be slothful. If to many Sunday only means a heavier sleep and a more gluttonous dinner than usual, it is not only wasted but desecrated; it becomes less holy than even continuous labour, clogging instead of expanding the wings of the soul, and strengthening instead of controlling the lower passions of the body. Next: Let not our Sunday be merely frivolous. In Liverpool the result of a religious census, taken very recently, showed that out of 600,000 of the population scarcely more than one in a hundred attended the service of any Christian religion. And among the more educated classes, if novels be any indication of modern society, as I suppose they are, I find in a recent novel no less than three Sundays described, and they are all

spent in indolent pleasure, without a hint that any one of the characters, whether the hero or heroine, so much as thought of entering a place of Christian worship. Is it the Sunday of God's children and fellow-labourers, or the Sunday of worldlings in a decadent civilisation? Is it the Sunday of Christian men and women, holy to the Lord and honourable, or of creatures who have no duties to perform, no souls to save? Thirdly: Let not our Sunday be purely selfish. We come then to the positive principle. Let our Sunday rest be gladly spiritual, a day of Christian worship and Christian thought, a day not only to rest us but also to ennoble, a day to remind us whence we come and whither we go, and who we are. Beside us and around is the world with its pomps and vanities; before us is virtue, is duty, is eternity. The Sabbath is to be a bridge thrown across life's troubled waters, over which we may pass to reach the opposite shore. For, as the Sunday calls on the worldly to give place to the spiritual, to lay aside the cares and labours of earth for the repose and holiness of heaven, so it is but a type of the eternal day when the freed spirit, if true to itself and to God, shall put on for ever its robe of immortal holiness and joy. (*Dean Farrar.*) *Sunday aids moral vision:*—"One day," writes a traveller, "as I was passing a Pennsylvania coal mine, I saw a small field full of mules. The boy who was with me said, 'Those are the mules that work all the week down in the mine, but on Sunday they have to come up into the light, or else in a little while they go blind.'" It seems to me that what is necessary for mules is no less necessary for men. Keep men buried in this world's business for the whole seven days, and they would soon lose the very faculty of spiritual vision, having no eye, ear, or heart for Divine things. Make Sunday a working day, and you degrade man into a mill-horse, and that a blind one. (*J. Halsey.*) *Brought up to keep the Sabbath:*—About thirty years ago a Girvan shoemaker emigrated to British Columbia, on the Western shores of North America, to try his fortune on the Caribou diggings, then attracting many people. After passing through his own share of hardships, he arrived at the diggings, and wrought hard though unsuccessfully till he had spent his money, and became, in miners' phraseology, "broke." Being a Scotchman, however, he had provided for this eventuality, by bringing with him a few tools with which he resolved to start shoemaking at the diggings. Next day, being Sunday, he was lying in his tent despondent enough, when a tall miner entered with a pair of long boots slung over his shoulder. "Is the shoemaker here?" asked the new arrival. The reply was that he would be here on Monday. "If I am not mistaken you are the shoemaker yourself." "Well," said our friend, "what though I be?" "Now, look here," said the miner with an oath, "I have travelled five miles to come here, and I won't leave this tent till you mend my boots." The cobbler looked up for a moment, and thought of turning him out by force, but all at once the recollection of the Sabbath day came to him, and so, dropping his eyes, he replied: "You see, sir, I come from Scotland, where the Sabbath is respected; and I have never wrought on the Sabbath yet, and please God I don't mean to begin now." The miner made no answer, and the cobbler looked up, when, to his amazement, he saw the big tears dropping over his cheeks. All at once the man flung the boots on the ground with these words: "God help me! I was brought up to respect the Sabbath too, but nobody respects anything in this God-forsaken country. Take the boots, and mend them when you can"; whereupon he left the tent. The shoemaker ultimately started a store in Victoria, British Columbia, called the "Scotch House," where he prospered exceedingly. He is now dead, but the business is still carried on by his son, who was in that district not many years ago. *The Sabbath as a spring-tide:*—Coleridge looked forward with great delight to the return of the Sabbath, the sacredness of which produced a wonderful effect on the temperament of that Christian poet. To a friend he said, one Sunday morning, "I feel as if God had, by giving the Sabbath, given fifty-two springs in every year." *A worthy example:*—We have all heard of Jenny Lind, the famous Swedish singer. Here is a good story, which shows her faithfulness to God. On one occasion, when she was in Stockholm, the capital of Sweden, the king was going to have a musical festival at his palace on the Sabbath day. He sent an invitation to this great singer to come and take part in these exercises. But she declined the invitation. Then the king waited on her in person, and commanded her to come to his entertainment. This was a very high honour for a king to show to one of his subjects. Most persons would have gone under these circumstances. But Jenny Lind still begged to be excused. And when the king asked for her objections she said, "Please, your majesty, I have a greater King in heaven to whom I must be faithful. I cannot do what your majesty desires without breaking the

commandment of my heavenly King, and offending Him. So please excuse me for declining to do what your majesty wishes." That was noble. Few persons would have had the courage to show their faithfulness under such circumstances as Jenny Lind did. "*I can't afford it*":—"Just come and work awhile in my garden on Sunday mornings, will you, Jim?" said a working man, with his pick-axe over his shoulder, to an old hedger, who was working by the side of the road. Jim took off his cap and made a bow to the speaker, and then said, "No, master, I can't afford it." "Oh! I don't want you to do it for nothing. I'll pay you well for the work." "Thank you, master, but I can't afford it." "Why, man, it will put something in your pocket, and I don't think you are too well off." "That's true; and that's the reason why I say I can't afford it." "Can't afford it! Why, surely, you don't understand me." "Yes, I do; but I'm not quick of speech. Please don't snap me up, and I'll tell you what I mean. It's very true, as you say, that I'm not well off in this world. But I've a blessed hope of being better off in the world to come. My Lord and Saviour has said, 'I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am there ye may be also.' I learned that text more than twenty years ago, and it has been a great comfort to me." "Well, but what's that got to do with your saying in answer to my offer—'I can't afford it'?" "Why, no offence to you, sir, but it's got all to do with it. If I lose my hope in that better land, I lose everything. My Saviour says I must keep the Sabbath day holy. If I break His command I shall not be prepared for the place He is preparing for me. And then all my hope is gone. And this is what I mean by saying, 'I can't afford it.'" *The Sabbath before Moses*:—Does the law of gravitation depend upon the tradition that Newton saw an apple fall to the ground? Does the law of electricity depend upon the tradition that Franklin drew the lightning from the clouds with a kite? As little does the law of rest and refreshment for one day in seven depend upon anything that was said by Moses or to Moses three thousand years ago. The Sabbath law of rest and refreshment is written in the needs of the human race. God did not first command it then; is still commanding it now. All human experience points to this law. All life interprets it. The body cries out for it, the mind cries out for it, the soul cries out for it, the very physical organisation of the animals cries out for it. (*Lyman Abbott, D.D.*) **Six days shalt thou labour.**—*Labour: its dignities and problems*:—How often has this Fourth Commandment been misinterpreted as dealing only with the question of rest, as inculcating the sanctity of worship and the beauty of Sabbatic peace! Does it not also lay down the universal law of labour? Does it not set forth the sanctity of toil and the beauty of holy activity? I. FIRST, LET US THINK OF THE GREAT FACT OF THE UNIVERSAL NECESSITY OF LABOUR. "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work": that is the one supreme, inexorable law for all the sons of men. "In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread," said God to Adam, and He has been saying it ever since to all the generations of men. There is no method by which life can be sustained, developed, ennobled except by the method of toil—either by hand, or foot, or brain. There is no endowment of Nature which ever brings anything to fruitfulness in human life without labour. Nature works; but when she works for man she only works with man. She will only minister to him when he, through constant toil, seeks to minister to himself. The general good of humanity—as well as the meeting of the wants of humanity—is effected by the labour of each individual. This necessitates at once not only division of labour, but degrees and diversities of labour. There is, first of all, the labour which is termed bodily labour, which tends to provide and then to distribute the resources of the world we live in. But we must add to this another sort of work—the work of the mind—ingenuity, thought, mental exertion, invention, before the organisation and progress of society can be effected. To ascertain and interpret the great vital and spiritual forces which this world half discloses and half conceals, is the work of the mental powers of men. The world of to-day, as we see it, and enjoy it, and use it, is the fruit of the labours of those who have lived in it in the past; and its beauties, its utilities, its wonderful ministrations to man's varied and increasing wants will only be maintained by the labours of those who live in it now, and who shall succeed us when we pass out of it and are no more. II. I would speak now of THE DIGNITY OF LABOUR. And I base the term "dignity of labour" upon the fact that all labour is of Divine appointment. Not only has God laid upon us the necessity of labour, but He has so constructed us that without labour we fail to find any satisfaction in life. Like the strings of the harp and the lute, our capacities and powers only make music when they vibrate. The active man is not only the useful man, but if he is working

on right lines and by right methods he is the happy man. We hear a great deal in low-class newspapers about the degradation of toil and the hard lot of the working man. No toil is of itself degrading; no work ought to be the producer of hardships. Nothing is low; nothing is mean if it be useful. Talk of degrading toil—there is no such thing. If there is one man more degraded than another it is the man who does nothing for the world but stare at it and suck the sweetness out of it. There is a common impression abroad that a gentleman is a man who has sufficient means to live without working. A gentleman is the man who does his duty in that sphere into which natural fitness has led him, or circumstances drawn him, honestly, purely, devotedly, and in the fear of God. It is a case of character, not of possession; of attainment, not of inheritance; of qualities of soul, not of a luxurious environment. Character is the crown of life. Deeds are the pulse of time. The sweat of honest toil is a jewelled crown on the brow of the toiler. III. I pass now to consider, in the light of what I have been stating, some of THE PROBLEMS CONNECTED WITH THE LOWER PHASES OF LABOUR IN OUR MODERN LIFE. I say lower phases of labour, because, fortunately, the higher phases tend more and more to settle their own problems. In the law, in medicine, in art, in the great world of science, labour is not harassed, circumscribed, and hindered by the thousand and one questions that are keeping the labouring classes in the lower phases of labour in perpetual turmoil. There are three problems affecting the labour market at the present moment, on which I will endeavour to throw some light. 1. There is first the great problem of how to keep the labour market full at the bottom. Every man has a right to choose the calling in which he thinks he can best minister to his own and others' good; but the false notions as to the qualifications of elementary education, and the imaginary stigma which is attached to rough labour, are ruinous alike to the towns which they are filling, and to the country which they are emptying. There is no stigma attached to honest and useful labour; there is necessarily no disqualification for society, or for enjoyment in any occupation that is a source of benefit to the world. An honest, enlightened, educated farmer is equal to a man of the same qualities in any of the professions. These facts, if apprehended by the so-called "lower classes," would go far to solve one of the great problems of the labour question of to-day. 2. The second problem is that connected with the hours of labour. You know that there is a loud cry for an eight hours' day; and there are some who think that Parliament ought to pass a Bill forbidding employers of labour in collieries, mines, and certain manufactories to work their employees more than eight hours out of every twenty-four. I do not so think. The remedy is to be found in fair combination and honest co-operation on the part of the men, and in a just and equitable temper on the part of employers. If you once employ legislation in this matter, where are you to stop? Will you give an eight hours' day to the clergyman—who oftentimes has to work (at least, I speak for myself) twelve and fifteen hours? Will you forbid the doctor to visit his patients, and to give medical advice for more than eight hours? Legislation, moreover, implies a certain amount of equality. But, as a matter of fact, there is nothing more unequal than men's capabilities for labour. What positively wearies one man to work at for six hours, another can stand cheerfully and unweariedly for twelve hours. An Act of Parliament compelling the lazy in all classes of the community to do some useful work every day would be of far greater benefit to humanity than any Government restrictions on the hours of labour. 3. There is one other problem which I will mention—the subject of livery; the badge of servitude. There is a strong feeling possessing certain classes of the community that humble labour ought not to be stamped with the regalia of its character; that a domestic servant, *e.g.*, ought not to be compelled to dress in a manner which proclaims her a domestic servant. What does it mean? Just this. If it is a disgrace to be a servant no honest man or decent woman ought to engage themselves as such. If it is right, if it is honest, if it is consistent with one's freedom and all those things that pertain to manhood and womanhood, why object to be known as what you are—a servant? There is nothing more degrading in a servant's cap than in a judge's wig. A respectable servant is as worthy of respect as her mistress. Service is no disgrace. (*W. J. Hocking.*) *The healthful tendency of work*:—Physical work promotes the circulation of the blood, opens the pores of the skin, gives tone to the respiratory organs, helps the functions of digestion, strengthens the muscles, adds suppleness to the joints, enlivens the senses, quickens the nerves, regulates the passions, and benevolently tends to build up the general constitution. Mental and moral work clears the understanding, empowers the will, keens the perception, awakens the

conscience, informs the judgment, enlarges the memory, rectifies the affections. In one word, the tendency of work is to promote and sustain the mental and physical organisation in an uninterrupted action of health, until by the fiat of nature, or as the result of accident, or by the ravages of disease, it shall be broken up and dissolved in death. Man is kept in life by work, and dies either because he will not or because he cannot work. *Work, a law of nature:*—The law of nature is, that a certain quantity of work is necessary to produce a certain quantity of good of any kind whatever. If you want knowledge you must toil for it; if food you must toil for it; and if pleasure you must toil for it. (*J. Ruskin.*) **The Lord thy God brought thee out thence.**—*The moral exodus:*—Look at this change as an emblem of that great moral revolution which has taken place in the soul of every genuine Christian, and which is essential to the spiritual well-being of every man. I. IT IS A BLESSED CHANGE. 1. A wonderful emancipation. 2. Wrought by the Almighty. 3. Through human instrumentality. II. IT IS A MEMORABLE CHANGE. "Remember." 1. To inspire with gratitude to Deliverer. 2. To promote spirit of contentment. 3. To establish confidence in God. (*Homilist.*) *Remember Egypt:*—We are prone to remember the palaces and pleasures of Egypt; God admonishes us to remember its slavery. The memory of our former state should be—I. AN ANTIDOTE TO DISCONTENT. Though the labours and trials of the wilderness were many, yet in Egypt we had more. If we labour, it is not to make bricks without straw—not for another, but for our own profit. II. A STIMULANT TO ZEAL. Remembering Egypt, let us press on toward Canaan; give no advantage to our enemies. III. A REASON FOR OBEDIENCE. He who graciously delivered us has right to our service. If we made bricks for Pharaoh, "what shall we render unto the Lord?" If fear produced activity, how much more should love! IV. WINGS FOR FAITH AND HOPE. Remember that the God who could deliver from Egypt can bring to Canaan. He who has begun the work will complete it. V. A CALL TO HUMILITY. I was but a servant, a slave; I owe all to my Deliverer. Without Him I were a slave again. (*R. A. Griffin.*)

Ver. 16. **Honour thy father and thy mother.**—*The Fifth Commandment:*—I. THE DUTIES of children are, in the language of the Decalogue, summed up in one word, "honour"—"Honour thy father and thy mother." No word could well have been more happily chosen. The duties required by it seem to be reducible under three general heads: 1. Reverence. There may occur cases in which the parental character is as far as possible from all that could inspire either reverence or love. But still, how much soever this may be the case, there is a respect due to the person of a parent, for the very relation's sake; just as there is an official respect due to the person of a magistrate on account of the station he occupies, independently of the claims of personal character. This respect is not the dictate of any servile fear. It is associated with love, and is proportional to it. It might be defined a reverential familiarity. 2. Obedience. 3. Maintenance. This, of course, comes into application only in certain circumstances, but the obligation is universal. II. THE MOTIVES to the fulfilment of this duty are necessarily very much the same as the motives to other duties. 1. The express command of God. Notice the extraordinary energy of the Word of God on this subject (Exod. xxi. 17; Lev. xx. 9; Deut. xxvii. 16; Prov. xx. 20, xxx. 17). And such declarations of the Old Testament have their confirmatory counterparts in the New (Col. iii. 20; 2 Tim. iii. 2, 3; Rom. i. 30). Observe with what characters the "disobedient to parents" are classed. 2. The manner in which God has made the paternal and filial relation the image of that which subsists reciprocally between Himself and His people. We are taught to cry unto Him—"Abba, Father!" And this is ever felt by the renewed soul to be the most delightful and endearing view of the Divine Being. 3. The obvious propriety and equity of the precept. "This is right." Nature itself teaches this. The very use of the phrase "natural affection" implies this lesson. The instinct is strong on the part of both parent and child. Yet the affection of the child is not solely instinctive, but in no small degree springs from the early experience of affection and care and kindness on the part of parents. I might show you also how right it is on the twofold ground of the law of equity and the law of gratitude. 4. The special promise annexed. How is it to be understood as to Israel? How as to us? (1) As to the former question it is only needful to say that it cannot be understood as a promise of long life to every obedient child individually. Were it so interpreted, then no dutiful son or daughter in the land of Israel could ever have died young. The language refers evidently

to the continued possession of Canaan by the people collectively, not to longevity in that land to each obedient individual. (2) How is this promise to be understood as to us? The land of Canaan consisted in this, in its being the subject of promise and its being obtained by faith—a faith manifested in obedience, "working by love." The heavenly inheritance must be obtained in the same way. (*R. Wardlaw, D.D.*) *The Fifth Commandment*:—Those who consider the circumstances of the case, and the large share which symmetry always played in the mind of the Jews, will readily believe that on those two tables which lay enshrined in the Ark, the Ten Words were carved in their briefest form, each occupying a line, and that there were five on the first and five on the second table. It may be objected that then this Fifth Commandment, the law of reverence to parents, which is a duty to man, will stand with the first four commandments, which are duties to God. But it is the special dignity of this commandment that it is a direct part of our duty to God. Our parents are not merely our neighbours; they stand to us in a special and in a Divine relation. During our early years they stand to us in the place of God. "Honour thy father and thy mother." We are bidden to honour because love is instinctive and spontaneous. If honour towards our parents is love combined with reverence, the love must be honour touched with emotion. The word "honour" includes love. There can be no true honour without love. Of course a reciprocal duty is implied. The obliteration of this instinct on either side is one of the worst signs, on the one hand, of savage dishumanisation, on the other of civilised degeneracy. Filial affection, however, though instinctive, may depend on education. The Jews, from whose wisdom we may learn so much, insisted upon it with intense earnestness. It lay at the basis of the first sweet patriarchal life. The modern *canaille* of the world care nothing for their parents, but only for themselves; but the deepest feelings of the best men have been always mingled with their love to their parents. The sacredness, or shipwreck, of this love has furnished to literature some of its most impassioned themes. Nor is it otherwise in history. Many of the most pathetic scenes in the records of human life turn on parental and filial love. Think of Aaron's stricken silence when his two eldest-born, Nadab and Abihu, died by the fire of God, and Aaron held his peace. Think of Jacob's wail over his lost Joseph. Think of the hero David's outburst of weeping over Absalom. Think of the noble Pericles placing the wreath on the brow of his dead boy, turning aside to hide the tears, the strong heart at last broken, which amid all the calamities of war and pestilence and the murmurs of the people had continued unsubdued. Think of Titus, so moved by the false accusation of intriguing against his father that he hurried back from Jerusalem with headlong speed and burst into Vespasian's presence with tears, "*Veni, pater; Veni, pater*—I have come, my father; I have come." Think of our proud Norman King Henry I.:

> "Before him passed the young and fair,
> In pleasure's reckless train;
> The seas dashed o'er his son's bright hair;
> He never smiled again."

Or of Henry II., when among the signatures of his other rebellious children he saw the name of his youngest and best-loved John. Or the great Frederick Barbarossa crying out bitterly on his son's death, "I am not the first who have suffered from disobedient sons, and yet have wept over their graves." Think of the wretched Henry IV. of Germany, treacherously arrested by his own son, falling on his knees before him with the cry, "Oh, do not sully thy honour and thy name; no law of God obliges a son to be the instrument of Divine vengeance against a father!" Again, how often has the thought of a mother been present even at the closing moments of life! When the young and gallant boy, Prince Conradin of Hohenstauffen, last of his race, was dragged to the scaffold at the age of sixteen, undaunted to the last he flung the gage of defiance among the multitude, but as he bowed his fair young face over the block he murmured, "Oh, my mother, how deep will be thy sorrow at the news of this day!" And when Sir John Moore lay dying on that disastrous field of Corunna, the name of his mother was the last upon his lips. The truest men have never blushed to give public proof of this filial devotion. No record of the late James Garfield, the murdered President of the United States, won him warmer sympathy than the manly kiss which he gave to his aged mother before the assembled multitudes on the day of his supremest elevation. I can but glance at a difficulty. "Are we to honour those who are

dishonourable? Are we to reverence those to whom no reverence is due?" I answer that we must not be like those Jews whom Christ so bitterly rebuked because they tried to shift off one duty by another. Our parents have loved us, their children, in spite of all our intractableness, our waywardness, our indifference. Are the children to show no forbearance to the sins of their parents? Alas, for earth if unworthiness is to sever the bonds of love and of duty! The bonds of nature which unite us to every member of our families are indissoluble bonds. I knew a mother once whose boy was convicted of stealing at school. She lived in the outskirts of a little town, and so deeply did her boy's shame weigh on her spirits that for years afterwards it was only in the deep twilight that she would ever enter the streets of the town by which she lived. St. Paul calls this Fifth Commandment "the first commandment with promise," and at that promise I must now glance. But perhaps you will be troubled with a doubt whether this promise holds true. Good sons, alas! die, cut off in the flower of their youth, who dearly loved their parents and truly honoured them. Yes, but that death may be in God's sight the reward—longer days in the better land. Oh, is it not true that, as a rule, the promise literally holds good, both to nations and individuals? Individually, even the boy who loves and honours his parents will, as a rule, be more prosperous, be longer lived, be more happy, be more blessed, than the bad son. It is so in the nature of things. A distinguished officer in the army told me that, in the experience of a long life, he had found that, and exactly the same had been said to him by an old admiral, who said of all the midshipmen who had passed under his rule he had never known one fail to turn out well who wrote weekly his loving letter to his home. "Show me a boy who loves his mother," says a recent writer, "and I will show you one who will make a faithful friend, a noble lover, and a tender husband: show me a boy to whom home life has no attraction, because it is too slow, and I will show you never to trust that man with anything which constitutes the happiness of others." But the main intention of the promise was not individual, it was national; and all history has contributed its national fulfilment. "The corner-stone of the national life," it has been said, "is the hearth-stone." Why was one Spartan worth ten other Greeks upon a battlefield? It was because Spartan boys were trained in parental obedience. Nor was it otherwise with Rome in her noblest days. The irresistible grandeur which arrayed her warriors to conquer was founded on the paternal authority. Coriolanus spared Rome only at the tears of his mother, Volumnia; and when Virgil wrote the great epic of the Republic he could find no greater name for his hero than *Pater*—father, and *Filius*—faithful. When Greece produced perfumed dandies like Alcibiades, and when Rome produced a jewelled debauchee like Otho, God began to wipe out their glory as when one wipeth a dish and turneth it upside down. And when Napoleon, who knew something of the glory of nations, was asked what was the chief want of the French nation, he replied in the one word, "Mothers." "Oh, thou who hast yet a mother," said Richter, "thank God for it." Do not burden long years by remorse for unthankfulness to parents, for though you may show tenderness to the living, it is too late for kindness to the dead. When King James IV., of Scotland, was a boy he stood against his father in arms. He made his manhood one long penance for that sin. In remembrance of it he wore under his robe an iron belt, and to that iron belt every year he added a new link an ounce in weight that the penance might be heavier every year. And we have all one father to whom we are unthankful and rebellious children; God's prodigals, to whom His only begotten Son on earth gave such loving obedience. God's prodigals are we all. By seeking the aid of His Holy Spirit to obey His commandments, we become more and more His true children, "accepted in the Beloved." (*Dean Farrar.*) *The Fifth Commandment*:—Observe it is not said, bear a natural affection toward thy father and mother, but honour and reverence them. Natural affection there will be till children grow altogether reprobate; but there may be much of this where there is little or nothing of the reverence commanded. A child who is very wicked toward God may have much natural affection for his parents. But to honour and reverence them as bearing God's authority and from a sense of duty to God, this is the main point and the only mark of a truly dutiful child. First, there must be an inward acknowledgment of their dignity and authority upon the heart. Secondly, there must be an outward expression thereof in a becoming behaviour. 1. From hence it is evident that the first duty of children to parents, and that also without which they can do no part of their duty to them upon a right principle, is to reverence them as immediately appointed by God to direct their education.

Honour them; have regard to their authority over you. Respect that authority as God's appointment. 2. The second duty of children is cheerfully and humbly to attend unto their parents' instructions. When parents are teaching their children the ways of God, examining into their conduct, showing them the sinfulness of their nature and the danger of such and such wrong courses; when they are warning them of the evil of certain sins they are most liable to, as self-will, idleness, pride; when they are giving their children directions on these heads, and requiring their careful observance of them, they are acting in the character of parents; and it is the duty of children humbly to hearken and carefully to observe such instructions. 3. The third duty of children is cheerfully to submit to the parents' discipline. By this I mean the religious discipline or government of the family. 4. It is the duty of children cheerfully to submit to the corrections of their parents and humbly to profit by them. By correction I mean any method the parent uses for restraining the vices of his children. (1) They must be humbled for their fault whatever it be, whether lying, or swearing, or idleness, or company-keeping, or whatever else. They must not deny they have done amiss, and set about to excuse themselves, as, if they could escape their parents' displeasure, all were well enough. (2) They must be grieved for having incurred their parents' displeasure. For that they must principally be grieved, and not for the correction they have brought on themselves. (3) They must submit to the chastisement; not be angry with their parents for doing their duty to them, but confess they deserve and need the correction. A hard lesson for a proud heart. (4) They must seek God's forgiveness and their parents'. 5. Have you cheerfully submitted to the disposals of your parents? Children of the one sex must not affect any other schools or callings than their parents provide for them, nor those of the other such dress or pleasure as their parents do not see fit for them. 6. It is the duty of children to submit reverently to the directions of their parents in all lawful things. (*S. Walker, B.A.*) *The First Commandment with promise*:—Maurice says, "Many writers begin with considering mankind as a multitude of units. They ask, How did any number of these units form themselves into a society? I cannot adopt that method. At my birth I am already in a society. I am related, at all events, to a father and mother. This relation is the primary fact of my existence. I can contemplate no other facts apart from it." This commandment, then, has respect to the home-life. Home is one of the sweetest words in our language; it speaks to us of heaven. It has been "childhood's temple and manhood's shrine"; it has been the safeguard of purity, the shield against temptation, the bulwark of all that is true and holy. Many a young man has been checked in his career of wickedness, and awakened to thoughtfulness and penitence by the remembrance of his early home. Here is the place where domestic virtues are cultivated, where the seeds of character are dropped into the mind and heart, where the holiest affections are kindled, and around which undying memories and associations gather. The mariner, as he treads the deck in the night watches, the missionary and the emigrant remember with gratitude and affection the old home; and the Australian settler sends up a cheer for the old land, and still calls it by the sweet name of "Home." It does not require a palace to make a home. There may be no architectural beauty, or abounding wealth, or costly furniture, or more costly paintings, or great luxuries; the dwelling may be a humble one. While children are commanded to honour their parents, the parents are to see to it that they deserve honour. Cowper said—

> "My boast is not that I derive my birth,
> From loins enthroned, or nobles of the earth;
> But higher far my proud pretensions rise,
> The son of parents passed into the skies."

It is a blessed thing to be able to say truly, My father was an upright man, a truthful, conscientious man, a Christian man; my mother taught me to pray, she prayed for me. As Thomas Fuller says, the good parent "showeth them, in his own practice, what to follow and imitate; and in others what to shun and avoid. For though 'the words of the wise be as nails fastened by the masters of the assemblies,' yet, sure, their examples are the hammer to drive them in, to take the deeper hold. A father that whipped his son for swearing, and swore himself while he whipped him, did more harm by his example than good by his correction." Let the parents be worthy of honour; and let the children learn to "honour their

father and mother." This is God's command; and it is enforced by the obligations under which we are laid to our parents. And there is a promise annexed to this command. Paul speaks of it as "the first commandment with promise"—the first that has a specific promise attached to it. And the promise is, "that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." The penalty of disobedience to this command was death. "He that revileth his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken to them: then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; and they shall say unto the elders of the city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear." And when the people stood on Mount Gerizim and on Mount Ebal, one of the maledictions that came from the summit of the latter was this, "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother"—and all the people responded "Amen." The curse fell on Ham and his descendants for dishonouring his father. And whenever you see a family or a people, among whom these filial and parental ties are lax, you see the beginning of the curse that will surely fall. But here is a promise to the obedient, "That thy days may be long upon the land," &c. This was not only true to the Jews, but it is true now. Blessings rest on the heads of obedient, as contrasted with disobedient children. The Jews were about to possess Canaan; and as the Canaanites would be cast out because of their sins, so the Israelites would keep the land only by their obedience. Sin in their case, as in the case of the Canaanites, would produce bitter fruit; but obedience would be blessed. And this was the greatest earthly blessing they could obtain, long life in the promised land. It is also true now that obedience to God's laws, a holy character, tends to the preservation of physical life and vigour. (*James Owen.*) *The foundation commandment:*—I. The keeping of this commandment PRODUCES A CERTAIN TEMPER OF MIND WHICH WE CALL MEEKNESS. So far as anything like peace can be obtained in this world it can only be obtained by obedience to God; and this cannot be shown but by obedience to those whom He has set over us. II. The temper of obedience being therefore the very foundation of all true piety, GOD HAS SO APPOINTED IT THAT MEN SHOULD BE ALL THEIR LIVES IN CONDITIONS OF LIFE TO EXERCISE AND PRACTISE THIS HABIT OF MIND, first of all as children under parents, then as servants under masters, as subjects under kings, as all under spiritual pastors, and spiritual pastors under their superiors. III. IT IS IN THIS TEMPER OF MEEKNESS, ABOVE ALL, THAT CHRIST HAS SET HIMSELF BEFORE US AS OUR PATTERN. Christ was willingly subject to a poor carpenter in an obscure village, so much so as even to have worked with him at his trade. He, alone without sin, was subject to sinful parents. IV. THE MORE DIFFICULT IT IS FOR CHILDREN TO PAY THIS HONOUR AND OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS WHO MAY BE UNWORTHY, THE MORE SURE THEY MAY BE THAT IT IS THE NARROW WAY TO LIFE AND THE STRAIT AND DIFFICULT GATE BY WHICH THEY MUST ENTER. True love will cover and turn away its eyes from sins and infirmities. For this reason there is a blessing unto this day on the children of Shem and Japheth, and a curse on the descendants of Ham. (*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times."*) *Reverence due to parents:*—Honour your parents, *i.e.*—1. Obey them. 2. Respect them. 3. Treat their opinions with regard. 4. Treat their habits with respect. 5. Provide for them when sick, weary, old, and infirm. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *Duty of children:*—I. CHILDREN ARE BOUND TO REGARD THEIR PARENTS WITH RESPECT AND REVERENCE AT ALL TIMES. Particularly these exercises of filial piety are—1. To exist in the thoughts. Here the whole course of filial piety begins; and if not commenced here will never be pursued with any success. Thoughts are the soul of all duty. His affections towards them ought ever to be reverential, grateful, warm, and full of kindness. 2. The same exercises of filial piety are to be manifested in the words of children. 3. The same spirit ought to appear in all the deportment of children. II. CHILDREN ARE BOUND TO OBEY THE COMMANDS OF THEIR PARENTS. This obedience ought to be—1. Uniform and faithful. 2. Ready and cheerful. III. CHILDREN ARE BOUND TO DO WHATEVER WILL REASONABLY CONTRIBUTE TO THE HAPPINESS OF THEIR PARENTS, WHETHER COMMANDED OR NOT. 1. Every considerate child will feel his filial duty strongly urged by the excellence of this conduct, and the odiousness of filial impiety. 2. Considerate children will

find another powerful reason for filial duty in the pleasure which it gives their parents. 3. The demands of gratitude present a combination of such reasons to every such child for the same conduct. 4. The great advantages of filial piety present strong reasons for the practice of it to children of every character. 5. The declarations of God concerning this important subject furnish reasons at once alluring and awful for the exercise of filial piety. 6. The example of Christ is a reason of the highest import to compel the exercise of filial piety. (*T. Dwight, D.D.*) *The duty which children owe their parents:*—The duty which children owe to their parents arises so naturally out of the relation between them that the Lord Himself makes His appeal on this very ground, in pleading His own cause with His people and His own rights over them. "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is Mine honour? and if I be a master, where is My fear? saith the Lord of hosts" (Mal. i. 6). A son honoureth his father. It is natural, it is right and fitting that he should do so. I. THE MOTIVE OF THIS DUTY MUST BE A REGARD TO THE WILL OF GOD (Eph. vi. 1). "Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord" (Col. iii. 20). Honour, then, and obey your parents in the Lord, from a desire to please Him, and a regard to His commandments. 1. These directions show on what foundation a parent should study to have his authority placed: the sure foundation of the authority of God. It is a delegated authority. As such from the very first he should use it. As such he should seek as much as possible to have it from the very first recognised. Let the child very soon learn that it is God who has committed him to your care and subjected him to your control; and as he grows to maturity, be you content to have not the first, but the second place in his respect and love. It may be very gratifying to your parental pride to see how much he will do, and how much he will sacrifice, for the sake of pleasing you. But it is far more important to perceive that he does all and sacrifices all in obedience to you, for the sake of pleasing, not you, but that God who has commanded him to honour you. 2. It is on the commandment of God, then, that this duty of honouring father and mother must rest. Do not trust your discharge of this duty to natural affection, or natural conscience, or reason, or gratitude, or honour. Alas! these are all frail supports of any human virtue. You may think that you are treating your parents with all the reverence which the highest notions of the parental character could require. But you do not honour them at all in any real religious spirit, except in so far as you honour them for the sake of that great God who first of all subdues you to Himself and then subjects you to them. 3. It may be remarked that the view now given of the duty which children owe to their parents is altogether independent of the character and qualifications of parents and the opinion which children may have of them. (1) Are your parents unfit for their high charge, or, in your estimation, unworthy of it? Have they failed to secure your confidence, your esteem, your love? Still you will feel that deference is due to them "in the Lord." You will be willing, on His account, to honour them, "bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things," if by any means, for your sakes, they may be themselves brought to honour Him for whose sake you so dutifully honour them. (2) Are your parents such as your hearts could wish? Are they like-minded with yourselves—possessors of the same grace? Blessed is your lot, believing children of believing parents. Yours is an easy task, to honour a father—a mother—so truly honourable. Still, forget not the special commandment of God. It is not enough that you honour them as all Christians honour one another, as high in rank, made kings and priests to God. You must further honour them simply as parents. II. THE EXTENT OF THE DUTY WHICH AS CHILDREN YOU OWE TO YOUR PARENTS may be gathered partly from a review of some of the particular precepts and instances in Holy Scripture on this subject, and partly from the application of the general principle of this direction, "Honour thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee." 1. On the subject of filial duty the Word of God is very full and explicit in its precepts and examples. Thus—(1) Respect, reverence in heart, speech, and behaviour, is strongly enjoined (Lev. xix. 3; Deut. xxvii. 16; Prov. xxviii. 24). (2) Obedience also is enjoined—obedience both active and passive. You are to do the will of your parents. You are to submit to their chastisements (Prov. i. 8, iii. 1). 2. The general principle of this direction confirms the view of its extent which these particular precepts and instances give. "Honour thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee." The ground or reason of this duty is the commandment of God. The duty

therefore must be as extensive as the commandment, which is altogether unlimited. No exception is allowed; no room left for any reservation. (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*) *Honour thy father and thy mother:*—This command begins the second "table" of the law, which is occupied with our duties toward our fellow-men. We are to fear and love God; but in that fear and love lies the ground of our reverence for His representatives. This commandment does not concern children alone. Every man has his part in it—in youth, manhood, and age. Order is to reign in all conditions of life—a Divine order. Rulers in home, state, and church rule according to this order, and are to be obeyed according to the will of God. I. THE DIVINE ORDER IN THE HOME. 1. Parents who spend toilsome days and sometimes sleepless nights in order to provide for their children, hope that in old age they will be cared for by these children. How often, alas! is it otherwise, and the parents are regarded as a burden by undutiful children! They blame the evil times, &c., whilst the real cause lies in their own forgetfulness of God's Word, their own careless lives, and lax fulfilment of their parental duties. 2. Why ought children not to despise their parents? Because in them they honour the Divine order. They have a holy office. God has given them a part of His power, His right, His majesty. Serve them, children. Be helpful to them in labour, in sickness, in age; help them from your superfluity, and even in your poverty as you may. Comfort them, pray for them, obey them. Do what they require, even when it is hard to do so; and when they depart, let it be said to their honour that they have left God-fearing children. Love and esteem them. Give them a chief place in your heart. Remember how they cared for you in youth, &c., and think that neglect of them can never lead to blessing (Prov. xx. 20, xxx. 17, &c.). And if father and mother are gone from earth, or if you have left your home, remember you are still servants and children of the heavenly King and Father. II. THE DIVINE ORDER IN THE STATE. 1. Princes and governors must also be held in honour as appointed by God. But, say some, all rulers are not the fathers of their people; many of them seem to live for themselves rather than for the people, &c. There is a cheap kind of popularity to be earned by the propagation of such ideas at the present day. Think of what would be the result if any man of honour subjected to the same criticism as those in high places—every word noticed and every action, every hasty exclamation, everything misconstrued, and added thereto lies, &c.—how would the life of many even good men appear after such an ordeal? 2. Princes and rulers also are men like ourselves, neither better nor worse. They are like the parents we are commanded to honour; and like them, they are to be honoured because ordained by God. And if children hear their parents lightly slandering "the powers that be," those children may be expected to become rebellious. 3. Then we must remember that even a bad government is better than none at all. A slave is he who obeys those in authority simply from fear of the sword. A freeman obeys according to the will of God. III. THE DIVINE ORDER IN CHURCH AND SCHOOL. 1. These also are of the Lord. They are appointed to instruct the Church and the youth of the nation, to exhort, warn, &c. For this they shall give an account. 2. The young ought to honour them. Those who despise them despise those whom God has appointed to this honourable office. It is no glory to make a man's office hard and bitter to exercise. 3. Those set over the community as pastors should receive this honour. "To pass by the church and school is the shortest way to Bridewell," says the proverb. And who are sometimes to blame for this? Careless parents, as the thief asserted when he said, "My father built the gallows—and he wasn't a carpenter." On the parents' attitude toward the Church and her pastors will depend the children's, very likely, in later years. 4. And if young people are taught to despise those whom God has appointed ministers of His word, what will be their attitude to the Word itself? Men should honour in those appointed to the office of teachers and preachers the Divine order by which men are trained intellectually and spiritually. (*K. H. Caspari.*) *Filial reverence:*—The Emperor Decimus intending and desiring to place the crown on the head of Decius his son, the young prince refused it in the most strenuous manner, saying, "I am afraid lest, being made an emperor, I should forget that I am a son. I had rather be no emperor and a dutiful son, than an emperor and such a son as hath forsaken his due obedience. Let then my father bear the rule; and let this only be my empire—to obey with all humility, and to fulfil whatsoever he shall command me." Thus the solemnity was waived, and the young man was not crowned—unless mankind shall say that this signal piety towards an indulgent parent was a more glorious

diadem to the son than that which consisted merely of gold and jewels. **That thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee.**—*The promise of long life and prosperity*:—1. That the lives of some good men have been short, need not be proved. 2. How such dispensations of Providence may be accounted for, consistently with this promise. (1) When God takes His saints out of the world when young, it is sometimes a peculiar instance of compassion to them, in taking them from the evil to come. (2) They are, at their death, possessed of a better world, which is the best exchange. (3) Old age is not a blessing, unless it be adorned with grace. 3. We shall now inquire how far, or in what respects, we are to hope for and desire the accomplishment of the promises of temporal good things. (1) Temporal good things are not to be desired ultimately for themselves, but as subservient to the glory of God; and long life in particular is a blessing so far as it affords more space to do service to the interest of Christ in the world. (2) They are to be desired with an entire submission to the will of God, and a resolution to acknowledge that He is righteous, and to magnify His name, though He deny them to us, as considering that He knows what is best for us, and may do what He will with His own. (3) We are to desire that God will give us temporal good things in mercy, as pledges of eternal happiness, and not in wrath. Thus the Psalmist says, "There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us." 4. We shall now inquire with what frame of spirit we ought to bear the loss of temporal good things, which we have been encouraged by God's promise to hope for. In answer to this, let it be considered that if God does not fulfil His promise in the way and manner which we expect in granting us temporal good things, yet—(1) We must justify Him, and condemn ourselves; for none can say that he does not forfeit all blessings daily. Therefore we are to say He is a God of infinite faithfulness, but we are unfaithful, and not steadfast in His covenant. (2) We are not to conclude that our being deprived of temporal good things which we expected is a certain sign that we have no right to or interest in those better things that accompany salvation; as the wise man says, "No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before him." (3) We are to reckon the loss of temporal good things as a trial of our faith and patience, and endeavour, under such disappointments, to make it appear that the world was not the main thing we had in view, but Christ and spiritual blessings in Him were the spring of all our religion. 5. It may farther be inquired, What are those things that tend to make a long life happy, for which alone it is to be desired? And it may be observed that though in the promise annexed to the Fifth Commandment we have no mention of anything but long life, yet the apostle, when explaining it, adds, that they shall have a prosperous life, without which long life would not be so great a blessing. Thus he says, "That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long upon the earth." Now there are three things which tend to make a long life happy. (1) Experience of growth in grace, in proportion to our advances in age, according to that promise, "They shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." (2) When we retain our natural abilities, and that vigour of mind which we have formerly had. This some are deprived of through the infirmities of old age, whereby they may be said to outlive themselves. (3) Old age is a blessing when our usefulness to others in our day and generation is continued. (*Thomas Ridglet, D.D.*) *Confide in your parents*:—Make them, above all others, your confidants. They are the best and most disinterested friends you will ever have in this world. Cultivate the habit of consultation with them. On things great and small seek their advice. A daughter will never come to shame, a son never to dishonour, that does so. Especially consult them in relation to your reading and your companions. There is to me something very beautiful in the intimacy of the father and a son, to see them walking side by side, perhaps arm in arm, in familiar converse in the street, the old man and the young in all the confidence of a hallowed friendship! It gives a satisfaction like a fair broad landscape at sunset. I know stalwart sons who to-day consult their mothers as in the days of yore, when they stood little higher than her knee—they are not low in my esteem, and I deem those mothers very happy in them. Nor need we confine these thoughts wholly to sons. The beauty of intimacy between parent and child is not theirs alone. When does a daughter appear so attractive as when showing her love to father or mother—as when employed in some way lightening their cares or relieving their burdens? It would not be far from wrong were I to say to a young man who is looking with some degree of interest for a life companion:—Would you know

what kind of a wife she will make upon whom now you have your eye? Ask what kind of a daughter she is now. If she be indolently selfish, leaving care and work to her mother; especially if she be unloving or undutiful, beware of her; she is not likely to make you happy. If she be an affectionate and self-denying daughter, if she is intimate and confidential with her parents, you have in that the best promise of happiness in the future. The eye of mother or father, beaming with delight as it rests upon a daughter's form, moving lightly in their presence, is an unspoken recommendation of untold value. But, whether the eye of friend or admirer is observing her or not, a daughter should cultivate this feeling of confidential intimacy with her parents; there is safety in it for her and unbounded happiness for them. *The secret of success:*—A Christian merchant, who, from being a very poor boy, had risen to wealth and renown, was once asked by an intimate friend to what, under God, he attributed his success in life. "To prompt and steady obedience to my parents," was his reply. "In the midst of many bad examples of youths of my own age, I was always able to yield a ready submission to the will of my father and mother, and I firmly believe that a blessing has, in consequence, rested upon me and upon all my efforts."

Ver. 17. **Thou shalt not kill.**—*The Sixth Commandment:*—First, we are here forbidden to injure our own flesh; to desire our own death out of impatience and passion, or in any way to hasten our end, and bereave ourselves of life. 1. It is a sin against ourselves, and against that natural principle of self-love and self-preservation which is implanted in us, and which is the rule of our love to others, which renders the sin more heinous, because it is a plain contradiction to the law of nature. 2. This is a crime against others, as well as against ourselves. For the community hath a share in us, and therefore when we destroy ourselves we injure the public. And then more especially we wrong the family which hath an interest in us, and of whom we are a part. 3. This is a crime against God as well as against ourselves and our brethren. He is a self-slayer, and an enemy of the workmanship of God. And this workmanship is no less than the image of God, for in the image of God made He man (Gen. ix. 6). Further, this is an offence against God because it is a distrust of His providence and His management of future events. Vibius Virius, a Roman senator, prevailed with twenty-four senators to drink poison with him, before Hannibal entered the city of Capua, and so they died unanimously with resentments of their country's deplorable condition, but were not so religious as to confide in the Divine Providence. Cato fell on his sword and slew himself, that he might not fall into the hands of Julius Cæsar. Demosthenes drank poison and ended his life that he might be sure not to be apprehended. Cleopatra killed herself that she might not be taken by Augustus. And others have despatched themselves on like grounds, namely, because they were uncertain of the future event of things, and they had not faith enough to rely on Him who governs the world. 4. This must be voted to be a very heinous offence if we respect the source and principles from whence it is derived. As generally, from fear and cowardice, which, possessing the minds of some men, have caused them to make all the haste they could out of the world, lest they should be overtaken with the miseries that attend it. Even the ancient Roman courage was stained with this pusillanimity. This argues a poor impotent spirit. But on the contrary, it is truly brave to bear calamity contentedly. Another ill principle from whence self-murder proceeds is pride. Cowardice and pride are often coupled together. A haughty and a dastardly spirit meet in the same persons. Hannibal, beaten by Scipio, scorned to see himself in disgrace, and poisoned himself. Mark Antony and Cleopatra being conquered by Augustus, scorned to survive their greatness, and to submit to the conqueror. Yea, it is probable that Cato slew himself in an arrogant humour, being loth to truckle to him who had vanquished Pompey. Another source of this wicked practice is impatience and discontent. When these are deeply rooted in men's minds they sometimes put them upon this fatal enterprise. Thus Pilate, turned out of his place, and fallen under the emperor's displeasure, abandoned the world. Themistocles, the famous and renowned captain of the Athenians, being banished by them, and brought into disgrace and poverty, sought for a redress of his melancholy by poison. Porcia, when she heard of the untimely death of her husband Brutus, like Cato's own daughter, put an end to her life by swallowing burning coals. And discontent is the general and most common spring of this evil I am speaking of. Lastly, when discontent and impatience ripen into despair, the persons thus possessed do often fling themselves out of the world, and will not be persuaded to stay here any longer. Which was

the case with Saul, Ahithophel, and Judas. And now, after all these brief hints, I question not but it will be freely granted that self-murder is a very heinous crime, and therefore deservedly forbidden. If you ask whether we must wholly despair of the salvation of those that kill themselves, I answer, If this violence done to themselves proceed merely from any of the causes before mentioned, I conceive we cannot entertain any hope of such persons. And my reason is, because this is their voluntary act, and in itself vicious, and they have not time to repent of it when it is done. But we must not judge so severely concerning those whose violent laying hands on themselves is the immediate effect of a distempered body and a disordered mind. It is most probable that no man shall answer for any miscarriage that is wholly caused by the violence of a disease or the distraction of the brain. The reason of my assertion is this, because whatever fault may be committed in such a case, it is not a man's free and voluntary act, and consequently is not his own, and therefore shall not be charged upon him. But, secondly, this commandment respects not only ourselves, but others, and those chiefly; wherein not only the gross act, but all inclinations towards it, are forbidden; as hatred: for "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John iii. 15). That is, he is a murderer in his heart, which God chiefly looks after. And all envy; for this passion lies not idle, but will, if possible, procure mischief to those that it is fixed upon: whence envy and murder are joined together in Rom. i. 29. And all undue anger and wrath are here forbidden, as Christ Himself hath interpreted this commandment (Matt. v. 21, 22). Anger is a degree of murder in the interpretation of the Gospel. And in itself it is a disposition to it, for wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous (Prov. xxvii. 4). Here also might be mentioned the wishing of other men's death, or the contriving of it, which, without doubt, are condemned by this commandment. Joseph's brethren intended his death, for "they conspired against him to slay him" (Gen. xxxvii. 18). There is not only the murder of the heart, but of the tongue. For we find that reproachful words are referred by our Saviour Himself to this commandment of not-killing (Matt. v. 21, 22). He that takes away his brother's good name is in the next capacity to rob him of his life. He that maliciously uses his tongue against his neighbour is diposed to use a weapon against him when he finds opportunity. Aristophanes, who scoffed at Socrates in his plays, was one of the conspirators against his life. Next, I am to mention those actions which are disallowed by this commandment. As, first, the hurting of the bodies of others, though their life be not concerned. The impairing of the bodily strength and health of any person is here forbid. So is all oppression, extortion, and persecution. "Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves, ravening the prey, to shed blood, to get dishonest gains" (Ezek. xxii. 27); where it is evident that tyranny and oppression in rulers are shedding of blood, and are a kind of murder. We are forbid also to countenance any persons in their attempts of taking away a man's life. He that any way abets this action, he that connives at it, is guilty of it. Too much severity in taking away a man's life is disallowed by this commandment. So we read of a French soldier, who was the first man that mounted the bulwark of a besieged fort, whereupon ensued the gaining of it. But the general first knighted him, and then hanged him within an hour after because he did it without command. Judges and jurors, and persons concerned in courts of judicature, where capital causes are tried, may soon be found offenders if they be not very cautious here. For if they be any ways assisting towards the condemning of the innocent, they incur the imputation of bloodshed. The like do physicians if they carelessly administer their medicines, and value not the lives of men; if they rashly make experiments on their patients, and are perfidious in their art. This I will add, in the next place, that to engage in an unjust war is forbidden in this commandment, for it is unlawful killing. For here men are hired to make a slaughter of others; killing is a trade and an art. Fighting of duels falls under the prohibition of killing. Lastly, here is forbidden the actual taking away of another's life, and that unlawfully. For every taking away another man's life is not unlawful, and therefore is not murder. Here, then, it is necessary that I distinctly show in what cases the actual taking away of a man's life is unlawful, and in what cases it is lawful. First, then, under the old dispensation, when God was pleased in an immediate way to stir persons up to effect what He intended should be brought to pass, it was lawful for a man to take away another's life, if he had an extraordinary impulse from God to do it. Thus Moses killed the Egyptian, Phineas slew Zimri and Coshi, Samson destroyed the Philistines, Elias put to death Baal's priests, Ehud stabbed Eglon, Jehoiada killed the she-tyrant Athaliah. These are rare and extraordinary examples, and

were founded on the *Jus Zelotarum*, whereby it was lawful for private men immediately stirred up by God to punish open wickedness even with death. This right of zealots is not now allowable; nor was it lawfully practised always by the Jews, and it grew at last to notorious villainy, as in the Jewish war. But I am to speak of what is lawful under the settled dispensation of the Gospel, and therefore—Secondly, I assert that it is lawful to take away a man's life in the way of public justice on notorious criminals. This is to be done by appointed magistrates and officers, and as they are such, for these have authority and power to punish malefactors even with death (Gen. ix. 6, xxvi. 11; Deut. xvii. 6, 7; Josh. i. 18; Rom. xiii. 4; Acts xxv. 11). Thirdly, in a lawful and just war it is no sin to take away a man's life. We may kill our enemies in a just cause, because we execute justice in so doing. Fourthly, we may take away another man's life in case of necessary defence, that is, when we are constrained to it in defence of our own lives. Fifthly, this may be done in the necessary maintaining of public justice, and the conservation of public peace. Sixthly, if a man kills a person by chance or misadventure, this is not to be reckoned a sinful and unlawful act. But excepting these limitations, there is no taking away a man's life but it is to be reckoned unlawful and downright murder. For it is the wilful killing of an innocent person, and that is the thing that is here forbidden. I am in the next place to assign the reasons of the prohibition, or to show what are the arguments against this killing which is here forbidden. They are these two: the sinfulness, and the danger of it. 1. The shedding of man's blood is forbid because of the sinfulness, the absolute depravity and enormity of it. We find it is that which our nature recoils at most of all. The very name of murder strikes a terror into the hearts of all that are not become wholly insensible. The wild and savage brutes have a courtesy for those of their own species, and seldom prey upon and devour one another. It must therefore be very repugnant to human nature to shed the blood of mankind. Besides, a man's life is the most precious thing he is owner of, and is the foundation of all other blessings and enjoyments: wherefore all is parted with for this, and all hardships are undergone to secure this. All the laws and constitutions of magistrates aim at the preservation of this, either directly or indirectly. I proceed next to the danger and punishment which attend this sin, which is another reason of the prohibition. All sin is troublesome and penal, but this of murder especially. It lies heavy on the conscience. It hath been known that after the commission of this horrid act, the guilty parties have not been able to enjoy a minute's rest, but have shifted from one place to another, and have rather chosen to be their own executioners than to live to be their own tormentors. And as this sin is most clamorous in the sinner's own breast, so the voice of it is heard the soonest in heaven. "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to Me from the ground," saith God to Cain, that first murderer (Gen. iv. 10). All sins speak, but this crieth. And that we may avoid this horrid crime, it will be necessary to observe these brief rules. 1. We are to beware of covetousness, and all greedy desire of wealth, and riches, and worldly possessions. Naboth's vineyard was coveted by Ahab, and this put him on contriving Naboth's death. 2. Let us curb ambitious thoughts and a desire of being great, lest these administer to bloodshed. Abimelech killed three score and ten of his brethren to get to the throne. The next direction is, that we put a check to lust and lewdness; for these have too often proved the forerunners of bloodshed. Uriah's wife is unlawfully desired by David, therefore he must be taken out of the way, that David's lust may be satisfied. Herod, to gratify a lewd woman, struck off the Baptist's head. Also, be careful to avoid all licentiousness, evil company, and debauchery, and particularly excess in drinking; for these proceed in time to this extremity of wickedness. Again, be not forgetful to suppress the inward springs and roots of actual murder, and those are pride, hatred, envy, revenge, and excess of anger; which are indeed themselves a kind and degree of murder, as I have shown before. This likewise must be enjoined, that we avoid the outward occasions of this sin, and whatever leads and prepares to it. We should carefully shun all bloody shows and inhuman spectacles, which are incentives to cruelty. Lastly, pray we unto God with great earnestness and fervour, in the language of the Psalmist (Psa. li. 14), that we may be kept by the Divine assistance and influence from the guilt of bloodshed and slaughter, of what kind soever. (*J. Edwards, D.D.*) *The Sixth Commandment*:—The primary aim, of course, of the commandment is to inculcate reverence for human life. Man is, or rather should be, a sacred thing to man. But for the tendency of the selfishness which makes every bad man his own idol, each man's life would be thus sacred in each man's eyes. It is Christianity that has made it so. The

Romans would assemble by myriads in the amphitheatre to see men how each other to pieces for their amusement. In China, in Dahomey, in all savage countries, human life is utterly cheap; in Christian countries it is infinitely precious. When the body of poor George Ebbens was cut and dashed to pieces on the rocks above Niagara, tens of thousands of spectators assembled on the shores of the river to help him if possible, and one universal sob shook the heart of the whole mighty multitude when that poor unknown boy missed his leap, and was swept over the rushing Falls. Only the lowest nations, only the basest or the most pernicious men, care not who perishes so their interests be fed. Was there ever a more wicked speech uttered than that of Napoleon I., when Prince Metternich told him that his plan would cost the lives of 100,000 men, and he haughtily replied, "A hundred thousand men! What are a hundred thousand men to me?" Metternich walked to the window and flung it open, exclaiming with indignation, "Sire, let all Europe hear that atrocious sentiment." The Sixth Commandment, taken as the Rabbis took it, and as it ought to be taken, in connection with the First, was meant as a check to this hateful egotism. You will say, that the commandment forbidding murder is needless to most men now; there is scarcely one man in a million who becomes a murderer. How that may be I know not. It is thought by some that more murders by far are committed than are ever detected, and that many a child, for instance, as well as many a mother, has been done to death, directly or indirectly, even for so mean a bribe as an insurance fee. A murderer is by no means always a dull, bestial, and ferocious soul. Many a tender and delicate man, who dreamed as little of being a murderer as we do, has become a murderer out of greed, or envy, or fury, or to hide some awful shame, or as the sequel of indulged passion, or of a life made reckless by gambling or debauchery. Some of these have left behind them a terrible warning of the slow degrees by which temptation, smouldering at the basis of the life, has leaped in one moment into the uncontrollable flame of a great crime which shows itself to be, not a sudden aberration, but the necessary result and epitome of long years of secret baseness. Now, which of us is wholly free from one or other form of this murderous sin so common and so rank? Anger: how many almost pride themselves on being irritable! They think it shows magnanimity, whereas it only shows weak pride and lack of self-control. What an abyss of crime has anger often hurried men into! Then there is what is called "bearing a grudge." How often has one heard on vulgar lips those wretched sayings, "I'll pay him out!" "I'll put a spoke in his wheel!" "I owe him one for that!" "I will give him as good as he gave!" Sometimes this becomes a feeble spite, sometimes it deepens into a sullen revenge that has turned men into raging maniacs, and women into frightful demons. But the spirit of this commandment is, "Avenge not yourself, neither give place unto wrath." And if many of you leave religious hatred to priests, is there no one here who has been guilty of that murder of the soul which may often in God's sight be more heinous than the murder of bodies? He who lends to a younger and weaker brother some impure book in which in ten minutes he may read himself to death, he who acts to some comrade, whom he calls his friend, as the torch-bearer to sin; he who first plants the seeds of hell in the soul of one of Christ's little ones; he who leads another over the thin borderline of wrong by teaching him to lie, or to gamble, or to drink, or to devastate the inner sanctities of his own being, may be in God's sight a ten times worse murderer than many who have been hanged. Again, all selfish, guilty, oppressive trade is murder in God's sight. Once more, in conclusion, there is a spirit of murder even in cold indifference and callousness to human misery. (*Dean Farrar.*) *The Sixth Commandment:*—I. THE DISPOSITION OF HEART it enjoins us to bear one towards another. 1. Thou shalt not bear an envious, but thou shalt bear a complacential spirit towards others. Envy, strictly speaking, is that inward hatred of another for some good thing he has, which we have not, but wish for. 2. As we may not bear an envious, so neither may we bear a revengeful temper towards any of our neighbours, but must be disposed in meekness of spirit towards all and every one of them. We must consider that by this commandment those dispositions which are the direct contraries to this revengeful spirit, and which fall under the general word meekness, are enjoined upon us. (1) We must bear a kind and courteous temper of heart towards others, as being members of ourselves; we and they being of one blood, and having the same Father. (2) A disposition to construe everything in the best part. (3) Another part of this meekness is a forgiving temper. (4) A peaceable temper is another branch of meekness. 3. But

we may not be of a cruel, but must be of a compassionate disposition. As we may not rejoice in others' sins, so may we not lead any into sin; as those do who take pleasure in making others drunk, or in putting them upon any kind of wickedness. Nor, finally, may we encourage any sin by our example and conduct. II. We must indulge neither envy, revenge, nor cruelty in OUR TONGUES; but from a real affection one towards another, our words must be charitable and kind. III. OUR CONDUCT. Thou shalt not do any damage to thy brother in soul or body, but shalt do him all the good thou canst in both. (*S. Walker, B.A.*)

Rights of Life:—There is a nobility in life. It is a grand thing to live. Whether in the ephemera of an hour or the eagle of a century, the flower of a day or the yew-tree of a thousand years, the infant of a week or the man of threescore and ten, life is a glorious fact. Life is everywhere; it is the only thing of which God seems prodigal. There is life in the earth and on the earth, in the sea and on the sea, and throughout the vast expanse of the atmosphere. Give the microscopist more light, and he will reveal the existence of more life. It is not possible to conceive of life devoid of grandeur. Whatever may be the misery incident to existence, to live is preferable to annihilation. The lease of life varies in animals and in plants. In some it is a song, a thrill of love; in others it sweeps through the centuries. What life is, is one of the deepest of all mysteries. The answer has baffled the chemist, the biologist, and physiologist, who have toiled in vain on this splendid theme. But whatever may be our definitions, life seems to be an impartation rather than a creation. There is but one life in the universe—the life of God. The Scriptures are accurate in the assertion that "in Him is life," which has a depth of meaning to command our keenest thought and widest research. The old Hindus entertained this loftier conception of life as an impartation, and said that all human lives were parts of the Infinite Life, and as drops of water return to the ocean, so all souls return to the Infinite Father by absorption. Underlying this description there is a deep thought, but by them misunderstood and misapplied; for all imparted lives, whether of men or of angels, will retain their individuality for ever. But life is of immense importance primarily to the individual, secondly to society at large. To the individual it is the beginning of his immortality, given for the noble purpose of self-development and for that probation from which he is to enter upon the exalted state of his blissful eternity. Who can contemplate a thought so sublime without placing the highest value upon our mortal existence? To the individual, life is the unfolding of his character; it is the accumulation of those forces which enter so largely into his destiny, and to destroy such a life is to interrupt the great process of nature and cheat man of his inalienable rights. Among civilised men there are two estimates of the importance and value of human existence—one of vanity and contempt, the other of dignity and power. From whatever standpoint human life is viewed, its grandeur is conspicuous. The fact is recognised by all governments, under all civilisations. Human law conceives an immeasurable distance between the life of a man and that of an animal. The organic law, "Thou shalt not kill," condemns murder, suicide, duelling, war, intemperance, malice, indifference, and unkindness. The crime of homicide consists primarily in three things: the destruction of the image of God; for one human being to lay his hand upon another is to lay that hand on the image of God, and, in a certain sense, upon God Himself. It is usurpation of the prerogative of the Sovereign of the universe, who has the right to create and the right to destroy. It is also the interruption of the unfolding of that individuality to which all have an unquestionable right, and he who interrupts that unfolding commits a crime against mankind. It is robbing society of an individual life, the influences of which might have gone forth as so many beneficent streams issuing from the fountain of goodness. Society depends largely upon its individual component parts, out of which come public opinion and public conscience. By the protection of the individual society reaps the golden harvest of purity, charity, and devotion. But the original law is not confined to homicide; it has a vaster amplitude and a more solemn comprehension. The deaths from homicide are but a fraction of the whole number who annually depart this life. There is a looseness in public sentiment touching the right of suicide. It is a mistake to suppose that suicide is largely from cowardice. The greatest characters in history have thus ended their existence. There is such a thing as despair. It may spring from temperament, sickness, misfortune, unbelief, bereavement, intemperance. How vast the army of suicides headed by Samson, Saul the son of Kish, Hannibal, Cato, and Brutus! There is a question among some physiologists of to-day, and the

question is coming to the front more and more, whether life is worth saving in those afflicted with a chronic disease, who are beyond the scope of science, for whom there is no known restoration. Is it true science to perpetuate the life of such? May not the dictates of reason and of love suggest that in their case life should be permitted to end in a superinduced sleep, in the interests of a common humanity? This is not a new thought. It is as old as Plato, who suggested that the science of medicine was designed only for those who have temporary and curable ailments. But a truer science should place a higher estimation upon human existence and cherish life until the last respiration. This ancient law of Mount Sinai not only covers the extreme cases of murder and suicide, but all causes leading to premature death. A blasted life by dissipation is only another form of self-destruction. The Divine law of life is as minute in its application as it is comprehensive in its requirements. Where life is imperilled, from whatever cause, a refusal to aid the helpless and comfort the distressed, when within the range of possibilities to aid and rescue, the law condemns such refusal as violative of its benign spirit. The law makes each man the preserver of the life of every other man. The dictates of reason and the precepts of religion demand that you should rescue a man from a burning house, from a watery grave, from a state of starvation. In its higher range of thought it demands the advancement of those sciences which preserve health and prolong human existence. There is, however, a vaster sweep in this law of life, comprehensive of those sanitary conditions which are promotive of human existence. In its grander sweep this beneficent law of life includes the existence of nationalities. The right of a nation to defend itself on the principles of justice tallies with the right of the individual to defend himself. But what shall we say about those wars for glory, for empire, for commerce? (*J. P. Newman, D.D.*) *Thou shalt not kill*:—Beginning with this commandment, God lays down the rules to be observed by men in relation to their fellows. To kill, to murder, to slaughter, &c., are words which make us tremble. Man's life is precious to him—he gives it up with a struggle; and God takes it under His especial protection. Man has been made in the image of God, and His image must be honoured in every human life. Notice—I. How this command is transgressed. 1. In old catechisms this commandment is illustrated often by two pictures—the fulfilment of it by the picture of the good Samaritan, the breaking of it by Cain with the club with which he slew his brother. Thus, whoever acts as Cain did—whatever the weapon he uses—transgresses this command (Gen. ix. 6). And it is seldom that the Divine order regarding this is escaped—not even here vindicated. A drop of blood, the lethal weapon, a footprint, a chance word, the pangs of remorse, &c., will bring the deed to light. Blood unjustly shed cries for vengeance; and any one deprived of life—even though a child or man in extremity—is murdered. The life which God has given God alone may take; and one is not guiltless even when he risks his own life in the deadly encounter. 2. The commandment also forbids the maiming, wounding, or injuring the body of another. When the man inflamed by drink injures another, when a man attacks his foe in the descending darkness, &c., there also lurks the spirit of murder. 3. But the tongue, too, may wound bitterly. There is an art by which, through insult or reviling, a neighbour is deeply wounded and bears about the scars for many a year. 4. But the Word of God requires more. It requires that the roots from whence those murderous words or actions spring should be torn up (Matt. v. 22). Such roots are anger, hatred, envy, malignity, revengefulness (1 John iii. 15, &c.). He who laughs and is glad when another weeps because of misfortune, &c., has the spirit of the murderer (Prov. xxiv. 17). Nor must any take on themselves the rewarding of unrighteousness without waiting for God's time (Rom. xii. 19). In the spirit of revenge lurks the spirit of murder. II. Notice how the command is obeyed. 1. We must turn away from the image of Cain and look on that of the good Samaritan—save those who are in danger of being murdered. If we see one in danger of losing life, say not with Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?"—pass not by with priest or Levite. Let us cultivate the spirit of the peasant who saved the lives of the bridge-keeper and his family when the bridge had fallen, bringing them in the light skiff through the raging flood and crashing-in drift safely to the shore and then going his way, putting aside every offer of reward. 2. We must also help men in time of need. If we neglect the hungry when we have plenty and refuse to succour the sick, we are not fulfilling this command (Isa. lviii. 7-10). 3. But not only does God seek to take a poisoned root out of man's heart by this command, but to implant another which will bring forth the

fruit of love and mercy (Col. iii. 12). 4. We are to live in love and peace even with our enemies. God has forgiven us much; we also must learn to forgive our enemies, &c. "Love is like dew," says the proverb; "it falls on roses and nettles alike." If your foe comes to you saying, "Let us be at peace," he comes in the spirit of this command. But even if he does not thus come, but goes forth to do what is unjust, then "heap coals of fire on his head" by gentle forbearance; and remember ever the promise, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." "They who turn aside disputing and striving turn the curses into a blessing," says the proverb. 5. Although animals are not made "in the image of God," yet mercifulness to his beast is part of the adornment of a Christian man's character. The man who starves or overdrives his beast sins against the spirit of this command. The tormenter of animals may become the slayer of men. Let the spirit of love reign. (*K. H. Caspari.*)

Ver. 18. **Neither shalt thou commit adultery.**—*The Seventh Commandment:*—The original word which our translators restrain to committing adultery is of a large signification, and comprises all kinds of uncleanness and lewdness. So that all unlawful lust and carnal pleasure is here forbidden, and we are enjoined to preserve chastity in every kind and degree. I begin with the sins forbidden. 1. Polygamy, or having more wives and husbands than one at one time, is here condemned; for this is contrary to the primitive institution and law in Gen. ii. 24. 2. Divorce, as we learn from our Saviour's interpretation of this commandment in Matt. v. 31, 32. 3. Incest, that is, lewdness committed with those that are our near kindred. That we may particularly know who these are, they are set down distinctly in Lev. xviii. 4. Fornication, which is the defiling of an unmarried woman. 5. Adultery is a direct sin against this commandment, and is the particular kind of uncleanness which is expressly named in it. This sin is extremely heinous, because there is not only an injury done to the woman, by setting her into a course of unfaithfulness and even downright perjury, and thereby hazarding the salvation of her soul, but to the man also in whom she is concerned, by robbing him of the incommunicable right he hath in his wife. This proves it to be the highest injustice; and it might be added that this injury admits of no reparation. On which score perhaps death was inflicted on the adulterer by the Mosaic law (Lev. xx. 10). And other lawgivers, even among the Pagans, punished this notorious offence with the loss of life. There are other lewd practices forbidden by this commandment, among which rape, or ravishing of a woman, is one. Here is forbidden voluntary self-pollution, or persons committing folly alone on their bodies. For which kind of disorder Onan was punished by the hand of God: the Lord slew him (Gen. xxxviii. 10). Here is likewise forbidden all immoderate use of carnal pleasure. And lastly, here is condemned all unnatural lust, as sodomy and bestiality, which are both mentioned together, and branded with the titles of abomination and confusion in Lev. xviii. 22, 23. Thus far I have spoken of the actual sins of uncleanness which are comprehended in this commandment. 1. This commandment strikes at all unclean thoughts and desires. Our Saviour acquaints us that there is the adultery of the heart (Matt. v. 28). Namely, when the thoughts and inward inclinations of the mind are corrupted, and are a preparative to outward defilements. 2. There is the adultery of the eye, which we learn from the Saviour's exposition of this commandment (Matt. v. 28), where looking on a woman to lust after her, because the heart or mind which gives denomination to all moral actions is engaged here; and this it is which diffuses the defilement into the outward senses. 3. There is the adultery and uncleanness of the tongue: for if wanton looks are adulterous, then obscene words are of the same nature. Wherefore the apostle commands the Colossian Christians to put away filthy communication out of their mouths (Col. iii. 8). As he had before left this prohibition with the Ephesians, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth" (Eph. iv. 29). And again, the very mentioning of lewd things is forbid (Eph. v. 3, 4, 12). 4. Next, there is the adultery of the ear, that is, listening to such kind of discourse as is filthy, delighting to be entertained with lascivious talk, with obscene songs, and unchaste poems, with which this age abounds. 5. And so it doth that of lascivious gestures, and whatsoever tends to the promoting of lust—as lascivious dresses, and all manner of enticements to unchaste practices. I will in the next place propound the reasons and arguments which we are to make use of against it. And some of these are proper to Christianity; that is, they were never used by heathen moralists, but are to be found only in the apostolical writings; as those three which we meet with together

in 1 Cor. vi. 6, 15, 18–20. Then again, there are arguments against this sinful practice, taken from the spiritual, the temporal, and the eternal evil which attends it. Thus I have been all this time in pursuit of the negative part of this commandment. I proceed now to the affirmative, which is the plain reverse of what hath been said, and may be comprised in few words. We are enjoined here to be chaste and pure in our minds. We are enjoined likewise to preserve our bodies pure, and all parts of them, the tongue, the eye, the countenance, the ear, and all the avenues or organs of bodily sense of perception. We are to take care that our deportment be modest and grave, and so well regulated and ordered that we discover nothing of wantonness. Moreover, this commandment requires that we use all the means and helps which are useful in order to the preservation of our chastity, and the preventing of uncleanness. Sobriety and temperance in eating and drinking. Avoiding occasions of provocation to lascivious thoughts or actions. Diligence in the calling which Providence has placed us in. Solemn resolutions and vows. A deep sense and great dread of the Almighty, and of His judgments. All these particulars contain in them the most sovereign remedies against lust, and helps to the exerting of the contrary virtue. But there is one yet behind, and that is this: in order to chastity and purity lead a conjugal life. (*J. Edwards, D.D.*) *The Seventh Commandment*:—I. THE COMMAND. The command is a simple, unqualified, irrevocable negative. "Thou shalt not!" No argument is used, no reason given, because none is required. The sin is of so destructive and damning a nature that it is in itself sufficient cause for the stern forbidding. 1. It is a sin against the individual. This needs no proof. Nature visits the sin with the heaviest penalties in every department of the complex being of man. The terrible results of unchaste life in the purely physical realm are such as cannot be named here. Every man of science will bear his testimony to the awful demand that nature makes for purity, and will assert that she has no pity for the unclean. 2. It is a sin against the family. The sacredness of motherhood and childhood, and the demands they make upon the care and thought of all, are secured and met in the Divine institution of marriage. Wherever the rights of the marriage relationship are violated and set aside, God's provision for both is broken down, and the disastrous result of the breakdown of the family circle and entity results. When the family is destroyed as a perfect whole by the sin of unchastity, an incalculable harm is done to the children. There is no more heart-breaking announcement in the newspapers than that which declares that in the granting of a decree *nisi*, the charge of the children has been given to one parent. Therein lies the destruction of the family after the Divine pattern, and the sin that leads to it is indeed terrible for this reason also. 3. It is a sin against society. Society is a union of families. Every attempt to create society upon any other basis is wicked, and ends in disaster. The sin which blights the marriage relation and destroys the family is the enemy of all true socialism. All the things that may be had in common can only so be shared, as it is for ever understood that communism in the realm of sex is the most damnable sin against the commonwealth. 4. It is a sin against the nation. The greatness of a people depends upon the purity and strength of the people, and in every nation where the marriage relation is violated with impunity the virus of death is surely and certainly at work. 5. It is a sin against the race. No man can deny his accountability for a share in the development or destruction of the race. The solidarity of humanity is more than a dream of visionaries. It is an indisputable fact. Every life is contributing its quota of force to the forces that make or mar. All are hindering or hastening the perfect day. The crime of prolonging sorrow and agony lies at the door of every impure human being. 6. It is a sin against the universe. The life of the universe is love. The origin of all is love, for "God is love." The propagation of all is love. From the highest form, that of the unity of the marriage relation, through all the lower spaces of action, love is the law of growth. The lair of the wild beast is fiercely guarded by the love that holds it sacred. The nesting of the birds is token of the impulse of the love-life that throbs through all creation. The bee that carries the pollen from flower to flower is the messenger of the same instinct. Love is everywhere. The sin of lustful unchastity is the violation of love, blighting and destroying it. 7. It is a sin against God. (Rev. xxi. 8.) II. APPLICATION OF THE COMMAND TO-DAY. There are certain signs of the times which point to the necessity for a re-statement of this commandment. The first of these is the tendency, which is only too apparent, to loosen the binding nature of the marriage tie. There seems to be an increasingly popular notion that the marriage relation is a civil one only. This is

a vital error. It is wholly Divine. Another sign of the times in this direction is the filthy fiction which has polluted the realm of literature in recent years, fiction in which the marriage relation is treated with amused pity, and whoremongers and adulterers are pitied and excused, if not defended. Then, again, is there not a growing danger of ministering to impurity in the multiplication on every hand of callings for women which throw them among men and give them wages which are insufficient? Then how one would thank God if some word that was not prudish or narrow might be spoken to the women of this country about their dress. The half-dress of the society woman is surely a sign of reversion to type, and has in it the pandering to animalism which has for ages been the curse of the marriage relation. And yet once more. There is an anomaly that dies hard in the distinction that is being made between the guilt of man and woman in this matter of unchastity. When General Booth issued that remarkable book, *Darkest England*, he said, in defence of his using the word "fornication," "Why not say prostitution? For this reason: prostitution is a word applied to one half of the vice, and that the most pitiable. Fornication hits both sinners alike." The importance of that statement cannot be over-estimated. Until the man who sins is branded with as deep a scar as is the woman, that public opinion which shields him is guilty of complicity with this vice which is deadly and damning. III. THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC. After all that has been said, there yet remains the most searching, withering words of all to repeat. They fell from the lips of the Incarnate Purity in that manifesto of His kingdom which He gave to His disciples during the days of His sojourn on the earth. "I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart," &c. (Matt. v. 28-32.) (*G. Campbell Morgan.*) *The Seventh Commandment:*—As we are men, and so the one part of our composition is body, we have all animal appetites in common with other sensitive creatures; hunger, thirst, and the like, are common to us with all the animal world. But then, seeing we are reasonable beings also, and should be religious, God will have these animal appetites kept in due subjection, and directed according to the measures He has prescribed for that purpose: that is to say, no animal appetite must be allowed to usurp a place that does not belong to it, but must be kept within such bounds, and ordered by such rules as God hath set it. And so it is regarding that animal appetite more specially designed in this commandment. I. It requires us to be CHASTE. 1. Inward chastity is keeping the heart for God, not suffering it to be defiled by any unchaste and filthy delights. 2. Chastity is also outward, expressive of that purity of heart which lodges within. II. TEMPERANCE is the other duty required by this commandment. By temperance is meant a holy moderation concerning meat, drink, sleep, and relaxation. 1. Intemperance is prohibited for its own sake. 2. Intemperance is not only prohibited as it is sinful in itself, but also as it gives occasion to and nourishes lust. And this a life of indolence does: it is the very food of lust (Ezek. xvi. 49, 50; Jer. v. 7, 8). Thus what made the Sodomites so wanton but fulness of bread? What made Lot commit such dreadful incest with his own daughters but drunkenness? (Gen. xix. 31-36.) Or what filled David, or his son Amnon after him, with so much lust but a fit of sloth and idleness? (2 Sam. xi. 2, xiii. 1-14.) "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection," saith St. Paul (1 Cor. ix. 27). Well, and how did he do this? 1. Be moderate in the use of meats and drinks, and, as need is, give yourselves to fasting and abstinence. 2. Be diligent in your calling. Labour keeps the mind employed, and the body under; whereas sloth both genders lust and gives it opportunity. 3. We must be aware of the recreations we use, and how we use them. (*S. Walker, B.A.*) *The Seventh Commandment:*—I. THE AGGRAVATIONS, MORE ESPECIALLY, OF THE SINS OF FORNICATION AND ADULTERY; which may also with just reason be applied to all other unnatural lusts. 1. They are opposite to sanctification, even as darkness is to light, hell to heaven. 2. These sins are inconsistent with that relation we pretend to stand in to Christ as members of His Body, inasmuch as we join ourselves in a confederacy with His profligate enemies. 3. They bring with them many other sins, as they tend to vitiate the affections, deprave the mind, defile the conscience, and provoke God to give persons up to spiritual judgments, which will end in their running into all excess of riot. II. THE OCCASIONS OF THESE SINS, to be avoided by those who would not break this commandment; and these are—1. Intemperance, or excess in eating or drinking (Gen. xix. 31). 2. Idleness, consisting either in the neglect of business, or indulging to much sleep, which occasions many temptations (2 Sam. xi. 1, 2). 3. Pride in apparel, or other ornaments, beyond the bounds of modesty (Isa. iii. 16,

&c.; 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8). 4. Keeping evil company (Prov. vi. 27, 32). III. As for THE REMEDIES AGAINST IT, these are: an exercising a constant watchfulness against all temptations thereunto; avoiding all conversation with those men or books which tend to corrupt the mind, and fill it with levity, under a pretence of improving it; but more especially a retaining a constant sense of God's all-seeing eye, His infinite purity and vindictive justice (Gen. xxxix. 9). (*Thomas Ridglet, D.D.*) *Neither shalt thou commit adultery*:—In the Sixth Commandment God takes under His protection the body and life of man. But a man should also love his wife as himself, &c. (Eph. v.). Here, then, God takes the married spouse under His protecting care, and honours marriage; and as the enemy of souls calls up some passion which militates against each of these commands, against this he sends the serpent of the lust of the flesh which creeps softly into men's hearts. More, he turns the breaking of this command into a jest—a jest likely to end where the laughter is turned into "weeping and gnashing of teeth." Consider—I. How WE MAY RIGHTLY REGARD THE MARRIED ESTATE. 1. Those in our day who desire to overturn the Divine order of things begin by attacking Christian marriage. Their aim is so clearly evidenced that none can mistake it. But there are others, even in the Christian Church, who, knowingly or not, support this outrage by seeking to make marriage an entirely civil contract. God forces His blessings on none; but Christians will not consider this a proper view of marriage. They will regard it as a Divine order (Gen. ii. 18), in which man and wife are bound in Him in love and faithfulness till death shall separate them. 2. Marriage is to be regarded as an holy estate, and blessed. The children of parents who thus think of marriage will rise and call them blessed, whilst men shrink from the adulterers as promise-breakers, perjurers, faithless; and if any one thinks there is not much in an adulterous act, if it be not known, he or she acts like a heathen and despises this Divine order. 3. It sometimes happens that where a time of wickedness in a nation has been followed by a period of punishment it is found that the downward course was begun by a disregard of the honour of marriage, *e.g.*, the Greek and Roman people, and France before the Revolution. Where marriage is no more honoured judgment is near at hand. Then unchastity becomes shameless; the number of children born out of wedlock increases; sin, shame, disorder, &c., prevail, and judgment at last descends (Heb. xiii. 4). II. How SHALL MEN BEST ARRANGE FOR THE MARRIED STATE? 1. Our forefathers said three things were necessary—to begin well, continue well, end well. How shall we begin well? The proverb says, "Marriages are made in heaven"; and certainly to begin well we must begin with God. What Eliezer of Damascus did for his master's son we must each do ourselves—begin with God. If we do not, then there is little wonder if the proverb comes true, "Marry in haste, repent at leisure." Begin with the wise counsel of Christian parents also. 2. How shall men best continue in this state? Let each love and honour his (or her) partner in life (Eph. v. 28, 29). In this relationship we need to have wisdom, self-denial, patience, forbearance, submission; but all these are comprehended in love. But each must also honour the other. Where such honour is there will be love—as Christ loved the Church. 3. How shall men end the married state best? When they say, "We shall continue it in God until He shall end it in death." There is a way by which marriage can be dissolved before death—the only way—through adultery. This really disannuls marriage in the very fact; and even if it be hidden, God Himself will take it in hand (Heb. xiii. 4). Many an adulteress or adulterer goes abroad with bold forehead and bids defiance to the world. But Scripture simply places them with the godless, thieves, &c., and says such shall not inherit the kingdom of God. III. How SHALL MEN BEST PREPARE THEMSELVES FOR ENTRANCE ON THE MARRIED STATE? 1. We must fear and love God, so that we may live virtuously and chastely in word and deed. Remember that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Young men and women should seek to enter this state in an unblemished manhood and womanhood. Avoid unchaste thoughts, words, looks, unchaste songs or jests, &c. The heart and thoughts should be clean. "Blessed are the pure in heart." 2. "There are two things unheard of in the wor'd," said a famous pious man, "unrewarded virtue and unpunished vice." Young men and maidens, flee occasions to vice. "Where wine goes in shame goes out," &c. Avoid evil companionship. "Better alone than in bad company." Opportunity makes thieves; so, too, it makes adulterers. Avoid those whose tongues are unchaste. Often a word is like a spark to powder. "If a worm is at the heart the tree will fall." Do not be ashamed of shamefacedness. "If you blush it is

God warning you." "Shame prevents disgrace." Flee from idleness. It is a root of much evil. Guard your youth. Virtue and a good name are a rich dowry to which God will add much interest. (*K. H. Caspari.*) *The crime of adultery:*—When I look, he said, at the iniquities which abound in the present day in our cities, I feel the time has come to cry aloud and spare not. If it be necessary for men to live in adultery, and if they must go to the house of the harlot, I don't know a quicker way down to hell than that is. Any man who can give up his virtue, and turn away from a home of purity, and stoop so low as to go the way of the strange woman, his ruin will be sure and very quick. How many a young man who follows her path goes down quicker than that! He must have money, and he soon begins by robbing his employer, as one crime leads to another, and at last his conscience becomes so scared that he tries to make it out to be a necessity. But does God make a mistake when He says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and excuse you because you cannot control your passions? It may be that you ruin some man's daughter or wife: then some man will probably ruin yours by and by. There was one place in America where I touched upon this sin; and a man of violent temper said if his wife had been there she would have slapped me in the face. But within a week it transpired that he was actually living with the wife of another. Oh, adulterer! what will you do when God shall bring you into judgment? The sins committed in darkness and in secret He will bring unto light. Do not, therefore, believe that God will not bring you into judgment, for it is only a question of weeks or months, or at most a few short years. (*D. L. Moody.*) *An adulterer's miserable end:*—There has recently died in the South of England a captain who in years past was engaged in watching the coast of Africa in order to the stoppage of the slave trade. He had been successful in capturing several cargoes of slaves. These, consisting largely of young African girls, were taken on board the captain's vessel. For liberty! Yes; so it was heralded to the world—but according to the commander's own confession, for "shameful treatment in his cabin." A gentleman well known thus describes the captain's confession at the close of his shameful life: "I am afraid to be alone at night. The faces of those black girls, with their eyes of fire and shrieks of despair, fill my room and my vision." And in this miserable state he died. Who need affect surprise that there is a hell to localise such monsters in? These awful confessions were made in the vain attempt to alleviate the fearful agony of a conscience whose torment anticipated the coming judgment before the bar of Christ. (*Christian Herald.*) *Purity in literature:*—Of late years, I am afraid, there has been a distinct retrogression in the conscience of the nation, so far as national purity is concerned. For example, some of the novels published to-day deal largely, if not entirely, with subjects of which no pure-minded man or woman ever speaks. Not long ago a certain novel was issued from the press that was as poisonous in its effects on the soul as sewer-gas is on the body. It was one of those books, as Mr. Lowell once said, which if read make you feel that you need to be sprinkled with some disinfecting fluid in order to get rid of the infection. Some years ago a distinguished public man said that when he was a boy at one of our public schools he had put into his hand by an evil companion a bad book, and that for years after reading it he could not get rid of the stain it had left on his mind. It is impossible to exaggerate the evil done by such an unclean publication. "Art for art's sake" is their watchword, and the result of this debased conception is works which are not literature and not art, which smell of the sewer, and are only fit to be burned. The man who writes a book that incites to impure thought is on the same moral level as the man who makes adultery easy. It tends by a swift and easy path to the violation of this Seventh Commandment. (*G. S. Barrett, D.D.*)

Ver. 19. **Neither shalt thou steal.**—*The Eighth Commandment:*—I will consider the negative and, secondly, the positive part of the commandment. For the first, the negative part, to wit, what is forbidden here, we are to know that it extends to ourselves as well as to our neighbours. I begin with the former. We are forbid to wrong ourselves as to our goods and possessions. We are to do nothing that will impair our own estates and livelihood. Wherefore one main thing disallowed of in this commandment, as it respects ourselves, is living without a calling, or wholly neglecting our calling, and living in idleness (Prov. xix. 15). Idleness is the way to beggary; and this is the way to that theft which injures others. Whence the Hebrew ministers say, "He that brings not up his son to some lawful calling and employment teaches him to steal." Idleness naturally disposes men to

robbery. Those that work not steal from others. Drones filch honey from the bees who take pains for it. Again, a man is a thief to himself by niggardliness and denying himself those things which are fitting for his maintenance, though God has given him great abundance. But by being penurious he deprives himself of the comfort which he might take in the enjoyment of them. This is self-felony. Others are guilty of this by a contrary extreme, that is, wastefulness and prodigality. They steal from themselves by being lavish above their income. But this commandment doth more signally respect our dealings with our neighbours, and therefore I will chiefly insist on it under that consideration, and show what sins are forbidden by it. To begin with the lowest instance of stealing, here is forbid covetousness, that is, an unlawful desiring of other men's goods and possessions. This is a degree of theft, or an immediate tendency to it. But actual stealing is that which this commandment chiefly strikes at, and of that I shall speak next. It is a taking away that which is none of ours. Or more fully thus, it is an unjust taking away or detaining from any man what is his proper goods, either without his consent or without the warrant of some superior authority. This is the true notion of theft, and it is the sin here condemned. This is either open or secret; the former is called robbery, which is an open and violent taking away of another's goods, as when one on the highway with force of weapons doth this. The other sort of theft, called by us larceny, is taking away privily from another that which is his without his knowledge or in his absence. These are downright thieves; but there are several other ways of defrauding our neighbours, as encroaching on our neighbours' lands, called, in the Mosaic law, removing the landmarks, which were ever esteemed inviolable, even among the Gentiles. Likewise all oppression and extortion and screwing of our neighbours in any kind whatsoever is here forbid. Yea, denying of alms to those that are really in want is a sort of thievery, for we are not absolute proprietors of what we have, but are stewards, and therefore we are obliged to dispense some part of that we have to our brethren that are in want. If we do otherwise, and show ourselves hard-hearted to our distressed neighbours, we rob them of their right, we detain from them what is their due. I might reckon ingratitude also among the other instances of defrauding others, for we are bound to show ourselves thankful to those who have done us kindnesses. And as there is injustice done to single persons, so likewise to the public, for there is a public right in which the whole community is concerned. And in the imperial law, and so, indeed, in the law of nature, it is commended to the care of all that the commonwealth suffer no detriment. And the good of the community is to be preferred to our own private profit. Yea, indeed, these two may be said to be joined in one, for our own interest is involved in that of the public. When the community is wronged, every individual person feels the effects of it, more or less. Unto the things forbidden by this commandment are to be reduced all cheats and circumventions, all articles of tricking and imposing upon others. There are three particulars more behind, namely—1. First, theft or deceit in buying and selling, in trading and merchandising, is here forbid. The buyer is guilty of deceit when he knows the condition, use, and advantage of what he buys better than he that sells it, and yet cunningly dissembles it, and thereby purchases it at a cheaper rate than it is worth. The seller also is guilty of theft when (1) he obtrudes upon the buyer bad wares instead of good, or (2) he takes an unreasonable price for them that are good. I might add, and that most truly, that as there is a deceitfulness and theft in overrating what is exposed to sale, so there is in selling of commodities at too low a rate. He that doth this not only defrauds himself by undervaluing his goods, but he defrauds others of the same calling by getting away their custom. 2. Next I am to speak of sacrilege, which is a theft of another and a higher kind, for it is robbing of God, and impairing or alienating of what is sacred and separated to holy uses. The offence of sacrilege reaches to places, times, persons, and things. I proceed now to the affirmative part of the commandment, namely, what is required of us. This part, as well as the other, hath respect both to ourselves and to others. 1. First, it concerns ourselves. We are obliged by virtue of this commandment to do ourselves right, to get and preserve such worldly goods as are for our convenience and welfare. We are to be content with our own, and not to covet other men's estates. We are to be moderate and prudent in our expenses. On the other hand, we are to take care that we be employed in some lawful business and honest calling. 2. But, secondly, our duty enjoined in this commandment hath respect to our neighbours, and that I am next to consider. We

must suffer them to enjoy their wealth and estate, and we must help them in it. This is a general description of that justice and righteousness towards men which this commandment requires. Before I proceed to particulars, I will show what is the spring and root of this righteousness, what is the great rule and standard of it, and I will endeavour to illustrate it by propounding some instances. Without doubt the great and standing rule, as well as spring, of justice towards men is that command of our Saviour, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them" (Matt. xii.), which is thus expressed in Luke vi. 31, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." I come now to the particular acts of justice and righteousness which are required in this part of the Decalogue. We are enjoined here to be true, just, and exact in our traffic and commerce. There ought to be great integrity in making of contracts, and as great in keeping them. Particularly in buying and selling there ought to be great faithfulness and sincerity. There must always be a just proportion between the price and the thing sold. This is justice, and this is religion, and they both go together. To which purpose it is observable that, according to Moses' law, the standards of all weights and measures were kept in the sanctuary, and it was part of the priest's work to oversee these (1 Chron. xxiii. 29), which shows that we ought to use great fidelity in our dealings and bargains, and to transact them out of conscience and a sense of our religion which obliges us to it. Again, this commandment requires that we show ourselves just and upright in paying our debts. Further, this requires of us to make satisfaction for injuries, to repair all hurts and wrongs, to restore what was unjustly taken from others. Examples of this are Jacob and his sons (Gen. xliii. 12, 21), Samuel (1 Sam. xii. 3), Zaccheus (Luke xix. 8). Restitution is an inseparable ingredient of justice, for this bids us give to every one his own. We are obliged by the laws of justice and righteousness to be grateful to our benefactors, to acknowledge their courtesies, to pray for them, and to make returns as our condition will permit. By the same law of justice we ought to relieve the poor, to supply the wants and necessities of those that are in distress. The same commandment that forbids theft enjoins charity and beneficence. I may add that justice extends even to the dead. To do the dead right, as well as the living, is an act of religion; and accordingly executors and those that are left to see the will of the deceased performed ought to act in this affair with a good conscience and to do what is just. Besides justice to single persons, there is also the same due to the community, for man is made for society, and calculated for converse and friendship. To this affirmative part belongs also equity, which mitigates the rigour of severe justice and tempers it with benignity. The office of this virtue is to exact of others less than we might, for the sake of peace, and to yield to them more than they could look for, and that for the same reason, namely, to prevent long disputes and to maintain peace. To what hath been said this must be added, that some people are more particularly concerned in this commandment, for though all are to observe the rules of justice, yet this is more especially incumbent on those who are in places of magistracy. (*J. Edwards, D.D.*) *Desiring to live honestly in all things*:—This word implies that it is right to own property; that it is perfectly just and legitimate for one to possess goods to which no one else can lay claim. It is natural to desire to possess property, to have some "portion of goods" you can call your own. I almost think that the gratification and pleasure with which a little child finds a pocket in his new dress are rooted in this instinctive desire of possession. We may speak of man's labour and ingenuity, the will of God, and the law of the land, as the grounds of right to property. That such a right exists few will deny, and there are many advantages resulting from it. As Paley says, "It increases the produce of the earth. The earth, in climates like ours, produces little without cultivation, and none would be found willing to cultivate the ground if others were to be admitted to an equal share of the produce. It prevents contests. War and waste, tumult and confusion, must be unavoidable and eternal where there is not enough for all, and where there are no rules to adjust the division. It improves the conveniency of living. This it does in two ways. It enables mankind to divide themselves into distinct professions, which is impossible unless a man can exchange the productions of his own art for what he wants from others, and exchange implies property. Much of the advantage of civilised over savage life depends upon this. When a man is from necessity his own tailor, tent-maker, carpenter, cook, huntsman, and fisherman, it is not probable that he will be expert at any of his callings. Hence the rude habitations, furniture, clothing, and implements of savages, and the tedious length of time which all their

operations require. It likewise encourages those arts by which the accommodations of human life are supplied, by appropriating to the artist the benefit of his discoveries and improvements, without which appropriation ingenuity will never be exerted with effect." But while the institution of property has its advantages, the vast inequality in the social conditions of men carries with it many disadvantages, and is the source of much evil and misery. Hence the cry for communism, the social theories that have been propounded, the destructive forces that are secretly and ceaselessly working in Russia, and Germany, and France. And many who have not fallen into open crime are ready to declare war against society. They ask, Why are we compelled to toil like slaves, while others are rolling in wealth, and spending it on their amusements and lusts? Why does Lazarus beg at the gate and Dives feast in the palace? Is it the ordination of God? Then God is unjust, partial, tyrannical. Is it the arrangement of society? What society? The arrangement is a cruel one; it is a conspiracy of the rich against the poor; of capital against industry: "let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." These words appear in a book in Russia—"And when we," the socialists, "get the upper hand, then will we rid mother Russia of all her oppressors. Then shall we be at liberty to set up our peasant-brotherhood, in which there shall be neither 'mine' nor 'thine,' neither gains nor oppressions, but there will be labour for the common weal, and among all men brotherly aid. Wrong must be utterly rooted out, and Right must be set on foundations that will last for ever." We do not hear much of this doctrine in our own country. A writer in the *Contemporary Review* says: "Multitudes cherish a faith in the omnipotence for good of a well-intentioned government; and in those lands where socialism is most potent there have been facts to foster this belief. The Russian has seen the effect of the *fiat* of the emperor in reconstituting the rural life of his subjects; why should not the same power be exercised on behalf of the artisan as well? The German feels the potent grip of militarism at every turn; why should this force not be used for social rather than dynastic gain? No nation possesses such a heritage of political experience as ours, and none has yet attained to so much political wisdom; it is this that has prevented our impoverished masses from joining in the widespread cry for a total reorganisation of our social system." Socialism would be no remedy; it would be a disease far more terrible than the one it was intended to heal. This word of the law, then, implies the sacredness of property, "Thou shalt not steal." Not only the burglar, and the pickpocket, and the swindler are the transgressors of this law, but all who by misrepresentation enrich themselves at the expense of their neighbours. There are many other applications of this law which I might dwell upon. "Thou shalt not steal." A man steals from his family when by his indolence or his intemperance he neglects its interests, and provides not for those of his own household. A man may steal from himself by frittering away opportunities, squandering money, wasting time, and abusing the energy that might be employed for some high and useful ends. A man may steal from God. "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me." To withhold from Him that which belongs to Him, the attention of the intellect, the love of the heart, the service of the life, is to rob Him, to waste our Lord's money, to embezzle our Master's property. Be just, then, in all your relations; be true, be honest. (*James Owen.*) *On theft*:—I. THE NATURE of the vice of theft. 1. The meanness of this vice. Every decent man, if he has pride in anything, has a pride in appearing upon an equal footing at least with the members of his own society. He will not choose to be indebted for the mere means of living to any man, but to depend upon himself, and be obliged, as much as possible, to himself. While his health and hands are left him he will account it the most reproachful objection which can be made to him that he is a burden to the society or to any individual of it. The thief is the character which is in every respect the reverse of this. He neither possesses respect, nor seems to wish for it. He has an evil and a base mind, which has no sense of honour nor of credit. Instead of aspiring to his own place in society, he aspires to no place; instead of making it his pride to depend upon himself, he thinks of nothing but how he may subsist himself upon others. 2. The vice of theft is not only mean itself, but inconsistent with the very existence and great end of society. In vain has nature directed and Scripture taught us to make provision for our necessities, if the thief or robber is allowed to intercept it. In vain will we select our superfluities, and reserve them for our future occasions, if the base part of our species are allowed to pick our stores and possess themselves of the fruits of our labours. II. THE CAUSES from which this vice commonly proceeds. 1. There is often an original difference among minds

themselves. Some minds seem to be naturally base and ill-disposed. They possess a natural turn for shuffling and a dexterity in deceit. They will prefer at any time a gain which they can obtain by trick to the same gain which they might obtain by fair dealing. 2. As there are some who are naturally base-minded, and seem originally to have been made of bad materials, there are many more who were once virtuous, but are degenerated. (1) Some are led to dishonesty from the obscurity and false shame of poverty. (*a*) They consider themselves as removed from notice, and become careless of their own conduct. (*b*) They are ashamed to discover their situation and to ask assistance and relief. The shame lies not in asking assistance, but in deserving to be reduced to that necessity. At any rate, we must not add one meanness to another, and, after contriving to be burdensome to our neighbours, contrive next to rob and plunder them. (2) Another cause which leads men to commit theft is covetousness. The love of gain, when it takes full possession, can bear no rival in the heart. It puts every other principle, good and bad, to flight. The covetous man, from the moment he bows before it, acknowledgeth no superior power. It is the religion in which he is sincere, and the one only god whom he worships without hypocrisy. There is no vice which approaches so nearly to theft as covetousness. The distinction is very slight between the man who strongly desires what is mine and the man who takes it. (3) As some are led to commit theft from covetousness, others are led to commit the same vice from prodigality. It is remarkable that in the natural world extremes meet, and that even in morals they produce often the same effect. Nature directs us simply to store up our superfluities and reserve them for our future wants. The covetous man stores up more than he ought; the prodigal stores up much less. The covetous man amasses everything; the prodigal throws everything away. The one goes beyond the intentions of nature; the other by no means fulfils them. The prodigal is under the dominion of vile habits and gross passions. He gorges the present without reflecting on the future. He seems born to waste and to consume. He never thinks on want or suspects that matters are to be any otherwise than as they are. It is easy to predict the effects of this character. If a man waste his substance he must come to poverty. If he acquire habits he must indulge them. If he consume in one day the provision of seven he must think of some way to supply the expenses of the other six. Sensual habits besides debase the mind and render it mean and worthless. In this situation what is he to do? He must borrow or he must steal. (4) The last cause of theft which I shall mention here is idleness. There is not a more ample source than this of vice and of disgrace. Idleness, with respect to the bulk of mankind, produces want, and want must be supplied. But from whence is the supply to come? An indolent, idle man cannot exert himself, or, if he can, he will not. His good qualities are destroyed and bad ones implanted in their room. He has acquired habits of expense from which he cannot disengage himself, and of vice which he cannot conquer. He is entangled in bad company, and soon finds himself engaged in bad practices. He has neither resolution to relinquish the one, nor virtue to surmount the other. His decline is therefore rapid, and his destruction sudden and inevitable. Lessons: 1. The first conclusion which presents itself is the necessity of employing the active and able part of our existence in acquiring that provision which is necessary to support the infirm and disabled parts of it. This goes to the source of the disorder. Every man, when he sets out in life, ought to ask himself this plain question, Whether he chooses to depend upon himself or to come upon the public? He has but this alternative, and must at last do one of these two things. If he choose the first, there is no covetousness, nor even any uncommon solicitude, necessary. He has only to exert himself and be careful. But then he must do it while he can, and not think that his youth is to last for ever. If you would not know the fond pang of a parent's heart brooding over the wants of his children; if you would not invite temptation; if you would not embrace vice and disgrace, work diligently, work while it is to-day. 2. Avoid with the utmost circumspection the causes which lead to this vice upon their own account. Covetousness, prodigality, idleness, and theft belong all to the same family. They are all a monstrous perversion of nature, and the certain marks of a vitiated mind. (*John Mackenzie, D.D.*) *Rights of property*:—Is it a crime to be rich? Against whom is the offence committed? Against God? Against man? Against society? Underlying the amplest fortunes are inflexible truth, incorruptible honesty, incomparable honour. Poverty, competence, and affluence are the three financial conditions of man, in each of which there may

be sainthood. Poverty may be as vicious upon the morals of character and life as wealth. Is it misanthropic to be rich? Do large possessions in land and money sour the milk of human kindness that flows through the veins of humanity? To whom are we indebted for those houses of charity whose gates of mercy stand open night and day? Who are the founders of those libraries which spread their ample feast before mankind? The universities and colleges of our country are the monuments of the rich. Is it unpatriotic to be rich? In the three great wars for the Union the rich poured forth their wealth as the rain descends upon the just and upon the unjust. Love of country rose supreme above the love of money. Wealth is not disloyalty. The capitalists of this country supported the Government in the darkest hour of the rebellion, when the national treasury was in sore distress. Is it tyranny to be rich? Do wealth and oppression go hand in hand? Are slavery and opulence born of the same parentage? Wilberforce was rich, yet foremost in the abolition of slavery in the British colonies. Gerrit Smith died worth his millions; yet he was the most eloquent, most ardent, most benevolent of abolitionists. Is it impiety to be rich? Is poverty essential to godliness? Are beggars the only saints? What, then, shall we do with Abraham, who was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold? Christ would not have had a decent tomb had it not been for the rich Joseph of Arimathea. The acquisition of wealth is a Divine gift. Industry and frugality are the laws of thrift. To amass great fortunes is a special endowment. As poets, philosophers, and orators are born such, so the financier has a genius for wealth. By intuition he is familiar with the laws of supply and demand. He seems gifted with the vision of a seer of the coming changes in the market; he knows when to buy and when to sell and when to hold fast. He anticipates the flow of population and its effect upon real estate. "The Lord thy God giveth thee the power to get wealth" (chap. viii. 18). Against these natural and lawful rights to the possession of property is the clamour for the distribution of property among those who have not acquired it, either by inheritance or skill or industry. It is a communism that has no foundation either in the constitution of nature or in the social order of mankind. It is the wild, irrational cry of labour against capital, between which, in the economy of nature and in political economy, there should be no common antagonism. There is a wealth of muscle and a wealth of brain and a wealth of character. He is a labourer who does productive work; he is a capitalist who has five dollars or five hundred thousand dollars. Capital may be a tyrant, and labour may become a despot. Wealth has the noblest of missions. It is not given to hoard, nor to gratify, nor for the show of pomp and power. The rich are the almoners of the Almighty. They are His disbursing agents. When the wealth of capital joins hands with the wealth of intellect, the wealth of muscle, and the wealth of goodness for the common good, then labour and capital will be esteemed the equal factors in giving every man life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The right to property is founded in nature, sustained by organised society, and protected by the sanctions of the Divine law. The right has its origin in a prior fact, that each human being is a distinct individuality, adapted to all the purposes of self-government and responsible to God and to society for the manner in which his powers are employed. By his physical nature he is connected with the universe which is modified to supply his wants. He has a right to use his body as he will, provided such use is not an interference with the equal rights of his fellow-men. Possessing an intellect, he has a right to the products thereof. Endowed with a soul of sensibilities, passions, and aspirations, he has the inherent right to seek happiness, always recognising a common right in each of his fellow-creatures. By this physical, intellectual, and spiritual endowment man is made for society, and each individual in his social capacity is bound to every other individual by the law of reciprocity. If, by the constitution of nature, a man has a right to himself, he has also an equal right to that which may result from the innocent use of his bodily and mental powers. The result is what men call property. In all well-regulated society every man is accorded the right to possess that which he has made and the power of control over the same. The Creator treats this right as a self-evident fact, directs His mandates against every act violative of the same and against the temper of mind from which such violations may proceed. In harmony therewith human governments among their first acts protect this individual right, and treat the offender thereof as guilty of a wrong, and punish him accordingly. Upon the recognition of this right depend the existence and progress of society. Ignore this right, and no one would labour more than is sufficient for his individual

subsistence. A nation of thieves would be a nation of barbarians. If such are the principles and consequences involved in this right of property, what are the violations of this right? The burglar takes the property of another without the knowledge and consent of the owner—this is theft; the highwayman takes the property of another with his knowledge, but without his consent. Not less guilty is he who presents wrong motives for the purposes of gain, who excites groundless fears, circulates false reports, inflames personal vanity, and awakens avarice for the purposes of illegal gain. A broker on 'Change who causes false information to be circulated for the purpose of raising or depressing the market seeks profit by deep rascality. God says to such a man, "Thou shalt not steal." Among the prevalent causes of the violation of man's right of property are a corrupt public sentiment, an inordinate love of wealth, an extravagance which amounts to prodigality. Society scourges the thief of necessity, but pities the thief of fashion. He who steals a loaf of bread to feed his starving family is sent to jail, but he who is successful in bold, dishonourable speculation, by which others are ruined, is caressed by society. Why is it that official dishonesty is considered less disreputable than dishonesty in a private citizen? A public man guilty of many flagrant sins is treated with consideration, while the private individual, less guilty, is shunned as a pestilential criminal. Does the dignity of his office cover him like a cloak? Does his position of trust and power commend him to our respect? If from the official who reflects public sentiment we turn to the private life of a nation, we shall not be surprised to discover the inordinate love of riches a prevalent and fruitful cause of the violation of the ancient law of property. Such is the greed for gain that justice, truth, honesty, are set at defiance. Men combine in vast monopolies to control vast wealth. All must bow to this shrine of Mammon. What is the dominant thought in the life of the world to-day? Is it the value of education? the purity of marriage? the elevation of the labouring classes? Is it not revenue, private and public? Out of this condition of things come financial panics with the regularity of clock-work. The bold attempt is made to force prosperity—to get rich in a day. As well might a man attempt to force the harvest. The most conspicuous representative of the inordinate love of wealth is the financial prodigy who attracts, lures, ruins. Wise, careful, honourable financiers rarely fail, and rarely, if ever, are they the cause of financial panics; but rather the financial prodigy, whose brilliancy dazzles, whose success captivates, whose unscrupulousness is hidden by the splendour of his operations. Closely allied with this invasion of the rights of property is the prevalent vice of gambling, the abuse of an innocent pastime. It ignores the law of equivalent. It is something for nothing. The highest motives impel to keep the law of property. Nature insists upon the recognition of her rights. Providence is upon the side of the honest. Law throws its muniments of protection around the honourable possessions of man. Honesty leads in the path of personal safety. Peace of mind is the certain reward. The happiness of others is the benediction attained. The future opens its golden gates to those who have obeyed the inspired behest of Heaven. (*J. P. Newman.*) *Neither shalt thou steal*:—God has divided the world's goods diversely. To one He has given much, to another little. This has been since the beginning. No attempt to alter this order of things has succeeded. That which God has given to the individual is called his property or possession; and in this commandment God throws a shield over men's possessions, be they great or small, and says to each, "Thou shalt not steal." When do we keep this commandment? I. WHEN WE DO NOT ACQUIRE OUR NEIGHBOUR'S PROPERTY UNJUSTLY. 1. Of thieving. Lutler says: "It is the meanest occupation, yet the most widely practised profession on earth; and if one considers the world in its various conditions it will be found to be a den of thieves." 2. If a man waylays another and takes his gold, we call him a robber. If another breaks into a house and carries off money or clothing, &c., we call him a thief; and of him who receives the stolen property we say, "The receiver is as bad as the thief." 3. But he who invades his neighbour's acres, who removes his neighbour's landmark, or takes produce from his neighbour's field, even though he plead necessity, is still a thief. 4. So, too, is the man who gets gain by adulterated goods or false dealing, the merchant who uses false weights or measures, who passes off spoiled or inferior wares as fresh and good, the artisan who gives "scamped" work for good pay, the purchaser who passes false coin, the extortioner, the servant or official who neglects duty, the beggar who by labour might earn a day's wage, the man who finds what has been lost and makes no effort to trace the owner. 5. And it matters not whose possession is thus

wrongly appropriated. The Government steals when it receives the taxes of the people and does not apply them for the good of the people, but for its own fads and designs; but the subject also steals when he seeks to avoid the legal taxation. The child steals when it takes or sells what belongs to the parent; but the parent steals when he squanders in play or debauchery the wife's or children's portion, or what should be given them for daily bread. It would be impossible to enumerate, briefly or at all, all methods of theft and robbery; and the victims—"God is the avenger of all such." II. WHEN WE DO NOT UNCHARITABLY PERMIT OUR NEIGHBOUR TO BE DESPOILED OF HIS POSSESSIONS. 1. Many who lose their property have not to lament theft or deceit, but the carelessness of those who should have warned and helped them, *e.g.*, the guardian who permits his ward to squander his property or is careless as to the investment and safety of that property; the neighbour who sees what damage his neighbour's servants or children are doing and does not warn him: such deal unjustly. 2. So, too, do those who damage their neighbour's trade or credit. Rather we are to aid our neighbour to increase and protect his possessions, as the apostle has said (1 Pet. iv. 10). 3. In the sight of men what you possess is your own; in the sight of God it is simply lent. It is His, and should be used according to His will. If God, therefore, requires that we should give or lend in order to increase or protect our neighbour's possessions, we should do so. "Give to him that asketh," &c. (Matt. v. 42). 4. Further, Scripture says, "Give thy bread unto the hungry," &c. (Isa. lviii. 7). Not that the lazy, work-shirking beggar or the child who is being trained in beggary are to be directly relieved, for this would be to have part in sin; but whenever we are convinced that the truly poor and needy are before us we are to consider them as sent of God for our help. "He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord," &c. III. WHEN WE ARE CAREFUL THAT OUR POSSESSIONS DO NOT UNHAPPILY BECOME TO US OCCASIONS OF SIN. 1. We must be careful that we have not to blush at the question as to how we obtained our possessions. Gold on account of which tears are shed—tears of poverty, of the deceived—will burn in the heart. Better to be Bartimæus the beggar than Ahab and Achan the thieves, or as the miser who on his death-bed lamented that the gold which had once been to him like rose-leaves on which he could sleep peacefully now appeared to be like thorns and thistles and red-hot needles. 2. We must guard against idleness. He who is idle may soon come to poverty; and if he cannot dig and is ashamed to beg, he may take to thieving. This applies as well to those who have no need to labour for daily bread. To every man some work is given, and "labour has a golden foundation." 3. Beware of extravagance. He who squanders his possessions in play or drunkenness, &c., has no right to say, "I spend what is my own." No, it is God's possession—the possession of his children and, if they have enough, of God's poor. The prodigal's fate is mostly an evil one. "The young free-liver becomes the old beggar." 4. Beware of avarice. "Many treasures, many snares." To him whom Mammon never satisfies sufficiently, who will sooner forego love and mercifulness than goods and gold, his possessions are occasions of sin. Avarice increases with gain during the years—binds its cords on rich and poor alike, makes the heart stony, and is indeed a "root of all evil." Many a one would not go about with disturbed mind and troubled heart, a broken promise, and the curse of the betrayer on the conscience, had such an one remembered that Mammon is a merciless lord and gives evil rewards to his servants. "What shall it profit a man?" &c. 5. Beware of envy. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Men may have wealth and yet sorrow and misery enough. "Poverty and riches lie not in chests, but in the soul." He is rich who combines godliness with contentment. Modest and honourably acquired possessions are like a graceful fountain, full of water (like the widow's cruse), which fills many pitchers and yet is not exhausted. "From a small fountain we may satisfy our thirst as well as from a great one." 6. Set not your hope on riches. The riches which water engulfs, fire destroys, rust eats, worms gnaw, and thieves steal are truly uncertain riches. 7. Let both rich and poor put their hope in God. With Him men can be poor or rich without sin; and He has given the promise, "I will never leave thee," &c. And where poor and rich can grasp this promise, then what Solomon says takes place. (*K. H. Caspari.*) *Stealing:*—This commandment strikes at many different forms of stealing, which are being practised to-day. 1. Perhaps it is hardly necessary to say anything concerning the simple act of purloining articles belonging to other persons. People seem to forget, *e.g.*, that to borrow a book and not to return it is a theft. 2. The sin of stealing is terribly prevalent in the matter

of fraudulent getting. Unjust weights, false measures, lying advertisements, &c. 3. The whole habit of gambling is of the essence of theft, and this for the reason that it is a means by which men come into possession of property which is a violation of both the laws upon which property may alone be held. A man who gambles, whether by play or betting, puts into his pocket money for which he gives to the person from whom he takes it no adequate return, money for which he has done no honest work; and by the very act he robs the man from whom he receives, and violates the law of love. 4. The commandment is, moreover, violated by all such as enrich themselves by means that rob their fellow-men of the inalienable rights of human beings. The wealth that is tarnished by a death-rate higher than is necessary is ill-gotten gains, and they who spend their days in the enjoyment of such wealth are branded in the light of the perfect law of God as thieves—thieves, indeed, by the side of whom Bill Sykes, the burglar, is a hero, for in the prosecution of his unlawful practices he risks his life; but these men risk nothing but the lives of their fellow-creatures. 5. The commandment is broken again and again every day within the great realm of capital and labour. How often to-day might the words of James (v. 4) be quoted with advantage. It is lamentable, but equally true, that many a working man robs his master in that he withholds his fair share of honest labour while he takes his wage. 6. Principles apply to individuals and to nations with equal force. This being so, this eighth word of the Decalogue is a severe denunciation of the false imperialism which is growingly manifest through all the nations of the world. Strong peoples have, without cause, stolen the land of the weaker. Weak nations have been handed over to the control of new Powers without reference to their own rights, and to the wrong of those so dealt with. (*G. Campbell Morgan.*) *Stealing in business*:—1. One of the common transgressions of this law is entirely a modern sin. I refer to those dishonest Limited Liability Companies which are so frequently floated. False prospectuses are issued, hopes of gain which is never made are held out to investors. The men who wilfully promote a dishonest company are as really thieves as the burglar who breaks into the house and forcibly appropriates its plate. 2. A closely connected form of stealing is found in the over-capitalisation of some companies which are formed to take over and to work a prosperous private concern. 3. The same principle applies to the lesser businesses of the world. A tradesman, for instance, who sells his customer goods of inferior quality to that of the sample that leads the customer to purchase, or who adulterates more expensive goods with a cheaper product, and then sells them as genuine or pure, may or may not be punishable by the law, but he is a thief in the sight of God, he is robbing the purchaser as truly as if he put his hand into his pocket and stole his purse. A short time ago I was talking to a commercial traveller of a certain person whom we both knew, and whose name had an unsavoury reputation in the town in which he lived. I said, "He is a very sharp man of business, is he not?" and the reply was, "Yes, he is too sharp to be honest." In other words, he was a thief, living by deceiving seller and buyer alike. 4. Let us not, however, forget that there may be dishonest buyers quite as truly as dishonest sellers of goods. A man who purchases goods without the means of paying for them, and who does it deliberately, is as really a thief as the man who purloins them. (*G. S. Barrett, D.D.*)

Ver. 20. **Neither shalt thou bear false witness.**—*The Ninth Commandment*:—I will speak first of the negative part of this commandment; secondly, of the affirmative. Under the former are forbidden these two things: first, more largely all evil-speaking that may be any ways hurtful to our neighbours; and then more particularly all evil-speaking that tends to the hurt of our neighbours, with respect either to their lives or goods, or good name, especially the last, which is more eminently concerned in this commandment. First, more generally all the abuses of the tongue are here forbidden; all evil-speaking that may any ways prove hurtful to others. Nay, those words and speeches which are unprofitable are forbid by this commandment, for these in some kind are hurtful to others. Thus far the tongue offends against the souls of our neighbours. Secondly, more particularly here is forbid that evil-speaking which is hurtful to the bodies, estates, and good names of our brethren. Hitherto I have spoken of that injury which is done to our neighbours by words in our common converse; now I proceed to speak of the injury done by them in public courts of judicature. For bearing false witness is either judicial, when a man is called to speak the truth publicly; or extrajudicial, between man and man in a more private manner. David complained that false

witnesses did rise up, and laid to his charge things that he knew not (Psa. xxxv. 11). The Jewish priests sought false witnesses against Jesus to put Him to death (Matt. xxvi. 59). And at last came two false witnesses (ver. 60). And their particular accusation is set down in the next verse. We read that the Jews set up false witnesses against Stephen, who said, "This man ceases not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law" (Acts vi. 15). This is a great sin, and the rather because witnesses in judicial courts are under the obligation of an oath to deliver the truth, on which account they involve themselves in the guilt of perjury. Not only witnesses, but all that have business in public courts, and appertain to the law, are nearly concerned in this commandment. Thus I have treated of the several faults and miscarriages of the tongue that are comprised under this commandment. It remains now that I offer the reasons why we should regulate these disorders, and that I prescribe the method how this may be effected. Under the first, I will do these two things. First, in general show why we should redress the abuses of the tongue. Secondly, why more particularly that abuse of it which consists in lying and slandering. As to the former of these, the reasonableness of it will appear from these ensuing particulars. First, on the tongue hangs the greatest good. "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile" (Psa. xxxiv. 12, 13). Secondly, because it is the source of so many and so great evils (James iii. 6). Thirdly, we are to answer at the last day for our words as well as our actions (Matt. xii. 36, 37). In the next place, more particularly I am to give the reasons why we should refrain from lying and slandering. I will speak distinctly of both. First, there are very great reasons why we should abstain from telling of lies; they are such as these: 1. We are to do it by virtue of the Divine precept, "Keep thee from a false matter" (Exod. xxiii. 7). This is, be not any ways accessory or assisting in promoting of that which is false, but abstain from it, and show thy dislike of it. 2. It is base and ignoble to tell a lie. 3. It is clearly against the use and ends of speech. 4. It is odious to God. 5. It is abominated by men. 6. It is the work of the devil. My next task is to show how and by what means we may restrain the abuses of the tongue. First, we must avoid too much speaking, and use ourselves to silence and reservedness. In the multitude of words there wants not sin (Prov. x. 19). Therefore here we ought to restrain ourselves, and to utter things with deliberation. Secondly, we are to look to our hearts, and to keep them with all diligence; for the tongue follows the motion of the heart, and our words are the product of our inward disposition. Thirdly, to cure most of the maladies of the tongue, be careful that you be not busybodies in other men's matters. Fourthly, avoid excess in drink, and the company of those that are addicted to that vice. For such persons generally have no guard on their tongues. When the wine inflames the company, then this wild-fire flies about. Fifthly, avoid passion, the drunkenness of the mind. None offend more with their tongues than the angry and choleric. Wherefore the remedy against the evil of the tongue prescribed by St. James is meekness (chap. iii. ver. 13). Hitherto I have mentioned those abuses of the tongue which are directly forbid in this part of the Decalogue. Now I shall take notice of that which may be reduced to it, and that is unlawful censuring and judging of our neighbours. For I go upon that rule which I grounded on Christ's exposition of the commandments, namely, that the inward acts of the mind which have reference to the external acts of sin forbid in these commandments are also here forbid. Judging of our neighbours is a disposition of mind that prepares the way for bearing false witness against them, for making use of our tongues to their hurt. Wherefore it is remarkable that speaking evil of our brother, and judging our brother, are coupled together (James iv. 11). This latter, then, is at least condemned in this commandment, it being an inward witnessing of the mind, and so is a false testimony borne against our brethren. Judging others is unlawful either in respect of the matter or the manner of this judging. As to the matter or objects. First, it is unlawful to judge peremptorily of our neighbours from their former actions, and what they themselves once were. Secondly, as we must not rashly judge of men from their actions before their conversion, so not altogether from those after it. For we are to remember that the best men are not free from their frailties and infirmities. Thirdly, judge not of the secret thoughts of men. This is a prerogative that God only can claim. Men's hearts are sometimes better than their lives, and therefore this should check us in our judging of them. Fourthly, judge not men for things indifferent. Not for any opinion or practice

disagreeing from ours in matters of that nature. Fifthly, judge not from common accidents and events, such as worldly crosses, poverty, disgrace, sickness, and diseases. Judge not from these concerning the guilt of any person. As we have little reason to think our own state good, because it is prosperous, so we have as little to censure and condemn another's because it is calamitous. Sixthly, judge not of the future and eternal state of any, nor of the decrees of God concerning them. Thus far as to the matter or object of our judging. Next, as to the manner or principle and motive, it is unlawful in any case to judge and censure our neighbours on weak and insufficient grounds. As first, on surmises and conjectures. Secondly, all judging of others is unlawful that is grounded on bare reports and flying rumours. Common fame hath been a liar, and therefore she must not be trusted. Thirdly, that judging and censuring is very blamable that proceeds from prejudice and prepossession. And again, judging of others is unlawful when the person that exercises this severity is guilty of the same errors and miscarriages which he condemns in them (Rom. ii. 1). Hitherto of the negative part of this commandment; now for the affirmative. First, this commandment obliges us to use our tongues, to bear witness with them. It is not an indifferent thing whether we speak or not. For speech distinguishes us from dumb animals, and therefore we act contrary to our nature if we imitate those mute creatures and affect to be speechless. We know that reason and religion bid us employ that useful member which God hath furnished us with, and they acquaint us that it is a sin to do otherwise. Secondly, it is required by this commandment that we make use of our speech for good and useful purposes. Though we differ from brutes as to speech, yet if we speak without reason the difference is but little between them and us. For barely to speak is no excellency of itself. To form and pronounce certain words is not denied to parrots and some other birds. Wherefore there must be something else to commend the gift of speaking, and that is reason. Thirdly, it is more particularly enjoined here that we speak truth, and thereby edify our brethren. The virtue opposite to lying is truth. The duty that is opposed to bearing false witness is hearing true witness. In two cases more especially we should be very careful of speaking what is true. First, in religious matters. Secondly, when we converse with children and young people. Thirdly, this commandment requires us to preserve and maintain, as much as in us lies, the good name of our neighbours. This doth not imply that we should take no notice of the faults that are in them, or that we should praise the bad, and commend those whom we know to be such, and so make no distinction between light and darkness, good and evil. But the duty is, that we seek not out for occasion to speak ill of others: that as we observe what is faulty in them, and reprove them for it, so we take notice of what is really commendable, and applaud it. (*J. Edwards, D.D.*) *The false witness:*—This is the ninth word of the law, and you will observe that all these words were not only spoken by God, but also derive their authority from the nature of God. The announcement "I am Jehovah" might be made before every one of them. If the question were asked, Why should we not lie? why ought we to tell the truth? the answer would be that lying is not only a moral injury to the man himself, and to society, but also contrary to the nature of God, who is true in Himself and in all His works. A man may injure his neighbour not only by crimes, but also by words, by a false testimony, by slander, by backbiting. And unless he be right in his relations to men, he cannot be right in his relations to God. The tree as it grows must receive nourishment and support from the earth in which it is planted, from the air that plays through its branches, from the dew and the rain that come down upon it; but it also receives help from the sun that is millions of miles away from it, and that sends his vivifying beams to the leaves and to the trunk and to the very roots. And man finds himself in this world sustaining divers relations; relations to the family, to society, to the state, and higher than all, and more important than all, to God. And so closely linked together are all these relations, that he cannot do wrong in his relations to men without doing wrong in his relations to God. You cannot strike the link that binds you to your fellow-man without touching the link that binds you to God. I. WHAT DOES IT FORBID? It forbids perjury, as the Third Commandment does; but there it is prohibited as a dishonour to God, and here it is prohibited as an injury to our neighbour. This word forbids all wilful and malicious damage to a neighbour's reputation. It forbids censoriousness, suspiciousness, the hasty and erroneous judgment of character. The man who has a beam in his own eye is, strange to say, quick to detect the mote in his brother's

eye. There are many things to be considered in judging character. The man's natural temperament, his training, his education, his circumstances, these are to be considered. God takes them all into account, and there is many a poor fellow picking oakum in prison who is not so guilty in God's sight as some magistrates on the bench. This word of the law forbids all harmful conversation about others. It has been said that you need not mind your own business, as there are very many who will mind it for you. There are "busybodies" now, as in the apostle's time, who go from house to house to publish the last piece of scandal. A story grows like a snowball; swells like a cairn, when every passer-by is adding a stone to the heap. "The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds; and they go down into the innermost parts." It is an easy thing to find fault; for there is nothing perfect among men. Every character is defective; every Christian work is defective; and just as I have torn to pieces many a sermon I have written, to begin again, so much of our Christian work might be torn to pieces, in order to begin again. It is so easy, therefore, to find fault. There is an old fable to this effect, that Jupiter loaded a man with two wallets—the one filled with his own vices, being slung at his back; the other, heavy with his neighbour's faults, being hung in front, so that he always saw the latter, and seldom or never saw the former. II. CONSIDER SOME OF THE REASONS WHY WE SHOULD OBEY THIS LAW. I have already said that as it is given by the true God, the God of truth, this is the supreme and all-sufficient reason for us. But there are other considerations which are also important. For example, let us remember the value of a good name; it is "rather to be chosen than great riches." A good character is better than property, better than fame, better than life. Regard it as a sacred thing, and do not injure it. And let us remember, also, our relations to our fellow-men. "Thou shalt not bear false witness against *thy neighbour*." A ruler asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbour?" and He replied in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The word "neighbour" means, I suppose, nigh-boor, the boor or countryman who is nigh. But Christ gave to the word a much deeper and broader significance. Help the weak, and you will be a neighbour to him; relieve the needy, and you will be a neighbour to him; bind up the wounds of the poor sufferer, and you will be a neighbour to him. Show that your religion means love, neighbourliness; and then not only your neighbour's life and property, but his good name also, will be sacred in your sight. Look upon your neighbour as your brother, inheriting the same nature, beset by the same infirmities, defiled by the same sin, exposed to the same suffering, at last finding a grave in the same earth. (*James Owen.*) *On calumny and detraction:*—This appears, perhaps, only to forbid a false oath in a court of justice to the prejudice of a fellow-creature, but in reality it comprehends and prohibits every sort of injury which the tongue of one man can do to the character of another. The most atrocious of these is clearly that which seems to have been more particularly in the contemplation of the legislator, the solemn affirmation before a magistrate of what we know to be untrue to the injury of another. The next degree of guilt in the violation of this commandment is that of him who affirms in private life what he knows to be false with an intention of wounding the reputation of his neighbour. The injury done to the person defamed is often as grievous as what he would have received from a false testimony in a court of justice; his character, his livelihood perhaps, which frequently depends on that character, are the sacrifice. A third offender against this commandment is he who repeats to the detriment of another reports which he has picked up in conversation, not indeed knowing them to be false, but which he might reasonably presume to be so, or which at least he does not know to be true, nor indeed is he solicitous about the truth of them. He thinks he has a right to repeat them. Supposing that he had, is such a repetition generous? is it doing as he would wish others to do by him? But he is deceived in the matter of right; he can have none to affirm anything which may injure the character of another, of the truth of which he is not absolutely certain. Another kind of evil-speaking by which this commandment is transgressed, and the reputation of our neighbour injured, is the fixing on him in general terms a bad character; calling him, for example, covetous, proud, foolish, or hypocritical, assigning to him any ill propensity in the gross, without mentioning any particular instances of it. Another mode of gratifying his passion, which the calumniator practises, is by miscalling good qualities, or attributing them, and the actions which arise from them, to bad or interested motives. Now, he who is guilty of this is eminently a slanderer, since he asserts a thing to my prejudice of the truth of which he must be doubtful; for how can any other person possibly know my heart? A fourth slanderer, and perhaps

the most pernicious of all, vents his calumnies under the disguise of benevolence; and with an affectation of candour, pretending to vindicate those whom he has heard, or feigns that he has heard, attacked, overwhelms them with the deeper obloquy. I have still further to observe that there are scandalous ears as well as scandalous tongues, and that he who encourages such kind of conversation, by greedily and with pleasure listening to it, who, though he does not concur, shows plainly how much he delights in it; who, by artful questions and affected doubts, draws on the calumniator to launch out and to expatiate, is scarcely less guilty than the person whose vice he thus fosters, and manifests that he approves. I shall now proceed to point out the chief motives by which men who are guilty of this odious vice are actuated, and in so doing evince its wickedness. 1. The destroyer of character is, I think, most commonly actuated by pride; it so happens that from the desire of distinction, which in a greater or less degree is felt by all men, we have established in our own mind a sort of competition for it with every one around us: we are desirous of surpassing, or at least of having the fame of surpassing, them in whatever excellences fall within our sphere. 2. A second root of scandal and detraction is envy. This is very similar in its nature to the species of pride above-mentioned, but yet it is not quite the same; it is even still more hateful. 3. A third origin of this vice is malice; we have received from our neighbour some real or imaginary injury, which has provoked our dislike of him; perhaps it is not in our power to avenge ourselves any other way, or not in our idea to an adequate degree, we therefore commence an attack on his character, vilify and abuse him on all occasions, disparaging his merits, and aggravating his failings whenever we have opportunity. 4. I will just mention one other ground of scandal, and that is vanity. If the esteem of his fellow-creatures be of any value in his eyes, let him remember that he of all others stands the least chance of possessing it; the inventor of slander, the propagator of calumny, is the object of universal contempt and abhorrence. (*G. Haggitt, M.A.*) *The Ninth Commandment*:—I. AS FAR AS WE CAN WE MUST PRESERVE A GOOD OPINION OF OUR NEIGHBOUR IN OUR HEARTS. And therefore these three things fall evidently under the censure of this commandment. 1. A censorious disposition. 2. Rash judging. 3. A willingness to hear of the fault of others. Which three are so connected together that there is no dividing them. II. The other duty required by this commandment is, THAT ACCORDING TO OUR POWER WE DO MAINTAIN HIS CHARACTER IN THE WORLD. And so these three other things fall also under the censure of this commandment. 1. Going about to lessen the real attainments of our neighbour, which is detraction. 2. Laying a charge against him that does not belong to him, which is slander. 3. Discovering his real faults needlessly, which is evil-speaking. III. From this account YOU MAY SEE WHAT AN ENEMY YOUR TONGUE IS TO YOUR SOUL, and what a perverse nature there is within you to set on fire your tongue. 1. Above all things in the world pray for a new heart. The chief transgressions of this commandment are within; and you know also it is out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. 2. Enjoin this upon yourself, never to speak of the faults of others unless absolutely obliged to it. (*S. Walker, B.A.*) *The Ninth Commandment*:—I. WHAT ARE THE DUTIES REQUIRED? These are—1. Our endeavouring to promote truth in all we say or do, and that, as to what either concerns ourselves or others. As to what concerns ourselves, we are to fence against everything that savours of deceit or hypocrisy, and in our whole conversation endeavour to be what we pretend to be. 2. This commandment obliges us to endeavour to promote our own and our neighbour's good name. (1) Our own good name, which consists not in our having the applause of the world, but in our deserving the just esteem thereof, and in our being loved and valued for our usefulness to mankind in general. And this esteem is not to be gained by commending ourselves, or doing anything but what we engage in with a good conscience and the fear of God. (2) We are to endeavour to maintain the good name of others; and in order thereto, we must render to them those marks of respect and honour which their character and advancement in gifts or grace calls for, yet without being guilty of servile flattery or dissimulation. II. THE SINS FORBIDDEN THEREIN, which are contained in that general expression "bearing false witness." This may either respect ourselves or others. A person may be said to bear false witness against himself, and that either in thinking too highly or meanly of himself. But that which is principally forbidden in this commandment is a person's bearing false witness against his neighbour, and that when he either endeavours to deceive or do him prejudice, as to his reputation in the world; the one is called lying, the other backbiting or slandering. III. To consider it as

FORBIDDING OUR DOING THAT WHICH IS INJURIOUS TO OUR NEIGHBOUR'S GOOD NAME, EITHER BY WORDS OR ACTIONS; and this is done two ways—either before his face or behind his back. 1. Doing injury to another, by speaking against him before his face. It is true, we give him hereby the liberty of vindicating himself. Nevertheless, if the thing be false which is alleged against him, proceeding from malice and envy, it is a crime of a very heinous nature. Sometimes that which is the highest ornament and greatest excellency of a Christian is turned to his reproach. This sin is attended with many aggravations; for God reckons it as a contempt cast on Himself. 2. The injury that is done to others by speaking against them behind their backs. This they are guilty of who raise or invent false reports of their neighbours. This is done in various ways. (1) By pretending that a person is guilty of a fault which he is innocent of. (2) By divulging a real fault which has been acknowledged and repented of, and therefore ought to be concealed; or when there is no pretence for making it public, but what arises from malice and hatred of the person. (3) By aggravating or representing faults worse than they are. (4) By reporting the bad actions of men, and at the same time overlooking and extenuating their good ones, and so not doing them the justice of setting one in the balance against the other. (5) By putting the worst and most injurious construction on actions that are really excellent. (6) By reporting things to the prejudice of others, which are grounded on such slender evidence that they themselves hardly believe them, or at least would not, had they not a design to make use thereof, to defame them. (*Thomas Ridglet, D.D.*) *False witness:*—We may frequently observe that men who would abhor the thought of violating the property of another by direct methods of oppression will nevertheless invade the characters of others with defamation, and destroy a reputation without remorse. I. WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT SENSES IN WHICH A MAN MAY BE SAID TO BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST HIS NEIGHBOUR? 1. The highest degree of guilt forbidden by this law of God is false testimony in a literal sense, or deliberate and solemn perjury in a court of justice, by which the life of an innocent man is taken away, the rightful owner stripped of his possessions, or an oppressor supported in his usurpations. 2. He that attacks the reputation of another by calumny is doubtless, according to the malignity of the report, chargeable with the breach of this commandment. To invent a defamatory falsehood, to rack the invention for the sake of disguising it with circumstances of probability, and propagate it industriously till it becomes popular and takes root in the minds of men, is such a continued act of malice as nothing can palliate. Neither is the first author only of a calumny a false witness against his neighbour, but he likewise that disseminates and promotes it, since without his assistance it would perish as soon as it is produced, would evaporate in the air without effect, and hurt none but him that uttered it. It may happen, indeed, that a calumny may be supported by such testimony, and connected with such probabilities as may deceive the circumspect and just; and the reporter in such cases is by no means to be charged with bearing false witness; because to believe and disbelieve is not in our power; for there is a certain degree of evidence to which a man cannot but yield. He, therefore, who is deceived himself cannot be accused of deceiving others, and is only so far blamable as he contributed to the dishonour or prejudice of another by spreading his faults without any just occasion or lawful cause. There is another occasion made use of by which, if this fault should escape from censure, many others might enjoy the same advantage. It is urged by some that they do not adopt the tale till it is generally received, and only promote what they cannot hinder. But how must wickedness be controlled if its prevalence be a reason for compliance? 3. There is yet another way by which we may partake, in some measure, of the sin of bearing false witness. That he who does not hinder the commission of a crime involves himself in the guilt cannot be denied; and that his guilt is yet more flagrant if, instead of obstructing he encourages it, is equally evident. He therefore, that receives a calumny with applause, or listens to it with silent approbation, must be at least chargeable with conniving at wrong, which will be found no trivial accusation when we have considered—II. THE ENORMITY OF THE SIN OF BEARING FALSE WITNESS. The malignity of an offence arises either from the motives that prompted it or the consequences produced by it. If we examine the sin of calumny by this rule we shall find both the motives and consequences of the worst kind. 1. The most usual incitement to defamation is envy, or impatience of the merit or success of others; a malice raised not by any injury received, but merely by the sight of that happiness which we cannot attain. This is a passion of all others the most hurtful and contemptible; it is pride complicated with laziness;

pride which inclines us to wish ourselves upon the level with others, and laziness which hinders us from pursuing our inclinations with vigour and assiduity. Calumnies are sometimes the offspring of resentment. When a man is opposed in a design which he cannot justify, and defeated in the prosecution of schemes of tyranny, extortion, or oppression, he seldom fails to revenge his overthrow by blackening that integrity which effected it. No rage is more fierce than that of a villain disappointed of those advantages which he has pursued by a long train of wickedness. He has forfeited the esteem of mankind, he has burdened his conscience and hazarded his future happiness to no purpose, and has now nothing to hope but the satisfaction of involving those who have broken his measures in misfortunes and disgrace. By wretches like these it is no wonder if the vilest arts of detraction are practised without scruple, since both their resentment and their interest direct them to depress those whose influence and authority will be employed against them. But what can be said of those who, without being impelled by any violence of passion, without having received any injury or provocation, and without any motives of interest, vilify the deserving and the worthless without distinction, and, merely to gratify the levity of temper and incontinence of tongue, throw out aspersions equally dangerous with those of virulence and enmity? 2. The consequences of this crime, whatever be the inducement to commit it, are equally pernicious. He that attacks the reputation of another invades the most valuable part of his property, and perhaps the only part which he can call his own. Calumny can take away what is out of the reach of tyranny and usurpation, and what may enable the sufferer to repair the injuries received from the hand of oppression. The persecutions of power may injure the fortune of a good man, but those of calumny must complete his ruin. Calumny differs from most other injuries in this dreadful circumstance. He who commits it never can repair it. A false report may spread where a recantation never reaches; and an accusation must certainly fly faster than a defence, while the greater part of mankind are base and wicked. The effects of a false report cannot be determined or circumscribed. It may check a hero in his attempts for the promotion of the happiness of his country, or a saint in his endeavours for the propagation of truth. III. WHAT REFLECTIONS MAY BEST ENABLE US TO AVOID IT? The way to avoid effects is to avoid the causes. Whoever, therefore, would not be tempted to bear false witness must endeavour to suppress those passions which may incite him to it. Let the envious man consider that by detracting from the character of others he in reality adds nothing to his own; and the malicious man, that nothing is more inconsistent with every law of God and institution of men than implacability and revenge. If men would spend more time in examining their own lives, and inspecting their own characters, they would have less leisure and less inclination to remark with severity upon others. They would easily discover that it will not be to their advantage to exasperate their neighbour, and that a scandalous falsehood may be easily revenged by a reproachful truth. (*S. Johnson, LL.D.*) *Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour*:—"Beyond our life, our spouse, our temporal possessions we have another treasure, *i.e.* honour and a good reputation, therefore God wills that we should not rob our neighbour of good name, forbearance, justice."—Luther. The world is false. "He who seeks faithfulness may kindle a light in clear day and yet scarcely find it." Honour is a precious possession—it is before gold. Thus God takes it under His protection and says, "Thou shalt not bear false witness," &c. To make the meaning clear we shall ask and answer three questions. 1. WHAT IS FALSE WITNESS? 1. People generally think of bearing witness in a court of justice. In this view a judge may be a false witness when, like Pilate, he knowingly condemned the innocent, &c. The accused, like Achan. It is bearing false witness for one to conceal the truth, and to deny it, even when force is used. Even the smallest village may furnish examples of the truth that false witness-bearing from hate, good-will to others, or self-interest never brought blessing, but sooner or later brought the Divine judgment. 2. But false witnessing is not confined to the courts of justice—in the home and in the street and field it finds place—nor even when evident lying is practised. A false word from a false heart, and a true word from a false heart are both false witnessing. Liars are false witnesses,—how many a strife have they raised! The betrayer is a false witness. We are not to be silent concerning evil, however—to hide mischief "in order to preserve peace." This is to betray righteousness. But those who betray secrets which can be kept with good conscience; who pry into their neighbour's concerns in order with malicious glee to spread abroad any supposed weakness, &c.; those who under the guise of friendship creep into

the confidence of men and betray them to the unfriendly—these are traitors whose evil report remaineth, *e.g.*, Judas. They are false witnesses also who take up an evil reproach against their neighbour (Psa. xv. 2); so, too, are backbiters. Against open liars men can defend themselves, but not against the sneaking backbiter, who ends with his hypocritical—"but I don't want it to be known more widely," &c. Words spoken in innocence are wrested so that they seem criminal, &c. "Honey is in their mouth, but gall in their heart." Every word from a false heart, be it blame or praise, &c., is false witness; and "a false witness shall not remain unpunished." II. HOW ARE WE TO PREVENT THE FALSE WITNESS-BEARING OF OTHERS? 1. God has so ordered that lying in the long-run never comes to good. Slander does not live long, and even at the worst, if there is no justice for you on earth, there is in heaven. We must ever seek to speak good of our neighbour. "There would be no thieves if there were no receivers," so there would be no slanderers if there were no listeners. "The slanderer has the devil in his tongue," said Luther; "and he who listens has him in his ear." Show to a slanderer a deaf ear, a reproachful look, a closed door, and if you cannot escape him, then you must not be silent. If he has the heart to slander your friend you must have the heart to censure his lies, &c. "Honour and a good name are easily injured"; therefore so speak to the injurer of another's reputation until he blush with shame, and if the slanderer speaks truth, then seek if possible to put forward something praiseworthy in him who is slandered. 2. True, there are things that are evil, godless, &c., and they must be called by their right names, and hypocrites, wolves in sheep's clothing, must not be spared. 3. There are, however, sometimes actions and words which are difficult to class. And there are men who have two sides to their characters. Then we must remember, "love bears all, believes all things, hopes all things," &c. 4. If all were so to act, if each were a faithful Jonathan, or Ahimelech, or Gamaliel, then Doegs and Ahithophels and Judases would fail. But—the slanderer lurks in all our hearts—we don't need to seek Pharisees in Jerusalem only. Therefore—III. HOW SHALL WE KEEP OUR OWN TONGUE FROM FALSE WITNESS-BEARING? 1. The tongue is ruled by the heart. The mouth will give utterance to righteousness if the heart is righteous. "From a good root comes good fruit." Silence is an art which many do not learn during a long life. "Make a grave of thine ears, and close it up until duty compels thee to speak," says Luther. 2. If you will speak, then watch your words. "A word spoken is like an arrow shot from the bow"—who can outdistance it? who recall it? There are no harmless lies. Even what is stated from amiability (*e.g.*, when an indolent or unfaithful servant is testified to as faithful, diligent, &c.), but which is not consonant with truth, is false witness-bearing. 3. Rash judgments of others often lead to false witnessing. "Don't do to others," &c. Readiness to believe what is said to another's harm is also a species of this transgression. When Luther stood before his accusers he almost fainted after much speaking, and Duke Erich sent him a refreshing draught in a silver cup, with the injunction to refresh himself. Anxious friends whispered that the Duke was his enemy, and that there might be poison in the draught. But Luther drank it and gave thanks, saying, "As Duke Erich has remembered me now, so may God remember him in the last hour." 4. Do not speak bitterly of one who was once your friend. Although he has failed you, do not become his enemy. 5. It may be a duty sometimes to say something hard of one in whose presence you stand in order to save an innocent or inexperienced person from danger. Then ask first: "Dare I say before this man's face what I would say of him behind his back?" and then do it clearly and unshrinkingly. Our Redeemer, a John, a Paul, are our examples. 6. Above all, covet the honour of having this said of you: "This man means what he says." Blessed is he whom the Searcher of hearts sees to be a Nathanael (John i. 47). (*K. H. Caspari.*)

Rights of fame:—Cast into the mould of changeless instinct, the ant of to-day is not wiser than the ant in Solomon's time, which has not improved the architecture of those mansions into which at all times it has garnered its stores. The bee of this century is no more skilful than the famous bees of Hymettus, and has made no improvement in the form and beauty of its cells. The beaver of our times constructs his habitation on the same plan as of yore. But man is the exception to this changeless and otherwise universal law. The beggar may become a millionaire, the peasant a prince, the private soldier a commander of armies, the fool a philosopher, the sinner a saint. This desire and this capacity are everywhere recognised. Civil government offers to the best citizens its largest immunities and highest honours. In Jehovah's moral government full recognition is given to man's ability

to rise to greatness. We are commanded to "covet the best gifts." The scholar may aspire to all knowledge, the man of business to all attainable wealth, the citizen to the highest stations in life, and all to the noblest achievements, to the widest influence, and to the most honourable distinctions. Such aspirations have been realised in the past, and may be in all time to come. The desire for this pre-eminence is an evil when it is gratified in defiance of God and of human rights. From such a heart God is excluded: the shrine is selfishness; the idol is self. When supreme this desire has given birth to a brood of the most devilish passions. Vanity begets hypocrisy; pride, haughtiness; jealousy, hatred; envy, murder. Some men attain to greatness, but it is the greatness of infamy. When this desire is gratified by the sacrifice of principle to policy, of character for reputation, it is highly censurable. Two things are dear to mankind—character and reputation. If a man has a right to life, liberty, and property, he has also a right to his character, and every injury done thereto is an infringement of a natural right and a crime against society. Character is what a man is, in his present intellectual, social, and moral condition. Character is the wealth of the soul, the only wealth of which some are ever possessed. It is the most substantial possession for this life and the life to come. Gold cannot purchase it. It comes to the individual in compliance with the requisitions of law and by the assistance of those gracious influences which descend from heaven. Many a man is bad to-day, having degenerated from original innocence and a high state of purity, because he did not resist the assaults upon his personal character. Reputation may be lost and regained, but to restore character is the work of God. There may be a beautiful correlation between the public estimation of a citizen and what he is in all the depth and breadth of his being. Character and reputation should go hand in hand and present a proximity closer than the proposition and demonstration of a geometrician; but it is too often true that a citizen wrongfully estimated by the public is the favourite of heaven; while, on the other hand, he may be reprobated by heaven and yet held in high esteem by his fellow-men. In a general sense, reputation is public opinion, and may be good or bad, true or false. If true and good it is the source of wealth, honour, and happiness. To succeed in any of the pursuits of life, the individual must be in repute both for capability and honour. The mechanic must be in repute for skill in his handicraft; known among his fellow-craftsmen as one deft in any given form of mechanism. All can readily see the financial value of reputation. To blast that reputation is to rob a man, and the chief difference between a robber and a slanderer is that sometimes you can find the stolen property on the robber, but never on the slanderer. How much of human happiness there is in what we call reputation! It is the joy of most men to be held in esteem by their friends and neighbours. For fame men have sacrificed everything. All men sigh for recognition. It is born with our birth; it grows with our years. If these are acceptable facts, confirmed by our experience and observation and recognised by law, human and Divine, then what anathema is too terrible to pronounce upon him who deliberately ruins the fair fame of another, or what punishment is too great to decree against him? How despicable the man who, whether for wealth, position, or glory, seeks to rise upon the ruins of another, whose prospects he has blighted, whose peace he has ruined, whose fame he has tarnished! Were defamation to become a universal custom, what a blow it would be to the very foundations of society! What would become of families, of friendships, of communities, if every failing should be proclaimed upon the housetop? What are the compensations to men who gain pre-eminence by such despicable means? They may attain to glory. All this is bewitching; but let us behold the troubled life of him who has thus attained to honour. What disquietude of soul; what sensitiveness to every report; what anxiety is excited by every change of public sentiment; what servility of soul to the great, what hypocritical smiles to constituents, what self-degradation before mankind! Whether defamation is by tongue or pen, it is forbidden by the organic law that flashed its authority amid the thunders of Mount Sinai. All evil-speaking may not be slander. It is proper, when the ends of justice are to be subserved, to bear testimony against crimes, for he who conceals a crime renders himself party to the offence. It is within reason to give publicity to the faults of others in self-defence, as when an innocent person is wrongfully accused and the guilty party is not suspected. At all times the innocent man has a right to vindicate himself. It is not evil-speaking to caution the innocent against the wiles and wicked intentions of the bad. It is both justice and charity. Nor is violence done to law and justice when allusion is made to the evil acts

of another, when such have been made known either by the offender himself or by the providence of God. Yet such allusions should be tempered with pity and discretion, and not made with hatred and pleasure. But this liberty of speech is carried to excess and abused when general conclusions are drawn from a single evil act. No one act is the fair exponent of any man's character. A single illiberal act does not prove a man covetous, any more than one act of charity proves him to be beneficent. In the treatment of human actions what a world of difference there is between candour and calumny! When a man relieves a beggar in the streets candour would ascribe it to a generous emotion, but calumny to vanity of ostentation. When a man stops short in a career of prosperity and resigns himself to the mercy of his creditors, candour pleads the cruelty of misfortune, but calumny whispers of midnight excesses, habitual licentiousness, extravagant dissipations. Where candour hesitates, calumny assumes the tone of authority. When the former demands investigation and proof, the latter gives confident decisions. Candour suspends judgment for more light, calumny draws conclusions and thunders invectives. When candour is for checking the malicious report, calumny opens its brazen throat and gives to it publicity, calling upon the wings of the wind to spread it abroad. Candour demands hesitation at two points, when the merit of an action is disguised by the uncertainty of evidence and the ambiguity of its complexion—when the accused has the right to the benefit of the doubt. And candour hesitates in assigning a motive for actions, for motives are hid by the veil of impenetrable secrecy. Candour never insinuates. "Charity thinketh no evil." Half-truths and false truths are slanders. A half-truth is one side of a question, and may be the bad side. Facts are false when out of their logical and historical connection. Facts should balance each other, and should be expressive of the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Some natures are too deep to be understood. Some natures are transparent, some translucent, some opaque. There are those so constituted that they cannot manifest themselves, and so go through the world misunderstood and misrepresented. Many a man is unknown beyond the circle of his family and immediate friends. Chief among the sources of slander is malice. A man succeeds in business, in art, in war, in professional life, and when his success is beyond question some detracting reason is assigned for his success. Nobler impulses would ascribe that success to genius. And what an abuse of the holy mission of language is the violation of this Divine law of fame! It is a law of our being that the words we utter excite in others corresponding emotions. Familiarity with wrong diminishes our abhorrence thereof. Speak an unkind word against a man, and it will open a fountain of hatred against you; speak kindly of an enemy, and his enmity is slain. (*J. P. Newman, D.D.*) *The Ninth Commandment:*—I. THE SIMPLE INTENTION OF THE COMMANDMENT. It demands truth in the statement, directly or indirectly made, by man to man, concerning man. The intercourse of men with each other is to depend upon actual facts of character, conduct, and capability. II. HOW THE COMMANDMENT MAY BE VIOLATED. 1. By false evidence given in courts of justice. 2. By the lie invented and distributed with malicious intention. 3. By repetition of some report without careful investigation. 4. By a hint, a suggestion, or an adroit question. Stigma has been cast upon many a fair reputation by such a question as, "Have you heard about Mr.——?" The answer being given in the negative, the questioner says, "Ah, well, the least said soonest mended." Nothing further can be drawn from him, but an unfavourable impression has been created, and the innuendo had all the deceiving effect of false witness. 5. By silence. 6. By the imputation of ulterior, selfish, or sordid motive. "Ah, yes; he knows what he is doing." "The gift was only a sprat to catch a mackerel." "He knows what side his bread is buttered on." 6. By flattery. To utter unwarranted praise, to give a testimonial of character, or to recommend a man simply out of friendship for him, while we know him to be unworthy of the testimony we bear, is to inflict injury upon the person to whom he is thus recommended. III. APPLICATION TO PRESENT-DAY QUESTIONS. 1. This sin is terribly prevalent among individuals to-day. It would be a somewhat startling revelation if records could be taken of all the conversations at afternoon teas, Dorcas meetings, and all those institutions at which women do congregate. There is no doubt that men are also guilty of much wrong-doing in this way, but it seems a peculiarly favourite form of iniquity among women. 2. Nations and societies, as well as individuals, may be guilty of the sin of false witness. It seems to-day the perpetual habit of certain sections of the Press to impute motives to foreign nations, and for politicians to heap contumely and abuse on their opponents. Half the unrest

in Europe may be said to be due to false witness borne by one nation against another through the Press. (*G. Campbell Morgan.*) *The remedy against evil speaking*:—What is the remedy for all this evil? Is it not to cultivate sedulously within ourselves certain good and wholesome principles of thinking and speaking which will be our best safeguard against the sin of bearing false witness? 1. Let us maintain the precious habit of accuracy of speech. "Accuracy," said Davison, "is of the noble family of the truth." Let us guard ourselves at all times against exaggeration or diminution of the truth. When we speak, let us say the thing as it is. 2. Let us seek that generous and kindly spirit that believes good rather than evil of a neighbour. It is, happily, possible to reach the habit of kindly thought, of generous tolerance and charitable belief; and just as the atmosphere on the higher Alps is too pure for poisonous microbes to live in it, so this habit will generate in our heart and life an atmosphere in which all that is uncharitable and bitter and base and false will utterly perish. 3. Let us remember the great principle, that the more we differ from a man or a politician or a church, the more anxiously and scrupulously should we seek to be fair and just in all our estimates and judgments of him. 4. Let us never forget that all men, howsoever much they may differ from us, are our neighbours, are our brothers, and in the light of this great brotherhood, this larger and nobler kinship, only realised perfectly in Christ, let us interpret this command. (*G. S. Barrett, D.D.*)

Ver. 21. **Neither shalt thou desire.**—*The Tenth Commandment*:—Nothing, be it ever so mean, is to be coveted which belongs to another, if it be to his loss and detriment. Wherefore it is observable that this commandment is thus briefly expressed by the Saviour (Matt. x. 19). Defraud not, take not away. Christ Himself made this alteration of the word in the last commandment, and knew best the meaning of it. He makes coveting and defrauding the same, because he that inordinately desires that which is another's doth it to his wrong. To wish anything hurtful to others is unlawful, though we never outwardly act what we design. "He that deviseth to do evil shall be called a mischievous person" (Prov. xxiv. 8). He merits that denomination on the account of those purposes of mischief which are in his heart. And as the Decalogue, so the Gospel declares this truth. Our Saviour interprets lascivious desires to be lascivious deeds (Matt. v. 28). This is the Christian law, that the inward fault is to be accounted for; the will alone makes us obnoxious, though we proceed no further. We are forbid not only to entertain any intentions and wishes, but any imaginations and thoughts tending to the hurt of others. Secondly, I come to speak of the affirmative part, or the duties enjoined in this commandment. Here, then, we are bid to act out of an inward principle of holiness. The law doth not only exact of us external obedience, but internal sanctity. And the Gospel doth this much more, it enjoins us not only to cleanse our hands, but to purify our hearts (James iv. 8). As we must take care of our lives, so we must expel all vicious appetites, lusts, and desires out of our minds. We must regulate our intentions and purposes, and rectify our thoughts and imaginations. This likewise is required of us in the affirmative part of this commandment, that we desire and wish in our hearts all good to our neighbours; that we be so far from coveting what is theirs, that we continually aim at their welfare, and employ our thoughts in promoting it. Besides, this is another part of the positive precept, that we be content with what is our own. We are bid here to acquiesce in God's providence, and to rest satisfied with the condition He hath placed us in. In short, then, if we would have the general sum of both the negative and affirmative part of this commandment, it is thus comprised in the apostle's words, "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have" (Heb. xiii. 5). Here is forbidden an inordinate coveting of what we have not, and a being discontented with what we have. So that I think I shall accomplish the design of this commandment by treating distinctly of these two, covetousness and contentment. I begin with the former. First, as to its nature. It is an inordinate desire after those worldly goods which we have not, and which it is not fitting we should have. I say, it is an excessive desire after those things. And this is one main thing that constitutes the sin of covetousness, as we may gather from the description of it in the sacred writings. Those who are addicted to it are said to be greedy of gain (Prov. i. 19). And covetousness itself is set forth by that greedy creature the horse-leech with its two daughters, *i.e.* its double-forked tongue wherewith it continually sucks blood (Prov. xxx. 15). This comparison is used to express the insatiableness of those persons' desires who are given to

avarice. Secondly, as covetousness is an immoderate, so it is an inordinate and irregular desire of worldly goods. For—1. It is a desire of them as they are our neighbour's. And thereby is intimated to us that the covetous have an evil eye, and grudge at the good of others. They are angry that they have not a monopoly of worldly riches, and it grieves them that any one hath a share of them besides themselves. 2. The inordinacy of this avaricious desire of the things of this world consists in this, that it is a longing after them as the chief good. Riches are desired by the covetous for themselves wholly, and are reckoned as the greatest happiness. In the second place, I am to display the evil and mischief of this sin. And this I will do by showing--(1) Covetousness and the love of the world are the source of most sins in men's lives (1 Tim. vi. 9). There is no kind of sin almost that you can mention but it springs from this root. Covetous persons break all the commandments. There is no sin but it will thrive upon such a root, there is no vice but this will supply nourishment to it. But a good conscience cannot grow upon it, and nothing that is virtuous can prosper. (2) And so I proceed to the second particular, which will give us a further account of the evil and mischief of covetousness, namely, that it is the source of punishment. And here I will show first that this vice is its own punishment. The same judgment befalls the covetous that befell Korah and his company, they are swallowed up of the earth, and they cannot extricate themselves out of this misery. This greedy appetite never suffers him to say, It is enough: but in the fulness of his sufficiency he is in straits (Job xx. 22). And we are told by another wise man, that "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase" (Eccles. v. 10). This is the genuine effect of covetousness, and this impossibility of being satisfied is a continual torment. Again, these persons, as they torment themselves, so they are judicially punished by God. Sometimes the hand of God blasts them immediately, as Gehazi was smitten with leprosy. Sometimes they are found out by the magistrate, and made sacrifices to justice, as Achan with his golden wedge. And sometimes through the judgment of God men of violence are permitted to spoil them of what they have so sordidly raked together. At other times we see that they are abruptly cut off in the career of their covetous pursuits (Jer. xvii. 11). Sometimes they are their own executioners, as the covetous Judas was. Lastly, the covetous are punished in another world. The third and last thing I undertook, which was to offer proper remedies against this inordinate desiring of the things of this world. The general expedient is that we must study to moderate our appetites and affections, we must take pains with ourselves to bring our souls into a right temper, for it is the mind that causes all the disturbance in us; wherefore, if this be not duly disposed, no condition will please us, and we shall be perpetually craving and uneasy. The more particular rules are these—1. Know and remember this, that riches and abundance are commonly indulged to the worst of men, and hence you may conclude they are of no great worth. Christ chose poverty, and left it as a portion to His disciples, and the holiest men have been denied the riches of this world. Let us meditate on this, in order to the disengaging of our souls from a covetous desire after wealth and abundance. 2. Observe the design of God's afflicting hand. Remember this, that He sends outward crosses on purpose to diminish our immoderate longing after these things. 3. Divert your worldly designs by those that are spiritual. Mind these things, which are of the highest nature: covet earnestly the best gifts; labour to be rich towards God. Be always earnestly seeking the graces of God's Spirit, communion with Him, and His love and favour. Thus cure your malady by revulsion. 4. Always carry in your eye the other world, and then you will be cured of your immoderate longings after this. Look up to heaven and contemplate that, and then the earth will seem to be but a poor, shrivelled point. Thus I have propounded the proper remedies which you may successfully make use of for the extirpating of covetousness and the immoderate love of the world. And because you can do nothing of this without the Divine aid, forget not to be frequent in prayer. I come, then, now to that which is the positive part of this commandment, namely, contentedness. And here I am to show—1. The true nature of it. 2. The excellency and benefit of it. 3. The means of attaining it. First, I will give an account of the true nature of contentment. And this we may learn from what hath been said concerning covetousness, for true contentment is opposite to covetousness, and therefore is rightly defined a cessation of all covetous desires, and an acquiescing in what we have. Contentment therefore denotes these two things: first, that the desire of what is absent is taken off; secondly, that there is a satisfaction in what is present. For this is

certain, that our ease and comfort consist in having what we desire, and in being pleased with what we have. Now, then, if a man desires something and yet wants it, or hath something and is not pleased with it, he cannot possibly be contented. Here, then, is the noble art of Christianity to take off the edge of our appetites, to qualify or to quench our thirst, and also to make us in love with the present, to bring our minds to an acquiescence in the condition that God places us in. This latter is the chief thing in contentment, and, indeed, comprehends the other; for if we contentedly enjoy the present, we shall not enlarge our desires to things that are absent. This is enjoined us by the apostle in Heb. xiii. 5, "Be content with such things as ye have," or, "with the present things," for so it should be translated. Secondly, the excellency and benefit of contentment are to be treated of. First, this must needs be a very excellent grace, because it argues a brave and generous spirit. Secondly, it is attended with pleasure as well as honour. Thirdly, it is also profitable (1 Tim. vi. 6). A contented mind is impregnable. We are rich with a treasure that none but ourselves can rob us of. Fourthly and lastly, to sum up all in a word, contentment makes us happy. Now, he that hath arrived to the art of contentment must needs be happy, because his will and the things he converses with exactly suit with one another. The third thing is to show what are the proper means of attaining this excellent grace of contentedness. Here I will propound these following directions:—First, in order to contentment it is necessary that we understand aright the true nature and disposition of the things of this world, that we form right conceptions concerning them. In the first place, we must know that they are in their own nature indifferent. They are not really good, and so not the proper objects of our desires. Consider this, and be content. Secondly, let us consider how little will suffice us, and how unnecessary the abundance of the things of this world is. Thirdly, another effectual way to procure contentment is to make a balance, and indifferently to poise both your crosses and your blessings. If you will take the pains to lay the latter in one scale, as well as the former in another, you will make them even, though one seemed to you to be weightier than the other. Have you never heard that the wind and tempest which battered the vessel and tore its sails drove it at last to the desired haven? Valerius Maximus tells us of one in a Tyrian ship who was struck into the sea by a wave on one side, and presently another wave on the other side of the ship hoisted him up into it. So with respect to those things which we are now speaking of, there is an abundant requital. Whenever there is any loss or adverse event there is constantly some compensation goes along with it—at least, if we rightly and skilfully improve the adverse accident, for thereby we may turn blanks into prizes. There is never anything taken from us but we may find there is some supply made for it, or else there is something yet left behind that may make us forget our loss. Wherefore under this head let me advise you, instead of reckoning up what you have not, to consider what you have; and this will lead you to contentment. You can never sufficiently thank God for letting you enjoy the use of your hands, your feet, your eyes, your tongue, for these are much greater things than any you can name that you are destitute of. Consider that you have your liberty, which is an unspeakable blessing; that you are provided for daily with a sufficient portion of meat and drink; that you have not only necessary food, but raiment; that you have a habitation to shelter you from the injury of the weather. Consider, likewise, that if we labour under some particular grievance, yet God generally continues to us some blessing which makes amends for it. Set, then, your health against your poverty, and know that some wealthy persons would purchase the former, though they had the latter into the bargain. Or perhaps you are afflicted with an unhealthful state of body, with pain and torture. But then you may be supported under this grievance by reflecting on those considerable mercies which God hath not deprived you of, as a competent allowance of the other good things of this life—the help of physicians, many obliging friends and relations, a good name, &c. Fourthly, in order to contentedness, it is requisite that we be not solicitous about the future. Our present ease depends much on our behaviour as to the future. Therefore here we are to regulate ourselves, and to take care that we be not inquisitive and anxious about the events that are to come. "Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire," saith Solomon (Eccles. vi. 9). It is better to enjoy the good things that are present and before our eyes than to follow after future and uncertain objects with vain inquiries and wishes, for "this walking of the soul," as the Hebrew in this text elegantly hath it, this ranging of our minds, will certainly create us trouble and dissatisfaction. Wherefore let us confine ourselves to the present, and

thankfully enjoy that, and not trouble our thoughts with what shall befall us hereafter. Fifthly, to cherish and preserve in him this excellent frame of spirit, he strives to learn the art and skill of making the best of all that happens to him. Sixthly, be not dejected and discouraged by what the men of the world, who have their portion in this life, are wont to suggest to you. Lastly, be thoroughly convinced of the Divine Providence which rules the world and takes care of us, and firmly depend and rely upon this, and then it is impossible you should be discontented. Seeing Infinite Wisdom governs the world and manages all things to the best ends and purposes, we may fully persuade ourselves that all things shall work together for our good. (*J. Edwards, D.D.*) *The Tenth Commandment*:—Observe, first, that this is a unique commandment. Search all the laws of all the world, and you will not find one which resembles it. Human laws can only prohibit crimes of which human eyes can take cognisance; the hearts of men are beyond their reach. The tyrant can only command the outward obedience of his slave, but he cannot subdue the fierce rebellion which rages in that slave's heart. He makes no attempt to order what he is impotent to enforce. The unique command which prohibits not only commissions but concupiscence can be uttered by God alone. And herein the ten commands on Sinai anticipated the eight beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. The law says, "Thou shalt not desire"; the Gospel says, "Blessed are the pure in heart." It is a commandment pre-eminently spiritual; it cuts at the root of all formalism and all hypocrisy; it shows that each man is not what he seems to be to men, but what he is in the eyes of God. The lesson which the Tenth Commandment teaches us is that God must be obeyed, not with eye service as men pleasers, but with singleness of heart. Even the heathen say that the God with whom we have to do is one with whom nothing avails except heart obedience. "Wickedness and injustice," says Aristotle, "lie in the intention." "He," says Juvenal, "who thinks in silent wickedness within himself incurs the guilt of the deed." And this command is tender as well as unique, for it is designed to save us from error; it is meant, not to terrify us, but to train; it reveals to us, as with a flash out of God's eternity, when and how the work of our life has to be done; it shows us that there is no sound cure for any disease without the removal of the cause. The literal meaning of the commandment is, "Thou shalt not excessively or wrongfully, thou shalt not unlawfully or irregularly, desire anything which thou canst not innocently and uprightly possess." Perhaps you think, "What harm can a mere desire do when I have not even expressed it? What wrong can there be in such an airy nothing, such an impalpable thought?" The answer is twofold. First, that airy nothing, that impalpable thought, as you call it, is a very real thing. It is seen in heaven, it is heard in heaven, in heaven it needs forgiveness, and consequently that thought will, if dwelt upon, be certainly the prolific mother of all sins. It is the cockatrice's egg which brings forth the vapour of the fiery flying serpent. Guilty longings are the avant-couriers of the performance of guilty lusts concealed in the guise of a harmless infant, the guilty curiosity, the guilty lingering on the confines of temptation. The guilty wish pushes open the wicket gate, and then, when it has done so it springs into the menacing stature of a giant demon. The sole way to keep ourselves from the infinite possibility of sin is only to follow the exhortation of St. James: "Cleanse your hearts, ye sinners; purify your hearts, ye double-minded." It is with the latter form of concupiscence, with the covetousness which is idolatry, that the extension of the commandment chiefly deals. It warns us against the greed of accumulation and the thirst for gold. This commandment says to our England of to-day, "Which wilt thou be, the freeman of Christ or the bond slave of Mammon? Which wilt thou be, an example to the world or its corrupter? Rich thou art beyond all nations, and art ever becoming more and more rich. But wealth means weal, means well-being; it does not mean riches and woe to thy weal." But this commandment teaches us something more than contentment, lovely, indeed, and full of happiness as a virtue. Utter content is but the passive form of the most fruitful of all virtues—it is self-sacrifice. But he who has ceased to desire will rejoice also to abstain; he who desires to cease that selfish greediness for what does not belong to him, or what he ought largely to share with others, will be eager to give with wise generosity—he will find that herein is happiness. St. Edmund of Canterbury, one of our sweet English saints, used to leave his money on the sill of the window of his staircase for any one to take who would, and sometimes he would sprinkle dust over it, saying, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust." Another great man said, "We have no time to get rich; the expulsive power of

good affections leaves no time for meaner passions." The lives of such saints poured silent contempt on gold, and how great is their reward! They are uplifted above the base temptations which surround the toiling, moiling multitude. Self-abnegation, the subdual of concupiscence, means that the soul is satisfied with God. Dissatisfaction is the necessary curse of worldly life. "Vanity of vanity," says one of the best-known novels of the century, "which of us has what he desires, and having it is satisfied? Answer me, children of the world, votaries of self-indulgence, slaves of gold; answer me, and confess your misery." Covetousness means a curse, but he who gives all to Christ gains all from Christ; he who will lose his life for Christ's sake shall always find it. Can you imagine a more struggling and apparently miserable lot than that of some poor harmless missionary in the depths of Africa? Not long ago a dying missionary wrote home from the wilds of Africa: "Tell my family and all my friends that I rejoice to have left all for Christ. Were my sacrifice to make again, I think, as I lie here dying in a strange land, I would make it again a thousand times. I would not change my lot for all the happiness of the world." "This German beast," says Leo X., "cares nothing for gold,"—a strange phenomenon when all the priests and all the world cared so much for gold; but because Luther did not care for gold, and lived and died a very poor man, it raised the hearts of myriads of men to seek their treasure where he had done—in things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. (*Dean Farrar.*) *The Tenth Commandment:*—For settling the true sense of these words it will be needful to remark—First, that in the nine former commandments there has been direction given for every inward and outward act of duty owing to God or man, and all the sinful conduct contrary thereto has been prohibited and condemned. Secondly, that the design of the whole law being evidently to make sin fully known, that design would not be answered by it if there had not been a particular commandment in it which should condemn those sinful desires of our nature which are the principles of all sinful acts whatever. In the seventh chapter to the Romans St. Paul does most plainly interpret this Tenth Commandment as condemning the natural desires of our depraved hearts. And lest it should be wondered that no other desires are here mentioned than those which refer to the second table, the reason is that all the sinful desires of our nature are only after the things prohibited in the second table. The sin of our nature against the first table is to have no desire after God; and therefore, there being in our nature no desire after God, that desire only that is in our nature can be condemned, namely, desire after earthly and sensual things, both which are expressly mentioned in this commandment, coveting our neighbour's house being an earthly desire, and coveting his wife a sensual one. But yet, that all desires after the things and enjoyments of this present time might not seem to be disallowed and sinful, the commandment also gives us to understand how we shall make a distinction between those desires after present things which spring from our corrupted nature and are in themselves sinful and such as are innocent and, indeed, in our present circumstances, necessary. Thou shalt not desire anything that is thy neighbour's, for to desire what is another's for thy convenience or gratification issues directly from the carnality and worldliness of thy nature, and plainly proves an inclination for present things which is neither consistent with love to God nor man. Nay, and many times the really sinful desire will be clothing itself under the guise of necessity, and pretend necessity where there is really none. Can we suppose King Ahab was in real want of a garden of herbs? Is it not more probable that some scheme of indulgence or pomp made him conceive he wanted Naboth's vineyard, and that, for any matter of necessity in the thing, he could as well have done without it? Should I attempt to enumerate all those various lustings and desires that pass through our hearts without being permitted to make a settlement there, and yet are forbidden by this commandment, the undertaking would be endless Yet it will be needful to give some sort of account of them. First, thou shalt not covet or have any sinful desires in thy heart after thy neighbour's dignity. And here all those sudden risings of heart against the authority of God in the persons of those he has set over us come in and are condemned. Secondly, thou shalt not lust after thy neighbour's life; thou must not have a motion to his hurt in soul or body within thy heart. All envious, revengeful, unmerciful suggestions against him are contrary to charity, and rise out of a depraved nature. Thirdly, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife. All manner of sensuality being also condemned by the Seventh Commandment, all motions towards it fall under the censure of the tenth. Fourthly, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods. What I now speak of is not the sin of covet-.

ousness, nor that devising of theft before it is committed, but that which is at the bottom of both—the sinful stirrings of corrupt nature after the interests of the world, in which our foolish hearts do naturally trust. You have not wished to have your neighbour's goods by fraud or force, I allow; but have you never wished any of them yours from the instigation of a world-trusting heart? Fifthly, thou shalt not lust after thy neighbour's good name. The meaning of this is, thou mayest never have in thy heart one suggestion of envy because thy neighbour is better than thou, of hatred because his virtues reprove thy vices, of displeasure because he will follow his conscience sooner than thy will, of delight—no, not in the least degree—in hearing of or beholding his sins. This is desiring hurt to thy neighbour's name. Yea, though thou dost not approve any of these suggestions, but art really displeased with them and wouldest never more know them, yet they are thy sins. What has been said may suffice to show the design of this last commandment, and therein the sad sinfulness of our nature. (*S. Walker, B.A.*) *The Tenth Commandment*:—The first thing which this commandment teaches us is that all desire is wrong when we set our hearts upon a thing which we cannot fairly and justly obtain. Ahab and Jezebel broke it when they took Naboth's vineyard. Is it ever right to desire? And what makes a desire right or wrong? Here we are all full of wishes and desires. Desire is one of the great motive forces of the world. If we had no desires we should have no progress. It is a sense of want that makes us exert ourselves, and very often bring to pass a great many results which we never set before ourselves as ends. What, then, is to be our criterion? Desire is not a wrong thing in itself. Desire of learning is not wrong; desire of success, say, in an examination, or in our future career in life, is surely not wrong? Roughly, very roughly, speaking, success is the guarantee from outside that we were right in pursuing such and such a course, in using our talents in such and such a way; while failure, speaking again very roughly, seems to mean that we have wasted our time, or mistaken our vocation. It is not always so, of course. Desire is not, it may be repeated, a wrong thing in itself. When is it wrong? 1. When we desire things that are unworthy of us, as when Nero wished to be applauded as a stage-performer, or when a great man, like Browning's "Lost Leader," is led aside from his path by the offer of some petty title or distinction; and, alas! if we look into our own hearts, we shall often find, almost with a sudden shock of shame and dismay, how miserably petty are some of the objects around which our imagination is building its castles in the air. 2. Again, desire is wrong when it throws us off our balance, and makes us take a one-sided view of life. 3. Desire is clearly blamable when we allow it to absorb us and make us forgetful of the needs of others. 4. Again, desire is wrong when indulged in such a way that the failure of what we desire makes us discontented. 5. Again, if our ambition, our love, our desire, makes us forgetful of God, is it not worse still? There is, however, one other thing I should like to say. Primarily, and roughly speaking, God does fulfil, or shows us how to accomplish, our wishes. There is a decided *à priori* probability that we shall get what we want. As an exquisite fragment of Greek poetry tells us, Hesperus (the evening star) brings everything home: the sheep to the fold, and the child to the mother. So we may say of the evening of life, in very many cases, it has brought to the man or the woman the objects of lifelong desire. "All things," as we say, "come round to him who waits." But it is also possible to have a wrong desire fulfilled, and to mourn its fulfilment as our bitterest misfortune. "*Occidat dum imperet* (Let him kill me if he only reign!)," said Agrippina of Nero, and her aspiration was terribly realised. The thirty pieces of silver were the "desire" of Judas Iscariot! How often do we see this still! The moment we try to force God's will we desire wrongly, and are sure to repent of it. (*Elizabeth Wordsworth.*) *Law of purity*:—The last of the Ten Commandments is the most important; it relates to the heart, out of which are the "issues of life." It is a law that cannot be broken by any word that man may speak, by any act that he may perform. It is descriptive of character, and supposes a moral state out of which flow all motives, desires, thoughts, words, and deeds. All the other commandments are violated by an act or a word; but the tenth is supremely mental in its scope and purpose. In this last of the Divine ten precepts is the law of desire. To covet is to desire the "forbidden fruit." It is not external, but internal; it relates to what a man thinks and feels. A desire is a conception, a wish, an inclination, an aspiration, which may or may not lead on to action. The penalty is not stated. Will it not be exclusion from God? The great thought is desire within the limitations of law. There is

a pleasurable, beneficent, lawful exercise of desire. There is a covetousness that is right and commendable. We are commanded to "covet earnestly the best gifts," and to "covet to prophesy"—that is, to teach the way of the Lord. Intense desire is indispensable to success. What were life without aspiration? Desire nerves the soul, stimulates the intellect, animates the mind. Men may aspire to all knowledge, to the largest wealth, to the highest honours, to the greatest achievements, to the widest influence, to boundless usefulness, to all attainable purity; but God must be supreme; principle the rule; charity the end. A man may desire a wife, but not another's; a horse, but not his neighbour's; a trusty servant, but not to the disadvantage of an employer; an ox, an ass, a field, but not to the injury of its owner. How execrable the man who lessens the esteem of a husband for the woman he has wedded and then ingratiates himself in the affections of that alienated wife that he may have her! The imagination is the domain wherein the law of purity operates, and therein should hold supreme sway. No other mental faculty is so potent in the formation of the character and in giving direction to the destiny of men and nations. The imagination rules the world for good and evil. The sacred writers couple the imagination with the heart, which is neither accidental nor incidental, but is done with intelligent intent. It is to remind us of the immense power of this masterful faculty over the great passions of our nature. To capture, control, purify, refine, elevate this dominating power of the soul is the mission of the law of purity: "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." How beneficent is the imagination when subject to law; how malevolent its influence when unrestrained and lawless! Like the reason and the memory, the imagination is subject to discipline and the sovereign will of man. This law of purity demands a passive state and an active manifestation. Christianity is the religion of the imagination. Christ is the only religious Teacher known to man who demands of His people a moral condition antecedent to act of devotion. If God is not a respecter of persons He is of character, and that He has foreordained unto eternal life. Christ's demand for a moral condition antecedent to all mental and physical action is in harmony with the order of nature. There is a passive state of our muscular forces and intellectual powers upon which the active depends, and of which the active is the living expression. If the arm is strong to defend, there must be healthfulness in the muscles thereof. If the faculties of the mind respond to the will, there must be latent vigour in the intellect. Man's moral nature is both passive and active, and experience is in proof that as is the passive so is the active. If the affections respond only to objects of purity, if the conscience only to the voice of right, if the will only to the call of duty, there must be inherent purity and strength in all our moral powers when quiescent. Christ is the Saviour and Sovereign of the heart wherein He incarnates purity. He must be at the fountain-head of life, that the issues thereof may be Divine. And it is a matter of experience that with purity there comes an intellectual elevation, a sharpening and quickening of all the mental powers, whereby the "perfect man in Christ" discerns more readily between right and wrong; and the heavenly calm that reigns in all his being, and the "perfect peace" wherein he is ever kept, conduce to tranquillity of intellect, correctness of taste, candour of intention, carefulness of judgment, and impartiality of decision. The imagination acts directly on the moral character, and by its abuse the will is weakened, the mental energy is dissipated, and the whole life is polluted. Purity and happiness are inseparable. In nothing more is the beneficence of the Creator apparent than in His ordination that happiness here and hereafter shall flow out of the character of a man. The blessings of human life, such as honourable birth, liberal education, ample fortune, high social position, renown among men, abundance of health, and length of days, may contribute to the repose of soul and add to the joy of life; but these can never be the radical source of happiness. The whole history of the world is a proof that happiness never flows into a man, but rather flows out of him. And what is true of earth will be true of heaven. Such was the conception of the Psalmist, who sings, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness." (*J. P. Newman, D.D.*) *Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife*:—This commandment is in brief, "Thou shalt not covet"; or, to put it positively, Give Me thine heart. Give it not to the world and all its store. Thus beginning and end of the Ten Words are united—the circle completed. "He who keeps the first commandment," said one of the fathers, "possesses the spring of all good works and

righteousness, *i.e.* the love of God; and he who keeps the last commandment checks the fountain of all sin, namely, evil desire, whence flow all wicked works" (1 John ii. 15). What does this command require of us? 1. THAT WE SHOULD NOT YIELD TO EVIL DESIRES. This is the easiest requirement. 1. The story of Ahab and Naboth's vineyard is a terrible example of the result of yielding to covetousness. Yet how many Ahabs are there who lust after their neighbour's house, &c., and who, when the neighbour has come down in the world and a friendly hand might raise him, do not stretch out that hand, but eagerly seize hold of the coveted possession! 2. How many are there also who, out of envy and covetousness, will disturb the peace of a household—raising discord between man and wife, between servant and master! Not more than one in ten can be found, perhaps, who would, on the contrary, seek to reconcile, in love and faithfulness, husband and wife, and how many will seek to draw a good and faithful servant even from a friend's service, with promise of higher wages, &c.! How many will either possess themselves of what is another's; or, if that cannot be, with the wickedest meanness seek to destroy or spoil the possession! 3. In this commandment God puts a check on the sin and evil desires which haunt men's hearts like savage creatures, ready to break forth in shameful deeds. He knows that wicked desires manifest themselves universally: envy, which covets a neighbour's goods; hate, which seeks a neighbour's undoing; fleshly lusts, which flame out in debauchery, pride, vanity, &c. But the apology of men, "Sin was stronger than I," will not stand; but "Let not sin reign" (Rom. vi. 12). II. THAT WE SHOULD NOT NOURISH EVIL DESIRES IN OUR HEARTS. This is a much harder endeavour. 1. Men can weaken and repress such desires, but they can also excite, foster, and indulge them. The poor boy who fled from the shelter which had been accorded to him through the frost and snow of a winter's night, until the desire to steal which the ticking of a watch aroused in him had vanished, thus bravely conquered evil desire. 2. Many who have not seized a neighbour's possession have yet coveted it, and have not put restraint on this desire. Some would not injure a neighbour, but are yet rejoiced when misfortune falls on him. The envious man may never attempt to ruin another's happiness; yet if the evil thoughts were clearly brought to the light of day, how would he himself shrink from them! 3. Even when such evil desires do not blossom into deed, yet they are reckoned even as deeds in the pure light of heaven. Adultery and uncleanness, murder and revenge, envy and anger, are classed as "works of the flesh." 4. We may not prevent evil thoughts coming into our minds, but we may take care that they gain no footing within us. "You can't prevent the birds flying about your head, but you can prevent them from building nests in your hair," said Luther. Through labour, prayer, remembrance of God and our Saviour we can give evil thoughts no place in our hearts. III. THAT WE SHOULD HAVE NO EVIL THOUGHTS IN OUR HEARTS. This is the most difficult endeavour. 1. "Thou shalt be holy, for I am holy." "Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." It is not enough that we should repress, &c., these evil desires; we must seek to banish them entirely. Not only must the weed be repressed; it must be uprooted. Can we do this? Let us hear the apostle (Rom. vii. 18–35). 2. But here our power has an end. Like the young man who came to the Saviour, we may keep outwardly, in appearance, all the commandments; yet this command is put here to show us that yet we have not attained—that our hearts are not yet fully temples of God; that though our lives might seem perfect to men, yet God calls us by nature lost and ruined. Thus before God stand those who say, To do good is the best religion. Truly, in doing good, religion manifests itself; but to attempt by our own little display of common honesty, &c., to make ourselves rich before God, and to despise the Christian faith, is vain. To say that this good-doing is the best religion is to lie. 3. God looks on the heart. He measures the actions by the heart. He looks not merely on the stamp which the coin bears, but at the metal from which it is formed above all. Woe to us were there no other way to life than perfectly keeping the commandments! But thank God, we have our Christian faith. The blessing we gain from an earnest consideration of this commandment is that it brings home the fact that salvation is not by the law alone, and makes us eager to learn the good news which is called the Gospel, and which tells us that "the just shall live by his faith." (*K. H. Caspari.*)

Ver. 22. **These words the Lord spake.**—*The voice of God:*—"God spake." Think of it, worshipper of lust and greed, worshipper of self, worshipper of the

many-headed monster of thine own evil desires, worshipper of no God! Think of it, Sabbath-breakers who seek only your own pleasure on the Lord's Day! Think of it, ye who dishonour and are ungrateful and disobedient to father and mother! Think of it, ye whose hearts are full of violence, cruelty, and malice! "God spake those words and said." Try to realise what God is, and with it that He speaks and that He is still speaking these words to thee. What words? Very few! Men multiplied indefinitely the necessaries which God had not made many. The summary of the first table is the fear of God; of the second, the love to our neighbour. Brief, then, as they are, the commandments, and with them the whole scope and range, the origin and sum-total of man's duty, are summed up in two monosyllables, "Love," "Serve." The Jews split the Ten Commandments into 613 positive and negative precepts and prohibitions. We can reduce them to one. St. Paul reduced them to the one word "Believe." St. John reduced them to the one word "Love." Thank God for their simplicity; thank God that the wayfaring man, yea, and even fools, need not err therein. Thank God, that while men may, if they like, devote their whole souls to small observances, doctrinal technicalities, that which God requires as alone necessary for any one of us is righteousness, and righteousness depends on love. A young Gentile went to the great doctor, Shammai, and said to him, "I will become a Jew if you will teach me the whole law while I stand on one leg," and the angry Rabbi drove him out of the house with blows. But when he went with the same words to the rival of Shammai, the sweet and noble Hillel, Hillel gently answered, "That is easy, my son; never do to any one what you would not like him to do to you. That is the whole law; all the rest is commentary and fringe." The Gentile was converted, but the Rabbi was wrong. Christ when He was asked by the young ruler, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" did not thus dissever the Golden Rule from its force and sanction, He did not divorce the second table from the first; He said, "Keep the commandments; love God with all thy heart"—that is the first table; "and thy neighbour as thyself"—that is the second. He knew that man cannot love God his Father unless he loves man his brother; and that he cannot love man the brother aright or at all unless he loves his Father God. In conclusion then, so far as man's whole duty is concerned, all the rest of Scripture is but a commentary upon the Ten Commandments; it either exhorts us to obedience by arguments, or allures us to it by promises, or frightens us from transgressions by threatenings, or excites us to the one and restrains us from the other by examples recorded in its histories. And when all this has been in vain to keep us back from sin, still God does not leave us nor forsake us. The covenant of *Jehovah-shammah*, "The Lord is there," becomes the covenant of *Jehovah-Tsidkenu*, "The Lord our Righteousness." As the atoning blood is sprinkled before the broken tables of the Law it teaches us we have indeed all sinned, but that with God in Christ there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. Christ Himself is "the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth." (*Dean Farrar.*) **He added no more.**—*The completeness of the commandments*:—These words may be very sad, or they may be very joyous. They would be sad if the Lord had turned away in anger, saying, "I will not speak again unto you"; but they may be very joyous, yea, musical after a heavenly sort, when God has said just enough to meet the necessity and the weakness of man, and when He forbears to add one word that would overtax his strength and throw his dying hope into melancholy and despair. You have, then, something like completeness of law in these Ten Commandments. Certainly you have what may be called temporary completeness; that is, a completeness adapted to the circumstances under which they were delivered. God could have added more; He need never have stopped: He might have been writing now—but does He delight to overburden us with technicality, or even with legislation of any kind? His delight is to give us as little as may be needful for proper discipline and to secure loyal, loving, and sufficient obedience. Does He give law to vex you? To prove you, not to bewilder and distract your memory. Has He written all the universe over with commandments? He has written the universe over with promises and blessings, and here and there His commanding word is written; for too many promises and benedictions, untempered by those severer words, might lead us into presumption, might turn away all our attention from the deeper and severer studies and pursuits of life, and might end in making us molluscous, and not strong and grand. Now, this is the kind of authority before which I bow with love and thankfulness. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Perpetual obligation of the moral law*:—The moral law is, from its very

nature, unchangeable, and of perpetual obligation; nor can we read the history of its promulgation without seeing that the greatest care was taken to distinguish it from all other laws, and more especially from those judicial and ceremonial laws which were given for the special guidance of the Jewish people. I. THE LAW IS OUR SCHOOLMASTER TO BRING US TO CHRIST. Leighton truly says, "It is a weak conceit, arising upon the mistake of the Scriptures, to make Christ and Moses as opposites. No, Moses was the servant in the house and Christ the Son; and being a faithful servant, he is not contrary to the Son, but subordinate to Him." By showing us what God requires, the law discloses to us our own manifold transgressions, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. It conveys to us much and important instruction concerning God and concerning ourselves. It teaches us His holiness and our unholiness, His righteousness and our unrighteousness, His infinite perfections and our fallen and imperfect condition. Thus the law, when listened to in the spirit of reverence and godly fear, must produce conviction of sin, and prepare the soul for the reception of Christ. It is our schoolmaster for this great end, that by holy discipline and faithful teaching it may lead us to Him in whom alone salvation is to be found, and of whom we read that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." II. THE LAW IS THE PERPETUAL RULE OF DUTY TO ALL WHO BELIEVE IN CHRIST. In our Divine Surety we see that the law has been perfectly fulfilled, its honour maintained, and its demands fully satisfied. And through His Almighty power, whose purpose is from everlasting, the righteousness which the Lord Jesus presented to the law is imputed to His people—it is unto all and upon all them that believe. It is the spotless robe in which they are accepted now at the throne of grace, and in which they shall be presented hereafter faultless before the throne of glory. How vainly do they talk who speak of the abrogation of the moral law! They forget that He has said, and will perform it, "I will put My laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people." Well, then, might the apostle triumphantly exclaim, "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law." Trusting in the Saviour, the believer is secure; but if his faith is genuine and sincere, he will ever seek to have that mind in him which was also in Christ Jesus, and he will be constrained to say, as the Psalmist did, "Oh, how love I Thy law: it is my meditation all the day!" (*W. Niven, B.D.*)

Ver. 24. **God doth talk with man, and he liveth.**—*Talking with God:*—There is no doubt that Adam was originally made for converse with his Maker. The voice of the Lord had no terrors for him until he had sinned. From that time forth the voice of the Lord was in itself calculated to strike terror into man. And as man shrank from God's talking to him, so we may feel assured he shrank from talking to God; and so, except in a very few cases, such as Enoch and Abraham and Job, and such holy men, a spirit of estrangement was set up. The great remedy is provided for us by our Lord Jesus Christ. He has taught us to call the Most High our Father. "Our Father which art in heaven." He has by this one name given us many reasons why we may go to God at all times, and talk with Him. Some reader of these pages is, perhaps, timid, and shrinks from the idea altogether. He says, I reverence God too much to embrace this idea of talking with Him; I can pray, and praise, but not talk. Well, to begin with, what is your prayer but one half of talking, your telling Him what you want? And what is the answer to prayer but the other half of talking—His telling you that He has heard and granted your petitions? But let us not insist on this, but rather turn to the word "Father," which Jesus has taught us to use. We cannot imagine a father living in the same house as his child, and never speaking to him; never wishing to be spoken to by him. Our common notion of a father, our experience of the relationship forbids the thought. Now there are not two kinds of fatherhoods; that of God is essentially the same as ours, only it is perfect (Matt. vii. 11). To come now to this talking itself. There are various kinds of talking. Prayer is no doubt a talking with God, but we shall not dwell upon it here. We mean by "talking" something—if we might so express ourselves with reverence—more free, less set, than our regular prayer. This talking is very independent of place; of church, or bedside, or our ordinary spot for prayer—and of times—of the morning, or noontide, or evening prayer; it has nothing whatever to do with them. Much of this talking is carried on when we are walking about, or perhaps in the train, or in the streets, or in snatches of time in business hours. And sometimes this

talking is carried on without any particular aim. We are not of set purpose offering adoration, or putting up prayer. We talk just because our hearts like to be in communion with Him; and we wish to say we love and honour Him. But what good will come of all this? 1. To begin with, our talking to God involves His talking to us. He never allows His people to keep on speaking to Him, without taking any notice of them, or making any answer. That would not be fatherly on His part. By His Spirit and by His providence He answers us in turn. 2. In such talking we might acquaint ourselves much with God, and be at peace. How much slavish fear—how much death-fear would take its departure, if we were accustomed to talk as with a friend with that One, in whose hands are all things, in that land whither we are going! 3. How near would this habit keep us to God in all our daily life! We never could stray far from Him if we kept it up. Matters which may be of the utmost moment, though we know it not, and which would never, perhaps, have been the subject of prayer and so of blessing, will thus be brought before Him, and be remembered by Him for good. 4. And when the time of need comes for strong prayer, this habit will be at work—it will give us encouragement. The God we have so often talked to will be no stranger. (*P. B. Power, M.A.*)

Ver. 27. **Speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee.**—*The duty of ministers:*—I. It is his special business and privilege TO APPROACH WITH FREQUENCY INTO THE PRESENCE OF GOD, AND TO KEEP UP AN INTIMATE AND FAMILIAR INTERCOURSE WITH HIM, that he may obtain enlarged disclosures of His will, and receive fuller manifestations of His character and excellence. 1. That one and the principal source of their information in reference to Divine things, is the inspired Word of God. 2. The Christian minister is to "go near, and hear what the Lord God says," by a close and enlightened attention to the dispensations of Providence. 3. The Christian minister is to "go near, and hear what the Lord God says," in the frequent and fervent exercise of secret prayer. II. The other department of duty attached to the ministerial office, as suggested by the text, is THE DECLARATION OF THE MIND OF GOD TO THE PEOPLE. 1. He is to speak unto the people *only* what God speaks unto him. 2. He is to speak *all* that God speaks to him. He must away with that base, time-serving principle, that would smooth down, or expunge altogether, the holy truths of God, to meet the vitiated tastes of degenerate men. (*Alex. Fisher.*) *Israel's commendable request:*—I. IT BESPOKE JUST FEELINGS OF GOD'S TERRIBLE MAJESTY, AND THEIR OWN LITTLENESS. It was the beginning of a right acquaintance with Him. The meeting at Sinai was a corrective at once for profane indifference and self-righteous security; it exhibited what God was. They had hitherto heard of Him by the hearing of the ear, but then their eyes saw Him; they were abashed and trembled. Who among the listening myriads could harbour light thoughts of Him with that quaking mountain in their sight, and that voice rolling in their ears? Who among them but must have felt his self-importance annihilated in that blaze of glory, and the conviction filling all his soul, "that men could not be profitable unto God, nor was it any gain to Him that they made their ways perfect"? The majesty of Jehovah burst upon them in its true proportions and splendour. Was it any wonder that they removed and stood afar off? Was it not a proper feeling that led them to retire from the presence, fearful, submissive, and adoring? II. It was further agreeable to God because IT BESPOKE A NEW FORMED CONVICTION OF THE STRICTNESS, DIGNITY, AND PURITY OF THE DIVINE LAW. The imperfect knowledge of God in which they had hitherto lived must have been attended with very false or defective notions concerning the requirements of the law and the measure of their own obedience. It is hard to say what their views upon the subject may have been, but it is not unwarrantable to suppose that they did not differ herein from their fellow-sinners of all times, whose error it has always been to underrate the demands made on them, and to overrate their own payment of obedience. One thing is certain, that they have first discovered an unbending strictness in the law for which they were not prepared, a minute and severe exaction which astonished and confounded them. Before this, their ideas of obedience might have been lax—a few transgressions seeming of little importance; and provision, they might have thought, was made in the law for human weakness, so as to admit to the credit of the doers of the law all not stained with gross crimes or perverse immoralities. But a far better lesson was taught them when they were brought forth by Moses to meet with God: they learned that sin of any the smallest kind, in thought even, was a transgression of the law, and that every sin was capital. Commandment after commandment, as it came from God's voice, only confirmed their condemnation.

Overcome with alarm, fearing lest each successive declaration of His will should be the reiteration of their doom, they took advantage of the first pause, and eagerly requested to be relieved from their most uncomfortable condition. III. The chief propriety of the Israelites' request lay in this: that IT BESPOKE THEIR SENSE OF THE NECESSITY OF A MEDIATOR—of some one to go between them and the dread Majesty of Heaven. Conscious that their sins had separated them from their God, they desired one to be the channel of free, unrestrained communion with Him; one who, without the terrors of the Godhead, could make known the Divine will as he should receive commandment, and take back to the Eternal their submission and their requests. Accordingly, because they could not think of a better, they selected Moses for this office. But the wisdom of Jehovah knew better how to supply their need, and shortly after made known to them His intentions in this matter (Deut. xviii. 15). You know that our Lord Jesus Christ gave ample proof that He was this prophet who should come into the world. He is the only one who can effectually mediate between guilty man and his offended God. Moses exceedingly feared; but Jesus cannot be disturbed by the awfulness of His own Godhead; yet He has veiled that Godhead in our human nature, that we may come with boldness to the throne of grace, no longer panic-struck by the sight of Sinai. He can best speak to us the things that God shall say, for He is in the Father, and the Father in Him. Such a Mediator God has given, according to His promise; and, because a sense of our need of a Saviour is the best preparation for accepting the Saviour, God approved the words in which the Israelites expressed such a sense. (*R. Henderson, M.A.*)

We will hear it, and do it.—*The duty of hearers:*—1. That it is their duty to hear, by which we mean it is their duty to place themselves within the reach of hearing, the Gospel; that is, it is incumbent on them to be regular in their attendance upon public ordinances. 2. That it is their duty to hear with attention. It is incumbent on them to collect their scattered thoughts, and ridding their minds of subjects of inferior weight, to direct them with perseverance to the truths which they assemble to hear. 3. That it is their duty to hear with candour. It is enjoined upon us to divest ourselves of all prejudices and partial affections, whether in reference to the truths that are set before us, or to the person that declares them; that it is our duty to avoid captiousness and disingenuity, and to hear with sincerity of mind all that the Lord God says. 4. That it is their duty to hear with faith. We must believe the record that God has given of His Son. 5. That it is their duty to hear with a view to obedience. "We will hear," said the Israelites, "and do it." Christianity is throughout a practical system. Though the method of salvation which it reveals is entirely of grace, and accomplished by Divine agency, to the utter exclusion of human merit, it nevertheless does enjoin unreserved obedience to the Divine law, and furnishes motives of the greatest efficacy to dispose us to yield it. (*Alex. Fisher.*) *The pastor's question and the people's answer:*—I. THE PASTOR'S QUESTION. "What shall I say unto them?" (Exod. iii. 18.) The Christian minister is an agent, not a principal. He is a messenger charged with the delivery of a message; but he does not originate that message, he receives it at the hand of another, and he is only responsible for its faithful delivery. This was the case with Moses: "The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you." (1) What are the essential truths which Scripture reveals to us, and which it is absolutely necessary for us to know? (2) What proportion do these truths bear to one another, and also to other truths not essential? What is their relative magnitude and importance? (3) How may the several truths be harmonised? Again, Scripture occupies itself with two great thoughts: the one having man as its centre; the other God. The thought concerning man is concerning man as a sinner: the thought concerning God is concerning God as a Saviour: and the two streams of thought unite in the further idea, that, namely, of salvation. Thus, to the pastor's question, "What shall I say unto him?" answer may be given thus. Declare to thy people, on the authority of God, their responsibility as men, and their ruin as sinners. But it is not enough that man should know himself as a sinner; such knowledge, if it stand alone, can issue only in despair. God has revealed Himself not only as "a just God," but also and emphatically as "a Saviour." II. THE PEOPLE'S ANSWER. Our responsibility is a joint responsibility. So far as we faithfully expound God's Word to our people, they are to receive it "not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the Word of God." Now this implies that they hear—1. Willingly. Not because custom requires or respectability demands. 2. Attentively. The willing hearer is commonly an attentive hearer. Lydia "attended unto the things which were

spoken of Paul." 3. Thoughtfully. Attention is one thing, thought is another. 4. Honestly, by which I mean without prejudice, with a single desire to know the will of God, and with the fearless unreserved purpose of doing it when known. "We will hear it and do it." 5. Prayerfully. Apart from the Divine blessing and the teaching of the Holy Spirit we preach and we hear in vain. And for that Divine gift we must pray. (*E. Bayley, D.D.*)

Vers. 28, 29. **The Lord heard the voice of your words.**—*God's hearing the voice of the words of His people*:—1. We may learn, from what is here said, that God notices and approves such religious professions and engagements as are in accordance with His Word, and by which we bind ourselves to do His will. "I have heard," He here says, "the voice of the words of this people." It is still true that He hears all the words that are spoken by men upon earth, that He hears them not as one by whom they are unregarded, but as one who marks them as indications of character, and to whom we must answer for what they have expressed. What need have we to pray, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips"! But here the words which God testifies that He had heard with approval were those which spoke the resolution adopted to obey and serve Him; and will He not take special notice of such words, observe whether they have been sincerely uttered, and whether the resolutions they expressed are acted on? 2. God greatly desires that we should adhere to our religious professions and engagements. "O that there were such an heart in them!" He said of the people who avowed their intention to hear and to do all that He should speak unto them by the mouth of His servant Moses. 3. It remains to be proved whether we will act up to our professions and engagements to be the Lord's. "O that there were such an heart in them!" God said when He heard the voice of the words of the people; an heart that is corresponding to their words, a mind and will to do according to what they had spoken. How lamentable often are the inconsistencies which may be observed between the professions of men and their practice, the changes which may take place from devotional feeling to utter worldly-mindedness! What a difference between the man calmly seated at the table of the Lord, his heart opening to every solemn and soothing impression, constrained to resolve that he will live to Him who died for him and rose again, and the same man it may be in the market, engaged in the bustle, hearing the clamour, and yielding to the various incitements which may be offered to covetous desire, or angry contention, or intemperate indulgence! But when we consider these things it becomes us to be jealous over ourselves, to consider deeply what we have undertaken. 4. That with our adherence to the engagements we have undertaken to be the Lord's and to serve Him, our present and our eternal interests are connected: "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments alway, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" Our portion of this world's good may be scanty, but, thus blessed, it will suffice for all our wants in regard to the body and the life that now is; and even if subjected to privations, we shall be sustained under them by the assurance of a Saviour's sympathy. We may find a religious life, a life of faith in the Son of God and of obedience to His commandments, effectual to promote even our present well-being. Who so blessed as the man who fears the Lord aright, and walks with Him in truth? His views and feelings and prospects may all partake of cheerfulness; they are all brightened by the light of hope. In the benevolent and devout affections which go forth to his fellow-men and rise to his Father in heaven, he has in him a well of living water springing up unto everlasting life. (*J. Henderson, D.D.*) *A sacramental meditation*:—1. God is witness to every word which we utter, especially to our solemn engagements to be His servants. 2. Those that say they will hear and do what God commandeth say well, and He is pleased with such declarations and resolutions. 3. The great God wishes that they who make good resolutions would keep them. 4. It would be happy for the professors of religion if they would abide by their good resolutions and act consistently. It would be well with them if there were always such an heart in them as there is at those solemn seasons. The expression plainly intimates that it is never truly well with mankind till they keep God's commandments, till they keep all His commandments; yea, till they keep them always. This is what God expects. Good resolutions without a consistent, sincere obedience, will not be accepted. Our happiness will be ensured. It will, as these words intimate, entail a blessing on our children. Yea, it will be well with us for ever. (*J. Orton.*)

They have well said all that they have spoken. O that there were such an heart in them!—*Perfect obedience*:—In this Divine saying there are several principal things concerned. 1. First there is a testimony of the great love of God. The words are, very expressively, the words of love and merciful regard. They strongly testify God's fatherly concern and disposition to do good towards His people. 2. There is a more melancholy feeling of regret that the people would not be found answering to this disposition of Divine love. God does not, indeed, plainly say that the people had not "such an heart," as is described in the text—an heart to "fear Him, and to keep all His commandments always"; neither does God say that they would not have such an heart; yet the impression left by the words is, that there would be a failure on the part of men, when God had done in His vineyard all that could be done, to keep it and to bless it. 3. It declares where the fountain of obedience must be; namely, in the "heart." There is the source of duty, as so many other scriptures testify: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." So it is said of the righteous man, "The law of his God is in his heart, and his footsteps shall not slide." So, again, "Thy words have I hid within mine heart, that I should not sin against Thee." 4. It is said, not simply "My commandments," but "all My commandments." And this difference will not be lost upon reflecting hearers. It is the building of integrity upon sincerity. It reminds us of the necessity of yielding to God, not a partial and divided obedience, but an entire one. 5. The word "always" is added, to guard us against "weariness in well-doing," as the words before it are directed to guard us against an imperfect and indolent aim. How many will be good for a while, and yet not endure to the end! How many begin a fair course, and break off from it! How many precepts and warnings are given us in Scripture, specially to guard us against this very thing! 6. It testifies the providential love and care of God towards His people from generation to generation; inasmuch as, after the preceding wish, the words run, "that it might be well with them and with their children for ever!" This is certainly a very striking and touching proof of Divine regard. It strongly confirms the doctrine of an eternal Providence. It also speaks powerfully towards the maintenance of an hereditary faith—a faith in the true and living God, handed down from father to son, until the purpose of God in creating man for this world shall have been fully answered, and "the fashion of this world" shall then "pass away." (*J. K. Miller.*) *Free-will*:—Consider—1. "Fear Me, and keep My commandments always." The Ten Commandments are not worn out and antiquated; they contain a moral element, a root of right action and right principle, which not only cannot be dispensed with, but must be enlarged upon. All contain a moral principle—love to God, love to man. But, as our Lord says, Christians must not content themselves with the observance of these Ten Commandments. Perfection must be our aim. Our love for man must be modelled after God's love, deep, catholic, unbounded; and our love for God must be reciprocal to His for us, an unrestrained overflowing gratitude, an unreserved devotion, an exhaustless loyalty. To keep His commandments we must go to the root of them. 2. "O that there were such an heart in them, . . . that it might be well with them." Plainly, then, the keeping of God's commandments ensures welfare. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." People talk of the burden of obeying God; it is tiresome, say they, and a thankless thing to be strict and religious. Those who do not try the pleasure of piety, of course will not understand that there can be any comfort in it. But there is more pleasure in serving God than in any other course. Ah! men may love the world, but the world will not satisfy the needs of their inner souls. But the fear of God does bring peace. There is an inward satisfaction, a consciousness of having done the right thing, which makes the heart glow with pleasure; not unfrequently, but not always, an outward blessing in earthly advantages—quite as often as in the case of the unprincipled—but, what is more than all, there is the peace of looking onwards. A step further. When the great plunge is made, and the soul finds itself in the world beyond, where silver and gold will not buy comforts, and intellect and sinews are powerless; there, in "the life which knows no ending," will those who have feared God, and believed in His Word, and kept His commandments, find to their joy that it is well with them: the treasures of that kingdom will be theirs: the honours of heaven, the pleasures of spiritual enjoyment, will be their own, when nothing else can give pleasure nor relief. 3. But mark: "Keep My commandments always." Steadfast, continuous, patient, must our obedience be; not hot and cold in the service of God; not a week of church-going and a week of dissipa-

tion. Piety consists in settled habits of love to God and man: and if your breath passes away at the moment when your evil spirit has the upper hand, what then? 4. Again, "O that there were such an heart in them that they would keep . . ." Here we have a Divine assertion of man's free-will. It lies with ourselves to choose—to do, or not to do, the will of God. He does not force us to be good, nor prevent us from being good. There is something in every heart, if honest enough to look at itself, which says, "It rests with thee, with thyself, whether thou wilt serve God or not." It is perfectly true, "By grace ye are saved; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God": yet St. Peter says, "Grow in grace," that is, enjoins growth; and therefore growth, somehow, is in our own power. We talk of our uncontrollable impulses; but self-control is in our own hands, and may be acquired by practice. You stand at a high window, or on the edge of a cliff, you look down, and an unaccountable impulse prompts you to jump down, to certain death, you know. Is it not at such a moment in your power to draw back? If you let the sensation linger, it takes a decided shape; you cannot say what may happen, you may jump down. But you can draw back at once. If you play with the temptation, you will soon find it stronger than your will; but not at first, for there is a promise of a way of escape from every temptation. In other words, you can resist; the aid of God, which rises above all false notions about fate, is guaranteed to you. (*G. F. Prescott, M.A.*) *Man's true attitude before God:*—There were three sentiments referred to when God declared of the Israelites that they had well said all that they had spoken. 1. That sinners must be consumed if they stood by themselves before God in His majesty. 2. That they need a Mediator. 3. That a Mediator once appointed must be unflinchingly obeyed. And forasmuch as God distinctly avouches His approval of that which the Israelites had uttered, we learn at once that to have a dread of His majesty, a desire for an Intercessor, and a determination to obey, make up the characteristics which the Creator searches after, and delights in, amongst His creatures. We have now to show that the three sentiments, into whose expression this speech is reducible, do virtually recognise the leading truths of religion; and there will then be no difficulty in understanding why God should have declared—"I have heard the voice," &c. Now we suppose that the secret spring of all impiety and all irreligion is the want of a due sense of the awfulness of God. Oh! for the trumpet peal, the thunder, and the lightning which heralded and announced the presence of the living God on Sinai! Something of the like scene takes place, something of the like instrumentality is introduced, whenever the Holy Spirit effects the work of conversion. The man is made actually to feel that God is to be reverenced, feared, and dreaded; that He is, and must be, a consuming fire to His adversaries. And then, when man is brought to the discovering by the law the infinite number of his offences against God, and the distinct impossibility that any one should be forgotten or overlooked—then, for the first time, can he be said to know rightly the awfulness of God; and then, for the first time, will he be softened in heart, and stricken in spirit, and confess from his very soul that the Almighty is terrible. But we go on to inquire what course it will be which the awakened man adopts when made thoroughly conscious that God is thus awful? It is enough if be discern but something of the spirituality of the law, of its infinite demands, of its unmitigated penalties; for he instantly perceives that it were as idle to think of grasping the sun and the stars as of obeying this law for himself, and there is at once wrought in man the persuasion that he cannot stand in his own strength and in his own merit, face to face with his Maker. He will be ready to lie down in the dust, and leave himself to be crushed beneath the weight of indignation, unless, indeed, he can find some being mighty enough and pure enough to rise as an intercessor, and plead his cause with the Most High. Add to this the third sentiment, and the illustration of our text will be complete. "Speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear and do it." You understand from this that the Israelites had, so far, right apprehensions of the office of the Mediator, as the expression may witness—not only to shield them from wrath, but to teach them their duty. There is no lack under the Gospel dispensation of a readiness to be delivered by Christ from the anguish which is the portion of those who die unregenerated. But unless Christ Jesus be received under all His characters, it is not possible that He should be received under any. Prophet, Priest, and King to His Church, I must submit to His teaching, and I must bow before His sceptre, if ever I look to be reconciled by His sacrifice. Those whom He washes in His blood, He instructs as a master, and reigns over as a monarch.

(*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The heart depraved:*—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE TERM "HEART," AS USED IN THIS PASSAGE AND THOSE WHICH CORRESPOND WITH IT? The same mind has a great variety of acts. When it acts in one manner, we call the mind thus acting, reason; when it acts in another manner, we call it conscience. In view of its constant production of feelings and emotions, we call it the heart, or will. Thus, the term "heart" is used to denote the mind, in respect to its capacity to exercise feelings towards God, His law, His government. 1. What, then, is the character of the natural heart? This is answered by the Word of God. All the acts of the natural heart are declared to be sinful. Whatever of evil exists in an individual of the human family, is charged ultimately on his heart. All evil, in thought, word, or deed, is described as having its origin here. 2. This doctrine is confirmed by the fact that God has promised to renew the hearts of His people. If Divine energy is requisite to turn the hearts of men, and to renew them in righteousness, then their depravity is truly alarming. 3. This view is confirmed by the prayers recorded in the Scripture for the renovation of the heart. 4. This view is sustained by the representations which the Scriptures make of its renovation (Prov. xxi. 1; Phil. ii. 13; 1 Cor. xii. 4-6; Eph. i.). The reclaiming of us from walking in the lusts of the flesh and of the mind, and our recovery from the control of our own hearts, and our creation in His image, are declared to be not of works, but of grace; and as new creatures the saints are declared to be His workmanship, created anew unto good works. II. HAVE WE NO CONTROL OVER THE FEELINGS AND DESIRES OF OUR MINDS? This branch of the subject is exceedingly important. It is admitted that the mind has some indirect control over the feelings and desires. But though the turning away of the eyes and the mind from meditating evil, and the contemplation of objects which are noble and excellent, may actually make a wide difference in the external character of men, and in the internal exercise of the unholy feelings and desires, yet it is to be remembered that the human heart, under all these operations, remains the same. If, after a long period, the eyes are again suffered to behold transgression, and the mind to meditate it, there will be found in every unregenerate bosom the same unholy feelings and the same elements of iniquity. Nor is it possible for the mind, by its own resolution, to hush them into silence. Let a strong affection seize the heart, and it controls and determines the volitions, but is not determined by them. Though their exercise may be checked, yet no power but that of Him, who commanded the winds and the waves to be still, can destroy them, and produce in their place the "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." III. ALL BEINGS ACT FREELY. The holy beings, who stand around the throne of God, act according to the law of God, and with this the holy desires and feelings of their hearts correspond. The saints in this life act freely. Their souls are renewed. The wicked act freely. They indulge, in different degrees, the desires and feelings of their hearts. These flow forth spontaneously, and all the determinations of their minds to neglect what God has required, or to do what He has forbidden, are produced by them. Thus they sin freely. But it may here be asked, are they not equally free to be holy? To this I reply, that I know of no other hindrance except their own hearts. "Ye will not come unto Me, that ye might have life." IV. IF ANY SHALL EVENTUALLY BE SAVED IT MUST BE ASCRIBED ALTOGETHER TO THE WILL OF GOD. I know, indeed, that this doctrine is not apt to be agreeable to the mass of mankind. But why should it not be? It is a truth—it is a melancholy truth—that the race of man has ruined itself. It is a sad truth that our hearts are depraved. It is a mournful fact that we will not come to Christ. Why, then, should we not rejoice to hear that God is better to us than we are to ourselves? Why should we not for ever praise Him for His unspeakable gift? (*J. Foot, D.D.*) *Good resolutions heard by God:*—God has heard our religious resolutions and engagements. First our private ones—that we would watch against such a tempter, pray for grace to resist such a temptation, to redeem the time and honour the Lord with our substance. Secondly, our more public and solemn ones; when we joined ourselves to His people, went to His table, and over the memorials of His dying love said "Henceforth by Thee only will I make mention of Thy name." But talking and doing are two things. Even amongst ourselves one goes little way without the other. Actions speak louder than words. What is lip service in religion! (*W. Jay.*) *Character not to be estimated by speech:*—Speech is one of the most uncertain criterions to judge of character as to reality or degree of religion. From education, reading, and hearing, persons may learn to talk well, may surpass others far better

than themselves, as an empty vessel sounds louder than a full one, and a shallow brook is more noisy than a deep river. Some speak little, concerning themselves especially, for fear of deception, or lest they should appear to be what they are not. Baxter says, in his life of Judge Hale, "I feared he was wanting in experimental religion, as he seldom spoke of his own spiritual views and feelings. But upon better acquaintance I found out my mistake. He had heard from many so much hypocrisy and fanaticism that he was urged towards the extreme of silence." The champion of truth has defended its purity and importance, contended earnestly and as far as argument and evidence goes, wisely for the faith. He has well said all that he has spoken. But where is the spirit of truth, the meekness of wisdom, the mind of Christ? Another in the sanctuary has acknowledged in language equally beautiful and true, "We have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep," &c. He has well said all that he has spoken. But where is the broken heart, the contrite spirit? How often after these confessions is the sermon founded upon them disliked, and the preacher condemned! A third has gone to his brethren in distress and justified the ways of God to man, but does he justify God's dealings with himself in time of trouble? He has well said all that he has spoken, but reminds us of Job's language, "Behold thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled." Men mistake themselves, though often sincere as they are earnest. They do not distinguish between impulse and disposition, outward excitement and inward principle. (*Ibid.*) **That it might be well with them.**—*Human happiness:*—I. OBEDIENCE TO DIVINE LAWS IS ESSENTIAL TO THE HAPPINESS OF THE WORLD. God's laws are not arbitrary institutes; they rise out of the constitution of things; they are not made for the sake of the Sovereign, but for the sake of the subject. II. RIGHTEOUSNESS IN MAN IS ESSENTIAL TO THIS OBEDIENCE. A right heart is a heart that both fears and loves God supremely. III. THE GREAT DESIRE OF THE ETERNAL FATHER, IN RELATION TO HUMANITY, IS THE EXISTENCE OF THIS RIGHT-HEARTEDNESS. (*Homilist.*) *The inward frame should correspond with the outward profession:*—I. THAT MEN OFTEN MAKE WHAT OUGHT TO BE THE MOST SOLEMN TRANSACTIONS WITH THE LORD ABOUT THEIR SOUL'S CONCERNS BUT SOLEMN TRIFLING WITH HIM. 1. Show how far a man may go in engaging himself to the Lord, and yet after all he may be but trifling. 2. Show wherein this trifling and slight work in such a weighty business doth appear. (1) It appears in persons engaging themselves to the Lord, without being at pains to prepare themselves, and bring up their hearts to the duty. (2) When people engage themselves to the service of the Lord, but do not give their hearts to Him. (3) When people have any secret reserves in their closing with Christ, as is the case when the heart is not well content to take Christ with whatsoever may follow this choice (Luke xiv. 26). (4) When people overlook the Mediator in their covenant of peace with God, but transact with God for peace and pardon without respect to the atoning blood of Christ. (5) This is turned into solemn trifling with God by people's not taking Christ for all, but only for making up that of which they may come short; thus endeavouring to patch up a garment of their own righteousness and of His together. (6) By persons making a covenant of works with Christ; the tenor thereof is, that if Christ will save their souls they shall serve Him as long as they live. (7) Persons lay hold on Christ with a faith of which the mighty power of God was not the forming principle (Eph. i. 19); but is merely the product of a person's natural faculties. 3. Point out how people come to turn such solemn work into mere trifling. (1) Because they have no due consideration of the worth and preciousness of their souls, they do not suitably value the great salvation (Matt. xxii. 5). (2) Because they know not their own hearts and their deceits (Jer. xvii. 9). (3) Because sin has never been made bitter enough to them. (4) Because they are hasty and indeliberate in their engaging. They fall a-building ere they count the cost (Matt. xiv. 25); what is rashly done is but slightly done in this matter. (5) Because they have never got a sufficient discovery of their own utter weakness and insufficiency. 4. We make some application. This doctrine may help us to see the reason why so many return with the dog to his vomit. There is an error in the first concoction. That you may beware of this we would exhort you to make sure work in your transacting with the Lord. Oh, do not trifle in so important a concern! To guard you effectually against this consider the following things—(1) Consider, this is to put, so far as you can, a solemn cheat on the great God (Gal. vi. 7). (2) It is to put a solemn cheat on your own

souls; you thus deceive your own souls. If you trifle with God you will find at length a sad disappointment (Isa. l. 11). (3) Consider the weight of the matter; the salvation or damnation of the soul is no small business; if you manage it right you may get your salvation sealed; if not, see Luke xiv. 24. (4) Consider, if you thus trifle with God in this matter, you will be discovered. (5) Consider that you have a deceitful heart. (6) If you make sure work you will find the eternal advantage of it. II. THAT A HEART SINCERELY AND SUITABLY CORRESPONDING WITH THE PROFESSION OF A COVENANTING PEOPLE IS A MOST VALUABLE AND EXCELLENT THING. 1. We are to show what such a heart is; and on this head the particulars shall be mostly taken out of the context. We observe—(1) That it has a view of the majesty and glorious perfections of that God with whom we have to do (Deut. v. 24). (2) It is filled with the fear of God. (3) It is a humble heart. (4) It is a heart full of wonder at the goodness of God, His condescension and patience towards sinners (vers. 24 and 26). (5) It is a heart convinced of the need of a Mediator, and resolved to employ Him in all causes betwixt God and them (ver. 27). (6) It is a heart taking the Lord only for their God. They professed they would have no more to do with idols, though it was not long ere their hearts turned to their old bias (Exod. xxxii. 8). (7) It is a heart for the Lord's work (ver. 27). It is a heart which inclines the man who has taken Christ's enlisting money to fight His battles; which willingly stoops to the yoke of Christ's commandments, and is set to walk in the way of obedience. It is a heart reconciled to the law of God. (8) It is a heart that has high and honourable thoughts of God (ver. 24). (9) It is a heart which the voice of God has reached (ver. 24). (10) It is a heart which takes up with the Lord for its God, even when He appears in the glorious robes of His perfect holiness. (11) It is a heart sensible of that vast distance which sin has made betwixt God and the soul, which has got such a sight of its own sinfulness, and God's holiness, that it sees there is no transacting with God but by a Mediator (ver. 27). (12) It is a heart reconciled to the whole law of God (ver. 27). It is not every heart which is such. They only have it "who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit" (Rom. viii. 1). (13) It is a heart which is for taking the law only out of Christ's hand as Mediator (ver. 27). The Mediator first makes the peace between God and the sinner, then bids the man work. (14) It is a heart ready for obedience (ver. 27). 2. Show that such a heart is a most valuable thing. It must be so; for—(1) Such a heart is God's delight: "O that there were such an heart in them!" This would give content to the heart of Christ. (2) It is that heart without which the largest profession, and the most express covenanting with God, is little worth. Without this heart men do but as the Lord's enemies, they lie unto Him. (3) The want of this heart is very grievous to the Spirit of Christ. (4) God accepts of the duty, and is well pleased with the bargain, where there is such a heart: "O that there were such an heart in them!" There wants no more to complete the bargain betwixt them and Me. Then, as they call Me their God, so would I call them My people by a saving relation. But where such is not, the contract betwixt Christ and the soul is written indeed, but it is not signed. (5) Where there is such a heart God will be well pleased with the person, and accept the duty, though it have many defects; albeit He be not pleased with these defects, yet in mercy He will overlook them: "O that there were such an heart in them!" As if He had said, O if they were but honest in the main, I would not be severe on them for every escape. The Lord will use the indulgence of a father for such infirmities. (6) They will never prove steadfast in the Lord's covenant without such a heart: "O that there were such an heart in them!" They have spoke fair, but they will never keep a word they say, for they have not such a heart. "For their heart was not right with Him, neither were they steadfast in His covenant" (Psa. lxxviii. 37). The heart is the principle of actions; such a heart is the principle of perseverance; and there can be no steadfastness without a principle (Matt. xiii. 6). (7) Such a heart enriches the man who has it. Christ is yours; all is yours—pardon, peace, and every blessing. III. THAT THE WORK OF COVENANTING WITH THE LORD IS SLIGHT WORK, WHEN IT IS NOT HEART-WORK; OR, THAT SOLEMN COVENANTING WITH THE LORD IS BUT SOLEMN TRIFLING WITH HIM, WHEN THE WORK OF COVENANTING IS NOT HEART-WORK. 1. To produce some evidences, that solemn covenanting is often nothing but solemn trifling, and not heart-work. It is of importance that you may be stirred up to take heed to the deceits which we may discover in this weighty business. With this view, we observe—(1) That apostasy and defection from the good ways of the Lord, persons returning again openly to the same courses which they pursued before. This is an evidence (2 Pet. ii. 19–22; Matt. xii. 45). (2) When

some lusts are maintained in Christ's room. (3) Persons making their covenant with the Lord a cover to their sloth and a pander to their lusts. (4) The barrenness of the lives of professors, nothing of the fruits of holiness appearing in their lives. (5) The having no communication of the life of grace from Christ to the soul (John xiv. 19). If the soul be truly united to Christ, it will partake of the root and sap of the vine (John vi. 57). (6) The having no contentment in Christ alone. 2. Show when covenanting is not heart-work, but a trifling business. It is so—(1) When the soul is not divorced from sin. The heart is naturally glued to sin, and it is impossible that the heart can at once be both for the Lord and lusts (Matt. vi. 24). The first marriage must be made void before a second can be made sure. (2) When the soul is not divorced from the law (Rom. viii. 4). (3) When the soul comes not heartily and freely to the Lord in His covenant (Psa. lxxviii. 34-37). The Lord will not meet that soul. He cares not for persons giving the hand, when they do not give Him their hearts. (4) When the soul comes to the Lord in His covenant for peace to their consciences, but not for victory over their lusts. (5) When the soul accepts of conditional promises, but does not accept of and receive the Lord Himself in absolute promises. (6) When there is not an absolute resignation of will to God. 3. Show the danger of trifling, and not making heart-work of this weighty business. This will appear if we consider—(1) That the Lord rejects the work (Mal. i. 13). (2) That it puts men more securely in Satan's grips than before. In this sense that holds true which you have in Isa. xxviii. 22. (3) That it exposes men to spiritual strokes (Jer. xlviii. 10). (4) That however quietly people may get it carried in life, it will bring them a sad disappointment at death. (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *National happiness and prosperity*:—I. THAT GOD IS SERIOUSLY CONCERNED FOR THE GOOD AND HAPPINESS OF NATIONS AND KINGDOMS, AS WELL AS THAT OF PARTICULAR PERSONS; AND MORE ESPECIALLY OF THOSE NATIONS THAT PROFESS HIS TRUE RELIGION. 1. Since it appears that God sits at the helm and steers all the affairs of mankind, and that public societies are more especially the objects of His providence, methinks this consideration should be a good antidote against all those troublesome fears we are apt to disturb ourselves with about the success of public matters. 2. This doctrine ought to teach us to depend altogether upon God Almighty, and upon Him only, for the good success of our affairs, either in Church or State, whenever they are in a doubtful or dangerous condition. II. THAT THE HAPPINESS AND PROSPERITY OF NATIONS IS TO BE ATTAINED THE SAME WAY THAT ANY PARTICULAR MAN'S HAPPINESS IS, THAT IS TO SAY, BY FEARING GOD, AND KEEPING HIS COMMANDMENTS. Name any nation that was ever remarkable for justice, for temperance, and severity of manners, for piety and religion, that did not always thrive and grow great in the world, and that did not always enjoy a plentiful portion of all those things which are accounted to make a nation happy and flourishing. And on the other side, when that nation has declined from its former virtue and grown impious or dissolute in manners, we appeal to experience whether it has not likewise always proportionably sunk in its success and good fortunes. III. THAT VIRTUE AND PIETY DO, IN THEIR OWN NATURE, TEND TO PROMOTE THE WELFARE AND HAPPINESS OF PEOPLES AND NATIONS. As, on the other hand, all vice and irreligion is destructive of human society. And this without respect to any appointment or decree of God that things should be managed in this way; but purely in the very nature of the thing. (*Abp. John Sharp.*) *The anxiety of God for the welfare of His people*:—The way to be happy is to obey God. And, though by nature we are inclined to question this, and think to find more enjoyment in self-indulgence, yet experience proves that the way to be happy is to obey God. It is sin which makes men miserable, and keeps them so. But "godliness has promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come." And thus, when God, in my text, called His people to obedience, it is that it may be well with them, and with their children after them for ever. I. THE SOURCE OF OBEDIENCE. This is the heart. All Christian obedience flows from the heart. And thus the Psalmist says: "When Thou shalt enlarge my heart, I will run in the way of Thy commandments." We are to love God, worship God, and obey God from the heart. There can be neither genuine love, nor worship, nor obedience, unless our hearts are engaged: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." God's claim is, "My son, give Me thy heart." God's appeal in the Gospel is addressed to our hearts; and for this reason—that "out of the

heart are the issues of life." It is the state of the heart which distinguishes the righteous from the wicked; and it is the heart which influences the conduct: it is the root which supports the tree, and makes its fruit either corrupt or good; and therefore God speaks to our hearts in the Gospel. He appeals to our gratitude. He endeavours to enlist our affections. He interests our hopes. He binds us to Himself by a sense of benefit. He provokes us to love and to good works by reminding us what great things He has done for our sakes. II. THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE OBEDIENCE WHICH IS REQUIRED FROM US. We are to fear God, and to keep all His commandments always. We are to keep all God's commandments, and we are to keep them always. 1. And, first, God requires universal obedience. It is the only obedience which will be accepted by God; He will not own a partial obedience or a divided heart. It is the only obedience which will give us confidence with God. "Then," says the Psalmist, "I shall not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Thy commandments." Our obedience must go to the length and breadth of the requirement. We must make no exceptions. What God enjoins we must do; and what He demands we must resign. To be His, we must be His wholly; and, without exception, our aim must be to keep all His commandments, and this always. 2. Our obedience must be constant, as well as universal. We can obtain no discharge from Christ's service except by apostasy; and, even then, the law is in force, though we have disowned the authority. In other services, a man may engage for a year or a day, and with the term of servitude the obligation to serve is cancelled; but nothing can release us from the Saviour's blessed service. And if we are really His, we have no wish to be discharged. We love our Master: we love His service: we are content with our wages. III. THE REWARD. "That it may be well with thee, and with thy children for ever." In keeping God's commandments there is great reward; and, to repeat the sentiment with which I began, the way to be happy is to obey God. Indeed, God has promised that it should be so; and none of God's promises can fail. You have a promise implied in the text. You have a similar one in Isaiah: "O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea" (xlviii. 18). Reward is a bold word for one of a sinful nature ever to use; but God has pronounced it, and we need not be afraid of what He has sanctioned. He connects obedience with reward, even in this world. And, when I look back upon life, I see written as with a sunbeam, "It shall be well for them that fear God, and keep all His commandments." It is an eternal necessity, founded on the constitution of things. "Great peace have they which love Thy law." And, just as sobriety and industry and talent and integrity will, to a certain extent, secure a man success in the affairs of this life, so obedience to God entails God's blessing. There is a promise, too, for the good man's children; and, blessed be God, it is often made good in this world. It is well with his offspring for his sake. His example had been their pattern; his name is their recommendation and passport; and his memory is bequeathed as a blessing, long after he has been gathered to his fathers, and has bid the world and all it contains an eternal adieu. (*J. Sandford, M.A.*) *Divine solicitude for man's salvation*:—I. THE SOLICITUDE HERE MANIFESTED. 1. Prompted by His relationship. 2. Prompted by His ownership. 3. Prompted by His love. II. THE WISH EXPRESSED. This wish certainly implies the natural evil of man's heart, an evil which is well nigh incredible. The heart is hard as stone. It is so callous that—1. It will not be impressed by fear. Even while Moses was receiving the commandments, they went and made a molten image, and forgot the great Jehovah. 2. It refuses to be crushed by judgment. How terrible the outward judgments visited at various times on the Israelites! Plagues, wars, famines, pestilence, serpents. Yet they were not one whit the more obedient. How many the inferior judgments visited on God's people still—bereavements, sorrows, trials, disease! But they are none the more obedient. 3. It is unwilling to be propitiated by love. III. THE REASON ASSIGNED. It is for our own sakes God desires obedience. 1. There is no happiness in opposition to God. 2. There is no happiness apart from God. Lessons: (1) If we want it "to be well with us," let us see to it that we are walking in His ways, which are ways of pleasantness. (2) And then what an encouragement we have in the text! God yearns for our obedience. Then He will assist us in the difficult attainment. (*Preacher's Analyst.*) *The blessings that attend a religious life*:—Let us attentively consider God's earnest desire,

and the rewards, which are here said to be dispensed by Him upon all those who do their utmost to attain to it. The former of these is thus expressed: "to fear God, and to keep all His commandments always." "The fear of God" is a common scriptural expression for the duties consequent upon a just sense of the relation in which we stand to Him, as our Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, and future Judge. For this relation embraces two things. It regards the All-wise and All-powerful Maker of the universe as the exalted Being on whom we have to depend for every temporal and every spiritual good, and whose will it should be our pleasure to perform. And it next regards ourselves as the poor beings of a day, whose breath is in their nostrils, and the imagination of whose hearts is only evil continually, admitted by covenant to be His children. It is this view of the relation in which we stand to God that renders the "fear of the Lord" equivalent in meaning to the fullest obedience to His commandments. Let us now turn our meditations upon the powerful motive proposed by God for our "fearing Him, and keeping all His commandments always." This motive is "that it may be well with us and with our children for ever." That we may value this motive properly, let us consider in what manner this blessing of God will attend His faithful and obedient servants. In its very nature, religion may be said to secure, more certainly than anything else, all the worthy objects of man's desire, and to bring with it all that properly deserves the name of blessing. Food and raiment, domestic comfort, health and safety, and length of days, are among the common temporal advantages of a religious life; that is, of a life of active labour or usefulness, recommended by honesty, temperance, humility, and innocence—in short, by the usual virtues of the Christian character. But this natural course of things, as we call it, is not that which attends every man in this life; nor does the Gospel hold out the same promises of temporal good as the law did. It often pleases the Almighty to try those that are His by a variety of, perhaps, apparently severe dispensations. And yet, in the midst of these afflictions, with respect to the principal concern of life—the state of the soul, and of their future prospects—it must be well with them; they must have higher and better joys than other men. Their views and sentiments, their hopes and desires, their feelings and ambition, have been regulated, raised, and refined. So true it is, that "all things work together for good to them that love God"; and that, although "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward," &c. But whether such spiritual discipline falls to the Christian's lot or not, it is "well with him," in reality, under all the occurrences of life; and if he is not so outwardly, or makes to himself imaginary troubles, from gloomy and distorted views of religion, let it not be imputed to the Gospel or any inherent fault of Christianity. Let us proceed to enumerate a few other of the blessings which are promised by God to attend the conscientious profession of it. In the Christian dispensation, of acceptance and adoption by God, the believer is mercifully promised pardon for sin upon repentance and faith in the great Mediator of the covenant into which he has been admitted. Another blessing is this. All his prayers are heard. But it is "well with" the man that fears God in another respect. He is blest with sound judgment, and the best of knowledge, upon the great concern of life. He is made "wise unto salvation." To use the words of the Psalmist, he "understands righteousness, and judgment, and equity, yea every good path," and may, therefore, look with pity upon the many arts and devices of those who mistake the nature of real wisdom, or consider anything as worthy of all their study which has not heaven for its scope or end. The last blessing of the truly religious man which I shall now mention, is this—that it will be "well with him" hereafter. His present trust and confidence in God and His promises—his full and zealous obedience to all His commandments always—will be repaid at length by an eternity of bliss. (*A. B. Evans, D.D.*) *The young Christian armed*:—I. A WORD OF WARNING. The fervent desire here expressed implies a sense of danger, and the probability that many would not continue in the fear and commandments of God. It is not by a single resolution, however firm, or by a single effort, however strong, that a war like this can be concluded. The man who thinks so, vastly underrates the power of his spiritual enemies, and does but build his house upon a foundation of sand, which, when the tempests of trial come, will give way beneath him. Nay, more, while this is true of all, it is especially true of young believers, who are going forth for the first time to assay their armour in the battle. Let me very briefly point out to

you some sources of this especial danger. 1. There is a risk in the very vehemence of your present resolutions. Your souls are now all on fire; you stand adoring before the wondrous truths of a redeeming God, and of an endless eternity. In the fervency of that holy enthusiasm, difficulties seem to vanish, and temptations to be as nothing; and you are liable to go forth, therefore, overrating your strength, and thinking that it will always be with you as it is at the present moment. 2. Another danger arises from your inexperience; and this in two points. As to the world around you, you are but standing as yet upon its very threshold, untried by the sense of individual responsibility, and untaught by the actual cares of life. You see before you the future, with its bright points, while its trials are mercifully hidden from you. You are like a traveller, who from some hill-top looks down upon the smiling valley beneath, radiant with a thousand lights, and spread before the eye in all its grace and beauty. He sees all the blended beauties of the scene, but the dangers which lie before his path are hidden from him in the distance. So you, in your view of your natural life, see its hopes and pleasures, while the troubles, labours, and anxieties which will be blended with them are unseen by you as yet. There is, consequently, a risk lest you value it too highly in the estimate of the worth of the two worlds to which you belong. And there is the greater danger of this, because in your view of the spiritual life your inexperience has an effect exactly the reverse of what it has in your temporal. Here you see all its difficulties, its self-denials, its privations; but the deep peace it brings, the wondrous glimpses of God, which cheer the soul meanwhile, as Stephen was cheered, when, through the opened heavens, he saw the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of God—these as yet you know not: these remain to be experienced, and can no more be told in words, than you can communicate to the dull canvas the gleaming radiance of a noontide sun. 3. There is a peculiar danger in the very buoyancy and animation of spirits, and that disposition to thoughtlessness, which characterise our early years. These things, if guided by grace, may indeed but give a greater constancy to zeal, and a warmer fervency to love; but unless they are carefully watched and disciplined, they may likewise lead into sore temptations, may open many a path of danger, and even seduce you unawares into sin. II. A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT. If the text clearly implies danger, it implies with equal clearness the possibility of that danger being overcome. He who knoweth all things, and from whose omniscience is not hidden either one outward temptation or one inward thought, would never impute as a fault to the soul that which was beyond its power. It is very needful that this, too, should be borne in mind; for with what courage shall we wage a hopeless war, or attempt to accomplish anything, if we feel, crushing our spirit all the while, the conviction that success is impossible? Here, however, all is possible, if we have but the heart to do it—if there be in us no hesitating thoughts, no doubtful purposes, no affections which cling still to the world. Observe how everything is supposed to be easy, if this one thing were but possessed —"O that there were such an heart in them!" not such as beats naturally in the breast of man, self-willed, carnal in its tastes, shrinking in unholy repugnance from God, and finding in the things that perish its choicest treasure, but such a heart as turns simply and wholly to the redeeming Saviour, a heart quickened with a heavenly life. III. A WORD OF ADVICE. 1. If you are earnestly desirous of fighting this holy warfare, and attaining by God's help these promises, never permit yourselves to neglect the means of grace. If you are not in earnest, do not deceive yourselves with a name; but have the courage to appear to your own hearts what you really are—strangers to the promises, and aliens to the covenant of grace. 2. Let me press upon you the duty of a daily self-examination. 3. Look well to the character of those whom you choose as the friends and companions of your life. (*E. Garbett, M.A.*)

Ver. 33. **That ye may live, and . . . prolong your days.**—*Prosperity and adversity*:—I. We fall, I conceive, into a very inaccurate method of speech, when we say that the prize which God proposes to His people is set forth in one of these clauses; the duty, or performance by which they are to earn that prize, in the other. Moses teaches his countrymen that God has conferred upon them the highest prize which man can conceive, freely and without any merit on their part. II. Is there no duty, then, enjoined in the words of my text? Does it merely speak of a blessing or a privilege? Certainly when it is said, "Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you," it must be meant that

there was something required on the part of the creature as well as something bestowed by the Creator. If we believe that an actual living being to whom we are related has put us in this way, and that it is a way of dependence upon Himself, we can understand how the preservation of it becomes a duty to Him; we begin in fact to know what duty is. If, finally, we believe that He who puts us in this way is the only person who can keep us in it, or prevent us from going out of it, we may feel that His command is itself a power; that it does not merely say, "Thus and thus you must do, thus and thus you must not do"; but, "This will I enable you to do, this will I prevent you from doing." III. We come then at length to this class of blessings which are shortly gathered up in the words: "That ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess." It is here signified in very simple, clear language, which admits, I conceive, of no double sense, that a people in a right, orderly, godly state shall be a well-doing people; a people with all the signs and tokens of strength, growth, triumph; a people marked for permanence and indefinite expansion. I cannot put another meaning upon these words; I should think that a wish to dilute their force was a proof of the greatest carelessness about the authority from which they proceed, as well as of the most shocking inhumanity. If it be the distinction of saints and spiritual men that they do not trouble themselves about the external prosperity of a land, that they do not care whether the oxen are strong to labour, whether the sheep are bringing forth thousands and ten thousands, whether there is no complaining in the streets; if they are so occupied in the future as to have no interest in the present, too busy with their souls to have leisure for thinking about the ruin which may be threatening the bodies of their fellow-men — then I say at once Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, were not saints and spiritual men. Since they held that God's order was the perfectly right and living order, they could not but think that all disorder, all wrong and death which had invaded it, must have come through man's neglect to fulfil the part which had been assigned him;—through his unwillingness to till and subdue the earth which he was meant to till and subdue; through his idleness and distrust and self-seeking, his refusal to walk in the ways which God had commanded. IV. And therefore it cannot be true—the whole history of the Jews declares it not to be true—that the blessings of adversity were unknown to them, were reserved for a later period. Which of the good men of the Old Testament was not proved in a furnace? Into whose soul did the iron at some time not enter? It was not because they believed in God's promises to their nation, and were sure that its outward prosperity must and would at last correspond to its inward health and vitality; it was not because they longed for the earth to bring forth and bud, to have heaps of corn upon it, that its presses might burst forth with new wine; it was not on this account that they had to endure less of inward sadness, or fewer reproaches from the kings and priests and people to whom they spoke. No; the more strong their feeling was that God had chosen their nation and made a covenant with it, the greater was the struggle with their individual selfishness. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*)

CHAPTER VI.

VER. 4. **The Lord our God is one Lord.**—*Of the unity of God:*—I. WHY GOD IS CALLED THE LIVING GOD. 1. In opposition to, and to distinguish Him from, dead idols (Psa. cxv. 4–6; 1 Thess. i. 9). 2. Because God is the fountain of life, having all life in Himself (John v. 26), and giving life to all things else. All life is in Him and from Him. (1) Natural life (Acts xvii. 28; 1 Tim. vi. 13). (2) Spiritual life (Eph. ii. 1). (3) Eternal life (Col. iii. 4). II. WHY GOD IS CALLED THE TRUE GOD. To distinguish Him from all false or fictitious gods (1 Thess. i. 9). There is a twofold truth. 1. Of fidelity or faithfulness. Thus God is true—that is, faithful. But that is not the truth here meant. 2. A truth of essence, whereby a thing really is, and does not exist in opinion only. The meaning is, that there is a true God, and but one true God. III. THAT THERE IS BUT ONE GOD. 1. The Scripture is very express and pointed on this head (chap. vi. 4; Isa. xliv. 6; Mark xii. 32; 1 Sam. ii. 2; Psa. xviii. 31; Isa. xlvi. 9; 1 Cor. viii. 4, 6). 2. This truth

is clear from reason. (1) There can be but one First Cause, which hath its being of itself, and gave being to all other things, and on which all other things depend, and that is God; for one such is sufficient for the production, preservation, and government of all things; and therefore more are superfluous, for there is no need of them at all. (2) There can be but one Infinite Being, and therefore there is but one GOD. Two infinites imply a contradiction. (3) There can be but one independent Being, and therefore but one God. (*a*) There can be but one independent in being; for if there were more gods, either one of them would be the cause and author of being to the rest, and then that one would be the only God; or none of them would be the cause and author of being to the rest, and so none of them would be God, because none of them would be independent, or the fountain of being to all. (*b*) There can be but one independent in working. For if there were more independent beings, then in those things wherein they will and act freely they might will and act contrary things, and so oppose and hinder one another; so that, being equal in power, nothing would be done by either of them. (4) There can be but one omnipotent. (5) The supposition of a plurality of gods is destructive to all true religion. For if there were more than one God, we would be obliged to worship and serve more than one. But this it is impossible for us to do, as will appear if ye consider what Divine worship and service is. Religious worship and adoration must be performed with the whole man. (6) If there might be more gods than one, nothing would hinder why there might not be one, or two, or three millions of them. No argument can be brought for a plurality of gods, suppose two or three, but what a man might, by parity of reason, make use of for ever so many. Hence it is that when men have once begun to fancy a plurality of gods, they have been endless in such fancies and imaginations. (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *Trinity and unity*:—I. The Scriptural Trinity implies THAT GOD IS ONE. So far from being against the cardinal truth of God's unity, it actually assumes it. The Trinity of our faith means a distinction of persons within one common indivisible Divine nature. If we ask, What is the chief spiritual benefit which we derive from the knowledge of the unity of God? the answer is this: The unity of God is the only religious basis for a moral law of perfect and unwavering righteousness. It is a unity of moral character in the Ruler, and therefore of moral rule in the universe. It is such a unity as excludes all conflict within the Divine will, all inconsistency in the Divine law, all feebleness in the Divine administration. II. WHAT RELIGIOUS ADVANTAGES DO WE REAP FROM THE FRESH CHRISTIAN DISCOVERY OF A TRINITY WITHIN THIS UNITY OF THE DIVINE NATURE? 1. To this question we answer, that the doctrine of the Trinity has heightened and enriched our conception of the nature of God. 2. This doctrine affords a basis for those gracious relations which it has pleased God to sustain towards us in the economy of our salvation. (*J. Oswald Dykes, D.D.*) *One God*:—I. The belief in one God GIVES REST TO THE ACTIVE MAN; it satisfies his intellectual, his moral, his emotional, his spiritual being. II. In the field of scientific research this faith INSPIRES US WITH A CONFIDENT HOPE OF REDUCING ALL PHENOMENA TO LAW, since all proceed from one hand, and express one creative will. This faith supplies that which physical science lacks and yet requires—namely, a prime mover and a sustaining power. III. In morals this faith ACTS MOST POWERFULLY UPON OUR WILL, and rouses us to exalt the higher nature and repress the lower. Polytheism deifies the human passions. But if there be only one God, then our highest aspirations must give us the truest image of Him. IV. Faith in one God BRINGS PEACE TO THE MOURNER AND TO THE SUFFERING, for we know that He who now sends the trouble is the same God whose kindness we have felt so often. Having learned to love and trust Him, we are able to accept suffering as the chastisement of a Father's hand. If there were gods many, we could regard the troubles of life only as the spiteful acts of some malevolent deity; we must bribe his fellow-gods to oppose him. V. UPON ONE GOD WE ARE ABLE TO CONCENTRATE ALL THE POWERS OF THE SOUL, our emotions are not dissipated, our religious efforts are not frittered away upon a pleasing variety of characters, but the image of God is steadily renewed in the soul, and communion with God grows ever closer. (*F. R. Chapman.*) *The Lord our God*:—I. THE SUPREMACY OF THE LORD. The one Being—incomparable, unrivalled. 1. As regards His existence. Alpha and Omega. Uncreated. Independent. From everlasting. 2. As regards His decrees. Consummate wisdom. 3. As regards His operations. Needs no assistance. Makes no mistakes. 4. As regards His faithfulness. The one immutable God. 5. As regards His love. Admits no rival. Has no equal. 6. As regards His claims.

The only Being who has a right to our praise, service, love. II. THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE LORD. "Our God." 1. Has made a covenant with us (Exod. vi. 4–8; Heb. viii. 6). 2. Has adopted us. 3. Has endowed us. With Himself. His power, wisdom, &c., are all at our service. 4. Has owned the relationship. III. THE COMMAND OF THE LORD. "Hear, O Israel." God would have us think much on this twofold theme—what He is, and what He is to us—1. To check presumption. 2. To stimulate faith. 3. To increase devotedness. 4. To dissipate fears. 5. To impart comfort. 6. To fire love. (*R. A. Griffin.*) *The one Jehovah*:—Knowledge as to the fact that there is one God is of high importance to its possessor. In connection with this statement, as to its importance, it may be predicated that evidence has never been adduced to prove that there is more than one God—the one Jehovah. Evidence upon evidence, however, can be adduced to prove that there is one God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the Upholder and Proprietor of all things. In evidence of this, we have only to look around us upon the things that exist; for they all speak of God as the Great First Cause of their existence. For the sake of argument, however, let it be supposed that the proposition is submitted that there are more Gods than one, how could this proposition be supported? How could there be any being equally high with the Highest, or equally excellent with the Most Excellent—two super-superlatives? The idea is not tenable. Not so, however, is it with the idea that there is one God, one Supreme Ruler in the universe; and from whom the universe itself had its origin. This idea has manifold support; and, from among the many evidences that might be adduced in support of it, reference may be made to that unity of design which is manifest throughout all the works of God: as in these works, so far as they can be surveyed by the human mind in present circumstances, this unity, embracing simplicity, testifies to the infinite wisdom and power of a Designer. The extent to which this truth might illustratively be carried out can only be glanced at in present circumstances. New countries, for example, are constantly discovering themselves to the eye of the traveller; and yet, go where he may, he still finds that the old laws of nature, by the appointment of Heaven, come into view. Many new plants may be found on foreign shores; yet all of them indicate the necessity of their continuance to exist in the adhesion of the pollen of the stamens to the gummy stigma of the pistil. Yes; and new animals may be found in different parts of the globe. Whatever their variety, however, they are all maintained by the same earth, cheered by the same sun, invigorated by the same breath, and refreshed by the same moisture. Go where we will the elements act upon each other, the tides uniformly fluctuate; and true to its index is the instrument, when properly adjusted, by which the ship may be steered. Man, too, go where we may, has the same origin, the same general external construction, and the same characteristics by which he is distinguished from creatures of a lower grade. Now whence, or for what purpose, does this uniformity of design exist? The text replies—"The Lord our God is one Lord," one self-existent, all-wise, and independent Jehovah, and of whose existence and attributes there is incontrovertible evidence, not only in things that exist, but in the unity, simplicity, and harmony of those principles which operate, with marvellous uniformity, throughout every department of the material world. In Him, as thus revealed, we have a God to adore, worthy of our worship, worthy of our confidence, and whose goodness may well captivate with thrilling emotions every affectionate impulse of the soul. But an awful question here comes into my mind. Is this one Jehovah, so plainly revealed, my God? How can I, without arrogant presumption, cherish the thought that I may find acceptance in the sight of Him, compared with whom I am as "nothing; less than nothing, and vanity"? His greatness, and my insignificance; His holiness, and my impurity, seem to repel every ground on which the hope of acceptance with Him would seek to rest. Through what medium, honouring to God, can His favour ever reach this poor heart of mine? How can condescension, in God, to take notice of me, ever accord with His own infinite purity, justice, and dignity? The case transcends my reason: it is too great for me. I am as one utterly out at sea in a frail bark, without a rudder or a hand to guide it. Here, in this labyrinth of perplexity, the great Jehovah might have left me to the guidance of my own mental wanderings till the long night of death had closed over my head. But in great goodness He has not left me thus! With a condescension upon which created intelligence, of itself, never could have reckoned, He has unfolded to me the mystery, that, while there is only one God, there are yet, in the essence of this one God, or Godhead, three distinct personalities

—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—each of them fulfilling a separate department in the economy of human redemption; and that, while thus separate in their gracious manifestations, they are nevertheless one as to undivided essence. The day now begins to dawn somewhat upon my hitherto benighted soul; and though its light be dim amid the darkness through which it comes, there is in it an intimation that, like the dawn of morn, its light shall increase. Be it borne in mind, however, that the revelation indicated is only intended to suit the infancy of our existence in the life that now is; and that while it does not tell us all that in due time we shall be made to know, it tells us all that our present circumstances require. (*Thos. Adam.*) *The unity of nature proclaims one intelligent Mind:*—Owing to the imperfection and limitation of our powers, we are obliged to deal with fragments of the universe, and to exaggerate their differences. But the more profound and varied our study of the objects of Nature, the more remarkable do we find their resemblances. And we cannot occupy ourselves with the smallest province of science without speedily becoming sensible of its intercommunication with other provinces. The snowflake leads us to the sun. The study of a lichen or moss becomes a key that opens up the great temple of organic light. If we could understand, as Tennyson profoundly says, what a little flower growing in the crevice of a wayside wall is, root and all, and all in all, we should know what God and man are. And the same unbroken gradation or continuity which we trace throughout all the parts and objects of our own world pervades and embraces the whole physical universe—so far, at least, as our knowledge of it at present extends. By the wonderful discoveries of spectrum analysis, we find the same substances in sun, moon, and stars which compose our own earth. The imagination of the poet is conversant with the whole, and sees truth in universal relation. He attains by insight the goal to which all other knowledge is finding its way step by step. And the Christian poet and philosopher, whose eye has been opened, not partially, by the clay of Nature's materials, worked upon by human thought so that he sees men as trees walking, but fully and perfectly, by washing in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, whose pure heart sees God in everything, and in God's light sees light—he stands at the shining point where all things converge to one. Wherever he turns his inquiring gaze, he finds "shade unperceived so softening into shade, and all so forming one harmonious whole," that not a link is wanting in the chain which unites and reproduces all, from atom to mountain, from microscopic mass to banyan tree, from monad up to man. And if the unity of the tabernacle proved it to be the work of one designing mind, surely the unity of this greater tabernacle, this vast cosmos, with its myriads of parts and complications, proves it to be no strange jumbling of chance, no incoherent freak of fortuity, but the work of one intelligent Mind having one glorious object in view. (*Hugh Macmillan, LL.D.*) *The unity of God:*—1. Here religion and philosophy are in accord. The saints and the scientists alike maintain the unity of God. Authority and reason go thus far together. God must be one; cannot be other than one. 2. The revelation of God is of necessity progressive. All education is progressive, because all knowledge is conditioned by the mind of him who knows. You may take a whole ocean of water, but you can get only two pints of it into a quart cup. The water is conditioned, limited, by the cup. Thus is knowledge conditioned by the mind. 3. The highest truth which the mind can touch is truth about God. The supreme knowledge is knowledge of God. But this, like all other knowledge, is conditioned by the mind of him who knows. God changes not; but year by year in the life of a man, and age by age in the life of the race, the conception of God changes. It is like the ascent of a hill which overhangs a plain. The plain does not change, does not get wider, mile by mile, as the beholder climbs. No, the beholder changes. The higher he gets, the more he sees. 4. Thus religion grew out of belief in God as many, into belief in God as one. Some see a trace of this old change out of the polytheistic into the monotheistic idea of God in the fact that in the beginning of the Bible the Hebrew name of God is plural, while the verb which is written with it is singular. Men began to see that the gods of their imperfect creed were but personifications of the attributes of the one God. 5. It was a hard lesson to learn. It is evident in the Old Testament that faith in the unity of God won its way little by little. The best men held it, but the people in general were slow to believe it. Even in the Psalms, God is often spoken of as the greatest of the gods. 6. All religion, however imperfect and mistaken, is an endeavour after a better knowledge of God. And as men grow, they are able to know more—to know more about

everything, even about God. God is able to reveal Himself more and more. At first, every tree is a god. Then there is a god of the trees, and then of all the universe and of man included in it. God is known as one. 7. We have not yet learned all the truth of God. We are not universally sure, *e.g.*, that God cares more for deeds than creeds. But we have learned that God is one; we have abandoned polytheism. 8. We believe in God the Father, and we believe in God the Son, and we believe in God the Holy Ghost. But there is one God, and there is none other. The word "person," which the old creed-makers used to express these different ideas of God, has given rise to endless confusion. With us a person is an individual. But this word "person" comes into English out of Latin, and in Latin was a blundering translation of a wiser word in Greek. It means "distinction." There is one God in threefold distinction. The Divine nature is complex as our human nature is. And there are three ways of thinking about God, corresponding to the being of God, ways which are not only true but essential, so that if we are to think of God aright we must think of Him in all these three ways. (1) God is the source of life, the infinite, the eternal—the Father. (2) God has manifested Himself to us—so that we may know Him and love Him, and know that He loves us—in the plainest and most universally understood of all possible manifestations, in a human personality; the Word become flesh—the Son. (3) And God is ever present with us, speaking to all men everywhere, in the past and in the present, teaching, warning, inspiring—the Holy Spirit. 9. Thus the Christian doctrine, taking that old truth that "God is one," and holding to it, draws new truth out of it. It is an advance upon monotheism, as that was upon polytheism. It meets the longings of the heart. It answers the eager questions of the race. (*George Hodges, D.D.*)

Ver. 5. **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.**—*The love of God*:—1. This verse is the meeting-point of the law and the Gospel. Very wonderful it must have sounded in the ear of Israel. To be bidden, not only or chiefly to fear Him as the God revealed in lightnings and thunderings and voices on Sinai; not only or chiefly to keep themselves from provoking a wrath so awful, a jealousy so sensitive and so terrible; but to love Him, to love Him as the whole of duty, to love Him notwithstanding—nay, partly because of—His incommunicable glory! 2. The words are very strong, very touching: "With all thine heart." Let the affections, even the emotions, find in God their object and satisfaction. "And with all thy soul." Let the immortal thing within thee, let the everlasting being which thou art, come out towards this Lord God, and devote itself, in the central life, in the moving will, to Him as its Creator, Owner, Father, Saviour, Comforter. "And with all thy might." Not with the feeblest, but with the mightiest of all thy faculties of thought and speech and action—with the mightiest of all, at their mightiest, in a devotion of which man is the priest and self the sacrifice. 3. Two things lie on the surface of the text. (1) The first is, the testimony here borne to God. He asks our love. What an idea must this give of His character! We all know how it draws us towards a man to know that, being active, manly, strong, and supporting many burdens of care, and work, and thought, and responsibility, he also has a warm heart—nay, even is womanly in his tenderness; craves affection; is touched by the response of gratitude; loves love; has even a void place within till love fills it. Does not this raise him in your esteem? The tenderness is the complement of the strength. (2) And what is this love which God asks of us? It is not different in kind, it differs only in direction, from that which we give one to another. Think what love is, as you give it to your nearest and best beloved. Think of it in its spring in the heart; think of it in its course day by day; think of it as it prompts the word and the act that shall give pleasure; think of it as it makes presence a delight and separation a sorrow; think of it as it wrings from your soul the sob of anguish when you have vexed or wounded or wronged the object of it—and there, in those experiences common to all of us, you have the affection which God Himself here calls love, and which He asks of us. 4. And now reflect upon the mighty consequences and inferences of this demand. See how it deals with life—the life of men, the life of nations—in so far as it is received. (1) There is a thirst, in all of us, for liberty. Some men idolise liberty; care not if it run to licence; abhor, not tyranny alone, but authority; ask, "Who is lord over us?" or mingle truth and falsehood, saying, "Even in religion there can be no obligation." See in this text how God offers liberty. He bids us love. He would make us free by one great Abolition Act. He would strike off the fetters of religion

itself. (2) There is another cry of the age—and that is, equality. An impatience of differences; an obliteration of distinctions, clamoured for on the one side—on the other, half-yielded, half-resisted; selfishness resisting—vanity, whether the vanity which would discern, or the vanity which would lead, or the vanity which would please this echoing the cry and yielding. This is one cry of equality. Another is the impatience of God in equalities—those, I mean, which He keeps in His own power; differences of constitution, of fortune, or circumstance; differences which make one man prosperous and another unsuccessful, etc. Now we see how the offer of God's love bears upon all these things. If all may have this—and if nothing but this can satisfy, endure, give peace, or survive death—where is inequality? Where, in a moment or two will it be? (3) It is needless, yet delightful, to record, in harmony with the last reflection, the operation of this love of God upon the unity of the human brotherhood. Philanthropists, as well as revolutionists, talk much of fraternity. Christians know that brotherhood hangs upon falsehood; that only they who love from the heart "Him that begat" will ever love from the heart "the begotten of Him." (*Dean Vaughan.*) *The great commandment of Moses and Christ recommended to Jews and Christians:*—I. I am to consider THE NATURE AND EXCELLENCY OF THAT TEMPER OF MIND WHICH YOU ARE TO EXERCISE TOWARDS THE JEHOVAH OF ISRAEL. If you are men and have the feelings of humanity, I need not explain to you what love is. Without it, the names of father, son, brother, friend, and every charity of life, are vanity and a lie. But, though I refer to your hearts for the feeling of the temper we speak of, yet remember that as it varies in purity, in strength, and tenderness towards our connections on earth, so will it differ much more when exercised towards the Lord our God. The love of God is founded in just apprehensions of His character. The very idea of God should contain in it all possible perfection in an infinite degree. There is no weakness in Him that thou shouldest despise Him and cast off His fear. He hath not burdened thee, that thou shouldest be weary of His service. He hath not wronged thee, that thou shouldest hate Him and break His commandments. The love of God is also founded on a due sense of His mercies. He hath given us life, and breath, and all things; and in Him we live, move, and have our being. He is perfectly good in Himself, and perfectly good to us, and to love Him with all our heart and to serve Him with all our strength is our rational service. If we do not, the very stones will cry out against our ingratitude, and evil, as well as good, angels will condemn us when we are judged. Consider how honourable this temper of love is to the blessed God, and to His happy worshippers. It exhibits Him in the lovely and confidential character of the Universal Father, the Father of mercies, and the God of all hope and of all consolations. It sheds the oil of gladness on all the springs and wheels of duty, and makes His service perfect freedom. For love is liberal in its gifts, unwearied in its services; it casts out tormenting fear, and indulges no suspicion in the unlimited confidence it reposes on the God of our salvation. Finally, it is a principle of universal obedience to all God's commandments, to all men, at all times, and under all circumstances. Love is the ruling affection of every soul of man, and, though false to every other principle, to this he will be ever true, as the needle to the pole. For where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also; and if the love of God exist in the soul, it will regulate and subject to itself every other principle. If we reject this Divine principle, how shall we supply its place? Faith itself is unprofitable but as it worketh by love. Obedience is a lifeless form of godliness but as it is animated by the spirit of love. II. THE MEASURE OF THAT TEMPER YOU ARE COMMANDED TO EXERCISE towards the Lord your God: "Thou shalt love Him with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." The love so strongly marked is of no ordinary character. It is pure, grateful, strong, affectionate, fervent, and reverent; specifically different from all earthly affection. As the light of the sun darkeneth all other lights, so doth the love of God absorb other principles. It requires us cheerfully to recognise Jehovah as Father of our spirits, the God of our lives, and the Lord of our possessions: as entitled to dispose of us, of our wives, our children, our fortunes, our time, our talents, our reputation, and our influence, when and how He pleaseth. Nor is this requisition unreasonable or unrighteous. For we, and all we have, are His. He loveth us better than we love ourselves. He is wise, under every circumstance of life and death, to know what is best for us, in this world and in the next; and His power is able to effect all His goodness shall prompt and His wisdom shall contrive. In the absolute surrender of ourselves to Him lieth all our honour, our happiness, and

our security. What greater honour, then, O ye Jews, can Christians show to the venerable Moses than to make this precept regulate every secret of their souls? This may appear wonderful, and it would be so, indeed, were Christianity opposed to Judaism. But, in truth, they are one and the same religion, as the light of the dawn is the same as the light of the day, as the rough outline is the same as the living picture, finished by the same great Master. It was to establish the law of love, as well as to atone for sin and to procure the Holy Spirit, that our Immanuel sealed His love to God and man on the altar of His Cross. We love Him because He so loved us, and His love constraineth us to love His enemies and ours. III. APPLY THE SUBJECT TO JEWS AND CHRISTIANS. And, first, I address myself to both. Do you love Jehovah your God with all your heart? That is, better than you love the world and all that is in it? Better than life itself? If any man think he love God, how doth he prove the fact? "If ye love Me," saith God, "keep My commandments." "This is the love of God," saith the true worshipper, "that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous." Ye Jews, ye must be circumcised with the circumcision not made with hands, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; whose praise is not of man, but of God. Ye Christians, ye must be born again, not of water, but of the Spirit. Hearken, O men of Israel. Had your fathers believed Moses, they would have believed Christ. Had they loved God, they would have received Him who came forth from God. (*Melville Horne.*) *On love to God:*—In this publication of His law God clothes Himself with this title, "The Lord thy God"—I. With reference to His gracious, external interpositions in behalf of that people. II. To intimate the gracious tendency of this seemingly severe revelation. III. And its connection with the offer and communication of God according to the method of His grace. But there are two inferences falsely made from this preface which ought to be avoided. 1. That an assured apprehension of God, as ours, is the beginning of religion, and that this must go before all beneficial knowledge of God and His law, whereas there must be a spiritual knowledge of God and His law in the order of nature necessarily antecedent to any such apprehension of God, otherwise we have no just ideas of Him whom we apprehend (but embrace an idol), nor of the footing on which we do apprehend Him. 2. That, after reconciliation with God, a man hath nothing to do with His law. To overturn such fancies it is to be observed that the doctrine of the law of God is to be learned—1. In subserviency to the glorification of God by the exercise of justifying faith in Jesus Christ. 2. For the government of one who is justified in walking towards heaven. It is chiefly in order to the first of those uses, to awaken men to flee to Christ, that I mean to speak at this time from the text. There are no Christians on earth exempted from the necessity of exciting themselves to faith in this way, unless there are Christians whose faith needs not to be increased or exercised. I. I am to OPEN THE SOURCES OF THE OBLIGATION OF THE LAW OF GOD AS THEY ARE EXHIBITED IN THIS EXPRESSION OF THE TEXT, "The Lord our God is one Lord." Two preliminary observations may here be mentioned. (1) That the grounds of the obligation of the law of God upon intelligent creatures are of an unsearchable and incomprehensible nature. I mean not that it is impossible for us to have a sufficient knowledge of this matter. If this were the case, it would be vain to say anything on this subject. But I mean that, after the greatest progress in such resources, faith must be maintained as to the immensity of the glory of God as surpassing all knowledge. (2) That there is in us an exceeding great strength of spiritual darkness or blindness in this matter. They only who have a deep and tender sense of these two things, their own blindness and the mysterious sublimity of these subjects, have such a humility of mind as is suitable to such inquiries. 1. It appears from the text that the chief source of the obligation of the law of God must be searched for and found in God Himself. (1) It is evident, from the nature of the demands of the law of God, that they cannot be justified, unless on supposition of there being such things in the nature and character of God as do of themselves entitle Him to such service. (2) The certainty of this truth concerning the origin of the obligation of the law of God appears from the consideration of the penalty annexed to the violation of this law. (3) Every other argument enforcing the law of God derives its chief force from its connection with this primary source of moral obligation. Because I am created a reasonable being I am bound to love God. But whence is it that my reasonable nature is a precious benefit? Is it not because hereby I am capable of the sight and enjoyment of God in His infinite beauty? In this view the benefit of creation may be said to be infinite. (4) This is expressly adduced in the Scripture as the foundation of the

authority of the law of God. So, in the preceding chapter, "I am the Lord thy God." The first and radical idea is, "I am Jehovah." I am what I am. (5) Obligations to obedience from consideration of Divine judgments and mercies are expressly resolved into this when the knowledge of God's being what He is is spoken of as the issue of these things, as is manifest (Ezek. xxviii. 22–26). 2. It appears from the text that the sources of the obligation of the law of God are to be found in those excellences of the Godhead which are most peculiar and distinguishing. Here it is to be considered that the excellences of God are justly distinguished into those which are called communicable and those which are called incommunicable. With respect to both these sorts of excellency He is incomparable. As to those which are called communicable excellences, because some degree of something like them is imparted to other beings, God is distinguished from His creatures by the degree and manner in which He possesses these excellences. But the most distinguishing quality of the manner in which God possesses communicable perfections is their being united with His incommunicable glories. It is by these last that God is chiefly distinguished from other beings, that He hath an immense fulness of such kinds of beauty as in no degree can be found in any created being. 3. It may also be inferred from the text that the obligation of the law of God is primarily derived from those excellences of the Godhead which chiefly constitute the harmony of all Divine excellences, or the bond of union, in consequence of which all the fulness of the Godhead is one whole. "The Lord our God is one Lord"—that is, in the midst of the immense variety of excellences which are found in Him, there is a marvellous unity and harmony, so that there is no division, jarring, or separation, but one glorious whole, in which all things are compacted. 4. The source of the obligation of the law of God lies in that one essence which is equally and fully possessed by each of the three persons in the Godhead. Application: 1. Beware of despising these truths as abstruse and unintelligible. 2. I call and invite every one of you to employ Jesus Christ, the Prophet of the Church, to instruct you savingly in these things. 3. Let those who have been called into the light attend to these exhortations (1 Pet. ii. 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 11, 12). II. TO GIVE A GENERAL EXPLICATION OF THE NATURE OF THAT LOVE TO GOD WHICH IS DEMANDED AND PRESCRIBED IN HIS LAW. Here the following preliminary remarks are to be attended to: 1. That we are now to speak of the love of God not as it is found in saints on earth, mingled with contrary corruptions, but as it is prescribed in the law of God, and as it is found in such creatures as are perfectly conformed thereto. 2. It is difficult for us to attain just and lively conceptions of the nature of this perfect love, because we never had any experience of it—no, not for a moment. 3. Such a knowledge of it is attainable as is sufficient to answer the purposes of the glory of God which are intended to be answered in this life, such as to excite high thoughts of the glorious excellences of God as appearing in His law, to discover the preciousness of the righteousness of Christ, the imperfection of our present attainments, the necessity of progress, and the amiableness of that state of perfection which is the "prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." 4. Our thoughts may be assisted and elevated on this subject by considering the highest attainments of Christians on earth, and adding perfection of purity and continuance thereto. I shall now apply myself to the direct consideration of this most fundamental subject, namely, "What is that perfection of love to God prescribed in His holy law?" 1. What are those views and character of God in which He is contemplated while perfect love is exercised? (1) I observe that God in the whole of His character, so far as in any degree revealed to the creature, is the object of perfect love. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all"—no spots or blemishes, nothing to allay or abate the splendour of His amiableness. "He is altogether lovely." (2) More particularly He is so in His incommunicable fulness of excellence, beauty, and perfection. (3) In His communicable perfections. Whatever amiableness is found in the creation, so far as is consistent with infinite perfection, is found in God in a Divine manner. (4) As He is the author of all that is good in the creation. (5) As He is the last end of all, for the sake of whose glory all things exist and all events happen. (6) As He is the benefactor, lover, and judge of intelligent, created beings. (7) As He is the enemy and avenger of evil. (8) As He is the supporter and recompenser of good. (9) In His unknown, hidden, and unsearchable fulness, which is implicitly loved. 2. The different motions of the faculties of the soul in bringing forth the actings of this love may be represented in this order. (1) The first principle of spiritual motion being the will, or the soul, as choosing and inclining itself towards what is suitable to its taste and inclination, so in this perfect love there is a Divine

instinct and disposition of the will by which the whole soul is turned towards God. (2) Hereby the faculties of the understanding are stirred up to inquire after God. (3) There is a disposition to faith concerning what God is, before the soul sensibly sees Him. (4) And to seek and take in that marvellous light by which He is sensibly discovered. (5) Then the will, having, by means of the understanding, found its object, embraces it, and rests in it in such actings as are afterwards to be mentioned. (6) Then the understanding is stirred up to go forward in taking in more of God, and this awakens new actings of the will, and these, again, new exertions of the understanding. 3. In the course of these motions of the faculties of a perfect creature, the various acts of love in their distinct kinds and in their connection with each other are brought forth. (1) Esteem, which is the accounting a thing valuable, excellent, precious. (2) Desire, as to present enjoyment and the securing endless possession, and hence valuing the intimations of Divine love, &c. (3) Delight, complacency, rest. (4) Zeal; delighting in the honour of God. Benevolence. (5) Self-denial; preferring the interest of God to ourselves. Disposition to suffer for Him. (6) Undervaluing the whole creation in comparison of Him. (7) Loving the creation in subordination to Him. Thus the creation is first thrust away; and then embraced. (8) Gratitude for the person's self and others. (9) Disposition to acts of worship and beneficence, in which this love appears clothed with its fruit. Application: 1. Give glory to God, the author of this law. 2. See the greatness of our fall from a state of perfect, uninterrupted love to a state of enmity. 3. See the preciousness of that redemption by which men are restored to a state of perfect, endless conformity to this spotless standard. (*John Love, D.D.*) *Supreme love of God:*—I. THE COMMAND. 1. None will dispute for a moment God's right to the affection of all His creatures. Surrounded as we are by the amazing proofs of God's love to us, hourly as we are the recipients of His bounty, it is to the lasting disgrace of every member of the human family that such a command as this should be needed. 2. But will the mere command produce love? No, it will not. The severest injunctions, the most formidable threatenings, are insufficient to produce love in the human heart. The penalties attached to disobedience may excite a slavish fear, but they cannot excite love. A child does not love its parent because commanded to do so; it may obey that parent by the outward act, but to excite love something more is needed than a command. And that something more is found in the affectionate kindness and watchful care of the parent, and this it is which, shown in a thousand varied ways, calls forth the love and affection of the child. If I want my neighbour to love me, it is not by merely expressing the wish for it that I shall gain his affection, but by embracing every opportunity for the exercise of benevolent feelings towards him. And thus it is that the love of God will be awakened within the heart of any one of us. And therefore, in exhorting you to obey the command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," we should set before you those dealings of God towards you which are calculated to kindle in your breasts the emotions of love. II. ITS EXTENT. What is the degree of love which God demands? 1. It must be supreme—with all the heart. You are to love God not as you love your friends, your relatives, your children, but above all things. He will allow no rival to share with Him the throne of your heart's affections. Not even any lawful affection must be set above that which we give to God, much less the love of sin or of the world. 2. It must be an intelligent love—with all the soul or understanding. By this you will have a clear perception of why you love God, and of the many motives which should excite you to give Him your heart's undivided affections. The thoughtful Christian will see the reasonableness of the adoration he pays to God. 3. It must be also a strong and fervent love—"with all thy might"—a love deeply rooted in the heart, and so closely intertwined with all your thoughts and feelings as to defy the power either of sin or Satan to tear it from your breast. (*R. Allen, M.A.*) *On God's love of being loved:*—One of the loudest outcries of present-day scepticism against Christianity is that it is based on an anthropomorphic or too manlike view of the nature of God, which is said to be degrading to the Unseen Everlasting Cause, and to be contrary to scientific fact. Now clearly there must be some limits to thinking of God as "such an one as ourselves." When men have, for example, represented the Divine nature by fabricating and consecrating an image of the human body, as in the case of the whole idolatrous world; or when they have conceived of the Divine character in the moral likeness of wicked men, as in the case of nearly all the gods and goddesses of paganism, there is reason in the outcry of these sceptics and in the demand for loftier and purer ideas of the Deity. But where objection is made to the formation

of ideas of the Divine nature based on any similarity to man's nature, or to ideas of the Divine providence based on our notions of great and small—as if so small a world as this and so minute a creature as man were unworthy of the special attention of an Infinite Being—then the objection is in fact founded on another kind of anthropomorphism or too much manlikeness—an error which is at least as vulgar as that which it condemns, and then the basis of so-called scientific unbelief is open to the same accusation which it brings against the Christian faith. For, of all indefensible notions, this must be the most indefensible—that the Infinite Being measures the value of objects in proportion to their size. Does any man really believe that if there be a God at all who is an intelligent Being, even if He were only as intelligent as a man may be, that He values things chiefly according to their cubic contents, so that what you call a "little" world has no chance of the notice of the Everlasting Mind? Everything that we know here of mind leads us to conclude very differently. Men do not value each other chiefly according to their size, or anything else, when they are educated into some right perception. The noblest nations have not inhabited the largest territories. It is not the largest buildings, the largest works of art which are of the highest value. We may be certain, then, to begin with, that suns and planets do not rank in the Creative Mind according to their cubic contents. He who made man in His own image of reason and love cannot possibly account man unworthy of notice because of his littleness. Nothing is too great for the Mightiest One, and nothing is too minute for His care. But now comes for consideration the deeper question of the nature of God, as capable or incapable of real feeling towards man—as caring or not caring for our affection—so as to be fitted to win our love to Him, a personal and everlasting love. Nothing is clearer in the Sacred Writings than that they all alike represent God not only as essential Love, but as asking for our love, and delighting in it, as the love of His children, to whom He has given all things. God's love of being loved is, perhaps, the foremost quality of the Divine Nature as described to us in revelation. Consider how strange it would be if God were not such a Being as this—if the Creator of all sensitive souls were the One Spirit devoid of real sense and feeling. Oh, surely this great world of sense and feeling was born out of a nature all sentient and vital, and rose like some form of beauty from a wondrous ocean of Deity, full of the life whence she sprang. Consider, too, what an effort seems to be made in the physical world to convey to our minds on all sides the impression that there is real and personal feeling towards man in the Most High. Does not every living form in plant or flower, every delicious landscape, or breadth of ocean, lighted with the radiance of the morning or the evening sun, breathe forth to us the feeling of some unseen, but not far distant, and Omnipotent Artist, who loves His children? But it is true that our sense affords no sufficing revelation to the soul. She cries out still for the Living God. We require a richer, fuller, nearer communion, and we have it in Christ. In Jesus Christ the Infinite is revealed, not only as a Person, but as one "full of compassion." And now we are more ready for the reception of the truth that, if "God is Love," it follows that next to the satisfaction of His own Almighty love in blessing His creatures, and saving the lost by His own sacrifice, that Nature must seek for its sweetest delights in the love of His children. And this is the revealed but too often forgotten fact that God loves to be loved. . . . When, then, of old, God spake by Moses, "Thou shalt love," &c., this was not the terrible and menacing demand of a Potentate requiring love as a debt, and threatening its non-payment with perdition. But it was Eternal Love crying out for the love of a world of revolted souls, and determined not to rest until it conquered the rebellion by the sacrifice of itself. But what that union of souls with God will be in eternity, in the embrace which no created power can unlock, and which the Uncreated never will, no earthly tongue can tell. The infant spirit will have grown up to its adult and angelic strength, and the faint answering smile of its earlier days shall have passed into the effulgent sunlight of an intelligent and immortal passion—a love for ever strengthening in the experience of the Love Divine, and thrilling the Infinite Nature with the gladness that the saved alone can give it, because they alone love with the ardour kindled by redeeming grace. (*E. White.*)

God must be loved:—A man is not a Christian because he is socially loving and kind any more than a person is a good son because he loves his brothers and sisters, leaving out his father and mother. Men would not wish to be treated by their children as they propose to treat their Father in heaven. They would not be satisfied to have their sons and daughters act on the principle that to love each other is the sufficient and only way by which children ought to love their parents. I should

not like to hear my children say, "To be kind to each other, and not care for father and mother, is the way for us to be good children towards them." (*H. W. Beecher.*)

The service of the heart:—All men know, or think they know, what love is. The poets have sung its praises, and the philosophers have analysed it, and the moralists have assigned it a niche, under one name or another, among their virtues; but all have alike regarded it as too irrational, too capricious, too transitory a thing to be an adequate foundation for morality. Christianity alone has made love at once the guide and goal of life, the condition of perfection, the fulfilling of the law. The principle of love is universal, without being abstract, it is a fact, a plain, obvious, palpable reality, which all men agree to recognise, and to recognise as ultimate and fundamental. Its analogues are broadcast throughout the universe, from the laws of gravitation upwards. It is universal, it is real, and further, it is vital. It is its own dynamic. It lives and grows and expands and fructifies, and sows its fiery contagion broadcast with an importunate, an imperious necessity of its own inner nature, which admits of neither help nor hindrance from without. The command, therefore, to love appeals to an instinct which is co-extensive with humanity, which is real beyond touch of controversy, and endowed with a vital force that is exclusively its own. But the very instinctive nature of love often misleads men into many other fallacies, owes its plausibility to its containing half a truth. Love is indeed irresistible; many waters cannot quench it. But like other irresistible forces—the lapse of a river, the electric energy, the current of a flame—it can be guided, and by guidance be controlled. "Learning to love" is too deep-set a phrase in our language ever to have arisen, if the act which it describes were after all impossible. And love, like the instincts in a being that is rational, not only can be, but must be, directed by the will, as the sole condition of attaining its true end. To assist us to that end let us look at love as we find it among men. In the first place, love is a relation existing between persons. The will need not have for its field of exercise more than a law, nor the mind more than an abstract object; but it is only in a derived and secondary sense that we can speak of loving anything other than a person. We may love him for the possession of this or that attribute of loveliness; but it is the self behind the attributes—the person—that we love. And then, though we cannot analyse this mysterious element of our being, we may see one thing about it clearly, that it moves between two poles—desire and sacrifice. The family, the earliest home of love, shows both these elements in their simplest form. The love of the child for the parent is one of simple, unreflective, self-referent desire; that of the parent for the child one of increasingly unselfish sacrifice. Both factors, of course, coexist, but in each case one predominates, and gives character and colour to the whole. To love is to be lifted or degraded by our love, in proportion as we repudiate or welcome the law of sacrifice. The forms which that sacrifice may take are infinite, but the fact of it needs no proof. Love, then, as we know it, is a relation between persons, founded on desire, tending to self-sacrifice, needing for its true development the guidance of the will. And further, it is never stationary. It withers unless it grows, and in growing gathers purity, intensity, perfection. This is the faculty which we are bidden to enlist wholly in God's service: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." How is this to be done? Different forms of personal beauty, different graces of mind or character, wake the love of different men. But once let a man be confronted by the congenial character, the appropriate grace, and nature does the rest. So with the love of God. He attracts us through many avenues. Our part is to direct our mental vision by the will; and then

"We needs must love the highest when we see it."

But it is in this direction of our vision that we fail. Our eyes are feeble, and we cannot bear the light. "He left not Himself without witness," but we interpret it amiss. The simplest of all witnesses is our natural desire for God. "All men yearn for the gods," said the Greek. "My soul is athirst for God," said the Hebrew poet. In spite of such utterances, a century ago philosophers could still maintain that religion was artificial. But in the light of our larger knowledge this is no longer possible. For however far we look back over India, or Babylon, or Egypt, or abroad over the savage inmates of the islands of the sea, the religious instinct is there; not merely a fear, or a sense of infinitude, but a yearning, a desire, the beginning of a love. So universally is it found to be part of our primitive endowments, that zoologists have proposed, for their special purpose, to classify mankind as "the religious animal." This desire is the foundation of all our love. Our

capacity for loving God and our capacity for loving man are one and the self-same thing. Or to put it otherwise, we have an infinite capacity for loving, which points to an Infinite Being as its only final object. Limit your love exclusively to any finite thing or person, and what is the result, and why? Sooner or later it will begin to flag; it will fail; it will become disgust; and that because you have thought to limit what never can be limited. We are all of us endowed, then, with an emotional capacity, whose final cause is the love of God. And every phase of human emotion should be, and may be if we will, a stage in the training of this faculty for its destined end and goal. There is, for instance, the love of nature—of the beauty of earth and sea and sky, and of all the various life with which they teem. Contemplate nature, and its loveliness will strengthen and develop your emotions, but in doing so will point them on, with irresistible suggestiveness, to One lovelier than itself. And then there is the love of art. Art selects and rearranges nature, with a view to bring its lessons more intimately home. Our duty is to use all art that will kindle our emotions nobly, but sternly to forego, even in what may seem the neutral region of amusement, all that is insidiously poisonous to us, and yet may innocently brighten and help the lives of other men. This fact needs insisting on; for artistic influences elude observation, and we are hardly aware of how profoundly painting, music, drama, poetry, and the immense literature of fiction mould and modify for good or evil every fibre of our modern life. Again, there is the love of humanity, the most universal of all schools of love. In the early dawn of affection we idealise our dear ones with an instinctive insight that is in truth prophetic of what they may one day be. But here and now they are finite beings—weak, sinful, incomplete. Differences of taste and temper, inadequacies, imperfections, cannot but disclose themselves, as time goes on. But if our love be true, we shall learn to efface our selfishness in helping other lives to overcome their insufficiencies; and every sacrifice this costs us will deepen our power of sympathy; we shall feel not only for the grace and beauty, but for all the pathetic frailty of the struggling human soul; and as we learn, by loving more profoundly, the limitless nature of our love, we shall see that its only adequate satisfaction is in God—"Nor man nor nature satisfies whom God alone created." There is one more school of affection; but we can only learn its lessons if we come to it, at least in some degree, prepared; for it is the school of bereavement. To the idolater of nature, or of art, or of humanity, we know what the shattering of his idol means—hopeless, helpless, impotent despair; weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. And yet it was not meant to be, it never need be, so. If once we have risen to realise that what we love on earth can have derived its loveliness from no other source than God, bereavement, however bitter, is full of earnest meaning. Our concern is with the fact that bereavement reveals to us new and mysterious vistas in the life of love. All along we have seen that sacrifice of one kind or other must be present. But bereavement shows us how intensely real that sacrifice must be. All else seems to vanish before it; and the very name of love acquires an awfulness which makes its light misuse seem blasphemy. Such are the common means by which we may learn to fulfil the commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." The genius can dispense with the ordinary methods of education; and so too can the saint; but for most of us it is otherwise. The things that lie around us, the stuff that life is made of, the field of our daily exercise—nature, art, society, marriage, friendship, partings, death—these are the appointed channels that should guide the heart to God. Our mistake is to think such things indifferent, as if there were a neutral region, neither good nor ill. Nothing is indifferent, except to our blindness. Every object of human interest lifts us up or drags us down. (*J. R. Illingworth, M.A.*) *Love of God the best basis of life*:—There was once a great painter who had three scholars. They were all anxious to learn the secret of their master's power, and become great painters themselves. The first spent all his time in the studio at his easel. He copied incessantly the great master's pictures, studying deeply into their beauties, and trying to imitate them with his own brush. He was up early, and was the last to leave the workroom at night. He would have nothing to do with the master himself, attended none of his lectures, never went to him with any question, nor spent any time in talking with him. He wanted to be his own director, and make his own discoveries, and be self-made. This scholar lived and died without notice, and never expressed on canvas a single one of the noble characteristics of his master. The second scholar, on the contrary, spent little time in the studio, scarcely soiled his palette, or wore out a brush. He attended every lecture on art, was constantly asking questions about the theories of

perspective, of colouring, of light and shade, of grouping figures, and all that, and was a zealous student of books. But for all his study he died without producing a single worthy picture to help and delight mankind and perpetuate his master's glory. The third was as zealous in the practical work of the artist as the first, and as zealous in the theoretical as the second, but he did one thing which they never thought of doing: he came to know and love the master. They were much together, the young artist and the older one, and they had long talks about all phases of an artist's life and work. So close and continual, in fact, was their communion that they grew to talk alike, and think alike, and even, some said, to look alike. And it was not long before they began to paint alike, and on the canvas of the younger glowed the same beauty and the same majesty that shone from the canvas of his master. The parable is not hard to interpret. If the Christian has been seeking to know God, and express God's beauty on the canvas of his human life, it has been in one of these three ways. If it has been by the way of practical living merely, by attempting with one's own unaided wisdom and power to be kind and helpful and influential, the attempt has failed. If it has been by the way of theory merely, if by searching of books alone the Christian has sought to find out God, he has failed. Our search for a noble and inspiring and fruitful basis of life will succeed only as, without by any means neglecting good deeds or study, we seek with all the might of the spirit God has given us for communion, personal love and communion, with the Spirit who made our spirits, until, in Jesus' words, we are one with Christ, even as He is one with the Father. *How to begin to love God:*—It will not be so difficult for you to love God if you will only begin by loving goodness, which is God's likeness, and the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit. For you will be like a man who has long admired a beautiful picture of some one whom he does not know, and at last meets the person for whom the picture was meant—and, behold, the living face is a thousand times more fair and noble than the painted one. You will be like a child which has been brought up from its birth in a room into which the sun never shone, and then goes out for the first time, and sees the sun in all his splendour bathing the earth with glory. If that child has loved to watch the dim, narrow rays of light which shone into his dark room, what will he not feel at the sight of that sun from which all those rays had come! Just so will they feel who, having loved goodness for its own sake, and loved their neighbours for the sake of what little goodness is in them, have their eyes opened at last to see all goodness, without flaw or failing, bound or end, in the character of God, which He has shown forth in Jesus Christ our Lord, who is the likeness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His Person, to whom be glory and honour for ever. *Our obligation to love God:*—If a great potentate did make subject unto thee his whole kingdom and all his dominions, nobles, and strong, powerful men, nay, all his subjects, and did command them to guard, defend, preserve, to clothe, cure, and feed thee, and to take care that thou shouldest want nothing at all, wouldst thou not love him and account him to be a loving, bountiful lord? How, then, oughtest thou to love the Lord thy God, who hath kept nothing back for Himself, but appointed to thy service all that is in heaven, and from heaven, and all that is upon earth, or anywhere? For He wants no creature for Himself, and hath excepted nothing from thy service, neither in all the hosts of holy angels, nor in any of His creatures under the stars. If we will, they are ready to serve us; nay, hell itself must serve us, by bringing upon us fear and terror, that we may not sin. (*John Arndt.*) *Why we ought to love God:*—1. We ought to love God. It is our duty to love God. We are commanded to love God. The Old Testament and the New Testament unite in emphasising that. It is not likely, however, that this text ever persuaded anybody into loving God. Love laughs at injunctions, pays no heed to duty, absolutely cannot be commanded. Obedience can be got that way, but love—never! It is of the very nature and essence of love that it must grow in a willing heart. Love is the manifestation of an untrammelled choice. 2. It may be that God set temptation within the reach of man, that He might thus make it possible for us really to love Him. The test of love is preference. Love comes out into the light, and is discovered when there is a choice to be made between two, or for or against. The best way in the whole world for a man to show his love for God is to say "no" to the devil, and to stand up on the side of God. But we must not do that because we are commanded to do it, because we are afraid not to do it, but because we want to do it, if there is to be any real love in it. 3. The purpose of this command is not to establish obedience, but to proclaim an ideal. The spirit of it is not that we must love God because we must, but that God wants us to love Him. "We love Him because He first loved us." 4. Christ is

the only authoritative teacher of the love of God. (1) He taught God's love for man in the blessed words that He spoke. He looked up to the great God and called Him, and taught us to call Him, by that loving name "Father." (2) His life, even more than His words, was a revelation of God. God is like Christ, and it is not hard to love Christ. How can anybody help loving Christ? And whoever loves Christ, loves God. (3) He taught the love of God for us in the death that He died. We wonder if pain and love can really go together, and behold! here they are together at the Cross of Jesus. (*George Hodges, D.D.*) *Love for God a real motive power*:—It is said that one of the greatest statesmen that we have ever had, having gone to hear an evangelical preacher, was heard growling as he left the church, "Why, the man said that we were to love God," evidently thinking that the very height of unreasonableness. And when Wilberforce attacked the fashion of religion in the beginning of the nineteenth century, this was the point on which he fixed—that not only was God not loved, but people did not even think that to love God was reasonable. Going to work philosophically, he demonstrated, first, that what he called passion—meaning love—is the strongest force in human affairs; and secondly, that religion requires exactly such a stimulus, because of the difficulties that it has to overcome. We are now living in a far warmer atmosphere everywhere than that in which Wilberforce was living, and we have no difficulty in acknowledging the power of emotion, or passion, or love in any department of human affairs. In politics, it is enthusiasm that carries the statesman through. In war, it is enthusiasm that makes heroes. It was the passion of friendship that made Jonathan able to lay a kingdom at David's feet. Love between the sexes is the grand mainspring of human refinement and industry, and affection in the home sweetens adversity, and enables even the weak to bear up under intolerable burdens. But, my people, there is one kind of love for which the human heart was made which is deeper and more influential than any other kind, and that is the love of God. I daresay that you and I would claim that we had tasted the other kinds of love, perhaps all the kinds, and we know well their power of developing energy and rewarding endeavour, and sweetening what is bitter in life; but let me press this question home on you—do we know the highest love of all? has this blossom burst yet on the tree of our being—love to our Father in heaven? It is to be what we call an absorbing, an overmastering love, pervading the whole being, and setting every power within us in motion. If the love of God be in us anything like the absorbing and over-mastering passion that Jesus means it to be it will lead us also to love everything belonging to God—His day, His house, His people, His call, and so forth; and wherever there is any deep love for the Sabbath, or the Bible, you will find when you come to the bottom of it, that it is due to love of God Himself, wakened in the heart in the way that I have indicated. But there is especially one part of worship which Jesus connects very closely with the love of God, and that is prayer. You know those who love must meet. The oftener they meet the higher rises the flame of love, and prayer is the trysting-place between God and the soul. (*J. Stalker, D.D.*)

Vers. 6–9. **These words . . . shall be in thine heart.**—*The Scriptures to be laid to heart, and diligently taught*:—I. THE WORDS CONCERNING WHICH THE COMMAND IS GIVEN, THEIR NATURE AND IMPORTANCE. 1. Their supernatural origin. 2. The extraordinary manner in which God has sanctioned them, in the signs and wonders performed by those who spoke or wrote the things declared in them. 3. The evident excellence and useful tendency of their contents, "to make us wise unto salvation." II. THE COMMAND GIVEN CONCERNING THESE THINGS. 1. We must not be indifferent, but deeply impressed with, and concerned about, these things; that is, about Divine revelation in general, its truth, its importance, its contents; and about that religion set forth in this passage, as above explained, consisting in the knowledge and love of God. 2. We must see that this is religion, and this alone; and that if we rest short of this, we rest short of religion. 3. We must be concerned to have proper views of, to experience, and to practise this religion. III. THE OBLIGATIONS WHICH LIE UPON US TO OBEY THIS COMMAND. 1. Gratitude; for this book lays us under great, yea, infinite obligations. Consider what would have been our condition had we not had the Bible—how ignorant, sinful, and miserable! 2. The express command of God, who gave us the Scriptures, lays us under an indispensable obligation: He is our Creator, Benefactor, Redeemer, Lawgiver, and Judge. He solemnly enjoins us to have these things in our hearts. 3. The example of our Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles,

&c., who all made these things the subjects of their chief study and discourse from day to day. 4. Compassion for and love to our children—mortal and immortal beings; to whom, under God, we have given being, and who are committed to our care by Him, the great proprietor and governor of all, who says, "All souls are Mine." 5. Our own interest should influence us; and that for time and for eternity. For if we have not God's Word in general, and the knowledge and love of God in particular, in our own hearts, we shall be miserable here, and perish everlastingly hereafter. And if we do not inculcate these things on our children and dependants, and those on whom we might inculcate them, and they perish, God will require "their blood," their souls, at our hands. (*J. Benson.*) *An ever-present religion*:—I. RELIGION CLAIMS TO TAKE A FOREMOST PLACE IN HUMAN AFFAIRS. The law is to be everywhere set forth clear and conspicuous. As the ancient Egyptians are said to have worn jewels on the forehead and arm inscribed with sacred words and amulets, and as the Mohammedans now paint over their doors sentences from the Koran, such as "God is the Creator," "God is one, and Mahomet is His prophet," so the Jews carried on their bodies, and wrote upon their houses, some of the most important passages of their law. Such a practice was liable to the abuse of ostentatious vanity. But are not we in danger of falling into the opposite fault through the intense reserve in which we hide our religious life? When we do recognise the right of religion to take its true place in the world, what shall we dare to set before it? This right is based on two grounds: 1. The essential value of the subjects treated by it. 2. The authority which it carries. Our religion must not be a mere matter of taste, of sentiment, and of philosophic speculation. It must be regarded as obedience to the will of our supreme Lord and Master. II. RELIGION NEEDS TO BE CONSTANTLY IMPRESSED UPON US. We do not have to set up maxims about our streets urging us to make haste to get rich, nor in our houses to prevent us from forgetting our daily meals. But the spiritual appetite is less keen, and requires to be whetted by constant teaching, by "line upon line" and "precept upon precept." III. RELIGION MUST BEGIN IN THE HEART. It is impossible to have religion in the outer life unless it grow from within. Nothing is easier than to put on the show of it. Any one can hang texts about his house. But to infuse real religion into the home is impossible except it grow out of inward spiritual devotion. The fruit cannot grow without a root. To be in the heart the Divine Word must be—(1) In the understanding, not merely heard of in meaningless words, nor practised in mechanical acts, but intelligently realised. (2) In the memory, not read for a moment and forgotten as soon as the book is closed, but carried in the mind, its sacred truths haunting the thoughts. (3) In the affections, not coldly contemplated, but lovingly cherished. To this end we must seek the aid of God's Holy Spirit to enable us to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest His truth. IV. RELIGION SHOULD GROW OUT INTO EVERY BRANCH OF LIFE. Though it begins in the heart it cannot contain itself there for ever; if the fountain is ever bubbling up it must issue in the flowing stream. When there is life in the root it is impossible to prevent the tree from breaking out into leaves, sooner or later. Like the sunlight pervading hill and plain, like the fragrant odour of incense penetrating to the inmost recess of the sanctuary, true religion must spread itself abroad, and reach down to the minutest details of life. (*W. F. Adeney, M.A.*) *Words in the heart*:—1. The style of the Book of Deuteronomy is unlike that of the preceding books of the Pentateuch, and this may be accounted for by the fact that the contents are very different. The language of Deuteronomy is in the main hortatory. 2. The law-giver is seen in this book to be full of zeal for God, and of earnest desire for the well-being of the people. His exhortations to obedience have been truly said to be "deeply fraught with holy and patriotic feeling." 3. There is something of a valedictory tone throughout these pages. The forty years' wanderings are almost concluded, and the death of Moses is near at hand. Moses, giving injunctions to Israel before his departure, is typical to the final commands of Jesus Christ before His Ascension. I. THE WORDS WERE TO BE IN THEIR HEART. 1. What words? The commandments of God, as summed up in the verses which precede the text. Having first asserted the truth that "God is a Spirit," for the people were reminded, when the Lord spake unto them out of the midst of the fire, that they "heard a voice, but saw no similitude" (chap. iv. 12); so now, the Unity of the Godhead is clearly revealed: "The Lord our God is one Lord." Further, Moses drew from the doctrine of the Divine Unity that God must be the sole Object of Israel's love and obedience—of a devotion which claimed "all" the

heart and soul and might for its rightful exercise. 2. These words were to be in their heart, or "upon" their heart, as something written and engraven upon the memory. This faculty was to be the treasure-house of the Law of God. Constantly in Holy Scripture exhortations and institutions had for their object the prevention of forgetfulness of the Divine Law and Divine mercies: "My son, forget not My Law" (Prov. iii. 1). The Sabbath was a reminder of Creation; the Passover, of the deliverance from Egypt; and twelve stones were set up for a memorial of the passing over Jordan. To remember the presence of God and the commandments of God and His goodness was a stringent duty, for these were to form the guide of life and the stimulus of devotion. 3. To forget God was a sin in itself. "Beware lest thou forget the Lord," the prophet continues, especially in days of affluence and prosperity in Canaan. It was Moses' reproach—almost his dying reproach: "Of the Rock that begat thee, thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee" (chap. xxxii. 18). And forgetfulness of God leads to all sin. II. "THOU SHALT TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY UNTO THY CHILDREN." 1. There never was a time when this Divine command needed more to be accentuated than at present. Secular education is only partial education; it omits to train the moral and spiritual, the higher elements of our being. It has been wisely said by a French statesman, "Strong, definite, religious convictions constitute the real strength of any country." He might have added, "of any soul." 2. Religious instruction of the young is necessary, because God commanded it. That is a clear and definite ground to go upon, for all who believe the Scriptures. Further, it stands to reason that if religion is to be our guide in the midst of a sinful world, we want that guide for all ages. Childhood as well as maturity belongs to God, and must be sanctified by God. The image of the Child Christ, with the words, "Hear ye Him," placed by Dean Colet over the master's chair in St. Paul's Grammar School, was his way of showing the importance of religious education, and of teaching children that they should follow Christ and be made like unto Him, if they would become true men and women. 3. Moreover, youth is the time when powers are fresh, and the truths which God has revealed can be best taken in and assimilated. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth" (Eccles. xii. 1). It is the time for acquiring deep convictions and of forming habits (Prov. xxii. 6). 4. Youth is an age when we are more liable to be led astray by passion and the first taste of the world; and therefore the restraining and blessed influences of religion are the more necessary. III. LESSONS. 1. To strive to remember the Divine commands and the presence of God. 2. "In the heart." Not merely an intellectual action, as "learning by heart," though this is important; but by loving obedience to God, and devotion to Him. 3. To teach religion to thy children. A ground for forcing the importance of religious instruction in our schools, and that definite. The text says, "these words." 4. But further, a lesson for parents, upon whom the task devolves, that in the home, as well as at the school, the children should be instructed in the truths of Christianity, as the most momentous of parental duties. (*Canon Hutchings, M.A.*) *The duties and privileges of pious parents*:—I. THE DUTIES OF BELIEVING PARENTS. 1. Love to God is the first and great duty of every moral being. Without this there can be good neither in the individual nor in his life and actions. 2. The Word of God should be the object of constant and unremitting study. This is a work for life. 3. The Word of God should dwell in the heart of the believer richly; and at all times, and in all places, it ought to be the chief employment of his mind. This leads to saving knowledge of God and of His will; and this, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, will make the believer "wise unto salvation," and, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, will do so likewise unto his children. 4. We should make the Word of God known to others—such as our friends, our associates, our neighbours, and that, too, as extensively as possible. Thus the believer is kept constantly in communion with God by love, and by the Scriptures; and thus he becomes more and more conformed to God's image every day. 5. But the believer should make known the Word of God to the world as far as possible, by recommending it, and by circulating it, as far as possible, amongst his necessitous fellow-creatures. II. THE PRIVILEGES OF PIOUS PERSONS. 1. They are great gainers themselves; for, by "loving the Lord their God with all their heart," they have the experience of heaven begun in their soul: all is life, power, readiness, willingness, and ability to do the whole will of God—and heaven just consists of this in perfection. This gives satisfaction; this gives "joy and peace in believing." 2. They are great gainers, because their whole intellectual powers are satisfied with Divine influences: their understanding is

satisfied with knowledge of the Divine nature, the Divine perfections, the Divine persons, the Divine will, the Divine promises, the Divine blessings, and the Divine word. 3. They are great gainers, because the whole man, soul and body, with the members, powers, and faculties, are dedicated to God, and are employed in His service and enjoyment. This is employment for the real Christian both in this world and the next. All Christians should daily be thus occupied, for this is answering the end of their creation. 1. But another unspeakable privilege is comprehended in our text, and that is, "These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart." This is to be conformed to the Divine image; this is to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. 2. Another unspeakable privilege is comprehended in our text, and that is, the instruction and edification of children. 3. This privilege is extensive, and may embrace not only the children, but also the servants, and all others connected with the family, by consanguinity, friendship, or otherwise. 4. The believer's privilege extends to all men, as far as in his power. Thus, the circle extends from the point—self—round the circumference of the globe! How exalted the consideration of being instrumental in the hand of God, of being so extensively useful in increasing the Church on earth, and the Church in heaven—of profiting the souls and bodies of men—of promoting the glory of God both in time and through eternity! (*Jas. Kidd, D.D.*) *Familiarity with the Word of God:*—I. THE WORDS OF GOD ARE THE TREASURE OF THE HEART. Wherever they be, if they are not in the heart they fail to answer the Divine intention. They are made for the heart, and the heart is made for them. Let them be there first, and it will follow that they will be everywhere else where they are needed. II. THE WORDS OF GOD ARE THE THEME OF THE CONVERSATION. There is a picturesque completeness in the enumeration of the occasions upon which these words are to be talked of—at home, abroad, evening, and morning. Though His words in origin, they are our words in use. III. THE WORDS OF GOD ARE THE ORNAMENT OF THE LIFE. The Jews adorned their persons with texts of Scripture, written upon papyrus or parchment, and enclosed within little boxes or cylinders, which were worn upon the hand or the brow: an emblem of their intimacy and familiarity with Divine truth, and to us a reminder that our life, our politics, our literature, our art, should all be governed by the principles and motives presented in revelation. IV. THE WORDS OF GOD ARE THE LAW OF THE HOME AND HOUSEHOLD. Scraps of Scripture were suspended by the threshold of the house surely to intimate that in a sense every Israelite's home was a temple sacred unto the Lord. Our households are protected, and guided, and hallowed, when the Divine Word is their supreme authority. V. THE WORDS OF GOD ARE THE INHERITANCE OF OUR CHILDREN. Whatever parents fail to do for their offspring, to bequeath to them, let them, above all things, hand down to them the precious and sacred deposit of truth, teaching diligently unto their children what they themselves have received from those who have gone before them. (*Homilist.*) *The Bible not too good to be used:*—Some years ago I had occasion to send a parcel to an honest, hard-working bricklayer who lived in the country. It contained, besides sundry little presents for his wife and children, a trowel for his own use, made in a superior way, with a mahogany handle; and often did I fancy that I saw him hard at work with the trowel in his hand. Last summer, being in the neighbourhood, I called at the cottage of the honest bricklayer, when, to my surprise, I saw the trowel which I had sent him exhibited over the chimney-piece as a curiosity. It had been considered too good to use, and consequently had never been of the slightest use to its owner. (*George Mogridge.*) **Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children.**—*On the religious instruction of children:*—I. TO MENTION SOME OF THOSE THINGS WHICH PARENTS ARE COMMANDED TO TEACH THEIR CHILDREN. 1. In the first place, then, inculcate upon them an early reverence for God. Teach them this duty even before they can understand who and what He is; and let them see it exemplified in yourselves, by your seriousness in speaking of Him, and by your humility in every act of Divine worship. 2. Teach them also an early value for the Scriptures. Let them know that the Bible is the Word of God; that it is the best book in the world; that it is more to be desired than gold; and that, if it were not for the discoveries, instructions, and promises contained in it, they and you, and all mankind, would be ignorant and wretched beyond imagination. 3. Let them also acquire an early sense of a future state. Most children are giddy and thoughtless. The trifling engagements of the present hour are all that they regard; and it often happens that the world with its baubles strikes so strongly upon their imaginations, and fixes such an early and rooted prejudice in

its favour as is not easily eradicated. You should, therefore, endeavour to convince them, as soon as possible, that the present state is only a passage to another. 4. Forget not to inculcate upon them an early love to our Lord Jesus Christ. Take the first opportunity to inform them of their obligations to Him; and let them know that if they have any comfort in this world, or any hopes as to a future, they owe it all to the kindness of the blessed Redeemer. 5. Habituate your children to the early practice of prayer. II. To suggest SOME DIRECTIONS TO PARENTS IN THIS IMPORTANT AND DIFFICULT WORK. 1. Take care, then, to be well instructed yourselves. 2. Begin with them very early. 3. Continue your instructions with diligence and perseverance. 4. It is also of great importance that you maintain a proper authority. 5. I would further advise you to accommodate yourselves to their tempers and capacities. 6. Be concerned especially to set them a good example; walk before them in the way in which you would have them go; and show them, by your practice, that you by no means require impossibilities. Let them see in you the amiableness and advantages of self-government and universal piety. 7. Sanctify all by your prayers. III. THE ENCOURAGEMENTS WHICH PARENTS HAVE TO TEACH THEIR CHILDREN DILIGENTLY. Nature and grace, reason and religion urge this strongly. 1. It will be a good evidence of your own sincerity. 2. It is also the best proof of love to your children. It should encourage you in the discharge of this duty to consider that it is the best means of promoting the glory of God and the revival of decaying religion. 3. These pious efforts will also comfort you on the death of your children. 4. That an attention to the spiritual welfare of your children will afford you unspeakable consolation in the hour of your death. IV. TO OBVIATE SOME OF THE MOST COMMON AND MATERIAL OBJECTIONS AGAINST THIS IMPORTANT AND NECESSARY DUTY. Various are the excuses that are made; but they are generally dictated by indolence, rather than by real conviction. Some object their want of ability. "We would gladly instruct our children," you say, "but we are ignorant ourselves. Ministers are the fittest persons to undertake it, for it is a part of their office." If your ignorance be real and not merely a pretence to silence conscience, if you really do not know the plain principles of religion, it is high time for you to learn. Had you your own souls only to attend to, it were a shame to continue unacquainted with the glad tidings of salvation. But if you only mean that you know not how to communicate that little knowledge which you have to your children; that you cannot talk to them so pertinently and fluently as others; I answer that not strength of genius, but a willing mind is required; and if you once undertake it, you will find your abilities increase by exercise. Others object their want of time. But while you have sabbaths you surely cannot plead want of time for the neglect of your duty. Remember that you must all find time to die. Let me beseech you to attend to this duty, which will contribute greatly to make your death-bed easy. Others, again, object their want of success. But do you expect to pass through the world without difficulties and discouragements? You have met with disappointments in your worldly business, and yet you did not presently give it up in despair. It is more than probable that your want of success may be traced to some guilty defect in yourselves. But if you have been never so diligent and faithful, and with little apparent success, persevere notwithstanding. The last thing you say to them may reach their hearts. The last effort which you make may be successful. You will, at least, "deliver your own souls"; and you will have the testimony of a good conscience. (*S. Lavington.*) *The importance of scriptural education:*—The truth that the Word of God is God's instrumentality for reforming and saving man, is the foundation of our present argument for the religious education of our children. We would enlarge the mind, elevate the character, and ennoble the nature of our children; we would lift them up above the mere degradation of working animals; we would ennoble them so as to give them a capacity for intellectual enjoyment and rational happiness; we would wish to make them not only loyal and faithful subjects of their earthly sovereign, but devout servants of the King of kings; we would endeavour to cheer them amidst the privations and agonies of poverty they are frequently called to endure, with a view of the glorious hopes that are created in us by the Christianity of the Scriptures; and it is because we desire this that we would give them a Christian education. We live in times when thrones are utterly shaken to pieces, when sceptres are shivered to atoms; a moral earthquake is heaving the foundations of society. In times like these we may well turn our thoughts to the right instruction of our children; in times like these, when the freedom of the press has been proclaimed,

when all men seem to be speculating as to the best means of securing national prosperity and individual happiness; in times like these, fraught with incalculable evil, as well as with immeasurable good; in times like these, so peculiar, so startling, we may well apply ourselves to the imparting of the sound principles of true religion to our children, that so those who are now the youth of our land may grow up to be a rightly-instructed as well as holy people. We have seen in that nation which hath, in a century gone by, flung aside the law of God and lightly regarded the Word of Jehovah, judgment following judgment, in revolution following revolution. Truly there is a judgment from heaven upon that nation that will not acknowledge God, and who lightly esteem the Word of God. But if we would express ourselves thus strongly of the neglect of the Word of God in education, we would also express ourselves strongly in reference to the blessedness of the country where that Word is honoured by being employed in the education of the people. Education without religion is education without God, and therefore education without the blessing of God; and if we, in the education we impart to our children, mingle the truths of our holy religion with everything, we shall draw down a blessing upon our homes and happiness upon our hearts; we shall be blessed in our mountains and in our valleys, and the whole land will be glad and rejoice in the presence of God. (*M. H. Seymour, M.A.*) *Family training*:—I. WHEN THE FAMILY HAS BEEN CONSTITUTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH GOD'S NATURAL LAWS, PARENTS MAY HAVE ENCOURAGEMENT THAT ALL THE LAWS OF NATURE ARE WORKING IN THEIR FAVOUR. Like produces like. This tendency may be modified, and in extreme cases overruled, by antagonistic laws; nevertheless, this is the course that is provided for. And, with a single exception here and there, children, comprehensively regarded, tend to become what their parents were, and *their* parents. They represent their ancestry. And this is as true morally as in feature, in intellect, or in any ordinary disposition. Nothing shows more strikingly the power of blood and this great law than the recuperative power of different kinds of men when they have fallen into evil. Anybody can fall into evil. The difference between one man and another is not in their slipping into the river, but in their extricating themselves when they have once slipped in. Everybody's child may fall into temptation through inexperience; but, after having fallen into temptation, it is not everybody's child that can recover himself. The child of parents that have the resiliency of a moral constitution will be apt to recover himself; whereas, the child of parents that have no such resiliency will be apt to go from bad to worse, clear down to the desolating end. II. While this general tendency should encourage us, IT MAY ALSO INSPIRE HOPEFULNESS, in special cases and difficulties. 1. Many of the infelicities of our children spring more from our ignorance than from any evil that is in them. Your child has in many respects just the same tendencies that you have. Yet we treat our children almost as if we were not to bear their burdens, to be conscious of their tastes of mind, and to administer according to their wants. 2. Many dangerous traits in childhood, that would be exceedingly discouraging if they were to hold on, will disappear in later life, and that too by the force of natural causes. Children, you know, have to run through certain diseases of the body. So they do of the mind. There are times when children will lie. There are periods when children will steal. There seems to be mumps of obstinacy, and rash of irritability, and measles of lying—and there are no measles half so bad as those. And many parents, seeing these early indications, reason upon them in this way: "How could this child do that thing? Why, as far back as I can remember, I did not do it." How is it with your husband? Suppose he says: "Though I never consciously told a lie, my child lies inveterately; and what will become of it?" I will tell you what will become of it. If the child has a tendency to this perversion, it will require all your care, both of personal instruction and institutional training, to keep his childhood from developing into a manhood of deceit. But if you are careful to train the child aright, just as quick as the whole of its nature is developed, one part will take care of other parts, and help other parts. 3. Many of the deficiencies of children, and of the difficulties of managing them, arise from the fact that the stimulating nature of society and civilisation in our day develop the child prematurely, and that he cannot be held properly until the forces of life are concentrated upon him. If you want your children to behave, you must give them something to do. Society is the training-ground of the human race. It is a school of practice, where God means that men shall be disciplined. Your child must go into that society and that life; and if you have brought him up right, he may now and then swerve from the right course, but the probabilities are that he will come

out right in the end. 4. Many of the faults of children are only the rude forms of excellences that are not yet ripened. I should be very sorry to have a man judge of my Duchess pears by tasting them now, in July. I should hate to have a man judge of my Delaware grapes by tasting them now. They are sour enough. But a great many parents taste their children's qualities when they are children; and, because they do not taste good, they are very much alarmed. There are many things to be done before a man is ripened. There is much juice to be changed and elaborated in the child before it can be brought to its normal condition. 5. Let me speak of one or two of those qualities which secure our children, and which are very few and very simple. (1) Bring up your children in the habit of openness of conduct and truthfulness. (2) The next element is self-respect, or the habit of acting, not from what others may think, nor from what may be the consequences to yourself of profit or loss; but from a sense of what is befitting to you—in other words, making a man's own self more important to him than all external considerations. (3) The other element is conscience. Truthfulness, honour, and conscience —train for these three qualities. Talk with your children about them. Interpret them to them by your conduct. Now, if you bring your children up with these three traits, you have the soil, and you can raise anything you please on that soil. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Children taught Christian truths:*—Children should be taught the principles which they understand not. 1. That they might have occasion much to think of the things that are so much and commonly urged. 2. That if any extremity should come, they might have certain seeds of comfort and direction to guide and support them. 3. That their condemnation might be more just, if having these so much in their mouths, they should not get something of them into their hearts. (*J. Trapp.*) *On the religious and moral education of the young:*— 1. IN WHAT THE YOUNG SHOULD BE INSTRUCTED. 1. It is the duty of parents to teach them to form just sentiments of the Deity. Just views of the perfections and character of God are necessary to all acceptable worship; they elevate the intellectual and moral faculties, and excite in the heart many pleasing emotions. 2. The young should be instructed in the statements of Scripture respecting the fall and the ruin of man. 3. The young must be instructed in the mission and character of the Redeemer, and in the regards which they owe to Him. 4. There are certain qualities which you ought to cultivate in the young, by setting before them their necessity and their importance. Teach them reverence for things sacred. The name of God demands their fear. Teach them to venerate the Word of God. Show them how "He hath magnified it above all His name," by the bright impressions of a Divine origin which He hath impressed on it, by the important purposes which He accomplishes by it, and by appointing it to be the rule of judgment when the quick and the dead shall be summoned to meet the Lord in the clouds. Children should be taught to respect the worship of God. Suffer them not to be absent from your family devotions without a real necessity; and beware of performing these in that hurried, careless, or languid manner which will induce them to think lightly of domestic worship. Children should also be taught to venerate the wise and the good, and to consider the Christian virtues as constituting the noblest respectability. The saints may be depressed by poverty, and scorned by those whose respect is attracted only by the titles and the wealth of this world, but they are the excellent of the earth. Inculcate the reverence which is due to the Divine government of the world, and which will maintain faith and patience till calamitous times are past, and preserve from that wantonness and insolence in prosperity by which the goodness of God is so often abused. Mercy is another quality which you should labour to cultivate in the hearts of the young. To impress the lessons of mercy on the heart, some have wisely recommended it to parents, to make children their instruments in dealing their alms to the poor, and in giving instruction to the neglected. The books which you put into the hands of your children, should be such as are adapted to cherish benevolence. Sobriety is another quality which you ought to cultivate in the young. I mean not to intimate that you should labour to repress the sprightliness of childhood and the vivacity of youth, or to recommend a mean, sordid, and gloomy temper. There are gaieties in which they should be indulged, and to debar them from these is to make them detest religion, and count a father's house, where all is morose and cheerless, no better than a prison. But while you allow them to rejoice in their youth, check all merriment that is unseasonable, unbecoming their characters, or excessive in degree. They must be taught to keep their appetites and passions under the control of reason, and to shun every pleasure which may be dangerous to innocence. Justice is another quality which must

be cultivated in the young. Children often discover an impatient desire to possess whatever strikes their fancy: but in this they ought not to be gratified. Children must also be taught to maintain a strict regard for truth. Lying, in children, often arises from vanity and envy, from a wish to aggrandise themselves, and to depreciate the merits of others. To guard them against this practice they should be told how disgraceful it is deemed by men, and how odious it is in the sight of God; that what is gained by lying is but a poor compensation for the dread of detection, and for the infamy which it brings; that the liar forfeits all the confidence of the world; that this is the character of the devil, that he is the father of lies; and that none who love or make falsehoods shall be permitted to enter the heavenly city. 5. Children must be taught to look up to the Holy Spirit for light, grace, and comfort. There are many things mysterious both in the nature and manner of the Spirit's operations; but you can find statements in Scripture sufficiently plain to enable you to teach them what they may derive from Him. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the doctrines of Christ; and you must assure them that it is He alone who can exhibit Divine truth in its glory and power, and that without His illumination no instructions of yours, or of the holiest and wisest teachers, can impart to them saving knowledge. He is also a Spirit of Holiness; and you must teach them that the qualities which they ought to cultivate must be implanted by Him, and that whatever semblances of these may be exhibited by unrenewed men, are produced by no sound principle, influenced by no proper motive, and are devoid of all stability. You must likewise explain to them that He is the Comforter whom Christ sends to cheer His disciples amidst all their sorrows; and that by His influence martyrs have gloried in tribulation, and the righteous hope in their death. To Him they must look for support in every afflicting incident; and you may assure them that the pious heart shall find Him ready to relieve, when other comforters are silent, and other friends are no more. 6. The young should be led to serious views of death, judgment, and eternity. Lead their views to the heavenly world, where the good are for ever happy in their Father's house, and in a land where sin, and sorrow, and death are unknown; where they are employed in the everlasting celebration of their Redeemer's love; where His image sheds over them the perfection of beauty; where there is social intercourse without jealousy or rivalship, perpetual worship without languor, and pleasures that never lose their relish. II. THE MANNER IN WHICH THAT INSTRUCTION SHOULD BE COMMUNICATED AND ENFORCED. 1. The instructions which you communicate must flow from the heart. Unless you feel a love of the truth, and a zealous concern to impart it, your lessons will be delivered in a manner so cold that your children will hear them with no interest. They easily discern, when you speak from conviction and feeling. Instructions which are marked by parental affection and pious solicitude will awe the giddiest into attention, and soften the most stubborn. 2. The lessons of religion and morality should be taught with diligence. Much attention will be requisite to find out the evil principles which are most likely to influence your children, and the quarter in which they are most vulnerable by temptation; and when you are aware of these, you must labour to mortify their corrupt propensities, and to guard what is most exposed to danger. 3. The young must be instructed frequently. In walking with them on the highway or through the fields there are many objects which call your attention to these lessons; and in teaching them to contemplate the scenes of nature in the spirit of devotion, you will cherish in them a relish for the purest pleasures, and open to them a source of unfailing entertainment during the whole of life. Your duty requires many of you to leave your dwellings early in the morning, yet go not forth till you have given, if it is possible, a serious counsel to the young. It may work in their minds during your absence, and will probably suggest such a thought as this, "My father's heart must be strongly set on my being wise and good, since he can never leave me without urging me to it." In the evening, ere you retire to rest, forget not to ask how they have spent the day, and what improvement they have made since you left them. The idea of such an inquiry will be a powerful incitement to the diligence of your children. On the morning of the Lord's day your instructions should commence as early as possible. Improve every incident that happens in the family, or in the neighbourhood, to enforce religious instruction. I shall only state further on this topic this short maxim, "Let instruction be your daily task, and it will be your daily pleasure." 4. Instruction should be communicated in a familiar manner. Your ideas must be expressed in simple language, and illustrated from objects with which they are acquainted. 5. Your instructions must be enforced by a suitable

example. Piety appears most venerable in a father's devotion, and love to Christ most delightful in a mother's praise. Nowhere does integrity seem so noble as in a father's abhorrence of all that is base and deceitful; nor charity so lovely as in a mother's sympathy with the mourner. Nowhere does patience appear more amiable than in their silence while in agony; nor faith more triumphant than in the support which it gives them in their last struggle, and in their last farewell. 6. Prayer to God must accompany all your instructions. You must pray that your children may be enlightened by the spirit of wisdom; that their tempers may be softened by the grace of meekness; that their hearts may be sanctified by the washing of regeneration; that their education may be blessed by the care of heaven, and their lives adorned with the fruits of holiness. Let these prayers be sometimes put up before them. In such a situation the young will be led to such reflections as these, "Can I continue an enemy to that God whose mercy a parent is now imploring for me? Can I cherish these evil propensities, the destruction of which he now supplicates? Shall I despise those graces which he entreats the Father of goodness to work in me? or turn away my ear from that law which he wishes may be written on my heart?" III. SOME MOTIVES. 1. Let parents consider that the vows of God are upon them. When your children were baptized you acknowledged that it was your duty to train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and solemnly engaged before God and His Church to perform it. And can your conscience permit you to be inattentive to the best interests of the children of your vows? 2. Consider the examples which are set before you to direct and encourage you in this duty (Gen. xviii. 19; Psa. xxxiv. 11). 3. Consider how much the success and the happiness of your children in life depend on your early care. Nothing is so likely to secure success in any business or profession, as industry and sobriety, justice and truth. And you know how much happiness depends on the state of the mind, and on the nature of the habits. Evil passions will make the heart wretched in the midst of honours and abundance, while piety and contentment will keep the soul in peace in every affliction. Habits of fickleness and indolence, precipitance and indecision, will involve men in perplexities, losses, and disgrace. By the counsels of religion, you secure for them a companion and a monitor, who will abide with them when you depart to the Father, and who will talk with them when you are silent in the grave. 4. I appeal to your regard to the Church, and to your country. Can you bear the thought that the institutions which you delighted to support will be deserted by your children? 5. I may plead with you from the regard which you feel for your own credit and happiness. Impious, profligate, and thriftless children will be the bitterest of your sorrows. On the other hand, virtuous children are the honour of their parents. There is no friend on whom the old man can lean with such pleasure as on the son in whom the kind affections are strengthened by Christian principle; and nowhere is the aching head so easy as on the pillow which filial piety has smoothed. 6. The common neglect of this duty should excite you to perform it. 7. Think on the efforts which are now made to corrupt the rising generation. If the lessons of religion are not taught, vice and folly will seize on the unoccupied mind, and acquire an influence there which no future exertions may be able to subdue. 8. Consider what comfort the discharge of your duty will yield you in the death of children. IV. REFLECTIONS AND EXHORTATIONS. 1. What a blessing to the young has the Bible been! Happy are the families which dwell under its shadow. 2. Let parents lay up in their memories the counsels and motives which they have heard. Listen to no suggestions that would detach you from your duty. 3. Let little children be thankful to God if they have parents who teach them the good ways of the Lord. Endeavour, by your meekness and docility, to render their duty more and more pleasing. 4. Let the young, whose parents are still continued with them, beware of imagining, that because they are now near to manhood they are above their counsels. Solicit their advice in your perplexities, and open your hearts to them in your sorrows. Give them the satisfaction of seeing in your temper and conduct the fruit of their early toils; and let them have reason to say that, so far from disappointing them, you are wiser and better than they hoped. (*H. Belfrage.*) *Religious education:*— What is the true idea in the religious instruction of the young? It is that they have in them a moral and spiritual nature to be unfolded, or, in other words, an original capacity for religious thought, feeling, faith, and affection. It is indeed a great idea, to be realised only by a long and arduous process, carrying the soul not only far away from, but infinitely above, its original rudimental state, where the powers of good and evil, as yet unstirred, slumber together. To the negative care

of not hurting the child must be added the positive, of helping him according to his great, pressing want. We need not fear to lay a vigorous hand upon his spirit in prosecuting this work. For that spirit is not the already delicately shaped, perfect excellence some suppose, like beautiful frostwork, which a breath may mar; or frail porcelain, exquisitely fashioned, which is easily shattered; but an undeveloped ability to fear and love and serve God, which we are by all means, and with all our might, to stimulate and bring forth. It is a work of difficulty. As the apostle says, "First is that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual." Leaving out extraordinary cases of those, on the one hand, apparently sanctified from birth with singular tenderness of conscience and nobleness of feeling, or, on the other hand, of a strangely stubborn and incorrigible temper—the being we have to deal with, beheld not as transfigured by our imagination, but in his real condition, is a being of undeveloped spiritual nature. Nor is this all. While the germ of the spirit is in him, the germ of what in Scripture is called the *flesh* is in him too. He is capable, not only of religion, but of selfishness, irreverence, falsehood, unkindness, impurity. You may have seen the German drawing of "the game of chess," in which a youth plays with the devil, the stake being his soul; while the guardian angel bends as a good genius over the contest. That game is in the heart: our task is to encourage and assist the good principle against the bad. But the difficulty is not only within. From the evil that is in the world too, from the general level of human conduct, flows a mighty stream of influence, tending to carry the child either into sin or a mean mediocrity of character. How lift him out of that stream? How get him above the unworthy temper that not only arises within, but predominates around and insinuates itself into him, like an unwholesome atmosphere, at every pore? I have but one comprehensive means or instrument to propose, and that is Christian truth—which Christ in His own prayer relies upon to sanctify His disciples. Truth is the magazine and armoury, by winning which into our possession and vigorously bringing to bear upon our object, we can effect our threefold object of developing the spiritual nature, subordinating the animal nature to its right place and proportions, and giving a check or antidote to the corruptions of the world. But it must be truth taught and exemplified; for otherwise it is hardly the truth, but only its body without the soul—truth flowing audibly from the lips and silently from the character—truth in our conduct, feelings, affections, and principles, as well as in our patient speech and persuasion. In the religious education of a child, you aim at a great effect. Do you complain that you see little fruit from your exertions? But have you put in motion a power or cause, great in correspondence to the effect you would produce? If not, you are as unreasonable as the man spoken of in Scripture who would build a tower without counting the cost, or as it would have been to expect the fountain of refreshing waters to gush up in our sight, before the rock had been bored and the quicksand bridged to conduct the stream. The moral faculty, in an immortal soul, is not a flower like that which opens in the morning to shut at night, but nearer resembling the century-plant; and we must be content to nurse it through grade after grade of growth, slowly approximating the bright consummation, which, even in the saint, is but partially revealed in this earthly life. Only for our good cheer, in this gradual and perhaps tardy process, let us have faith in the law of cause and effect, as operating no less surely in the moral than in the material world. No more certainly will the sonorous church-bell answer to its clanging tongue, calling us to worship, or the liquid water spread its successive circles from the falling stone, or our own voice penetrate the listening ear, than, sooner or later, will the sincere and vital truth we utter or practically manifest produce an influence upon all within our sphere, especially upon the susceptible young. As the engineer in the steamship or at the locomotive, if he observe the wheels slacken, increases the speed by increasing the power, acts on the circumference by first acting on the centre, and quickens the pulsations of that great heart of brass and iron which he wields, that he may hasten the motions of his car or vessel; or as the aeronaut, if his balloon will not carry the given weight into the atmosphere, does not sceptically sit down to repine, but only sets to work to generate more of the buoyant force; so are we not to be dispirited and unbelieving, when our moral ends in the minds and lives of the young are not accomplished as rapidly as we desire, and they do not rise to the height of purity above the world we would fain see them maintain: but we are to replenish our own spiritual stores, and clear a new passage for the perhaps obstructed waters of that well within, which springeth up into everlasting life. If the explosion, the precipitate, or the transparency does not follow upon the mingling of the chemist's

ingredients, as he expects, he attributes the failure of his experiment, not to any mysterious fatality or insuperable hindrance, but at once to his neglect of some of the requisite conditions; for nature does not lie, or ever prove treacherous. If the architect's roof settles or his tower leans, he judges he has made some mistake in his foundation, his materials, or construction. If the artist's canvas presents an untrue portraiture, his eye has been at fault as to the colouring, or his hand in the proportions. If a political movement, business-plan, worldly speculation, or trial in husbandry, turns out badly, there has been some want of discernment, contrivance, or forecast. So the failure of our moral experiment upon the hearts of the young indicates the absence of some necessary ingredient. The weakness of our spiritual building proves that we have taken the sand for our basis, instead of having been at the pains to penetrate to the rock. And if there be no success, no return, no fruit, from our religious calculation and culture, the first and most likely inference is, that we have not endeavoured wisely, anticipated prudently, grappled with the real difficulties, taken advantage of favouring circumstances, or well prepared this living soil for the seed of God's Word. I know, and do not forget the peculiarity involved in the fact, that we are not working in gross matter, as wood or stone, or dealing with such things as the wind and the rain in our planting, or wielding the mechanical elements of any earthly economy; but trying to impress a spiritual substance, essaying to guide a self-moving and free being, whose liberty and inclination and individuality of nature, whose situation and exposure to change and temptation beyond our reach, give a singular character to the terms upon which we can stand with or approach him. But all this does not make void, or even for a moment bring into the slightest question, the principle that has been laid down. Whatever may be done to the child by others, or whatever he may do to himself, our action upon him will nevertheless tell the full tale of its own quality and amount. The ship sailing across Atlantic seas may be retarded by the shell-fish that fastens on her smooth sides, or be swept out of her course by the Gulf-stream; nevertheless, the breezes of heaven, that have blown upon her, have produced their entire effect; and she would have been more retarded or further diverted, had those breezes intermitted their constancy, or abated their stress. Much of the force in all machinery is lost in friction; but the artisan does not therefore doubt the virtue of the central motive-power, however much of it may be neutralised on the way. So our exertions, whether cancelled by hindrances or producing their free results, are fully reckoned in a positive or negative way. And we know that God Himself conspires with our enterprise; that we are humble, privileged co-workers with Him; setting our action in the line with His friendly providence; fulfilling what will ever more reveal itself, as dearer to Him than the making of worlds, kindling of suns, and balancing of constellations; sowing our seed, and preparing its tender sprout and blade for the dew He promises of His Spirit, and the rain that will descend of His grace. Said a wise elder in the ministry of the Gospel to a younger labourer in the vineyard, "If you want to save the souls of your people, you will." So, if it be the real absorbing object of your desire and devotion to lead your little flocks into the ways of pleasantness and peace, you will at least set them in that blessed direction. And what reward of your labours greater than even their partial and commencing success? What should one so desire to do in the life he lives in this world, as to give to a soul the tendency of virtue, and inflame it with the love of God? (*C. A. Bartol.*) *On the religious instruction of the young*:—I. To discourse of THE CLUSTER OF ADMONITIONS CONTAINED IN THE WORDS OF MY TEXT. 1. These admonitions are addressed to the children of Israel and to every one who professes to be an Israelite indeed. 2. That little children must be instructed with patience and perseverance. 3. That the statutes and judgments of the Lord should habitually be the conversation of His people, in the presence of their children and domestics. 3. That the statutes and commandments of the Lord should be constantly kept in view, habitually read and remembered. 5. That the doctrines of Divine revelation and the laws of heaven are to be perpetually practised. II. To specify SOME OF THE REASONS WHY GREAT ATTENTION IS TO BE PAID TO THE DUTY RECOMMENDED IN MY TEXT. 1. The authority of heaven binds you to this duty. 2. The love of God and of Christ should constrain you to the discharge of these duties. 3. The near relation in which you stand to them, and the engagements under which you have come for them, should excite you to the discharge of this duty. 4. You are obliged to discharge this duty, that the entail of religion may not be cut off from your family. 5. The consideration that this is the way to be a blessing both on the

rising Church and the rising State, should excite you to the discharge of this duty. Lessons: 1. From what has been said, let such as have been negligent in teaching their children and the rising generation in the knowledge of the statutes of the Lord, be convicted and reclaimed. 2. Learn to begin this pleasant and important task as soon as you possibly can. 3. Consider that this is the leading duty which you ought to discharge towards your children and the rising generation. 4. Learn from this subject to expect difficulties and discouragements when instructing your children in the ways of the Lord. 5. That you must not think of rolling the burden of the religious instruction of your children from off your own shoulders. (*John Jardine.*) *Parental obligations*:—I. THE COMMAND. 1. It emanated from the highest authority, the Lord Jehovah. 2. Fraught with the utmost importance; extending both to the cultivation of personal religion and to the furtherance of youthful piety by the special inculcation of Scripture truth. 3. Demands implicit obedience. II. TO WHOM GIVEN. To Moses, as the temporal head, legislator, and judge of Israel, was confided the solemn and important charge of carrying into execution the commands of Jehovah. Thus, as a wise and faithful legislator, he "spake unto the people all that the Lord God had spoken unto him" (ver. 27, &c.); to the intent "that they should make them known to their children, that they might set their hopes in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (Psa. lxxviii. 5–7). III. HOW FAR THE CONDUCT OF MOSES IS WORTHY OF OUR IMITATION. Although the Divine command delivered to Moses was intended for the Israel of God collectively, he regarded it as having reference to them also individually; and consequently, as obligatory upon himself, and intended, like every other Divine command, for the real happiness of man. Oh, ever let us receive the Word and command of God first for our own individual instruction; for it behoveth us, amid all our anxiety to impart, by personal exertions or by pecuniary supplies, the Word of God to others, to take good heed that we ourselves have "received that Word with pure affection" into our own hearts. Thus received, it will be the grand stimulus to personal holiness and to individual activity in the service of God. And besides, being brought through grace to "hope in God's Word," it is also a source of unspeakable comfort; and it furnishes the believer's plea with God—"Remember the Word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope." And when his hope is beclouded, or his faith is "faint and sickly" in the hour of languishing and depression, the believer can say, "This is my comfort in my affliction: Thy Word hath quickened me; Thy statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage." Nay, more, he can say, with the written Word of God in his heart—with Christ, the Eternal Word, formed therein "the hope of glory," "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Psa. lxxiii. 25). This gracious and happy state of mind, we shall do well to imitate the conduct of Moses, in regarding the command as specially obligatory upon ourselves. But is not the conduct of Moses in his social or domestic character also highly worthy of our imitation? Parents, do you love your children? I know that you do. Availing himself, therefore, of the period of childhood and youth (when the mind is most impressible, and impressions, good or bad, most permanent), the Christian parent seizes upon every opportunity for the inculcation of those principles which will best regulate the affections of the heart and guard against temptations to outward sin; nay, more—"which are able to make wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." But what was worthy of imitation in the judicial and legislative conduct of Moses? All should respect the authority of God as revealed in His Word—the one grand standing statute-book of the King of heaven, which ought to be the basis of every law enacted by the kings of the earth. The perfection of human law is the measure of the approximation of its principle to the Divine. The real prosperity and happiness of a nation will, therefore, always be in exact ratio with its practical knowledge of the Word of God. Lawgivers, and all who are entrusted with the administration of the law—magistrates, and all who bear office under them—would do well to imitate the zeal and fidelity of Moses, in enforcing by precept and example the inculcation of the Word of God as a national concern. (*M. Seaman, D.D.*) *The necessity and advantages of early religious education*:—I. WHAT NEED THERE IS OF THE EARLIEST INSTRUCTIONS, WITH THE MOST CONSTANT CARE AFTERWARDS TO REINFORCE THEM, IN ORDER TO MAKE AND KEEP MEN WISE, VIRTUOUS, AND RELIGIOUS. To express this to us by similitudes both just and beautiful, some philosophers compare a human soul to an empty cabinet of inexpressible value for the matter and workmanship,

and particularly for the wonderful contrivance of it, as having all imaginable conveniences within for treasuring up jewels and curiosities of every kind. But, then, we ourselves must collect and sort them, and we shall ill deserve such a present from the Maker if we keep it empty or fill it with trifles; nay, if we do not, as we have opportunity, furnish and enrich it with whatsoever is of use or worth in art or nature. This ought indeed to be the main business of our lives. Others, with equal truth and justice, have likened the minds of children to a *rasa tabula*, or white paper, whereon we may imprint or write what characters we please, which will prove so lasting as not to be effaced without injuring or destroying the beauty of the whole; even as experience shows, and the son of Sirach advises, "My son, gather instruction from thy youth up: so shalt thou find wisdom till thine old age" (Ecclus. vi. 18). These first characters therefore ought to be deeply and beautifully struck, and the learning they express should be of great price. And this, if timely care be taken, may be done with ease, because the mind is then soft and tender, and because truth and right are by the nature of things as pleasant to the soul as light and proportion to the eye or as sweet as honey to the taste (Prov. xi. 10; xxiv. 13, 14). II. WHAT ADVANTAGES ARE LIKELY TO FOLLOW FROM SUCH INSTRUCTIONS AND SUCH CARE, AS WELL TO THE PERSONS WHO ARE OBJECTS OF THEM AS TO THE COMMUNITIES WHEREIN THEY LIVE. 1. As to persons themselves. Without a good education the best natural parts would profit little, and could never exert and show themselves to advantage. Men would be raised thereby no higher than savages in knowledge or virtue, and might degenerate into that ignorance and brutality which travellers relate of Hottentots. Good natural parts are indeed like jewels, which in their natural state show little of their worth and few of their inherent beauties, till the skill and labour of the artist have taken off their roughness, decked them with light, discovered their different waters and colours, and spread through every part an amazing brightness and glory. Education, after like manner, if it have its perfect work upon a human soul, will throw out to view and give a lustre to every latent virtue and perfection which otherwise might never have made an appearance, much less a figure, in the world. Thus, likewise, to speak in vegetable metaphors, the choicest seeds will prove of no value if we sow or plant them in bad ground where they will decay or die; and if they fall into good, they will be overrun and choked with weeds, which are ever most rank in the richest soils, unless constant care be taken to root them out. They certainly can never grow and flourish in any soil so as to bring their natural fruit to perfection, without cultivating, manuring, watering, pruning, and all the other arts of skilful management that the best of gardeners or husbandmen can exercise. 2. Without having any view to the good and happiness of private persons, a religious and wise education of children is of so great concern to the communities wherein they live, that in all the best ordered governments of old time, public care was taken of it; and in some of them it was thought right and necessary to take them wholly out of the hands of bad, ill-judging, or over-fond parents, and to place them in public schools and seminaries. And though the natural claim of parents may, all things considered, be the best, yet we shall see great reason for the other practice if we consider too that religion and virtue is the only true cement of all society; that the principles of both must be conveyed by education; and that (as private vices spread their poison through the whole community) most of the disorders, mischiefs, and confusions which disturb and harass any state, or the members of it, may be justly charged upon the want of it. (*John Donne, D.D.*) *Child trained for Christ*:—A father whom I knew had a son who had long been ill and whose end was approaching. One day when he came home the mother told him that their child was like to die, and the father went at once to his bedside. "My son, do you know that you are dying?" said he. "Then I will be with Jesus to-night," was the answer. "Yet, father," he added, "don't you grieve for me, for when I get to heaven I will go straight to Jesus and tell Him that you brought me to Him when I was a child." (*D. L. Moody.*) *The Bible the standard of education*:—If we do not adopt the Bible as our standard in training the young, combined training is impossible. If in moral principles every man is his own lawgiver, there is no law at all, and no authority. You may train a fruit tree by nailing its branches to a wall, or tying them to an espalier railing; but the tree whose branches have nothing to lean upon but air is not trained at all. It is not a dispute between the Scriptures and some other rival standard, for no such standard exists or is proposed. It is a question between the Bible as a standard and no standard at all. But training without an acknow-

ledged standard is nothing—is an empty form of words, by which ingenious men amuse themselves. There are some who would borrow from the Bible whatever moral principles they have, and yet are unwilling to own the Scriptures, in their integrity, as an authority binding the conscience; because, if it is binding in one thing, it is binding in all. (*W. Arnot.*) *A whole family trained for God:*—I happened to know two aged ministers of the Gospel. One of them told me that he prayed that he might never have a child who was not a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ. God gave him ten children, and he said to me, on his dying bed, "Nine of my children are God's children, and I am dying full of faith that the tenth will be also His." It was my privilege to be the instrument in God's hands of leading the tenth to the Saviour. (*W. Grant.*) *Training of children:*—The first thing to be instilled into the minds of children is to fear God. This is the beginning, the middle, and the end of wisdom. Next, they ought to be induced to be kind to one another. Great care ought to be taken to guard against speaking on improper subjects in their presence, since lasting impressions are made at a very early age; on the contrary, our conversation ought to be on good and instructive topics. Imperceptibly to themselves or others, they derive great benefit from such discourse, for it is quite certain that children take the tinge either of good or evil, without the process being discovered. (*Philip de Mornay.*) *Religious training:*—"It is already a hard case with me," the Queen says, when she speaks of the pressure of public business which prevented her from giving to the little Princess-Royal all the attention she wished, "that my occupations prevent me from being with her when she says her prayers." And we may quote entire the note of instructions in respect to religious training which the young mother of twenty-five put down for the guidance of her deputies in this important work: "I am quite clear that she should be taught to have great reverence for God and for religion, but that she should have the feeling of devotion and love which our Heavenly Father encourages His earthly children to have for Him, and not one of fear and trembling; and that the thoughts of death and an after life should not be presented in an alarming and forbidding view, and that she should be made to know as yet no difference of creeds." *Training of children:*—Be very vigilant over thy child in the April of his understanding, lest the frost of May nip his blossoms. While he is a tender twig, straighten him; whilst he is a new vessel, season him; such as thou makest him, such commonly shalt thou find him. Let his first lesson be obedience, and his second shall be what thou wilt. Give him education in good letters, to the utmost of thy ability and his capacity. Season his youth with the love of his Creator, and make the fear of his God the beginning of his knowledge. (*F. Quarles.*) *Training children for God at the start of life:*—I do not think I was ever so much impressed by a picture as I was by one, although it was only a rough woodcut, that I saw in Chamouni, Switzerland. It was a representation of a group of people that had been trying a few months before to climb the Alps. You know that people who climb the Alps have a rope put around the waist, and guides go first and guides come after. The rope connects them all together, so that if one slips the others may save him from fatality. Well, this group of eight or ten people were on the side of the mountain, all tied together, passing along on a very slippery place, and one slipped and dropped, and the others slipped and were going down this precipice, when one man with more muscular power than the others, halted on the ice—stuck his feet into the iceberg and halted; but the rope broke! Fifty years from now, at the foot of that glacier, the rest will be found. Here is a whole family bound together by a cord of affection wandering on the slippery places of worldliness and sin. All given up to the world. No Christ in that family. All bound together and on the slippery places. Passing on down, the father, at fifty years of age, strikes his foot on the Rock of Ages, and halts. But the rope broke! the rope broke! A ship-carpenter in New York walks up and says: "That vessel has been gone three days at sea. Why, there is a timber in that vessel that ought not to have been there. It was worm-eaten." Or, "I had a timber put in that ship that was the wrong kind of wood. Oh! I am so sorry about it, I am so very sorry. I will correct it. I have another piece of timber to put in the place of it." Correct it! That ship went down last night in a cyclone. Oh! the time to train our children for God and for heaven is at the start; it is at the start. (*T. de Witt Talmage.*) **Write them upon the posts of thy house.**—*God's laws to be remembered:*—1. At the time this command was given there were few written copies of the whole law, and the people had it read to them only at the Feast of Tabernacles. God, therefore, seemed to have appointed, at least for the present, that

some select sentences of the law should literally be written upon their gates and walls, or on slips of parchment to be worn about their wrists or bound upon their foreheads. 2. The spirit of the command, however, and the chief thing intended, undoubtedly was that they should give all diligence, and use all means to keep God's laws always in remembrance; as men frequently bind something upon their hands or put something before their eyes to prevent forgetfulness of a thing that they much desire to remember. But the Jews, forgetting the spirit and design of this precept, used these things as superstitious people do amulets or charms. They used also to put these slips of parchment into a piece of cane or other hollow wood, and fasten that to the door of their houses, and of each particular door in them, and as often as they go in and out they make it a part of their devotion to touch the parchment and kiss it. (*J. Wilson.*)

Vers. 10–12. **Cities which thou buildedst not.**—*The Divine transference of man's property:*—I. GOD'S RIGHT TO THE SECULAR PROPERTY OF MEN. Not merely the land, but also all productions of labour, belong to Him. II. THE FATE OF ALL EARTHLY POSSESSIONS. The only property that we can retain, that we can carry with us, and which can bless us wherever we go, is moral—the property of a holy character. III. THE PRINCIPLE OF ENTAIL IN GOD'S GOVERNMENT OF MAN. One man labours, and another man enters into his labours. So it has ever been, so it is now. 1. It is so politically. 2. Socially. 3. Religiously. IV. A TYPE OF A GOOD TIME THAT IS COMING. The Church shall take the property of the world. V. THE PRIMARY CONDITION OF MAN'S WELL-BEING IN EVERY AGE. "Beware lest thou forget the Lord." 1. That forgetfulness of the Lord is an immense evil. 2. That worldly prosperity exposes us to this immense evil. (*Homilist.*) **Beware lest thou forget the Lord.**—*The dangers of prosperity, and the means of avoiding them:*—I. THE DANGERS OF PROSPERITY. One danger to be apprehended from prosperity is, that a man may thereby be led to forget God as the Author of his blessings, and the Sovereign Disposer of those events which have issued in success. Alienation of heart from God is the result of our fallen state. Should prosperity come upon us unexpectedly, without any previous effort on our part, there is fuel, as it were, applied to the unhallowed fire within, which causes the natural carnality of our hearts to exhibit itself with a force before unknown. Should, however, man's prosperity in this world be the result of well-directed efforts of his own, there is a temptation lest we should forget God who has given us power to succeed in our endeavours, lest we should attribute to our own strength or wisdom what is due chiefly to Him of whom we have received our all, and to whom all the praise is due. But we may notice other dangers connected with worldly prosperity. There is a security sometimes issuing out of it which is altogether inconsistent with man's frail and uncertain tenure (Psa. xxx. 6, xlix. 11; Job xxix. 18; Luke xii. 16, 19, 21). We should not undervalue the blessing of temporal welfare; it is God's gift, and ought to be enjoyed with thankfulness in Him. It is then sweetest when it is possessed as the fruit of His goodness towards us, and when we consider ourselves as accountable to Him for the use of it. But dependence upon our worldly treasures is at once irreligion and folly. To look for happiness, as issuing out of anything in this present world independent of God, is to search for bright colours in the dark—is to mistake the end of our being, and to occupy ourselves with a fruitless toil. II. METHODS BY WHICH THESE DANGERS MAY BE COUNTERACTED. 1. First and chiefly: God must be before our eyes. We should enshrine Him in our heart and memory, not only as our omnipotent Creator, but as our Protector—as our Governor—as "the Author and Giver of all good things"—as the Sovereign Disposer of all events—by whom the ravens are fed, and the lilies of the field do grow and clothe themselves with beauty. 2. Another means for avoiding the danger of prosperity is this: meditation upon God. Our danger arises from thinking too much of ourselves. To overcome this danger we must meditate often upon God; upon His goodness, glory, and majesty. 3. But last of all, that we may not be overwhelmed by the dangers which threaten us from worldly prosperity, we must meditate much and deeply upon the superior glory of eternal realities. Our hearts must be imbued with the love of Christ. Our hearts must dwell on His matchless grace in dying for us. In this way we must endeavour to form some estimate of the glorious salvation which is in store for us hereafter. Against the riches, honours, and comforts of this present world we must set the riches which no moth corrupteth, the honour which cometh only from God; the consolations of His Spirit, and the happiness of the redeemed. (*H. J. Hastings, M.A.*) *Sudden prosperity fatal to*

religion:—I. THAT A JUST SENSE OF THE SUPREME BEING IS THE BEST SECURITY FOR A MAN'S VIRTUE. I say a just sense, because wrong apprehensions of the Deity have generally had a very unhappy influence on the interests of virtue; as is evident to every one who compares the religion and manners of the heathen world. This was probably the reason why Moses was so solicitous to suppress all personal representations of the Deity through his whole economy; he knew very well that the people would naturally borrow their idea of God from the representations they saw of Him, and that the idea of their God would be the measure of their morality. There are few things that have contributed more to the extent of vice than the hope of secrecy, which vanishes at the very apprehension of a Being who seeth in secret. But our idea of the Deity stops not here; we consider Him not barely as a spectator of our actions, but as a judge of them too; and he must be an insolent offender, indeed, who will dare to commit a crime in the sight of Him who he knows will judge him, who he is sure will condemn him for it. The hope of reward and fear of punishment add fresh vigour to the cause of virtue. II. THIS SENSE OF GOD IS OFTEN MUCH EFFACED, SOMETIMES ABSOLUTELY LOST, IN A STATE OF EASE AND AFFLUENCE. The observation of Moses has its foundation in nature, is evident to experience, and confirmed by a greater than Moses, who tells us how difficult it is for those who trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God; and we find how difficult it is for those who have them not to trust in them. When we are under any immediate presence of affliction, when we are despised and deserted by men, we look upon God as a present help in trouble; but that exigence is no sooner over than we begin to see Him at a great distance. We no longer call to heaven for that satisfaction which we can now find from earth, but depend upon the second cause for that support which can never be attained but from the First. We begin to fancy ourselves established even beyond the reach of providence, or the possibility of change. There is something in the very nature of ease which is apt to enervate the mind and introduce a languid effeminacy into all its faculties. The senses, by an habitual indulgence, gain ground upon the understanding and usurp the province of reason, which must inevitably decline in proportion as the sensual affections prevail; the spirit becomes less willing as the flesh grows more weak; we sink into an indolent oblivion of our Maker, and fall amongst the number of those who are "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." It is obvious to observe here, that as every corruption in our principles is followed by proportionate decay in our practice, so every corruption in our practice is attended with an equal decay in our principles; from whence it appears that religion and virtue are inseparably united, they must flourish and fall together; they are lovely in their lives, and in their deaths they cannot be divided. III. A STATE OF EASE AND AFFLUENCE, AS IT TEMPTS US STRONGLY TO LOSE, SO IT LAYS US UNDER GREATER OBLIGATIONS TO RETAIN AND IMPROVE THAT SENSE OF GOD UPON OUR MINDS. You, who inhabit great and goodly cities which you did not build, who inherit houses full of all good things which you did not fill; you, whose fortunes seem to be showered upon you directly from heaven, while others are forced by the sweat of their brows to raise them from the earth; as you are blessed with higher degrees of the bounties of God, so are you more eminently obliged to preserve a stronger sense of them. Your duty increases with the eminence of your station, and your obligations to it are multiplied by the number of your advantages. IV. I shall now point out to you, in the last place, SOME OF THOSE MEANS WHICH SEEM MOST LIKELY TO PRESERVE AND IMPROVE THOSE CONCEPTIONS UPON OUR MINDS. And I think there can be no better than those which Moses recommends to the Israelites in vers. 6, 7. When you thus begin and end your day, when you thus open your morning and close your evening, you cannot absolutely forget the Lord, especially if you make Him the subject of your conversation too. The next direction is, to teach the commandments of God to your children; but a man cannot well teach that to another of which he is ignorant himself. And every time you endeavour to imprint a sense of God upon the minds of your children, you must necessarily make so strong an impression of it upon your own that you can never be able to forget the Lord. (*T. Ashton, D.D.*) *Forgetfulness of God*:—It is remarkable how frequently in the Book of Deuteronomy, when God is giving His final summary of instructions to the Israelites, the warning is repeated, that the Jewish Church forget not God and His dealings with them in connection with their deliverance from Egypt. Such warnings strike us the more forcibly, because the people to whom they were addressed had come into the closest contact with God, and had been favoured with the clearest visible evidences of His presence. To have seen Jesus in

the flesh, to have witnessed His miracles, these would have been privileges the memory of which could have never passed away. Now, all such reasonings are mere self-deception. That there is a deep fallacy involved therein is manifest from the fact that the Jewish Church, which had the most abundant ocular demonstration of God and of His power, is so repeatedly cautioned against this forgetfulness of God. With this fact impressed upon our minds it will be profitable to consider the ways in which forgetfulness of God displays itself. 1. This tendency will be perceived in respect to God Himself. We acknowledge that it is in God that we live and move and have our being; yet we rarely find a sustained recognition of God. We do not walk day by day as seeing by the eye of faith Him who is invisible. What an importance would it give to life could we attain to that deep sense of the consciousness of God's immediate presence and majesty which is implied in the brief but full description of the spiritual life of those of whom it is recorded, that they walked with God. 2. But besides this forgetfulness of God in His abstract nature and perfections, we trace this evil in a similar forgetfulness of Him in His operations. God in His glorious majesty dwelleth in the highest heavens, but in His operations and providential dealings He is ever, as it were, coming down to earth and meeting us closely and continually in the pathway of our lives. Every comfort is held out to our acceptance by the hand of God; in every trial we may trace the discipline of God. But this we overlook: human agency, second causes, personal effort, self-dependence, come in between us and God. Backsliding Israel at length reached this point, that they knew not that it was God who gave them their corn and wine and oil, and multiplied their silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. 3. Forgetfulness of God also displays itself in respect to that covenant which He has made with us in Christ. The Jewish Church had a special warning upon this head: Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God which He made with you. A covenant with man is not disregarded nor trifled with. We are less scrupulous with respect to God. Our covenant with God goes beyond that of the Jewish Church, in that it brings Christ before us in His finished work, and no longer veiled in types and shadows. All that God can give to sinful man is our covenant portion in the Son of His love, the Lord Jesus Christ. 4. Another painful feature of this infirmity is to be found in the forgetfulness of the Lord Jesus as our Saviour. It is noted as one point in the sinfulness of Israel, that they forgat God their Saviour, who had done great things in Egypt. The Passover was to be the means of maintaining a devout remembrance of this deliverance. In like manner the Lord's Supper was to be a commemorative ordinance to keep ever before the minds of His people a lively remembrance of their greater deliverance by the death and sufferings of the Redeemer. Do this, says our Lord, in remembrance of Me. The grace and condescension, the tender love and never-failing compassion of the Saviour, His sufferings, and agony, and death, fade from our recollection. 5. We may notice one other form of this forgetfulness of Divine things. In addition to those ordinary influences of the means of grace upon the soul which the believer experiences, there are some occasions of special blessing. Some striking or alarming providence of God brings us, as it were, into His immediate presence; under the preaching of the Word, or in the prayerful study of it, the mysteries of spiritual truth are opened to the mind; it is a time of bright light, of quickened affections, of holy aspirations, of heavenly communion with God. In the moment of such ecstasy we feel how good it is to be here, and imagine that we shall go forth with the holy influence of such a season abidingly with us. It is a new era in our spiritual life. We can never be again engrossed, as in times past, with the vanities of time. Yet the memory here again betrays its trust. Forgetfulness of the heights which we have reached lowers the tone of our spiritual life; coldness creeps over the soul; and it is well if we escape the state of backsliding Israel, when she "went after her lovers, and forgot Me, saith the Lord." 6. This forgetfulness of God cannot be confined to any one period of life; it meets us everywhere. As we look back upon the sins of our youth, this rises up as one of the most overwhelming. Amidst the buoyant spirits of our early days, and the cheerfulness of home, and the freshness of our first affections, where was God? What place did He occupy in our minds and in our hearts? "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." But as years pass on, and manhood succeeds to youth, other objects engross the thoughts to the exclusion of God. The cares and anxieties attendant upon the start in life, the turmoil of business, the engrossing and ensnaring contact with the world,—these present no atmosphere favourable to the cultivation of habitual converse with God.

Nor, if we follow on our search into advanced life, do we find it otherwise. Grey hairs and decreasing strength would seem to give a sufficiently solemn warning to prepare to meet God; but it is remarkable how entirely indifference and insensibility to Divine things mark an old age which succeeds a manhood of worldliness and a youth of thoughtlessness. Thus does forgetfulness of God accompany the worldly man through every period of his earthly life; and, in the case of the believer, the danger is equally present, and forms a main element in the severe conflict of his inner life. But though sin has introduced this infirmity into our fallen nature, God has not left us without a remedy. The evil may, through grace, be counteracted and overcome; and in order to this, the following suggestions are offered to the earnest Christian. 1. Realise the danger. Understand that the memory has a tendency to betray its trust, and neglect its duty in that which relates to God. There are many circumstances in our ordinary life which never pass away. Let a man be exposed to shipwreck, or to a railway accident, the horrors of the scene would be ever before him. There are many scenes of domestic interest which never lose their freshness. But it is otherwise in our spiritual life; and we should know it and feel it. Many an Israelite probably thought that he never could forget the passage through the Red Sea, or the terrors of Mount Sinai; but they did forget them. And so we think that the strong impression and deep conviction is to abide with us. Or we think, perhaps, that though gone for a while, it is only hidden in some secret place of memory's storehouse, and when needed will be produced again. But we are mistaken; and when we sit down to recall the past dealings with God, memory retains little beyond the bare fact; all the lesser yet perhaps more striking and instructive peculiarities of the dispensation are lost. 2. With this danger realised we next observe the need of much diligence and pains to counteract it. The natural faculty of memory differs greatly in its power in different individuals; but when weak, either generally or in any particular respect, we have recourse to certain means and helps for assisting and strengthening it. A careful and systematic classification of events, or the aid of a Memoria Technica, or a well-arranged commonplace book, will go far to supply the deficiencies of memory. Men will think no pains too great which will enable them thus to master the events of history or the facts of science. But when we pass from the subjects of human learning to the record of God's dealings with the Church and our own souls, all such efforts on our part are deemed useless and superfluous. We must be careful, too, in carrying out into corresponding action any impressions which have been made upon our minds, so as to fix them in the character by habits resulting from them. And we must note any dealings of God with us in providence or in grace which seem calculated to bring us nearer to Himself, in patient dependence or in grateful love. 3. In the use of these and like helps it is necessarily implied that the soul will be seeking by earnest prayer the effectual aid of the Holy Spirit. We have viewed this forgetfulness of God as an inseparable consequence of our fallen nature, and one which no amount of outward and sensible evidence or impression can of itself obviate, as the case of the Israelites fully proves. A similar, and even stronger, proof is presented in the case of the apostles. They had enjoyed unrestrained intercourse with our blessed Lord for several years. His conversation, His teaching, never could be forgotten. Yet the mere moral and physical effects of this teaching would be counteracted by the weak and treacherous nature of human memory; and hence our Lord promises a direct operation of the Holy Spirit to remedy this infirmity: "The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (*Christian Observer.*) *The danger of forgetting God*:—I. THE TENDENCY THAT THERE IS IN US TO FORGET GOD. 1. Forgetting the presence of God. 2. Forgetfulness of God in worship. 3. Forgetting the commandments of God. 4. Forgetting God's redeeming love. II. THE CAUSE OF FORGETFULNESS OF GOD. Prosperity. III. THE DANGER OF THIS FORGETFULNESS. Now, just let me show you that the Scripture tells us that they "shall be turned into hell" who forget God. "Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver!" But the danger of living without God is the danger of dying without God; and the man that dies without God dies without hope. You will recollect that God in a special manner complains of this with reference to His ancient people. In the first chapter of Isaiah we are told that He had nourished and brought up children, but that Israel had rebelled against Him; that the ox knew his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel, God's own people, did not consider. Are there not many amongst you that do not consider? Are there not

some amongst us that have forgotten God? But so strongly has the Scripture laid down the danger which awaits the forgetters of God, that we find that God in a special manner has condescended to help us that we may remember Him. For instance, let us look at the very text, and at that part of the text to which I was referring just now. "Beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage." Why, what great things God has done for us to remind us of redeeming love! What a blessing it is that we have a special ordinance, which it is impossible to approach with any light in our minds, without reflecting that it represents the dying love of Jesus, and is, as it were, bidding us ask ourselves whether we have a thankful remembrance of the death of Christ! What a blessing it is that God has appointed men in a special manner to go forth and to preach that Gospel which shall remind their fellow-sinners of that same redeeming love! God has done everything to prevent our forgetting Him, and lead us to consider our ways, and consider our personal relationship to Him, to consider our daily dependence upon Him for the things of this life, and to consider our complete dependence upon Him for the things of the life to come. (*Bp. Villiers.*) *Beware of prosperity:*—Mark the conception which Moses formed of all advancing civilisation. How much we have that we have not done ourselves! We are born into a world that is already furnished with the library, with the altar, with the Bible. Men born into civilised countries have not to make their own roads. We are born into the possession of riches. The poorest man in the land is an inheritor of all but infinite wealth, in every department of civilisation. In the very act of complaining of his poverty he is acknowledging his resources. His poverty is only poverty because of its relation to other things which indicate the progress of the ages that went before. Young men come into fortunes they never worked for; we all come into possessions for which our fathers toiled. We could not assemble in God's house in peace and quietness to-day if the martyrs had not founded the Church upon their very blood. Men to-day enjoy the liberty for which other men paid their lives. Coming into a civilisation so ripe and rich, having everything made ready to our hands, the whole system of society telephoned so that we can communicate with distant friends and bring them within hearing, the table loaded with everything which a healthy appetite can desire—all these things constitute a temptation, if not rightly received. Moses drew the picture, and then said, "Beware." In the time of prosperity and fulness, "then beware lest thou forget," &c. Prosperity has its trials. Poverty may be a spiritual blessing. The impoverishment and punishment of the flesh may be religiously helpful. There are anxieties connected with wealth as well as with poverty. The high and the mighty amongst us have their pains and their difficulties, as well as the lowliest and weakest members of society. Ever let men hear this word of caution, "Beware." When the harvest is the best harvest that ever was grown in our fields, then "beware." When health is long-continued and the doctor an unknown stranger in the house, then "beware." When house is added to house and land to land, then "beware." Men have been ruined by prosperity. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Danger of prosperity:*—Many are not able to suffer and endure prosperity; it is like the light of the sun to a weak eye; glorious, indeed, in itself, but not proportioned to such an instrument; Adam himself (as the Rabbins say) did not dwell one night in paradise, but was poisoned with prosperity, with the beauty of his fair wife, and a beauteous tree: and Noah and Lot were both righteous and exemplary, the one to Sodom, and the other to the old world, so long as they lived in a place in which they were obnoxious to the common suffering; but as soon as the one of them had escaped from drowning and the other from burning, and put into security, they fell into crimes which have dishonoured their memories for above thirty generations together, the crimes of drunkenness and incest. Wealth and a full fortune make men licentiously vicious, tempting a man with power, to act all that he can desire or design viciously. (*Bp. Taylor.*) *Forgetfulness through prosperity:*—Strolling along the banks of a pond, Gotthold observed a pike basking in the sun, and so pleased with the sweet soothing rays as to forget itself and the danger to which it was exposed. Thereupon a boy approached, and with a snare formed of a horsehair and fastened to the end of a rod, which he skilfully cast over his head, pulled it in an instant out of the water. "Ah me!" said Gotthold, with a deep sigh, "how evidently do I here behold shadowed forth the danger of my poor soul! When the beams of temporal prosperity play upon us to our heart's content, so grateful are they to corrupt flesh and blood that, immersed in sordid pleasure, luxury, and security, we lose all sense of spiritual danger, and all thought of eternity. In this

state many are, in fact, suddenly snatched away to the eternal ruin of their souls." *Forgetfulness of God but too easy:*—The solemn possibility is the possibility of forgetting God and God's providence in human life. We may not have endeavoured to expunge, as by an express and malicious effort; but memory is treacherous; the faculty of recollection is otherwise than religiously employed, and before we are quite aware of what has been done, a complete wreck has been wrought in the memory of the soul. There will settle upon the intellectual faculties themselves, and upon the senses of the body, a stupidity amounting to sinfulness. The eye is meant to be the ally of the memory. Many men can only remember through the vision; they have no memory for things abstract, but once let them see clearly an object or a writing, and they say they can hold the vision evermore. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 13. **Fear the Lord thy God, and serve Him.**—*Moses' serious and affectionate charge to Israel:*—I. A SOLEMN CHARGE GIVEN. 1. Hear the Word of the Lord. This message is neglected or abused—(1) By those who seldom or never attend a place of public worship: let such consider how they will be able to account for their negligence (Heb. ii. 1–3). (2) By those who visit places of worship, but who sleep when they should hear (Rev. iii. 14–19). (3) By those who are usually engaged in worldly contemplations while under the sound of the Word (Amos viii. 5). Hence the charge is—2. Observe the Word of the Lord. Observe—(1) The doctrinal truths taught—respecting God's claim on us; and God has claims on us as our Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, &c.—respecting our obligation to obedience, from gratitude, fear, hope, &c. (2) The preceptive part of what is taught—concerning both outward and inward obedience, and the discrepancy between our conduct and spirit and the extensive requirements of the holy law (Mark xii. 30, 31). (3) The promissory and encouraging part of what is taught—respecting the freeness and plenitude of Divine grace, to pity and pardon our transgressions (Isa. i. 18); to purify our hearts (Ezek. xxxvi. 25–27); and to help our infirmities (Isa. xli. 10; Heb. iv. 14–16). The observance required is, however, principally in reference to practice. 3. Obey the Word of the Lord. "Observe to do it." This refers to what in ver. 1 Moses called "the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord your God commanded." II. IMPORTANT BENEFITS PROPOSED. As a stimulus to the Israelites to devote themselves to the service of Jehovah, Moses proposes—1. Their safety; their well-being—"that it may be well with thee." By way of contrast, look at chap. iv. 23–26, xxvii. 26, xxviii. 16–20. Disobedience always exposes to danger, to destruction. But "say ye to the righteous"—the obedient believer—"it shall be well with him." He shall be well instructed (Psa. xxv. 9; 1 John ii. 20); well defended (chap. xxxii. 9–11); well provided (Psa. xxxiv. 10; Phil. iv. 19). It shall be well with such, not only through life, but also at death (Psa. cxvi. 15); at judgment (Matt. xxv. 34; 2 Thess. i. 10); and for ever (Psa. xvi. 11). But we must return to observe that Moses proposes—2. Their prosperity—"that ye may increase mightily." This may have respect—(1) To an increase of wealth—"houses full of all good things," &c. (ver. 11). Or—(2) To an increase of numbers (chap. vii. 13). In the former case they would have an increase of their means of enjoyment; in the latter they would more "mightily" resist and overcome their enemies (chap. vii. 24); and in both they might with less difficulty and greater cheerfulness attend on the services of the Most High. We, as Christians, may expect prosperity of a higher order. 1. Individually, we may be blessed with a sense of pardoning love, and fellowship with God through His Son (1 John i. 3); may be enriched with the fruits of the Divine Spirit, "love, joy, peace," &c. (Gal. v. 22, 23); strengthened with "might in the inner man" (Eph. iii. 16); and continue to "grow in grace," &c. (2 Pet. iii. 18). Hence we shall be enabled to bear temptation more easily; and in our conflict with Satan and his servants, our having prospered "mightily" will appear in our effectual resistance and our final triumph. And hence—2. While the members of churches adorn their profession, we may hope that the churches collectively will receive an accession of members who, won by our Christian deportment, shall glorify God on our behalf. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *Serve God:*—I. WHAT IS IT TO SERVE GOD? 1. To dedicate ourselves wholly to Him. (1) Our souls, understandings, wills, affections. (2) Our bodies. (3) Our estates. (4) Our gifts. (5) Our authority. (6) Our time. 2. To make His laws the rule of our lives. 3. To endeavour to please Him in all things. II. WHY SERVE GOD? He is our Maker, Preserver, Redeemer, &c. III. EXHORTATION. "Serve God"—1. Spiritually.

2. Obediently. 3. Willingly. 4. Cheerfully. 5. Faithfully. 6. Humbly. 7. Thankfully. (*W. Stevens.*)

Vers. 14, 15. **Thou shalt not go after other gods.**—*The forbidden path*:—In all our hearts there is a tendency to depart from God, to forget what He commands, "to go after" what He forbids. This forbidden path is described. 1. It is entered by many. The path of "the people," "the gods" of the age. Idolatry of every kind is the root and nourisher of error and superstition—the expression and epitome of human nature—the foul dishonour to God and His supremacy. "Go not after other gods to serve them and to worship them" (Jer. xxv. 6). 2. It is offensive to God. It stirs up God's anger and rouses His jealousy. Bishop Patrick observes that we never find in law or prophets, anger, or fury, or jealousy, or indignation attributed to God, but upon occasion of idolatry. 3. It is destructive in its end. "Destroy thee from off the face of the earth." Idolatry corrupts the body and petrifies the heart. Like a withering mildew it overspreads the earth and blights the nations. The warning voice from above should be heard: "Ye shall bear the sins of your idols, and ye shall know that I am the Lord God." (*J. Wolfendale.*) *Jealousy the shadow of love*:—All sin is a caricature of virtue, and sin never looks so shameful as when we put it beside the virtue which it caricatures. The Bible seems to attribute human passions to God. He is a jealous God, an angry God. But jealousy and anger are distortions of virtue, as the face of the man in anger is a distortion of the same face in repose. The very passions of men, rightly inspired and rightly guided, are Divine. For this very reason, wrongly caused, wrongly inspired, wrongly guided, they are the more detestable. What is worse than jealousy? Read of it in Othello. But is jealousy always wicked? Was it wicked in Elijah when, looking out upon a devastated and desolate kingdom, with Israel's allegiance swept away from God, he cried out in agony of prayer to Him, "I have been jealous for Thy name, O Lord of Hosts"? Was it wicked in Paul when, writing to the Corinthians, who had at one time held firmly to their love for Christ, and had been swept away from their allegiance, the apostle cries out, "I am filled with a godly jealousy for you"? Jealousy is the shadow love casts; and the greater the love the greater the possibility of the shadow. Jealousy is the revulsion of feeling against that which assails love. And as the musician, full of keenness of ear and ecstasy of pleasure in fine music, revolts against a discord, so the soul that is rich in love and sensitive to all the pulsations of love revolts against whatsoever impinges upon and violates love. (*Lyman Abbott.*)

Ver. 16. **Ye shall not tempt the Lord.**—*Christ tempted through unbelief*:—We know that though God cannot be tempted with evil, He may justly be said to be tempted whenever men, by being dissatisfied with His dealings, virtually ask that He will alter those dealings, and proceed in a way more congenial to their feelings. Suppose a man to be discontented with the appointments of Providence, suppose him to murmur at what the Almighty allots him to do or to bear: is he not to be charged with the asking God to change His purposes? And what is this if it is not tempting God, and striving to induce Him to swerve from His plans, though every one of those plans has been settled by Infinite Wisdom? Or again, if any one of us, notwithstanding the multiplied proofs of Divine loving-kindness, question whether or not God do indeed love him, of what is he guilty, if not of tempting the Lord, seeing that he solicits God to the giving additional evidence, as though there was a deficiency, and challenges Him to a fresh demonstration of what He has already abundantly displayed? In short, unbelief of every kind and every degree may be said to tempt God. For not to believe upon the evidence which He has seen fit to give is to provoke Him to give more, offering our possible assent if proof were increased as an inducement to Him to go beyond what His wisdom has prescribed. And if in this, and the like sense, God may be tempted, what can be more truly said of the Israelites than that they tempted God in Massah? Was there ever a people for whom so much had been done, on whose behalf so many miracles had been wrought, or for whose protection there had been such signal displays of Omnipotence? And, indeed, we are perhaps not accustomed to think of unbelief or murmuring as a tempting God, and therefore we do not attach to what is so common, its just degree of heinousness. Yet we cannot be dissatisfied with God's dealings, and not be virtually guilty of tempting God. It may seem a harsh definition of a slight and scarcely avoidable fault, but nevertheless it is a true definition. You cannot mistrust God, and not accuse Him of want either of power

or of goodness. So that your fear, or your despondency, or your anxiety in circumstances of perplexity or peril are nothing less than the calling upon God to depart from His fixed course—a suspicion, or rather an assertion, that He might proceed in a manner more worthy of Himself, and therefore a challenge to Him to alter His dealings if He would prove that He possesses the attributes which He claims. But it is now in His mediatorial rather than His Divine capacity that we would wish to show you how Christ may be tempted. There is a great general similarity between the two cases, for in both the Supreme Being is tempted if we practically undervalue what He has done for us—throw scorn upon the proofs already given of His love, and thus virtually challenge Him to do more or give greater. Ah, this may be putting neglect of Christ and His Gospel under an unusual aspect; but prove to us, if you can, that it is not just. We affirm, that by every refusal to turn from your sins, and to seek that repentance and remission which Christ died to procure, and lives to bestow, you are as literally guilty of tempting Christ as were the Israelites in the desert, when they provoked God by their repining and unbelief. You tempt Him precisely in the sense in which the Israelites tempted God, by practically denying that what has been done on your behalf has bound you to His service; and therefore, by practically demanding that He interfere again and again, and with mightier tokens of supremacy and compassion. And how little had been done for the Israelites by God in comparison with what has been done by Christ Jesus for us! It was much that God had wrenched from the neck of a captive people the yoke of an oppressor; but think of your emancipation from the thraldom of Satan! By plague and prodigy had the Egyptians been discomfited: but what is this to death vanquished, the grave rifled, and heaven opened by the triumphs of the Mediator? God gave the people manna from heaven; but what is this to Christ giving the true bread—His own flesh—for the life of the world? The tabernable was set up, and Aaron, with the Urim and Thummim on his breast, could intercede with God, and gain oracular response; but what is this to our having a High Priest within the veil, having at His disposal all the gifts of the Spirit? Ay, if it show great hardness of heart, great ingratitude, great perverseness, that men who had seen waters turned into blood, and the sea divided, and the food brought in profusion by the stretching forth the rod of the lawgiver, should have been fretful and mistrustful in every new trial, what is evidenced by our conduct if we continue to be careless and unbelieving—we before whose eyes Christ Jesus is evidently set forth crucified amongst us? I dare no longer compare that tempting of God with which the Israelites were charged, with that tempting of Christ of which numbers amongst ourselves are continually guilty. It were to say that a temporal deliverance and a temporal Canaan gave as great evidence of the love of the Almighty towards men, and of infinite power being engaged in their succour, as redemption from everlasting death, and an inheritance that fadeth not away. Oh, no! there is sameness in the mode of temptation, but there is vast difference in the degree of guiltiness. Yet the Israelites were terribly visited. And "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation"? (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Vers. 20, 21. **When thy son asketh thee.**—*Remembrances of holy privileges*:—We are also favoured with Divine ordinances, as were the Israelites; and for the same purpose, for a pious testimony to keep alive upon the earth a remembrance of God's surpassing love. As to them pertained "the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the service of God and the promises," so to us pertain the gracious promises of life and salvation, and all the privileges and ordinances of the Christian covenant. So that when children, as reason begins to dawn, and they find themselves growing up amid certain religious ordinances, shall ask the meaning, we may always be able to point, with humble gratitude, to the origin and intent of every duty and service. The lisping babe is given to hear, perchance is taught to sing, of the cross which was traced on its forehead in infancy; and the pious mother is asked, What did it signify? She will point with tenderness to the Cross of Christ, to the sacrifice of the spotless Lamb; and the holy emblem, thus stamped upon the youthful mind and heart, may be there for ever fixed by the Holy Spirit of God, as a living image of the truth in Jesus, as an everlasting memorial of His dying love. The child lifts up its hands in prayer; and wherefore lifted up? To its Father in heaven; to the mercy-seat at which a Saviour pleads; and from which the Holy Spirit, with His manifold gifts, is sent down, gifts for childhood and youth, for manhood and age: and this in obedience to that Saviour's word (Matt. vii. 7; John xiv. 13, xv. 16). The child learns to

read; the Bible is opened; and every page is fraught with grace, is glowing with mercy. Here are tender invitations which the youngest can understand and feel. And thus our youth have in their hand a constant remembrancer of God Almighty's goodness; the Word written by the Spirit, and taught by the Spirit, to each obedient heart of old and young. The points are but few, respecting children, upon which we can now touch; but there is yet another, which marks rather the transition state between the child and the man, at least where greater responsibility begins. The children of the Church are brought to the bishop to be confirmed: and here is a mighty memorial. All the privileges of holy baptism are then placed in view, and impressed powerfully on the heart. And over the whole of our Christian life and walk the tokens and reminiscences of God's goodness are plentifully spread; in all our Divine ordinances and services, and in all our providential experiences. Every Sabbath, what a blessed memorial! How does it remind us of the great Creator, and of His resting from all His works! how of our own rest in Him and in heaven! There is likewise that holy rite and service which the Lord Himself appointed with His dying breath as the sacramental emblem of His love. This is the most perfect of all the testimonies: a perpetual representation of the sacrifice before the Church, for the benefit of the faithful, for the conviction of all; a perpetual application of it, through the power of the Spirit, to the believer's heart and soul. And our faithful Church, in all her constitution and services, has acted upon this monitory plan; has sought to stir up continually "the pure minds (of her children) by way of remembrance"; and to keep the wonders of Divine grace, one after another, always before our eyes. At various seasons of the year she sets before us the marvellous acts of redeeming love, all that Jesus has done and suffered on our behalf: the mystery of His holy incarnation; His holy nativity and circumcision; His baptism, fasting, and temptation; His agony and bloody sweat; His cross and passion; His precious death and burial; His glorious resurrection and ascension, and the coming of the Holy Ghost. And besides her faithful dealing on these great occasions, she is continually bringing to view other objects also, other tokens of love, other means of grace, of high importance to be borne in mind and diligently observed. The lives and deaths of her apostles and martyrs are set in order, as so many patterns of righteousness, so many beacons of grace, &c. And there are other dealings of God with us to be treasured in the memory; the mercies of His providence and of His grace experienced in our own persons. We have been cast on a bed of sickness; who raised us up? in danger, who delivered us? in the deep of affliction, who sent the Comforter? We have sinned: we have been alarmed; we repented, prayed, promised, and were spared; and should not that holy season, should not all these days of grace, be kept in mind? Let us not unfrequently shut up the busy present, and muse upon the solemn past. God give us grace to deal faithfully; to prize the privileges, to look upon the blessings showered down upon us, to keep them in grateful remembrance, and so fix our affections upon the one thing needful. (*J. Slade, M.A.*) *Questions and answers*:—Suppose that one wholly uninstructed as to Christian faith and doctrine and practice should ask us—What mean ye?—account for yourselves; what are you doing? and why do you act as you do?—it would be pitiful to the point of unpardonableness if in the presence of such an inquiry we were dumb; our speechlessness would show that our piety is a mere superstition. It is surely, therefore, incumbent upon us to be able to give some reason or explanation for the faith and the hope that are in us. We cannot adopt a better reply than the answer suggested by Moses. No originality of answer is required. The leader of Israel gave the only reply that will stand the test of reason and the wear and tear of time. All we need is in this paragraph. Adopting this reply, what answer should we make to the kind of inquirer now supposed? We should, first of all, make the answer broadly historical. We are not called to invention, or speculation, or the recital of dreams: we do not want any man's impressions as a basis of rational and universal action; we call for history, facts, realities, points of time that can be identified, and circumstances that can be defined and have a determinate value fixed upon them. We could enlarge the answer which Israel was to give, and ennoble it. We, too, were in a house of bondage. That must be our first point. The house was dark; the life of the prison was intolerable; no morning light penetrated the dungeon; no summer beauty visited the eyes of those who were bound in fetters. Human nature had gone astray. The Christian argument starts there. All Christian doctrine is founded upon that one fact, or

bears direct and vital relation to it. We, too, could add with Israel, human nature was Divinely delivered. The action began in heaven. No man's arm delivered us; no man's eye could look upon us with pity that was unstained and unenfeebled by sin. God's eye pitied; God's arm was outstretched to save. Then we could continue the reply, and say the Divine deliverance was attested by many "signs and wonders." The nature of the miracles may have undergone considerable change, but their inner meaning is an eternal truth: it abides through all the ages, for every purpose of God in the miracles which were wrought was a purpose of life, growth, holiness, transformation into His own image. The purpose is in reality the miracle. That being so, the miracles never cease, for to-day the Gospel performs nothing less than the miracle of making the dead live, and the blind see, and the dumb speak in new and beauteous eloquence. In the next place, still following the idea laid down by Moses, we must make this answer definitely personal:—"thou shalt say unto thy son" (ver. 21). Speak about yourselves, about your own vital relation to the historical facts. The history is not something outside of you and beyond you: it is part and parcel of your own development, and your development would have been an impossibility apart from the history; let us, therefore, know what this history has done for you. The answer will be poor if it be but a recital of circumstances and occurrences and anecdotes—a vague, although partially reverent, reference to ancient history. The man who speaks must connect himself with the thing which is spoken. The answer is still incomplete. It is broadly historical, and therefore can be searched into by men who care for letters and events and ancient occurrences; the answer is definitely personal, and therefore the character of the witness has to be destroyed before any progress can be made with his particular view of the history; now the answer must, in the third place, be made vitally experimental. The twenty-fifth verse thus defines this conclusion: "And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He hath commanded us." One targum says, "it shall be our merit." The general meaning would seem to be—"it shall be accounted unto us for righteousness": the attention and the service shall not be disregarded or put down into any secondary place, but what we do in the way of attention and observance and duty and service shall be reckoned unto us as a species of righteousness. What is the meaning to us in our present state of education and our present relations to one another? The meaning is that out of the history and out of the present relations to that history there will come a quantity which is called character. God is all the while forming character. His object has been to do us "good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is at this day." Without the righteousness where is the history? Without the character what is the value of our personal testimony? We may be speaking from a wrong centre—from mental invention, from intellectual imagination, from spiritual impulse, from moral emotion; we may not be standing upon vital facts and spiritual realities. The outcome, then, is righteousness, character, moral manhood, great robustness and strength, and reality of life. The Christian man's history is to himself worthless if it be not sealed by character. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Children's questions:—Children often break upon their parents with very tough questions, and questions that wear a considerable looking towards infidelity. It requires, in fact, but a simple child to ask questions that no philosopher can answer. Parents are not to be hurried or flurried in such cases, and make up extempore answers that are only meant to confuse the child, and consciously have no real verity. It is equally bad if the child is scolded for his freedom; for what respect can he have for the truth when he may not so much as question where it is? Still worse, if the child's question is taken for an evidence of his superlative smartness, and repeated with evident pride in his hearing. In all such cases a quiet answer should be given to the child's question where it can be easily done, and where it cannot, some delay should be taken, wherein it will be confessed that not even his parents know everything. Or, sometimes, if the question is one that plainly cannot be answered by anybody, occasion should be taken to show the child how little we know, and how many things God knows which are too deep for us—how reverently, therefore, we are to submit our mind to His, and let Him teach us when He will what is true. It is a very great thing for a child to have had the busy infidel lurking in his questions, early instructed in regard to the necessary limits of knowledge, and accustomed to a simple faith in God's requirement, where his knowledge fails. (*H. Bushnell.*)

Let the Bible speak:—The mother of a family was married to an infidel, who made a jest of religion in presence of his own

children; yet she succeeded in bringing them all up in the fear of the Lord. I one day asked her how she preserved them from the influence of a father whose sentiments were so openly opposed to her own. She answered: "Because to the authority of a father I did not oppose the authority of a mother, but that of God. From earliest years my children have always seen the Bible upon the table. This Holy Book has constituted the whole of their religious instruction. I was silent that I might allow it to speak. Did they propose a question; did they commit any fault; did they perform any good action; I opened the Bible, and the Bible answered, reproved, or encouraged them. The constant reading of the Scriptures has alone wrought the prodigy which surprises you." (*A. Monod.*) *The significancy of the Jewish passover*:—The ordinances of Israel were the ordinances of a redeemed people, and they were the signs and memorials of the fact of their redemption. Selecting the passover, then, as the most prominent of these ordinances, let us inquire what it was designed to teach. 1. In the first place, we see in it a memorial of Divine sovereignty. Could the Jew look back upon the history of his forefathers, and doubt that it was not their own might nor their own wills that carried them forth from the land of tears? 2. Again, we see in it a memorial of Divine goodness and truth. It was a promise that God would not forget, that Abraham's seed should inherit the land of Canaan; and now that he was in possession of all this, was it not well that Abraham's child should be reminded of what had been done for him? In the passover, then, he learned how true and gracious the Lord had been to him and to his fathers. What would he trace but mercy and faithfulness in all His ways? 3. These were the aspects of the ordinances as they looked Godward; but there were others which reminded him of his own personal position. Could the Jew, for example, forget the Egyptian yoke, as he stood up, year after year, his loins girded and staff in hand, to eat the Lord's passover? Is it not a little remarkable, that though they have lost the Sacrifice, this is the only ordinance the Jews celebrate to this day? Even in a strange land, and at such an interval of time, they fail not to call to remembrance the bondage of Pharaoh. How often does God set this before His people in the course of His dealings with them! "Thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt." He frequently reminds them. He would have kept them in a due subordination, that they might not be lifted up to their own destruction. 4. But we see in the passover, lastly, a memorial of present deliverance. As long as the Jew could celebrate it in his own land, he was reminded of his deliverance from Egypt. In this respect the redemption of Israel from the house of bondage has been always a present blessing. As a nation, and therefore as a type of the Christian Church, they have never been enslaved a second time in Egypt. Once delivered, they were delivered for ever from that bondage. Most truly, therefore, could the Jewish parent teach his son—"We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt." That was a past history of terrible suffering and disgrace, and the remembrance of it could call up nothing in the heart of a faithful Jew but thankful, peaceful joy. The passover, consequently, was eminently a joyous festival; it was a feast upon a sacrifice; it was a celebration of Divine mercies, and of the entire destruction of the Egyptian yoke. And is not the Christian ordinance and history a counterpart of this? (*W. Harrison, M.A.*) **The Lord brought us out of Egypt.**—*Deliverance from Egypt*:—It has been said that the earth is but the shadow of heaven, and that things therein are each to other like, more than on earth is thought. This may be a great truth, for in the Scriptures earthly things are used as types and symbols of heavenly. It is so in the words that I have read to you. Egypt was the symbol of captivity, darkness, and death; and the land of promise, the type of heaven, where there is freedom, light, and life without end. And so, the deliverance of the Israelites out of the bondage of Egypt by the mighty hand of God, and their entrance into the land of Canaan, are typical of our deliverance from the bondage of sin and the devil, and entrance into the kingdom of heaven, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Hence we shall consider these words: first in their literal sense; and, secondly, in their spiritual meaning. I. First, we shall consider these words IN THEIR LITERAL SENSE. Nearly four thousand years ago, a period soon after the deluge, Egypt appears to have had its kings and princes, and to have been great as a kingdom of this world. Nor is it only remarkable for its antiquity, but also for its physical phenomena, its worldly wisdom, its idolatry, and its monuments. It was peopled by the descendants of Ham, and was dedicated to him, and therefore, from the earliest times, in the hieroglyphics and Scripture, it was called "the land of Ham." Now Ham, as a deity, was reverenced as the sun, and no doubt he was the sole introducer of

the worship of the sun after the deluge. That Egypt was addicted to sun-worship there can be no doubt; for it is not only seen in the hieroglyphics or sacred writings, but also by means of several of its most ancient names. The theology of Egypt, however, being so closely connected with astronomical principles, underwent as many changes as the planets themselves. Hence it is that there are so many and various opinions upon it. One thing is clear, that they paid great honours to brute animals, and employed them as representatives of their deities. . . . Thus God manifested His power, and mercy, and faithfulness. His power in delivering a defenceless people from the oppression of one of the greatest military nations of the ancient world; and His mercy in giving them the land of Canaan; and His faithfulness in performing the oath which He sware unto Abraham, that He would give them. II. We shall now consider THE SPIRITUAL MEANING OF THE WORDS OF OUR TEXT. And here it will assist us very much to know that Egypt had several names; and we have found, after much research, that under whatever name we contemplate this land of spiritual darkness, we perceive the same root and source of post-diluvian idolatry—Ham associated with the sun; and along whatever line we pursue our investigations in the etymology of this land of spiritual wickedness, we arrive at the same goal. Here let us learn a lesson on worldly wisdom and human power. 1. Egypt was the mother of learning and of gross idolatry; of worldly light and spiritual darkness. It was sacred for a time to the physical sun, the source of light and life in the natural world; but it will be for ever an emblem of darkness and death. It reared its pyramidical temples to the sun, symbolising its worldly greatness and light; but it was as full of darkness and dead men's bones as the pyramids themselves. In human language, Egypt, with its various names, means light; in the language of heaven, darkness; in the language of earth, life and fruitfulness; but in the language of heaven, death and corruption. Hence it is that Egypt in the Scriptures symbolises the present world. It was the source of worldly wisdom and gross idolatry. The Egyptians, professing themselves to be wise, became fools; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. We read the wisdom of this world in the ruins of Egypt, Assyria, Palestine, Greece and Rome. The kingdoms of this world may build their nests in the rocks, as the Kenite of old; nevertheless they shall be wasted, and their palaces shall be for beasts to lie down in. 2. Egypt is synonymous with the world, and we know that the world is enmity against God. Let us, therefore, cast off the world, and its Egyptian darkness, and its enmity to God and truth. Let us turn from the world, so full of error, darkness, folly, and death; let us come out of it; let us walk worthy of our high calling; let us walk as children of light and children of the day. Now the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage was typical of our deliverance from sin and Satan. We know very well how great the oppression of Egypt was. We know that their cries pierced the clouds, and found their way to the throne of God, and He came down to deliver them; and He accomplished this by His own power, and wisdom, and mercy, and gave them the land of Canaan, and a code of Divine laws. Now this faintly shadows forth the deliverance of all mankind from the slavery of sin and the devil, than which a more cruel slavery never oppressed the family of man. Our text admits a still higher development, namely, that the entrance of the Israelites into Canaan was typical of the entrance into heaven of all true believers. Of that glorious place, the brightest scenes of earth are but shadows dim and dark. The Israelite in Egypt never looked to the land of Canaan with the earnest longing of the disciples of Jesus for the heavenly Canaan; and why? Our title to it is clearer. It is our heavenly inheritance, purchased for us with the precious blood of Christ; and it is kept for us by the power of God through faith. We dwell on earth; but our heart and our life are there, hid with Christ in God. (*A. Jones.*)

Ver. 23. **He brought us out from thence, that He might bring us in.**—*The outbringing and the inbringing of Israel*:—There were many things in the history of ancient Israel which repeat themselves in the history or experience of the Christian Church. Our text may be regarded as—1. God's answer to man's question: What is the meaning of human life? Everywhere we see beginnings and advances, but where are the issues or ends? Human life in general has its beginnings or outgoings, but who can foresee its incomings? We may regard human life as a promise or as a prophecy, but to many it is also an insoluble problem. Throughout the kingdom of nature we find everything comparatively

plain. We find nothing of the nature of chance or caprice. Certain causes are invariably followed by certain definite effects. From the greatest planets to the tiniest plants, all things are under the operation of fixed laws. Everything comes to pass in its time, and with all the beauty of that "order which is heaven's first law." Things in the natural world are thus ordered in all things and sure. Are they not equally so before God in the moral and spiritual worlds? Verily He knows all our outgoings and incomings, our sittings down and risings up; He is entirely acquainted with us in all our ways. He knows the end from the beginning in every case. There are no accidents with Him, and He is never taken by surprise. God has no new thoughts, and He makes no new discoveries; the darkness and the light are both alike to Him always. 2. This reveals God's purpose. God's purposes may be far beyond the scope of human vision, but they are fixed as the laws of the material universe; they may lie far beyond the hills and mountains of man's higher thoughts and best conceptions, but they are realities and pregnant with good, and they are always being fulfilled in the experience of His own people. God has done something that man might do something else, and that something else man must either do or perish. What has God done? 3. God's work. "He brought us out from thence." It was not Moses that brought them out. Moses himself was only a weak instrument. In wisdom he might be greater than Lycurgus, in skill greater than Alfred, in efficiency more powerful than Cromwell, in patriotism greater than Washington; but the work to be done required Divine wisdom and power. Moses was an efficient agent because God's Spirit was in him to will and to do as God required. 4. Man's work. Man must ever be regarded as left to the freedom of his own will, for he was so created. When God completed the work of creation, He said in effect, "It is finished. Take the earth, Adam, as I have made it; till it, and live on it; make the best of it; have dominion over it." When God completed the work of man's redemption on the Cross, He said, "It is finished. Take it, ye children of men, and work out your own salvation." When God took the Hebrews out of Egypt, He said in effect, "Follow My servant Moses through good and evil report, and I'll take you into the land which I sware unto your fathers." In other words, God promised to save them only if they were willing and obedient. But alas! they were neither willing nor obedient, and hence we read, "they entered not in, because of unbelief." They were willing to go *out*, because of their bitter bondage, but they were not willing to go *on*, because of the trials and sorrows of the wilderness. They were discouraged because of the way. 5. The Hebrews were a typical people—(1) Of true believers. Those who went out and went on and went into the land were typical of those who with the heart believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are willing to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. They have tested His promises and His character in the alembic of their own Christian experience; they have weighed His claims in the balances of Christian thought and meditation until the fire burned within them, and they felt "unspeakably obliged" to go after Him; and so they "press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Their faith and love and religion being alike practical they work towards purity, progress, and perfection. (2) Of unbelievers. Those of the Hebrews who entered not in because of unbelief, typify those who in every age confound their life with their limbs and their souls with their senses. These sceptics must ever be as "hewers of wood and drawers of water," even in this world. Success, even in this world, implies a high ideal—faith, indomitable energy, and perseverance. With these, men even of average mental powers will succeed, and without them they must abide in the wilderness of circumstances. While holding by the Bible doctrine of Divine sovereignty, we also hold by the fact that God helps those who help themselves. Only hardships can make hardy men. Brave soldiers and good sailors are manufactured by forced marches, wars, and through storms. The best and bravest men become perfect through suffering. (*J. K. Campbell, D.D.*) *Profit and loss:*—Israel, brought out of Egypt, for awhile wandered in the wilderness. But they were not left in the wilderness; it was no part of God's purpose to leave them there; He brought them out from the house of bondage that He might give them the land large and good. I. The text has direct teaching for us WHEN THE DIVINE SPIRIT LEADS US OUT OF THE CARNAL LIFE. "He brought us out from thence." The redeeming God finds us in the Egypt of the fleshly mind and the worldly life; finds us under a harsh, debasing rule; finds us full of bitterness; and by His good Spirit He moves us to go forth to a freer, brighter life. Let us be sure that we permit Him to bring us thoroughly out

of the sordid, sensual past. To a large extent it was the ruinous mistake of Israel that they never truly and fully got out of Egypt. They remembered it too frequently, they talked about it too much, they recalled far too often and too vividly its coarse pleasures. Conversion, regarded etymologically or Scripturally, means a total change, an emphatic turning of the back on the far country, the steadfast setting of the face to Jerusalem. See to it that you cast no lingering look behind; drop the entangling friendships, the compromising habits, the unseemly tempers of the old guilty, godless life. But be absolutely sure that if you heartily renounce the carnal life God will bring you into a rich inheritance. The first experiences of the wilderness were very strange to the Israelites. All their habits of life had been suddenly changed: they had lost the leeks without getting the pomegranates; and in those days of transition they became impatient and disobedient. Had they persevered a little all would have come gloriously right. It is often thus with newly-converted men and women; there is an intermediate state in which the old world has been renounced, and in which the new world has not been realised, and this intermediate state is full of peril to the pilgrim soul. Wait, trust, hope, persevere, and the inheritance shall grow upon you. It is grand enough to be worth a little waiting for. We are all familiar with a certain class of emigrants who go forth with rosy expectations to distant lands, and who soon return utterly disappointed. In starting the higher life we have need of patience, patience that will not make us ashamed. Following on to know the Lord, new interests will spring up, new friendships will inspire, new hopes will dawn, new activities absorb and delight, new charms will disclose themselves in work and worship, new and richer meanings will shine through all things. II. The text is a message for us WHEN THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE SUDDENLY AND RADICALLY CHANGES OUR CIRCUMSTANCES. Life is continually changing, but in some periods its whole aspect is changed by some unexpected event, and we go out as Israel went out of Egypt, as their father went out not knowing whither he went. Some event occurs breaking up the business which seemed so well established, and the merchant driven from his old anchorage is in fear of quicksands amid strange waters. The working man with the least ceremony is discharged from the herth in which he has been able to secure for himself and others daily bread, and in the crowded labour market must find himself a fresh job as best he may. We are familiar with facts like these in this world of vicissitude, but who can express all the uncertainty and solicitude and sorrow they imply? It is a time of peculiar exposure, suffering, and peril to the creatures of the sea who have shed their old shell, and not yet got a new one; and birds of passage often perish in multitudes on their journey from one land to another. So the Christian, turned out of his nest, stripped of his shell, experiences a phase of life full of peril to faith and temper and character. The disruption of our circumstances is frequently followed by serious and even fatal moral and religious consequences. But be sure that if you fear God and follow His leading He has brought you out of the familiar life that He may give you a richer inheritance. When one door shuts another opens. But you say, "Will the door that opens, open upon a situation as pleasant as the old?" It may open upon one a great deal better. Most men who have found their way to fortune owed their success to the fact that some door or other was once slammed in their face; but even should the opening door open on a more sombre situation, be sure that it opens up to you possibilities of far grander character and experience. I say, then, if God is leading you out of the old set of associations, do not be afraid; He is preparing you for something better, preparing something better for you. When God brought the Pilgrim Fathers out of this country they tasted to the full the bitter sorrows of dispossession; for dreary months they were tossed in the *Mayflower*, and then found it hard work to get foothold upon the strange coast. But in due time God brought them into the good land, giving them liberty of conscience and all else that makes life worth living. Whatever else may come to pass you shall finally acknowledge that disinheriting you, transporting you, God has brought you into a deeper faith, a stronger character, and set your feet in a large place of moral wealth and spiritual blessing. III. The text is full of encouragement AS THROUGH THE DIVINE GRACE WE PASS INTO A NEW YEAR. Time is even a greater leader than Moses, conducting us out of the familiar into the unknown. We attempt to settle ourselves in what we conclude to be a fairly happy condition of things, to adjust our ideas, interests, and hopes to a fixed and permanent environment, but it is all in vain. But let us not repine. He brings us out from thence that He may bring us in to give us the land. Dispossessed so many times, it is that we may be made meet for an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

Sir Samuel Baker writes in his diary as he penetrates the great unknown land, "It is curious in African travel to mark the degrees of luxury and misery; how one by one the wine, spirits, bread, sugar, tea, &c., are dropped like the feathers of a moulting bird, and nevertheless we go ahead contented." And despite the fact of their constantly dropping the conveniences of civilised life they might well go ahead contented, for were not their eyes every day looking upon the wonders of a new land of surpassing wealth and splendour? Our earthly losses are richly compensated in the growing wealth of our spirit. Let us take care that by our discontent and unbelief and disobedience we do not permit some painful and perilous hiatus to come between the losses of the material life and the accessions of the grace and glory of the higher life; let us grow into the diviner as we grow out of the coarser. IV. The text has gracious consolation for us WHEN THE DIVINE WILL ENDS THIS MORTAL LIFE. We do not take kindly to that last dispossession. "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out." We cannot take out as much as Israel took out of Egypt. But let not our faith fail us. He brings us out from this terrestrial life that He may bring us into the celestial. Cicero tells of a prisoner who had always lived in prison; he had never once seen the outer world. And so when he had become an old man, and they began for some reason or other to pull down the walls of his prison, he broke into bitter lamentings because they would destroy the little window through whose bars he had got the only bit of light that had ever gladdened his eyes. He did not understand that the falling of the walls would let him into a broad, bright world, would open to him the wide glories of sun and sky and summer. And so when we see the body sinking ruinous in decay it seems as if we were about to lose everything, forgetting that the senses are but the dim windows of the soul, and that when the body of our humiliation is gone the walls of our prison-house are gone, and a new world of infinite light and beauty and liberty bursts upon us. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *Coming back again*:—We are face to face with a great providential plan. Men do not go out and in by haphazard if they be wise men, true in heart, obedient in will. There are no outlying provinces and colonies on which the Sovereign's eye does not rest. We must not bring ourselves out. How prone man is to do this! He will handle himself. It is comforting, it is self-elevating, it has a look of business and energy about it; as who should say, I am awake, I will do this with mine own hand. Why bring yourselves out? You cannot take yourselves back again. A continual restraint of the appeals and voices and seductions that would carry us from the providential way is part of the discipline of life. Do not take yourselves out of anything; for God's sake and your own, let your lives alone. If you are always taking up the tree to see whether it is growing you will make growth impossible. Only when God brings us out will God bring us in. We are too much given to tempting God, saying, We will make a bad bargain, and ask God to complete it and make it up to us as if we had done nothing foolish; we will adventure ourselves down this unfamiliar road ten miles, and when we find we are on the wrong path we can begin to pray. Why will not men look at both ends of a covenant, an arrangement, or action? Give your whole life every day, and every hour, and every moment, to God, saying, "Jesus, still lead on"; saying, Except Thy presence, Thou covenant God, go with me, take me not up hence: I weary for something else, I pant for some new opportunity; but if it be Thy will that I should not go, then make me glad, if not with rapture, yet with quiet content of soul. God brought His people out of bondage that He might bring them into liberty. Bondage is a large word, signifying a large experience, and signifying also an experience that is necessary—that is to say, an essential part of any true solid and perpetual growth. We are all in the bondage of littleness. God is continually leading us out of littleness that He may bring us into largeness. We shall know whether God brought us out of our littleness by the largeness into which we have entered. If our charity is larger, if our impulses are nobler, if our prayers take upon themselves a new grandeur of desire, then know that it was God, whose key turned the lock, it was God whose voice called us out of our dwarfed estate into largeness of manhood. There is a bondage of darkness, a bondage of bigotry, a bondage of thinking that we are the people, and the temple of the Lord are we; and all people who do not go with us are wrong, benighted, and foolish. God will lead us out of these misconstructions of others that He may lead us into a true appreciation of our brethren. Sometimes God leads us out of wealth that He may lead us into it. If God takes away our wealth He means to give us more and more;

if God is at the beginning of Job's distresses He will be at the completion of Job's fortunes; if Job shall take the case into his own hands he shall fight it with his own hand, but if God begin to strip him and to bruise him we must wait until the latter end comes and then interpret the purpose and the scheme of heaven. Things must not be judged in their fermenting processes; they must be judged when God says concerning each of them, It is finished. God brings us out of youth that He may bring us into manhood. That is His purpose. Youth itself is good and beautiful, excellent, but not enough. God leads us out of the letter that He may bring us into the spirit. Most of us are prisoners of the letter. At the first it is necessary that literal bondage should test us; but we are not under God's guidance fully and consentingly unless we are daily growing away from the letter—not to make the letter a stranger or to isolate ourselves from it, but growing away from the letter as the edifice grows away from the foundation, and as the tree grows away from the root; not leaving it, but carrying it up to higher significance, into blossom and fruitfulness. We have a familiar saying amongst us which is not true; we say of certain things, "As easy as A B C!" Now there is nothing in all literature so hard as these letters; there is no reading in all the world so hard as the alphabet. It is in the alphabet that we find the difficulty; the years will come and go, and then the mechanical will be forgotten, because we have entered into a spiritual consciousness, and now everything that is mechanical and arbitrary is under our feet; we are masters of that department of the situation. It is even so with God's Book; it is even so with God's own Son. The Apostle Paul says, "Henceforth we know no man after the flesh, yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know we Him no more." The reader does not know the alphabet in the sense of that alphabet being an irritation or an exasperation to him. He knows it so well that he is not conscious of knowing it. Thus the letter may be translated into the spirit; thus the creating Hand and the redeeming blood may be carried up into what is called the Holy Ghost—the final, the eternal Personality. Have ye received the Holy Ghost? God thus leads us out of law that He may bring us into grace. The law is hard, the law is graven on stone or written in iron. We must pass through that school of the law, we must obey; but obedience makes law easy and gracious. "Practice," we say, "makes perfect." That little maxim has its application to things spiritual; doing the will, we learn the doctrine; obeying the law, we come into the grace. We shall know how far we have grown in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ by the ease and the delight which we realise in obedience and service and sacrifice. God has led some of you out, and you do not know where to. There is no need for you to know. Let God alone. Did He place you where you are? Have you reason to believe that you are in your providential position? Then stop there. But by taking one step across the road I could do wonders! So you may: how long will the wonders last? What are these yellow wonders, these rocket blazes of earth? Better have a crust with God than try to banquet on the wind. How sweet it is to realise the providence of life; how comforting to know that everything we say, think, or do, is of consequence to God! (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The eternal purpose:*—A glance at the text will suffice to show that the honour of Israel's redemption, from beginning to end, is due to Israel's God. No mention is made of any other power; God and God alone is responsible for Israel. 'Twas He that brought His people out, 'twas He also that led them in. So may it be with us, for our salvation, too, is of the Lord. The other thought is almost as manifest, namely, that God's redemptive work, from its initial stage to its glorious consummation, is a scheme or plan which He conceived in His loving heart, and wrought out by His mighty hand. It is not the result of haphazard, nor of casual thought. It is no experiment, no after-thought, but the outcome of a settled and unalterable purpose. "He brought us out, that He might bring us in." I. SALVATION IS OF GOD. Israel's redemption, from first to last, was Jehovah's doing. Notice this, will you, that the Lord our God in the matter of our salvation both brings us out and brings us in. From Him we received our first convictions; 'tis He that wakes within the slumbering soul the earliest desire for better things. And just as certainly as that God works in us those earliest aspirations and desires, so certainly does He crown the work at last. 1. Note, first, that He brings us out. How was it with these people in the early days? We have here a short record of their wonderful experience. "We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt." "The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand." They would have tarried still among the brick-kilns if the Lord had not interposed on their behalf. He heard their cry. The things that accompany our salvation are

not less remarkable than the wonders God wrought in the land of Ham. He has had pity, and shown His mighty power to us-ward. His compassions have not failed in our case, and He has wrought miracles that eclipse altogether the wonders that Zoan saw. 2. Equally true is it that He brings us in. Canaan was a long way from Egypt, but the Lord had determined to do the work thoroughly. It was not enough to cross the Red Sea, nor even to pass the desert; the chosen people must ford the Jordan, and enter the promised land. Oh, believe me, the Lord is prepared to do just this in the realm of spirituals for all His believing people. Whom He justifies them He also sanctifies, and whom He sanctifies them He also glorifies. He is all our salvation and all our desire. At the first He gives us by His Spirit all needed grace that we may come repentingly, look believingly, and go on our way rejoicingly. 'Tis He produces joy, and peace, and hope, and love. II. AND THIS SALVATION IS THE RESULT OF PLANNING. God's purpose and God's power go together. As I have told you already, there was a scheme at the back of this. They did not happen or come to pass by chance; they were all devised and designed by the loving Father. I do not think that we should marvel particularly at this. We ourselves have plans and purposes. They do not always come off, it is true; too often we fail to see what we have hoped to view, and our best laid plans deceive and disappoint us. Not so with God; all that He arranges for surely comes to pass, for His power and His purpose go hand in hand. Now apply this to our case and to spiritual things. 1. Thank God there was a loving thought in His dear heart. I know not when it first sprang up. God has never been aught but love, and I cannot conceive that there could ever have been a time when He had not set His heart upon the salvation of men whom He would yet create, and who He knew would sin. You do not wonder either, that, having such a thought in His heart toward us, it found expression in words. 2. The gracious promise proclaimed the loving purpose. 3. Then came the mighty deed, the baring of His arm, the showing of His mighty power, the deliverance of His people from the heel of the tyrant—a deliverance so complete that they did not leave so much as a hoof behind them. Not they and their children merely, but their cattle and their chattels were all delivered from the house of bondage. 4. Then began the ceaseless care of Jehovah towards His people. He did not lead them over the Red Sea that He might forsake them in the desert, nor did He conduct them across the desert that He might see them drown in the Jordan. No, no! He led them all the way; nothing interfered with His purpose; there were obstacles, but He overcame them. He did not bring them out from Egypt merely as a demonstration of His power; as one of the great powers, for instance, will make a naval demonstration, and secure a certain result, and then it is all past and over. This was only the first step and stage in the glorious process of complete deliverance for Israel, and of the fulfilling of a gracious promise ratified by oath to Abraham. He did not bring them out that He might slay them in the wilderness, as the enemies of Israel insinuated when they heard how He punished them. Certainly He did not bring them out that they might go back again, as they themselves, alas! were prepared to do when they got into difficulties. Grace is glory in the bud. (*Thomas Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 24. **The Lord commanded us to do all these statutes.**—*The moral significance of God's laws:*—The doctrine of this text is that God's laws are for the good of His subjects; that the basis of all His laws is benevolence; that their foundation is love. I. THIS FACT IS WELL ATTESTED. 1. In the nature of the commands. 2. In the experience of His subjects. The loyal have ever been the happiest. II. THIS FACT REVEALS THE DIVINE CHARACTER. 1. Unbounded love. 2. Complete wisdom. 3. Absolute independence. III. THIS FACT EXPLAINS THE CONDITION OF ALL HUMAN HAPPINESS. What is it? Not the search for it as an end. "He that seeketh his life shall lose it." Obey, because it is right to obey the Infinitely Holy and the Supremely Good. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *Obligation, nature, and advantages of religion:*—I. THE OBLIGATION OF RELIGION. "The Lord commanded us." 1. The will of God is the proper ground of moral obligation. 2. The will of God, as made known to us, is the statement and rule of religion. II. THE PARTICULAR NATURE OF RELIGION. 1. "To fear the Lord our God"—the mind constituted so as that certain affections may be produced by certain objects. The true knowledge of God will produce reverence, admiration, and dread. At first this, with a deep sense of guilt, will be the spirit of bondage unto fear. When the Spirit of adoption is received the fear is filial, reverential, producing hatred to sin. 2. "To do all these statutes." Religion is to be practical and external, as well as experimental

and internal. (1) It is not talking about the Divine laws, but doing them. (2) It is not doing what we please, but the commands of God. (3) It is not selecting such as we prefer, but doing "all these statutes." (4) It is not doing them carelessly, but with due thought: observe. (5) It is not doing them formally or to please man, but in reference to God Himself; "before the Lord." (6) Obedience is not to be in opposition to the covenant of mercy, but connected with it; "before the Lord our God." III. VALUE AND ADVANTAGES OF RELIGION. 1. "It shall be our righteousness." Mercy comes only through merit and intercession of Christ. Is at first received only by faith. Still, He is Author of eternal salvation only to them that obey Him. For Christ's sake continued obedience to the law of our dispensation is the channel of continual acceptance. 2. "For our good always." We enjoy the favour of God, and the light of His countenance is our happiness. His providence takes care of us. His glory will receive us. (*G. Cubitt.*)

CHAPTER VII.

VERS. 2–4. **Thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them.**—*Wars of the Israelites:*—There is, perhaps, no point on which the weakness of human nature is more clearly shown than in the difficulty of treading the right path between persecution on the one hand, and indifference to evil on the other. For although we are, it may be, disposed according to our several tempers more to one of these faults than to the other, yet I fear it is true also that none of us are free from the danger of falling into them both. If we have to-day been too violent against the persons of evil men whom we do not like, this is no security against our being to-morrow much too forbearing towards the practices of evil men whom we do like; because we are all apt to respect persons in our judgment and in our feelings; sometimes to be too severe, and sometimes too indulgent, not according to justice, but according to our own likings and dislikings. Nor is it respect of persons only which thus leads us astray, but also our own particular sympathy with, or disgust at particular faults and characters. Even in one whom we may like, on the whole, there may be faults which we may visit too hardly, because they are exactly such as we feel no temptation to commit. And again, in one whom we dislike on the whole, there may, for the same reason, be faults which we tolerate too easily, because they are like our own. There is yet a third cause, and that a very common one, which corrupts our judgment. We may sympathise with such and such faults generally, because we are ourselves inclined to them; but if they happen to be committed against us, and we feel the bad effects of them, then we are apt to judge them in that particular case too harshly. Or again, we may rather dislike a fault in general, but when it is committed on our own side, and to advance our own interests, then in that particular case we are tempted to excuse it too readily. There are these dangers besetting us on the right hand and on the left, as to our treatment of other men's faults. And in Scripture we find very strong language against the error on either side. A great deal is said against violence, wrath, uncharitableness, harsh judgment of others, and attempting or pretending to work God's service by our own bad passions, and a great deal is also said against tolerating sin, against defiling ourselves with evil-doers, against preferring our earthly friendships to the will and service of God. Of these latter commands the words of the text furnish us with a most remarkable instance. We see how strong and positive the language is (ver. 2); and the reason is given (ver. 4). It is better that the wicked should be destroyed a hundred times over, yea, destroyed with everlasting destruction, than that they should tempt those who are as yet innocent to join their company. And if we are inclined to think that God dealt hardly with the people of Canaan in commanding them to be so utterly destroyed, let us but think what might have been our fate, and the fate of every other nation under heaven at this hour, had the sword of the Israelites done its work more sparingly. The Israelites fought not for themselves only, but for us. Whatever were the faults of Jephthah or of Samson, never yet were any men engaged in a cause more important to the whole world's welfare. Their constant warfare kept Israel essentially distinct from the tribes around them, their own law became the dearer to them because they found such unceasing enemies amongst those who hated it. The uncircumcised, who

kept not the covenant of God, were for ever ranged against those who did keep it. It might follow that the Israelites should thus be accounted the enemies of all mankind, it might be that they were tempted by their very distinctness to despise other nations; still, they did God's work; still, they preserved unhurt the seed of eternal life, and were the ministers of blessing to all other nations, even though they themselves failed to enjoy it. But still these commands, so forcible, so fearful—to spare none—to destroy the wicked utterly—to show no mercy—are these commands addressed to us now? or what is it which the Lord bids us do? Certainly, He does not bid us shed blood, or destroy the wicked, or put on any hardness of heart which might shut out the charity of Christ's perfect law. But there is a part of the text which does apply to us now in the letter, thereby teaching us how to apply the whole to ourselves in the spirit. "Be ye not unequally yoked together in marriage with unbelievers. For what concord hath Christ with Belial?" It is, indeed, something shocking to enter into so near and dear a connection as marriage with those who are not the servants of God. It is fearful to think of giving birth to children whose eternal life may be forfeited through the example and influence of him or of her through whom their earthly life was given. But though this be the worst and most dreadful case, still it is not the only one. St. Paul does not only speak against marriage with the unbelievers; he speaks also no less strongly against holding friendly intercourse with those who call themselves Christ's, yet in their lives deny Him (1 Cor. v. 11). We need not actually refuse to eat with those whose lives are evil; but woe to us if we do not shrink from any closer intimacy with them; if their society, when we must partake of it, be not painfully endured by us, rather than enjoyed. We may put away from among ourselves that wicked person; put him away, that is, from our confidence, put him away from our esteem; put him altogether away from our sympathy. We are on services wholly different; our masters are God and Mammon; and we cannot be united closely with those to whom our dearest hopes are their worst fears, and to whom that resurrection which, to the true servant of Christ, will be his perfect consummation of bliss, will be but the first dawning of an eternity of shame and misery. (*T. Arnold, D.D.*) *Destruction of the Canaanites*:—The extermination of the Canaanites forces itself on the attention of the most careless reader of the Old Testament. We cannot deny that there is a difficulty which needs explanation: we cannot doubt that such a judgment was meant to give to every age a solemn and needful warning. 1. In the first place, it behoves us to understand that this destruction was not a punishment for idolatry. The war of Israel in Canaan did not resemble a crusade. The Canaanites perished, not because they had bowed down to false gods, or refused to worship the true God, but because they had made themselves utterly abominable. This is clear from Leviticus xviii. 24. The Canaanites perished because the earth could no longer bear them: the safety of the whole demanded their extirpation. 2. We observe, further, that they did not perish without warning. The sites of Sodom and Gomorrah, once like the garden of Eden in loveliness, withered and burnt up by fire from heaven, and at length turned into a bituminous lake, showed the end of those sins by which the land was defiled. It was a memorial not to be forgotten. The Dead Sea was a phenomenon which forced the inquiry, "Wherefore hath God done this?" The forty years' sojourn in the wilderness was not only fraught with blessing to Israel and instruction to the Church, but it gave to the Canaanites time to consider and repent. It produced this effect on Rahab and on the Gibeonites, who humbled themselves under the hand of God and were spared. The rest of the nations of Canaan heard and feared, but repented not. We may not, then, marvel that the cup of wrath which such habitual and audacious wickedness had filled was deep and deadly. Yet the destruction is not without its parallels. Many modern campaigns have produced a greater loss of life and far intenser misery. The sword appals us by its fierceness; but it is more merciful than the famine and the pestilence, which in our own days have ravaged large portions of the globe. It cuts short the suspense which is more grievous than death; it inflicts no lingering pain. Besides, this was the only judgment in which idolaters would have seen the hand of the God of Israel. Had they perished in thousands by want or disease they would have attributed this to the displeasure of Moloch or Baal. But they ever regarded battle as the trial of deities. So, when the iron chariots had been broken in the valleys, and the rocky fastness and fenced city had failed to protect the Anakim, all who felt the sword of Israel and all to whom the tidings came were forced to confess that Jehovah was to be feared above all gods. Hence we

may see what Israel and all other nations were to learn from these wars in Canaan. 1. They learnt, first, God's absolute sovereignty, His right and property, in the life of man, and therefore in everything by and for which man lives. If, then, the Canaanite had no property in his life, nor power to retain it when God demanded it, we dare not claim more than stewardship of anything that we call ours. The largest possessions, the richest intellectual *gifts*, are less than the life. These, then, are at the disposal of Him who is the Lord of life. If we use them as God's servants they will secure to us everlasting possessions; but from the unfaithful steward shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have. 2. Again, God manifested that man hath something better than life. Our hearts may be harrowed or sickened at the thought that the sword of Israel struck down not only the boastful warrior, but the feeble woman and the blooming child and the infant at the breast. But the same suffering and death of the weak and the graceful and the pure is continually forcing itself on our attention in every epidemic, in public calamities, and in the more frequent casualties of private life, in Indian and Syrian massacres, and even at the birth of Christ Himself, when Rachel was weeping for her children. All this piercing and cutting down of the young and the tender and the promising would be inexplicable if we had not the revelation of a higher life, for which suffering and the contact with suffering are the preparation. (*M. Biggs, M.A.*) *A noble resolve*:—Eliza Embert, a young Parisian lady, resolutely discarded a gentleman to whom she was to have been married the next day because he ridiculed religion. Having given him a gentle reproof for some impropriety, he replied that "a man of the world would not be so old-fashioned as to regard God and religion." Eliza immediately started; but soon recovering herself, said, "From this moment, as I discover you do not respect religion, I cease to be yours." *The danger of a morally vitiated atmosphere*:—Some time ago the following strange occurrence happened at St. Cierge, a village in the Jura. The principal room of an inn there, known as the Cerf, was lighted by a hanging petroleum lamp, above which had been placed, for the protection of the ceiling, a metal plate. In course of time the woodwork above the plate became desiccated, and one evening it took fire, and when the innkeeper and his family retired to rest was all aglow—a fact, however, which they do not seem to have noticed. From the ceiling the fire was communicated to the room above, and was first discovered by a neighbour, who, early next morning, observing smoke issuing from the door, gave an alarm, when, as none of the inmates could be aroused, the door was broken open. The fire, having gone on smouldering without bursting into flame, had done little material damage, and was easily extinguished; but all the people in the house—the landlord, his wife and sister—were dead. After the manner of country people, they had firmly closed their windows before going to bed, and the smoke, having no exit, had asphyxiated every one of them. In like manner those who allow a morally vitiated atmosphere to surround them, and willingly inhale its pestiferous fumes, wither and become spiritually suffocated. *The loss of spiritual tone*:—Animals that live in two elements are awkward in both. Do we find it difficult, even after the most innocent and unexceptionable entertainments, to brace the soul for its devotions? Do not our pinions flap languidly as we attempt our upward flight? And is it not the case that many of the so-called amusements which men pursue are in the last degree unfavourable to those exercises, without a constant application to which the highest zones of religious experience, the snowy summits of a pure spirituality—those glistening peaks that are the first to catch the auroral glow of the rising Sun of Righteousness, and the last to lose His evening beams—cannot be reached and maintained? To spoil a harp, you need not rudely break its strings and batter its sounding-board. Remove it from one temperature to another, and the mischief is done. We cannot say that people are not hurt by these things because they are not made openly and scandalously vicious. I maintain that a man has sustained a dire and irreparable, though a subtle, and at first impalpable injury, when he has lost his spiritual tone. (*J. Halsey.*)

Ver. 9. **Them that love Him and keep His commandments.**—*Love God, and keep His commandments*:—The love of God, according to the Scripture notion of it, is a duty easy to be comprehended. And the text before us, which attaches so great a reward to this grace, does, at the same time, show us what it means in saying that God keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments. For the latter words fix and ascertain the meaning of the former,

and give us to understand that he who keepeth God's commandments is he that loveth Him. Nor are the laws and commandments of God, by the keeping of which is evidenced our love of Him, so hard to be understood. For He hath marked out the great lines of our duty by His works of creation and providence, and hath clearly filled them up in His holy Scriptures. "By these He hath showed thee, O man, what is good." I proceed to the main design of this discourse, which is, to lay before you the reasons and motives of loving and obeying God, which the text offers, from His nature and promises. The name of God implies all that is excellent and adorable; and here, in the first place, by the title of Lord added to it, directs our view to His dominion and sovereignty, by which He hath a right to our submission and obedience. We were created by His power, and are sustained by His providence. We are born the subjects of His kingdom, which ruleth over all; and are the children of the family of which He is the great Father and Lord; who allots to every one his rank and condition in it, and expects from all an account of their works. Our passage through life is compared to a voyage over a great ocean, where we must wander and be lost, without somewhat to direct us through it. But our safe and certain direction is the law of God, in which we have not less reason to rejoice than "they who go down to the sea in ships and do business in great waters" have in beholding and observing the signs and constellations by which they govern their course over the face of the deep. For mariners, who sail in such tempestuous weather that neither sun nor stars in many days appear, are not in a state of greater perplexity and danger than man would be left in without the laws and commandments which God has set forth, as so many lights and signs from heaven to guide him securely through this voyage of life. We read that, in certain climates of the world, the gales that spring from the land carry a refreshing smell out to sea, and assure the watchful pilot that he is approaching to a desirable and fruitful coast when as yet he cannot discern it with his eyes. And, to take up once more the comparison of life to a voyage, in like manner it fares with those who have steadily and religiously pursued the course which heaven pointed out to them. We shall sometimes find by their conversation towards the end of their days, that they are filled with hope, and peace, and joy, which, like those refreshing gales and reviving odours to the seaman, are breathed forth from paradise upon their souls, and give them to understand with certainty that God is bringing them unto their desired haven. But to return to our proper argument. The wisdom of God is incapable of being misled itself, and His goodness of misleading us; and therefore the precepts which He hath given for the government of our lives must be excellently framed to the perfection and happiness of our nature. His laws, which enjoin the worship and honour of Himself, which command us to honour our parents, to do justice, and to love mercy, which forbid us to injure the life, the peace, the property of our neighbour, are evidently framed for the general good of mankind. And this we are mostly willing to allow. But there are some cases which the laws of God treat as sinful, wherein we are fondly apt to imagine that the injunction is rigorous which forbids us to follow the bent of our inclinations, when, as appears to us, no injury is done to others. Yet God is gracious, alike in His restraints and in His allowances. Some things which He hath forbidden prove injurious to others, if not directly, yet in their consequences. Some waste our time, divert our thoughts from worthy objects, and prevent our usefulness, to which God and society have a right; some consume our substance, to which our families, or the poor, have a claim; some impair the health of the body, which we have no right to destroy, and which, being lost, men become uncomfortable to themselves, dissatisfied with others, and disposed, perhaps, even to repine against that providence which hath left them to reap the fruits of their own folly. In the meanwhile those better principles and purer sentiments of the mind, without which religion and virtue cannot subsist, grow weak and faint, or are blotted out. Evil courses, in the expressive language of Scripture, "take away the heart"; that is, they deprive men of their judgment and darken their understanding; it may be, in the affairs of the world, but most undoubtedly in those things which are spiritually discerned. We are in this life as children in a state of education, training up for another condition of being, of which, at present, we know but little; only, we are assured that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"; that its enjoyments are of a spiritual nature, corresponding more with the faculties of the soul than with the present constitution of the body. The restraints, therefore, under which we are laid, and which seem grievous to us, as children, are parts, no doubt, of a wise and gracious

discipline, which is to qualify us for a heavenly inheritance, and is so necessary a preparation for it that we cannot otherwise see God or enter into the joy of our Lord. Reason, therefore, in some particulars, and in others faith, which is the evidence of things not seen, will assure the mind of the Christian that every branch of the law of God is most worthy to be honoured and obeyed, as proceeding from infinite loving-kindness and goodness to man. Is any one, then, who professes himself the servant of the Lord, called by Him to a trial of his obedience, wherein some hardship or peril must be undergone? Let him call to mind how much harder trials they who loved and feared God formerly have undergone; let him consider how great things men of noble and ingenuous natures will do, even for an earthly commander; and let him recollect that he is serving a Master who never faileth to succour those who trust in Him, and in whose service he cannot lose the promised reward. For He is the faithful God who keepeth covenant and mercy. And here I am led to the last observation proposed, namely, the encouragement to obedience arising from this consideration, that the Almighty is our Deliverer, who hath visited and redeemed His people by His blessed Son Jesus Christ. (*T. Townson, D.D.*)

Ver. 16. **Thou shalt consume all the people.**—*The destruction of the Canaanites:*—I. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CANAANITES WAS IN CONFORMITY WITH THE ORDINARY PROCEDURE OF GOD IN THE MORAL GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD. If He choose, in punishing sinners, to visit at one time with a flood of waters, at another with fire from heaven, at another with a deadly epidemic, at another with the scourge of war, who shall dare to question the propriety of His choice in the weapons of destruction? II. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CANAANITES WAS IN PUNISHMENT OF SIN, AND AS SUCH WAS JUST TOWARDS THEMSELVES. The vilest practices were rife among the people. Their very religion was a system of sorcery, sensuality, and depravity. The traces of ancient Syrian worship exhibit the vilest features of pagan idolatry. Their very gods were demons (Psa. cvi. 37). Human sacrifices were offered at their shrines. The grossest abominations were practised in their orgies. If such, then, was the light, what would the darkness be? In other words, if this was the religion of the country, what would the vices of the people be? III. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CANAANITES WAS A SPIRITUAL SAFEGUARD TO THE ISRAELITES. We are tempted to ask whether it was well that the Israelites should be made the executioners of God's wrath upon their brother man. Would they not be tempted to lose sight of their subordination to God's purpose, and to take up the cause with feelings of proper fanaticism? Again, would not the part to which they were called tend to foster in them cruelty and recklessness of human life? On the contrary, we find that the snare of the Israelites lay in the opposite direction, and that they were ever more ready to spare than to slay. No token appears of any tendency to rapacity or violence having been impressed upon the national mind, while the salutary lessons that were thus taught them are apparent. In no way could the Israelites have been so forcibly convinced of the hatefulness of idolatry and impurity as when they themselves were made God's ministers of vengeance against the crying evils. They were thus made witnesses against themselves should they ever adopt like abominations. IV. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CANAANITES WAS NECESSARY FOR THE MORAL PRESERVATION OF THE WORLD. Clearly it was an act of mercy to the little children of the Canaanites, who were cut off before they knew between good and evil. To the Israelites the extirpation of these nations was an act of mercy. Even crippled and curtailed as the Canaanites were, their influence for evil was too strong; but had they remained in larger bodies, and especially had the women been spared, piety would soon have become unknown among the people of God. But if the destruction of the Canaanites was an act of mercy to Israel, and necessary for their spiritual safety, it follows that it was not less a mercy to the whole world, and necessary for the preservation of the spiritual life of the entire family of mankind. The Church of the present day is but the continuation of the Church of the wilderness. Had that been destroyed, the materials of which the Saviour at His coming built the Church of the New Testament would not have been in existence. The impediments in the way of the Gospel would have been tenfold. To the present day the early ruin of the faith of God's people which would have resulted from the general toleration of the Canaanites would have borne its bitter fruits. V. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CANAANITES HAS A DEEP SYMBOLICAL AND PRACTICAL LESSON FOR US ALL. God changes not; the same principles direct His dealings now as then. The flesh must be mortified and sub-

duced. See Jesus, our Joshua, stretches forth the spear. He commands the conflict; onward, then, and conquer. (*G. W. Butler, M.A.*) *The Christian failure and its reasons:*—Though the Israelites have passed out of Egypt and beyond the Red Sea and through the wilderness, they have not passed beyond the domain of struggle and duty; they must go on to possess the land. In its south-eastern border dwell the Moabites; north of them are the Amorites, strongly intrenched; above them the Hittites; on the west side, beyond the Jordan, are the Anakim; above these, a mighty nation, the Canaanites; near them the Perizzites, &c. I. THE THING TO BE DONE. Too much is our Christianity over-anxious about its beginnings and too careless about its subsequent growth and reach. We are all the time seeking just to get people out of Egypt, we are all the time too unconcerned as to whether these people go on to conquer Canaan for the Lord. Having "come to Jesus," the reign of Jesus is to be extended inwardly over the entire soul, outwardly over the entire life. Canaan reached was not Canaan conquered. The converted man is not yet a sanctified man. Evil pride, vanity, jealousy, covetousness, passionateness, discontent, bad habits, &c.—Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites enough are yet resident in even the converted soul. II. THE FORCE BY WHICH THIS CONQUEST IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED. "And thou shalt consume all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee." The soul and God—these are the forces of conflict. III. SOME REASONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAILURE. 1. Ceasing of battle. After a while some of the Israelites stopped struggling against the aliens. 2. Fear. These Israelites would not struggle against certain of the aliens, because they had chariots of iron. So some bad habit frightens a Christian from struggle. 3. Success of a sort. "And it came to pass when Israel was strong they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out." Many a man, professedly Christian, dares not attempt to be the Christian he knows he ought to be because, successful in worldly affairs, his worldly interests will not let him. So he salves his conscience by putting his questionable gain "under tribute"; gives it, or a portion of it, in charity, &c. IV. RESULT. "Will be a snare unto thee." Was their failure not a snare? Call to mind the history of the Israelites, the destruction of the ten tribes. The only proof of a real Christianity is a continually advancing self-conquest. (*Homiletic Review.*)

Vers. 17, 18. **Thou shalt not be afraid of them: but shalt well remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh.**—*Encouragement for the Christian warrior:*—To a man about to journey into a strange country nothing gives more comfort or confidence than if there be put into his hand, by way of guide through it, a book written by some one who has travelled that country before him. He will read that book not for entertainment, but instruction; that he may learn beforehand how to make his way, what to take with him, what to beware of, and whither to betake himself for rest and refreshment on the way. In like manner the Bible has been given us to make us acquainted with the way itself, with the difficulties and the dangers of it, with the enemies that we shall meet with in it, and our only way of overcoming them. I. THE SPIRITUAL STATE HERE REPRESENTED. The Jewish Church in the wilderness may be here regarded as a type or figure of the Church of Christ in the world, and the case of each member of the one as prefiguring in some particulars the condition of each believer in the other. But like as Israel, though free from Egypt and from all fear of being carried thither again, notwithstanding, had not overcome all enemies, but was to fight his way against them and never give them quarter, but fight on till they were utterly destroyed; so now is the believer in Christ called to "fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold upon eternal life." We may perceive, then, that the situation of Israel when Moses addressed them in the words of the text, represents to us the present state of the follower of Christ, and the warfare which he has to war under Christ as his captain against the enemies of his salvation. II. THE FEARS WHICH COMMONLY ATTEND THIS STATE. The strength and number of the enemies whom Israel had to fight was well known to that people; but the Lord Himself had repeatedly put them in mind of it, saying continually, after He had numbered them over, that they were "seven nations greater and mightier than Israel." But why did God say so? Was it to make them afraid of these nations? No; but to enliven their faith and exercise their dependence upon God. It was quite true, and a notorious truth, that those nations were in point of strength and number quite an overmatch for Israel; so that it was impossible for him in his own strength to dispossess them. It was also true that, till they were dispossessed, the land of

promise could not be enjoyed; so that these two considerations, the strength and number of the enemies of Israel and his own weakness, were the more immediate causes of his fears. The fears often felt by the Christian are much of the same kind. His enemies are of three kinds—the world, the flesh, and the devil: mighty all of them, and many; for the world and the flesh and the devil have marshalled under them whole hosts of enemies, of whom any one, encountered by the Christian in his own strength, would be too strong. And oh! should he compare himself with them, what painful cause has he for the acknowledgment, "These are more than I!" It is in such a case too natural for him to look within himself, and, pausing upon what he finds there, ask, almost in despair, "How can I dispossess them?" But mark how graciously the Lord anticipates, prevents such fears: "If thou shalt say in thine heart (He too well knows His people will say so), These nations are more than I: how can I dispossess them?"—this is their—III. ENCOURAGEMENT. "Thou shalt not be afraid of them: but shalt well remember," &c. What God had done to Egypt and her king, Israel had seen and knew: it was because of this that they were then where they were, and that they were not in Egypt now; and God calls upon them to remember, for encouragement, what they had been in time past, "Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt"; and what had been done for their deliverance, and who had been the doer of it, Himself, the Lord their God: thus every word appears to have an emphasis intended to encourage them against their fears. Now, this encouragement, which God addressed to them, may serve as a figure of that which forms the encouragement of every Christian; for it is now the privilege of every Christian to look, for his encouragement, at the redemption wrought for him by Christ. Under all his fears he should remember what a wretched, lost condition Christ redeemed His people from, and how and why He did it. That state is thus described in Eph. ii. 1. This was the state of every one of us by nature. And how were they set free from it? By no less an act of love than the death of God's own Son in His dead people's stead (Rom. v. 6). We see, then, that the encouragement of a true Christian, under all his fears and against all the enemies of his soul, is in that sure covenant and rich provision of all things his soul can need, through that redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Does he find the world too strong for him; does he dread the rage and malice of its children who are set against him, or the snares and perils which the God of this world sets about his path? Or does he tremble at that overwhelming crowd of cares which comes upon him daily with his first waking thought? Let him not be afraid of these things, but let him well remember what Christ did for him when he was dead in trespasses and sins; and thus strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, let him cast all his care on God. Does he dread the power of his own corruptions, and ask, "How can I dispossess them? Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Let him faithfully remember the encouragement suggested by the text, and he shall soon say also with the apostle, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Or lastly, is he troubled by the fear of death, "the last enemy that shall be destroyed"? Christ, his Redeemer, through His own death, hath abolished death by destroying him that had the power of death—that is, the devil. In short, the Christian's "life is hid," and so kept safe from every enemy, "with Christ in God." (*F. F. Clark, B.A.*)

Ver. 20. **The Lord thy God will send the hornet.** — *Secret sins driven out by stinging hornets:*—I. SINS WHICH ARE LEFT AND HIDDEN. John Bunyan very wisely describes the town of Mansoul after it had been taken by Prince Immanuel. The Prince rode to the Castle called the Heart and took possession of it, and the whole city became his; but there were certain Diabolonians, followers of Diabolus, who never quitted the town. They could not be seen in the streets, could not be heard in the markets, never dared to occupy a house, but lurked about in certain old dens and caves. Some of them got impudent enough even to hire themselves out for servants to the men of Mansoul under other names. There was Mr. Covetousness, who was called Mr. Prudent Thrifty, and there was Mr. Lasciviousness, who was called Mr. Harmless Mirth. They took other names, and still lived here, much to the annoyance of the town of Mansoul, skulking about in holes and corners, and only coming out on dark days, when they could do mischief and serve the Black Prince. Now, in all of us, however watchful we may be, though we may set Mr. Pry Well to listen at the door, and he may watch, and my Lord Mayor, Mr. Understanding, be very careful to search all these out, yet there will remain much hidden sin. I think we ought always to pray to God to forgive us sins that we do

not know anything about. "Thine unknown agonies," says the old Greek liturgy; and there are unknown sins for which those agonies make atonement. Perhaps the sins which you and I confess are not the tithe of what we really do commit. There are, no doubt, in all of us Canaanites still dwelling in the land, that will be thorns in our side. II. A SINGULAR MEANS FOR THEIR DESTRUCTION—"THY GOD WILL SEND THE HORNET AMONG THEM." These fellows resorted to caves and dens. God employed the very best means for their destruction. I suppose these hornets were large wasps; two or three times, perhaps, as large as a wasp, with very terrible stings. It is not an unusual historical fact to find districts depopulated by means of stinging insects. In connection with the journey of Dr. Livingstone we can never forget that strange kind of guest which is such a pest to the cattle in any district, that the moment it appeared they had either to fly before it or to die. The hornet must have been a very terrible creature; but it is not at all extraordinary that there should have been hornets capable of driving out a nation. The hornet was a very simple means; it was no sound of trumpet, nor even the glitter of miracles, it was a simple, natural means of fetching these people out of their holes. It is well known that insects in some countries will sting one race of people and not another. Sometimes the inhabitants of a country are not at all careful about mosquitoes or such creatures, when strangers are greatly pestered with them. God could therefore bring hornets which would sting the Hivites and the Jebusites but not molest the Israelites, and in this way the Canaanites were driven out of their holes; some died by the stings of hornets, and others were put in the way of the sharp swords of the men of Israel, and thus they died. The spiritual analogy to this is, the daily trouble which God sends to every one of us. I suppose you have all got your hornets. Some have hornets in the family; your child may be a hornet to you—your wife, your husband, your brother, the dearest friend you have, may be a daily cross to you; and, though a dead cross is very heavy, a living cross is heavier far. To bury a child is a great grief, but to have that child live and sin against you is ten times worse. You may have hornets that shall follow you to your bed-chamber—some of you may know what that means—so that even where you ought to find your rest and your sweetest solace, it is there that you receive your bitterest sting of trouble. The hornet will sometimes come in the shape of business. You are perplexed—you cannot prosper—one thing comes after another. You seem to be born to trouble more than other people. You have ventured on the right hand, but it was a failure; you pushed out on the left, but that was a breakdown. Almost everybody you trust fails immediately, and those you do not trust are the people you might have safely relied upon. Others have hornets in their bodies. Some have constant headaches; aches and pains pass and shoot along the nerves of others. If you could but be quit of it, you think, how happy you would be; but you have got your hornet, and that hornet is always with you. But if I tried to get through the whole list of hornets I should want all the morning, for there is a particular grief to every man. Each man has his own form of obnoxious sting which he has to feel. There is one point I want you to notice in the text, and that is, we are expressly told the hornets came from God. He sent them. "The Lord thy God will send the hornet." This will help you, perhaps, to bear their stings another time. God weighs your troubles in scales, and measures out your afflictions, every drachm and scruple of them; and since they come, therefore, directly from a loving Father's hand, accept them with grateful cheerfulness, and pray that the result which Divine Wisdom has ordained to flow from them may be abundantly realised in your sanctification, in being made like unto Christ. III. A VERY SUGGESTIVE LESSON TO OURSELVES. It is this. What is my particular besetting sin? Have I been careful in self-examination? If not, I must expect to have the hornet. God never punishes His children for sin penally, but He chastens them for it paternally. You may often discover what your sin is by the punishment, for you can see the face of the sin in the punishment—the one is so like the other. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Small troubles*:—It seems as if the insectile world were determined to extirpate the human race. It is bombarding the grain fields, and the orchards, and the vineyards. The Colorado beetle, the Nebraska grasshopper, the New Jersey locust, the universal potato bug seem to carry on the work which was begun ages ago, when the insects buzzed and droned out of Noah's Ark as the door was opened. In my text the hornet flies out on its mission. It is a species of wasp, swift in its motion and violent in its sting. Its touch is torture to man or beast. The hornet goes in swarms. It has captains over hundreds, and twenty of them alighting on one man will produce certain

death. The Persians attempted to conquer a Christian city, but the elephants and the beasts on which the Persians rode were assaulted by the hornet, so that the whole army was broken up, and the besieged city was rescued. This burning and noxious insect stung out the Hittites and the Canaanites from their country. What gleaming sword and chariot of war could not accomplish was done by the puncture of an insect. The Lord sent the hornet. When we are assaulted by great Behemoths of trouble, we become chivalric, and we assault them; we get on the high-mettled steed of our courage, and we make a cavalry charge at them; and, if God be with us, we come out stronger and better than when we went in. But, alas! for these insectile annoyances of life—these foes, too small to shoot—these things without any avoirdupois weight—the gnats and the midges, and the flies, and the wasps, and the hornets. In other words, it is the small stinging annoyances of our life which drive us out and use us up. In the best conditioned life, for some grand and glorious purpose, God has sent the hornet. 1. I remark, in the first place, that these small stinging annoyances may come in the shape of a sensitive nervous organisation. People who are prostrated under typhoid fevers or with broken bones get plenty of sympathy; but who pities anybody that is nervous? 2. Again, these small insect annoyances may come to us in the shape of friends and acquaintances who are always saying disagreeable things. There are some people you cannot be with for half an hour but you feel cheered and comforted. Then there are other people you cannot be with for five minutes before you feel miserable. They do not mean to disturb you, but they sting you to the bone. They gather up all the yarn which the gossips spin, and peddle it. They gather up all the adverse criticisms about your person, about your business, about your home, about your church, and they make your ear the funnel into which they pour it. These people of whom I speak, reap and bind in the great harvest-field of discouragement. Some days you greet them with a hilarious "good-morning," and they come buzzing at you with some depressing information. "The Lord sent the hornet." 3. Perhaps these small insect annoyances will come in the shape of a domestic irritation. The parlour and the kitchen do not always harmonise. To get good service and to keep it is one of the great questions of the country. 4. These small insect disturbances may also come in the shape of business irritations. It is not the panics that kill the merchants. Panics come only once in ten or twenty years. It is the constant din of these everyday annoyances which is sending so many of our best merchants into nervous dyspepsia and paralysis and the grave. 5. I have noticed in the history of some of my congregation that their annoyances are multiplying, and that they have a hundred where they used to have ten. The naturalist tells us that a wasp sometimes has a family of twenty thousand wasps, and it does seem as if every annoyance of your life brooded a million. By the help of God to-day I want to set in a counter current. The hornet is of no use? Oh yes! The naturalists tell us they are very important in the world's economy; they kill spiders and they clear the atmosphere; and I really believe God sends the annoyances of our lives upon us to kill the spiders of the soul and to clear the atmosphere into the skies. These annoyances are sent on us, I think, to wake us up from our lethargy. If we had a bed of everything that was attractive and easy, what would we want of heaven? We think that the hollow tree sends the hornet. You think the devil sends the hornet. I want to correct your theology. "The Lord sent the hornet." Then I think these annoyances come on us to culture our patience. When you stand chin-deep in annoyances is the time for you to swim out towards the great headlands of Christian attainment, and when your life is loaded to the muzzle with repulsive annoyances—that is the time to draw the bead. Nothing but the furnace will ever burn out of us the clinker and the slag. Now, would you not rather have these small drafts of annoyance on your bank of faith than some all-staggering demand upon your endurance? I want to make my people strong in the faith that they will not surrender to small annoyances. In the village of Hamelin, tradition says, there was an invasion of rats, and these small creatures almost devoured the town and threatened the lives of the population, and the story is that a piper came out one day and played a very sweet tune, and all the vermin followed him—followed him to the banks of the Weser, and then he blew a blast and they dropped in and disappeared for ever. Of course this is a fable, but I wish I could, on the sweet flute of the Gospel, draw forth all the nibbling and burrowing annoyances of your life, and play them down into the depths for ever. How many touches did Mr. Church give to his picture of "Cotopaxi" or his "Heart of the Andes"?

I suppose about fifty thousand touches. I hear the canvas saying, "Why do you keep me trembling with that pencil so long? Why don't you put it on in one dash?" "No," said Mr. Church, "I know how to make a painting. It will take fifty thousand of these touches." And I want you to understand that it is these ten thousand annoyances which, under God, are making up the picture of your life, to be hung at last in the galleries of heaven, fit for angels to look at. God knows how to make a picture. God meant this world to be only the vestibule of heaven, and that is the great gallery of the universe towards which we are aspiring. We must not have it too good in this world, or we would want no heaven. You are surprised that aged people are so willing to go out of this world. I will tell you the reason. It is not only because of the bright prospects in heaven, but it is because they feel that seventy years of nettlesomeness is enough. They would lie down in the soft meadows of this world for ever, but "God sent the hornet." (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Ver. 21. **Thou shalt not be affrighted at them: for the Lord thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible.**—*Courage and humanity:*—I. The complaint has been made often THAT THE QUALITIES WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE ESPECIALLY ENCOURAGED TO CULTIVATE ARE NOT MANLINESS AND COURAGE; that, so far as the Christian ideal is set continually before the mind of a nation or a man, that mind is likely to become submissive, not energetic. I believe that the courage, which is only another way of expressing the heart, of a nation is liable to a continual weakening and decay; that left to itself it will certainly wither; that some religions may hasten its death; but that by doing so such religion will prove that it does not come from God, that it is not His religion, not His instrument for reforming and regenerating the world. II. A RETURN TO THE OLD FAITH THAT COURAGE AND HUMANITY ARE NOT ENEMIES, BUT INSEPARABLE COMPANIONS, HAS CERTAINLY COMMENCED AMONG US. The misfortune is that Christianity is supposed to be not identical with humanity, but a substitution for it. And this opinion is closely connected with another: that courage is a heathen, or perhaps the heathen, virtue, and that we have cherished it by giving our children a semi-heathen education. Consider this opinion under different aspects. III. By a heathen we mean one who is not a Jew. That is the simplest, most accurate use of the name. Taking it in this sense, our text is decisive THAT A HIGH ESTIMATE OF COURAGE WAS NOT CONFINED TO HEATHENS; that if to form such an estimate is ungodly, the chosen people were as ungodly as any. The Bible tells us that idolatry is the great destroyer of courage, reverence for the true God and an abiding sense of His presence and protection the upholder of it. Now is this doctrine compatible with the fact that the most illustrious of the heathen nations were singularly brave nations, and that our forefathers sought to kindle English courage at their fires? It is incompatible if we regard a heathen merely as an idolater. It is perfectly compatible if we trace through the history of the great nations that worshipped idols a continual witness against it. Their belief in courage, as a quality which raised them above the animals, was the greatest of all the protests which the conscience of heathens was bearing against idolatry, against the worship of visible things, which is directly connected with our animal instincts, which is always lowering the human being to the level of that which he should rule. IV. THE COURAGE OF THE HEBREW WAS DERIVED FROM HIS TRUST IN THE BEING WHO HAD CHOSEN HIM TO DO HIS WORK IN THE WORLD, WHO WOULD ACCOMPLISH THAT WORK, LET WHAT POWERS WOULD UNITE TO DEFEAT IT. Christianity is not a denial of Judaism or a denial of heathenism, a *tertium quid* which excludes all that is strongest and most vital in both, but the harmony and concentration of both, the discovery of Him in whom the meaning of both is realised and raised to its highest power; but out of the union and reconciliation of apparent opposites in the faith of a Father and a Son, of a Spirit proceeding from both, to quicken men and make them the voluntary, cheerful servants, because the sons, of God, there must come forth a courage diviner than the Hebrew, more human than the Greek, more pledged to a continual battle with disorder than the Roman. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) *Moses' address to the people:*—The manner in which the possession of Canaan is invariably spoken of is worthy of notice. Moses never supposes it impossible that they should reach Canaan; the style of his expression is uniformly that of certainty; he does not say, "If the Lord," but "when." This confidence did not rest on human grounds, for their enemies were in themselves formidable, but on the Divine promise. Those who have the Lord's promise are safe, and they who trust in it are happy. But another fact

is, that the Lord condescends to the state of His people; He knoweth their frame, and remembereth they are dust that they are prone to fear. True, there is no cause for fear, but their infirmity may lead them to do so. Hence He anticipates those fears, provides a remedy, and suggests every consideration calculated to encourage them. I. THE FEARS WHICH THEY WERE IN DANGER OF INDULGING. 1. The superior strength of their enemies. 2. The consequent difficulty of dispossessing them. A few, comparatively, against many; the weak against the strong. How can *I* dispossess them? Is not the case very similar now? The Christian cannot be blind to the fact that his enemies are greater and mightier than he; the hosts of hell are marshalled against him. Legion is their name, implying unity, order, zeal, and perseverance. The enemies are mighty, and have overcome their thousands. There are few who have not been tempted to consider the contest hopeless, and to say, "Surely I shall one day perish." Now if there be one here saying this in his heart, let him attend—II. TO THE ENCOURAGEMENTS PROVIDED AGAINST THOSE FEARS. 1. A recollection of God's past dealings. Thou shalt remember well what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt. The difficulties there were as great as they could be;—Pharaoh had chariots and horsemen; the Israelites were despised slaves; he had power, and was determined to use it in retaining them; yet the Lord brought them out, and therefore they need not fear now. 2. They were instructed as to the Lord's future methods. So shall the Lord do unto all the people of whom thou art afraid. He had ten thousand ways of weakening the power of the enemy; the whole kingdom of nature was at His command; He could send the hornet among them; even the insect tribe shall be made subservient to the accomplishment of God's design towards them. Joshua records the fulfilment of this promise (chap. xxiv. 12). But this conquest was to be gradual. The Lord thy God will put out those nations by little and little. Immediate and entire victory would have been attended with undesirable consequences; God therefore gave them as much as in their circumstances was good for them. 3. Assurance was given of final victory. And are there not equal encouragements now, to every one anxious to attain the heavenly Canaan? There is, however, this happy difference in the two cases: that when once the Christian has passed over the Jordan of death, every difficulty will be over, every enemy conquered, he will have the land in possession. In conclusion, I would say—1. Let no one expect the victory who fights in his own strength. 2. Let no one despair of victory who fights in the Lord's strength. (*George Breay, B.A.*) *Christian warfare*:—I. THE ENEMIES OF GOD'S PEOPLE. We know that the inhabitants of Canaan were emphatically idolaters. This was their special characteristic. Now it is idolatry, in some shape or other, that draws men away from the service of God. Some make pleasure their idol; some make wealth their idol. But their enemies are many in number. There is a special danger in the present day arising from those false doctrines which have arisen in the household of faith and caused hostile parties in the Church. In connection with this I may mention a contrary error—latitudinarianism. Again, the world is very dangerous; the example of those who live in it is most seductive. Again, we meet with those who are men of learning and great talent, and we are exposed to danger even from them. We hear them maintaining opinions which are not scriptural, but we think it is scarcely possible for those who are so learned to be wrong; we are thus left to ask in perplexity, "Who is in the right?" We forget that men must "become fools that they may be wise" as respects spiritual knowledge. But there are enemies within. And here I must not omit to place in the forefront self, in all its varied forms (2 Tim. iii. 1–5). Then, again, we have to contend against the whole army of lusts—"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." All these are of the world, and all these lust against the Spirit, so that we cannot do the things that we would. II. Now let us inquire what are the WEAPONS with which we must fight? Scripture teaches us (2 Cor. x. 4) that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal." Amongst our defensive weapons I may mention, as the first and chiefest, prayer. With this we must join faith in the promises. And, also, we must remember that throughout our whole life we shall have need of active watchfulness. There are also offensive weapons which we are bound to use. The first of these which I will mention is consistency. Outward consistency of character deters many from attempting their proposed assaults. Nor must we forget the Word of God. Here, indeed, is our great weapon; and so powerful is it, that it is the great desire of Satan to keep it out of our reach. III. But I own there are great DIFFICULTIES in the way. The first to which I will allude is that which arises from our peculiar position in the world. We must be in the world,

and the difficulty at the same time is to take care that we are not of the world. To have a wise discerning judgment; to distinguish between the fulfilment of our duty in that station of life in which God has placed us, and the yielding to the secret subtle snares of Satan, is often a work of great difficulty for the Christian. Again, the Christian's difficulties and afflictions are not all at once removed. Like the enemies of the Jews they are put down, as it were, "little by little." It is a gradual and a progressive work. But assuredly it does progress towards final victory. But numerous as are our enemies, great as are our difficulties, blessed be God, we have—IV. OUR ENCOURAGEMENTS also. And first among these we know we shall have the victory. The promise of victory has been given, and it is as sure as if it were accomplished. We know that we are on the conquering side. The numbers of our enemies, then, need not terrify us. "Greater is He that is for us than all they that are against us." The past mercies we have received are all pledges of future mercies. If we had but received that one pledge of God's love which He afforded us in the gift of His Son for us, this would of itself be sufficient to encourage the assurance of hope. For (Rom. viii. 32) we have nothing to fear from present weakness. The Lord has laid help upon One that is mighty to save. Though our gracious Saviour is not Himself personally present He has told us the reason (John xvi. 7). Still He is spiritually present with us. His Spirit still abides with His Church—and therefore with us, if we be indeed members of that Church—comforting us, assisting us, strengthening us, and ensuring us victory at the last. Furthermore, the Lord is on our side. "The Lord thy God will do this." (*H. M. Villiers, M.A.*) *The Almighty Helper:*—This description of God is a terror to sinners, but an encouragement to Christians. His mighty presence is—1. Unmerited. The aid we get from earthly friends is often a reciprocity of kindness—a discharge of obligation. But our goodness extends not to God. We have done nothing to deserve help. 2. Unexpected. In most extreme danger and when most unlikely, comes deliverance. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." The place of fear and sorrow becomes one of joy and triumph. 3. Singular. God's methods are peculiar to Himself. Events which appear to combine to work our ruin bring our salvation. In the deliverance from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan God was terrible to His enemies. 4. Timely. We think He has forgotten or forsaken us if He appears not when we wish; but He knows better than we do when it is time for Him to work. "Too late" can never be said of His mercy. "A very present help in trouble." 5. All-sufficient. Earthly friends fail. God is always among us, "a mighty God and terrible." He conquers most formidable foes, rescues from the greatest dangers. (*J. Wolfendale.*)

Ver. 22. **The Lord thy God will put out those nations.**—*God's expulsion of evil:*—As you read this Scripture you will instantly remember the position occupied by the Jews at the time these words of promise were spoken to them. The forty years of wilderness wandering had run their round. The narrow stream of Jordan was all that lay between them and the land of promise, and in a few days they would cross the swollen flood, and take possession of the goodly country in the name and for the glory of that God who had given it to them for a heritage for ever. In prospect of the work, the warfare they would have to carry on in their conquest of Canaan, these words of exhortation were addressed to them, teaching them a twofold truth. First, God would be with them; God would work for them. Therefore they might cherish the utmost confidence of ultimate success. Secondly, God would be with them, but not to complete the work for them at a single stroke. He would do it surely; but He would do it slowly also. Therefore they might have quiet contentment as well as unfaltering hope. They must "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." This was no new arrangement on the part of God; it was no new revelation to the Jewish people. The Lord had spoken to them forty years before in the self-same strain. As in the words of the text, so in those of the twenty-third chapter of Exodus, He impressed this truth upon them, that they must both labour and wait. The words then set before us: Work done at God's command, work done with God's help, work done successfully, and yet work progressing slowly towards its promised perfection; the slow progress not because of human indolence and faithlessness, but because of Divine ordinance. Why did He not do it all at once? How easily with the breath of His mouth He could have swept the land clear of the last polluting remnant of the Canaanites and their idolatries! The reason for the delay God gives. It was no use for the people to gain the country faster than they could fully occupy and properly cultivate it. This was one reason, though doubtless there were

others which God has not made known to us. Let us now turn from Jewish history to our own Christian circumstances, and to our own work. This ancient story throws light on the principles and processes of Divine providence in all ages. It is one practical proof of the truth that, even in the destruction of wrong and the re-establishment of right, our God often works with what seems to us a strange slowness. In His warfare against the power of evil which is so alien to His heart, so hurtful to His creatures, so contrary to His will, the All-holy One does not annihilate it with a word, but He gradually crumbles it to fragments, and He casts it away little by little. There is the work of individual sanctification. A Christian man does not find his nature a blank sheet, on which he can at once write all manner of holy sentences. Nay, but it has already been written upon. There are unholy words, which to deface is his work, and which to entirely remove requires more than human skill. He finds that his nature is anything but an empty country, in which he has just to plant his standard of heaven, and of which he has just to take possession in the name of God. It is full of inhabitants—evil passions, thoughts, desires, habits—and they have all to be cast out, that their place may be taken by thoughts and desires and habits, pure and holy, God-pleasing and God-like. And this expulsion of the Philistines, this filling of the land with the children of God, is in every case a lifelong work. It is only done by little and little. This is one of the mysteries of our present position. The false is often so much, and the true is often so little; the wrong is often so easy, and the right is often so difficult. The evil, the worldly, and the devilish, is often just yielding to nature, just floating with the tide. The good, the heavenly, the God-like—to follow it is often to go against tide and tempest, against flesh and blood, against all manner of opposing forces. Why are we taught to see the beauty and to appreciate the blessings of holiness, and yet are left to wrestle so continually with sins and doubts and fears? Could not our God come, and at once sweep every defiling thing out of our heart for ever? We know that our God could do this if He saw it to be wise and best; and this must be our comfort under the fact that He does not do it. He does not abstain because of His weakness. He does not abstain because of His unwillingness. He sees that the discipline of weakness and tears, and not unfrequent failures, and success only partially secured—He sees that His discipline is good for us. He knows how it will prepare us for higher service and for holier joys in heaven; and so, while we are sighing for instant redemption, He grants us only gradual deliverance. (*C. Vince.*) **By little and little.**—*Victory sure but gradual*:—The victory over our enemies, that is, over our sins, will, in general, not be sudden, but gradual. Final success is promised: the first attempt to resist is a pledge of that final success; continued resistance is a continued pledge of that result; it needs only to persevere in the struggle, and the victory is ours—ours already in prospect. We must be prepared, therefore, for a continuous warfare. Sometimes we shall prevail over the temptation of the day—then we shall be encouraged; the next day, perhaps, we shall be defeated by it, and then we shall be humbled. Sometimes we shall look back, and feel that we have advanced. At other times we shall be conscious of a loss of ground, and we shall betake ourselves afresh to humiliation and prayer. But, on the whole, there will be no doubt so long as we continue to struggle, by faith not in ourselves but in Christ, that we are making progress. Things which once seemed impossible will have become easy; things which once seemed irresistible will have been found conquerable in the name of Christ. "By little and little" our foes are giving way before us. Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and find us with His armour on, maintaining the post which He has assigned. Nor is this an arbitrary arrangement, but one calculated for our good. "Thou mayest not destroy them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee." The sudden and final discomfiture of our foes at the moment of our first onset would not, in all probability, promote but defeat our ultimate good. There is a lesson to be learned, without which virtue itself might be a curse and not a blessing. That lesson is humility. He who would see God must be a humble man; and humility is a grace of gradual attainment. It comes by difficulty, sorrow, conflict, often by defeat. Worse than any fall is that pride which precedes it—that pride which, without a fall, would never be humbled. Was there danger lest the beasts of the field should increase upon Israel, if their enemies should fall before them at once? So the heart abruptly cleared from the assaults of other sins—of ambition, and vanity, and selfishness, and lust—might fall an easy prey to the ravenings of spiritual pride; and the last end of that man would be worse than the first. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *By little and little*:—The

rule of heaven, earth, and hell is—"By little and little!" Whether you look to the outward and visible, or to the inward and invisible; to the world of matter, or to the world of spirit; to the kingdom of nature, or the kingdom of grace,—you will surely find this rule to hold good. "First the blade," &c. Look at the history of yon giant oak. There is a little bird, and in his beak he bears a tiny acorn along. Away he wings his flight, over hedge and ditch, brier and brake, until, frightened by a hawk, he lets his little acorn fall in yon pasture-field. Oxen are grazing there. The ox comes by, and beneath his hoof the tiny acorn is trodden deep down into the soil. The ox passes on his way. The acorn remains, uncared-for and forgotten; but "by little and little" it bursts its shell; "by little and little" it takes root downwards and bears fruit upwards; "by little and little" the tender twigs peep out amid the surrounding blades of grass, and thus slowly but surely it rises higher and higher, and grows broader and broader, until at length a sturdy oak marks now the spot where years before the little acorn fell. My object, however, is to point you rather to the world of spirit than to that of nature. Just as the ancient Israelites were sure of the Promised Land as their inheritance ultimately, but still could not secure it without a struggle, or rather a series of struggles, even "by little and little"; just so with the child of God, although from the moment that he believes in Jesus, as the only Saviour of his soul, he by that very act secures to himself the right to enter heaven; nevertheless his meetness for heaven is a work which will require years of stern struggling with his spiritual enemies. Now we may rest assured that the Master's reasons for not destroying our spiritual enemies at once, but enabling us to overcome "by little and little," are both wise and all-sufficient. That we cannot overcome these enemies at once, will, I take it, be acknowledged to the full if I appeal to the experience of any Christian man or woman. Have ye never been harassed by those enemies of the Christian's peace, even by the nation of worldly cares? This nation is compared by the Master to briers and thorns, which spring up, and unless the greatest and most constant care be taken will choke the good seed. I know of none other nation, perhaps, more to be dreaded than these worldly cares, and this is especially the case in these days, when many causes, such as the great competition in trade, the high price of provisions, and an ever-increasing population, give to Satan a terrible vantage-ground wherefrom to attack. Ye have tried to shake them off once and for ever, as unworthy of the child of God, but they will not be shaken off at once. Still strive on, and the Lord thy God will put them out before you "by little and little." Again, the true Israelite is worried by a nation of idle and wandering thoughts. Now ye must not be discouraged at this state of things; ye must not incline to despair because unable to be rid of these vain thoughts at once. Continue to strive against them, and God will put them out before thee "by little and little." Thus might I enumerate enemy after enemy that will harass and impede us by the way. I might remind you of the sickening doubts and fears, of the lurking treachery of that poor heart, of the seducing friends and the too frail flesh. These cause you frequent and fearful pain, and ever and again break in upon your peace. Still in any moment of despair I would point you to the truths of the text, and entreat that you will not forget how that God has all-wisely willed that we should not conquer at once, not become perfect at once, but conquer one foe after another, and become perfect only "by little and little." And as this is the rule of heaven, so alas! is it also the rule of hell. In Gen. iii. we read that "the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field," and surely in nothing has he manifested his cunning more than in the cruel way wherewith he has imitated God in dealing with men's souls. "I see that in saving souls," he would seem to say, "Jehovah takes not the sinner out of his sin so as at once to transform him into a perfect saint. I see that in winning souls to glory He woos them gradually away from earth, and by little and little makes them meet to be for ever with the Lord. I will go and do likewise. In seeking the eternal ruin of souls, my principle of action shall be the same. I will not try to make a man a tenant meet for hell at once, but step by step I will lead him down. I will first coax him till he gives up some one good habit; I will then tempt him till he indulges in some one sin, and again I will blunt his conscience by tempting him to repeat that sin, until by little and little I shall be able to sap the very foundations of his character, and gradually make him fit for the abode of the lost." I adjure you, then, as you value your happiness in time and in eternity, beware of the very first little tendency to sin. It is here the danger lies. This is the rule of hell's attack. (*D. P. Morgan, M.A.*)

Every day a little:—1. Every day a little knowledge. One fact in a day. How small is one fact! Only one. Ten years pass by. Three thousand six hundred

and fifty facts are not a small thing. 2. Every day a little self-denial. The thing that is difficult to do to-day will be an easy thing to do three hundred and sixty days hence, if each day it shall have been repeated. What power of self-mastery shall he enjoy who, looking to God for grace, seeks every day to practise the grace he prays for! 3. Every day a little helpfulness. We live for the good of others, if our living be in any sense a true living. It is not in great deeds of kindness only that the blessing is found. In "little deeds of kindness," repeated every day, we find true happiness. (*Anon.*) *Theory of graduality*:—My text is representing the gradual process by which God will exterminate the Canaanites and give the land into the possession of the Israelites. It will not be by one fell blow, or instantaneously, but "by little and little." Indeed, that is God's usual way. Gradually the world was peopled. Gradually the rocks wear away. Gradually great changes occur. The world ages in being built. The world ages in being redeemed. Eternity is the lifetime of God. We hasten and worry and die, but God waits, and His stupendous projects go on gradually, slowly, inch by inch, "by little and little." This theory of graduality has its illustration in the achievement of spiritual knowledge and character and the driving out of Canaanitish ignorance and Canaanitish sin from the heart. The most accomplished rhetorician or poet who has filled a whole shelf with admirable books of his own began by learning the alphabet. The mightiest mental toil in which we ever engaged was the learning of our a-b-c's. The swiftest reportorial pen failed once in attempting to make a perpendicular stroke on the boy's copy-book. The printer, whose fingers move with electric speed, once pulled out from the "case" slowly, cautiously, studiously, type by type. The boy, who bounds over the playground with so much celerity that he does not seem to touch it, once poised himself cautiously against the wall, and could not be tempted to cross the floor until he saw his mother's arms out ready to catch him if he fell. So in all spiritual knowledge, it is by little and little that we advance. We went on from one attainment to another. Each of the attainments, perhaps, seemed to be very small indeed, but they came on—now a resolution added to a resolution, hope added to hope, experience added to experience, joy to joy, struggle to struggle, victory to victory. They did not come up on this great mount of Christian excellency by one great athletic stride, but inch by inch, step by step, "by little and little." Paul came to his great attainments in piety gradually. He had to take a course of mobs, of shipwrecks, of scourgings, of imprisonments, of execrations before he came to the rounding out of his character, and every Christian now must come through ups and downs, and losses, and slights, and blunders, and abuse, and struggles to that rounding out of his character. A merchant tailor takes down the goods, he unrolls them, he makes the line of chalk-mark, with his scissors he follows the chalk-mark until the garment is cut out, and though there may be many pieces, the whole garment is made out of one cloth. But it is not so in the putting together of a Christian character. It is a little of this to make the robe of character, and a little of that, a little of the bright-coloured prosperity, and a little of the dark-shadowed calamity. It is a sort of patchwork. Little by little. Conversion is an instantaneous work. Believing is becoming a Christian. But there is a great difference between conversion and sanctification. Conversion is turning around from the wrong direction and starting in the right direction; but sanctification is keeping on in the right direction after you have started. After conversion, oh! how much work. And your greatest battles with the world, the flesh, and the devil will be after you have declared against them. Men think after they are converted the work is done. They suppose that in some way there will be heaved up in their souls a grand Christian character as an earthquake heaves up a beautiful island in the midst of the sea. No. No. "By little and little." Troubles will help you. There is no such thing as "wrought-iron" without passing through the fire. The seniors in Christ's college, of course, know more than the freshmen. But be accumulative every day. A handful of acorns will make a forest of oaks. "By little and little." Again, this theory of graduality has its illustration in the formation of bad habits. Look at that habit of falsifying. The man began with what is called a "white lie," or a "fib." He can stand in his store, behind his counter, and unblushingly, deliberately, calmly say that which he knows to be false, and which you know to be false. There are hundreds of men in this house to-day who would confess that the habit is injurious to them, but somehow they cannot stop. How, my brother, did you get this bondage on you? In one day? In one hour? No. "By little and little." Again, this theory of graduality is

illustrated in the right kind of domestic discipline, and the driving out of Canaanitish evil from the child's heart. Family government is by fits and starts, but it is worth less than nothing unless it be calm, deliberate, continuous all through boyhood and girlhood. Your children by this process are making character noble or degraded. "By little and little." To the nursery-story and the picture-book of the first four years must be added the influence of a Christian fireside, proper improvement of anniversaries, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, there a little, here a smile, there a look, here a frown, here a walk, here a ride, here a flower plucking, here this, here that. "By little and little." Once more, this theory of graduality has its illustration in the conquest of the world for God and the extermination of the Canaanites for ever. Would it not be pleasant if in one day all the race could be evangelised, and the Atlantic cable could thrill with the news that Europe, Asia, and Africa are converted? Because it is not done rapidly, Christian people get discouraged. They say: "Nineteen centuries since Christ came, and yet the world not saved." Oh, you cavillers; you do not realise the way God does things. God is not in a hurry. Many generations are to have joy in this work; you shall not monopolise it. Your children and your children's children, and their successors innumerable, shall help to draw on this Gospel chariot. Let God control the great affairs of the universe. Let us each one do his own little work. The hands that made the curtains in the ancient tabernacle did their work. And you will favour the work in one way, and I will favour the work in another way. Each one doing his own work, in his own way, according to his own capacity. "By little and little." Then God will at the last gather up all these fragments of work, and in the great day of eternity we shall see it, and under arches of light and in bowers of beauty, and amid the battle-flags of God's great host of the redeemed, and amid the blast of all heaven's trumpets, we shall see the consummation. Amid that "great multitude that no man can number," God will not be ashamed to announce that all this grandeur and glory and triumph were achieved "by little and little." (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *Tick by tick*:—In listening to the sound by which a clock or watch marks the passing of the diminutive portions of time, one might almost fancy that deductions so extremely small would never wear away the whole duration of a long life. But it has been by such minute lapses in never ceasing succession that the vast series of ages since the creation has passed away; it has been by this succession of instants that all our ancestors have completed their sojourn on earth, and by this it will be that we shall one day have arrived at the end of our mortal existence. Each passing moment, then, may be regarded as having a relation to the end, and everything which hints to us that moments are passing, may be a monition to us to be habitually at the great work which ought to be accomplished against the period when the last of them shall come. (*J. Foster.*) *The progress of our truest life*:—We have watched, on a summer's day, the tide coming in upon the shore. How slow, and scarcely perceptible its advance! Now a strong onrush; then a temporary ebb; presently a further advance; so, inch by inch, the ground is gained. Such should be the progress of our truest "life." Steadily the tide of purer, stronger feeling, of nobler and more strenuous endeavour should ripple in, until life flows to its height, musical as the sound of many waters! *The concentration of the little*:—The weakest living creature, by concentrating his powers on a single object, can accomplish something; the strongest, by dispersing his over many, may fail to accomplish anything. The drop, by continued falling, bores its passage through the hardest rock—the hasty torrent rushes over it with a hideous uproar, and leaves no trace behind. *The conquest of character*:—The boundary line between legitimate aspiration and a reasonable content is sometimes hard to find. Contentment may be construed by some as lack of enterprise, and so more or less ignoble, while aspiration may, and often does, become mere restlessness and discontent. But all depends on what we aspire to and what we are content with. The man who wants to be a little better, a little wiser, a little richer than he is, whose aspiration takes the form of gradual growth by littles, will probably realise his desires. And if he refuses to fight the inevitable and the immutable limitations that are set about him, even while constantly bettering his condition, he may yet be content and happy. Great estates are built up by slow and gradual accretion running through the years. Great scholarship is the result of constant aspiration, unflagging industry, and tireless diligence. So fine character is the result of innumerable conquests over self and selfishness and ease, and evil and vicious tendency. It is built up as the coral animal builds the reefs,

one act at a time, and a great many of them going to the erection of the lofty structure. *Little things done well*:—Young men in beginning life are apt to be impatient of the first little steps that apparently make no advance, forgetting that seeming "trifles make up the sum of life," just as in building, the little bricks, laid carefully one at a time, side by side, and securely cemented together, make at last the great, strong structure. A young man, having exhausted his patrimony in obtaining a professional education, settled himself in a town already filled with successful lawyers, to practise law. One day one of these older lawyers asked him how, under such circumstances, he expected to make a living. "I hope I may get a little practice," was the modest reply. "It will be very little," said the lawyer. "Then I will do that little well," answered the young man decidedly. He carried out his determination. The little things well done brought larger ones, and in time he became one of the most distinguished jurists of his State. Again, a certain old bishop, who was fond of finding odd characters in out-of-the-way places, was visiting in a quiet neighbourhood. One day, in a walk with a friend, he came across a cross-roads settlement of a few houses. Among them was a snug little shoe-shop, kept by an old negro man, which showed signs of prosperity. Interested in the old cobbler, the bishop stopped for a chat. "My friend," he said, "I would not think so small a business as mending shoes would pay so well." "Ah," said the gentleman with him, "old Cato has the monopoly of shoe-mending in this region. No one else gets a job." "How is that, Cato?" asked the bishop. "Just so, master," replied Cato. "It is only little patches put on with little stitches or tiny pegs. But when I takes a stitch it is a *stitch*, and when I drive a peg it *holds*." Little things well done! The good bishop used that reply as a text for many a sermon afterwards. (*Christian Age.*)

Ver. 25. **Thou shalt not desire the silver or gold.**—*Things not to be desired*:—Showing, as he always shows, a most penetrating mind, Moses points to a very subtle temptation which would arise in connection with the progress of Israel. The graven images of the heathen nations were to be burned with fire. Moses says in the twenty-fifth verse: "Thou shalt not desire . . . lest thou be ensnared therein." How subtle is the temptation in that direction! Shall we cast in the hideous gods and the valuable gold, and consume them both in the unsparing fire? How much better first to strip the god of his golden coat and then burn the wood or clay or grind the stone to powder! Moses, foreseeing this temptation, and by the very inspiration of God, knowing the mysteries of human nature, said: "Touch not; taste not; handle not." In such abstention is the only possible safety of the Church. The temptation operates to-day. Men will sustain a questionable mode of earning a livelihood on the pretence that they can gather from the forbidden trade gold and silver which they can melt down and mint with the image and superscription of God; they can allow the devastating traffic to proceed, reeking like the pit of hell, destroying countless thousands of lives, and yet justify the continuance of the iniquity by taking off the gold and the silver and throwing part of it into the coffers of the Church. Missions so sustained are dishonoured. The gold torn from any evil way of getting a livelihood and given to the Church is an abomination to the Lord thy God. He does not want even good gold stolen for His purposes, or gold won by unholy means thrown into His exchequer. Let us give honest money. Let us eat bread unleavened by wrong-doing; there may be little of it, but Christ will break it with His own hands, and it shall be more than our hunger needs. Marvellous, too, is the prevision of Moses when he lays down the only law or principle by which all these abstentions and all these actions can be sustained. Do not let us ascribe these regulations to the prevision of Moses unless we understand by that term the inspiration of God. What is the principle which guarantees safety and protects the soul from the unclean things of heathen nations? That principle is laid down in the twenty-sixth verse. Speaking of heathen abomination Moses says: "Thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it." There is no middle feeling; there is no intermediate way of dealing with bad things. "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off"; "if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out." "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." Thus the Testaments are one: the moral tone is the same; the stern law never yields to time—its phrase changes, its words may come and go, its forms may take upon them the colour of the transient times, but the inner spirit of righteousness is the Spirit of God, without beginning, without measure, without end. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

CHAPTER VIII.

VERS. 1, 2. **Remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee.**—*Remembering and forgetting* (with Phil. iii. 13):—Thou shalt remember, and thou shalt forget. We need a good memory and a good forgettery. I. FIRST, THEN, THE PAST: WE ARE TO REMEMBER IT. The old lawgiver sought to make the nation's great history sacramental. Much might well be forgotten. The old rebellions, the old murmurings, their lapses from loyalty, and the heavy, hard work they had made for their great spiritual leader—they had better break with much of this unsavoury record. But they must remember the lessons of history. Unfortunate is the man or the nation without the memories of great providences, that has never known the discipline of heaven. We are never to forget the past: the fact that we are the product of the past, that the ground on which we stand is made soil; that if you sink your pick into it you cut into the layer of forty or fifty centuries; that all our sowing is upon the prepared ground and top-dressing contributed by all the older periods. God has been working and good men have been building at all the substructures that are the foundations on which we start the work we have in hand. Providence is not the mintage of yesterday, and God has not been waiting for us to appear on the scene before He set His plough in the furrow. We had better not be too ready to quit with the past. Foundations have been made for us; we are ourselves the creations of the past, and most of the instruments with which we work are contributions from the past. We may easily exaggerate our abilities and resources, especially our originality. We are a little inflated just now with our physical resources. The greatest moulders of men, the greatest teachers of the world are not any of them above ground, when we come to think of it. The mightiest forces that reach forth their transforming energies to mould human life come to us from sources back of all contemporary history. For our greatest literature, for the most truly constructive forces for shaping history, and for our religion we must go to the past. The history of the great peoples of the world is a veritable mine of wealth; we could better afford to throw all our gold into the sea than to lose our past and the past of the divinely led nations among whom God has been so visibly working. We had better remember all the way the Lord hath led us,—remember it because it has made us what we are, and because God's footprints are visible upon it. God has been here before us; has been forehanded with us; has wrought at the basis of all our individual and national life. II. THE FIRST WORD IS REMEMBER, THE SECOND IS FORGET. We are to remember the past and we are to forget it. The made soil on which we sow is an inheritance from the past, but we are to add a new layer of soil on which others are to sow. Our best use of the past, Phillips Brooks tells us, is to get a great future out of it. Many people and many nations overwork their past, give themselves in excess to retrospection, build the sepulchres of the fathers, and give themselves to criticism of their own age and time. They behold God and nature through older eyes alone, forgetting the individual relation of each personal soul. "Why," asks Emerson, "should we not enjoy our original relation to the universe and demand our own works, laws, and worship? The past is for us, but the sole terms on which it can become ours are its subordination to the present." And so one way of forgetting the past and leaving the things that are behind is to go and do better things. Good precedents are good, but we ought to improve on them. We ought to swing clear of the mistakes of predecessors, and do a better work than they did. We need in the interests of personal growth to forget many things which we insist on loading ourselves with. It is very human to blunder, but it is a Divine thing in imperfect people not to repeat blunders. Past sins too, if repented of, are good things to forget. And old sorrows we had better leave with the dead yesterdays: the to-morrow of hope is already kindling in the east. Even old successes had better be left with the past, if we are making them the limit of responsibility and the end of duty. The future should be reserved in all cases for constructive work: for new undertakings, for larger tasks, for better fidelities. Learn new things; do new things every week you live. Our life stagnates when poised on the older standards of duty or achievement. (*S. H. Howe, D.D.*) *Looking backward*:—I. THE DIVINELY GOVERNED LIFE. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness." Now, it is not difficult for us to believe in the Divine government when we look up into the midnight sky. Ten thousand times ten thousand stars moving in their orbits, and

pursuing from age to age their march of light, compel us to believe that this is a divinely governed cosmos. It is also easy to believe in the government of God when we look upon this world in which we live. This planet is evidently a rational and ordered sphere. The form of the argument for design may change, but the conviction of design persists in the consciousness of mankind. They feel that at the back of earth and sea is an Architect building with a plan; an Artist working out a distinct ideal and purpose; a Dramatist fitting perfectly each act of the drama. Looking on the beautiful world, it is easy to believe this, it is almost impossible to disbelieve it. Again, it is not difficult to believe in the Divine government when you consider the history of the human race. It is as difficult to resist the idea of order, progress, purpose in contemplating the course of human history as it is to resist that idea in surveying nature. There is a doctrine known as the doctrine of purposelessness, a doctrine that maintains the inconsequence and irrationality of nature and history, but it has found few defenders. And, once more, it is not difficult to believe in a Divine government when we mark the career of extraordinary men. When we consider Cyrus and Cæsar, St. Paul and Luther, it is easy to believe in the divinity that shapes men's ends. The real difficulty of believing in a supernatural order arises when we begin to think of a Divine government ordering the individual lives of such obscure and mediocre beings as we are. Any unbelief here is fatal indeed. We must believe that the same infinite knowledge and power which shape the destinies of orbs, races, and heroes, shape the life-history of the lowliest man and woman on the face of the earth. What did our Lord teach us on this very matter? "If God so clothe the grass of the field, shall He not much more clothe you?" And certainly the science of the day helps us to the same conclusion. The world is built upon the atom; the microbe in many ways teaches the grandeur of insignificance. We may be very obscure and ordinary people, but it is our joy to remember that we are certainly embraced by the government of God, and that He ever seeks to lead us and guide us as a shepherd guides his sheep. And have we not many of us a very vivid consciousness of this overshadowing Providence? Do you say, "I am the architect of my own fortune"? If you are, you are the architect of a precious jerry building. If your life is really rich and successful, ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. And if God has blessed us marvellously, has He not also wonderfully kept us amid the temptations and perils of the pilgrimage? The man who congratulates himself upon his character and standing, and imputes all to his own strength, and caution, and skill, is strangely blind and forgetful. What would you think if an ocean liner were to flatter itself because it had found its way from New York to Liverpool? "How cautiously I crept through that fog; how skilfully I kept clear of those icebergs; how cleverly I piloted myself past those sandbanks; what a wide berth I gave those rocks; how delicately I threaded my way along the Mersey!" Forgetting all the time the captain on the bridge. We must not forget the Captain on the bridge, the Captain of our salvation. How wonderfully God has disappointed our fears and misgivings! We have often looked forward with solicitude and even anguish to impending, threatening trials, and yet God has brought us safely through. God has been with us through all the years, filling us with good things, delivering us in the evil day, scattering our fears, bringing us onward to the appointed rest. II. THE DIVINE PURPOSE IN OUR LIFE. "To humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no." The moral idea is the grand end to which God governs the race, the nation, and governs us. God seeks to bring men to the knowledge of Himself, to purify them from false love and lusts, to teach them obedience, to make them fit for their great and holy inheritance. The Egyptian historian, the Greek historian, the Roman historian simply gave a series of grand pictures of kings, cities, marches, battles won and lost, and ended with such pictures; but the Jewish lawgivers and prophets grasped the fact of the moral character and aim of the Divine government. The aim of God's government is not the material enrichment of men. The great symbols of His final purpose are not L. S. D. He does not rule the world to create rich nations or individuals. He has not led you for forty years that you might make a big pile, and get at length an embroidered shroud. And the final idea of God is not intellectual. He is not satisfied with genius, scholarship, taste. Some seem to think that the ultimate purpose of the governing Power of the universe is to produce a sensual race with a magnificent environment of palaces and pictures, like Victor Hugo's devil-fish in the enchanted cave. The great end of God's government is stated in the text. For forty years God disciplined Israel in the wilderness, that they might pass from being a

nation of coarse slaves into a nation of saints, losing their sensuality and wilfulness, being weaned from idols, growing into righteousness and spirituality; and it is precisely for the same great end that God disciplines us to-day. He anticipates, disposes, adjusts, rules, and overrules, so that we may taste His love, keep His law, reflect His beauty, and be prepared to see His face. How far has this great end been answered in us? God has greatly blessed us, humbled us; what is the result? How do we bear the moral test? Some of us are in many worldly respects far worse off than we were forty years ago. Life is a wonderful process for spoiling dreams and frustrating hopes, and some of you feel that your life has not been the success you expected, that you have been sorely disappointed, that life ends in frustration, if not in a general breakdown. Are you at last humble, spiritual, godly, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life? Then glorify God with all your ransomed powers. Blessed humiliation! You are no failure. You are a splendid, Divine, eternal success. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *Looking backward*:—Memory is said to be sometimes quickened to an unusual activity at the end of life. The dying, and especially the drowning, are said to have set before them in swift panoramic view the varied experiences of the life which is hurrying to a close. "Son, remember"—is the thrilling admonition—"that thou, in thy lifetime, receivedst thy good things." It is in a more merciful and hopeful way that we are called upon to exercise our memory to-day. While we still live and the result of our life may be influenced, we are required to pass it in review. Occasionally circumstances arise which seem to set us upon this duty in an altogether special way. You pass along a road where you have not been for fifteen or twenty years. You see a face that you have not seen since you were a child, or you meet a man that was your friend in youth. Or perhaps it is some particular crisis in life, or the return of some birthday, that sets the past in review. Life is here regarded as a discipline, and we have set before us first of all—I. THE AGENT OF THIS DISCIPLINE. "The Lord thy God." Think of the multitude of influences to which these Israelites were exposed in their great migration. Moses to lead them, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram to mislead them, Aaron to do sometimes the one and sometimes the other; the Red Sea to bar their way at the beginning of their journey, and the Jordan at the end; famine and pestilence, quails and manna; Caleb and Joshua to encourage, the unfaithful spies to discourage, the Egyptians to drive them, Moabites, Amorites, and the rest to harass and hinder them. Yet as they look back they are taught to see One Hand at work, and that the hand of the Lord their God. The great lesson which this old Hebrew history has to teach us is the clear recognition of God in everything. There is no lesson, surely, which our strained and worried modern life more urgently requires than this. If our lives, and lives dearer to us than our own, are to be the sport of every malign influence, and every wilful or foolish person; if we are at the mercy of all those varied calamities and deaths which ride upon the breeze and lurk in the dust and lie in wait at every point, we may well be driven to distraction. II. THE SPHERE OF THIS DISCIPLINE. "In the wilderness." The place in which the discipline was conducted was not without its bearing on the result. It was a place in which the influence of things seen was as weak almost as it could be upon the earth. If you wish to teach a child a specially important lesson you will take him into some quiet room, where he shall not be interrupted, and where in the room itself there shall be as little as possible to distract attention. Such a school-room was this desert place, where God took the nation to Himself, and taught them the great lessons in regard to His nature and character which, through them, in after ages have been taught to the world. Our life, as a whole, is not a wilderness; it is rather a garden, which ever tends to become richer and more fruitful as generation after generation toils upon it. Yet there is in many of our lives what may be termed a wilderness experience—a time of affliction, bereavement, disappointment, perplexity; in which God is doing for us in a briefer period what He did for the Israelites during this long forty years. If God does give us a taste of the wilderness life, let us remember that He is not doing it without a purpose. III. THE DEFINITE TERM OF THIS DISCIPLINE. "These forty years." The Israelites were not to be on trial for ever. At the end of forty years a result had been arrived at and ascertained which would not now be materially altered. There is a loose idea, only too common nowadays, that probation is to be extended indefinitely into the future. People allow themselves to think that if a man does not come right at first he is to be kept on with till he does come right, so that the drunkard, the Pharisee, and the miser, though they grow worse and worse, and pass out of this life drunken, pharisaic, or miserly, are yet by some unexplained process in the

indefinite future to become saints. Now, such an idea not only sets itself squarely against the main body of Scripture teaching, but altogether fails to commend itself to common sense. Indeed, a wide observation will lead us to this, that even within this life character tends to final permanence, so that forty years, for example, do not pass without leaving a mark, and setting character into a form. Professor Drummond has said that a man cannot alter his collar after he is forty, much less his character. IV. THE PURPOSE OF THIS DISCIPLINE. "To humble thee, to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no." It was to humble them, that is, to bring them by means of privation and distress to feel their need of His help, and their dependence upon Him. To prove them, to put them, that is, in such positions as would drive them to show what was in them. Times come to us also when we are obliged to speak out, and to take our stand, and to do distinctly either right or wrong. Young people at the beginning commonly regard life mainly or chiefly as a sphere or opportunity of enjoyment. And we must not be unsympathetic. It is natural, and perhaps unavoidable, that they should take this view at first. This aspect of life, however, very soon turns out to be utterly unsatisfactory. Then, after the thought of enjoyment there often comes with earnest young people the higher and better thought of achievement. They say: I will accomplish something; I will make a mark; I will get to the top of the tree. But the top of the tree is so hard to reach, so few can reach it, those who do reach it have to pay such a heavy price, and find it, after all, such a barren and comfortless elevation, that this view of life frequently ends in disappointment too. Then it is that the Divine view of life comes to our rescue. Enjoyment is not left out of the account. It comes in, not as the object of life, but as the divinely given accompaniment of service. Achievement also finds its proper place. The faithful servant shall have the "Well done." But above the thought either of enjoyment or achievement there rises the thought of discipline. In forming our estimate of a man we ask, What has he done? God asks, What has he become? There is no subject on which greater mistakes are made than in the matter of getting on in the world. We all want to get on, and for our children to get on, but few have the right idea of what getting on really is. A man thinks he is getting on when his business prospers, and everything turns to gold in his hands. Not necessarily. He may be losing ground all that time. No! When he can stand in the presence of temptation without yielding to it; when he can bear humiliation and disappointment without murmuring; when he can see the unscrupulous competitor go in front of him, and yet refuse to be unscrupulous himself, and let the best bargain he ever saw in his life go past him, rather than secure it by doing or saying that which is unworthy; when he can toil all day and accomplish very little, and go home at night and neither scold the wife nor be angry with the children, that's when he is getting on. When we get into such a position that our word is always listened to with respect and deference, and "when we ope our lips no dog durst bark," we think we are getting on. No! When we can bear hard and cruel speech, and not resent or retaliate; when we can give the soft answer that turneth away wrath, or even be reviled and not revile again, that's when we are getting on. A woman thinks she is getting on when she is moving into a bigger house, when her drawing-room is splendid and crowded, and she a gay and brilliant queen in the midst of it. But it is quite possible that she may be suffering loss at such a time as that. No! When she can move into a smaller house, and make every corner of it radiant with her smile; when she can work in narrowed circumstances without becoming soured, or meet affliction and distress and bear it like a heroine, that is when she's getting on. (*Sidney Pitt.*) *The power of memory:*— I. THE AGENCY OF MEMORY, AND ITS ATTENDANT FACULTY RECOLLECTION IN THE WORK OF SPIRITUAL ADVANCEMENT. 1. Among the faculties with which God has beneficently endowed man, memory ranks with the most important. It is a gallery lined with the pictures of past events, and with scenes on which we have gazed—a gallery sometimes vocal with sounds that fill the heart with gladness, or pierce it with keenest pain. It is memory that makes the record to which conscience points when it speaks in tones of menace. It is in memory that there is stored up the treasures knowledge has patiently amassed, and it is with memory we take counsel when we would investigate, or must decide. (1) If the record is so perfect, how necessary to avoid sin! One of the greatest blessings a man can possess is an unspotted memory. How many of us are humbled at the record of our memory! (2) The indestructibility suggests one pain of perdition. He who passes into hell with a record of sin, and of opportunities wasted, will carry with him his own chamber of torture. There

is an attendant faculty called recollection. The curator at a museum or library searches for the object you want. So recollection. 2. Illustrate the influence on spiritual work. These are not merely intellectual faculties. These have a moral work to do. It may be illustrated in the aid given to convince Joseph's brethren (Gen. xlii. 21). It ever presents to us the teachings of God's dealings with us. To lead to avoid past errors, and to show that the purpose was to do us good at our latter end. II. THE ISRAELITE WHO THUS REMEMBERED WOULD PERCEIVE THAT GOD'S PURPOSE HAD BEEN TO HUMBLE. III. TO PROVE THEE, TO KNOW WHAT WAS IN THINE HEART. Not to show God, but to show us our faults. The great gun is taken to a proof-house, and tried with the great charge, and if some crack is revealed men say it was well it did not burst and spread dismay at some crisis of the fight. The anchor and chain is tested link by link, to see if any flaw should be revealed. If it had gone untested, how great the peril! (*J. R. Hargreaves.*) *The advantages of a devout review of the Divine dispensations*:—I. EXPLAIN THE SOLEMN CHARGE. 1. The object of remembrance is extensive: the way—*all* the way which the Lord our God has led us; that is, the whole tenor of the Divine dispensations toward us—their nature, means, seasons, relatives, tendencies, and actual effects. 2. It supposes that this exercise, interesting and beneficial as it is, we are prone to neglect. II. ENFORCE OBEDIENCE TO THE CHARGE. 1. An enlightened and devout retrospect of the dispensations of God to you will present you with many impressive displays of His glory. 2. This devout retrospection will supply us with many affecting displays of our own corruption. 3. This remembrance will supply the saints with pleasing discoveries of the sanctified tendencies of their souls. 4. This remembrance will confirm our faith in the Scriptures as the Word of God, and improve all our practical views both of things seen and unseen. (*James Stark.*) *Remembrance of God's dealings*:—I. ON THE DUTY OF REMEMBERING THE DEALINGS OF GOD TOWARDS US. Look back to the earliest period of your history—the time and place of your birth—the varied circumstances of your education—the business or the profession in which you have been engaged—the measure of prosperity or adversity you have experienced—the various connections and engagements you have formed—the sicknesses, accidents, and dangers you have encountered, and the merciful deliverances which you have received;—all these come under the general idea of the dealings of God with you, which it becomes you to remember. But this review of the providential dispensations of Almighty God should lead us to contemplate also that grace and mercy with which we have been favoured. Ever let us remember that we were not born in Egyptian darkness, or consigned from our birth to a waste, howling wilderness. We were born in a highly favoured land, brought by Christian parents and pious friends to the house of God; early baptized in the Saviour's name; accustomed to worship God in His house. And has not God graciously vouchsafed to meet with and bless us in His house, and under those ordinances which through His mercy have been administered among us? II. THE MEANS TO BE ADOPTED IN ORDER TO REMEMBER THE DIVINE DEALINGS TOWARDS US. We are prone to forget the God of our mercies, to lose sight of His dispensations, to sink into carelessness and neglect, to regard passing events as matters of course, not calling for any special recollection or acknowledgment. Now, to guard against this forgetful disposition it becomes us ofttimes to stir up ourselves, and all with whom we are connected, to record and remember God's mercies; and especially to improve those times and seasons which He hath set apart for this purpose. And while we carefully observe seasons which are especially set apart in commemoration of the Divine dispensations, we should also diligently improve the ordinances which are appointed for the same important end. III. THE END WHICH THIS REMEMBRANCE OF THE DIVINE DISPENSATIONS IS CALCULATED TO PRODUCE:—Namely, "to humble us, to prove us, to show what is in our hearts." When we observe the conduct of Israel in the wilderness we are compelled to feel how foolish, perverse, and ungrateful that people were; but when we review our own conduct, must we not too often pronounce the same sentence upon ourselves? The remembrance, therefore, of the dealings of God with us should deeply humble us under a sense of our unprofitableness and ingratitude. When duly considered, it will show us what has been in our hearts, how foolish, how vain, how deceitful they are, and how often our own conduct has been inconsistent with our profession, and what need we therefore have of pardon. It will teach us the fallacy of many of those excuses which we have made for the neglect of duty, and evince that God has been merciful and gracious to us all our journey through. This remembrance of God's dealings with us is especially calculated to bring us afresh, as sinners, to our

gracious and merciful Saviour. (*T. Webster, B.D.*) *A protecting providence*:—This is emphatically a day of remembrance. Parted families meet, and recount the course of providence since they were last together. The monuments of Divine love are crowded so closely together that we are prone to pass them by unnoticed. The experience of all of us is so much alike that we cease to marvel at it. I. In helping you in the performance of this duty, I would first ask you TO REFLECT ON THE AMOUNT OF HAPPINESS WHICH YOU AS AN ASSEMBLY REPRESENT. There is probably not one of you to whom, in the sight of God, this is not a happy day; not one whose glad do not outnumber his regretful thoughts. How many sources of happiness flow for us! In a thousand ways must an incessant providence watch, guard, and guide, avert peril, and bestow aid, in each of our households, with every new day, to make health the rule, disease and death the rare exception,—joy the current, grief the transient ripple on its surface. I have spoken of common blessings. Have we not each special mercies which we would own with devout gratitude,—mercies adapted to our peculiar wants, as distinctly marked, so to speak, with our names, as keepsakes from a friend might be? How often have we received the very favours which we most needed, and dared not anticipate, sent in at the only moment and in the only mode in which they could have been availing! In this connection it is well for us to consider how little we can do for ourselves. We are too prone to feel as if our own industry, energy, and forethought could accomplish much. But think how many sources of joy must all flow together, how many departments of nature and of being must all be brought into harmony, in order for us to pass a single hour in comfort. II. WHAT ARE THE DUTIES TO WHICH THIS REVIEW CALLS US? Does it not make the gratitude of the most thankful seem cold? What but unceasing praise can worthily respond to this incessant flow of mercy? And yet, do not some of us live without thanksgiving? Oh, that every soul might feel the love in which it is embosomed, and might send heavenward the blended anthem of all its powers and affections, "Bless the Lord, and forget not all His benefits!" In these mercies, hear we not also the voice of religious exhortation, "My son, give Me thy heart"? (*A. P. Peabody.*) *The common levels of life*:—The forty years' wanderings! What remains of them? A list of unknown names, no more. The dust of time has settled on the stations; and the events, big at the time with interests to millions, are without a note in history. What weary years of plodding marches through a dark unheavenly country; what dreads and dangers, what wants and distresses, what keen agonies and fierce complaints, that oblivious silence covers! They are all there, days of fighting, nights of weeping, years of trudging. They seemed at the moment as if they were burning an indelible mark deep into life records; but they are already behind us, dim in the distance, a softening veil has fallen over the whole pilgrimage; a broad sense of pain conquered, shame endured, duty done; the consciousness that we have come out of the wanderings richer, braver, stronger, more earnest, but sadder, than when we entered the desert, is all that is left to us. In order that we may better understand the method of God in ordering our wilderness marches let us consider—I. THE REASON OF "THE WANDERINGS." Why is so large a portion of our years spent under the yoke of undistinguished duties, leaving no record but "the wanderings" behind? Briefly, because a few critical experiences do not make a character; a few impassioned, enthusiastic moments do not make a life. The inevitable falling off of the common hours and experiences seems to me to be the great teaching of this passage of Israel's history. It is a broad fact in the history of every life; in a measure, of every day's life, for the great cycles repeat themselves in little, as the organs of the body are present potentially in every part. But these narratives gather up the scattered incidents of our moral life into one grand incident, and show us with a large dramatic point and emphasis what we are daily doing under the eye of the great Leader, which makes these long, dry, unnoted wanderings inevitable; what it is which compels Him to impose what I have called the yoke of undistinguished duty, and to lead us up and down in the wilderness, that we may, if we will yield ourselves to His hand, work the sublime lessons, which we cannot learn and practise in a moment, into the common daily texture of life, that is, of eternity. II. THE PURPOSE OF THE WANDERINGS. Briefly, again, to work godly principles of action into the common texture of our daily lives. To make it a matter of perpetual, quiet choice and habit to square every action by the rule of the mind of God. III. THE "WANDERINGS," IN VIEW OF THEIR ETERNAL RESULTS. They, obscure and unprofitable as they may seem, are the builders for eternity.

The quiet, undistinguished years decide the matter for the moments when the election is finally and openly made. It takes years to give a form and bent to a character. Temperament we are born with, character we have to make; and that not in the grand moments, when the eyes of men or of angels are visibly upon us, but in the daily quiet paths of pilgrimage, when the work is being done within in secret, which will be revealed in the daylight of eternity. Habits, like paths, are the result of constant actions. It is the multitude of daily footsteps which go to and fro which shapes them. Let it light up your daily wanderings to know that there—in the quiet bracing of the soul to uncongenial duty, the patient bearing of unwelcome burdens, the loving acceptance of unlovely companionship—and not on the grand occasions, you are making your eternal future. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*) *The journey of life*:—I. LIFE IS A JOURNEY. "All the way." 1. Intricate. Perplexities and difficulties in every stage and turn. 2. Eventful. Changes in every step. All is shifting. 3. Unretraceable. 4. Perilous. Poisonous streams, noxious herbs, venomous serpents. 5. Solemn. Leads body to grave, and spirit to heaven or hell. II. LIFE'S JOURNEY HAS A GUIDE. "The Lord thy God led thee." 1. The guide thoroughly understands the way. 2. The guide has resources equal to all possible emergencies. III. LIFE'S JOURNEY CAN NEVER BE FORGOTTEN. "Thou shalt remember." 1. Some memory of it is a matter of necessity. 2. A right memory is a matter of obligation. Remember it so as to awaken contrition for past sins, gratitude for past mercies, resolutions for improved conduct. (*Homilist.*) *Human life*:—I. A DIVINE SUPERINTENDENCE of human life. 1. The fact of this superintendence. "The way of man is not in himself." 2. The purpose of this superintendence. Moral discipline. II. A SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION of human life. Morally, we are all in a wilderness, intricate, perilous, privational. It is only as we get the true manna from heaven that we can live spiritually in the wilderness of our present life. III. A SOLEMN OBLIGATION of human life. "Remember." 1. Man does remember the past. Cannot help it; linked to it by a necessity of his nature. 2. Man does not always remember God in the past. This is the duty here commanded—to see God in the past, to see Him in all, in the tempest and the calm, the darkness and the sunshine. IV. AN ETERNAL NECESSITY of human life. Bread is not more necessary to support material life than the Word of God to sustain spiritual. The soul can only live as it receives communications from the Great Father of spirits. (*Ibid.*) *The Christian called to review the dealings of God with him*:—I. THE WAY IN WHICH WE ARE LED. 1. The way of providence. 2. The way of grace. II. THE END FOR WHICH WE ARE LED IN THIS WAY. 1. "To humble thee." Consider the vast importance of this in order to our obtaining, retaining, and increasing in grace (Matt. v. 3, 4; Isa. lvii. 15; 1 Pet. v. 5, 6; James iv. 6, 10). 2. "To prove thee." God tries the genuineness of our repentance when He permits temptations to assault us, and suffers sin to wear a pleasing dress. Of our faith, when difficulties seem to arise in the way of His fulfilling His declarations and promises. Of our trust in Him when dangers, wants, enemies, distresses, assault us. Of our resignation to His will, in reproach and affliction, and in the death of those we love. Of our patience, in long-continued pain, or in a succession of calamities. Of our contentment with our lot in poverty. Of our meekness, gentleness, and forgiving spirit amidst provocations and injuries. Of our long-suffering amidst the follies and sins of those round about us. Of our love to mankind, and to our enemies, amidst the hatred and ill-will of others. Of our love to God, when the world courts us, and we must of necessity abandon one or the other. Of our obedience when difficult duties are enjoined, and we are called to deny ourselves and take up our cross. Of our hope of everlasting life, when both the wind of temptation and the tide of our corruption are strongly against us. 3. "To know what was in thy heart." God, who searches the heart and knows what is in man, infallibly knows what is in thine heart; but thou must know thyself, and discover to others what is in the heart. 4. "Whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no." Whether thou wouldest be brought to love Him with all thy heart, as thou art commanded; to serve Him with all thy strength; to make His will thy rule in all thy actions; to make His glory thy end, and not thy own honour, or interest, or pleasure. (*J. Benson.*) *The way of the past*:—I. THE WAY OF PROVIDENCE. 1. This we have experienced nationally. 2. Socially. 3. Personally. II. THE WAY OF PRIVILEGE. 1. We have possessed the Word of God. 2. All have been welcome to the house of God. 3. As Christians we have enjoyed fellowship with the people of God. III. THE WAY OF EXPERIENCE.

1. Each of us has had his share of conflict. 2. To each has come deliverance in times of perplexity. 3. Even in the midst of trial we have, through faith in Christ, realised a measure of peace. 4. To every believer there has been vouchsafed spiritual joy. Application: The past should thus be remembered (1) with humility; (2) with gratitude; (3) with confidence. (*Lay Preacher.*) *Remembrance of past trials*:—I. THE DUTY OF REMEMBRANCE. The world likes to forget. There is so much that is self-humiliating in the past, so much that is disagreeable, that men would like to get it out of their thoughts. But not so the Christian. He is taught that it is his duty to bear in mind all the incidents of his past. It is an important duty. The way has been rough and varied, but it has been fraught with momentous issues. Have all the varied experiences been given us in order that they might at once pass from our ken? Some forget from indifference; they never can remember. Go through what they may, they never learn experience. Some forget from loose habits of mind; from long indolence. Others forget because they want to avoid the pain of remembrance. But none of them realise that remembrance is an important duty, an absolute command of God. It is important in worldly things, for it does much to form our human character. But it is still more important in spiritual things, for it does still more to form our spiritual character. II. THE PROFIT TO BE DERIVED. Our past lives have been directed for two ends—1. To humble us. How insignificant we appear to ourselves in the light of the past! How our plans have been thwarted, our ambition damped, our desires crushed! Where is our pride at the end of the journey of life? 2. To prove us. There is much alloy in the best of our services, much sin even in holy things. III. THE COMFORT TO BE IMPARTED. At first sight it seems that no affliction for the present seemeth light. It is always painful. Nevertheless it worketh out an abundant weight of glory. Persecutors mean evil, but God causes it to be good. Consider—1. The future good more than counterbalances the present evil. When the rod is removed the purified soul will rejoice in the eternal presence of God. 2. Trials by the way are proofs of Divine love. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." God sees better and further than we do. (*Preacher's Analyst.*) *To bring to remembrance*:—I. WHY WE ARE TO REMEMBER THE BEGINNING. It was almost the first business of Moses, in giving this long address which we have in Deuteronomy, to show that the Israelites, for want of remembering all the way the Lord had led them, lost the promised land. Let us, then, take a threefold view of the beginning, as applicable to us spiritually. 1. What is the first thing that we shall call the beginning? That which the people of God as a general rule come to last, and that which is almost everywhere despised. The beginning was a manifestation of the pure sovereignty of God. In Exodus xi. the Lord said that He would put a difference —as the margin reads it, a redemption—between the Egyptians and Israel; referring to the paschal lamb. Now, how did the Lord begin with you? Why, by making a difference, not only between you and others, but by making us something very different from what we had been before. 2. Then the second thing in the beginning was that beautiful circumstance as a type of the Saviour. "When I see the blood I will pass by the house, and the sword shall not come near to hurt you." Oh, let us remember that the original way of escape was by Jesus Christ; if we were left of the sword, it was by the blood of the Lamb. 3. Then the third thing in the beginning was the victory which was wrought. Look at the victory the Lord gave to the Israelites; see how He divided the sea. God did in that case what none but God could do. Now apply this closer home. Who but the God-man Mediator could have divided a greater sea? Who but the God-man Mediator could bring in such a victory as Jesus Christ hath brought in? Who but Jesus Christ could penally bear our sins? II. WHY WE ARE TO REMEMBER THE PRESENT. How much wilderness experience the people of God have! what solitude! "Like an owl of the desert," "like a sparrow alone upon the house-top"; and "that He will hear the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer"; and "they wandered in a solitary way, and found no city to dwell in." I dare say some good Christians think that ministers have not much of this wilderness experience; but I can tell you this, if they have not, they will not be of much use to the people. They may pretend to weep with the people, but they cannot feel as they would if they had these experiences. The doctor may be very sympathising over the dying patient, but the doctor cannot feel what the parent feels, the doctor cannot feel what near and dear relatives feel. The apostle saith, "We have ten thousand instructors, but not many fathers." For a minister, therefore,

to be of that sympathising nature that he shall strengthen the diseased, heal the sick, bring again that which is driven away, he must from time to time know what this wilderness experience is; and then he will think when he comes into the pulpit, and say to himself, I am a poor, dark, helpless creature, no more fit to preach the Gospel than to create a world; and thus the man is humbled down like a little child, and the Lord knows that is just the time for Him to come; so in the Lord steps, the man's heart is warmed, his soul is enlarged, Satan flies off, and the man is astounded how it is he is so strong; and one thought comes, and another; and the man that one half his time perhaps is little more than a stammerer, all at once becomes eloquent, and pours forth torrents of thoughts, and blessing after blessing, until the people lose their troubles and their sorrows, and he loses his. III. HOW WE ARE TO LOOK AT THE FUTURE. With confidence in Him who has been so gracious to us up to the present. (*J. Wells.*) *The retrospect*:—I. THE CALL TO REMEMBRANCE. If knowledge is important, memory is important in precisely the same degree; for knowledge is nothing unless it be applied, and it cannot be applied unless it be remembered. But there are many who resemble the workmen in the days of Haggai, who received wages to put them into a bag of holes. And therefore says the apostle to the Hebrews, "Give the more earnest heed to the things you have heard, lest at any time you should let them slip"; for we are now considering memory not in reference to the scholar, or the man of business, but with regard to religion; and it is remarkable that the whole of religion is expressed by the word, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." One thing, however, is worthy of consideration—that in all these instances the remembrance is to be considered, not as a speculation, but as experimental and practical. The sacred writers never regard remembrance as an end, but as an instrument; to call forth such feelings, and to produce such actions as will correspond to the things we are required to remember. As they consider knowledge without practice to be no better than ignorance, so they consider remembrance without influence and efficiency as no better than forgetfulness. II. THE SUBJECT TO BE REVIEWED. 1. The place—"the wilderness." 2. Their conductor—"the Lord thy God." God guides the people with His eye, He leads them by His word and His Spirit and His providence. He is a very present help to them in every time of trouble, and He will never leave them nor forsake them till they have entered the promised land. 3. The passages—"all the way." Not that everything in their journey was equally important and interesting; this could not be; but all had been under the appointment and discipline of God, and all would be rendered profitable. 4. The period—"these forty years." (*W. Jay.*) *The advantages of a frequent retrospect of life*:—I. THE WAY WHICH WE ARE HERE CALLED ON TO REMEMBER, is, "all the way which the Lord our God has led us"; the whole course of His dispensations towards us from the day of our birth to the present hour. Even the most minute occurrences in our history have had some influence on our condition and character; they are affecting us now, and will continue to affect us through an endless eternity. But while all the events of our life ought to be preserved in our memories, those events ought especially to be treasured up there which are more immediately connected with the way that is leading us to heaven. 1. And among these the means by which we were first brought into this way should hold a chief place. 2. We are called on to remember also the afflictions with which we have been visited since we have been walking in the path of life. 3. Neither must our mercies be forgotten in the retrospect of our lives. 4. The sins we have committed in the midst of our afflictions and blessings must also be often retraced; not merely viewed in a mass, but, like our mercies, contemplated one by one with all their aggravations. II. The remembrance of these things, however, in order to be beneficial to us, MUST BE ACCOMPANIED WITH A LIVELY CONVICTION OF THE OVERRULING PROVIDENCE OF GOD IN ALL THAT HAS HAPPENED TO US, and as lively a sense of His close connection with us. The text points out to us the ends which God had in view in afflicting the Jews, and it consequently affords us the means of ascertaining the reasons of His diversified dispensations towards ourselves. 1. They are intended to humble us. All is humility in that kingdom where God dwells. Here, in this fallen world, the meanest sinner lifts up himself against Him; but there the loftiest archangels cast down their crowns before His footstool. Before we can enter that glorious world we also must learn to abase ourselves. 2. The various changes in our condition have been designed also to prove us. 3. They have a tendency to teach us the insuf-

ficiency of all worldly things to make us happy, and the all-sufficiency of God to bless us. III. These, then, are the immediate purposes for which the Lord has led us through so many trials and mercies in our way to heaven. There are, however, other ends which they have been designed to answer; and that these may be accomplished He commands us to look back on the course in which we have walked, and has CONNECTED WITH THE RETROSPECT MANY SPIRITUAL BENEFITS. 1. A review of the past is calculated to confirm our faith in the Bible. Our lives are practical illustrations of this blessed book. Indeed the whole world and all that is passing therein is one continued commentary on it, and confirmation of its truth. 2. A retrospect of the past has a tendency also to increase our knowledge of ourselves. 3. The remembrance enjoined in the text is calculated also to strengthen our confidence in God. It brings before our mind the help we have received in our difficulties, the supplies in our wants, the consolations in our troubles; and reasoning from the past to the future, we are naturally led to infer that He who never has forsaken us never will forsake us; that the goodness and mercy which have followed us all the days of our life will follow us still; that no vicissitudes in our condition, no tribulation, no distress, no persecution, no peril, "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *The lesson of memory*:—I. WHAT WE SHOULD BE MAINLY OCCUPIED WITH AS WE LOOK BACK. Memory, like all other faculties, may either help or hinder us. As is the man, so will be his remembrance. The tastes which rule his present will determine the things that he likes best to think about in the past. There are many ways of going wrong in our retrospect. Some of us, for instance, prefer to think with pleasure about things that ought never to have been done, and to give a wicked immortality to thoughts that ought never to have had a being. Such a use of the great faculty of memory is like the folly of the Egyptians who embalmed cats and vermin. Then there are some of us who abuse memory just as much by picking out, with perverse ingenuity, every black bit that lies in the distance behind us, all the disappointments, all the losses, all the pains, all the sorrows. And there are some of us who, in like manner, spoil all the good that we could get out of a wise retrospect by only looking back in such a fashion as to feed a sentimental melancholy, which is, perhaps, the most profitless of all the ways of looking backwards. Now here are the two points in this verse of my text which would put all these blunders and all others right, telling us what we should chiefly think about when we look back. "Thou shalt remember all the way by which the Lord thy God hath led thee." Let memory work under the distinct recognition of Divine guidance in every part of the past. That is the first condition of making the retrospect blessed. Another purpose for which the whole panorama of life is made to pass before us, and for which all the gymnastics of life exercise us, is that we may be made submissive to His great will, and may keep His commandments. II. And now turn to the other consideration which may help to make remembrance a good, namely, THE ISSUES TO WHICH OUR RETROSPECT MUST TEND IF IT IS TO BE ANYTHING MORE THAN SENTIMENTAL RECOLLECTIONS. 1. Remember and be thankful. If it be the case that the main fact about things is their power to mould persons and to make character, then there follows, very clearly, that all things that come within the sweep of our memory may equally contribute to our highest good. 2. Remember, and let the memory lead to contrition. 3. Let us remember in order that from the retrospect we may get practical wisdom. 4. The last thing that I would say is, Let us remember that we may hope. The forward look and the backward look are really but the exercise of the same faculty in two different directions. Memory does not always imply hope; we remember sometimes because we do not hope, and try to gather round ourselves the vanished past because we know it never can be a present or a future. But when we are occupied with an unchanging Friend, whose love is inexhaustible, and whose arm is unwearied, it is good logic to say, "It has been, therefore it shall be." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *A call to remembrance*:—When Charles I. was executed, January 30, 1649, the last word he was heard to utter was "Remember." Memory is a power that may be vivid to the last moment on earth; it may echo its terrors in hell, or carry its blessed lessons and reviews to the heavenly world. It is a mighty faculty of the human mind. It is meant to be useful as a storehouse of information and a granary of knowledge. Again, it is intended to remind us of the lessons gathered by experience and observation. These lessons may have been dearly learnt, but may be all the more precious as they serve to correct our pride, and to reveal our sinfulness and weakness. I. MARK THE STAGES OF

ISRAEL'S JOURNEY, 1. Border of Red Sea. 2. March. 3. Elim. 4. Wilderness of sin. 5. Rephidim. 6. At foot of Mount Sinai. II. MARK THE SUGGESTIVENESS OF THAT JOURNEY TO US. It is a parable of the journey taken by God's children by faith in Jesus Christ. 1. They also leave the slavery and sin of Egypt. 2. They too must go forward in the way of repentance and faith, in discharge of Christian duty, in cultivation of Christian graces, and in the path Providence and grace has ordained. 3. They often drink the bitter waters of sorrow and trial; but these waters are sweetened by Christ. 4. They drink of the waters of Elim, where they find joy and refreshment. 5. They also have to learn lessons of Divine care and Divine trust. 6. What rich supplies of the water of life flow around the camp of the spiritual Israel. 7. Where Israel encamps before Sinai, it reminds us that the law written on tables of stone is by the covenant of grace written on the tables of our hearts, and we are to remember those commandments of Jehovah that are a rule of life for all time, even the Ten Commandments. III. GREAT FACTS ISRAEL WOULD REMEMBER. 1. Surely Israel remembered they had a glorious Guide. 2. Surely they would remember their full supplies. No good thing will God withhold from them that walk uprightly. 3. Israel would remember with sorrow their sins, and so must we. 4. They were to remember their rebukes and chastisements. 5. They were to remember their conflicts. 6. Surely they would remember the devious way they took. 7. Surely Israel might say, Mercy has ever been mingled with judgment. 8. Would not Israel remember all the way in the light of the glorious end then in view? IV. THE PURPOSE TO BE SERVED by the way that Israel journeyed. 1. To humble the people. 2. To prove the heart. 3. To lead to God and heaven. (*F. A. Warmington.*) *Divine leading*:—I. THE WAY in which the Lord led His people. 1. A way not chosen by themselves. Grace—freely bestowed (John v. 16). 2. A trying way. Walking by faith, not sight (1 Pet. i. 7). 3. A mysterious way. (1) To the unregenerate world, who know nothing of the secret dealings of God with the quickened soul. (2) To the Christian. How dark sometimes! 4. A discouraging way (Numb. xxi. 4, 5). So the Christian is often discouraged. He wants to feel that he is going on spiritually; but he feels, more and more, his own helplessness. Some days he has most cheering and delightful thoughts of God; on others he feels bereft of faith, love, joy, hope, comfort, and every spiritual gift. 5. A way of tribulation (John xvi. 33). 6. A way in which God went before them (Exod. xiii. 21, 22). He is with every one of His people every moment, to keep them by His Almighty power, in the way of grace. II. THE PLACE in which the Lord led His people. "The wilderness." 1. A wild place. What evil and depraved thoughts spring up from within, which terrify and alarm the Christian! 2. An uncultivated place. The carnal mind is only kept in check by the power of grace. 3. A solitary place (Psa. xliv. 23, 24). 4. A comfortless place. III. THE PURPOSE for which the Lord led His people into the wilderness. 1. To humble. In order that He may magnify Christ in them. 2. To prove. That He may convince them of their own weakness. 3. That He may know what is in his heart—its secret corruptions, &c. (*J. J. Eastmead.*) *Human life a pilgrimage*:—I. THE WANDERING OF THE ISRAELITES THROUGH THE WILDERNESS TO CANAAN IS A LIVELY IMAGE AND REPRESENTATION OF A CHRISTIAN'S PASSAGE THROUGH THIS WORLD TO HEAVEN. 1. The passage of the Israelites through the wilderness was a very unsettled state; so is ours through this world. If we do not continually wander about from place to place as the Israelites did, yet we are far from having any fixed and constant abode. The perpetual alterations we see about us, either in our friends, our neighbours, or ourselves, our persons, tempers, estates, families, or circumstances, and in short, the vast change which the compass of a few years makes in almost everything around us, is sufficient to convince us that we are in no settled condition here. 2. The travel of the Israelites through the wilderness was a troublesome and dangerous state. Now, here is another fit emblem of a Christian's pilgrimage through this world which to him is not only a barren but a hostile land. From the very nature of things, and the circumstances of his present state, he meets with many inconveniences and sufferings, and from the malice of his enemies more. Setting aside the natural evils which he bears in common with others, sickness, pains, crosses, disappointments, personal and family afflictions, he is exposed to many spiritual evils and dangers as a Christian which create him no small concern; particularly frequent instigations to sin, from a depraved nature, from an ensnaring and delusive world, and from a wily and watchful enemy going about indefatigably seeking whom he may devour. 3. In the wilderness through which the Israelites travelled to

Canaan, there were many by-paths or devious tracts by which they might be in danger of going astray. And how much this resembles a Christian's walk through this world is very apparent. 4. Notwithstanding all the by-paths and windings in the wilderness, the Israelites had an infallible Guide to lead them in the way they should go. 5. Though the Israelites travelled forty years in the wilderness, yet they were all that while not far from the promised land. We have here another circumstance of similitude to a Christian's state in this world. If he be in the right way to heaven, he is never far from it; he lives on the borders of it. A very little and unexpected incident may let him suddenly into the eternal world, which should every day therefore be in his thoughts. 6. The reason why the children of Israel wandered so long in the wilderness before they reached the promised land is given us in the text. Now, whether it be not sometimes by way of punishment that God is pleased to detain some of his people from their state of rest and happiness for a long time, as He did the Israelites from the land of Canaan, I will not take upon me to say. But without all doubt, this world is a state of trial and temptation to them all; in which they are detained the longer that they may be more fit for and more ardently desirous of the heavenly Canaan when they are well wearied with the labours and difficulties of this their earthly pilgrimage. And there are three graces which the trials of life are very proper to cultivate, and to the exercise of which the Israelites were more especially called during their passage through the wilderness. And they are faith, hope, and patience: all proper to a state of suffering and mutually subservient to each other. Faith keeps its eye on God in all we suffer; looks beyond the agency of second causes; views the direction of the Divine hand and adores it. Patience, under the influence of faith, submits to the hand of God in all. And hope, enlivened by faith and confirmed by patience, looks beyond all to that future and better state of things where we shall meet with an unspeakable recompence for all we can go through to obtain it. 7. In order to keep up the faith, patience, and hope of the Israelites, full and frequent descriptions were given them of the goodness of that land to which they were travelling. Nor are our faith and patience and hope without the like supports in respect to the heavenly Canaan. Oh, what great and glorious things are told us of the city of the living God, the metropolis of the universal King! 8. When the Israelites were come to the end of their pilgrimage, before they could enter the promised land, they were obliged to pass over the river Jordan which separated the wilderness from Canaan. Here lay their greatest difficulty at the very end of their journey. Now to apply this part of the history to the Christian's life and pilgrimage. The last enemy he is to overcome is death. And as it is the last, so to some Christians it is the most terrible of all their trials; and all their faith and hope and patience is little enough to support them under it. But there is no arriving at the heavenly Canaan without first passing through the fatal Jordan. And as the Israelites by the long and frequent exercise of their faith and hope and trust in God were better prepared for this last difficulty of passing over Jordan, so the more these graces are wrought into a lively habit, the more composed will the soul be under the apprehensions of approaching death. I shall now conclude this with a few reflections: 1. Let these thoughts, then, be improved to abate our desires after the pleasures of the present life and excite them after those of a better. 2. What reason have we to be thankful that we have so sure a Guide through this dangerous desert! The Israelites themselves had not one more safe. 3. Though our state and condition in this world be much the same as that of the Israelites was in the wilderness, let us however take care that our temper and disposition be not the same. They are set up as our warning, not as our pattern. 4. Whilst we are in this wilderness let us keep the heavenly Canaan always in our eye. The frequent thoughts of it will speed our progress towards it, quicken our preparations for it, and be a sovereign support under all the trials we may meet with in our way to it; will soften our sorrows, and reconcile us to all our earthly disappointments. And indeed, what is there which a man need call a disappointment whose heaven is secure? (*John Mason, M.A.*) *The way to improve past providences*:—I. I AM TO SPECIFY SOME OF THOSE PROVIDENTIAL DISPENSATIONS WHICH WE OUGHT IN A MORE ESPECIAL MANNER TO RECOLLECT AND CONSIDER. And this review ought to be universal. We should not willingly let pass any of the ways and dispensations of Providence towards us without a serious remark. But as we cannot remember them all, we should take the more care to retain the impression of those that are more remarkable, as a testimony of our dutiful acknowledgment of God and our dependence upon Him in all our ways.

1. Then we should often call to mind God's afflicting and humbling providences. Have we been afflicted in our bodies? let us remember how it was with us in our low estate; what thoughts we then had of our souls and another world; what serious impressions were made upon our minds which we should endeavour to renew and retain. Again, have we been afflicted in our spirits? By sore temptations, grievous dejections, severe conflicts with sin and Satan, little hopes, great fears, dreadful doubts, and terrifying apprehensions concerning the state of our souls, and what is like to become of them hereafter. These kinds of troubles ought by no means to be forgotten. And when they are remembered, our proper inquiry is, How we got rid of them? For there is a very wrong and dangerous way of getting rid of such spiritual concern of mind. If stupidity and indolence, neglect or worldly-mindedness, carnal security or prevailing vanity, have contributed to overbear and drown those convictions, and banish that serious thoughtfulness and religious sorrow we once had, our state is really worse than it was then; and we have more reason now to be concerned than we had before. Again, have we been afflicted in our family or friends by the death of some, or the sickness and distress of others, let us not soon forget these kinds of afflictions when they are past. It is possible we may know very well from what immediate cause they flowed, yet let us not overlook the sovereign hand of God therein. And if they have in any degree been owing to some neglect or fault in us, they should especially be remembered, to humble us and make us more wise and cautious for the future. 2. We should likewise remember the merciful providences of God towards us. For instance, our temporal mercies should be frequently remembered—the health, the peace, the prosperity, and the worldly advantages we enjoy above so many others. Again, our spiritual mercies and religious advantages should be thankfully recorded by us, and especially that invaluable one of a good and pious education. Again, family mercies should be often remembered by us—family health, peace and prosperity, the comfort of relations, the blessing of children, especially if they be found walking in the way of truth. And so should public mercies; especially the signal interpositions of Providence in preserving us from our enemies and restoring to us the blessings of national prosperity and peace. II. Let us now consider IN WHAT MANNER THE PAST PROVIDENCES OF GOD ARE TO BE RECOLLECTED AND CONSIDERED BY US. 1. We should review them very intently and seriously, call to mind as many particulars as we can, reflect upon them, dwell upon the reflection till the heart be deeply impressed with it. 2. We should review past providences with thankfulness (Eph. v. 20). What! are we to give thanks for afflictions, pains, and crosses; for those humbling providences under which we mourn? Yes; there is no providence, though ever so adverse, in which a Christian may not see much of the Divine goodness, and for which, upon the whole, he will not see abundant cause to be thankful. He hath reason to be thankful that his afflictions are not greater; that when some of his comforts are gone he hath so many others left; that some honey is thrown into his bitter cup; that there is such a mixture of mercy with judgment; that his supports are so seasonable and effectual; that under these strokes he can eye the Father's hand and look upon them as the effect of His love, for He chastenoth every son He loves. But especially are kind favourable providences to be gratefully recorded. It is not to be supposed but that every one of us may call to mind many a merciful providence which has contributed greatly to the comfort of our lives, and laid the foundation of our present happiness and future hopes. 3. Our remembrance of the past providences of God should be improved for the confirmation of our hope and trust in Him. By what God hath done for us we see what He is able to do. Our experience, then, should support our hope, and past mercies establish our trust in God for future. 4. When we call to mind the past ways of God towards us, we should seriously reconsider in what manner we behaved under them and what good we have gained from them. Every providence hath a voice, some a very loud one calling us in a more especial manner to practise some particular duty, or forsake some particular sin. Have merciful providences made us more active, diligent, and steadfast in the service of God? and together with greater power given us a better heart to do good? Again, what effect have providential afflictions had upon us? And all afflictions are to be deemed such excepting those that are the genuine effects of our own sin and folly. Have they humbled us? mortified our worldly-mindedness? checked our false ambition? or subdued any secret lust that before too much prevailed? Have they fixed our hope and dependence on God? and made us think more seriously of death and another world? and, in a word, been the means

of making us more circumspect and better Christians? III. I am now to lay before you SOME OF THOSE CONSIDERATIONS THAT ARE MOST PROPER TO INDUCE US HEREUNTO. 1. The express command of God should be a sovereign motive to this duty. 2. The duty recommended in the text is necessary as subservient to the great end for which such providences are intended—namely, to do us good in the latter end. So that if we seldom or superficially reflect upon them, we frustrate the chief design of them, and lose the benefit intended thereby. 3. This is a very pleasant as well as useful employment of the mind; and a very happy way of filling up those leisure minutes which, through the vagrancy and dissipation of thought, do so frequently run to waste. 4. Such a serious reflection on past providences may be of use to direct us in our future conduct. 5. The shortness and uncertainty of life makes this duty more especially necessary. What is past we know, what is to come we know not. For anything that we know, by far the most important periods and occurrences of life may be past with us. If the hand of Providence therein hath not yet been properly attended to and improved by us, it is high time it were. (*Ibid.*) *Remember the way*:—I. WHAT IT WAS THAT GOD DID. 1. God kept the children of Israel wandering in the wilderness ten times longer than would be necessary for a man's passing through it. We hasten because we are impatient, distrustful, and uncertain. "He that believeth shall not make haste." We do not believe, and therefore we are in a hurry. We see only brief time before us as our day in which to work. God does not hasten, for eternity is before Him as His working day, and He has no misgiving about accomplishing His purposes: for He saith to Himself and of Himself continually, "I am that I am"—"I am the Almighty God." The great question with our God is not our getting through so much of our course as quickly as possible, but our so passing through it as that all things shall work together for our good. A man is in a hurry to secure a certain object and to get to a certain position; and God hedges his way with thorns and there he stops, and a voice from heaven saith to him, "Be still," and he is obliged to "be still." 2. God exposed the people to much difficulty and hardship, but He did not suffer them to sink under their troubles. They were long kept back from Canaan, but God did not forsake His people. The glory, the pillar of cloud and fire, and every Divine ordinance were as so many tokens and symbols of His presence. II. WHAT DID GOD MEAN BY DEALING THUS WITH THE PEOPLE? God has a meaning in everything. You know one great design embraces our whole life, from the beginning to the end; and then a still larger design takes in the lives of all living things: so that God is not only dealing with me in His dispensations toward me, but He is dealing with all His creatures in dealing with me. There is an end to which everything that happens is subjected. What did God mean by dealing as He did with the people before us? 1. He treated them in this way to humble them. They thought of themselves more highly than they ought to think. They had been accustomed, some of them, to stand by Him as though they were on a level with Him, and to ask Him what He did this for, and what He did that for—not, mark, as an obedient and trustful child, but as a rebel would inquire of some ruler against whom he had risen up. Well, the people had been accustomed in this way to ask God, "Why?" and God brought them down from this. And we say that this is a sublime spiritual spectacle, a man injuring himself by pride, and God lowering that man's estimate of himself. There is something sublime in this—in the great God occupying Himself with one of us men, having our abasement for His object, and so ordering all things as that our pride shall be laid low. 2. God dealt with the people thus to show them what material they were made of. He knew them, but they did not know themselves, and He would have them know themselves. Is the eye evil? Is the ear deaf? Is the tongue fired by hell? Is the neck an iron sinew? Is the heart stone? God knew: they did not—and He dealt with them as He did to show them what they were. 3. God dealt thus with them to show them further what He could do. "That He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord." 4. God's end in His dealings with Israel was instruction and correction, and all the spiritual advantages to be derived from that instruction and correction. III. WHAT GOD REQUIRES in respect of this instruction and correction. What a mighty effect upon life memory has! It adds the past to the present. Now among the several moral and religious advantages of memory is your being spared the toil of learning the same lesson over and over again. (*S. Martin, D.D.*) *The duty, benefits, and blessings of remembering God's commandments*:—I. THE DUTY OF REMEMBRANCE. "Thou shalt remember," &c. Here we

have the same form as in the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt have none other God but Me"; "thou shalt keep holy the Sabbath," &c. It is, therefore, a positive duty, an obligation insisted on, to remember God's dealings with us and those before us. But now what is the general course of the world about this important duty? Altogether opposed to it. Some persons we see and know never do remember. Go through what they will, suffer what they may, they never learn experience, or what is called common sense. They continue the same thoughtless, headstrong, violent people they ever were. They never remember. Some there be, however, whose habit of mind is so loose from long indolence, that they really find it difficult so to do; others because it is painful—the thoughts of past years have so much pain in them. There are the false steps that we wilfully made, the neglected opportunities of both doing and getting good, old instances of influence abused, courses of sin persevered in, misgivings of conscience disregarded. To look back on all these is contrary to that peace which we strive to say to ourselves when there is no peace. Instead of meditating and examining themselves, and praying for God's grace to become altered characters, these men shut out all such reasonings as far as they can, and go on with self-willed eagerness in their old plans: sometimes, if driven from them, they go on only in other courses of the same character, and these, too, with their old eagerness. But if this duty of remembrance is important in a worldly point of view, as it regards our mutual relations on earth, it is of far greater consequence in heavenly things. It is possible to get through our earthly career, though never happily, without remembering; but heaven, the city of our God, we never shall attain unless we do remember all the way the Lord our God hath led us. We must remember Him in our ways, bear in our minds our old sins, and what led us into them. Thence we shall think of what befell us in consequence; and, calmly weighing these over in our minds, we shall pray to God for grace in the future, and will avoid those occasions of sin which previously tried us. II. In remembering all the way which we have been led, WE SHALL FIND IT HIGHLY PROFITABLE; because each of our lives is so directed, sooner or later, for two ends—to humble us, and to prove us whether we will serve God or no. 1. Here we see, first, that all events are ordered for our humiliation. Is it not so? Have you had no remarkable turns in your lives, when, yourself or your friends intending one thing, another has come to pass? Have you had no answers to prayer, when, in your helplessness or agony, you besought God and He hearkened? Look back to your youth; how He controlled your self-wickedness, overruled your ignorance, directed your forwardness. It may be, He answered your prayers and punished your inventions; or that what you were so eager for and prayed to obtain so earnestly, as thinking it would without fail make you happy, He refused, and you now find greatly to your comfort. You must bear these in mind; they were so ordained to humble you. We hear men say of their troubles that they are humbling; how they will try in consequence to remove them, to fling themselves out of them. They are thwarted: this causes irritation; it shows them a glimpse of what they really are, poor and weak, blind and naked, and humbles them. God sends these troubles for this purpose—to humble you. Let no Christian therefore try, for it is a vain work, to shake them off; God sends them to humble him. Let the prayer of this man rather be, Let me be humbled. God exalteth the humble, but casteth away the proud. 2. But in discussing this branch of our subject we have another end also laid open to us; this is to prove us. Christ, by Malachi, says, that His coming will have the same effect on the world as the fire of the refiner on silver. And as all the multiplied complications of our chequered lives are ordered to fit us for Christ's kingdom, we may well suppose they are calculated to produce this same effect—that of refining or proving. We are told that God will do this in several passages: "I will thoroughly purge away all thy dross, and take away thy tin: I will refine them as silver is refined: the Lord your God proveth you." Now there is so much alloy, even in our best services, that all this is necessary. III. DO THESE THINGS SEEM HARD? Listen to the great comfort to be derived from our subject. It is all—if you turn to ver. 16—to do thee good at the latter end. It is true, enemies mean mischief; false friends wish confusion of face: but, as Joseph said to his brethren who had sold him, and instrumentally had brought on him the miseries he suffered in Egypt, "Ye meant it for evil; but lo, God hath brought it to good," so with Christians; the different tribulations and unevenness on their road, are the spurs which should quicken their pace to Jerusalem above, the mother of us all. (*J. D. Day, M.A.*)

Past recollections:—I. Those words were addressed by God Himself to the Israelites.

God has a right to call on each one of us to remember His guidance. Observe—II. These words were spoken to a people, the great majority of whom were ungodly, wicked people. God has been leading them. They do not think so. III. In calling us to remember, God has the most important practical purposes to answer. There is a moral purpose to every man's life. 1. Humility. 2. Experience. 3. Freedom. IV. There are many things we ought to remember. Infancy. Childhood. Opportunities of receiving truth. Trifling with religious impressions. V. There must come a time when we shall be obliged to remember. VI. Remembrance now will save us from all this. VII. The first effort to remember will be owned and blessed by a gracious Saviour. "I will arise," &c. (*W. G. Barrett, M.A.*) *A New Year's meditation*:—I. Let us emphasise the ALL, for on that word the emphasis of the sentence truly lies. Survey one part, and then not only the whole, but even that particular portion will inevitably be misunderstood. Take it all together. The very principle of it implies a wholeness, a continuity of purpose, which can only be fully comprehended in the result. It is a way somewhither. No way explains itself at every step. And believe that a Being of unerring wisdom laid the plan of your life-course, the nature and conditions of your journey, and the certainty that that was the straightest way to your home. Believe that a Father's wise and loving eye has surveyed the whole of it; and that not a quagmire, not a perilous passage, not a torrent, not a mountain gorge, not a steep, rocky path, not a bare, sandy plain, has been ordained that could have been spared. Thou shalt consider all the way. Consider—1. That it is a way. That the character of the path is to be estimated not by the present difficulty or danger, but by the importance of the end. God says to you, as you would say to every traveller along a difficult path, "Look up; leave caring for the track at thy feet; look on to the end that is already in sight." Full little cares the weary pilgrim for the roughness of the path or its peril; his heart strains on—Rome, Jerusalem, will reward it all. Is the end worth the toil? That is always the one question. 2. Consider the infinite variety of the way, the many rich elements and influences which it combines to educate your life. A dead and dreary monotony is no part of the plan of God in the education of His sons. If you want to see vast monotones, broad sand-tracks, boundless plains, go to Asia and Africa, the continents of slaves and tyrants. If you want to see rich variety, hill and valley, tableland and plain, lakes, rivers, inland seas, and broken coast-lines, come to Europe, the home of civilisation, the continent of freeborn and free-living men. And manifold in beauty, in variety, in alternations of scenes and experiences, is this wilderness way by which God is leading His sons. The valley, remember, is part of the mountain. If you will have the height of the one with its exhilaration, you must have the depth of the other with its depression. It is the memory of the depths that makes the heights so grand and inspiring. II. Thou shalt consider THE BEAUTY OF THE WAY. I believe the wilderness to have been only less beautiful than Canaan. In many points, if not more beautiful, more striking and grand. It was a bright contrast to the dismal monotony and fatness of Egypt. And through the forty years' journey that people had spread round them all the pomp and splendour of Nature, her grandest aspects, her most winning, witching smiles: "And thou shalt consider all the way by which the Lord thy God hath led thee." Lift up thine eyes and take in all the beauty and goodness of the world. "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works, how beautiful; in wisdom and in goodness hast Thou made them all." We none of us take half joy enough, the joy we have a right to take, in the goodly world which our God hath built. Poor we may be and struggling, and all the higher interests and joys of life, art, literature, music, may be tasted but rarely, and in drops. But the Great Artist has taken thought for the poor. He wills that their joys shall not be scant. The beauty, the glory, which art at its highest faintly adumbrates, is theirs in profusion. Thou shalt consider the good world through which the Lord thy God hath led thee. III. Thou shalt consider THE BREAD OF THE WILDERNESS (Exod. xvi. 11–15). This miracle of the manna is a very wonderful miracle, repeated every day before our eyes. The God who made the manna their food makes bread of corn your food. It is good sometimes to get behind all the apparatus of laws which hide the hand of the living God from us, and take our daily bread, our daily breath, as the sparrows and the lilies take their food and their beauty, direct from the hand of our Father in heaven. IV. Thou shalt remember THE PERILS OF THE WILDERNESS. It is distinctly by a perilous path God leads us, that we may see as well as dimly guess at our dependence, and ascribe our deliverances to the hand from which they spring. Life is one long peril. Physiologists say that if we could but see the

delicate tissues which are strained almost to bursting by every motion, every breath, we should be afraid to stir a step or draw a breath lest we should rupture the frail vessels and perish. "Strange that a harp of thousand strings should keep in tune so long." But it does keep in tune; it is in full tune this day. Remember the perils of the way. Remember the moments of sickness and agony, when death seemed to stand over you. There are deadlier perils than death around us each moment, perils which threaten the second death. Temptations of no common strain. Some of you, by a wonderful chain of providential agencies, have been delivered from positions which you felt to be full of peril, in which, had you continued, you must have fallen; but the net was broken and you have escaped. Thou shalt remember THE SINS OF THE WILDERNESS. VI. Thou shalt remember THE CHASTISEMENTS OF THE WAY, and consider "that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." VII. Thou shalt remember THE ELIMS OF THE WAY, the sunny spots, the living verdure, the murmuring fountains, the rustling, shadowing palms, where not seldom you have been permitted to lie down and rest. The wilderness had nooks as fertile, as beautiful as Canaan. Earth has joys, though rare, pure and deep as the joys of heaven. We are ever moaning over our sorrows. We take our mercies as a thing of course. "The people came down to Elim, where were springs and palms." I do not catch the notes of a song of praise. Remember the way and count the Elims by which it has been gladdened, the moments of rapture in which the full heart, swollen almost to bursting, has murmured out its thanksgiving, and realised that "it is a blessed thing to be." VIII. Thou shalt consider THE END OF THE WAY. Forget that, and it is all a mystery. "Be patient, brethren, and see the end of the Lord" (7–11). "The Lord doth bring thee in." Every sorrow, toil, pain, chastisement He sends is to bring thee in with joy, with glory; to make thee rich for eternity. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*) *Retrospect exhilarating*:—The face which the sculptor chisels or the artist paints as looking backwards is usually expressive of the extreme of sadness. Yet the recollection of the past which such a countenance suggests need not be full of gloom. There is a retrospect which only adds to the keenness of enjoyment. A few years ago a party crossed the backbone of Europe by one of the most picturesque of the passes that cleave the Alps. It was a steep pathway. Reflected by the rocky walls, the sun flung into his glances a heat like a tropic day. But at last they reached the summit. Before descending the other side they stopped and looked back upon the way they had already climbed. Winding far below, the difficult road was mapped out upon the shaggy slope. There were the cliffs they had scaled, the precipices along the edge of which their path had led, the dizzy chasms spanned by bridges seemingly as fragile as that the spider builds. And to stand upon that breezy elevation, to look back on such a pathway, and to know that over such obstacles they had triumphantly gained the very summit, was to drink the wine-cup of mental exhilaration. So do men generally look back from the summit of success. Such a retrospect is the ripest sheaf in the harvest of life. (*Bishop Cheney.*) *Memory a scribe*:—Aristotle calls it the scribe of the soul. (*T. Watson.*) *God's leading*:—However quiet your life may have been, I am sure there has been much in it that has tenderly illustrated the Lord's providence, the Lord's deliverance, the Lord's upholding and sustaining you. You have been, perhaps, in poverty, and just when the barrel of meal was empty, then were you supplied. You have gone, perhaps, through fire and water, but in it all God's help has been very wonderful. Perhaps you are like the Welsh woman, who said that the Ebenezers which she had set up at the places where God had helped her were so thick that they made a wall from the very spot she began with Christ to that she had then reached. Is it so with you? Then tell how God has led you, fed you, and brought you out of all your troubles. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **To humble thee and to prove thee.**—*The stages of probation*:—I. There has ever been A STRUGGLE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL PROCEEDING IN THE WORLD—a struggle in which some have arrayed themselves on one side, some on another. II. Again, THE WORLD GROWS IN EXPERIENCE, increases its stores of knowledge, and its power over matter. III. But now to come to a more definite illustration of the truth, THAT THE INDIVIDUAL IS BUT THE SPECIES IN MINIATURE. Ever since the creation of man, God has been proving His rational creatures by various dispensations. 1. Man, when ejected from Paradise, had a certain limited degree of light and help. 2. Man was next put under the restraints of human law—the warrant for the whole compass of human law being contained in that sentence, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." This was a new help, a new light. Did man recover

himself under it from the ruins of the fall? Alas, no! Consider that one saying to Abraham, "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." It shows that mighty nations had sprung up upon the earth's surface who were forgetful of God, and among whom stalked oppression and lust, such as called down vengeance from heaven. 3. So a law was henceforth to be revealed from heaven, and to be made plain upon tables of stone, so that he who ran might read it. Surely when it was so explicit, when it had so manifestly the attestation of heaven, man's evil propensities would not dare to break through its restraints. But the third dispensation failed, as the two preceding ones had done. 3. Subsequently the precepts of the law were expanded and spiritualised by the prophets, those inspired preachers raised up in orderly succession to bear their testimony for God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Still, man was unreclaimed: walked, as ever, in the way of his heart, and in the sight of his eyes. The servants who were sent to receive of the fruits of the vineyard were sent away empty, beaten, stoned, slain. 5. A pause, during which the voice of prophecy was hushed, and then full of augury and hope, the new dispensation, with its covenant of pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace, broke upon a world, which had as yet been stricken down and foiled in its every conflict with evil. A revealed Saviour, joining, in His mysterious Person, man with God—this was the new Light. A revealed forgiveness through His blood, of every transgression—this was the new encouragement. A revealed Sanctifier, who should take up His abode in the abyss of the human will, and there meet evil in its earliest germ—this was the new strength. In the long-suffering of God this dispensation is still running its course. (*Dean Goulburn.*)

Divine providence a moral discipline:—I. Let us regard the text AS INDICATING AN ENLARGED EXPERIMENT UPON HUMAN NATURE, AND ILLUSTRATING THE MORALITY OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE. The moral ends of providence are manifested — 1. In overruling the curse pronounced at the fall of man. Affliction, pain, and all the various ills that flesh is heir to are the means of bringing men to their right mind, of showing them the vanity of earthly things, and of maturing moral virtues and Christian graces. How few would regard their spiritual destitution but for this discipline! Even death itself is made a moral blessing. Its terrors lead men to seek Christ and a preparation for heaven; its uncertainty induces watchfulness. 2. There is a moral lesson in the present usual consequences of vice and virtue. The vices which are most injurious to society being poverty and shame, the virtues which are most conducive to the welfare of society are most favourable to the temporal welfare of individuals. Filthiness of the flesh usually has its fit punishment in the diseases of the flesh; filthiness of the spirit, its appropriate penal visitation in the disappointments and vexations of the spirit. The largest amount of temporal misery may be traced to idleness, indecision, improvidence, and transgression. And "neglects from inconsiderateness, not looking about us to see what we have to do, are often attended with consequences altogether as dreadful, as from any active misbehaviour from the most extravagant passion." The consequences tread upon the heels of the fault; and indeed, vice generally becomes its own punishment. 3. Observe, also, the encouragements which providence furnishes to seek pardon at the hand of God. We are sinners, and have forfeited every blessing and enjoyment but such things as are essential to us as accountable beings—necessary to endow us with that responsibility in which the law of God contemplates us. Nevertheless, God continues to us innumerable forfeited blessings; and the continued bestowment, notwithstanding that they are abused, and converted into occasions of unthankfulness, or weapons of rebellion, marks a forbearance admirably calculated to "lead men to repentance." II. THE PARTICULAR ENDS OF GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL DISPENSATIONS TOWARDS THE CHURCH. 1. Since humility is the proper counter-working of the fall, the first design named by Moses is "to humble thee." 2. A second great object of the discipline of providence over the Church is here specified: "To prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no." Not that the principles and fluctuating feelings of the heart are not fully known to God, but that we know not our own hearts. It belongs essentially to probation that we should be proved. Something must ever be left as a test of the loyalty of the heart. Every day offers a test to some part of our character. Some duty is required which is painful or disadvantageous to our temporal interests; or we are placed in such circumstances that our precise duty is involved in considerable obscurity, and requires patient thought and a conscientious balancing of reasons and scrutiny of motives. Thus God proves what value we set on acts of disobedience as such, and shows us that our

virtue is to be estimated by the amount of temptation and the difficulties of obedience. (*F. A. West.*) *The blessing of temptation:*—It is the privilege of God's people "that all things work together for their good." St. Paul, when speaking of this, speaks of it as a certain and well-known truth. He does not say, "We know that all things are good"; but, "that all things work together for good." Pain and sickness, poverty, contempt, provocations, wrongs and injustice, these are evils to the believer as much as to the unbeliever. But though evil in themselves, they work together for his good; like the storms and tempests, the cold frosts and piercing winds—they are often as necessary and useful to the harvest as the warm dews and gentle sunshine. It was so with God's Israel of old. The words of the text show us this. It may seem strange to the carnal ear to affirm that temptation may be a great blessing; and even the believer, when hardly tried, may scarcely think it can be so; yet it is certainly true that temptation is a source of blessing to the real Christian. And thus, through the goodness and mercy of Almighty God, even Satan himself is made an instrument of good to His believing people. 1. We will consider HOW GOD PROVES US, and what we are to understand by this part of our subject. We at once see that by proving us the Lord must mean, not the finding out what we are, but the showing it. Man's heart is not like a boxed main-spring of a watch, all but wound up from God's sight, as it is from ours, and of which only a part of the chain, a few links now and then, may be seen moving across and over it, as the chain works round; but there is no covering over the main-spring of our hearts to God's eye: glass is transparent, and hearts are glass to God. When God is said to have led His people "forty years in the wilderness, to prove them and know what was in their heart," it was to show them and others what was in their heart, and not to know and find out for Himself. During these forty years He suffered them to pass through a variety of trials and temptations, all calculated to prove and show which among them would keep His commandments, and which would not. So is it still with the professing Church of Christ. We must be proved as Israel was; for only they that are proved shall enter the heavenly rest. And temptations alone can prove us. Our honesty is proved when we were tempted to be dishonest, and through God's grace resisted the temptation. Our truth is proved when we might have gained by untruth, and yet were enabled to overcome the temptation. Our chastity is proved when the allurements to sinful lusts were thrown in our way, and we shrank from the snare. Our trust in God is proved when we were in want or difficulties. But further, "They also help to make known what is in our hearts." When God's grace first comes into the Christian's soul it is as when the windows of some old ruined house, long shut up in dust and neglect, are opened, the light is let in upon the rooms. It is as when those who have undertaken thoroughly to repair it, take up the floor, and take down the skirtings, and examine the timbers, and lay bare the drains. No one could have thought, even from the outward appearance, that such a mass of rotten timber, such a heap of dust and filth, and so many vermin, could have got together. And it is not till the work of repairing begins in our hearts that we begin to know anything of their real condition. While there is no light of God's Spirit shining in us, we know nothing of our inward corruptions. We are like persons long used to the close, foul, and unhealthy air of some sick room; it is not till we have left it, and felt the freshness and sweetness of the air of heaven, that we know what the other was. We cannot know what our heart is till we know what is in our heart; and we cannot know what is in our heart till that which is in is drawn out; and temptation alone can draw it out. It is temptation which shows us what is in our hearts—that brings out in various ways the miserable pride and self-conceit, the hypocrisy and dissimulation, the vain self-confidence, the impurity and uncleanness, the fear of man's shame and love of man's praise, the envy and jealousy, and all those other evil tempers and dispositions which are in every soul of man by nature, but which man only learns to know and feel by grace; and the great object of all the various trials and circumstances through which the believer is made to pass, as Israel through the wilderness, is "to show him what is in his heart." II. THE EFFECT OF ALL THIS IS "to humble him." The self-righteous sinner is always a proud man: he has, indeed, nothing to be proud of, and everything to be ashamed of; but because he is blind to his sins and faults, blind to the real character of his heart, and ignorant of himself, he is proud. Now, no proud man ever came to Christ—no man that thinks himself righteous ever came to Christ. He may call himself a miserable sinner; but he does not feel or really believe what he says. The Christian wishes to be humble;

but he is not what he wishes to be. He wishes "to learn of Him who is meek and lowly of heart," and he is a learner in Christ's school; but he is often humbled for his want of humility. Still, the growing experience of his heart is humbling him: he is becoming daily better acquainted with himself, and likes himself every day less and less. He once thought that, excepting a few faults (and those very few and very excusable and natural), there dwelt in him many good things. Now he can say, even from what he already knows, "that in him" (that is, in his flesh) "there dwelleth no good thing." (*W. W. Champneys, M.A.*) *The moral discipline of man:*—I. IT IS A HUMBLING WORK. To bring the soul down from all its proud conceits, vain imaginations, and ambitious aims, and to inspire it with the profoundest sense of its own moral unworthiness. II. IT IS A SELF-REVEALING WORK. "The evil principle sleeps in the spirit as the evil monster in the placid waters of the Nile; and it is only the hot sun, or the sweep of the fierce tempest, that can draw or drive it forth in its malignant manifestations." III. IT IS A DIVINE WORK. God alone is the true moral schoolmaster; He alone can effectually discipline the soul. 1. By the dispensation of events. 2. By the realities of the Gospel. 3. By His influence on conscience. IV. IT IS A SLOW WORK. Goodness is not an impression, an act, or even a habit; it is a character, and characters are of slow growth. It is a growth, and requires cultivation—planting, nourishing, and seasonal changes. (*Homilist.*) *God "proves" His children:*—The suffering you see around you hurts God more than it hurts you, or the man upon whom it falls. But He hates things that most men think little of, and will send any suffering upon them rather than have men continue indifferent to them. Men may say, "We don't want suffering: we don't want to be good." But God says, "I know My own obligations, and you shall not be contemptible wretches if there be any resource in the Godhead." The God who strikes is the God whose Son wept over Jerusalem. (*George Macdonald.*) *The discipline of life:*—A touching story was told of a young man whose mother and father died, leaving him in the care of a guardian. He was put to work at a trade, and worked faithfully for years. When he was eighteen a companion said to him, "Why do you work so hard? Your father was rich, worth 500,000 dols., and your guardian is keeping the money." The young man then began to entertain hard feelings towards his guardian, and stopped calling upon him. But he kept on working. The day before he was twenty-one he was invited to take tea with his guardian and his wife. Just before supper his guardian called him aside and said to him, "Before your father died he asked me to be your guardian, and to withhold from you a knowledge of his circumstances. He wished you to learn a trade and to earn your own subsistence. I was only to assist you when you were in real need. He wished you to acquire industrious habits." The young man was broken down. He wanted to explain. But the guardian would not permit it; no explanation or forgiveness was needed. So we are to pass through the discipline of life patiently, faithfully, industriously, until we enter into the inheritance above. **That He might humble thee.**—*Afflictive dispensations of providence:*—I. The afflictive dispensations of providence ARE INTENDED TO HUMBLE BELIEVERS BY TEACHING THEM ABSOLUTE AND CONSTANT DEPENDENCE ON GOD FOR EVERYTHING THAT THEY ENJOY. II. The afflictive dispensations of providence ARE INTENDED TO PROVE THE SINCERITY, AND TO INCREASE THE STRENGTH OF RELIGION IN THE HEART OF THE GODLY. 'Tis the battle that tries the soldier, and the storm the pilot. How would it appear that Christians can be not only patient, but cheerful in poverty, in disgrace, and temptations, and persecutions, if it were not often their lot to meet with these? He that formed the heart knows it to be deceitful, and He that gives grace knows the weakness and strength of it exactly. The Word of God speaks to men; therefore it speaks the language of men. "Now," said the Lord to Abraham, "I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me." In the wisdom of God, believers are thus put in possession of an undeniable evidence of their own sincerity, and which goes further to assure them of their final salvation than a thousand inward feelings, which are often the effect of imagination alone. It is of importance, besides, to observe that every such trial is a means not only of proving the reality of their religious principles, but of confirming and increasing them. It is with the mind as with the body. Exercise and exertion increase its vigour and strength. III. Consider THE ULTIMATE DESIRE AND EFFECT OF ALL THESE DISPENSATIONS. "To do thee good at thy latter end." When entered into heaven, their knowledge will be enlarged and perfected; and what is at present concealed from them will burst on their view as a necessary part of the discipline of grace in

conducting and completing their everlasting salvation. They will then perceive that by poverty they were guarded from the dangers to which wealth would have exposed them, or that the meanness of their station preserved them from the snares of ambition, or that sickness was the means of correcting their tendency to the pursuit of sensual pleasures and worldly joys. Penetrating into the counsels of the Lord, they will see the mercy even of His heaviest judgments, and the wisdom of His most unsearchable ways. At present they may be in heaviness through many tribulations, but the trial of their faith being much more precious than that of gold which perisheth, though it be tried with fire, shall be found to praise and honour and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (*D. Dickinson, D.D.*) *The design of affliction*:—There is a twofold design of chastening. The first is self-revelation, "to know what was in thine heart." Some things can only be got at by fire. There are depths in our consciousness that nothing can sound but pain, anguish, bitterness, sorrow. And these are not all bad; sometimes pain works its way down to our better nature, touches into gracious activity our noblest impulses, and evokes from our heretofore dumb lips the noblest prayer. Sometimes we see further through our tears than through our laughter. Many a man owes all that he knows about himself, in its reality and in its best suggestiveness, not to prosperity, but to adversity; not to light, but to darkness. The angel of trouble has spoken to him, in whispers that have found their way into the inmost hearing of the heart. The next design of affliction given in this quotation is "whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no." Obedience is the purpose which God has in view. There can be no grand life until we have learned to obey. It is good for a man to have to obey. It is a continual lesson, a daily discipline. He gathers from it a true consciousness of his own capacity and his own strength, and he begins to ask questions of the most serious intent. From the beginning God's purpose was that we should obey. You cannot obey in any good and useful sense the spirit of evil. You only get good from the exercise of obedience when that exercise goes against your own will and chastens it into gracious submission. Self-revelation and filial obedience—these are part of God's design in sending afflictions upon us. Take another explanation: "I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?" Sometimes God's withdrawments evoke from the heart conscious of His absence the most poignant and eager prayers. He says, "I will go away that they may miss Me." He says, "I will withdraw and cause the walls of their security to tremble and the roof of their defence to let the storm pour down through it, in order that they may begin to ask great questions." He will not have us fretting the mind with little inquiries and petty interrogations. He will force us to vital questionings: "Are not these things come upon us because our God is not among us?" Why deal with symptoms and not with real diseases? Take another answer: "They shall bear the punishment of their iniquity . . . that the house of Israel may no more go astray from Me." Punishment—meant to bring men home again. That is God's weapon, and you cannot steal it. You do wrong, and the scorpion stings you. You cannot bribe the scorpion, or tame it, or please it. Do what you will, it is a scorpion still. You say you will eat and drink abundantly, and grow your joys in your body, and the blood saith, "No!" And every bone says, "No!" And the head and the heart say, "No! we are God's, and not in us shall you grow any joy that is not of the nature of His own purpose and will." The bones, the joints, the sinews, the nerves, the whole scheme of the physical constitution of man, all fight for God. What is God's purpose in this? To bring you home again, and nothing else. Take another statement of the cause and purpose of God in this matter of afflicting men: "I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant, . . . there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed." There, again, is the internal mystery. It is not the heart that needs must be revealed. You cannot argue with a man who is running down to hell with the consent of all his powers. Argue with him! Your argument and eloquence would be thrown away upon him. You must so show the evil of his doings as to work in the man self-loathing. You may show him pictures of evil, and he will gaze upon them—nay, he will buy them and hang them up in his rooms at home and point them out to his friends as works of vigour and power and wondrous artistic skill. He will not regard them as mirrors reflecting

his own image. The work must be done in his soul. He must so see evil as to hate himself—self-disgust is the beginning of penitence and amendment. We all have affliction. Yours seems to be greater than mine; mine may seem to be greater than yours. But let us know that there cannot be any affliction in our life without its being under God's control, and He will not suffer us to be tried above that we are able to bear, and with every trial He will make a way of escape. He does not willingly grieve the children of men. He is pruning us, cutting us, nursing us, purifying us by divers processes to the end that He may set us in His heavens—princes that shall go out no more for ever. Let us next consider how variously, as to spirit and interpretation, affliction may be received at the hands of God. By "affliction" do not narrowly understand mere bodily suffering, but trial of every kind, yea, the whole burden and discipline of life. We must go to history for our illustration, and, turning to history for my first illustration, I find that the discipline of life may be received impenitently. Hear these words in solemn and decisive proof: "If ye will not be reformed by Me by these things, but will walk contrary unto Me, then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins." I warn you, God will not give way—God cannot give way. The one thing God can do is to multiply your affliction seven times, and to cover up the arch of the sky with a night denser than has yet blackened the firmament. Turning to history again, I find that affliction may be received self-approvingly or self-excusingly, and so may fail of its benign purpose. The proof is in these words: "In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction. . . . Thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely His anger shall turn from me." The correction has been administered, but has not been received. It has been misunderstood. It has been taken in hardness. It has been resented as an injustice. It has been treated as if it came from an enemy, and not from a friend. The deadly sophism of your innocence must be rooted out before you can be cured. The Pharisee must be destroyed before the man can be saved. Will you understand that? Turning again to history for illustration and argument, I find that affliction may be received self-deceivingly. The proof is in these words: "They have not cried unto Me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds." Heart-crying is one thing, and mere howling is another. Men come to us with sad stories of distress, and they make long moans about pain and fear, about poverty and uselessness. They use the words which penitents might use, but not in a contrite spirit. It is the flesh that complains; it is not the spirit that repents. When a bad man complains of his head, is he complaining of his sin? Is he not only waiting till he can gather himself together again that he may renew the contest against heaven, and endeavour to find on earth a root that was never planted there? One more point there is which I dare scarcely touch. How few know that the passage is in the Bible. It is a passage that proves that affliction may be received, in the fourth place, despairingly. Are there in any poems made by men such words as these? Tell me if any poet dare write such words: "They gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds." "My soul, come not thou into their secret." Some man wrote these words who had seen hell. Do not trifle with the idea of future punishment. Whatever it be, it is the last answer of Omnipotence to rebellious man. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." This is not a question to be argued. When logician and speculist have accomplished their task there remains the unexplained word—hell! How are we receiving our afflictions? "Come now, let us reason together." Ephraim of old was described as a "bullock unaccustomed to the yoke." In some countries the bullock is used for ploughing and for drawing vehicles. The poor ox is yoked, and, being unaccustomed to the yoke, it chafes under it. Its great shoulders protest against the violation of liberty. By and by the bullock becomes accustomed to the treatment, and submits itself to the service of man. Ephraim receiving the discipline of God was "as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke." We do not take kindly to our troubles, afflictions, distresses, and losses. It is not natural that we should do so; but, seeing that we have incurred them, we must receive them at God's hand, and become accustomed to the discipline, and eventually submit ourselves to the service of God, which is the true liberty. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Development and discipline:*—The point of comparison brought to view in the text is between God's treatment of the Israelites in the wilderness and His treatment of His peculiar people—or, if you please, of all mankind—in this world of probation. I. We have here God's providential treat-

ment of men in this world set forth AS A PROCESS OF DISCOVERY. "God led them forty years in the wilderness, to prove them, and to know what was in their heart." Under God's providential economy earthly and practical life is but practical development. Man's business on this sublunary platform is to work out his hidden character in the face of the universe—to make manifest his secret thoughts even in forms of materialism. The fashion of the man's garments, the furniture of his dwelling, the pictures he hangs upon his walls, the volumes he places in his library, the places of his favourite recreation, the style of men with whom he delights to associate; yea, his very bearing as he mingles with men and walks in the market-place—are all but the visible expression of the quality of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And this practical manifestation of character in life is with a great Divine purpose. In the case of the Israelites it was to show who, of the wanderers in the Exodus, were proper men to go over to Canaan; and in our case it is to show who, of these dwellers upon earth, are becoming meet for the heavenly inheritance. Not that God needs to learn this, but that He would have His universe know that He is just when He judges and clear when He condemns. And this, this is life! The development in actual forms of the hidden things of the spirit! This making known to a universe what there is in the heart! Oh, then, how awfully solemn a thing it is to live—just to live! II. And it brings us to consider this other providential design—A PROCESS OF DISCIPLINE. "The Lord God led them forty years in the wilderness to humble them." Here, by a common scriptural figure, the great grace of humility is put metonymically for all the distinguishing graces of Christian character. And the meaning is, that God led them about in the wilderness as in a state of pupilage and preparation for the civil and ecclesiastical immunities of Canaan. And in illustrating this thought we only ask you to observe how earthly trials and affliction are the finest means of sanctification. You perceive at once, in the case of the Israelites, that if God had allowed them to pitch a permanent encampment in some fair oasis of the desert, then, instead of becoming more humble, they would have waxed worse and worse in arrogance and carnality. And it needed the burning sun, and the hot sand, and the fiery serpents, and the constant assaults of the fierce men of Amalek and Moab to humble them before God, and make them meet for a citizenship in the theocracy of Canaan. And so of Christians on earth—a moment's consideration will show you how afflictions are, after all, the finest discipline of sanctification. Yes, yes, it is thus God sanctifies—He takes away the earthly, that the heart may rise to the heavenly; He tears the bark from its mortal moorings, that it may launch forth toward the eternal haven; He stirs up the nest of the slumberous eagle, that, with exulting pinion, it may soar to the sun! (*C. Wadsworth.*) *God's training of men*:—This is the lesson of our lives. This is God's training, not only for the Jews, but for us. We read these verses to teach us that God's ways with man do not change; that His fatherly hand is over us, as well as over the people of Israel; that their blessings are our blessings, their dangers are our dangers; that, as St. Paul says, all these things are written for our example. I. "HE HUMBLED THEE, AND SUFFERED THEE TO HUNGER." How true to life that is! How often there comes to a man, at his setting out in life, a time which humbles him, when his fine plans fail him, and he has to go through a time of want and struggle! His very want and struggles and anxiety may be God's help to him. If he be earnest and honest, patient and God-fearing, he prospers—God brings him through; God holds him up, strengthens and refreshes him, and so the man learns that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. II. There is another danger which awaits us, as it awaited those old Jews—THE DANGER OF PROSPERITY IN OLD AGE. It is easy for a man who has fought the battle with the world, and conquered more or less, to say in his heart, as Moses feared that those old Jews would say, "My might and the power of my wit hath gotten me this wealth," and to forget the Lord his God, who guided him and trained him through all the struggles and storms of early life, and so to become vainly confident, worldly and hard-hearted, undevoted and ungodly, even though he may keep himself respectable enough, and fall into no open sin. III. OLD AGE ITSELF IS A MOST WHOLESOME AND BLESSED MEDICINE FOR THE SOUL OF MAN. Anything is good which humbles us, makes us feel our own ignorance, weakness, nothingness, and cast ourselves on that God in whom we live, and move, and have our being, and on the mercy of that Saviour who died for us on the Cross, and on that Spirit of God from whose holy inspiration alone all good desires and good actions come. (*C. Kingsley, M.A.*)

Vers. 3-6. **He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna.**—*The pilgrims' grateful recollections:*—I. LET US PASS IN REVIEW THE FAVOURS OF THE LORD, taking what He did for Israel as being typical of what He has done for us. 1. The first blessing mentioned is that of humbling: "And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger." Not very highly esteemed among men will this favour be; and at first, perhaps, it may be regarded by ourselves as being rather a judgment, one of the terrible things in righteousness, than a great favour from the Most High. But rightly judged, this is one of the most admirable proofs of the Lord's loving-kindness, that He does not leave His people in their natural pride and obstinacy, but by acts of grace brings them to their right minds. Note in the text, that the humbling was produced by hunger. What makes a man so humble as to be thoroughly in want? Oh, happy season when He stripped me of what I thought my glory, but which were filthy rags! 2. Notice, in the second place, the Divine feeding. We shall now see ourselves mirrored in the case of Israel as in a glass. "He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee." How sweetly that follows: "suffered thee to hunger and fed thee"; the light close on the heels of the darkness. "Blessed are ye that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for ye shall be filled." That "and" in the text is like a diamond rivet, none can ever take it out or break it. "He suffered thee to hunger *and* fed thee." He who suffers thee to hunger will be sure to feed thee yet upon the bountiful provisions of His grace. Be of good cheer, poor mourning soul. 3. The third favour mentioned is the remarkable raiment. "Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee." Though subject to the ordinary wear and tear incidental to travelling, their garments still continued to be as good at the end of forty years as they were when first they left the land of Egypt. I believe that to be what the text means. Anyhow, spiritually, it is the case with us. You cannot point me to a stale promise in all God's book, neither can you find me a worn-out doctrine. In the way of perseverance we have been maintained and preserved. Personally I admire the grace which has kept me in my course, though assailed by many fierce temptations and exposed to great perils in my position. 4. The next blessing for which we ought to be grateful is that sustained personal strength. Our spiritual vigour has not decayed during our sojourn in the wilderness, for it is written, "Neither did thy foot swell." Up till now you have held on: have confidence. He will keep you still. Your foot has not swelled in the way of perseverance. Neither have you been lamed in the way of service. Perhaps you have been called to do much work for Christ, yet you have not grown tired of it, though sometimes tired in it; still, you have kept to your labour, and found help in it. So, too, your foot has not swollen in the way of faith. Such little faith you had at first that you might well have thought it would all die out by now. But it has not been so. God has not quenched the smoking flax, nor broken the bruised reed. In addition to all this, your foot has not swollen in the way of fellowship. You have walked with God, and you have not grown weary of the holy intercourse. Moreover, your foot has not swollen in the way of joy. You were happy young men in Christ Jesus, and you are happy fathers now. The novelty has not worn off, or rather one novelty has been succeeded by another, fresh discoveries have broken out upon you, and Jesus is still to you the dew of youth. He who walks with God shall never weary, though through all eternity he continues the hallowed march. For all this we give to God our thanks yet again. 5. Notice the memorable blessing of chastisement. "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart." That unswollen foot, and that unworn garment, you need not so much value as this, for this you are specially bidden to consider, your deepest thoughts are to be given to it, and, consequently, your highest praises. "Consider in thine heart, that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." I am sure I have derived more real benefit and permanent strength and growth in grace, and every precious thing, from the furnace of affliction, than I have ever derived from prosperity. II. THE INFERENCE FROM ALL THIS. All this humbling, feeding, clothing, strengthening, chastening, what of it all? Why this—"therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, and to fear Him." Take the model of the text. 1. Let your obedience be universal. Keep the commandments of the Lord, walk in His ways. 2. Let your obedience be entire. In nothing be rebellious. 3. Let that obedience be careful. Doth not the text say, "Keep the commandments," and doth not the first verse say, "Ye shall observe to do"? Keep it as though you kept a treasure, carefully putting your heart as a garrison round it. Observe it as they do who have some difficult art, and who watch each order of the

teacher, and trace each different part of the process with observant eye, lest they fail in their art by missing any one little thing. Keep and observe. Be careful in your life. Be scrupulous. You serve a jealous God, be jealous of yourself. 4. Let your obedience be practical. The text says, "Walk in His ways." Carry your service of God into your daily life, into all the minutiæ and details of it. Whereas others walk up and down in the name of their God, and boast themselves in the idols wherein they trust, walk you in the name of Jehovah, and glory always to avow that you are a disciple of Jesus. 5. Let your obedience spring from principle, for the text says, "Walk in His ways, and fear Him." Seek to have a sense of His presence, such as holy spirits have in heaven who view Him face to face. Remember He is everywhere; you are never absent from that eye. Tremble, therefore, before Him with that sacred trembling which is consistent with holy faith. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **Man doth not live by bread only.**—*True life*:—What is the life for which we seek and hope? Mere existence? No. But conscious happiness—a large preponderance of success over disappointment, and joy over sorrow. This is what all desire; but they seek it in different ways. Our text suggests two theories of life;—the one, the living by bread alone; the other, by obedience, duty, and love, by angels' food, by the manna that comes down from heaven. I. MAN DOTH NOT LIVE BY BREAD ONLY. Yet multitudes think thus to live—by things outward and earthly, by the accumulation of material, perishable objects of enjoyment, or of wealth, which can represent and command them all. Can wealth sustain or comfort the bereaved husband or father? When the strong ties of natural affection are sundered, is it a solace to know that they had been gilded and jewelled? If they were not strengthened and sanctified by Christian communion, by the fellowship of heaven-seeking souls—if the only common interests have been sordid, then has the prosperity enjoyed together left the survivor only the heavier burden of remembrances not again to be realised, and of joys for ever fled. II. WHAT, THEN, ARE THE ELEMENTS OF THIS HIGHER LIFE? Since man, spiritually speaking, cannot live by bread only, by what is he to live? 1. First by faith—faith in an all-seeing Father, whose sceptre ruleth over all, and who, if our hearts are His, will cause all things outward to work together for our good—faith in a Redeemer, who has loved us and given Himself for us as our Saviour from sin, and our Guide to duty and heaven. 2. Again, man, by the appointment of God, is to live by hope—by the hope of heaven, which alone can anchor the soul amidst the fitful fortunes of our earthly pilgrimage. 3. By God's appointment, we are also to nourish our souls by charity, by sympathy with our brethren, by bearing their burdens and helping their joys. There can be no life worth living without brotherly love—without a ready heart and hand for the needy, the suffering, and the erring. 4. Finally our true life must be connected with, and flow from, the testimony of a good conscience, which, if merited, no outward condition can suppress or pervert. III. Such are the heaven-appointed means of life and growth within the reach of all of us. IT IS THESE THAT OUR SAVIOUR PROFFERS TO US. They were His peace and joy. They are the fountain still flowing at the foot of His Cross. Other streams there are, sparkling, attractive, rolling over golden sands and beneath a brilliant sky; yet there is a voice in their murmur, ever saying, —"He that drinks of us shall thirst again, and thirst as often as he comes to draw." But from the mountain of the beatitudes, and again from the olive-shade of Gethsemane, and from the darkness and agony of Calvary, I hear the voice,—"If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink, and the water that I will give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." (*A. P. Peabody.*) *The food of man:*—If this be true, what a strange comment on it is the world around us at this hour! Turn to what class of our countrymen you like, and in every variety of expression upon their countenance you will see written deep their conviction, in every changeful accent of their voices you will hear uttered their practical belief, that they can live by bread alone. It is for bread—using "bread" in the largest sense as meaning all material things—that men toil, and exhaust their finest energies. And as statesmen, and philosophers, and priests behold these things, each comes forward with his gospel for mankind. I. First, we have the "GOSPEL OF EDUCATION." Let us take care that each child learns the elementary principles of knowledge, and we may hope that the coming generation shall have a higher idea of national and of social life. Well, certainly the very last persons in England to depreciate the blessings of secular instruction are the clergy. But let not educational enthusiasts think because they have provided partially against material deterioration that they have discovered a moral cure. It may

change the form of crime; it will not touch the root from which it springs. II. We have then from others the message of the PHILOSOPHERS. "Let us eat of this tree, and live for ever." Now, while we gladly acknowledge all the past successes of science and of philosophy, and while we thankfully receive every new discovery as a further revelation of the wisdom and the love of the Creator, we say this is not the bread of life for sorrowing, sinning humanity. This is no gospel for all mankind. Clad in the purple of her pride, and the white linen of her fine-spun theories, philosophy's few cultured friends may fare sumptuously every day in her high hall of state; but humanity, like Lazarus, with hunger in its soul, and its body covered with festering sores of sin, lies helpless at her gate. III. The more experience I have, the more deeply I am persuaded that the power to accomplish it is THE PREACHING OF A PERSONAL CRUCIFIED CHRIST. That—the incarnate Word of God—is still and ever the bread by which nations and men must live. It was not a new science, it was not an advanced thought, it was not an improved philosophy, it was not a merely exalted morality, it was not the idyllic life of a Galilean peasant, that men preached in the early days, in the purple dawn of Christianity, and by the preaching of it shook the Empire and revolutionised the world. And it is not by any such means, or by anything which appeals exclusively to the intellect; nay, not even by a vague "accommodating theology" with no doctrinal articulation—which, polype-like, floats on the tides of human thought, rising as they rise, falling as they fall—that men and nations can be saved now. It is as of old—by the preaching of the Word, Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. "I am the Bread of Life," said Christ. (*T. T. Shore, M.A.*) *The staff of life:*—I. We are to consider what OUR PERIL is. In one word, it is the peril of an over-mastering materialism. Look on England to-day, the England that speaks to us through Liverpool and Manchester, through Cabinet and Parliament, her stout hand not upon her heart but upon her pocket, cold towards us, sneeringly indifferent to the triumph of law, order, and right, anxious only about the cargoes of cotton, which are to feed her whirling spindles. Tell us, ye British statesmen, tell us, ye sordid sons of heroic sires, are Constitutions only parchment? Are nations only herds of farmers, artisans, and traders? Is chartered freedom only sounding rhetoric? Is duty only a name? Is honour dead? And is there nothing for us, in this nineteenth century, but to delve and spin and trade, to clutch and hoard, to eat and drink, and bloat and rot and die, and make no sign? II. What OUR DELIVERANCE must be. Deliverance is what we want; not mere respite, lifting the agony from our spirits to lay it over upon our children; deliverance, complete and final. What avails it in a raging fever, rapidly nearing its crisis, that we comfort ourselves with cooling drinks, while the disease is striking boldly at our vitals? It is written in God's Word, and written in all the history of the race: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Such is the Divine regimen for the nations. They live, if they live at all, by no felicity of position, soil, or climate, by no abundance of material good, but by the living word of the living God. Work we must, and shall, and should. And work will bring us wealth. And wealth will bring us power. What then? Need wealth be idolised, or spent upon our lusts? Need power be vaunted and abused? If so, we perish, as Tyre and Sidon perished; perish, as Carthage perished; perish, as, according to the Indian legend, the last of our gigantic mastodons perished, smitten down by the thunderbolt of the Great Spirit. Thank God, it need not be so. Nor is it our task to lay our feeble, ineffectual finger upon this vast revolving wheel, which carries the whole machinery of our earthly life, and bid it pause. It is not our task to slay this giant of our material prosperity, and stretch his huge corpse out across the continent. Ours is the far grander task of teaching the giant wisdom, and subduing his earth-born energies to Him who has told us that "Man shall not live by bread alone." How, then, shall men and nations live? "By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"; so reads our text. The Hebrews in the desert had no need of bread; they were fed with manna from the skies. But our Lord proved that there was no need even of manna. It was enough for Him, as the Son of Man, that He had faith in God. On this He feasted, while He fasted, the forty days. It was God's commandment, which He obeyed in fasting, and this commandment, thus obeyed in faith, was the bread He ate. The commandments of God, then, are the bread of life for the nations. If a Christian people, then we must be loyal to our calling, baptising our unexampled material prosperity into the name of Christ, and dedicating our

wealth, with a wise and eager generosity, to Christian uses. (*R. D. Hitchcock, D.D.*)
Bread for the hungry:—I. Let us, that we may get the meaning of this text with regard to PROVIDENCE, reflect upon the children of Israel in the wilderness. God has proved by miracle, that although He chooses to act usually according to certain rules, and nourish the body with bread and with meat, yet He is not tied to rules, but is absolute King and Master, and can do as He wills; and even in the subtle processes by which food is digested and assimilated to the flesh and blood, and bone and sinew, He can work without the means of ordinary chemistries. He can dissolve without alembics, and fuse without crucibles. But you say, "Ah! but that cannot concern us, for He never works miracles now." Ay, but I reply, it is most marvellous for God to be able to do a miraculous thing without a miracle. I have seen many miracles, which were not miracles, but yet all the more miraculous. The poor have lacked bread; stones were not turned into bread for them, but they had their bread as much by miracle as if rocks had crumbled into food. We have seen the poor merchant reduced to distress, and he said, "Now I cannot see any hope for me. God must rend His heavens, and put His hand through the very windows to deliver me." No heavens were rent, but the deliverance came. Now, the Lord can this day without a miracle work such a miracle that we shall have all our wants supplied, for "man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." You have heard the story of the martyr who was condemned to die. The judge said railingly: "You will be in prison. I shall make you no allowance for food, and what can your God do for you? How can He feed you?" "Why," said the poor prisoner, "if He wills it, He can feed me from your table": and it was so, though unknown to his cruel judge; for until his day of burning came, the wife of the judge, touched with sympathy, always secreted food and fed him abundantly even from the persecutor's board. II. THE SPIRITUAL BEARING of the text. Man shall not live by bread alone; that does but nourish the mere coarse fabric of clay; he lives by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God—that nourishes the immortal spirit; that sustains the heavenly flame which God has put there by the work of regeneration and conversion. 1. The text speaks of a hunger and of its consequences. Very many of you understand what this hunger means. There was a time when the world suited us well enough. But suddenly God put a new life into us; we knew not how. The first evidence we had of that life was that we began to hunger; we were not satisfied; we were unhappy. The soul was conscious of sin, and hungered for pardon; conscious of guilt, and hungered for purity; conscious of absence from God, and hungered and thirsted after His presence. (1) Now, speaking of that hunger, you know that it was a most painful thing when first we knew it. It was so painful to some of us that we could not rest. We wanted Christ. (2) Then that hunger, moreover, was utterly insatiable—nothing could stop it. Friends said, "You must take worldly amusement." The legalist said, "You must perform such and such duties"; it was like attempting to fill a soul with bubbles. Still our hunger cried, "Give, give, give us something more substantial, more Divine than this." (3) Next, this hunger is impetuous. Sometimes it will come at inconvenient seasons. Henry Smith—an old preacher at St. Paul's Cross, preaching upon the text: "As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby"—observes, "When hunger assails infants, they neither regard leisure, nor necessity, nor willingness of their mothers, but all excuses and business set apart, so soon as they cry for food they must be fed." So it is with a man who has begun to feel the need of Christ. 2. Notice, the heavenly bread and its surprising excellency. This bread, you see, is the Word of God. Now, the Word is given to us first here in the Bible, as it is written; it is given to us, secondly, from the lips of God's own chosen and appointed ambassadors. He that despises either of these two, will soon find himself growing lean in spirit. But now, why is it that we need this food at all? I answer first, we need it to sustain the life which we have received. As life spiritual depends upon God to give it, so upon God to sustain it. Only He who makes us Christians can keep us so. We need this Divine food not only to keep us barely alive, but to make us grow. Besides, this food is necessary to strengthen us when we have grown up. How can we wonder that a man is weak if he does not eat? It is no wonder if Christians find themselves weak in prayer, weak in suffering, weak in action, weak in faith, and weak in love, if they neglect to feed upon the Word of God. Moreover, we need to have spiritual food also for our joy as well as for our strength. How often do you see a man

sad and troubled, who, if he had sufficient sustenance, would soon have sparkling eyes and a shining face! Many Christians, I do not doubt, are very low and miserable because they do not feed upon the Word. Are you starving your souls? If so, there is no wonder that your joys are dead, and hang their heads like withered things. I trust many of us know what it is to feed to the full upon the Word of God. And do you not bear me witness that it is rich food? 3. A great privilege involving a consequent duty. We have been made to eat manna, as angels' food which we did not know. It was far above our carnal judgments, yet they who feared the Lord said it was like wafers made with honey. Israel found it to be very sweet, and indeed it is said by the Rabbis that the manna had such a peculiarity about it, that it was always the flavour that a man wished it to be, and I think it is very much so with Gospel preaching; if a man chooses it to be disagreeable to him, it will be; but if he desires it to be sweet to him, it will be; he will be sure to be fed if he wants to be fed. For so is it with the precious Book; very much of its flavour is in our own mouths, and when our mouths are out of taste, we think the Bible has lost its savour. It is often your ears that are to blame, not the preacher; do not be so quick to blame him, but be a little more rapid in examining yourself. "Neither did our fathers know." By nature, however much we may respect them, they are no better than ourselves, and they knew nothing about this subtle, mysterious, munificent way by which God supplies the needs of the souls of His people. Well now, if God has given us such food as this, I think the least thing we can do is to go and gather it. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

The true life of man:—This passage is composed of two propositions, a negative and an affirmative. The verb is the same in both, and therefore can only have one and the same meaning in both propositions. The first taken literally is an obvious truism. The second, taken literally, is unintelligible. That man cannot live by bread alone is patent to all. At least two more substances are needful for existence, namely, air and water. Nor can air, water, and bread alone suffice for human life. Man must undergo some exertion in order to derive nourishment from the air, water, and bread, and he needs likewise to sleep and to have shelter or else he will die. As man rises in the scale of being, many more things become necessary to life which a primitive savage never thought of. The second proposition, "Man doth live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord," taken literally, is manifestly unintelligible. We can understand that bread eaten and assimilated is one of the many things required to support human life, but in no sense can we understand the process of eating and assimilating to be applied to any words human or Divine. The second proposition is therefore so manifestly figurative that the literal interpretation must be abandoned. And if the second proposition be figurative, so likewise must be the first; for the verb which gives meaning to the second is the same in both. The key to the meaning of the passage lies in the sense given to the verb "live" and to the phrase "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord." The author used this term "live" in a very exalted sense. It was much more than mere existence. We all know what kind of torpid, stupid life we mean to describe by the term "to vegetate"; a life of motionless, passionless inactivity—mere existence without exertion, without animation. A higher life than this belongs in common to all animals; but a mere animal life was not, I think, what the author intended when he said "man cannot live by bread alone." Just as we use the term "vegetate" to express inactivity, so we use the term "animalism" to express a brutish kind of life of which selfish indulgence is the alpha and omega. The life of man is something higher than the life of the beast, and cannot be sustained by the mere supply of animal wants. Taking the word "bread" to embrace typically every possible object needful for animal sustenance, vigour, and enjoyment, man wants for his life much more than bread. Man cannot live by bread alone. If he lives by bread alone, he has either never been a man at all or has ceased to be a man, he is only an animal. And , I venture to say, is one lesson that has to be re-learnt in our own times. Whether things were worse or better in times that are gone, one thing is most obvious now. Many men and women are steeped in the notion that it is only by bread that man can live and by nothing else—that is to say that their whole lives depend upon the constant and adequate supply of those things which go to furnish animal health, animal strength, animal spirits, and general animal enjoyment; that this earthly bread is all they ever want, or all that they need ever seek; that when these things are provided, the rest of everything can go to the wall, and the kingdom of God along with it. Too often parents by precept or example instil this animalism into the minds of

their children, impressing it upon them by word and deed that their first and last duty in life is to get all they can; or else they tacitly acquiesce in their children's downward tendency and take no pains to eradicate their selfishness or to cultivate within them higher pursuits. It takes little from the sadness of this outlook to know that in a very large measure the state of society in which we live is very much to blame for much of this concentration on earthly good. On the one hand competition and the struggle for existence has made it very hard for some people to live at all, and on the other hand luxurious habits have not only grown in number but have gradually taken their place in the category of the necessaries of life. The wisdom of the Stoic which commended the restraint of desire as a means of conferring happiness is now all but forgotten; and parents and children together seem to act as if the attainment of desired objects was the whole secret of happiness, and the multiplication of gratified wishes led only to satisfaction. It is a wonder they do not see that the more we have the more we want; it is feeding the disease of longing to gratify wish after wish; and I must add it is cruelty to the young to let them grow up with the idea that the true happiness of man's life consists in getting all we want and having our own way. If the course of Divine Providence with Israel be any guide to parents in the training of their children—and I think it is entitled to that place by those words, "Thou shalt remember in thine heart that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee"—we may well lay to heart that to deny our children some longed-for pleasure, to submit them to mild privations and to disappoint them in the execution of their will is to be following a Divine example which seeks the truer, higher, and more enduring happiness of His children by the temporary infliction of some needful chastisement. But no parent can do this with judgment or moderation, or can conduct the process of disappointing his children's wishes properly unless he has learnt for himself the lesson, "Man cannot live by bread alone," unless he knows by experience that his life in its truest sense "does not consist in the abundance of things which he possesseth," but that his troubles and cares have been part of his most valuable treasure, and that his life has been enriched more often by what he has lost than by what he has gained. And this brings us to consider what is meant by the assertion of the text that "man doth live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord." This phrase becomes intelligible to us the moment we understand what is meant by the term "live." The truest and highest life of man is not mere existence, nor the fullest enjoyment of his physical nature, but the highest exercise of his noblest functions as a moral and spiritual being, as a member of the great brotherhood of mankind, as a child of God. From such an elevation, the wants and cares of this lower life lose much of their overwhelming importance. Gains and losses are less felt as changes in the atmospheric pressure upon the soul. Daily bread is no longer regarded as the sum-total of aspiration, as the sustenance of a heaven-born spirit. In the devout language of Job, "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food." Now to live such a life we must not be content with bread, or with the most ample supply of all our physical wants, but we can only live it by the word of God, *i.e.* by following the higher law of our being, by seeking for and finding all possible truth, by acting in harmony with the known laws of Nature and with the known laws of human nature which are moral and spiritual as well as physical. If we but endeavour to have God in all our thoughts, to set God always before us, then our life will be a human life, and not the life of the vegetable or the life of the beast that perisheth. Why, even for the perfection of our lower life—the purely physical—we must attain to the knowledge of God's good laws, and follow them faithfully, or else the bread of life will fail to nourish us; all its thousand embellishments will destroy and not promote our happiness. How much more, then, must we seek, in active obedience to His good laws, that perfection of moral and spiritual health in which alone the highest life of man consists! It still holds good that "he that seeketh his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life the same shall find it." Paradoxical as it may sound, the law of self-denial for the well-being and comfort of others is the only condition in which our own well-being and comfort are attainable, or when attained can be made enduring. (*C. Voysey, M.A.*)

Spiritual food:—A few years ago died, at one of the missionary stations of India, a native called Brindelbund. He had spent sixty or seventy years in the service of Satan. Talking to his Hindoo brethren, he would say, "And whom do you need but Him whom I have found?" He would take his wallet of books, and travel two or three hundred miles to distribute them; and this he did for fourteen

or fifteen years. Mrs. Chamberlain, in his last days, would go to his bedside, and say, "Brindolbund, shall I get you some tea? Can you eat bread?" He would lay his hand on the New Testament: "Sister, this is my tea—this is my bread; man was not made to live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." How valuable the Gospel, which can thus give happiness to a man who had spent the greater part of his life in the slavery of idolatry! *Feeding on the Word*:—In her autobiography the late Frances Ridley Havergal says that after giving up her soul to the Saviour, "For the first time my Bible was sweet to me, and the first passage which I distinctly remember reading in a new and glad light was the fourteenth and following chapters of St. John's Gospel. I read them feeling how wondrously loving and tender they were, and that now I too might share in their beauty and comfort." In this statement we have the secret of that lady's symmetrical piety and eminent usefulness. As she began her spiritual life by feeding it on the Divine Word, so she continued. She made it her daily bread. By reading it constantly, by meditating upon it, by implicitly believing it, by praying for light upon it, and by claiming its promises as her own, she learned to see and to know God, and to possess in very large measure that "eternal life" which consists in knowing Him. Hers was, therefore, a Scriptural piety. Her faith pushed its roots deep into God's Word. And whoever wishes to be truly and actively pious, must, like her, nourish his heart with Scripture truth, since no Christian ever did, or ever can, attain deep piety who does not learn to sip sweetness from God's words as bees suck honey from the flowers of the field. *Spiritual assimilation*:—In a town in Japan I once wanted to hold a meeting in the hotel, but only two fishermen came. I entered into conversation about Christ and His salvation with them instead of preaching. I told them that all men were descended from one pair, the present difference in the appearance of the people in separate countries being caused by the climate, food, and water. One of the men replied, "I understand it is just the same with fish; if they feed on green seaweed they become green themselves." It is the same with Christians, if they read and meditate upon the Word of God, they will become like God. If they follow the world and feed upon its pleasures, then they will become like the world, and no one will see the difference between them and those who, without disguise, are on the way to perdition. (*R. Davison.*) *Living by bread alone*:—What is it, therefore, to live by bread alone? Let us contemplate the present age. Behold a workman of the fields always looking down upon his plough, and who never gives himself time to look up towards the heaven whence fertility descends; behold a workman of the town for whom all days are alike, and who quits his trade only for pleasure, or what he believes to be such; behold a man who has dividends, and who lulls himself to sleep in a selfish indolence, whence he awakes only twice a year to receive them; behold an employé, that is to say a man who during his life gives six days to writings of which he is weary and the seventh to amusements of which he will become weary also; behold a wealthy man, and when one asks what is his occupation, he has only one, that of administering his fortune, and, if possible, augmenting it; and those *savants* who deal only in science, searching unceasingly into the truth of facts, and forgetting the voice which said: "I am the truth"; and those artists who pursue the beautiful whilst forgetting the supreme beauty; and those literary men, who seek the sublime, whilst forgetting that religion is the chief sublime; and those magistrates, who only judge or administer; and those potentates of the earth, who only skim and rule. . . . All those men are, perhaps, good and honourable, incapable of staining their reputation, of dishonouring themselves. . . . But they live by bread only; the earthly life rules them, carries them away, pre-occupies them, to the point of leading them to egotism and indifference; they are so mindful of themselves that they forget God; of the world, that they forget heaven; of life, that they forget death and immortality; they take so much care of themselves that they take none of their neighbour; and as to their family, they dream of its advancement. They live in a manner most honourable, doubtless; but they live by bread only . . . only, and this is their folly and transgression. (*Athanase Coquerel.*) **As a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee.**—*The afflictions of God's people*:—I. THE AFFLICTIONS OF GOD'S PEOPLE—however complicated, however prolonged, of whatever materials they may be made—PROCEED FROM THE PUREST BENIGNITY OF OUR HEAVENLY FATHER. Suffering does not come from God at all. I know that He overrules it, and that He makes up, if I may so speak, of the briars and thorns which so plentifully grow in this wilderness a hedge by which

His children are kept in and restrained. But He did not cause your sufferings. If man had continued in his primeval state of innocence, there would have been no aching heart. But suffering is to be considered as destructive or as corrective. Now, where it is destructive, it is an expression of displeasure. We know that punishment ultimately inflicted will be destructive; but, remember, afflictions may be considered also as corrective. Then they issue from love. Following up the beautiful idea of the text—that of parental discipline—I say they proceed from a solicitude to improve the child, to correct many vices, to form the character of the child as perfectly as it can be formed. Now, remember, that the love of your Heavenly Father regulates all this. II. YOUR AFFLICTIONS ARE BROUGHT ABOUT BY DIVINE WISDOM—no chance, no accident. God cannot explain Himself to you, but before Him everything is arranged in the most exquisite order, in the most luminous combination. Not an atom floats without His permission; the hairs of your head are all numbered. III. ALL AFFLICTIONS WILL ISSUE IN YOUR HIGHEST GOOD. You must take God's word; "All things work together for good to them that love God." This is the secret—"to them that love God." God loves you—you love God; what is the consequence? God is employing His attributes for you; God is taking care that there shall be nothing hostile, however inexplicable may be the circumstances of your life. They shall work for your good—perhaps not for your gratification. The physician's prescriptions do not work for the pleasure of the party; the probing instrument of the surgeon gives the patient pain, but it is all for good. God is not absent from you; He is present. This is a consolatory thought: your Father never leaves you for a moment; He is educating you for Himself. (*T. Lessey.*) *On the purposes of God in chastening man:*—I. The way in which God tried the Israelites in the wilderness was this: HE WAS PERPETUALLY EXPOSING THEM TO DIFFICULTIES AND DANGERS, WHICH WERE CALCULATED TO TRY THE STRENGTH OF THEIR FAITH AND TRUST IN HIM. II. WHAT, THEN, WERE THE DESIGNS WHICH GOD HAD IN VIEW IN THUS BRINGING THE ISRAELITES INTO THESE DIFFICULTIES, AND IN THUS CORRECTING THEM? 1. The first was that they might know themselves, to know their hearts, whether they would keep His commandments or no. 2. But the second point, in which it was the intention of God to instruct the Israelites, and in them all mankind, was their absolute dependence upon Himself. "He fed them with manna, which neither they nor their fathers had known," in order that He might make them know that men do not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord do men live. More important knowledge than this of the providence of God cannot be learned by men. While we thus practically know the power and presence of God, we shall feel the dispositions which that knowledge ought to inspire; we shall watch over our conduct with a filial dread of offending Him; we shall place an unbounded confidence in His wisdom to direct, His power to strengthen, His providence to defend, His goodness to bless us. III. Having thus taken a view of the purposes of God toward the Israelites in the desert, it remains THAT WE CONSIDER FOR WHOSE INSTRUCTION THESE DESIGNS WERE ACCOMPLISHED. 1. In the first place, He makes use of afflictions and trials to prove you, as He did the Israelites of old. These trials you have doubtless felt, but have you seen the hand of God in them? 2. What, then, is His aim? It is to teach thee to know thyself and Him. To know thyself. You will tell me, perhaps, you do not know yourself sufficiently; you will acknowledge you are a weak, sinful creature. To say this from theory only is a very different thing from saying it from experience. Self-knowledge is not soon taught. You cannot acquire it merely by reading books, or by meditating on it in your study; it must be the result of long and painful observation of your own heart. 3. But God designs also to teach you to know Him. You are amazed at the stupidity of the Israelites; they had so many proofs of the presence of God! And have not you as many? (*J. Venn, M.A.*) *Divine correction:*—Divine correction may be considered—I. AS THE MEANS OF RELIGIOUS IMPROVEMENT. 1. Affliction is a restraint from evil, without which we should frequently fall the victim of our folly and impetuosity. 2 Affliction is an excitement to duty. 3. Affliction is a needful ordeal. 4. Affliction is a seasonable monitor. II. AS THE DISCIPLINE OF PATERNAL REGARD. A father corrects his children—1. With reluctance. Tries everything else first. 2. With wisdom. 3. With tenderness. 4. With design. For our good. III. AS THE SUBJECT OF FILIAL ATTENTION. How awful is it when affliction is useless, when correction hardens, when medicine poisons! Beware of this—"Consider in thine heart," &c. 1. Acknowledge His hand. Trace your afflictions to their proper cause. 2. Submit to His authority. Submission is the

perfection of Christianity—the submission not of apathy, but sensibility. Shall a scholar murmur against the discipline of wisdom and goodness? 3. Improve His design. This must be known to be improved. You cannot know each particular design, but you may the grand and ultimate one. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *Design of God's chastisements:*—This is the manner of God's proceedings—to send good after evil, as He made light after darkness; to turn justice into mercy, as He turned water into wine; for as the beasts must be killed before they could be sacrificed, so men must be killed before they can be sacrificed—that is, the knife of correction must prune and dress them, and lop off their rotten twigs before they can bring forth fruit; these are the cords which bind the ram unto the altar, lest when he is brought thither he should run from thence again; this is the chariot which carrieth our thoughts to heaven, as it did Nebuchadnezzar's. This is the hammer which squareth the rough stones till they be plain and smooth and fit for the temple. (*H. Smith.*) *God's chastening:*—A bystander in the market-place of a country town saw a group of boys quarrelling and fighting. In a few moments he observed a man from a side street cross the place, enter the group, bring out one boy, and severely rebuke him. The bystander pondered, his thoughts shaping themselves thus: That is a father, selecting his own boy, plucking him from the evil out of fatherly love, and dealing with him in such a manner as to make him fear a repetition of the conduct. "We are chastened of the Lord that we should not be condemned with the world." This is the paternal motive. (*Mrs. Umpleby.*) *Chastisement a proof of love:*—I had a teacher, when I was a boy, who used to love me and let me off easy in my lessons, and I thought he was splendid. I had another teacher who, out of school and out of doors, was almost like a brother and a father to me, but who was very rigid with me in the mathematical room—and with me especially; and when I once complained to him that he did not treat any other boy as he did me, he said, "No, I do not, for I do not love any other boy as much as I do you." He brought the screw down on me tremendously, but it was the only thing that carried me through mathematics. At last he developed in me an energy and an enterprise in that direction that led to results that I never should have achieved under any other culture than that. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. . . . But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons," saith the Word of the Lord. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *God the best Ruler:*—Man would have God go according to his mind in chastening and afflicting him. He would have God correct him only in such a kind, in such a manner and measure as he would choose. He saith in his heart: "If God would correct me in this or that, I could bear it, but I do not like to be corrected in the present way." One saith: "If God would smite me in my estate, I could bear it, but not in my body"; another saith: "If God would smite me with sickness, I could bear it, but not my children"; or, "If God would afflict me only in such a degree, I could submit, but my heart can hardly submit to so great a measure of affliction." Thus we would have it according to our minds as to the measure of the continuance of our afflictions. We would be corrected for so many days, but months and years of trouble are not according to our mind. Man would have God govern not only himself, but the whole world, according to his mind; man hath much of this in him. Luther wrote to Melanchthon when he was so exceedingly troubled at the providence of God in this world: "Our brother Philip is to be admonished that he would forbear governing the world." We can hardly let God alone to rule that world which Himself alone hath made. (*J. Caryl.*) **Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God.**—*Incitements to the Divine service:*—Time and again Israel was called to remember that God's goodness to them was designed to lead to more faithful service. They were to beware lest forgetfulness of this and a life of self-indulgence should lead to their undoing. In chap. xxviii. the terrible results of ingratitude and disobedience were set before them. See, especially in vers. 63, 64 of that chapter, a graphic picture in general outline of the state of the Jewish race for the past eighteen hundred years. For those who have no time or inclination to study the history of the race, the graphic description of their position in Scott's *Ivanhoe* and the historical notes appended to that work, will give a clear conception of their miserable condition. The passage teaches us that when men have received blessing from God it is fitting for them to render Him a willing service, and that ingratitude here means destruction. I. THE REASONABLENESS OF RENDERING A GRATEFUL SERVICE TO GOD. 1. This was clearly evident in the case of Israel. God rightly demands as the

Creator obedience and service from all men. Surely, then, from a people so highly favoured as Israel! Delivered from slavery; given a noble system of laws; brought under the direct rule of Jehovah in the theocracy; and given in promise "a land flowing with milk and honey." They were highly favoured, and in gratitude should have consecrated themselves to the Divine service. 2. If they had reasons for thankfulness, &c., we have greater reasons. Contrast the state of our native land since the time when Columba, Cuthbert, Austin of Canterbury, &c., began their apostolic labours among its tribes with our present pre-eminence among the nations. 3. As individual subjects of this empire we have great reason to offer to God a grateful service. How blessed our lot compared with that of many peoples whose manner of life and customs have been portrayed by a Livingstone, Stanley, J. G. Paton, and others! Contrast the state of less highly favoured peoples with our own individual lives, under righteous government, religious liberty, even-handed justice, &c. There are many reasons why we should render to God gratitude, praise, and willing, joyful service. II. THE FOLLY OF THE SIN OF INGRATITUDE TOWARD GOD. 1. What we are to beware of is the danger that whilst we enjoy the gifts, the gracious Giver should be forgotten—of spending all our time and energy on the acquisition of God's gifts to be used for our own pleasure rather than in seeking the Divine glory. 2. Into this sin the Israelites fell once and again in the course of their history. Even after the stern lesson of the Babylonian exile they fell into this sin (Hag. i., &c.). In our Lord's time this sin was aggravated by hypocrisy. The formal religionists drew near to God with outward devotion, but their hearts were far from Him. The self-pleasing, worldly agriculturist of the parable was, it may be surmised, a typical figure (Luke xii. 15–21). 3. There is too much of this spirit in our own time. Among all classes there is a feverish grasping after riches and pleasure; there is a striving after wealth, not that those who strive may become better men and women, and be better enabled to serve God, but that they may have more of ease, of passing pleasures. Possessions gained and received without thankful gratitude to God and more earnest effort in His service turn to dust and ashes in the using. 4. This results from the failure of men to desire first and receive God's best gifts in Jesus Christ. III. THE EFFECT OF EITHER SPIRIT ON NATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL LIFE. 1. When a nation rests on God in its government and institutions, and shows grateful loyalty to Him, that nation will grow in righteousness and strength, and become a power for good in the world. 2. To the individual who serves Him in grateful love He will give His richest blessings. Material gifts may sometimes be withheld as not for their good; but joyful assurance of His presence will be given to them, and of the certainty of His promises. 3. Far otherwise will it be with those who forget God. Israel's history tells how the curse has fallen (Isa. i. 8). God-forgetfulness led to hardness of heart, spiritual pride, and the invocation on themselves of the awful sentence, "His blood be on us and on our children." 4. Are there not many among us who fall into the same error—who reap luxuriant fields, who amass enormous gains without any thought of gratitude to God, or any effort in His service? Such love of money—of the possessions of this life—"is a root of all evil," leading to the hardening of the heart and the materialising of the life. 5. The Divine rule is the only safe one: "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God," &c. "Through Israel's failure to render God a grateful service they failed to carry out the Divine commission confided to them as a nation, *i.e.* to make God's name, &c., known (Psa. lxvii.). Does our thankful gratitude to God lead us to do so? (*Wm. Frank Scott.*)

Vers. 7–9. **The Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land.**—*The land of promise*:—We will first take the central picture which is presented to us, and we shall then notice the neighbouring thoughts held up to us. "The Lord bringeth thee into a good land." These words were uttered, as you know, to a number of people who had never seen anything but the wilderness. They had not an actual knowledge, but they had only heard by description, by their fathers' memory lingering upon what they had once enjoyed, and talking of them to their children. And their children had grown up in the desert and wondered what those nations could be of which they had heard their fathers speak. These words would seem to be a description which was intended to convey a contrast between Egypt and the land of promise. The feeling that lingered still upon their minds as to what Egypt was would render the contrast stronger still in their own minds. "The land whither thou goest in to possess it is not as the land of Egypt from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed and wateredst it with thy foot. But

the land whither ye go to possess it is a land of hills and valleys, and is watered by the rain from heaven." Some think this is a figure of speech intended to represent human labour, that the country had to be watered by labour, physical exertion; others seem to think it may be literal, and intended to apply to the way either in which by mechanism or by the use of the foot the water was raised to an elevation; or as, perhaps, very likely, afterwards it was spread abroad over the land in little streams; a man could just walk from place to place and with his foot let it out into different streams. In the land of promise, instead of there being any process of human labour, or any contrivances of the kind—"The land to which ye go," said the prophet, "shall be watered by the rain from heaven." It shall come down upon it like a gift from God. For in Egypt there was no rain—and in the wilderness nothing but sand, nothing but desert. There is also the suggestion, you know, of green hills. Egypt was very flat, but this was a land of hills and valleys, of valleys and hills. "A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees"—the staff of life, all that is necessary for support. And what is given for enjoyment—luxury? "A land of oil olive, and honey. A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness." They had been living on manna, and their souls loathed this light bread. They were to have bread without scarcity—"Thou shalt not lack anything in it. A land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass." This was a fine picture set before these people—setting forth the love of God to them, His Divine purposes, His Fatherly protection, and exciting them to devotion to His will. The surrounding words also suggest a grand idea. The idea is that of obedience, at all times and under all circumstances. In the desert, in the city, whatever be your circumstances or your needs, God's law is to be recognised. He is lord over all. God hath made the earth, and placed man upon it, and hath given him everything richly to enjoy. And so he presents a picture of discipline with the enjoyment of abundance. There is the suggestion of preparatory discipline, in order that a man may be fitted for the right appreciation and right use of these sources of physical enjoyment. God gives you all things richly to enjoy, and you may enjoy them; but there can be nothing in the present world and in the present condition of our nature—there can be nothing without peril and moral danger. There is danger in the desert surrounded by sterility and want; and there is danger in abundance, surrounded with wheat and barley and vines and olives, and all these luxuries. God had led them through scenes of preparatory discipline; He had given them a taste of sorrow; He had disciplined their souls by labour and by want; He had tested them that it might be seen what was in their hearts. There was moral danger and peril. The great truth which the whole discipline was intended to impress upon their souls was this, that man does not live by bread alone. Of far more importance is the attainment of the higher and diviner life than to attend merely to the physical life. It is better to die through absolute starvation and want than to supply those wants by anything which would be a violation of the Divine law. And there is set forth the warning—warning them of the danger and the peril which they had to encounter—"Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping His commandments and His statutes, which I command thee this day," under the circumstances in which thou art placed, surrounded by abundance, "Lest when thou hast eaten and art full," &c. How prone is man to forget God, and then to sink into worldliness! Oh, what a fall is there! The Great Being excluded from his thoughts, and the poor inflated heart filled with its own image, and the man thinking about himself. Forgetting God, who had done everything in him and for him, then looking upon God's gifts and their very magnitude and number, hiding God, concealing the Giver, and man tempted to say, "My own power and my skill have gotten me all this." In a certain sense you exercise skill, but God gave you the power. It is through Him everything is done. Thus our religion in all things takes us from ourselves and throws us back upon God. Then comes the last thought of all, which is the prophetic denunciation, "It shall be if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish." God loved your fathers, and loves you, and He selected you for a great mission, has told you what to do in the world, He sets before you the course you are to pursue; but if the heart be not with Him, if you forget Him and disobey Him, ye shall likewise perish, in spite of God's love to your fathers and His love to you and your children—ye shall utterly perish; He will find others to do the work, that will not stand still. I merely throw out these few thoughts to guide you. There are principles embodied here of a general and universal application to individuals and

nations. In the reading of the Bible you have the law of Divine government set forth. You not only hear God saying to an individual or to a nation, "At a particular time so and so shall be," but in consequence of having the whole history of the other nations spread out before you, you can see the actual workings out of the law in history, and character, and fortunes of the individual or nation. Now, if you read the Bible so, then I take it there are great moral principles in this chapter, which it would be very easy to dwell upon in relation to individuals and nations; it is God's way in the education of most of us. Men sometimes have a great deal to bear in their youth. We have seen men go through very severe self-denial, hard work and little enjoyment, harsh words and disappointment. Oh, the youthful heart, and the heart of early manhood—how very often does God school it, and set it a tremendously hard lesson! It is to discipline it. And how very often do we see this very process succeeding, producing submission, peace, industry, integrity—these are the virtues which spring out of discipline and suffering, and they have their reward. Then there comes the fruit of the reward: in the middle life of the man you may see, in consequence of the preparatory discipline, the fruit of it springing up—the man surrounded with riches and affluence and possessions, and you see him in the land, which is not like the land of Egypt, the land of his youth, where he had to labour and suffer; no, he has his wheat and his barley and vines and olive oil and pomegranates, and all things about him like the good land. Then comes the rest. Then we shall see what is in the man. Ay, and how very often do we see that man forget the rock out of which he was hewn, and the pit from which he was digged—the discipline and the ways through which God led him, ay, and the lesson, the very lesson which he learned. When he was little in his own eyes, and had little of the appliances of luxury about him, he had his mind filled with what was Divine. And now he has fallen upon the lap of earth, and it is very pleasant to the flesh to lie down and enjoy; the wings of his spirit are clipped, and he has fallen down into the mire; the man becomes sensual and worldly, his heavenly aspirations have departed, he has forgotten God, and is filled with worldliness. Sometimes God comes down upon such a man and blasts him. He was like a bay tree, and in a moment he is not. We look, and behold he cannot be found. Or he may live on and on, but he shall not be what he was; he is doing nothing for God or man; all his Divine aspirations are dead, and he dies, and his name is forgotten. Nobody has anything to remember of him, but perhaps the few to whom his property comes, which comes with a curse rather than a blessing. But in the other case, where the individual remembers the discipline, the lesson, and the hard history through which he passed when he was rising up and struggling nobly with circumstances, and then when his position changes the man's inward and better life keeps up, and all things are kept in their proper subordination, and used for God. When men hear of his prosperity they bless and thank God; his righteousness endureth for ever, and his name is held in everlasting remembrance; he has the blessings in relation to this world and that which is to come, and he dies amid the benedictions of his children and the blessings of society. These principles have to do with you. Are there young men here who sometimes think their lot is hard, and perhaps it is; their lot may be very hard; they may be placed in circumstances and pressed by duties that may be hard to bear; but still, it may be and it is God, it is God teaching you, it is God disciplining you, and if you will accept this teaching that is the great secret—accept it, take it lovingly, and then half the difficulty is gone. If affliction or toil through God's providence should come upon you, accept it cheerfully, and then only half the burden falls upon you. It is only half what it was as soon as you lovingly accept it and say, "I take it, and will make the best of it; I will by Thy strength, bear it like a man." And so now, if there are many young men here who have to endure a great many hardships, look up to your Father and bear it bravely; seek for God's strength, and depend upon it that this very hardness and the discipline through which you are passing now is a sort of wilderness, a desert which will lead you to the good land. Only, take care to remember the lesson that you are learning now; in whatever circumstances you may hereafter be placed do not forget God. (*T. Binney.*)

Ver. 10. **When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God.**—*Prosperity a test:*—These words occur in Moses' farewell charge to the Israelites. Moses had long stood to his people in the relation of father as well as general, and, like a father, has at the end a good many last words to speak. This

whole Book of Deuteronomy is made up of last words; his last will and testament to the Hebrew people. He wanted to clinch the instruction that had been given them already. His anxiety outran his responsibility. He had been their saviour in the past, and now would like to take out a policy of insurance in their behalf for the time to come. And they needed everything in the shape of counsel and insurance that could be given them. They had hardly earned the confidence of their leader. He did not much believe in the Israelites. He did not expect with any confidence that they would bless the Lord when they had eaten and were full. They had hardly been a match for adversity, still less could they be expected to be for prosperity. He had carried them forty years, and been one of them a hundred and twenty. He understood their composition and drift. They were a nation of backsliders. Their history was full of ebb-tides. They were not to be trusted. God had kept them worn down into manageableness simply by force of disaster; had always driven them with a curb and a check. Liberty they regularly corrupted into license. The point is reached now, however, where a new experiment is to be tried with them. There are some elements in the case that warrant at least a hope that the experiment will succeed. The wilderness and the manna are now put behind them; in front is the Jordan, and across the Jordan cities and well-watered plains—a land flowing with milk and honey. How will they bear the longer, laxer tether of plenty and prosperity? It lay in Moses' thought as a question. It is important to understand that it is God's desire for His people to load them as heavily with luxuries and gladnesses as they can bear. Evil and suffering are all around us, but it is a part of our faith in the Fatherliness of God to believe that "He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men"; and to say with the Psalmist: "I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." The universe is in the interests of comfort and happiness and joy. It is God's desire that we should eat and be full. Everything looks to a good time coming. Everything is contrived to bend toward a blessing; God started man in Paradise—as good a Paradise as he could bear, and a good deal better; and all that lies after Paradise is preparation for a Paradise improved. There is no sorrow that has not lodged in it the possible seed-kernel of fruition. Faith in the Fatherliness of God involves all this. When we experience vexation and tribulation we must always bethink ourselves of the issue to which in our Christian faith we are sure it is divinely designed to conduct. "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him." The mountain-sermon begins with the promise of blessing. A whole octave of blessedness ushers in the Gospel. This is a wholesome reflection for our mind to rest in. That there is sin in the world and suffering we can get along with as soon as we learn to interpret them instrumentally. Suffering is a means of grace, and is education toward a better holiness. It is a singular thing, however, that although gladness is the soul's destination, and a destination that God is concerned to have us reach, yet the fact of the matter with us is that gladness is itself very apt to impair our capacity for gladness, and to hinder our attainment of it. We are in this respect like a sick man who requires nourishment, but has not the power to digest it, and so is harmed by the very thing he needs. Recognising, as we do, that every good gift is from God, it would certainly seem as though everything we obtained from Him would be a fresh reminder of Him and a new bond to bind us to Him. But we know how it works with children sometimes, whose parents, the more they do for their children the less are they regarded and loved by their children. This was the point of Moses' anxiety in our text. This fact of the corrupting power of prosperity is a practical and a serious one. Prosperity is dangerous: dangerous for a man, a family, a country; it makes men indifferent, infidel, atheistic, if not in their creed, at least in their life. The more God gives us, the less, as a rule, we have of God. It is not easy to escape being injured by mercies. It is easy to be ruined by success: success is very often failure, and failure success. To our eye God gets eclipsed by His own bestowments. We bless God when we want anything, and congratulate ourselves when we get it. "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God." It takes considerably more piety to make a man thankful to God for what He has done than prayerfully dependent upon God for what we would like to have Him do. It is for that reason that thanksgiving forms so small an element in our prayers; and one reason, most likely, why our petitions bring us so little that is new, is that our thanksgivings so scantily recognise what is old. It is the tendency of the heart to forget God, and the more sunshiny things are, the more likely is that tendency to become realised. Our thoughts and regards are continually slipping away from Him. Our eyes drop from God to

some representation of Him, and we become idolaters; from God to some theories of Him, and we become philosophers; from God to the gifts He confers, and in our fulness we fondle the gift and ignore the Giver. Sunshine is not the only parent of the harvest. Men fell in Paradise. Angels fell in heaven. I do not know that there is any good thing that cannot be given in so great measure as to alienate the recipient from the Giver. The fruits of the Holy Ghost can be produced in us so profusely as to work disaster. You remember how when the Seventy returned from their evangelistic tour they commenced to parade the fact of the submissiveness of the devils unto their word. And the Lord rebuked them, and bade them rejoice rather that their names were written in heaven. We sometimes think it is well and possible for us to have all the grace we are willing to receive. I am not sure of that. I have met people that I thought had more grace given them than they had grace to bear; people that were really so holy as to be conscious of it. Men get puffed up even by their heavenly enrichments. Any possession or power we may happen to have stimulates self-consciousness, and that alienates us from God. I once heard a professor in one of our popular classical schools make this petition at evening prayers: "O Lord, Thou to whom the darkness is as the light, we commit ourselves unto Thee for the night, praying that Thou wilt care for us in those hours when we cannot so well take care of ourselves." It is so easy to think that we can almost get along alone, and should hardly need to put our trust in God were it not for dark nights, and days that are stormy. It is such facts as these that explain why it is that our lives have sometimes to be made desolate and vacant. Read the entire Book of Judges, and you will find it the continuous repetition of the same sequence of events. When the Israelites had gone across Jordan and tasted the milk and the honey and were full, they stopped blessing God, just as Moses told them not to do, but as he feared all the while they would do. Then the Lord sent in upon them an invasion of Philistines, or of Hivites, or Jebusites, or Moabites, or Midianites, or Ammonites, who ground them, and trampled upon them, and devoured them till they were willing to cry unto the Lord and acknowledge Him again. This gives to us the philosophy of disasters in national life, and explains to us as well the impoverishments and emptinesses that have to be wrought in our individual lives. Men are quite uniformly disposed to be devout when they get into difficult places. Men are like certain kinds of vegetation, which do best in poor soil. I have somewhere met with this illustration: "The Alpine flower does not bear transplanting, and can only thrive, perhaps like some souls, amidst wind and tempest, with only brief summer sunshine and heat." I do not believe there is any man but what prays when there is nothing else left that he can do. It is a large part of the philosophy of distress that it makes us look up. We ask when we are hungry. When we are empty we are devout. "When He slew them, then they sought Him," said the Psalmist. "In their affliction they will seek Me early," wrote Hosea. The prodigal went back to his father when he got down as low as the husks. The bruised flower yields the sweetest perfume, and the finest poetry of the Church has been inspired in seasons of persecution. Horace Bushnell once said: "I have learned more of experimental religion since my little boy died than in all my life before." It was he also who wrote: "Deserts and stone pillows prepare for an open heaven and an angel-crowded ladder." St. John did not receive his revelations till he was shut up in a little sea-girt Patmos. St. Paul's most jubilant epistle was written in gaol; as birds sometimes have their cage darkened in order to teach them to sing. I trust that if we have eaten and are filled with the pleasant outward gifts of the Lord, we are able still to live in distinct and hourly recognition of Him from whom they flow, and to walk with Him in relations of reverent but friendly intimacy. We often pray that God would enable us to bear adversity; there is quite as much need of His grace to keep us from falling in seasons of prosperity. (*C. H. Parkhurst, D.D.*) **Thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land.**—*Possession and praise*:—Now that there is no longer need for strenuous effort, Moses fears that, like other conquerors, they will become lax in their morality and luxurious in their habits: that they will forget the help they have received from God, and act as though their own strength or cleverness had secured these blessings. I. THE NOVELTY OF NEW POSSESSIONS QUICKLY PASSES AWAY. Persons who suffer misfortune often think they must be happy who escape it. They rejoice at the first removal of such misfortune, but soon become so accustomed to their new freedom as to scarcely give it a thought. The pleasure we derive from new joys seldom lasts longer than the novelty. On the other hand, troubles are ever new. II. POSSESSIONS THAT COST LITTLE PERSONAL EFFORT ARE BUT LIGHTLY VALUED. It is

proverbial that receivers of gifts seldom estimate them at sufficient value; also, that those who have not experienced the toil and self-denial needful in acquiring wealth, squander that for which their fathers laboured long years. There is danger that the greatness of God's gifts shall be a cause of ingratitude. III. PROSPERITY IS A SEVERER TEST OF FAITHFULNESS THAN POVERTY. Then will be the time to see if they can cling to the Lord. Many a man serves God well so long as he is afflicted, but forgets Him when the affliction is removed. There was a saying of the heathen that altars rarely smoke on account of new joys. Solomon found the possession of wealth his greatest trial. Temptations could be resisted in days of strenuous effort and toil which were yielded to in days of ease and prosperity. IV. GOD APPRECIATES MAN'S GRATITUDE. To "bless" is really to praise in worship. Yet the thought underlying the conception is that man can render to God that which will add to His joy. Though He is the ever-blessed God, He cares for the love of His children. His nature is love, and therefore He both gives us blessing and craves our hearts in return. (*R. C. Ford, M.A.*)

Vers. 11–17. **Beware that thou forget not the Lord.**—*National wealth*:—Here we have Moses' answer to the first great question in politics—What makes a nation prosperous? To that wise men have already answered, as Moses answered, "Good government; government according to the laws of God." But the multitude, who are not wise men, give a different answer. They say, "What makes a nation prosperous is its wealth. If Britain be only rich, then she must be safe and right." I. MOSES DOES NOT DENY THAT WEALTH IS A GOOD THING. He takes for granted that they will grow rich; but he warns them that their riches, like all other earthly things, may be a curse or a blessing to them. Nay, that they are not good in themselves, but mere tools which may be used for good or for evil. II. AND HEREIN HE SHOWS HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE HUMAN HEART; for it is a certain fact that whenever any nation has prospered, then they have, as Moses warned the Jews, forgotten the Lord their God, and said, "My power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth." And it is true, also, that whenever any nation has begun to say that, they have fallen into confusion and misery, and sometimes into utter ruin, till they repented and remembered the Lord their God, and found out that the strength of a nation did not consist in riches, but in virtue. For it is He that giveth the power to get wealth. He gives it in two ways. First, God gives the raw material; secondly, He gives the wit to use it. This, then, was what Moses commanded—to remember that they owed all to God. What they had, they had of God's free gift. What they were, they were by God's free grace. Therefore they were not to boast of themselves, their numbers, their wealth, their armies, their fair and fertile land. They were to make their boast of God and of God's goodness. This they were to remember, because it was true. And this we are to remember, because it is more or less true of us. God has made of us a great nation; God has discovered to us the immense riches of this land. It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves. III. YOU WILL SEE THAT MOSES WARNS THEM THAT IF THEY FORGOT GOD THE LORD, WHO BROUGHT THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT, THEY WOULD GO AFTER OTHER GODS. He cannot part the two things. If they forget that God brought them out of Egypt, they will turn to idolatry, and so end in ruin. And so shall we. If we forget that God is the living God, who brought our forefathers into this land, who has revealed to us the wealth of it step by step as we needed it, who is helping and blessing us now, every day, and all the year round—then we shall begin worshipping other gods, worshipping the so-called laws of nature, instead of God who made the laws, and so honouring the creature above the Creator; or else we shall worship the pomps and vanities of this world—pride and power, money and pleasure—and say in our hearts, "These are our only gods which can help us, these must we obey." Which if we do, this land of England will come to ruin and shame, as surely as did the land of Israel in old time. (*C. Kingsley, M.A.*) *Forgetful of God*:—"Forget not." God hates forgetfulness of His blessings —1. Because He has commanded that we should not forget them (Deut. iv. 9). 2. Because forgetfulness is a sign of contempt. 3. It is the peculiarity of singular carelessness. 4. It springs from unbelief. 5. It is the greatest mark of ingratitude. (*Thos. le Blanc.*) *Danger of riches*:—Mr. Cecil had a hearer who, when a young man, had solicited his advice, but who had not for some time had an interview with him. Mr. C—— one day went to his house on horseback, being unable to walk, and after his usual salutations, addressed him thus: "I understand you are very dangerously situated." Here he paused, and his friend replied, "I am not

aware of it, sir." "I thought it was probable you were not, and therefore I have called on you. I hear you are getting rich; take care, for it is the road by which the devil leads thousands to destruction!" This was spoken with such solemnity and earnestness, that it made a deep and lasting impression. *Prosperity and spiritual ruin*:—A friend recently told me of a beautiful elm in his garden that for centuries had withstood the fury of winter's storms. On one still summer's morning, however, he was startled by a crash, followed by the rustling fall of a huge limb. The thing was unaccountable, for not a breath of air was stirring, and the broken branch was perfectly sound. At length the gardener gave the explanation. It was the calm itself that had wrought or occasioned the mischief. All through the tranquil night copious dews had fallen, and every leaf had caught and held as in a closed chalice the copious deposit, whose countless drops bore with an oppressive weight upon the branches until the one in question could no longer endure the strain. Had the slightest breath of air been stirring, so as to disturb the leaves and empty their tiny reservoirs, they would have rained their riches of moisture upon the soil beneath, and the elm would have continued to flourish in unmutilated majesty. Prosperity often accomplishes the spiritual ruin that adversity failed to effect. (*J. Halsey.*) *God forgotten*:—A Glasgow minister was sitting on a coach beside the driver on a lonely Highland road, and saw in the distance an old woman, who looked wistfully towards the coach. As it came near her face showed by turns anxiety, hope, and fear, and as the coach passed, the driver, with downcast eyes and sad expression, shook his head, and she returned disappointed to her cottage. Being much affected by what he saw, the minister asked an explanation of the driver. The driver said that for several years she had watched daily for the coach, expecting either to see her son or to receive a letter from him. The son had gone to one of our great cities, and had forgotten the mother who loved him so dearly. But the mother went every day to meet the coach, trusting that one day her son would return to her. Such a tale makes our heart bleed for the parent who was cruelly forsaken, but many forget how badly they are treating their heavenly Father when they forsake Him and refuse to return to Him. *Forgetfulness of God*:—Among the legends of Hindostan is this:—Rawana, a Brahmin, was offered by his god anything that he might name. Rawana prayed his god to bestow upon him the government of the world. His god immediately granted his wish. Then he prayed for ten heads with which to see and rule the world. After Rawana had well fortified himself, and was surrounded by riches, honours, and praise, he forgot his god Ixora, and bade all the people worship him, an act which greatly angered the god Ixora, and he destroyed Rawana. How true to human nature was the course of Rawana! and how many we find to-day that have forgotten the God that gave them all they possess! (*J. Bibb.*) **Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness.** *The Christian aspect and use of politics*:—It is a common saying in these days that politics, as the phrase is, "run high," and are likely to continue to run high for some years to come. And this is perfectly true, so far as the present is concerned, and is likely to prove true in the future also. Great issues have to be fought out. The area, too, over which the interest in politics is felt has been widened by the spread of education and the extension of political rights. Men's convictions and affections and prejudices and passions are deeply engaged in the questions of the day. They feel and speak warmly on one side and on the other. And the result is what we see, and perhaps, to a certain extent, suffer from. The Christian ministry would stand self-condemned if it had not a word in season to say at a time like the present. To bring the whole subject to the purest light, which is the light of Christ; to lift our thoughts to the highest point of view; to connect present trials and difficulties with our life as men, and as Christian men, so that they may become no longer injurious to us, but a wholesome discipline—this is the object of the present discourse. 1. A time of political stir and agitation, when great questions are being discussed and settled, is in many ways much better than a time of apathy and stagnation. If it calls out some of the fiercer passions of our nature, it calls out also the nobler qualities. It helps to make the political atmosphere, if more stormy, yet less liable to become venal, corrupt, and impure. A recent traveller in America, an observer of much acuteness, has remarked upon the gravity, the seriousness, the seeming melancholy of the American character. Can it be matter of surprise that it should be so? Could a nation pass through a tremendous crisis like that of the still recent civil war without bearing the mark of it upon its brow for many a long year after-

wards? Is it the dream of a visionary or of an enthusiast to hope that the critical times through which our own beloved country is passing may leave a permanent impress for good upon the national character? 2. But this view of the gain which may accrue to all true manliness of character, through the demand at present made upon it, requires to be extended and modified by an additional consideration. We must not forget that what we want is not a heathen, but a Christian manliness. And this involves higher qualities, such as gentleness, considerateness, courtesy, sympathy, as well as the sterner stuff of truth and courage and endurance. England's great need at the present day is of wise counsels and of gentle hands, to heal the wounds of society, to interpret the various sections and classes to each other, and to unite them together, so that all may seek the common good and feel that they are all members of one commonwealth. Those wounds of society are deep and many. Pauperism, drunkenness, crime, ignorance, vice, misery; who can reflect on these giant evils, these horrible sores, of our social state, without feeling that the triumph of a party is not worth a moment's thought compared with the removal of such evils and the cure of such diseases? 3. If I were to look for a motto, which I might take it upon me to recommend to all those who are in any way engaged or interested in politics, I should select that noble Christian rule which St. Peter gives us, "Honour all men." No three words that I know of cut more decisively at the root, whether of the false Toryism which delights in patronising and domineering, or of the false Liberalism which hates all that is above itself and longs to pull it down to its own level, but has no wish to raise what is below, and whose ruling spring is not a genuine human sympathy, but pure selfishness and scorn. Yes, "honour all men"; not the few only who are above us, but the many who are below us. The grounds of this noble Christian motto lie deep in the Gospel of Christ. That common human nature, which Christ Himself, the Son of God, has condescended to wear, cannot but be a sacred thing in the eyes of all His followers. But more than this, it stands in such close fundamental connection with Him, and He with it, that in honouring it we are in fact honouring Him. 4. In sober truth and earnest, the responsibility which attaches to every citizen, even the humblest, of our common country at a time like this, is a heavy one, and might well avail to call out all the dignity, honour, and manliness that are in each, though too often, it may be, latent there. Each contributes something by word, by influence, by sympathy, to present tendencies. Each contributes some drop, as it were, to the mighty tide, which is bearing us onwards into the future. Each is therefore helping now to determine what that future shall be; our own future, our children's future, our country's future. Act neither from fear nor favour. Act as in the sight of God, looking to Him to purify our motives, to inspire us with wisdom and courage, to make us tolerant, too, and conciliatory, as well as steadfast and resolute. Then we shall be blessed ourselves, and our country will be blessed also. 5. Lastly, let it never be forgotten by us that, come what may, God's kingdom is over all. (*Canon D. J. Vaughan.*)

The journey towards the promised land:—These words were addressed by Moses to the Israelites when, having at length reached the end of their protracted wanderings through the wilderness, they were on the point of taking possession of the promised land. The veteran leader exhorts his companions in toil and suffering to cast a retrospective glance on the memorable period of their existence which is now drawing to its close, and to consider it as a time of humiliation, of trial, of providential education, necessary to fit them for the possession of Canaan after the thraldom of Egypt. The application of this text is simple: Israel is the people of God. Egypt, that house of bondage, is sin; the slavery of the prince of darkness. Canaan, that promised land, is heaven. The wilderness, the great and howling wilderness through which God leads us, is the world of sin and suffering, in which He leaves us yet awhile. Let us consider these words in relation to our past, present, and future, and endeavour to understand the solemn significance and sublime end of our earthly pilgrimage. I. THE PAST. The time which immediately followed the rescue of Israel from Egypt was undoubtedly one of the grandest epochs in the history of that people. With one voice they sang that magnificent song, the most ancient and one of the finest monuments of that noblest of all poetry — Hebrew poetry (Exod. xv.). But alas! how shortlived was this enthusiasm! Deliverance was followed by protracted trial. Instead of the gates of Canaan open to receive them, the Israelites found only a great and terrible wilderness through which God led them, against their will, towards the ultimate good He had in view for them. Is not this an image of ourselves? Who is there

that has not felt similar emotions to those experienced by the Israelites on the morrow of the passage of the Red Sea? On the high road to the promised land, with the foretaste of eternal life in our hearts, in the fervour of our first love, in the outburst of our gratitude, we gladly exclaim with Simeon: "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace." And it is from the very depths of our heart that, as we take our first step towards the fatherland, we renew the engagement of the Israelites of old, and promise that, "All the Lord hath spoken we will do." But the descent from these sublime heights soon commences. To what may our experience at such times be compared? You have seen, after a dark night, the sun begin its daily course in more than ordinary radiance, the sky is a glowing canopy of gold and purple, the earth revels in floods of light; . . . then, by degrees, this brightness dims; clouds, at first almost imperceptible, thicken and condense in the atmosphere; the sky becomes overcast, and the horizon is dull and cold; the rain begins to fall, thin, uninterrupted, penetrating, and the heart grows heavy and chill. Such, in most cases, is the long day of human life after the transient dawn which announces or precedes conversion, and from the depths of your soul do you not call this a great and terrible wilderness? Have you never murmured or asked yourself the question: "Wherefore this long journey through this barren land?" II. THE PRESENT. "The Lord thy God hath led thee." What memories were these words calculated to awaken in the mind of the Israelites? If God ever manifested the providence of Omnipotence in a striking manner upon earth, it certainly was during the wanderings of His people through the desert. And though the Divine providence that leads us on in our turn be not miraculous, as during the journey of the Hebrews, it is, however, none the less real and marvellous. That which the people of God witnessed by the eye of the body may yet be manifest to the eye of faith. The mercies of former days are pledges of those we are permitted to expect in the present. But wherefore this wilderness? Why not immediate peace, triumph, and glory? Hear the answer of Him whose every act tends to an excellent end: "That He might humble thee, to prove thee." The purpose of the Lord was to bring the will of His people into subjection, to train them to obedience, to sanctify them in the highest and noblest sense of the word. And everything down to the minutest details was chosen, ordained, calculated with a view to the ultimate result. Thus it is with us. We are placed, here below, in presence of a maturity to be attained; and no fruit can ripen unless it has felt the burning rays of the sun. We are being educated, and there can be no thorough education without stern discipline. We are going towards a promised land, but the path to it lies through a valley of tears. Between this conception, which is that of faith and a blind fatalism, the very thought of which is bewildering, there is no middle course. It is good for us to be tried. If we knew naught of "the sufferings of this present time," should we know "the weight of glory which shall be revealed to usward" which they are meant to bring forth? Let us beware, however, lest by our folly we add to our measure of affliction, and thus constrain the Lord to humble and chasten us beyond His own purpose. III. THE FUTURE. "To do thee good at thy latter end." The constant end of God is good. Faith reveals to us and the Scriptures declare that "all things work together for good," &c. Even upon earth, whoever remembers all the way which the Lord his God hath led him, finds at the end of each trial a mature fruit, "the peaceable fruit of righteousness," to be received ultimately. And what shall it be when the fashion of this world hath passed away, and all the ends of the Lord with a view to the final good of His saints shall be manifested? These forty years of pilgrimage through the wilderness were a sore trial for Israel. But how glorious was the day when at length they reached the end, and obtained the reward of so much toil and suffering! Who, then, remembered the weariness of the road save to praise Jehovah, who had led them to so goodly an inheritance? For us also there shall be a crossing of Jordan and an entrance into the heavenly Canaan, of which the earthly was but a feeble type. We, too, shall have our day of triumph, a day when the sun, which marks the stages of our journey, shall set amid the shadows of a last eventide, to rise again for us radiant and cloudless for evermore. God's purpose is to do us good at our latter end! Forward, then, in peace and hope! Soon all things shall become new! Faith to-day; sight to-morrow! Weariness now; rest by and by! Here the desert; beyond the promised land! Forward! Excelsior! (*Frank Coulin, D.D.*) **Scorpions.**—*The scorpion:*—Our subject is the scorpion—a dreadful insect which is as full of lessons as it is of venom. The scorpion is in reality a terrible kind of spider, and has the

venom claw at the end of its body, not in its jaw. Scorpions do not look unlike lobsters, as we see them collected in a basket on their way to the market. These uncomfortable creatures, the scorpions, manage in some way to secrete themselves in hidden nooks and corners, and one experienced in travelling in the East—where scorpions abound—will be careful where he takes his seat until he has discovered whether there are any scorpions or venomous spiders hidden under the rocks near where he may happen to be. The scorpion has a peculiar venom, some of the larger scorpions being able to make a man very ill, and even to kill him if he should be one subject to inflammation. The scorpions were so much feared by the early Christians and the apostles of our Lord, that we find He promised them safety from their stings, and the bite of poisonous reptiles. So much, then, for the scorpion. Let us now learn the lessons which this venomous creature teaches us. I. First of all, we learn from the scorpion—THE LESSON OF THE HIDDEN POWER OF VENOM. Venomous thoughts are thoughts of malice, and spite, and malignity; that is why we always want to kill a viper, or a snake, or a black spider, because we know that it is filled with venom, or poison, or some noxious material, which will give us pain or perhaps cause our death. A venomous writer is one who is malignant and mischievous. A venomous neighbour is one who is spiteful, and has evil designs upon us. We don't know how it is that we have this evil within us; but it is very evident that in some way venom is within us, just as truly as it is within the poisonous scorpion. Let us beware of this hidden power of venom within us, for the poison as "of asps" is indeed under our lips. II. The second lesson we learn from the scorpion is—THE LESSON OF THE POISONING POWER OF SIN. The following illustrates what we mean. In the chemical laboratories of our colleges there are many experiments made which show us the wonderful power of a single drop of poison. A great bottle of colourless water will become a thick and clouded white in an instant by the addition of a single drop of the prepared chemical; and one drop of poison, such as strychnia, will paralyse in an instant a living being, such as the gold-fish, turtles, and tadpoles which we see in a vase of water. But none of these poisons is so powerful as the poison of sin (James i. 15). I was reading, some time ago, a story which shows us the poisoning power of sin. A man who wished to buy a handsome ring went into a jeweller's in Paris. The jeweller showed him a very ancient gold ring, remarkably fine, and curious on this account, that on the inside of it were two little lion's claws. The buyer, while looking at the others, was playing with this. At last he purchased another, and went away. But he had scarcely reached home, when first his hand, then his side, then his whole body became numb and without feeling, as if he had a stroke of palsy; and it grew worse and worse, till the physician, who came in haste, thought him dying. "You must have somehow taken poison," he said. The sick man protested that he had not. At length some one remembered this ring; and it was then discovered to be what used to be called a death-ring, and which was often employed in those wicked Italian States three or four hundred years ago. If a man hated another, and desired to murder him, he would present him with one of them. In the inside was a drop of deadly poison, and a very small hole out of which it would not make its way except when squeezed. When the poor man was wearing it, the murderer would come and shake his hand violently, the lion's claw would give his finger a little scratch, and in a few hours he was a dead man. III. The third, and last, lesson that we learn from the scorpion is—THE LESSON OF THE MISERY OF SPITEFULNESS. There is nothing in life so miserable and contemptible as the spirit of spitefulness; that is, the spirit of envy at another's success. There is something spiteful and venomous about the bite of an insect or reptile: a bite from a mosquito, a spider, or a snake will always make us think of the spitefulness of the creature that has bitten us. (*R. Newton, D.D.*)

Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna.—*The manna which humbled Israel:* —What was there in God's gift of manna to humble Israel? We should rather think it placed them in a high and distinguished rank among nations. Whom else did God feed thus? It did exalt Israel; it did point him out and distinguish him far above the Hittites or Jebusites, or even the voluptuous and powerful Egyptians; and yet it humbled him. To humble is not to humiliate; humility is not humiliation. When shall humility be at its height? When tears and sighs and sickness and poverty have brought you down to the very grave? No such thing. When death has paralysed every power of body, and perhaps shaken the mind itself into a wreck? No such thing. When the world sneers and contemns your piety, and calls you the filth and offscouring of all things? No such thing.

But look onward! look upward! Who are they falling down before Him that sitteth upon the throne, and casting their crowns at His feet? They are redeemed, and crowned, and glorified spirits; they are the most humble of our race; humility is made perfect, not in sorrows and scoffs, but there, midst harps and crowns and palms and songs. And since the Lord will thus perfect your humility by crowning you and receiving you to heaven, it is no hard matter to suppose that God might give Israel manna "to humble" them. The fact, then, is certain; but how is it brought about? by what process did the manna humble Israel? First of all it did so by the mystery of its dispensation; and thus Moses distinctly calls it "manna which thy fathers knew not." Neither Abraham nor Isaac nor Jacob had seen such a thing; the oldest Israelite had never eaten such food; it was "manna which thy fathers knew not." And the Israelites then alive were equally ignorant of its nature; with the manna actually before them it was still a mystery to them. They could not tell how it came, or whence it came, they simply could say they gathered it. And then there was the gathering, equally unaccountable. It was gathered in the morning, yet if any man should grudge his daily labour of collecting it, and his daily recognition of Him who gave it—if any man should try to make one morning's collection do for two days' food, behold on the morrow his pot of manna is a pot of corruption, and instead of food he finds worms. And then if any Israelite should dare to forget or to outrage the Sabbath by not collecting a double portion on the sixth day, he finds the ground all bare; the wilderness is arid and fruitless as ever; for bread he finds stones. But how did all this mystery humble them? Why, it taught them, and made them feel their own ignorance. Let the Jew take up that "small round thing as small as the hoar frost on the ground," and let him tell me how it is made or whence it came. Not all the subtle learning of Egypt, which some of them doubtlessly possessed, could teach them this lesson; that grain of food is a puzzle for 603,000 men besides the Levites; the manna tended to humble them. And so with you. True, you have no food sent and gathered in a most incomprehensible manner; but every mercy you have which you do not understand takes its place side by side with the manna, and on the self-same principle ought to humble you. How, Christian, wast thou born again? "The wind bloweth where it listeth," &c. And what is every step in the believer's career but a mystery of love—a mystery of grace? "Great is the mystery of godliness"—great in the work of redemption by Christ—great in the application of that work by His Spirit—all, all, a great mystery from first to last. And shall we, standing as we do amidst the crowd of deep and awful truths—shall we, feeling in our own hearts that love "which passeth knowledge," and that power which like a hidden magnet draws us to holiness and God—shall we, surrounded by the "deep things of God"—shall we be aught else than nothing in our own sight? But, again, the gift of manna tended to produce this humbling effect by its greatness. I am not disposed to elevate the importance of "the meat which perisheth," or to prove the vastness of God's gift to Israel by the fact that myriads of lives depended on the regular supply of this food. Neither will I dwell on the abundance in which manna strewed the spot of Israel's encampment; there was no lack in any tent of Jacob; the patriarch of a large family fared as well as though he had been childless and alone. Want was unknown in that mighty camp; all was plenty. Now this abundance alone would prove the greatness of God's gift; but we may rest our proof on higher grounds, and assert that whatever the nature of the manna, and whether sparingly or profusely given, the simple fact that God gave it makes it at once a great and unspeakable gift. A present from a great man is esteemed great from the very greatness of the donor. If the King were to give you some token of his regard, let it be trifling as it will—a mere bauble—yet how highly would you prize it! a case of gold is not too precious a casket for it. What, then, must be a gift from God! The greatness therefore of Him who gave Israel manna, and the love which the provision displayed, made it a great gift. But how did its magnitude tend to humble Israel? Why, by calling to Israel's continual remembrance their own unworthiness, and God's matchless and free mercy. And, surely the bounty of your Lord affects you in the same way; it must teach you your unworthiness. "The goodness of God leadeth you to repentance"; and thus Paul entreats the Romans, "I beseech you by the mercies of God." It must be a callous and a dead heart which does not feel its baseness whilst filling itself with new and full supplies of Divine goodness. The son may be hardened by rebuke or by punishment; he may be callous to recollections of past affection and care; but often as he holds out his hand to receive some gift of his pardoning father, that

seared conscience speaks, that hard heart breaks, that rebellious arm trembles, and he who could dare a father's curse shrinks and quails before a father's gift, his unworthiness pressing on him with a weight he never felt before, and mercy accusing him more powerfully than all the reproaches which lips could utter. And in spirituals you will find there is nothing which impresses the soul with so deep a sense of guilt as a sense of Divine mercy. I may reckon up a long catalogue of your sins; I may tell you of all the guilty deeds you have done since childhood; but if I can, by the grace and power of the Spirit, put into your heart one evidence of Christ's love for sinners, I have done more towards your conviction of guilt than if I had opened the two tables of law, and tried your every act by the light of judgment. Sins will strike a man low, but God's mercies will gently lay him lower still. The penitent often sinks deeply and more deeply in the slough of despond; but there is a place where his position is lower still—it is the Cross of Christ; and when we need to learn or teach a lesson of self-renunciation, you may depend upon it the best subject for study is not the magnitude and the multitude of your sins alone, but the magnitude and the multitude of the Lord's mercies. (*D. F. Jarman, M.A.*)

Ver. 18. **Remember the Lord thy God, for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth.**—*To remember God is the way to get wealth:*—1. THE DUTY ENJOINED. Thou shalt remember the Lord, &c. 1. In point of contemplation to remember Him, that is, to think of Him, and to have Him often in our minds. There's no man that forgets his treasure; wherever that is, there will be also his heart, as our Saviour tells us. We need not call upon worldly men to remember their gold and silver and riches, they will think upon these of their own accord, and all because such things as these are dear with them. In like manner will it be with us to God; if He be our treasure, we shall remember and daily think of Him, as it is fitting for us to do. 2. As in point of contemplation, so also in point of affection. We are said to remember any one, not when barely we think upon him, but when we think upon him with respect, when he is not only in our thoughts but in our hearts. And thus likewise are we said to remember God. 3. In point of obedience to remember God is to be subject to Him, and to do that which He requires. Those that walk in ways of opposition and contrariety to God, they are said to forget Him. Consider this ye that forget God (Psa. l. 22). 4. In point of address and seeking to Him, and reliance and dependence upon Him. When anything is to be done by us, or for us, that we be sure to call upon God Himself for the prospering of it to us (Prov. iii. 5, 6). 5. In point of thankfulness and acknowledgment we are then said to remember God, when we own Him in all the mercies which we enjoy from Him. This is the proper drift of this present Scripture, as we may see by the context, in vers. 10, 11, &c., of this chapter. When thou hast eaten and art full, thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which He hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping His commandments and His judgments, &c. Because, indeed, it is that which we are naturally and commonly too prone and subject unto. (1) From His sovereignty, that He is the Lord, we should remember Him for that, and accordingly yield all respect and acknowledgment to Him. (2) From the word of propriety, and that interest which He has in us and we in Him: "Thy God." II. THE REASON ANNEXED. For it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth, which passage may be considered two ways. First, in its absolute consideration; and, secondly, in its connexion. We will look upon it first of all in the former consideration, as it is absolute, and by way of proposition. 1. Emphatically. When it is said here He gives power, this power, it may be said, laid forth according to sundry explications. (1) He gives the skill and faculty which does tend and conduce hereunto. All your arts and trades of your several societies in the city, and ability for the managing of them, God is the author and giver of them. And being the giver of them, He is also consequently the giver of that wealth that comes by them. He gives thee power to get wealth, while He gives thee skill and understanding. And this again not only in the general habit, but also as to the particular act and improvement and the exercise of that habit which is in Him. (2) He gives thee power to get wealth, that is, He gives thee occasion and opportunity to do so. Thus in a way of husbandry, there is the seasonableness of the weather. Thus in a way of merchandise, there is the favourableness of the seas and waters and winds, which are at God's command and disposing. (3) The power of success: it is He that gives this likewise, when all things are prepared in the means as much as can be, yet there is a further blessing

which is required for the perfecting of them. And this is also from God Himself. It is the blessing of the Lord that makes rich, and adds no sorrow with it, as Solomon tells us (Prov. x. 22). (4) It is God that gives thee power to get wealth; that is, that gives thee grace, and makes thy gettings to be lawful to thee. To get wealth in God's way and according to His approbation; this is power to get wealth indeed. And this also, together with all the former, is the gift of God. 2. Exclusively. When it is said here that He gives this power, this is to be taken not only emphatically, but exclusively; and so there are these intimations in it. (1) That wealth and riches and great estates they are not matters of mere accident, and casualty, and chance; but that there is a special hand of Providence in them. (2) It is not from ourselves neither, that we do any time come to be rich and to increase in wealth. It is the gift of God. (3) It is not from other men neither, it is exclusive of them. Parents and friends and progenitors, and such as these. Indeed, Solomon tells us in one place that houses and riches are the inheritance of fathers (Prov. xix. 14). But this must be understood so far as they are able to make them, which is not absolutely, but with its restriction. How many have there been in the world who, though they have had great estates left them by others, yet notwithstanding have been poor themselves; and have not known either how to increase or how to keep that which has been left them. We have seen how He does it emphatically; He is not wanting in doing it; we have seen also how He does it exclusively. There is none to purpose that does it but He. First, He gives thee power to keep it; and, secondly, He gives thee power to use it. (*T. Horton, D.D.*) *The theology of money*:—What a blow this text strikes at one of the most popular and mischievous fallacies in common life, namely, that man is the maker of his own money! Men who can see God in the creation of worlds cannot see Him suggesting an idea in business, smiling on the plough, guiding the merchant's pen, and bringing summer into a brain long winter-bound and barren. Lebanon and Bashan are not more certainly Divine creations than are the wool and flax which cover the nakedness of man. To the religious contemplation, the sanctified and adoring mind, the whole world is one sky-domed church, and there is nothing common or unclean. God wishes this fact to be kept in mind by His people. In this instance, as in many others, God makes His appeal to recollection: "Thou shalt remember." The fact is to be ever present to the memory; it is to be as a star by which our course upon troubled waters is to be regulated; it is to be a mystic cloud in the daytime, a guiding fire in the night season. The rich memory should create a rich life. An empty memory is a continual temptation. Mark the happy consequences of this grateful recollection. First of all, God and wealth are ever to be thought of together. "The silver and the gold are Mine." There is but one absolute proprietor. We hold our treasures on loan; we occupy a stewardship. Consequent upon this is a natural and most beautiful humility. "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" When the trader sits down in the evening to count his day's gains, he is to remember that the Lord his God gave him power to get wealth. When the workman throws down the instrument of his labour that he may receive the reward of his toil, he is to remember that the Lord his God gave him power to get wealth. When the young man receives the first payment of his industry, he is to remember that the Lord his God gave him power to get wealth. Thus the getting of money becomes a sacred act. This, then, is the fundamental principle upon which Christians are to proceed, namely, that God giveth man power to get wealth, and consequently that God sustains an immediate relation to the property of the world. Take the case of a young man just entering business. If his heart is uneducated and unwatched, he will regard business as a species of gambling; if his heart be set upon right principles, he will esteem business as a moral service, as the practical side of his prayers, a public representation of his best desires and convictions. In course of time the young man realises money on his own account. Looking at his gold and silver, he says, "I made that." There is a glow of honest pride on his cheek. He looks upon the reward of his industry, and his eyes kindle with joy. Whilst he looks upon his first-earned gold, the Bible says to him gently and persuasively, "Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth." Instantly his view of property is elevated, enlarged, sanctified. He was just about to say that his own arm had gotten him the victory, and to forget that, though the image is Cæsar's, yet the gold is God's. What, then, is the natural line of thought through which the successful man would run under such circumstances? It would lie in some such direction as this: What can be the meaning of this word "remember"? Does it not call me

to gratitude? Is it not intended to turn my heart and my eye heavenward? As God has given me "power to get wealth," am I not bound to return some recognition of His goodness and mercy? "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase." Supposing this to be done, what is the result which is promised to accrue? That result is stated in terms that are severely logical: "So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." The text has called us to an act of remembrance, and in doing so has suggested the inquiry whether there is any such act of remembrance on the part of God Himself? The Scripture is abundant in its replies to this inquiry: "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed towards His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." Jesus Christ Himself has laid down the same encouragement with even minuter allusion: "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The philosophy of worldly success*:—1. How worldly success is to be obtained. By strict obedience to God's laws; by this only. Work is what He demands, and work is the only condition under which the prize may be won. 2. The nature of the profit we are to look for. Not merely worldly profit. No life so dreary, so deadly as that of the mere millionaire. The joys of the true man's life he cannot taste; the holy fellowships of spiritual being he cannot enter: God stamps him reprobate. There is a vast wealth of faculty in him, "fusting" from want of use. And power unused soon gets acrid, and mordant, and gnaws and wears within. 3. Why we should remember the Lord God. Because—(1) It will bring us out at once into the glad sunlight, and will make even our toil lightsome. (2) It will spare us all wearing and crushing anxieties. (3) It will save us the shame and anguish of finding ourselves bankrupt at last and for ever. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*) *God acknowledged*:—When Speaker Crooke was presented to Queen Elizabeth in the House of Lords on the occasion of his election, he said that England had been defended against the Spaniards and their Armada by Her Majesty's mighty arm. The Queen interrupted him, and from her throne, said: "No; but by the mighty hand of God, Mr. Speaker." *God the original source of wealth*:—He that would thus critically examine his estate upon interrogatories, put every part of it upon the rack and torture to confess without any disguise from whence it came, whether down the ladder from heaven, or up out of the deep—for there it seems by the poets Plutus or riches hath a residence also—by what means it was conveyed, by whose directions it travelled into that coast, and what the end of its coming is, and so learn the genealogy as it were of all his wealth, would certainly acknowledge that he were fallen upon a most profitable inquiry. For beside that he would find out all the ill-gotten treasure, that gold of Toulouse that is so sure to help melt all the rest, that which is gotten by sacrilege, by oppression, by extortion, and so take timely advice to purge his lawful inheritance from such noisome unwholesome acquisitions, and thrive the better for ever after the taking so necessary a purgation—he will, I say, over and above see the original of all his wealth, all that is worthy to be called such, either immediately or mediately from God, immediately without any co-operation of ours, as that which is left to us by inheritance from honest parents—our fortunes and our Christianity together, mediately as that which our lawful labour, our planting and watering hath brought down upon us, wholly from God's prospering or giving of increase.

Vers. 19, 20. **If thou do at all forget the Lord.**—*Forgetfulness of God, destruction to the soul*:—I. WHAT IS THAT FORGETFULNESS OF GOD OF WHICH THE PRESENT EFFECTS ON OUR MORAL AND RELIGIOUS CHARACTER ARE SO HIGHLY INJURIOUS, AND OF WHICH THE FUTURE CONSEQUENCES IN REGARD TO OUR ETERNAL PROSPECTS ARE SO DREADFULLY FATAL. 1. If any persons can rise up and lie down, go out and come in, day after day, and week after week, with scarcely a transient thought of Him whose hand has sustained them, whose long-suffering has borne with them, and whose bountiful goodness has supplied their various wants, those persons are clearly chargeable with forgetfulness of the Lord their God. 2. The same guilt must also lie at our door, if we are habitually unmindful of the attributes of God; and, particularly, of His omnipresence. 3. The same may justly be said of him who allows himself to think of his Creator under a different character from that in which He has revealed Himself to mankind in His holy Word. II. THE FEARFUL DOOM WHICH IS DENOUNCED IN THE WORDS OF THE TEXT AGAINST THOSE WHO ARE GUILTY OF THE SINS THERE FORBIDDEN. The expression, "to perish," when used

in the Scriptures in a judicial sense, to describe the punishment of sin, does not mean the suffering of temporal death only—it further signifies the spiritual death of man's immortal part. (*C. Townsend, M.A.*) *A caution against forgetfulness of God*:—I. MEN ARE LIABLE TO FORGET GOD. 1. We infer our liability to forget God, from the mysteriousness of His nature. 2. We infer our liability to forget God, from the moral dislike we have to Him. 3. We infer our liability to forget God, from the facts that fall under our notice. 4. We infer our liability to forget God, from the testimonies of the Scriptures (Psa. x. 4, xiv. 1–3; Job xxi. 14, 15; Rom. i. 28). II. FORGETFULNESS OF GOD IS AN EVIL AGAINST WHICH WE SHOULD BE PECULIARLY ON OUR GUARD. This is the intimation in the text, and the reasons on which it is founded are—1. They who forget God must necessarily remain ignorant of Him. 2. They who forget God must necessarily disobey Him. 3. They who forget God must necessarily prove ungrateful to Him. 4. They who forget God must necessarily be punished by Him (Psa. ix. 17; Judges iii. 7, 8). III. MEANS SHOULD BE USED FOR THE AVOIDANCE OF THIS HEINOUS CRIME. This is the object of the charge: "Beware that thou forget not," &c. 1. Serious consideration should be exercised on all the things that belong unto our peace. 2. Fervent and unremitting prayer should be offered up to God for a change of heart. 3. We should constantly avoid those things which tend to exclude God from our thoughts. 4. Let us use all the means which tend to turn our thoughts towards God. Let us associate with the pious—frequent religious ordinances—read God's most holy Word—contemplate death, judgment, and eternity. In conclusion—(1) Inquire, Do we forget God? This may serve as a discriminating mark of moral character. Christians love to think of God—sinners strive to forget Him. (2) Exhort those who forget God to consider their folly, their ingratitude, and their danger. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *Gratitude and ingratitude toward God*:—Such a passage belongs to the prophetico-historical order. The warnings are repeated with added force in chap. xxviii. The experience of Israel brings this general lesson, that the thought of the Divine goodness should lead men to show thankful gratitude to God, and to offer Him a willing service. Notice—I. THE REASONABLENESS OF RENDERING A GRATEFUL SERVICE TO GOD. 1. In the case of Israel the propriety for such a grateful service is clearly seen. All men owe obedience to God; but we should expect a highly-favoured people like Israel to render it in a high degree. Israel had been brought from slavery to freedom, and were promised and received as their inheritance a land most highly favoured. 2. Above all, the system of moral law and social order, and the Divine rule of the theocracy elevated them far above surrounding nations. In view of it all, there was reason that the people should yield to God a grateful service. 3. If the Israelites had reason for this, much more we. What was Britain when Imperial Rome held sway? What is it now, when Rome and many another proud dominion are but names? Do we not owe our higher light and liberty to the truth and freedom of the Gospel? As a nation we owe our God thankful gratitude and service. 4. As individual members of a great Christian people we owe gratitude to God. Contrast our condition with the savage tribes discovered by a Livingstone or Stanley; with the higher yet still idolatrous and superstitious Hindu; with a cannibal of the race so graphically described by a John G. Paton or the semi-barbarous Chinaman with his history reaching far into the past ages before our own began, but who yet has not risen above the grossest superstition and a most materialistic idea of existence. Contrast our blessings alike bestowed on cottage and palace, with the darkness that prevails among the peoples, and reason will be found for the exercise of grateful service. II. THE SIN OF INGRATITUDE. 1. The passage warns us against the danger of receiving and enjoying the gifts at the risk of forgetting the Divine Giver; all thought and energy are not to be applied to the acquisition of more and more of the gifts of this life to use them for our own use, &c. 2. Into this sin Israel fell. They became practical materialists. Even after the return from Babylon their enthusiasm for God's work soon faded (Hag. i.). So was it in our Lord's day; and the ingratitude was then heightened by hypocrisy (Matt. xxi. 33–46, xxiii. 26–39). Self and their own ease and glory were to them in reality, first; loving service toward God shown in works of love to their fellow-men was far from them. 3. Is not this the spirit of too many in our time? There is a perpetual striving after the gains and pleasures of time, not that they may better serve God and become better men and women, but that they may have more of ease, more of the passing fleeting joys of this brief existence. This feature is seen in every class of the community. The socialistic schemes of the

toiling millions are simply attempts to gain the kingdom of the material. But material possessions gained and received without due thankfulness to God and endeavours in His service, turn to dust and ashes in the using. Whereas if received with thankful hearts and used in His service, they may be transmuted and transformed into spiritual treasures, eternally enduring. III. THE EFFECT OF CULTIVATING THE SPIRIT OF GRATITUDE OR ITS OPPOSITE ON MATERIAL AND INDIVIDUAL LIFE. 1. When a nation, in its government and institutions, publicly acknowledges its indebtedness to God, and makes public profession of loyalty to Him, God shall add to its blessings. Examples are not wanting. 2. So with individuals. God may not send material wealth, &c. But He will give them reasons for the joyful assurance that He is with them, and of the certainty of His promises. Hope for time, and assured hope for eternity. The effect will be closer communion and more consecrated service. 3. Far other is the effect of forgetting God whilst receiving His gifts. Remember how it was with Israel (Isa. i. 3; Matt. xxiii. 38, 39). Hardness of heart, material living, God-forgetfulness, idolatry —these were the steps of descent. Nothing so tends to harden the heart and quench the spiritual life than God-forgetfulness and ingratitude in using the Divine gifts. There are still too many who reap luxuriant fields without due gratitude to Him who sent sunshine and rain, &c., who attribute their success, wealth, &c., to their own skill and industry, who add possession to possession without one thought of using them beyond the narrow circle of their own lives. 4. The Divine rule is the only safe one: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," &c. (Matt. vi. 33). Let the soul be right with God through forgiveness, &c., in Christ, then we shall be guided to seek and enabled to find what is best for our mortal life, and will best avail us in thankfully doing our Heavenly Master's work. (*Wm. Frank Scott.*)

CHAPTER IX.

VERS. 1–6. **Hear, O Israel.**—*The call to attention*:—I. HE REPRESENTS TO THEM THE FORMIDABLE STRENGTH OF THE ENEMIES WHICH THEY WERE NOW TO ENCOUNTER (vers. 1, 2). This representation is much the same with that which the evil spies had made (Numb. xiii. 28, 29, 31–33), but made with a very different intention: that was designed to drive them from God, and to discourage their hope in Him; this, to drive them to God, and engage their hope in Him, since no power less than that which is almighty could secure and succeed them. II. HE ASSURES THEM OF VICTORY, BY THE PRESENCE OF GOD WITH THEM, NOTWITHSTANDING THE STRENGTH OF THE ENEMY (ver. 3). Observe, "He shall destroy them," and then, "thou shalt drive them out." Thou canst not drive them out unless He destroy them, and bring them down; but He will not destroy them, and bring them down, unless thou set thyself in good earnest to drive them out. We must do our endeavour in dependence upon God's grace; and we shall have that grace, if we do our endeavour. III. HE CAUTIONS THEM NOT TO ENTERTAIN THE LEAST THOUGHT OF THEIR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS, AS IF THAT HAD PROCURED THEM THIS FAVOUR AT GOD'S HAND (vers. 4–6). In Christ we have both righteousness and strength; in Him, therefore, we must glory, and not in ourselves, or any sufficiency of our own. IV. HE INTIMATES TO THEM THE TRUE REASONS WHY GOD WOULD TAKE THIS GOOD LAND OUT OF THE HANDS OF THE CANAANITES, AND SETTLE IT UPON ISRAEL. 1. He will be honoured in the destruction of idolaters (vers. 4, 5). 2. He will be honoured in the performance of His promise to those that are in covenant with Him (ver. 5). (*Matthew Henry, D.D.*) **Thou art to pass over Jordan this day.**—*The Jordan*:—"Be the day weary, or be the day long, it ringeth at length to evensong." So the weary wanderings of God's people, long though they had been, were coming to an end at last. It has been a weary struggle to reach this river—the stream which lay between the wilderness and the promised land; just as, for that part of mankind who do not die young, the river of death is gained only through a long life, in which, while joys and sorrows are strangely mixed up, the sorrows form the largest portion. Every one ought to be looking forward to this time; a time when all personal activities will cease, when we shall have to loose our hold on those things which engross us now, and which we imagine could not go on without us. And one great

value of this looking forward to our death will be that we must at the same time look to our life, on which depends our death. Here, then, we are helped by meditating on the record which is left us of Israel's journeyings towards the river of Jordan. Bear in mind that they travelled on, filled with a steadfast faith and hope as to the reality of the promised inheritance, and led by the Spirit of God. It was not ever thus with them. At one time they hankered after old sins—after the bondage of Egypt; they thought at one time that life might hold joys enough for them, without the future hope. But God quietly taught them by what looked like anger—but which was really love—the vanity of all earthly things; and from that time forward the promised land was their loadstar, which guided all their life. Nor were they left without the direct guidance of the law of God. How many lives amongst us are wrecked, how many of us are marching in a circle, because we have no settled principle to guide us! Every side-path, every enticing glade, invites us to leave the strait way, and we follow it and find ourselves further from home than ever. Moreover, in addition to this law of God, Israel had the guidance of the ark, which was to them as the very presence of God Himself. The ark was to Israel as the Church of Christ is to ourselves, interpreting God's will, giving point to His law, making that law not merely a set of rules, but a great guiding principle in truest touch with our whole lives. And Israel had all this time battles to fight, which in their varied characteristics fitly represent the perpetual conflicts which we are called to endure. But while Amalek represents the attacks of the world and Satan, which all must expect and be prepared for, Edom, Israel's "brother," who comes against him with a great force, reminds us that we may be attacked and thwarted in our heavenward course by those who should speed us on our way. It is no new or uncommon thing for the ardent young Christian to feel, not only want of sympathy, but positive opposition from those near and dear to him in earthly relationship. Again, in the attack of Moab we see the very Word of God attempted to be used as a weapon against the faithful people. And is it not true that many a young Christian, whom no enticement of sin can influence, who cannot be tempted to rebel against God's moral laws, is assailed with awful effect by some one who comes bringing God's own Word in his hand, and suggesting doubts and difficulties and problems, which, once suggested, cannot be ignored by a truth-loving, ardent spirit? Through all these trials, there was ever before the eyes and thoughts of Israel the entering on the promised land—the crossing of the river. As they wandered on, they knew that this day was coming. And now it has come. "Ye are to pass over Jordan this day." A day is at hand when to each of us this summons will come. God will make us know, unmistakably, that the days of our pilgrimage are at an end, and that we are to enter upon our inheritance. There will be no more time for preparation. And in the case of Israel the same guiding Presence which has been with them from the first will be with them still. "The ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you." All that made the wilderness a home shall go with them, so that they shall not be afraid, though, as Joshua says, "ye have not passed this way heretofore." And as an earnest of what shall be, we have in our last hours the ministrations of Christ's holy Church to speed us on our way, even as the ark of God went before Israel. On this side, the manna to support us on our journey; and then no more types, but the "old corn of the land"—even Jesus Himself, the very true Bread of Life. (*E. Smith, B.A.*)

Vers. 4, 5. **Not for thy righteousness.**—*That outward success, prosperity, and greatness in the world is no true evidence of grace*:—I. MEN ARE VERY PRONE TO MAKE THE OUTWARD PROSPERITY AND INCREASE WHICH GOD GIVETH THEM AN ARGUMENT OF THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND SO OF GOD'S LOVE TO THEM, TO SAVE THEM. They think it impossible that, seeing God hath so blessed them here, He should damn them hereafter. For the discovery of the weakness of this prop take notice first of these particulars. 1. Prosperity, wealth, and success are in themselves blessings, mercies, and so good things to be desired. Hence we read of the people of God praying for these earthly mercies, and we have a direction for it in the Lord's Prayer, when we pray for daily bread. It is true, indeed, the very petition doth much limit our desires, for it is after the great things that belong to God's glory; and it is but one petition, whereas there are divers for spiritual things, so that our Saviour would have us to be above these earthly things, as those fowls of the heaven are which on a sudden fall on the ground for their food, but presently fly up to heaven again; and then it is daily food, or as the most learned expound it, food convenient, and decent for our place and calling, not superfluity. 2. Although

those are blessings and mercies, and so good things, yet they are not sanctifying of those that have them. Dives said he had good things laid up in store, but how were they good which made him bad? How were they good which could not keep him out of hell? Riches, therefore, are neither good nor bad, but indifferent in their nature. Those are good things which make us good. 3. As outward wealth and increase are blessings, so they do belong by promise unto godliness (1 Tim. iv. 8). I do not say with some divines that wicked men have no right to their goods, that they are usurpers, and shall answer for every bit of bread they eat, as robbers and thieves. No, it is a dangerous position to hold civil dominion and right to be placed upon godliness. The earth hath He given to the children of men, saith the Psalmist, to all men as well as to the godly; but as there is a lawful, civil right, so there is a sanctified use, and this only the godly have. 4. Although we cannot conclude grace by outward mercies, yet thus far we must by Scripture say, that God out of a general love in a providential way doth give many a man outward prosperity and wealth for his diligence, industry, upright and honest dealing in the world. Thus Solomon saith, "The hand of the diligent maketh rich," and truth and justice in our day is blessed by God to increase. 5. Some go into another extremity, and conclude of their good estate and holy condition because they are in a poor, needy, and miserable estate, and destitute of all earthly comforts. But every poor man is not a Lazarus, nay, there are many times none more wicked, cursed, profane, and enemies to all goodness, than those that are in a low and miserable condition. A woeful thing it is, indeed, to have nothing but misery here, and nothing but torments hereafter. II. WHY OUTWARD PROSPERITY AND BLESSINGS DO NOT ARGUE A MAN'S GOOD ESTATE. 1. It may be demonstrated from the original, or fountain, whence they flow. It is not only from God's love, but His anger also. Sometimes God giveth men the outward comforts of this life in His hot displeasure. 2. Therefore may not outward plenty and mercies be made a sign of our good estate, because they have always in corrupt hearts corrupt and sinful operations. As—(1) Outward comforts in the plenty of them are apt to beget pride and loftiness of heart, so as to despise and contemn those that are under them. (2) If these outward mercies deaden thy heart to the things of God, or the exercise of those means of grace God hath appointed, oh, thou hast cause then to tremble in the increase of them. (3) Then can outward abundance be no comfortable sign, when the means to get it and the way to preserve it are unlawful, and such as the Scripture condemneth. 3. Therefore may we not trust in outward prosperity, because God many times giveth a man all the good things he shall have in this life only, and afterwards there is nothing but everlasting woe and misery. 4. Therefore may we not trust in these, because we many times abuse them to a contrary end for which God gave them; He gave them to be instruments of much glory to God and good to others. Rich men are the greatest men in debt of all others; they owe much to God, much to the public, much to others' necessities; now what comfort canst thou take if God bless thee with these things if thou dost not also find Him making thee thereby instrumental to His glory? If thou keepest all the good mercies God vouchsafeth to thee, as the ants and pismires do their grain and corn, which they hide in their little hills, and, as they say, bite it that it may not grow. 5. They are not to be relied on, because though all power to get wealth and prosper in the world argue God is with thee, yet He may be only with thee providentially and powerfully, not graciously; as when Nebuchadnezzar conquered and prevailed, when Alexander became great, Augustus happy. God was with these in a mighty, providential way, but not graciously. Use—1. Of reproof to those who desire these outward good things more than inward and spiritual. Use—2. Of instruction to those who meet with much prosperity and outward encouragements in this world. Take heed of thinking that God doth this to thee for thy righteousness, for thy piety. Use—3. Of consolation to the godly, who, it may be, want many of those outward mercies the wicked have. Let them know they are no arguments of true godliness, or of God's dear love in Christ. (*Anthony Burgess.*) *The warnings of Moses*:—I. PRINCIPLES OF GOD'S GOVERNMENT. 1. Mark the assertion that God governs mankind. 2. That God governs by law in the moral as in the material world. II. THEY POINT OUT A NATIONAL DANGER—SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS. 1. A subtlety in self-righteousness. It is so multiform. (1) There may be the form of godliness, &c. (2) A power to criticise. (3) Freedom from observable faults. (4) Possession of some great virtues. 2. And its danger is—(1) To mistake the outward for the inward. (2) To lose sight of personal sin

through the glorification of some real or imaginary virtue. (3) To rest on privileges. (4) To simulate virtues. (5) To blind the soul as to its real state and need. Application — 1. Self-righteousness the great hindrance to the reception of the Gospel now (Luke xviii. 10; Rom. x. 3; Rev. iii. 17). 2. Use David's prayer (Psa. cxxxix. 23). 3. Work of the Holy Spirit (John xvi. 8). (*H. W. Dearden, M.A.*) *The address of Moses*:—1. The address of Moses IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM THE ADDRESSES OF MOST CAPTAINS OF ARMIES UNDER SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. He makes no attempt to underrate the power of the enemies with whom the Israelites had to contend. He begins his address by telling the people that they are that day to pass over Jordan, to go in and possess nations greater and mightier than themselves. The reason for his giving such information was that the design of God was not merely to conquer the Canaanites, but to educate Israel, to teach them that by God's power weakness may be made strength and the mighty vanquished by the feeble. 2. Moses assures the people in plain language that no righteousness of theirs had gained them the land. They might be ready enough to admit that it was not their own courage or their own bodily strength, but they might still be disposed to think that they had deserved God's favour, that if they had not been deserving of the victory, God would not have given it to them. Self-flattery is easy, and therefore Moses very wisely and decidedly protested once for all against such a view of God's doings. II. THE PRINCIPLE OF SPIRITUAL LIFE WITH OURSELVES IS PRECISELY THAT WHICH MOSES LAID DOWN AS THE PRINCIPLE OF NATIONAL LIFE FOR THE ISRAELITES. God gives us the land of promise for no righteousness of our own. Everything depends on God's mercy, God's will, God's purpose; the certainty of victory depends, not upon any feelings or experiences or conflicts of ours, but upon the ever-present help of the Almighty God. (*Bp. Harvey Goodwin.*) *Heaven and glory not the reward of our own righteousness*:—One would think this too obvious to be disputed in the mind of an Israelite. Then I ask if any man or woman, taking a calm retrospect of his or her life, has not to say the same? I. Let us inquire TO WHAT SUBJECTS THIS PRINCIPLE MAY BE APPLIED. 1. To our lot in life, and to our temporal affairs. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." He may do what He will with His own. In the independence and infinite sovereignty of His government He sends small means and penury, or He dispenses riches and honours, according to His own good pleasure, and to accomplish the inscrutable purposes of His heavenly providence. 2. To our religious condition and privileges. 3. To success in the ministry. 4. To the rest and glory of the heavenly world. Eternal life is the gift of God. II. WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR WHICH WE SHALL POSSESS THE LAND? 1. The choice and will, the purpose and pleasure of the Almighty. 2. God's justice on the one hand, and His goodness on the other. 3. The faithfulness of God to His promises. III. WHAT IS THE USE OF THIS DOCTRINE? 1. It is taught us that we may understand it. Acknowledge your own poverty and God's riches. Submit to His method and plan of justification and acceptance by Christ. Do not go about to establish your own righteousness. 2. I cannot conclude without one caution. A farthing is a farthing, and a sixpence is a sixpence; so of an ingot of gold or a banknote. And a farthing will only purchase what it is worth. A sixpence will not buy what is worth a hundred pounds. But let it buy what it will. If you want an estate you must give the ingots and the banknotes. So let the work of Christ alone, the costly and prodigious sum, secure for you the glory and the heritage of heaven. But let your own righteousness and your small virtues do what they will. You cannot purchase glory with them, but they will do much for the welfare of men and the honour of God, and they will show forth your gratitude and love. (*Jas. Stratten.*) *Mercy, not merit*:—Mercy, not merit, is the cause of all the blessings of our being. I. This is true of our SECULAR POSSESSIONS. If we say that our comfortable homes, our freedom from temporal anxiety, and our possession of a competency, have come to us as the result of industrious efforts and economical habits, that they are our reward for honest labour: the reply is—1. That to such a reward we have no right. We are sinners, and justly deserve not only destitution but destruction. 2. That both the materials of labour, and the power to labour, which have brought us these comforts, are to be ascribed to God's mercy. II. This is true of OUR RELIGIOUS ADVANTAGES. Bibles, sanctuaries, religious literature. "The tender mercies of our God have visited us." III. This is true of OUR CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. IV. This is true of OUR SPIRITUAL USEFULNESS. "Not by might, nor by power," &c. V. This is true of OUR HEAVENLY INHERITANCE. (*Homilist.*) *The favoured peoples of the earth*:—There are favoured peoples in all commun-

ities—persons specially favoured by their healthful constitutions, vigorous intellect, lofty genius, high culture, worldly wealth. I. Whatever favours distinguish one class of men from another in society, they are the GIFTS OF GOD. This should teach us—1. Not to be proud for our superiorities. 2. To thank God for our superiorities. 3. To bless men by our superiorities. II. These distinguished gifts are bestowed, NOT ON THE GROUND OF ANY SPECIAL MORAL EXCELLENCE. III. The fact that they are not bestowed on the ground of moral superiority SHOULD BE WELL UNDERSTOOD BY MEN. 1. Understand it, that you may not deceive yourself. Let no man conclude because he is prosperous that he is the favoured of heaven. 2. Understand it, that you may realise your responsibility. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 7. **Remember . . . how thou provokedst the Lord.**—*Profitable remembrance:*—I. The FACT asserted is this: we have provoked the Lord our God. Shall we call to mind the sins of our youth and the transgressions of our riper years? They are a long catalogue, and they testify strongly against us. But as professors of religion, what is the conviction of our minds? Have not our provocations, since we commenced this profession, been numerous and great? Pride: unbelief: unchristian tempers. II. The EVIL implied in the text is our proneness to forget this fact. "Remember, and forget not." Why this injunction, if the evil were not real? But how is this proneness to forget to be accounted for? 1. Inattention. 2. Light thoughts of sin. 3. Love of self. III. The DUTY enjoined is: that we remember our provocations. "Remember, and forget not." There is emphasis in this repetition; it implies not only a proneness to forget, but the importance of not forgetting, and having impressed on the heart our provocations against God. What is this importance and its utility? 1. To make us penitent. 2. To keep us humble. 3. To preserve us thankful for mercies. 4. To help our resignation under Divine corrections. 5. To endear the Saviour to us. 6. To convince us that salvation is entirely of grace. (*T. Kidd.*) *God provoked at Horeb* (in conjunction with Psalm cvi. 7):—To provoke is an expression setting forth a more than ordinary degree of misbehaviour, and seems to import an insolent resolution to offend. A resolution not contented with one single stroke of disobedience, but such as multiplies and repeats the action till the offence rises into an affront; and as it relates to God, so I conceive it aimed at Him in a threefold respect. 1. It rises up against the power and prerogative of God. An assault upon God sitting upon the throne, snatching His sceptre, defiance of His royalty and supremacy. He that provokes God dares Him to strike to revenge the injury and invasion upon His honour—considers not the weight of His arm, but puffs at all, and looks the terrors of revenging justice in the face. 2. Provoking God imports an abuse of His goodness. God clothed with power is the object of fear; but as He displays goodness, of love. By one He commands, by the other He courts our obedience. An affront on His goodness and love as much exceeds an affront of His power as a wound at the heart transcends a blow on the hand. For when God works miracles of mercy to do good upon a people as He did upon the Israelites, was it not a provocation infinitely base, a degree of ingratitude higher than the heavens struck at, and deeper than the sea that they passed through? 3. Provoking God imports an affront upon His long-suffering and His patience. The musings of nature in the breast tell us how keenly every man resents the abuse of His love; how hardly any prince, but one, can put up an offence against His mercy; and how much more affrontive to despise majesty ruling by the golden sceptre of pardon, than by the iron rod of penal law. But patience is a further, a higher advance of mercy—mercy drawn out at length, wrestling with baseness, and striving, if possible even to weary and outdo ingratitude; therefore sin against this is the highest pitch of provocation. For when patience is tired let all the inventions of mankind find something further upon which to hope, or against which to sin. The Israelites sinned against God's patience, one offence following upon another, the last rising highest, until the treasures of grace and pardon were so far drained and exhausted that they provoked God to swear; and what is more, to swear in His wrath, and with a full purpose of revenge, that they should never enter into His rest. (*R. South, D.D.*)

Ver. 22. **And at Taberah . . . ye provoked the Lord to wrath.**—*Warning examples:*—In the histories here referred to we have examples of some of the methods of the Divine government of the world which reappear in all ages. I. GOD DOES NOT ALWAYS LEAD PEOPLES AND INDIVIDUALS TO REPENTANCE BY VISITATIONS

OF HIS GOODNESS. He sometimes uses the rod. 1. The more a people has been blessed, &c., so much the more certainly will God visit their sins with judgment. 2. But He does not overthrow at once and without warning. Signal fires which tell of coming danger are lighted afar, showing what is coming. 3. When the people repent, then His wrath against sin passes them by. This is seen in all the incidents mentioned here. II. SUCH WARNING EXAMPLES ARE SEEN IN ALL THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD. 1. The Reformation was a time of blessing. The light of knowledge and of Divine truth shone throughout Christendom. The Gospel was set on its candlestick. A reformation in social, political, and domestic life occurred in conjunction with the religious movement. 2. But God's ways are ways of earnest effort and quiet waiting through endurance and self-sacrifice. Many would not wait. Progress was too slow for them. They would reform the world at one stroke. Discontent and murmuring broke out among some sections of the people. Then came the peasant war. Like a terrible conflagration, the flames of sedition burst out and threatened to destroy the stays of political and religious existence. Yet God had mercy, as on Israel in the wilderness. He permitted only the outermost defences to be destroyed; and there was left behind a fire-swept ruin to remind Christendom whither impatience, murmuring, discontent, and self-will lead. 3. See a hundred years later. Had the people realised with thankfulness the great blessings of freedom and the Gospel divinely given them? The prophets of the Reformation had warned men what the result of such ingratitude would be. What had been the result of a hundred years' preaching of the Gospel among the peoples and their rulers? The judgment came. The Thirty Years' War, with its blind passions, sent a warning column of flame heavenward. But God again had mercy, although for years Germany was like a burnt-up house. Still, the holiest was preserved, and a new time began. 4. Look a hundred years later. Through the whole of Europe a spirit of apostasy had spread. It swept through England as Deism; as scoffing in France, with accompanying libertinage. In Germany, and indeed in all Europe, the bonds of Christian life and morality were unloosed. Like a shallow but broad stream, the spiritual revolution overflowed all lands. With it came the outer overturning. Uneasiness and discontent were over all. The flame of revolt broke out in France, and Europe was enveloped. But God again, in His mercy, gave space for repentance. III. THE LESSONS TO OUR TIME OF THESE INCIDENTS. 1. We should have eyes to see what the signs of our time mean. If the spirit of discontent, rebellion, &c., be not repressed, whither shall it lead? Already the flames begin to appear—political incendiarism, audacity in speech, universal agitation. Men who look for no hereafter storm fully grasp at material good. How shall it be when the Divine patience ends? 2. At the beginning of Israel's history those warning fire columns were seen. Fifteen hundred years later the impenitent descendants of Israel saw the temple in flames, Jerusalem destroyed, the nation a ruin. 3. Will the New Testament Zion not understand those warnings? A people remained to God even after Jerusalem fell. So will it be although the present form of Christendom passes; and the New Testament foretells such perilous times. 4. Let the individual learn the need of watchfulness. Was not that dangerous sickness a warning signal? But in mercy He spared, and life and health are yours. Let those signs be like beacon lights on your life's voyage. Murmur not, cultivate contentment, learn to say: "I shall go as God leads me, without seeking to choose for myself." (*W. Grashoff.*)

Ver. 24. **Ye have been rebellious.**—*Rebellion:*—I. THE SOURCE OF REBELLION. This is to be found in selfishness, in the preference by men of their own will over the way of God. When men choose another lord than the Eternal and Holy Ruler they set up a standard of rebellion, and are in revolt. II. THE SIN AND GUILT OF REBELLION. This appears from considering the righteous character of God's government, the marvellous forbearance which He has displayed towards sinners, and the obligation of all men to Him who is the source of all blessing, of every mercy. God cannot and He will not treat obstinate rebels as if they were loyal and obedient subjects. He will maintain His honour and authority. III. THE PARDON OF REBELLION. 1. On God's side this is provided for by the redemption which is by the Lord Jesus Christ. 2. On man's side this benefit is appropriated by faith, under the guidance and by the prompting of the Holy Spirit of God. The penitent who make a sincere submission, and accept forgiveness on God's own terms, are assured of being treated not as rebels, but as subjects returned to their allegiance, and admitted to all the privileges it involves. (*Family Churchman.*)

Vers. 26, 29. **I prayed therefore unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, destroy not Thy people.**—*A covenant people:*—This prayer brings out in its greatest strength a contrast which goes through the Book of Deuteronomy, and through the whole Bible. The Israelites are the people of God, His inheritance, redeemed by His mighty hand. They are stubborn, stiff-necked, wicked. One all-important contrast suggests itself the moment we open the Scriptures. They do not set forth the history of man seeking for God, but of God seeking for men. In the Book of Exodus we have very distinct records of the life of Moses, but no one could possibly think that it was the object of that book to give us a biography of him or of any other man. Moses is called out by God to know His name and to do His work; that is the account which he gives of himself. This was his holiness; he was separated, set apart by God to act as His minister. He who set him apart revealed to him His character—showed him that righteousness, and not self-will, was governing the universe. To separate Moses the righteous man from Moses the deliverer of the Israelites is impossible. He could not have been righteous if he had not fulfilled that task, he could not have been righteous if he had not testified in all his acts and words that God, not he, was the deliverer. We miss the whole meaning of the story—the saintship of Moses disappears altogether—if we try to conceive of him apart from his people. It was a holy nation because God had called it out, had chosen it to be His, had put His name upon it. The family of Abraham was signed with God's covenant, and was declared to be holy. Was it not so actually? Was it only so because Jacob was the head of it, or because Joseph was a member of it? The Scripture is careful to preserve us from any such feeble notions. It forces us to see that Joseph was better than his brethren, just because he identified himself with the family, and they acted as if they did not belong to it; because he believed that God had chosen it, and they forgot that He had; because he did, and they did not, believe it to be holy. The nation of Israel was told that the invisible God was actually their king; that He had brought them out of the house of bondage; that He was with them in the wilderness; that He would be with them in the promised land. Supposing any Israelite to believe this, he was a strong, brave, free man; he could overcome the enemies of his land; he could tread his own underfoot. See, then, how reasonable the prayer was which I have taken for my text. Because Moses regarded the Israelites as a holy and chosen people, redeemed by God's own hand; because he believed that this description belonged to the whole covenant people at all times; therefore he felt with intense anguish their stubbornness, their wickedness, and their sin. Had they not been a holy people he would not have known in what their sin consisted. It was the forgetfulness of their holy state—the choice of another—which he confessed with such shame and sorrow before God; it was because they had gone out of the right way, forgetting that they were a nation, each man preferring a selfish way of his own—each thinking that he had an interest apart from his neighbour, apart from the body to which he belonged—that they needed his intercession and God's renewing and restoring mercy. And Moses could ask for that restoring mercy; he had the power to pray, because he was sure that he was asking according to God's will, because he was sure that he was asking that that which resisted His will might be taken away. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) *Moses at the highest level of his ministry:*—Here we learn what Moses was—in spite of his imperfections—in the sight of God and men; and to what place of honour he attained among that great cloud of witnesses whose lives pass before us in Scripture. In this part of his history which he recounts he stands conspicuous. I. IN HIS ZEAL FOR THE DIVINE HONOUR. 1. Moses had been forty days and nights on Sinai in the Divine presence, receiving revelations of God's mind and will. The people had become impatient, had forgotten the near presence of God, and fell away from Him. When Moses came near the camp, on descending from the mount, the idolatrous scene that met his gaze roused him to anger, and he broke the tables of the law which he had brought from the mount, and only at his intercession the people were saved. 2. God has given His people many proofs of His goodness, condescension, &c. But around are many evidences of languor, of lukewarmness, and even of apostasy. If not outwardly, then in heart many have turned back from God. Should not a holy indignation fill the breasts of God's true servants; should not they, and all who belong to the Lord, strive against this defection, call those sins by their right names, &c.? There are situations in which such a zeal should characterise the office-bearers of the Church and all true members of the same. II. IN HIS EARNEST ENTREATY FOR HIS PEOPLE. 1. "He fell down before the Lord,"

&c., in earnest prayer for the people, as he had often done. So earnest that he asked that he himself might be blotted out of the book God had written if their sins were not forgiven (Exod. xxxii. 32). And his "effectual fervent prayer" was answered. 2. How like in spirit to the great apostle's prayers was the prayer of Moses! (Rom. ix. 3.) If we go through the books of holy writ we see what may be done through prayer. The prayers of a Samuel, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Daniel, and the prayers of our Lord (Heb. v. 5–7) all encourage to earnest prayer. Oh, that we could pray as earnestly and believingly as a Monica, a Luther, &c., or as Moses here prayed for his people! that we could wrestle in prayer for the lost and erring, for every soul sunk in sin, and remind God of His gracious promises, &c.! In these days, where means and ways must be considered whereby the channels of a true spiritual and moral life may be laid among the people, prayer and supplication are chief means. Let us use them earnestly. (*Albert Kyphe.*)

Ver. 29. **Yet they are Thy people and Thine inheritance.**—*The history of the Jews a convincing argument in favour of Christianity:*—It is related of a certain royal chaplain, that being asked offhand by his sovereign to give a concise and convincing argument in favour of Christianity, he replied in two words—"The Jews." He could not have given a better answer. You may question, if you will, every single prophecy in the Old Testament; but the whole of the history of the Jews is one continuous prophecy, more distinct and more articulate than all. You may deny, if you will, every successive miracle which is recorded therein; but again, the history of the Jews, from first to last, remains one stupendous miracle, more convincing than all. Look, first, at the capacities of the people themselves. They had no remarkable gifts which might have led us to anticipate for them this unique distinction. Nor does their land help us to solve the enigma. Palestine does, indeed, occupy a very large space in our imagination, but it is a very minute and insignificant spot in the map of the world. It was, moreover, incapable of expansion; for it was bounded on all sides either by the sea or by mountain ranges, or by vast and impracticable deserts. It is largely made up of barren and stony mountains; and even this meagre and contracted territory was not all their own. The sea-coast would have been a valuable acquisition to a people gifted with commercial instincts; but from the sea-coast they were almost wholly excluded; the Phœnicians on the north, the Philistines on the south, occupied all the most important harbours. And this territory, so small, so inexpansive, so unpromising, appears at a still greater disadvantage when compared with the surrounding people. The Jews were environed on all sides with the most formidable neighbours. What chance has Israel? Must it not be crushed, ground to powder, annihilated by its foes? But, at all events, it might be supposed that the Israelites would at least be united amongst themselves; loyal to their country; faithful to their laws and institutions; true to their God. But what do we find as a matter of fact? Their national history is one continuous record of murmurings, of rebellions, of internal feuds, of moral and spiritual defection. Not once or twice only, when the Almighty Archer had strung His weapon, and pointed His shaft, His aim was frustrated by Israel's disobedience, His chosen instrument swerved in His hands, "starting aside like a broken bow." So then, however we look at the matter, there is nothing which affords ground of hope; and when we question the actual facts we find that they correspond altogether to the expectations which we should have formed beforehand from the character and position of the people. Never has any people lived on this earth which has passed through such terrible disasters. Never has any people been so near to absolute extinction again and again, and yet has survived. Again and again the vision of the prophet has been renewed; again and again the valley of the shadow of death has been strewn with the bones of carcases seemingly extinct. Again and again lookers-on have despaired, and even the most hopeful, when challenged by the Divine call, could only respond, "O Lord God, Thou knowest." But again and again there has been a noise and a shaking, and the bones have come together bone to bone, and they have been strung with sinews and clothed with flesh, and the breath has been breathed into them, and they have lived, and stood up an exceeding great army. . . . And do we ask what it was which gave to the Jewish people this toughness, this vitality, this power? The answer is simply, "They are Thy people, and Thine inheritance." It was the consciousness of their close relation to Jehovah, the omnipotent and ever-present God; it was the sense of a glorious destiny marking them out as the teachers of mankind; it was the conviction that they were possessors of magnificent truths, and

that these truths must in the end prevail, whatever present appearances might suggest—this was the secret of their strength notwithstanding all their faults, this was the ever-sustaining breath of their life despite all their disasters. And do we ask, again, how it came to pass that when Israel called to the Gentiles, the Gentiles responded to the call, and flocked to the standard set up in Zion? Here, again, the answer is simple: "Because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel." The Gentiles had everything else in profusion, but this one thing they lacked—this knowledge of God their Father; and without this all their magnificent gifts could not satisfy or save them. Therefore when at length the cry went forth, "Ho, every one that thirsteth," &c., they hurried to the fountain of salvation to slake their burning thirst. (*Bp. Lightfoot.*)

CHAPTER X.

VER. 1. **Two tables of stone.**—*The tables of stone—What do they symbolise?*—These were made before any part of the tabernacle furniture. Their history heralds forth their transcendant importance. No compend of moral truth may pretend to compare with them, for glory and grandeur of origin; for simplicity and completeness of adaptation to man's necessities, or for sublime exhibitions of the Divine perfections. Such an illustrious transcript of the moral attributes of God and His claims upon the supreme adoration of men, and of their obligations to one another, is sought for in vain among the records of human wisdom. Who but Jehovah Himself can reveal the perfections of His own being? Whose right is it to dictate law to the moral universe, if not its Author? But Jehovah exists as the Elohim—the plurality of persons in the essential unity. Has the issuance of these ten words any special reference to this personality? Certainly; the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. All that man knows truly of the Divine perfections, he knows through the teachings of the second person in the Elohim—the Divine Logos, by whom the world was made and without whom was not anything made that was made. It was the voice of the Word, afterwards made flesh—the same Word which said Let there be light, and there was light, that thundered from the summit of the burning mountain these ten words, and afterwards delivered them to Moses along the ranks of angels. This will be evident upon a comparison of a few Scriptures (Psa. lxviii. 17, 18, 20; Eph. iv.; Deut. xxxiii. 2). The entire system of ceremonial observances is evangelical—all relate to the Gospel scheme of salvation. "For unto us," says Paul (Heb. iv. 2), "was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them." As to the kind of stone used, we are left even more in the dark than as to the wood, and therefore infer it to be a matter of no consequence. Only this is plain, that they were fragile, being shattered to pieces when thrown from Moses' hands. Nor have we anything specific as to their size, unless it be that Moses seems to have carried them down the mount (Exod. xxxii. 19), in his own hands, whence we may infer they were not very thick, and they could not have been more than forty-two or three inches long, and twenty-six wide. The first suggestion of a symbolical meaning is durability. Engraving on stone intimates permanency. Job, in his sorrows, exclaims (chap. xix. 23), "Oh, that my words were now written! oh, that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen and laid in the rock for ever." Then he proceeds to express his faith in the living Redeemer, and his hope in a glorious resurrection: truths these, which he wished to perpetuate for ever. The first tables represented the law of God as written in the heart of man at his creation: or, we may say, human race—Adam, with the law created in him. The breaking of the tables sets forth the fall of man and the utter defacement of God's law and image. The replacement of the tables by Moses, and the re-writing of the law upon them, by the power of the great Redeemer, forcibly illustrates His entire work of restoring man to the full dominion of the holy law, or, in other words, the restoration of the law to its ruling power over him; or may we not say the second Adam, the pattern of all the redeemed. The bringing of man under the power of law, the protection of the law from violence and profanation, and the security of its rightful dominion, is the grand idea herein set forth. All around it is encased within its golden enclosure. The casket indeed is precious, costly, and beautiful, but the jewels it contains are the priceless treasure. In connection, however, with

the remarks above, that the ceremonial ordinances are Gospel ordinances, it is important to distinguish them from the legal matter of the old covenant. The ten words and the various applications of their principles throughout the Pentateuch, are quite different from the sacrifices, the lustrations, the incense burnings, the cities of refuge, &c. The former are legal, and whenever separated from the latter become a law of works—the very covenant made with Adam. But the latter, coalescing with and qualifying and pointing out the way of fulfilling the former, transmute the whole into the new covenant, or true Gospel, which was revealed to Adam before his expulsion from Paradise. (*George Juntem, D.D.*) *The new tables*:—I. THE BREAKING OF THE TABLES. The tables themselves were in every respect most remarkable. Mark, first, that they were "the tables of the covenant." God said: "These are My commands, keep them, and I am your God, I will be a glory in the midst of you, and a wall of fire round about you; break My commands, disobey My will, there is an infraction of the covenant, and the safety is departed, the glory gone." Sin was the violation of the covenant; sin was the overturning and the breaking to pieces of the covenant. The sin being committed, the transgression having taken place, the covenant was at an end. This is indicated by God in the fact that Moses breaks the tables of the law, because Moses in this matter acts as mediator for God; he is invested with the Divine authority, and ordered to do what he did in that capacity and in God's name. It is said that he was in great anger, his anger waxed hot; but it was a holy and a justifiable anger, caused by great and elevated zeal for truth and for God, and so no censure is pronounced upon it. This act of breaking the tables resembled figurative actions performed by Hebrew prophets in later times. It is like Jeremiah breaking the bottle, and saying to the elders of the Jews, "Even so shall this people and this city be broken." Or when he is commanded to take a girdle, and to go with it to the river Euphrates, and to put it in a damp place until it becomes rotten and worthless: then it is—"After that manner you shall be carried captive into Babylon." Ezekiel, in like manner, is ordered to take the goods of his house, his "stuff," and to remove it upon his shoulders from one dwelling to another afar off—a figurative action, indicative of the same truth, that there was to be a removal of the people far away. And we have one instance in the New Testament where Paul's girdle is taken: "Thus shall the man be bound," it was said by Agabus, "that owneth this girdle." It was a customary mode of instruction, ordained on the part of God to be used by His prophets and the teachers of the Hebrew people; and I suppose this act of Moses breaking the tables is the most striking and exemplary instance, as it stands at the head and is apparently the first. The breaking of the tables by God's mediator signifies to the people on God's part the abrogation of the covenant, and that, so far as He is concerned, He is not their God any longer, and will hide His face from them. Precisely the same in essence, I think, it is with another memorable instance recorded in the New Testament. When Christ died, when He said upon the Cross, "It is finished," "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom," and God said, "Let Us go hence; this is no longer My house; this people is no longer My people." As there had been violation of the covenant by sin, there is repudiation of the covenant on the part of God. Finally, I think it intimates that the covenant upon the same principle should never be renewed, for the tables were broken in pieces. It was not simply in two pieces; they were probably smashed together in Moses' hand before they were dashed upon the ground; they were broken into shivers, so that the parts could not be brought together again. It was one offence which occasioned the expulsion from the garden—it is one offence which occasions the breaking of the tables of the covenant; and if there be one transgression in any moral agent, innocence is gone, guilt is come, and justification by the law is henceforth and for ever an utter and profound impossibility. II. THE RENEWING OF THE TABLES. I suppose there is a mystery in it—that there is more intended than first meets the eye. Moses, you observe, is commanded to prepare fresh tables, and to come up to the mount with them in his hand. He is represented as doing this according to the Divine commandment; and, that you may understand the mystery and see the point distinctly which I am attempting to open to you, will you mark first the things that preceded the writing of the Ten Commandments again upon the tables which Moses brought. They were these. The sin of the people was forgiven; Moses interceded on their behalf, and God said, "I have pardoned them at thy word." Before the law is rewritten God takes the tables out of Moses' hand to do that work; He forgives the iniquity of His people; and I suppose that act of indemnity, that forgiveness on

the part of God, was in connection with the ulterior and remoter sacrifice to be made for sin by the Son of God, when He should come in the flesh; and when He did come in the flesh He is said to have declared the justice of Deity, in the remission of sin. The Hebrew believers are especially said to have received the redemption of the antecedent ages, the forgiveness of their transgressions which they had committed under the old covenant, when Christ died, and they became established in the everlasting inheritance in consequence of that great truth and principle: and so sin, I think, has ever been remitted of God. God affirms His sovereign right—His right to condemn the guilty, His right to reprieve them according to His own infinite and glorious will. Here is forgiveness of sin and the affirmation of grace. Here is the promise of His presence. Moses said, "If Thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence"; God says, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." You will find this in the chapter which precedes the account of the rewriting of the law by the Divine finger upon the tables of stone. Then there is the showing of Godhead. Moses said, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy face"; and that remarkable vision in the cleft of the rock, Moses being put into it by God, and God passing by him, I think the same may be said of it as was said in after ages respecting Isaiah's vision in the sixth chapter of his prophecy—"These things said Moses, when he saw Christ's glory and spake of Him." Then there is the proclamation of the Divine name—"The Lord, the Lord God, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin"; and when that announcement is made it is said, "Moses bowed down and worshipped." Then, will you mark, here is the forgiveness of sin, affirmation of the Divine grace, promise of the Divine presence, showing of Christ's glory, proclamation of that amazing name, antecedently to the rewriting of the tables?—which proves, I think, that the rewriting of the law was not the going back to the old covenant, or making a second trial of that principle in relation to the Israelites, but that it was upon altogether different principles—the principles which are enumerated—free forgiveness, revelation of Christ, His presence in the midst of His people, His name full of mercy and love. And see the effect of this: He writes the law a second time; and upon these principles it is said, "Well, go and be obedient." For it strikes me that that is the great truth which comes out in the Gospel revelation and economy—not that we are to obey the law, and then make our appeal to God's grace and mercy, but that God, manifesting His grace and mercy in a free and overflowing salvation, then says, "Let My law be rewritten; go and obey it." Secondly, what was done with the second tables? The commands were unaltered; what was written on the tables was exactly the same; but what was done with the second tables? They were not exalted, like the brazen serpent, upon a pole: they were not used as a banner, floating before the eyes of the people as they advanced to their respective encampments—they were not, as Job desired his words might be, "written with an iron pen, and graven upon a rock for ever"; none of these things was done, and nothing resembling them: they were put into the ark, the chest of which we read so much, and which was, I suppose, the very first article prepared by Moses under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. That chest represented, I think, Christ. The law, never kept by angels, never kept by man in his innocence, nor by man in his restoration, nor by any moral beings in the universe, as the law was kept by God's own Son; the law, then, was put into the ark. Christ obeyed not only for Himself in person, but as the Surety and Representative of His people; "He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." As I put the finger of faith on His person and on His life, I feel that He obeyed the law and kept the law for me. The law is in Christ fulfilled, and fulfilled for them whose cause He espoused and whose interests He had undertaken. Mark another thing. The lid upon that sacred chest was a plate of pure gold, upon which the blood of the sacrifice was to be sprinkled according to the Divine command. In order to the fulfilment of law, the rendering to law and justice everything that can be required, there are but two things. The first is, perfect obedience. If there be perfect obedience, the law is satisfied; but if the law be broken, the next thing is the penalty; and if the penalty is fulfilled, the law is satisfied and asks no more. Penalty and obedience, the only two things with which the law is conversant. We say that in Christ the penalty was paid; we say that the iniquities of man were transferred to Christ, and that He suffered for him—that "we have redemption through His blood." So I come to the blood of Christ for the expiation of my sins, put the finger of faith on His sacrifice, and feel that I am secure. Mark once more: upon this lid was the mercy-seat—or, it constituted the mercy-seat; and God said to Moses, "Come to the

Mercy-seat," and to all the people, "Come to the Mercy-seat." Through that every communication was made from them to God, and from God to them; and from that hour to this—or to the days of Daniel and the captivity—they turned their faces when they prayed towards God's presence, exalted and enthroned in grace and in mercy there. It betokened the great principle—"faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"; answering prayer in the exercise of consummate rectitude and justice, as well as of clemency, condescension, mercy, and grace. One thing more I notice; and that is, that upon either end of this plate of pure gold was the cherubic figure, in reference to which the Apostle Peter says, "which things the angels desire to look into, to the intent that to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places may be made manifest by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." I infer, from all I have said, that the renewal of the writing of the tables is not the renewal of the old covenant, but a representation of God's mercy and grace in Christ Jesus, as antecedent to the law being rewritten, and written upon the hearts and upon the consciences of men. I only note, further, what followed. After the rewriting by God's own finger Moses came down. How did he come down? With the glory upon his face, so that they could not steadfastly look upon him; and the apostle says it intimated that there were things intended which the Jews had not the capacity at that time to understand. It was not proper that they should know them. The veiling of Moses' face intimated the veiling of certain profound principles which were to have a future and after manifestation. Thus in the same way, I think, the breaking of the tables and the renewing of them intimates that the law never would be fulfilled but in Christ, and that it could not be safely enforced upon man—at least, it could produce nothing but condemnation—irrespectively of Christ and the obedience which He has already rendered. But what followed besides? The completion of the tabernacle in all its parts and proportions, the ordination of priests, the crossing the Jordan, the entering into the promised land—of which things we cannot now speak; but it comes out, I think, in most beautiful conclusion, that if these matters preceded the rewriting of the tables, and the tables then written were placed in the peculiar circumstances which the passage represents, and if such things transpired when this was done, then it is not the old covenant of works, but the new covenant of grace, mercy, and salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ; and so "the law is a schoolmaster, bringing unto Christ." (*J. Stratten.*) *The tables of the law*:—1. In the next verse it is said that Moses "made an ark of shittim wood" before going up into the mount with the two tables in his hand; whereas, according to the Book of Exodus (xxxvii. 1), Bezaleel is said to have made the ark. Those who seek to trace contradictions in the Scriptures, or variety of authorship, of course, point out this "discrepancy." The obvious remark that one may be said to do what he directs another to do is probably a sufficient reply to this difficulty. 2. It is not, however, with the ark, but with the tables of the law, we are now concerned. 3. The delivery of the law, on the fiftieth day, according to the Jews, after the Exodus—an event celebrated by the Feast of Pentecost—reminds us of the contrast between the circumstances under which the old and the new law were promulgated. The thick cloud, the darkness, the thunder, the lightning, filled the Israelites with alarm. How very different are the approaches to God in the New Testament! (Heb. xii. 18–24.) But the same moral law is binding in both; and it is to this fact, God's condescension in writing a second time the words of the Decalogue, our thoughts are invited in the lesson. Let us consider some reasons for keeping the Ten Commandments; and then, how we are to obey them. I. REASONS FOR KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS. 1. They come from God. This may be said of the whole law, ceremonial and judiciary, as well as moral. But surely there is a difference. Not only were the Ten Commandments promulgated, as a French writer says, "avec éclat," and the people warned to prepare for the solemn event (Exod. xix. 10, 15), but they were given directly by God. The first tables were "the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven on the tables." The second tables were the work of man, but the writing was still the writing of God (Exod. xxxiv. 1). They stand above the ceremonial law, as an abridgment of the duties of man, and are of lasting obligation. 2. They agree with the law written in man's heart. They are in full accord with our moral intuitions. The Divine Law was not a brand-new code of ethics, but it was necessary, if man was to attain to a supernatural end. Moreover, man's moral sense was liable to be tampered with and impaired, so as at last to give an uncertain judgment: neither was it able to discern clearly always between good and evil; nor did it reach into the sphere of thought

and motive. If man had been entirely dependent upon a written law, its promulgation would not have been delayed till the time of Moses. It is altogether a mistake to suppose that the Decalogue made murder, theft, adultery, and the like sinful. It forbade them because they were sinful. It fixed man's moral intuitions so that they could not be dragged down by human passion and selfishness. It made them clearer and more distinct. It clothed them with a new sanction and authority. 3. We find, when we examine the period before the law was given, a sense of the evil of the actions which it forbids. "Jacob said, Put away the strange gods that are among you." This is an anticipation of the First Commandment. Perhaps the previous observance of the Sabbath may be gathered from Exod. xvi. 23. So the Sixth Commandment was already in force (Gen. ix. 6). Sins against purity were abhorred (Gen. xxxiv. 31, xxxviii. 24), showing that the Seventh Commandment was no novelty. Joseph's brethren were shocked at being charged with stealing the cup (Gen. xliv. 7). The sin of coveting "thy neighbour's wife" was evidently recognised by Abimelech as "a great sin" with regard to Sarah (Gen. xx. 9). All these statements—and there are others before the giving of the law—are witnesses to the moral light which God has given to man, irrespective of external guidance or enactment. 4. The moral law did not make sin to be sin, though it added to its malice; but it clearly revealed the amount of human transgression, which was veiled in a mist before. It was like a clinical thermometer which measures the height of the fever, which might have been unknown before. It reveals the temperature of the patient, and so the seriousness or lightness of the case. "By the law," says the apostle, "is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. iii. 20). 5. Further, obedience to the moral law of God is necessary for salvation. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. xix. 16, 17). St. Paul declares the same (Rom. xiii. 8, 9). Again, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God" (1 Cor. vii. 19). St. John the same (1 John iii. 22, 24). II. HOW ARE WE TO KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS? 1. With the help of Divine grace. The law cast light upon the sinful principle in man, and by his inability to overcome it, aroused the sense of need and longing for a Saviour. Moses gave the law without the Spirit, says a commentator, but Christ gave both. Whilst on the one hand we realise that we can do nothing without grace; on the other, we must remember that we can do everything with it. 2. We have to keep all the commandments. Not nine out of ten. The commandments are not isolated precepts, so that the violation of one does not touch another. They form, if I may say so, an organic body of moral truth, as the Creed an organic body of dogmatic truth. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James ii. 10). 3. Christians have to read the commandments in the light of "the Sermon on the Mount," and so to see how deeply they cut. They not only touch the outward action, but thought and motive. III. LESSONS: 1. To seek by meditation upon the law of God to know how much that law demands of us as Christians. 2. To examine the conscience by the Ten Commandments, so as to discover, by the help of the Holy Spirit, wherein we have broken them—in thought, word, deed, or omission. 3. They are the way of life. (*Canon Hutchings, M.A.*)

Ver. 9. **The Lord is his inheritance.**—*The Lord the Christian's inheritance*:—The obvious meaning of having the Lord for our inheritance is, that we have dedicated ourselves to His service, that we have surrendered ourselves altogether to Him, the energies of the body and the faculties of the mind, to do His will and advance His kingdom and glory; again, that we have secured Him as our own for ever, that we are attached to Him as a man to a possession which he cannot alienate; further, that we have, as it were, the use of the Lord God Almighty, that His perfections and His grace are guaranteed to us to be employed for our personal advantage; and, lastly, that we are in the actual enjoyment of those blessings which belong to living in a state of favour with the righteous Governor of the universe. I. IN LIFE the true believer realises the promise, and has the Lord for his inheritance. 1. Because he deliberately chooses Him in preference to the charms and allurements of the world. In proportion as he is separated from the world, does the Lord become his inheritance; he is more closely united to Him, and more exclusively employed in His service; he perceives the wisdom of his choice, tastes of the blessings that are at God's right hand, and finds a supply of all his wants from the fulness that is in Christ Jesus; that the Lord is his portion and his sole inheritance, he has taken Him for his own, and every other less perfect and

substantial he has absolutely and utterly renounced. 2. The Christian has the Lord for his inheritance, in that all things are working together for his final salvation. 3. The true believer has the Lord for his inheritance, because he has the peace of God shed abroad in his heart. The voice of Christian experience is unanimous. God does not hide Himself from those whom He has given to His beloved Son. 4. The true believer has surrendered to him the Lord Christ Himself as his inheritance; he has Him for his own. It is the assurance of St. John that "he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life." II. But not only in this life, but also AFTER DEATH—not only in time, but also IN ETERNITY, has the Christian the Lord for his inheritance. He is not deprived of his portion by the separation of soul and body, by the change of scene, nor the commencement of a spiritual existence. Not only is it his own now, but also in the world to come. 1. For, first, He is eternally with him. Wherever is the heaven where Christ lives and reigns, there is the habitation of His chosen people. They are with Him where He is, they see Him as He is, they walk in the light of His countenance. 2. But the great truth stands out in all its excellency when we find it is the presence of the Lord that constitutes the believer's happiness and joy. Every joy and blessing of those blessed places originates in the fact, that we are to dwell in the presence of the Lord. His presence is the fountain and spring of happiness to every individual of His glorified Church. Conclusion: Let us bear in mind—1. That whether we have made the Lord our inheritance must be the criterion of our hopes. To have no part in Him is to be an outcast from the promises, to live with the Divine wrath upon our heads. 2. Let us also seriously inquire, what will be the state of those in the next world who have not made the Lord their inheritance? Can their souls be conceived in any way capable of participating in heavenly joy? Is there anything in the circumstances or employments of redeemed spirits which can fill up the measure of their cup, and make them perfectly and for ever blessed? (*H. Hughes, M.A.*)

Vers. 12, 13. **What doth the Lord thy God require of thee.**—*The true life of man*:—The true life of man is the life of practical conformity to Divine claims. All is summed up and expressed here. I. LOVING REVERENCE. 1. Fear of not acting worthily of the object of love. 2. Fear of offending the object of love. II. PRACTICAL OBEDIENCE. 1. God has "ways," that is methods of action—(1) In material nature. Acquaintance with these is what is called "science." (2) In moral mind. Acquaintance with these is the highest knowledge. Embodied in the life of Christ. 2. To walk in God's ways is—(1) The only righteous walk. (2) The only secure walk. (3) The only elevating walk. III. HEARTY SERVICE. 1. Perfect freedom. 2. Sunny cheerfulness. 3. Thorough completeness. All the powers fully employed. (*Homilist.*) *Educated towards spirituality*:—That was the Divine intention from the very beginning. God does not disclose His purpose all at once, but out of consideration for our capacities and our opportunities and our necessities He leads us one step at a time, as the wise teacher leads the young scholar. What wise teacher thrusts a whole library upon the dawning mind of childhood? A picture, a toy, a tempting prize, a handful to be going on with, and all the rest covered by a genial smile: so the young scholar passes from page to page until the genius of the revelation seizes him, and life becomes a sacred Pentecost. This thought supplies a standard by which to measure progress. What are we? To what have we attained? Are we still among the beggarly elements? Do we still cry out for a kind of teaching that is infantile and that ought to be from our age altogether profitless? Or do we sigh to see the finer lines and bear the lower tones and enter into the mystery of silent worship—so highly strung in all holy sensibilities that even a word jars upon us and is out of place under circumstances so charged with the Divine presence? Still keeping by this same line of thought, notice how the promises were adapted to the mental condition of Israel. What promises could Israel understand? Only promises of the most substantial kind. Moses addresses himself to this necessity with infinite skill (chap. x. 22, xi. 11, 12). Still preserving the marvellous consistency of the whole economy, we cannot fail to notice how beautifully the sacrifices were adapted to the religious condition of the people. This explains the sacrifices indeed. What was the religious condition of the people? Hardly religious at all. It was an infantile condition; it was a condition in which appeal could only lie with effect along the line of vision. So God will institute a worship accordingly; He will say to Israel, Bring beasts in great numbers, and kill them upon the altar;

take consers, put fire thereon; spare nothing of your herds and flocks and corn and wine; have a continual burnt offering, and add to the continual burnt offering other offerings great in number and in value. Israel must be kept busy; leisure will be destruction. There must be seven Sabbaths in the week, and seven of those seven must be specialised by fast or festival or sacred observance. Give Israel no time to rest. When he has brought one bullock, send him for another; when he has killed a ram, call for a thousand more; this will be instructive to him. We must weary him to a higher aspiration; to begin this aspiration would be to beat the air, or to speak an unknown language, or to propound a series of spiritual impossibilities. Men must be trained according to their capacity and their quality. The whole ceremonial system of Moses constitutes in itself—in its wisdom so rich, its marvellous adaptation to the character and temper of the times,—an unanswerable argument for the inspiration of the Bible. So far the line has been consistent from its beginning, what wonder, then, if it culminate in one splendid word? That word is introduced here and there. For example, in chapter x. 12, the word occurs; in chapter xi. 1, it is repeated. What is that culminating word? How long it has been kept back! Now that it is set down we see it and acknowledge it; it comes at the right time, and is put in the right place:—"To love Him." (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Exhortation to serve the Lord*:—Who obeys this command? A part of my hearers obey it in some degree. They esteem God above every other object. They consider His glory as their highest interest, and communion with Him as their supreme happiness. It is their greatest grief that their treacherous hearts are so prone to wander from Him. Their most fervent desires pant after Him. And when in a favoured hour they find Him whom their "soul loveth," they hold Him fast and will not let Him go. I have no reproaches for these. But are all such? Would to God all were. But there is no service without love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Supreme love to God will certainly produce self-denial for His sake. It will habitually avoid everything which He has forbidden, and obey, not a part, but all He commands. Supreme love will seek communion with its object more than any worldly pleasure. It will pant after Him and after greater conformity to Him; it will seek His glory as the highest interest; it will renounce the world and idols and cultivate a heavenly mind. Unless we have that which will produce all these effects, we have no supreme love to God; and if we have no supreme love, we have no love at all; and if we have no love, as there is no neutral state, we are His enemies. It was God that made you what you are, and put you into a world which He had richly furnished for your use. Have you nothing to do with Him, or He with you? Do you imagine that He created you and raised you so much above the brutes, and put you into a world on which He had expended so much labour, that you might wander from Him in the regions of darkness? that you might seek your happiness out of Him, and live in rebellion against Him? that you might spend your life only in preparing to live in this transitory state? or that you might live only to eat and drink? As God is true, He sent you into His world for the same end that a master sends a servant into his vineyard—to labour for Him. He has sent you into the field abundantly furnished with powers and means to serve Him, and has strictly commanded you to use these talents in His service. Say not that He is too far above you to be apprehended. He has brought Himself down, and spread Himself out before you in His works and word, and it is only to unbelief that He is invisible. Having sent you into His vineyard, He looks after you to see whether you are faithful or not. Has He nothing to do with you? His eyes are upon you every moment—upon the very bottom of your heart. Did your Creator turn you loose into the world, to run wild in pursuit of your own imaginations, without law or restraint, intending to look no further after you, but to throw you out from His care? Woe to you if He had done this; though this, I fear, you have often wished. But He did no such thing. His intention was still to follow you with His care, as beloved creatures, whom His own hands had formed — to exercise government over you—to establish eternal communion with you—to lead your desires up to Him—to fill you with His own sublime happiness, and to make you a part of an harmonious, blessed, and glorious kingdom. To accomplish these ends He put you under law—a law admirably calculated to unite you to Him and to consummate your happiness. The unreasonable will complain of anything, and murmurs have filled the world because this law requires the heart. But were it otherwise—were God to relinquish His claims on the heart and compound for outward service only, would it be better then? Could they be happy here, could

they be happy in heaven, without a holy heart? They had better never been born than be excused from loving God. Should God give up His law, still they are wretches to eternity without love to Him. The law enjoins nothing but what in the nature of things is essential to happiness. From this moment you must either renounce your Bible, or understand that God accounts you rebels for not loving and serving Him with all the heart and soul. He admits no excuse. Your plea that you cannot, is only pleading guilty. A heart that refuses to love the Creator and Redeemer of the world, is the very thing for which God condemns you—is the vilest rebel in the universe. (*E. Griffin, D.D.*) *God's requirements:*—God's exactions, if we be Christians, are our own free-will offerings. What God demands is what thankful hearts should gladly give. 1. First of all "to fear" Him. Not to be terrified, that is the natural man's religion. Unless taught of God men look upon Him with alarm. Hence religion is a sepulchral and gloomy thing to them. To the Christian all is reverse. He has no alarm; he courts God's presence and feels that presence to be the inspiration of hope and joy. 2. Next "to walk in all His ways." All the ways proceed from one source and terminate in the same again. There are varieties of expression, but one religion. A way of righteousness, a way of truth, a way of peace, and a way of pleasantness. 3. Then "to love Him." If the fear enjoined were terror, it would be impossible to love. Love is the germ in the heart that blossoms and bursts into all the fragrant fruits demanded by God's holy law. The law, like the imperious taskmaster, says, "Give me fruit," and you cannot; but love softly, progressively, originates and develops all the fruits of the Spirit. The absence of this love is the absence of Christianity. This love, lost in the Fall, regained by the Cross, is the result of seeing God's love for us. The measure and extent is "all your hearts." Not cold, calculating preference; but warm, cordial attachment—attachment not blind and unintelligible, but with all the soul. 4. Also "to serve" Him, service in the sense of worship. The word liturgy strictly means service; here service means adore, pray, and praise; worship outwardly, publicly, and privately with all the heart. We learn the essence of all true acceptable worship before God. Not material glory, ritual splendour; but depth of sincerity, intensity of love, the supremacy of God in the heart. 5. What is the end of all this? First, God asks this, not for His benefit, but for our good. Is there no benefit in meeting together in the house of God, in unloading the thankful heart in praise? When you give the greatest glory, worship, and homage to God, the reaction of it is showers of blessings, mercies, and privileges upon yourselves. God requires this in His Word, in seasons of affliction and prosperity. He requires it that holy effects may be seen, and that men may feel that religion purifies. It is also good for the world. The best evidence that you are Christians is in what you feel, suffer, sacrifice, and do; not as servants obeying for reward, but as sons serving God out of affection. (*J. Cumming, D.D.*) *An imperative demand:*—Yea, and what does the Lord require of us? 1. Reverence—"But to fear the Lord thy God." 2. Obedience—"To walk in all His ways." To go when He tells us, and to take the way He has prepared for us. Matthew Henry says, "It ought to be the care of every one of us to follow the Lord fully. We must, in a course of obedience to God's will, and service to His honour, follow Him universally, without dividing; uprightly, without dissembling; cheerfully, without disputing; and constantly, without declining: and this is following Him fully." 3. Love—"And to love Him." This exhortation comes in beautifully to prevent the possibility of reverence becoming a terror, and obedience servility. 4. Service—"And to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul." Conviction, principle, truth, sentiment, and emotion find their level in service, as the waters of the river do in the sea. Life, of every kind, is energy from within towards an outward object. 5. Diligence—"To keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good." (*T. Davies.*)

Vers. 14–16.—**He chose . . . you above all people.**—*Election and holiness:*—I. In SETTING FORTH ELECTION, I must have you observe, first of all, its extraordinary singularity. God has chosen to Himself a people whom no man can number, out of the children of Adam. Now this is a wonder of wonders, when we come to consider that the heaven, even the heaven of heavens, is the Lord's. If God must have a chosen race, why did He not select one from the majestic order of angels, or from the flaming cherubim and seraphim who stand around His throne? Why was not Gabriel fixed upon? What could there be in man, a creature lower than the

angels, that God should select him rather than the angelic spirits? I have given you, then, some reason at starting, why we should regard God's Election as being singular. But I have to offer others. Observe, the text not only says, "Behold, the heaven, even the heaven of the heavens is the Lord's," but it adds, "the earth also, with all that therein is." Yet one other thought to make God's Election marvellous indeed. God had unlimited power of creation. Now, if He willed to make a people who should be His favourites, who should be united to the person of His Son, why did He not make a new race? When Adam sinned, it would have been easy enough to strike the world out of existence. But no! Instead of making a new people, a pure people who could not sin, He takes a fallen people, and lifts these up, and that, too, by costly means; by the death of His own Son, by the work of His own Spirit; that these might be the jewels in His crown to reflect His glory for ever. Oh, singular choice! My soul is lost in Thy depths, and I can only pause and cry, "Oh, the goodness, oh, the mercy, oh, the sovereignty of God's grace." Having thus spoken about its singularity, I turn to another subject. 2. Observe the unconstrained freeness of electing love. In our text this is hinted at by the word "only." Why did God love their fathers? Why, only because He did so. There is no other reason. I come to the hardest part of my task. Election in its justice. Now, I shall defend this great fact, that God has chosen men to Himself, and I shall regard it from rather a different point of view from that which is usually taken. You tell me, if God has chosen some men to eternal life, that He has been unjust. I ask you to prove it. The burden of the proof lies with you. For I would have you remember that none merited this at all. God injures no man in blessing some. I defend it again on another ground. To which of you has God ever refused His mercy and love, when you have sought His face? Doth not His Word bid you come to Jesus? and doth it not solemnly say, "Whosoever will, let him come"? You say it is unjust that some should be lost while others are saved. Who makes those to be lost that are lost? Did God cause you to sin? Has the Spirit of God ever persuaded you to do a wrong thing? Has the Word of God ever bolstered you up in your own self-righteousness? No; God has never exercised any influence upon you to make you go the wrong way. The whole tendency of His Word, the whole tendency of the preaching of the Gospel, is to persuade you to turn from sin unto righteousness, from your wicked ways to Jehovah. II. We now turn to ELECTION IN ITS PRACTICAL INFLUENCES. You will see that the precept is annexed to the doctrine; God has loved you above all people that are upon the face of the earth; therefore, "circumcise the foreskin of your hearts and be no more stiffnecked." It is whispered that Election is a licentious doctrine. It is my business to prove to you that it is the very reverse. "Well, but," cries one, "I know a man that believes in Election and yet lives in sin." Yes, and I suppose that disproves it. So that if I can go through London and find any ragged, drunken fellow, who believes a doctrine and lives in sin, the fact of his believing it disproves it. Singular logic, that! But I come back to my proof. It is laid down as a matter of theory that this doctrine is licentious. The fitness of things proves that it is not so. Election teaches that God has chosen some to be kings and priests to God. When a man believes that he is chosen to be a king, would it be legitimate inference to draw from it—"I am chosen to be a king; therefore I will be a beggar; I am chosen to sit upon a throne, therefore I will wear rags"? Why, you would say, "There would be no argument, no sense in it." But there is quite as much sense in that as in your supposition, that God has chosen His people to be holy, and yet that a knowledge of this fact will make them unholy. No! the man, knowing that a peculiar dignity has been put upon him by God, feels working in his bosom a desire to live up to his dignity. Again, not only the fitness of things, but the thing itself proves that it is not so. Election is a separation. God has set apart him that is godly for Himself, has separated a people out of the mass of mankind. Does that separation allow us to draw the inference thus:—"God has separated me, therefore I will live as other men live"? No! if I believe that God has distinguished me by His discriminating love, and separated me, then I hear the cry, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will be a Father unto you." It were strange if the decree of separation should engender an unholy union. It cannot be. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *All things subserve the welfare of God's elect children*:—I see a mother that, as the twilight falls and the baby sleeps, and because it sleeps out of her arms, goes about gathering from the floor its playthings, and carries them to the closet, and carries

away the vestments that have been cast down, and stirring the fire, sweeping up the hearth, winding the clock, and gathering up dispersed books, she hums to herself low melodies as she moves about the room, until the whole place is once again neat, and clean, and in order. Why is it that the room is so precious to her? Is it because there is such beautiful paper on the walls? because there is so goodly a carpet on the floor? because the furniture in the room is so pleasing to the eye? All these are nothing in her estimation except as servants of that little creature of hers—the baby in the cradle. She says, "All these things serve my heart while I rock my child." The whole round globe is but a cradle, and our God rocks it, and regards all things, even the world itself, as so many instruments for the promotion of our welfare. When He makes the tempest, the pestilence, or the storm, when He causes ages in their revolutions to change the world, it is all to serve His own heart through His children—men. When we are walking through this world, we are not walking through long files of laws that have no design; we are walking through a world that has natural laws, which we must both know and observe: yet these must have their master, and Christ is He. And all of these are made to be our servants because we are God's children. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *God's elective call:*—These words were intended to make it plain to the Israelites how greatly they had been honoured of God in being given such pre-eminence among the nations. So we must ever keep in view who calls us through the Gospel and has come near to us in it. It is God, whose are not only the earth but the heaven of heavens. From these words of Moses we may gather—I. HOW GREAT AND MIGHTY IS THE GOD WHO CALLS US TO HIMSELF—how wise and solicitous for men's good, and how He has proved this in all the regions of the creation which belongs to Him. II. HE WHO HOLDS ALL THINGS IN HIS HAND AND CARES FOR ALL, CAN HAVE A SPECIAL AND PECULIAR CARE FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL: and thus we may have fullest confidence in Him. III. IT SHOULD MAKE US ASTONISHED AND CONFUSED BEYOND MEASURE TO THINK THAT THE GREAT GOD SHOULD HAVE CALLED US WEAK AND PUNY CREATURES TO SO GREAT GRACE AND FAVOUR; that He should even have sent His Son for our redemption, and that He would have us become temples of the Holy Ghost. Many indeed find it inconceivable that God should have destined our globe—one of the smallest of the worlds—for such high honour. This appears to them so absurd, that on this account they would throw over Christianity. They forget that the greatness of God lies in this, that He attends to and cares for the small as well as the great. To the infinite Jehovah the distinction between small and great is not as it appears to us. Moses understood this. IV. IN THESE WORDS THERE APPEARS THE HINT OF A COMPREHENSIVE DIVINE PLAN WHICH GOD DESIGNED WITH REGARD TO THE CREATION THROUGH THAT WHICH HE ACCOMPLISHED TOWARD THIS LOWER PORTION OF IT. So had He already proclaimed to that people chosen before all others. "As truly as I live, saith the Lord, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Numb. xiv. 21). He thus proclaimed that through the choice of Israel He had in view the salvation of all the peoples; a truth already revealed in the blessing of Abraham, in whose seed all nations are to be blessed. Even so we may say that, in the choice of our globe for this special design, He contemplates the renewal and glorification of the universe. "In Christ, in the fulness of time, He will gather together all things, both which are in heaven and which are on earth" (Eph. i. 10; Col. i. 20). How this is to be accomplished we must leave to the care of Him whose are "the heaven and the heaven of heavens." V. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THOSE SO HIGHLY FAVOURED WILL BE THE GREATER IF THEY SHOULD TURN AWAY TO UNBELIEF AND DISOBEDIENCE. If these things be so, Moses' words give us sufficient inducement to hold fast with decision and faithfulness what is offered us in the Gospel and in the revelation of God's will. Let us not fail in our part, as we may be assured He will not fail who has come down so far in Christ unto us. (*J. C. Blumhardt.*) **Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.**—*Circumcision as compared with baptism:*—I. SPIRITUAL CIRCUMCISION—its meaning. 1. Declared in the Old and New Testaments, as, in the text, also in Jer. iv. 4, and elsewhere. 2. Spoken of as a seal of the righteousness of faith (Rom. iv. 11). 3. Spoken of as representing the renunciation of, and cutting off of, the superfluity of the flesh (Col. ii. 11). 4. Therefore true circumcision is of everlasting and universal obligation. II. LITERAL CIRCUMCISION. Temporary and preparatory. 1. For males only. 2. Superseded by baptism. III. CIRCUMCISION AND BAPTISM. 1. Two points in which they differ. (1) Baptism, in its literal sense, taken as an outward rite, is of universal and continual obligation—continual, that is, as long as this dispensation lasts. (2) Taken in its literal

sense, circumcision was the initiatory rite of the old covenant, as baptism is of the new. 2. Three points of resemblance. (1) In a spiritual sense, both have the same signification. Both point to the renewal of heart which is required of all. (2) Neither circumcision nor baptism are of value as mere rites, unaccompanied by the spiritual grace which they typify (Gal. v. 6; 1 Pet. iii. 21). (*Archbp. Whateley.*)

The cure of wilfulness:—It is a thing much to be observed, that many of the outward and visible signs, which God has ordained His people to use in worshipping Him, have somewhat in them to remind us in some way of suffering, affliction, pain, self-denial, death. Thus the Holy Communion is the remembrance of our Saviour's death, His violent and bitter death. But of all Church ceremonies, there is none which so distinctly sets before us our call to suffer, as that which has from the beginning always gone along with baptism; the signing the newly baptised with the sign of the Cross. The Cross is the very height and depth of all suffering. Now such as the baptismal Cross is in the Christian life, such was circumcision among God's ancient people. It was His mark, made for life, in the very flesh of those who belonged to Him, setting them apart, in a manner, for suffering and self-denial. It was a foretaste of the Cross; and, as such, our Saviour Himself received it. Thus, whether we look to our Lord's own example, or to the sacramental ways which He has ordained, both of old and new, to bring His people near Him, either way we are taught to count them happy which endure; to consider affliction and trouble as God's seal, set upon those who particularly belong to Him, and to fear nothing so much as receiving our consolation in this world. But if this be so, then just in such measure as we are going on prosperously and at ease, have we need to mortify ourselves, and keep our passions in order; that by our own doing, if so please God, we may provide for ourselves something like that due chastening, which our afflicted brethren really have to endure. This, our self-denial, we must practise in little matters: it should accompany us in our everyday walk, as every Jew bore about with him the mark of circumcision, visibly impressed on his flesh. We must not keep our patience and self-command to be exercised only on great and solemn occasions; we must be continually sacrificing our own wills, as opportunity serves, to the will of others. There is no end, in short, of the many little crosses which, if quietly borne in a Christian way, will, by God's grace, do the work of affliction, and help to tame our proud wills by little and little. I say, tame our proud wills, because Holy Scripture sets forth this as one of the particular objects for which circumcision was appointed, that God's people might learn by it, not only to get over what are commonly called the lusts of the flesh, but the angry and envious, and proud feeling also; as the text seems specially to hint: Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked. As if stubbornness and obstinacy, and, in one word, wilfulness (for that is the meaning of a stiff neck), were to be cured by the same kind of discipline as sensual passions, lust, and greediness. In short, it is not hard to understand how the body, which greatly affects the mind, may be tamed and brought into subjection, by a quiet and discreet method of fasting, accompanied, of course, with alms and prayer. And a little consideration will show that the same discipline must do great good to the passions of the soul too. If we abstain from indulging our bodily appetites, for the sake of pleasing God and obtaining His grace, is there not so far a better chance of our remembering Him, when we are tempted to indulge discontented, unkind, proud thoughts, wilful tempers of any sort? I do not of course mean that this benefit follows upon the mere outward exercise of fasting, but only if a person sets about it religiously, in the fear of God, in desire to draw near to Christ, and in humble obedience to His will, made known in His Gospel and by His Church. Otherwise mere fasting, as well as mere prayer, or mere reading, or mere going to church, may be turned into a snare of the devil. But it is not therefore to be omitted, any more than those other holy exercises; but practised, as I said, in the fear of God, the want of which fear alone it is, which can ever make any person easy in depending on one or other holy duty, so as to leave out the rest. (*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times."*)

Ver. 19. **Ye were strangers.**—*The stranger's claim*:—In both Jewish and Christian economy special kindness was to be shown to the stranger. I. THE STRANGER'S CLAIM DOES NOT REST UPON ANY DOCTRINE OF ABSTRACT RIGHT, BUT UPON THE DISADVANTAGE OF HIS POSITION. He can hardly be said to have any right at all. He is a foreigner. He comes uninvited. He seeks only his own advantage. Why should I befriend him? He is seeking only to make his own way, and to secure a footing, probably at my cost, or that of my neighbour.

Besides, it is impossible to befriend him without risk. Nothing is known of his history or his character. Why did he leave the place where he was known? If he couldn't succeed there, why should he expect to succeed here? The very fact that he had to come among strangers and start life afresh is a reason for caution and reserve. All this is true. Why should you trouble about him? Yet you must trouble. And the simple reason is, that his strangeness places him at a terrible disadvantage. In the Old Testament he is always classed with the widow and the orphan. They are the defenceless class. And because they are an easy prey of cunning and wickedness, God makes special provision for them. He comes into a community ignorant of all the well-established order of its life. The common-places of their life are novelties to him. What an object for fleecing! The sailor on shore, and Young Evergreen on the turf, are striking examples of the readiness with which the simple-minded stranger falls a victim to wily and wicked men. The same thing happens in business and society. Most people regard it as quite the proper thing to make the stranger pay for his experience, and do not scruple to take advantage of his ignorance. The glory of our Jehovah is that He is the Defence and Champion of the helpless and oppressed. The world bullies the widow, exploits the poor, and considers the stranger fair game for plunder. But God says, My people shall protect the weak, provide for the poor, and show kindness to the stranger. One reason why they were to show kindness to the stranger was because he is especially sensitive to first impressions. His loneliness and comparative helplessness lay him open to the first influences that come upon him. He is ready to enter any door that opens. How much depends upon those first influences! He will form his estimate of the new community from the people who first get hold of him. The stranger's first impressions of Israel would be gathered from his first experiences among them. First impressions last. God was jealous for His name among the heathen and the stranger. The stranger is nervous, uncertain, apprehensive. He is easily offended, and apt to see slights where they do not exist. But he is just as easily pleased, and responds readily to kind and sympathetic interest. I am persuaded our churches have suffered great loss in our towns and cities through their neglect of the stranger. It would be safe to affirm that no church prospers that is not mindful of the stranger. "Forget not to show love unto the stranger." He is altogether a pathetic figure. Often behind him is a history full of tragedy; his heart is sore, sometimes even unto breaking; always he is in need of kindly and helpful sympathy. II. OUR DUTY TO THE STRANGER. Our duty runs along the line of his need. The Old Testament law protects him against oppression, wrong, and vexation. No advantage was to be taken against him. But they were not to stand aloof, and let him severely alone. They must deal hospitably with him. He with the poor was to have the gleanings of the field, that he might secure his daily bread. In the New Testament the hospitality is extended. To care for the stranger was one of the marks of Christian character (Rom. xii. 13; 1 Tim. v. 10). He was to be treated both in the Old and New Covenant as home-born, and admitted to the privileges of national and social life (Lev. xix. 33, 34). The reason for such generous treatment was threefold. 1. The stranger's need. That in itself ought to be sufficient. The Good Samaritan does not stop to inquire into the merits of the man naked and bleeding on the roadside. His need is a sufficient passport to sympathy. Philanthropy in the guise of a detective is a very poor thing. The large-hearted pity of Jesus did not wait for a certificate of merit and respectability before it healed the sufferer or fed the hungry. The stranger's hunger is for brotherliness, rather than bread. Feed him, then, out of the fulness of your heart. 2. "Ye know the heart of a stranger." One would think such would need no exhortation to be considerate to strangers. The remembrance of a fellow-feeling ought to make them kind. But it does not. The cruellest slave-driver is the man who has been a slave. Suffering unsanctified by grace does not soften and sweeten; it hardens and sours. But the law ought to hold good. If suffering does not make us appreciate the troubles of those who may afterwards be passing through the same experience, what can we appreciate? We are comforted of God, that we in turn may comfort others in like affliction. We have all been strangers, for we began life as "the little stranger." Recall your experiences, and when you see a stranger, do unto him as you would that others should have done unto you. 3. God loves the stranger. "The Lord your God is God of gods, the Lord of lords, a great God, . . . and loveth the stranger. Love ye therefore the stranger" (Deut. x. 17–19). The love of God overflows the boundaries of the elect. It compasses the heathen as well as the Israelite. Be ye imitators of God. Because God loves him, you must love him for God's sake.

This motive is greatly strengthened in Jesus Christ. For His sake we are debtors unto all men. For His sake we must take up our cross and crucify the flesh with its narrow affections and selfish lust. In the stranger you may find an angel. Not that every stranger is an angel. Some are sharks. You are not asked to abandon the ordinary rules of prudence and common sense. There is all the difference in the world between being kind to a stranger and making him your bosom friend straight off. But in the stranger there are great possibilities. When God gave His great promise unto Israel, we are told "they were few men in number, yea, very few, and strangers in the land" (Psa. cv. 11, 12). Only a few feeble strangers, but heirs of a great promise. Angels have a trick of dwelling in unsuspected places; they delight to travel in disguise, and be "entertained unawares." In the stranger you may find appreciation and gratitude. St. Luke tells us that when Jesus healed ten lepers none returned to express their thanks, save only he who was a Samaritan and a stranger (Luke xvii. 18). In the stranger you may find more than an angel. You may find in him your Lord. At the last day you will be surprised to find you have been ministering not unto a needy brother, but to the Lord Jesus Christ. "I was a stranger, and ye took me in." (*S. Chadwick.*) *Experience a stimulus to generosity*:—Diderot rose on Shrove Tuesday morning and groping in his pocket found nothing wherewith to keep that day, which he spent wandering about Paris and its precincts. He was ill when he got back to his quarters, went to bed and was treated by his landlady to a little toast and wine. "That day," he told a friend in after life, "I swore that if ever I came to have anything, I would never in my life refuse a poor man help, never condemn a fellow-creature to a day so painful." (*Francis Jacox.*) *Kindness to a stranger*:—A Pittsburg pastor writes: "It was at the close of the evening service last Sunday that, according to my wont, I stepped down from the pulpit and moved towards the door to greet old friends and welcome strangers. Presently there stood before me a shy, intelligent-looking lad, who grasped my hand with so much cordiality that, looking him in the face, I said, 'What is your name? Do you live somewhere near by?' 'My name,' said he, with a charming accent, 'is John Silas. I do not live here; I work at the K—— Hotel.' 'How did you find your way here?' 'I looked for you many days,' responded the boy; 'I come from Germany one year ago—no father, no mother. I meet you one night, you preached at W—— (one of our suburbs); you shook hands with me, and said you were glad to see me, and I've been looking for your church ever since.' The incident deeply touched several who were standing by, and hospitality to strangers will seem to us all more valuable than ever before."

Ver. 21. **Done for thee these great and terrible things.**—*The great doings of God*:—I. IN WHAT THE GREAT DEEDS OF GOD CONSIST. 1. In Salvation. God, who delivered Israel from the bondage of Egypt, has wrought a great work of deliverance on behalf of the human race. Greater than any deed of vengeance is the Divine interposition by which mankind is saved from the penalty and the curse of sin. 2. In the supply of all wants. The Lord, who gave Israel bread from heaven and water from the flint rock, has made, in the dispensation of His grace, a sufficient supply for the spiritual needs of all mankind. 3. In protection and deliverance from all dangers, and from the assaults of every foe. II. BY WHAT THE GREAT DEEDS OF GOD ARE PROMPTED. 1. By the spectacle of the need, the misery, the helplessness of men. 2. By the pity and loving-kindness of the Infinite Heart. III. TO WHAT THE GREAT DEEDS OF GOD SHOULD LEAD THOSE WHO PROFIT BY THEM. 1. To gratitude and praise. "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." "Bless the Lord, O my soul." 2. To cheerful obedience. The memory of Divine favours should not only awaken gladness; it should remind us of God's claims upon us, upon our love, our life, our all. (*Family Churchman.*) *Praise and obedience*:—He who would serve God must begin by praising God, for a grateful heart is the mainspring of obedience. We must offer the salt of gratitude with the sacrifice of obedience; our lives should be anointed with the precious oil of thankfulness. As soldiers march to music, so while we walk in the paths of righteousness we should keep step to the notes of thanksgiving. Larks sing as they mount, so should we magnify the Lord for His mercies, while we are winging our way to heaven. Our thanksgiving is not a swallow which is gone with the summer. The birds within our bosom sing all the year round, and on such a day as this their song is doubly welcome. The fire of gratitude will help to warm us—heap on the big logs of loving memories. No cold shall freeze the genial current of our soul; our praise shall flow on when brooks

and rivers are bound in ice. Let us see who among us can best rejoice in the Lord in all weathers.

CHAPTER XI.

VER. 1. **Love the Lord thy God, and keep His charge.**—*On the imperfection of righteousness without religion:*—In the expression, "the love of God," are comprehended admiration of Him, and delight in meditating upon Him, reverence towards Him, desire of His approbation, and a fear of offending Him, gratitude for His benefits, and trust in Him as our Father; for perfect goodness, which is the object of this love, at the same time calls for the exercise of all these affections of soul. And this inward religion is the sole fountain of an uniform righteousness "of keeping the commandments of God alway." I. THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION UPON RIGHTEOUSNESS will appear, if we consider—1. That God, who is the wise and righteous Creator and Governor of the universe, and the object of all religion, is also the perfect pattern of all excellence. 2. As loving God under the notion of the pattern of all goodness, naturally transforms a devout mind into the Divine image, by a secret but strong sympathy betwixt God and the pious soul, by its essential admiration and love of what is really beautiful, righteous, and excellent, and by its desire of possessing what it so much admires; so the same view of God will appear to work the same effect in another way. Perfect goodness, which is the true object of love, is an awful thing, commanding reverence from every mind, and a care not to contradict its ordinances. It is not a changing principle, but ever holds one fixed invariable course. Every attentive person therefore will perceive that the only way to be acceptable to this goodness is to resemble it, and consent, in all his actions, to its dictates. This must be a natural reflection upon the first just apprehension of the Divine goodness, and of some force even before love towards it has grown strong in the soul. Can, then, a man who really loves the perfect goodness of God, be without great awe of Him? Must he not be earnest for God's approbation, and be afraid to do anything disagreeable to Him? 3. The devout Christian looks upon himself as a son of God through Jesus Christ the Redeemer of mankind; and shall he not be animated with a spirit suited to the dignity of his high birth and origin? 4. Must not the soul of that man who loves God be animated by a strong gratitude towards Him? Can he behold the Almighty continually pouring forth His bounty on himself and on all other creatures, without feeling himself moved with the warmest sentiments of gratitude leading him to keep the charge and statutes of God cheerfully? II. We come now to make IMPROVEMENT of all that has been said. 1. Hence we may see how much we are indebted to our holy religion, which has given us so amiable a character of God as naturally invites our love. The Gospel has opened our eyes to discern the beauties of His holiness; it has banished all that darkness which overshadowed the nations, and all those dreadful opinions of the Almighty, which were fitted only to excite terror in the breasts of men. 2. Considering the necessity and great advantage of religion and true devotion, whence can it proceed that a matter of such moment is so generally neglected? It is very observable that many, who bestow little thought upon God and His righteousness, never fail to applaud every instance of worth and righteousness amongst men. An upright, a merciful, a generous man they extol with the most liberal praises; while the fountain of all this excellence is not acknowledged, is not heeded. What can occasion this egregious contradiction? There are many causes for it; but amongst others this must be acknowledged not a small one. That the hypocrisy and sinful lives of many who profess piety and devotion, bring a strong prejudice against religion itself, and occasion it to be evil thought of and evil spoken of. 3. From what has been said, let us all be persuaded to cultivate a spirit of devotion, and strive to grow in the love of God. (*John Drysdale, D.D.*)

God requires our love:—You buy a camellia, and determine, in spite of florists, to make it blossom in your room. You watch and tend it, and at length the buds appear. Day by day you see them swell, and fondly hope they will come to perfect flower; but just as they should open, one after another they drop off, and you look at it, despairingly exclaiming, "All is over for this year." But some one says, "What! the plant is healthy; are not the roots, and branches, and leaves good?" "Yes,"

you answer, "but I do not care for them, I bought it for the blossom." Now, when we bring God the roots, and branches, and leaves of morality, He is not satisfied, He wants the blossoming of the heart, and that is love. *God the only object of supreme love:*—There is a noble economy of the deepest life. There is a watchful reserve which keeps guard over the powers of profound anxiety and devoted work, and refuses to give them away to any first applicant who comes and asks. Wealth rolls up to the door, and says, "Give me your great anxiety"; and you look up and answer, "No, not for you; here is a little half-indifferent desire which is all that you deserve." Popularity comes and says, "Work with all your might for me"; and you reply, "No; you are not of consequence enough for that. Here is a small fragment of energy which you may have, if you want it; but that is all." Even knowledge comes, and says, "Give your whole soul to me"; and you must answer once more, "No; great, good, beautiful as you are, you are not worthy of a man's whole soul. There is something in a man so sacred and so precious that he must keep it in reserve till something even greater than the desire of knowledge demands it." But then, at last, comes One far more majestic than them all—God comes with His supreme demand for goodness and for character, and then you open the doors of your whole nature and bid your holiest and profoundest devotion to come trooping forth. Now you rejoice that you kept something which you would not give to any lesser lord. Now here is the deep in life which can call to the deep in you and find its answer.

Ver. 6. And what He did unto Dathan and Abiram.—*The spirit of revolution:*—Moses recalls the revolt against his authority in the wilderness. It took place in conjunction with the revolt of Korah (Numb. xvii.). The point which Moses emphasises is the revolt against Divinely constituted authority, and the result thereof. At the head of the civil rebellion were the sons of Reuben, Dathan and Abiram. As descendants of the first-born of Israel they grudged Moses his lofty position. They allied themselves with the Levitical revolt, and under the cloak of asserting the universal priesthood of the people (Numb. xvi. 3) led many to follow them into the vortex of revolution. This insurrection against the Divinely ordered religious and political order threatened the very existence of Israel. God therefore visited the rebels with special Divine judgment, and the nation was saved. This episode in Israel's history gives us a glimpse of the motives which underlie most revolutionary movements. In these—I. VICE DECKS HERSELF IN THE APPEARANCE OF VIRTUE. 1. The revolutionaries profess ardent desires for the commonweal, for freedom—to save the "enslaved community," &c. Liberty, equality, &c., is their cry, war against tyranny and oppression. They seek to play the *rôle* of unselfish friends of the people. 2. But in their depths such movements are mostly dominated by selfishness. In the revolt here referred to Korah was simply an ambitious Levite, hypocritical and selfish. The Reubenites were moved by tribal ambition. Selfishness, ambition, special interests were the moving springs of this as of other revolutions. 3. The revolution of Dathan and Abiram took its rise first on an ecclesiastical ground; but the political movement was not far behind the ecclesiastical. Men with widely differing opinions joined in opposing constituted authority. The cry for "illumination" is speedily followed by that for so-called "freedom." 4. Revolution is not accompanied by penitence. It never seeks the ground of its complaints in the faults of the people themselves. 5. Most revolutions are dominated by some "phrase" or party cry. Here it was: "All the people are holy." The power of the partial truth in it lay in God's Word: "Ye shall be to Me . . . an holy nation." But God had appointed leaders in Church and State, therefore it was against His authority Dathan and Abiram rebelled. II. THE PROPHETIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS TYPICAL EVENT. 1. The deepest fulfilment lies in the future—in the days of antichrist. Then the political and ecclesiastical order will be overturned—when antichrist comes offering promise of deliverance from all ecclesiastical and political ills. 2. But the punishment meted out to Dathan and Abiram with their fellow-rebels shall fall more fiercely on antichrist (Rev. xix. 20). 3. A veil, however, overhangs this future. Still there are experiences in history which prepare us to understand what shall be. The French Revolution is a striking example. It was not merely a revolt of ruled against rulers. It was first a spiritual revolution. Scepticism had loosened religious authority, and the political crisis speedily followed, as in the rebellion of Korah. So in France ambitious leaders shrieked of liberty, &c. The whole foundations of order were overturned. Then from the Revolution rose one who had no law but

his own will. He trod men under his feet; for twenty-five years the storm raged. Here was a faint experience of what will be in the times of antichrist. A respite has been given; but he who has eyes may conceive somewhat of the trend of that great future revolt. III. WHAT SHALL WE DO IN VIEW OF WHAT IS COMING? 1. Let us ask, guided by God's Word, what revolts in Church and State will lead to. What is the meaning of much of so-called "progress" and "freedom"? "If the Son shall make you free," &c. (John viii. 36). What is "culture" if not found in Christ's Gospel?—this is the only "culture" of eternal worth. Modern "progress" does not always mean progress in righteousness. 2. Do not let the hollow "phrases" of the modern age influence us. In God's Word the madness of rebellion, its falseness and hypocrisy are seen, and its terrible end. The way of righteousness is conformity to the Divine order. The sin of participation in rebellion must be shunned. Those who stand on the side of revolution, of the antichristian age, or (in the future) of antichrist, lay themselves open to the punishment of the rebellious Reubenites. (*W. Grashoff.*)

Vers. 10–12. **Not as the land of Egypt.**—*Canaan on earth:*—Egypt is typical of the condition of the children of God while they are in bondage to the law of sin. There they are made to work unceasingly, without wages or profit, but continually subject to pains. The coming up out of Egypt is the type of the deliverance which every one of God's people enjoys, when by faith he strikes the blood of Jesus on his doorpost, and spiritually eats the paschal lamb; and the passage through the wilderness is typical of that state of hoping, and fearing, and doubting, which we usually experience between the period when we come out of Egypt, and attain unto the full assurance of faith. Many of you are really come out of Egypt; but you are still wandering about in the wilderness. "We that have believed do enter into rest"; but you, though you have eaten of Jesus, have not so believed on Him as to have entered into the Canaan of rest. I. TRUE RELIGION MAKES A DIFFERENCE NOT ONLY IN A MAN, BUT IN A MAN'S CONDITION; IT AFFECTS NOT ONLY HIS HEART, BUT HIS STATE; NOT ONLY HIS NATURE, BUT HIS VERY STANDING IN SOCIETY. The Lord thy God cares not only for Israel, but for Canaan, where Israel dwells. God has not only a regard to the elect, but to their habitation, and not only so, but to all their affairs and circumstances. My habitation is now guarded by Jehovah; my position in this world is no longer that of a needy mendicant; my position, which was that of a bondslave in Egypt, is now become that of an inheritor in Canaan. In this difference of the condition of the Christian and the worldling we shall mark three things. 1. The Christian's temporal condition is different to that of the worldling, for the worldling looks to secondary causes; the Christian looks to heaven; he gets his mercies thence. 2. But now comes the second distinction, and that is, a difference in the toilsomeness of their lives. The worldly man, just like the Israelites in Egypt, has to water his land with his foot. Read the passage: "For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot as a garden of herbs." This alludes, possibly, to the practice amongst all eastern nations where the land is irrigated, of letting out a certain quantity of water into a trench, and then having small gutters dug in the gardens, to compel the water to run along different parts of the ground. Sometimes one of these gutters might be broken, and then the gardener would press the mould against it with his foot, to keep the water in its proper channel. But I am inclined to think that the passage alludes to the method which those eastern countries have of pumping up the water by a tread-wheel, and so watering the land with their foot. However that may be, it means that the land of Egypt was watered with extraordinary labour, in order to preserve it from sterility. "But," says Moses, "the land, to which ye are going, is not a land which you will have to water with your foot. The water will come spontaneously; the land will be watered by the rain of heaven. You can sit in your own houses, or under your own vine, or under your own fig-tree, and God Himself shall be your irrigator. You shall sit still, and 'in quietness shall ye possess your souls.'" Now, here is a difference between the godly and ungodly—the ungodly man toils. Suppose his object is ambition; he will labour and spend his very life, until he obtains the desired pinnacle. Suppose it is wealth; how will he emaciate his frame, rob his body of its needed sleep, and take away the nourishment his frame requires, in order that he may accumulate riches! And if it is learning, how will he burn his eyes out with the flame of his

hot desire, that he may understand all knowledge; how will he allow his frame to become weak and wan by midnight watchings! Men will in this way labour, and toil, and strive. But not so the Christian. No; his "strength is to sit still." He knows what it is to fulfil the command of Paul—"I would have you without carefulness." We can take things as God gives them, without all this toil and labour. I have often admired the advice of old Cineas to Pyrrhus. Old story saith, that when Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, was making preparation for his intended expedition into Italy, Cineas, the philosopher, took a favourable opportunity of addressing him thus: "The Romans, sir, are reported to be a warlike and victorious people; but if God permit us to overcome them, what use shall we make of the victory?" "Thou askest," said Pyrrhus, "a thing that is self-evident. The Romans once conquered, no city will resist us; we shall then be masters of all Italy." Cineas added, "And having subdued Italy, what shall we do next?" Pyrrhus not yet aware of his intentions, replied, "Sicily next stretches out her arms to receive us." "That is very probable," said Cineas, "but will the possession of Sicily put an end to the war?" "God grant us success in that," answered Pyrrhus, "and we shall make these only the forerunners of greater things, for then Libra and Carthage will soon be ours; and these things being completed, none of our enemies can offer any further resistance." "Very true," added Cineas, "for then we may easily regain Macedon, and make absolute conquest of Greece; and when all these are in our possession, what shall we do then?" Pyrrhus, smiling, answered, "Why then, my dear friend, we will live at our ease, take pleasure all day, and amuse ourselves with cheerful conversation." "Well, sir," said Cineas, "and why may we not do this now, and without the labour and hazard of an enterprise so laborious and uncertain?" So says the Christian. 3. This brings us to the last difference that we will note, and that is, that the unbeliever, he who has not crossed the Jordan and come to full confidence, does not understand the universality of God's providence, while the assured Christian does. In Egypt the ground is almost entirely flat; and where it is not flat, it is impossible, of course, to grow anything, unless the ground is watered at considerable difficulty by some method of artificial irrigation, which shall force the water on to the high places. "But," says Moses, "the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys." The Egyptians could not get the water up on the hills, but you can; for the mountains drink in the rain, as well as the valleys. Now look at a worldling. Give him comforts, give him prosperity. Oh! he can be so happy. Give him everything just as he likes it; make his course all a plain, all a dead valley and a flat; he can fertilise that, and water it; but let him have a mountainous trouble, let him lose a friend, or let his property be taken from him—put a hill in his way, and he cannot water that, with all the pumping of his feet, and all the force he strives to use. But the Christian lives in "a land of hills and valleys"; a land of sorrow as well as joys; but the hills drink the water, as well as the valleys. We need not climb the mountains to water their heads, for our God is as high as the hills. II. We must consider THE SPECIAL MERCY. We must now turn away altogether from the allegoric, and come to this special mercy, which is the lot only of God's people. "The eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." That is, upon the lot of all Christians individually. Do not pick out one day in the year, and say it was a bad day, but take all the year round. "Ah! bless the Lord! He hath done all things well; my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name!" And you know why all things have been well. It is because the eyes of the Lord have been upon you all the year. Then might I not say a word to you concerning the eyes of the Lord having been upon us as a church? Ought we to let this year pass without rehearsing the works of the Lord? Hath He not been with us exceeding abundantly, and prospered us? Some old writer has said, "Every hour that a Christian remains a Christian is an hour of miracle." It is true; and every year that the Church is kept an entire Church is a year of miracle. "The eye of the Lord" has been upon us, "from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Gospel for the day—a glad word for the New Year:*—I. NOTICE THAT THE PEOPLE ARE REMINDED OF THE PAST. Confidence in God for the future is to grow out of the memory of His former dealings with them. "Your eyes have seen all the great acts of the Lord which He did." "Think of your almighty Helper," cried Moses, "He goeth with you into this land: He careth for it." And so let us call to mind the greatness and the glory of our God. What tokens of His love to us

we have! What pledges of His care for us, far outpassing all that Israel ever looked upon. II. LOOK AT THE LAND IN WHICH GOD WOULD HAVE US TO LIVE. Egypt is the type of the world, the world that knows not God. "Who is the Lord that I should serve Him? I know Him not." This is the language of Pharaoh, the language, too, of the prince of this world. Egypt is the land where they looked down for their supply—watereдst it with thy foot. They got their harvests by their own toil and depending upon themselves; they knew not God. Israel must come out of this into a land where they look up for their supply, up into the hills whence cometh their help—a land of hills and valleys that drinketh in the rain of heaven. The wilderness between the two was the school where the people were to learn the first lesson of their dependence upon God. We have long enough been fretting and murmuring in the wilderness. In the Lord's name arise and enter into the land where God's presence encircles all, the eyes of the Lord are always upon it. Rest in the Lord. Believe in His power, not as a reserve fund from which you are to draw when your strength is spent, but as actively engaged for you, interested in all your affairs, ever eager to help and guide. III. NOTICE THE LORD'S PROMISES CONCERNING THIS LAND IN WHICH WE ARE TO DWELL. "The land whither ye go to possess it is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven." All our supply is to come from the Lord. Here are springs that shall never dry; here are fountains and streams that shall never be cut off. Here, anxious one, is the gracious pledge of the Heavenly Father. If He be the Source of our mercies, they can never fail us. Do not go down to Egypt for your pleasure, or your strength, or your wisdom, or your comfort. Man of God, thy place is Canaan, the land that the Lord careth for. Fetch all thy supplies from Him. If strength is needed, who can help thee like the Lord? Who else can give thee patience or who so tenderly comfort as the God of all consolation, the God of all patience? If the way grow tangled, who can give thee wisdom as He can? There is the land to live in—the land that drinketh in the rain of heaven. IV. HERE IS A LESSON IN PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY. The land is a land of "hills and valleys." That is all we are told of it. And that is all we know of the land in which we are just entering. This much I can tell of your fortune in the New Year. It will be a year of ups and downs, of hills and valleys. The hills, so hard to climb, that make you sigh and wonder why they are sent—they make the glad and fruitful valleys. If life were all one dead level every pleasure would grow wearisome, the dull sameness of life would oppress us. We want the hills and valleys. The steep climb shows us the landscape that we could never have seen otherwise. The little vexations make the pleasant things fresh in their pleasantness. Only he who has tasted the bitterness of sorrow for sin can taste and see how gracious the Lord is. The beauty, the blessedness, the pleasure of our life is more dependent than we can ever know on the hills of life. The land whither thou goest is a land of hills and valleys. "A land of hills and valleys." Look again. The hills drink in the rain of heaven and thereby make the valleys fruitful. The desert is a desert, because no hills rise up to heaven to touch the clouds and bring down blessings on the thirsty land below. The hills collect the rain for a hundred fruitful valleys. Ah, so it is with us. It is the hill difficulty that drives us to the throne of grace and fetches down a shower of blessing. It is the trial that sends us to the Lord for help. The hills, the bleak hills of life that we wonder at and perhaps grumble at, bring down the showers. They drink in the rain from heaven. And yet again—the hills give to the valleys their fruitfulness and beauty by protecting them. They rise up and shut back bleak winds and furious storms: then in the sunny shelter the valleys shall be covered over with corn, the pastures are clothed with flocks. So is the land whither we go to possess it—a land of hills and valleys. Ah, how the soul had been withered, dead, if no steep hill had risen for its shelter. How many have perished in the wilderness, buried under its golden sands, who would have lived and thriven in the hill country. We cannot tell what loss and sorrow and trial are doing. Do not judge, much less grumble. Trust only. (*M. G. Pearse.*) **The land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys.**—*The land of hills and valleys*:—1. Note how often God tells Israel that the land they were making for was their possession. In Egypt they had possessed nothing; they were possessed. Their time, their children, their lives were not their own there. Now they were to be slaves of a tyranny no more. And every man who is living his life well is marching forward in the track of Israel. There is a sense in which we all begin by being possessed; but we shall end, God helping us, possessing. Sometimes it is a foolish ambition that possesses us; some-

times it is a hereditary curse; or a habit, or sloth, or cowardice, or passion; and we are not our own. But when God breaks that bondage of the soul, far off, it may be, but gleaming in the morning, we see the peaks of a land that shall be ours. Gradually, not without many a failure, through daily effort, and prayer, and watching, we come to a country where we are not slaves but kings. 2. These marching Israelites had been told what the land was to be like in outline. It was to be "a land of hills and valleys." How high the hills would be, they did not know. Much was shrouded in impenetrable dark. And do you say that the future is all hidden? There is a deep sense in which that is true. The separate secrets of the coming days are lodged and locked in the eternal mind. But there is an outline of the coming year that God makes plain to every child of man. For, what your past has been, and what your God has been, and what your heart is eager for to-night—all that will map out the New Year for you. 3. There was to be no monotony in their new home. It would be ever fresh with endless charm. Every valley would have its rushing stream, and every ridge its separate vista. And is there ever monotony where God conducts? It is a lie to say that being good takes all the charm and colour out of life. It is our sins that grow monotonous; our graces are dew-bespangled till the end. 4. I wonder how long it took the Israelites to learn that the hills were necessary to the valleys. How sweet and fertile the valleys were, they knew. Life was a joy down by these happy meadows; it was a sweet music, that of the rustling corn. But yonder, towering skyward, were the hills, and the brigands were there, and over them, who could tell what tribes there were? And there was an element of tempest too, among the hills. The children said life would be perfect here, if God had but spared us those barren and baneful hills. But halt! these rushing brooks, where did they come from? Out of the hills. And where were the sharp sea-winds that would have blighted the vine and withered the springing corn? It was the barrier of mountains that kept them off. The children said, we hate these ragged hills, and we wish that God would level them to the ground;—and it was when they grew to men and women that they knew that never a vine would have clustered in the hollows, and never a harvest turned golden in the valleys, but for the mountains that they wished away. Is there nothing in your life you wish away? Is there no cross, no trial, no limitation? Do not be angry with the hills, because they shut you in. Fret not. Accept them. Is there no lily of the valley at your feet? It would never have been there but for the hills. 5. But the valley does not always speak of harvest. It is not always ringing with the vine-dresser's lilt. There are valleys in which we catch the sound of weeping, and see the rolling mist and never the sunlight. And it is then that we need this text graven upon our heart. For in the valleys we sometimes forget the hills. In the hour of mist we forget that the sun was ever shining. You would think there had never been any blue sky at all, we are so utterly disheartened in the cloudy day. Are the stars not there, though the clouds are abroad to-night? Are the hills not rising heavenward and Godward, though I am in the valley of the shadow? Recall the hours of vision on the mount. 6. Remember the valley when on the hill. To stand on the hill-top is an exquisite joy. There is vision in it: there is the birth of song. And to be strong and vigorous, with a firm grasp of oneself and one's work, that is like heaven begun. Only remember, the day of the valley is coming; the shadow, the mist, and parting are coming; and the wise man, though not with noise and fuss, will be quietly preparing upon the hills for that. (*G. H. Morrison, M.A.*) **Drinketh water of the rain of heaven.**—*The God of the rain:*—Beautiful, simple, noble, true words. Who would change them for all the scientific phrases in the world? The eyes of the Lord were upon the land. It needed His care; and therefore His care it had. Therefore the Jew was to understand from his first entry into the land, that his prosperity depended utterly on God. The laws of weather, by which the rain comes up off the sea, were unknown to him. They are all but unknown to us now. But they were known to God. Not a drop could fall without His providence and will; and therefore they were utterly in His power. God is the living Judge, the living overlooker, rewarder, punisher of every man, not only in the life to come, but in this life. His providence is a special providence. But not such a poor special providence as men are too apt to dream of nowadays, which interferes only now and then on some great occasion or on behalf of some very favoured persons, but a special providence looking after every special act of man, and of the whole universe, from the fall of a sparrow to the fall of an empire. And it is this intense faith in the living God, which can only come by the inspiration of the Spirit of God, which proves the Old Testament

to be truly inspired. This it is which makes it different from all books in the world. This it is, I hold, which marks the canon of Scripture. As it was then, so may it be again. There may come a time in this land when people shall profess to worship the Word of God; and yet, like those old scribes, make it of none effect by their own commandments and traditions. When they shall command men, like the scribes, to honour every word and letter of the Bible, and yet forbid them to take the Bible simply and literally as it stands, but only their interpretation of the Bible; when they shall say, with the scribes, "Nothing new can be true. God taught the apostles, and therefore He is not teaching us. God worked miracles of old; but whosoever thinks that God is working miracles now is a Pantheist and a blasphemer. God taught men of old the thing which they knew not; but whosoever dares to say that He does so now is bringing heresy and false doctrine, and undermining the Christian faith by science falsely so called." From ever falling into that state of stupid lip-belief, and outward religion, and loss of faith in the living God: Good Lord, deliver us. (*C. Kingsley, M.A.*) **The eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it.**—*Good cheer for the New Year:*—Observe here a type of the condition of the natural and the spiritual man. In this world in temporals and in all other respects the merely carnal man has to be his own providence, and to look to himself for all his needs. Hence his cares are always many, and frequently they become so heavy that they drive him to desperation. He lives in Egypt, and he knows no joy. But the spiritual man dwells in another country; his faith makes him a citizen of another land. It is true he endures the same toils, and experiences the same afflictions as the ungodly, but they deal with him after another fashion, for they come as a gracious Father's appointments, and they go at the bidding of loving wisdom. I. First, we will consider THE TEXT AS WE FIND IT. "The eyes of the Lord." What is meant here? Surely not mere omniscience. No, there is love in the text to sweeten observation. "The Lord knoweth the righteous" with a knowledge which is over and above that of omniscience. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, not merely to see them, but to view them with complacency and delight. 1. The meaning of the text then is, first, that God's love is always upon His people. The big heart of Deity is set upon us poor insignificant, undeserving, worthless beings. 2. The expression of the text teaches us that the Lord takes a personal interest in us. It is not here said that God loves us, and therefore sends an angel to watch over us; but the Lord does it Himself. 3. Further, the text reminds us of the unwearied power of God towards His people. What, can His eyes be always upon us? This were not possible if He were not God. The next word that seems to sparkle in the text is that word "always." "The eyes of the Lord are always upon it." And it is added, as if that word were not enough for such dull ears as ours, from the beginning of the year even to the end of the year. I tried to discover the other day what time there was in one's life when one could best afford to be without God. Perhaps imagination suggests the time of prosperity, when business prospers, wealth is growing, and the mind is happy. Ah, to be without God then, why it would be like the marriage feast without the bridegroom, it would be the day of delight and no delight, a sea and no water in it, day and no light. What! all these mercies and no God! If you can do without God at all, it certainly is not when you are standing on the pinnacle. What then? Could we do without Him in adversity? Ask the heart that is breaking! Ask the tortured spirit that has been deserted by its friend! Ask the child of poverty, or the daughter of sickness tossing by night and day on that uneasy bed, Couldst thou do without thy God? And the very thought causes wailing and gnashing of teeth. *With* God pain becomes pleasure, and dying beds are elevated into thrones, but *without* God—ah! what could we do? Well then, is there no period? Cannot the young Christian, full of freshness and vigour, elated with the novelty of piety, do without his God? Ah, poor puny thing, how can the lamb do without the shepherd to carry it in his arms? Cannot the man in middle life then, whose virtues have been confirmed, do without his God? He tells you that it is the day of battle with him, and that the darts fly so thick in business nowadays, that the burdens of life are so heavy in this age that without God a man in middle life is like a naked man in the midst of a thicket of briars and thorns—he cannot hope to make his way. Ask yon grey beard with all the experience of seventy years, whether at least he has not attained to an independence of grace, and he will say to you that as the infirmity of the body presses upon him it is his joy that his inner man is renewed day by day, but take away God, who is the spring of that renewal, and old age would be utter wretchedness. Ah! there is not a moment in any one day that you or I have ever lived, that we could have

afforded to dispense with the help of God, for when we have thought ourselves strong, as, alas! we have been fools enough to do, in one five minutes we have done that which has cost us rivers of tears to undo; in an unguarded moment we have spoken a word which we could not recall, but which we could have recalled if we should have had to bite our tongues in halves to have had it unsaid. The next word that springs from the text is that great word "Jehovah." He who surveys us with love and care is none other than the one and indivisible God, so that we may conclude if we have His eyes to view us we have His heart to love us, and if we have His heart we have His wings to cover us, we have His hands to bear us up; we have all the attributes of Deity at our command. Oh, when God says that He always looks at you, He means this, that He is always yours, there is nothing which is necessary for you which He will refuse to do; there is no wisdom stored up in Him which He will not use for you, there is no one attribute of all that great mass of splendour which makes up the Deity which shall be withheld from you in any measure, but all that God is shall be yours. He shall be your God for ever and ever. He will give you grace and glory, and be your guide even unto death. Perhaps the sweetest word of the text is that next one—the eyes of Jehovah "thy God." Ah, there is a blessed secret! Why? Ours in covenant, our God, for He chose us to be His portion, and by His grace He has made us choose Him to be our portion. We are His and He is ours. II. We are now to TURN THE TEXT OVER; that is to say, we will misread it, yet read it rightly. Suppose the text were to run thus—"The eyes of the Lord's people are always upon Him from the beginning of the year to the end of the year." We like the text as it stands, but I do not believe we shall ever comprehend the fulness of it unless we receive it as I have now altered it, for we only understand God's sight of us when we get a sight of Him. III. In the third place, we will imagine that we BLOT THE TEXT OUT ALTOGETHER. We are to suppose that it is blotted out, to imagine that you and I have to live all the year without the eyes of God upon us, not finding a moment from the beginning of the year in which we perceive the Lord to be caring for us or to be waiting to be gracious to us. Imagine that there is none to whom we may appeal beyond our own fellow-creatures for help. Oh, miserable supposition! We have come to the opening of the year, and we have to get through it somehow, we must stumble through January, go muddling through the winter, groaning through the spring, sweating through the summer, fainting through the autumn, and grovelling on to another Christmas, and no God to help us; no prayer when God is gone, no promise when God is no more. There could be no promise, no spiritual succour, no comfort, no help for us if there were no God. IV. Let us close with USING THE TEXT. The way to use it is this. If the eyes of the Lord will be upon us His people, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, what shall we do? Why, let us be as happy as we can during this year. You have your trials—do not expect that you will be free from them. The devil is not dead, and sparks still fly upward. Herein is your joy, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ will never leave you nor forsake you. Up with your standard now and march on boldly! I would have you use the text by the way of seeking greater blessings and richer mercies than you have ever enjoyed. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *God's care for His Church and people in all ages*:—The land which the Lord thy God careth for. This is true not only of the land of Canaan which was considered in the proper sense of it, but also of any other land together with it, which is the place and residence of the Church, and ordinances, and people of God. This is reductively, and interpretatively, and proportionably the land which the Lord thy God careth for. I. WHEN IT IS SAID HERE THAT HE CARETH FOR IT, THIS WORD CARE MAY ADMIT OF A THREEFOLD EXPLICATION. First, as a word of respect. He cares for it—that is, He regards it. Secondly, as a word of providence. He cares for it—that is, He looks after it and takes care of it. Thirdly, as a word of solicitude. He cares for it, is anxious about it. 1. As a word of respect. The Church of God, and such a land where the Church resides. God cares for it—that is, He regards it, and has an esteem for it. It is precious and of great account with Him. 2. It is a word of forecast or providence. He cares for it—that is, He looks after it, and inquires into the state of it. He casts about what may be best and most convenient for it, and answerably does bring it about. 3. It is a word of solicitude and perplexity. He cares for it—that is, He is anxious about it (Hosea xi. 8). There is no man can express more affection in any thing whereof he is solicitous as to the welfare of it, than God does express towards His Church, as there is occasion for it. It is the land which the Lord cares for in the full extent and latitude of care. Now as there is a threefold expression of God's care for His

Church; so there is a threefold account also, which may be given to us of this care, as from whence it does proceed in Him. 1. From His relation. The Church is His own land by special purchase and redemption, and so He takes care of it more particularly in that respect. 2. From His covenant. It is the land that He cares for upon this consideration also. Because He has engaged Himself hereto. 3. From His interest and more peculiar concernment. The Lord takes care of His Church as that which He receives the greatest advantage from any other besides; not in a strict sense, but in a qualified, and as He is pleased to account it. The use of this point to ourselves comes to this purpose. First, as it serves to inform us, and to satisfy us in the truth of this point, which we have now before us, that we be persuaded of it. It is that which we are ready sometimes to doubt of whether God cares for His Church or no. Especially according to the circumstances wherein it may be as Gideon sometimes reasoned with the angel (Judg. vi. 13). This proposition which we are now upon, it hath both an inclusive emphasis and an exclusive. It has an inclusive emphasis in it, as it does signify; that God does indeed take care of His Church and land. An exclusive emphasis, as it does signify that He does care of it both in the denial of others' care for it, and in His own denial of care for others. And so now I have done with the first general part of the text, which is the interest this land here had in God's affection expressed to us in these words, "The land which the Lord thy God careth for." II. The second is THE INTEREST WHICH IT HATH IN GOD'S INSPECTION IN THESE WORDS. The eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of, &c. Wherein, again, we have two branches more. First, the privilege itself, and that is of being under the eyes of God; the eyes of the Lord thy God are upon it. Secondly, the continuation of this privilege, and that is expressed in two words more. First, in the word of perpetuity, and that is, always. Secondly, in the words of extent. From the beginning of the year to the end of the year. 1. First, we will take notice of the former, namely, the privilege itself here mentioned. And that is, of being under God's eye. First, an eye of observation, that is one which God hath upon His Church, He does mark, and mind, and take notice of the state and condition in which it is. Secondly, an eye of compassion; He has an eye upon it, to pity it, and to comfort it in the state in which it is. Thirdly, an eye of direction, a teaching eye; God has such an eye as this which He does sometimes vouchsafe His Church. There is a great matter in the eye to such a purpose as this is, and it is here considerable of us, as we have it in Psa. xxxii. 8. Fourthly, an eye of protection and preservation and authority. 2. Now for the second, which is the continuation of this privilege, that is exhibited to us in two expressions more. First, in the word of constancy or perpetuity; and that is always. Secondly, in the words of extent, or production. From the beginning of the year to the end of the year. First, we may take notice of the continuance of the privilege he mentioned in the word of constancy or perpetuity. And that is always. It hath three properties in it, which are here particularly considerable of us. First, it is a quick eye, there are many persons which see a thing at last, but it is a great while first before they come to do so; yea, but God beholds His Church, and the state and condition of it, as soon as ever there is need for Him to see it. Secondly, it is a fixed eye. He looks upon His land, as if He would in a manner look through it and pierce it with His eyes. Thirdly, it is a frequent eye. His eyes are never off it. The second is the words of extent or production. From the beginning of the year to the end of the year. Where there are three periods, as I may so call them, of the care and providence of God towards His land and people. There is the initial, and the intermediate, and the final. First, here is the initial point of God's providence, taking its rise from the beginning of the year. Thus it signifies to us God's earliness, and readiness, and forwardness in His goodness towards His people, that He takes the very first season and opportunity that is afforded unto Him, for the hastening of His favours upon them. Secondly, here is the intermediate point, in the rising or progress of the year, that is also included as joining both terms together: God is not only kind a little at first, when the year begins, and so making a good entrance, but He holds on and proceeds in His goodness as the year itself rises and gets up. This is God's manner of dealing, not only like some misers, perhaps, to make a feast for a time, and once a year, but like a liberal and free-hearted person—that keeps open-house all the year long, from the beginning of the year to the end. The third is the final point or conclusive. He ends the year as well as begins it, with the expressions of His goodness in it; "He crowns the year with His goodness" (Psa. lxv. 11). Thus is God gracious to His

land and people, in all points and periods of time, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year; from one year to another: yea, from one age to another. Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Lessons: 1. First, in a way of thankfulness and acknowledgment, where we have at any time the experience of this made good to us in our own particulars, as we very much have. 2. In a way of faith and dependence, let us make use of it also, that so we who have had experience of His goodness in the past may still wait upon Him and rest comfortably in His providence. 3. In a way of fruitfulness and obedience, we are to improve this point so likewise. That as the eyes of the Lord our God are upon us, in this extent and production, so our eyes may be upon Him likewise in the same extent. As His in a way of providence, and protection, and preservation; so ours in a way of obedience, and fruitfulness, and circumspection. To begin the year with Him, as He does with us, and thereby to lay a good foundation of holy conversation to ourselves; to set ourselves in a good way at first, in this entrance of time. If we have hitherto been any way failing in our duty, and neglected it, let us now at least and at last keep it. Let us proceed also, as God does with us. He begins, and He goes on in His goodness, His eyes which He cast upon His Church and people, they never fail, but continue, and hold good still. So should our eyes be also upon Him, we should perfectly continue in goodness; and proceed in it, from one degree of it to another. As the year rises in the light of it, so should we rise also in the improvement of it. Let us also end well; be especially careful of that. (*T. Horton, D.D.*) *The Lord's eyes on the land:*—Consider Canaan, with its privilege of being ever under the open eyes of the Lord, as setting forth to us, in a very real manner, the spiritual condition of the Church of Christ, and the blessedness of that state. I. THE SPIRITUAL GROUND OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. 1. The freedom of the new land, though Divinely given, was to be acquired and retained by courageous conflict and endeavour. 2. The productiveness of the new land was to be a blessing to the producer. God has expended His Divine treasures, that His children may bring forth the rich fruits of His own glorious life. 3. Purity of life was to be realised in the new land. The Church exists to promote the worship of the Revealed Father in spirit and in truth. The Church's worship is the drawing forth of its strength from God—the reception of the Divine life into the human. 4. The beauty of the new land was to be the counterpart of spiritual beauty. The fruits and flowers of earth were the response to the light and rains of heaven. The Church exists, that the beauty of the Lord our God may be upon us. Nothing in creation is more beautiful than the sight of consecrated spirits co-operating in the work of God and of His Christ. II. THE DIVINE OBSERVATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. A high privilege and blessing. 1. For the condemnation of wrong. 2. For the approbation of right. No encouragement to the pursuit of goodness can be so great as that which is derived from the truth that God is beholding the fight with evil. (*W. R. Percival.*) *The ideal country:*—Palestine included everything required to make a perfect commonwealth, an earthly paradise. It had —1. God's special husbandry. God cared for it. (1) A free land. (2) A productive land. (3) A beautiful land. (4) A holy land. 2. The perennial watchfulness of God. (1) The land, with all its interests, was precious to Him. (2) The produce of the land was assured. (3) No wrong-doer could be uncondemned. (4) The right had His approbation. (*Homiletic Monthly.*) *The land that the Lord careth for:*—I. "A land which the Lord thy God CARETH for," says the Jewish lawgiver. The word is very suggestive to us. It speaks to our hearts of a kind and loving oversight. Our age, distinguished as it has been by scientific advances of all kinds, has perhaps in nothing made more rapid strides than in improved methods for the cultivation of the soil. The farmer no longer rejoices in his ignorance; and agricultural chemistry has taken rank among the established studies of the day. But what proof are all such appliances against the continued drought, or the falling blight, or the wasting rains? No; we must be taught, as Israel was taught, that fruitfulness was not so much the happy product of the soil, still less the natural requital of man's industry and skill, but an immediate effect of the Divine blessing—a consequence of the eyes of the Lord never being off the land, but ever seeking and ever caring for it to do it good. II. BUT THE EVIDENCE THAT WE ARE A CARED-FOR PEOPLE, and therefore a fresh ground for our devotedness and love, IS TO BE FOUND IN THE TIME WHEN THIS BLESSING OF AN ABUNDANT HARVEST HAS BEEN SENT TO US. III. But here the scoffer may interject, "Why, if this be 'a land which the Lord careth for,' IS IT SUFFERED TO BE DARKENED HERE AND THERE BY THE OVERHANGING PESTI-

LENCE, or drained of its best blood to keep down a despot's pride?" Should we call that a cared-for land over which the ploughshare had never passed, neither iron had entered to break up the fallow-ground? Many can see this with regard to the wasting sickness, who find it hard to apply to the case of a tyrant's misdoing. But we cannot allow a Divine purpose to the pestilence, and refuse a heavenly mission to the sword. It would be a deep enigma in Providence, and contrary to all that has been hitherto known among men, if the desolating scenes which are now taking place in the East should be without some great moral—should pass away, like the dark shapes upon a storm-cloud, and leave no trace behind. All God's judgments, whatever the instrumentality employed, are to teach men righteousness. It is so with individuals; it is so with nations. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) **The beginning of the year.**—*A sermon for the New Year*:—What are the reflections which are specially appropriate to "the beginning of the year"? It occupies, as it were, a middle position between the year which has just closed, and which you cannot recall, and that portion of time of equal duration on which you have entered; and it thus invites you to look back to the one, to look forward to the other, and in connection with both to look up to that God who has brought you safely through the former, and who alone can determine the events that will befall you during the course of the latter. I. LOOK BACK ON THE YEAR WHICH HAS EXPIRED. The man of business is accustomed at this season to review the transactions of the preceding year, that he may ascertain the amount of his gains and losses. And it becomes you as rational, as immortal, and as accountable beings, to reflect seriously on all that you have received and endured and done during the past year, that thus you may be able to correct what has been wrong, and to supply what has been wanting, in your character and conduct, so as to be better prepared for the trial which you must undergo when you leave the present scene of activity. 1. The outward blessings you have received, and the manner in which you have employed them. 2. The spiritual privileges with which you have been favoured, and the improvement which you have made of them. 3. The trials you have endured, and the effect which they have had upon you. 4. The sins you have committed, and the sentiments and feelings which they have awakened in you. Have you been led gradually to think less of the evil involved in them, and to indulge in them with diminishing repugnance? Or have you been prompted to increased vigilance, in avoiding everything that has a tendency to betray you into them, and increased care to keep at a distance from them, and shun even the appearance of them? In the one case, there is evidence that you have been making a mock at sin, or have looked on it as a trivial thing, which ought not to awaken in you any deep distress; in the other, there is ground for the conclusion that you possess the broken and contrite spirit which God does not despise. II. LOOK FORWARD TO THE YEAR WHICH HAS COMMENCED. I do not mean that you should look forward to it with the design of discovering the events which will occur in your history, or the vicissitudes which you will experience during its course. That would be a vain attempt; and if it were practicable, it would be unwise in you to make it. But your ignorance of futurity should urge you to seek preparedness for the events that will befall you, whatever they may be. You ought not, indeed, to conjecture new and unusual circumstances in which it is possible that you may be placed, and to distract your thoughts from present duties, by considering what in all probability you would do, were these conjectures to be realised; for the grace, or Divine assistance, which the Christian is encouraged to ask, is grace for present need, and not present grace for future supposed necessities. Still, however, there is a state of habitual preparedness for everything that may occur in his future life, which it is of the highest importance for you to possess. Now, there is a twofold preparedness for death which you should desire to possess. The first is a preparedness as to state, which imparts a title to eternal blessedness. And the second is a preparedness as to character, which fits or capacitates for the enjoyment of eternal blessedness. III. LOOK UPWARD TO GOD, IN CONNECTION BOTH WITH THE RETROSPECT OF THE PAST, AND WITH THE ANTICIPATION OF THE FUTURE. 1. With self-dedication. Cherish a sincere desire and resolution to have Jehovah for your God. Enter now into covenant with Him, if you have not hitherto done so; and if in past times you have chosen Him to be your God, renew your solemn engagement to Him. 2. With confession of sin, and engagement to holiness. Let your contemplation of the past prompt to an humble acknowledgment of the greatness and inexcusableness of the offences by which you have provoked the Divine displeasure, and let the anticipation of the future be accompanied with sincere resolutions of new obedience. 3. With prayer for forgiveness and needed grace. Ask God in His great

mercy to pardon the sins of the past year, and to grant to you that assistance which will enable you to avoid these sins during the year that has commenced. 4. With gratitude and confidence. While you cherish thankfulness to God for the goodness which He has manifested to you during the past year, cherish also reliance on His kindness and care for the year that is to come. (*D. Duncan.*)

Vers. 16, 17. **Take heed . . . that your heart be not deceived.**—*Religion no humbug:*—I. LET US NOT BE DECEIVED IN OUR IDEAS ABOUT GOD. 1. Let us not be deceived in thinking that our heavenly Father is partly good and partly bad. 2. Let not your heart be deceived in thinking that God cannot pardon the one who supposes himself or herself to be the worst. We all do wrong, in some sense or another; and when the thought of our sin weighs down our hearts, let us feel persuaded that God can forgive us. But do not mistake His pardon by thinking that when He forgives us, there is an end of it. Here is a careless weaver at work, throwing the shuttle containing the weft. When she has got half through the warp, she finds she has made an error in the pattern, and when the overlooker unwinds the piece he discovers the flaw running through the whole. Well, what is to be done? She says, "O, do forgive me!" He replies, "Certainly I will; but you know it must be undone." It is weary work undoing a web of long threads; but nobody would buy that piece as it is. So the weaver begins with the last thread and pulls it out from side to side and begins again. Likewise, though the Lord forgives us, we must undo the bad life. As the kindly overlooker stands beside the weaver, saying, "Let me help you," so the Lord stands by us to help us to amend the tangled web of our life. While God forgives us and inspires our heart, the rectification of what is wrong must, however, be our own act. We must undo our bad life by beginning afresh. II. DO NOT BE DECEIVED IN YOUR VIEWS CONCERNING RELIGION. Religion is not a theory; it is the living spirit of usefulness. Religion that does not inspire us to be pure ourselves and useful to others is not the true Christian religion; it is a humbug. Religion will comfort your own heart and make you a blessing wherever you go. While it teaches you to fight against your evil propensities, it trains you to be kind-hearted at home and peaceable-minded abroad. In leading you down the steps of true humility, it exalts you to the noblest manhood; and while constraining you to surrender your will to the Christ-spirit, it gives you the glorious power of God-likeness. A minister was on one occasion preaching on peaceableness, having special reference to Messrs. Pincher and Stiggins, two of his deacons who had long been at daggers' point. Such was his faithful earnestness that the whole congregation was moved, and when the benediction was pronounced, Mr. Pincher went across the chapel to the other, and with tears in his eyes, remarked, "Brother Stiggins, after such a sermon there must be peace between us. Now, I can't give in, so you must!" The other replied, "Well, Brother Pincher, if you won't give in, I'm blessed if I will!" You see, they were religious in theory but not in practical life. III. WE SHOULD NOT BE DECEIVED IN OUR THOUGHTS ABOUT THE INVISIBLE WORLD CALLED HEAVEN AND HELL. If you have good things in this world, and do not care for the destitute, you cannot have good things in the other world. (*W. Birch.*) *A caution against deception:*—I. AN EVIL ANTICIPATED. That of having the heart deceived. 1. The scantiness and imperfection of human knowledge. 2. The deceitfulness of the heart. 3. The deceitfulness of sin. 4. The deceitfulness of the world. 5. The deceitfulness of the devil. Such are the reasons we have for believing that our hearts may be deceived. But the text assumes that this deception is an evil pregnant with very pernicious consequences. And this appears from the consideration, that those whose hearts are deceived are involved in a state of the most palpable error. What tradesman would wish to make errors in his accounts? What scholar would not guard against error in his sums? But these errors are trivial, when compared to the grievous error in which those are involved whose hearts are deceived concerning their salvation and their God. Nor is this all; those whose hearts are deceived, are exposed to extreme danger. II. THE CAUTION URGED AGAINST THIS DECEPTION. "Take heed to yourselves," &c. 1. Be alive to a sense of your extreme danger. Let us consider what we are—how deeply fallen! Let us weigh well our circumstances, dangers, and enemies; this will lay the foundation for caution and circumspection. 2. Seek for the illuminating and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. O, seek His influence by fervent, importunate prayer. "Take heed to yourselves." 3. By the constant practice of self-examination. 4. By watching over yourselves. "Watch and pray." "Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." "Watch thou in all

things." Watchfulness will lead you to keep a strict guard over your thoughts, words, actions. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*)

Ver. 18. **Lay up these my words.**—*The four places in which a good man keeps God's truth*:—The four places are here: heart, soul, hand, head; or put it another way: there are two departments of the religious life—first, the truth of God, the reality of religion revealed in us, that is in the heart and soul; and second, the truth of God revealed by us, that is, by the hand and by the head. Even as it is said there were four rivers flowing from paradise, so also there are four rivers which flow through the paradise of a good man's life. They are love, truth, use, beauty. 1. THE FIRST PLACE IS THE HEART. 1. Lay up God's words like treasure in a chest; they are the family plate of believers, the heirlooms of the household of faith. 2. Like books in a library, ready for reference. We cannot read all books at once; we cannot read the whole Bible at one time, it is neither necessary nor desirable. In a very large library well selected, it may be thought there are no books useless, every book has its place and worth, and may be referred to again and again; but it is laid up on the shelf against the time. 3. Like clothes in a wardrobe, ready for all weathers: for summer's sunshine, and for winter's storms. The truth of God should be the garment of the soul. 4. Like conserves of precious fruit, gathered in the time of plenty to be eaten in the snow time of winter scarcity; as of Mary, the mother of our Lord, we read, "She kept all these sayings and pondered them," she laid them up for love to brood over. 5. Like knowledge hidden but not lost. It does not follow always that what does not appear does not exist. A capable captain on shore is not always telling you how he would manage a ship in difficulties; an accomplished musician may be sitting quite still, and saying nothing of the art he loves and of which he knows so much; but in both of these, and many such men, the knowledge only needs the occasion; it is there. 6. Lay them up in the heart as guides. We are not always studying the map, but if we desire to know a country, it is useful to have it; and these words are for use, meditation, and memory. 7. In the heart: not like misers' hoards, but like bankers' gold, which turns into capital, and is not only wealth itself, but a means of creating more. II. THE SECOND PLACE IS THE SOUL. 1. The soul is the seat of thought or understanding. 2. The soul is the seat and place of mind-life. 3. The soul is the seat of conviction, and conviction is mental activity and independence. III. And now the relations of the text change; and this third head brings us to the second department. I said at the first, those two places to which I have referred speak of the truth of God revealed *in* your heart and soul—refer to the moral and mental power of man. Now in this third particular religion is brought into notice; it is the truth of God revealed *by* us, "THEREFORE SHALL YE BIND THESE WORDS FOR A SIGN UPON YOUR HAND." I suppose, that is as much as to say, realise them in your life. Religion is for use, fuel is for fire, wood cut down is to be used, bricks are to build, cloth is for clothes, religion is for life. If you have any religion, use it. Some years ago there was a sect of people called the Rosicrucians; they were a very remarkable people. It was said of them that they had discovered the principle of an ever-burning flame; but then nobody was able to see it; the singularity of the lamp was, that it only shed its lustre in vaults, in closely sealed and concealed tombs. I do not so much doubt the discovery, as I deny the use of such a flame; open the door, it was said, and instantly the light was extinguished. Why, whatever is the use of such a light as that—a light that nobody ever sees? And so it is with the religion of some people; if they have got any, they keep it all to themselves as in a vault or a tomb. "Therefore bind these words as a sign upon the hand." 1. Like a glove, on the hand for defence. The hedger and ditcher tears up many a weed, and encounters fearlessly many a prickly thorn with his rough glove, which he would be fearful to grapple with his ungloved hand. 2. Like a gauntlet, as a sign of challenge. 3. Like a tool, an implement of labour, something to work with, to build with. 4. Like a sword. IV. THE HEAD. "Lay up these words in the heart, that they may be a frontlet to the eye," that is, before you; what you possess you will profess; in a word, avow the Word; do not be ashamed of it. On the other hand, do not make profession of it before you possess it. Thus—1. These words are to be a source of pride; for what is worn on the head, or between the eyes, is usually a source of pride, or a manifestation of it. Be proud then, not of yourself, of your attainments, but of that which has been conferred upon you in the possession of these words. 2. As frontlets between the eyes, for this implies dignity, giving ornament, rank, elevation; so it ought to be if these words are laid up in heart and soul and are manifested in the life; they will be like

an ornament of grace to the head, and chains about the neck; they will be wreathed into a coronet, diadem, a tiara, a crown—all these are worn on the head; and I cannot imagine religion really possessed without its giving beauty, some royalty and elevation to character, something that aliko dignifies person and speech. 8. That they may be as frontlets between your eyes, that they may be a source of protection. Wear them as helmets are worn, like that of which we read, "for a helmet the hope of salvation." And is not this also in the words of God? for they constitute not only the ornament or character, but its defence too, as it is written, "Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me." These are the principles of a religious life—these are the principles which the great Hebrew lawgiver beheld as lying at the foundation of all prosperous states, and all truly noble personal character. (*The Preacher's Lantern.*) *Intellectual religion:*—You cannot read this Book without perceiving that Moses delivers himself with the energy and affection of one who knew that though his strength was unabated and his eye not dimmed, he had but few days to remain upon earth, and who therefore desired to gather into a parting address whatever was most calculated to arrest the attention and confirm Israel in loyalty to Jehovah. And if we attach a more than ordinary interest to the last words of distinguished individuals, ought we not to listen with a reverent attention to the lawgiver with whom God had spoken face to face, whilst in the thought of a speedy dissolution he pours forth lessons, warns, and exhorts? Now, we believe that in our own day, perhaps more than in any other, there is a risk of men being satisfied with a merely intellectual religion. Undoubtedly the character of the age will tell upon the character of the religion of the age, and a mere head knowledge of Christianity will satisfy many of the admirers and cultivators of intellect. And besides this possible case of surrendering to religion an intellectual homage, in which, from the beginning to the end, the heart has no share, we believe that with those who are really converted the head very often outruns the heart, and that many truths are acknowledged which are not at all felt. I. Now, let it be distinctly observed, THAT THERE IS A GREAT PROVINCE FOR THE UNDERSTANDING AS WELL AS FOR THE AFFECTIONS IN THE MATTER OF TRUE RELIGION. It is the business of reason to scrutinise the claims of the Bible to the being received as inspired; and there can be no proper place for the exercise of faith until there be in some shape this exercise of reason. I can never ask a man to believe that the Bible is God's Word, except as the result of a painstaking inquiry; but when once this inquiry has been made, when once the conclusion has been arrived at, that the Bible is inspired, then, indeed, we expect of a man that he prostrate his reason before the disclosures of the Book, and that, whenever these disclosures surpass his comprehension, he give them that unhesitating admission which is due to the confessed fact that they are communications from God. And over and above this employment of the understanding in determining the evidence of the Volume, and therefore the veracity of the doctrines, a man is to read Scripture with just the same endeavour to gain a clear and intelligent acquaintance with its statements which he would make in perusing an ordinary book. There is no fault in the effort to comprehend whatever comes within the range of a finite comprehension; the only fault is in the refusing, when a point is reached by which the understanding is baffled, to receive on God's Word what we cannot clear up by human reason. And thus the intellect is to be no idle agent in religion, for a man must know what he is to believe before he can believe it. We contend that faith cannot be in advance of the understanding; but we are equally clear that the understanding may often be in advance of faith. We are not speaking of mere historical faith, but of that powerful principle which the Scriptures alone recognise as faith; and we say that faith cannot be in advance of the understanding, for according to the foregoing statements, a man must know the object of faith before he can believe: he must know that there are Three Persons and but One God, ere he can believe a Trinity in Unity. But then, on the other hand, the understanding may be very far in advance of the faith, for a man may have knowledge of a vast variety of truths, on not one of which is there any influential fastening of his belief. So that whilst there is a kind of necessity that the intellect possesses itself of doctrines before they can become objects of faith, it by no means follows that the intellect will send them on to the heart; on the contrary, it is a thing of most common occurrence, that the intellect will retain them as merely speculative truths, and that the historical uninfluential assent is the highest homage which they shall ever obtain. And our business is to endeavour to show you the danger of this laying up of religious truth within the confines of

the intellect, and the consequent importance of attempting all obedience to the precept of our text. There is a danger to those who are unconverted; there is a danger also to those who are converted. We begin with the former, and we declare that the parties on whom it seems hardest to make a moral impression are those who are thoroughly well acquainted with the letter of the Gospel. If there be one of you who knows thoroughly well the whole plan of salvation, but who has nothing more than an intellectual religion, we should like to look over what may be called the elements of his knowledge, and see whether he can stand acquitted of the charge of hindering his own conversion. It is a part of your knowledge that it is your duty to detach yourselves from those habits and associations which are opposed to God's Word. Do you labour to effect this detachment? You have the intellectual persuasion that you must be lost, unless Christ heal your moral disease. Do you act as you would do, if you had the intellectual persuasion that you must speedily die unless you betake yourself to this or that physician? We are sure that if there were anything of candour in your replies, they would furnish an ample demonstration that man is himself chargeable with detaining truth in the intellect, when it ought to go forward to the heart, and that it is simply through his not making that use of religious knowledge which he would and does make use of any other sort of knowledge, that he fails to become spiritually as well as intellectually a Christian. Now, up to this point we have confined our remarks to the case of unconverted men; and it may be thought at first sight that intellectual religion can never be attributed to the converted; yet, if you examine with a little attention you will perceive, that in respect of every man there is a likelihood of the understanding outstripping the affections, so that many truths may be held by the intellect which are not known in the experience. Now, look, for example, at the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not possible that a renewed man should fail to give his unqualified assent to the truth that the death of Christ was an expiation for sin, so that he will unreservedly hold the doctrine of the atonement. But all this, you observe, is purely intellectual. The truth may be thus held, but yet held only in the understanding; and the question is, whether the believer lives in the daily experience of this truth—whether as fast as sin is committed it is carried to the blood of the atonement, and whether, therefore, the opening of a fountain for human defilement is a fact which has only gained the assent of the intellect, or one in which the heart feels a deep and abiding concern. And thus, again, there must be with every real Christian an intellectual holding of the truth, that we are to live each moment in a realised dependence upon God; that we are to cast our burdens upon the Lord, that we are to refer to Him our every care, our every want, our every anxiety. But we want to know whether, in respect of the providence of God, as well as of the priesthood of Christ, the intellect is not often in advance of the experience. There may be an unqualified admission by the understanding of the noble truth, that not a sparrow falls without our Heavenly Father. But unless a man continually act on the admission—unless, indeed, he carry his every concern to the Almighty, so as to ask His counsel in each difficulty, His support in each trial, His guardianship in each danger, why, we contend that the understanding has outstripped the heart—in other words, that the intellect is in advance of the experience. And there are, we suppose, but few Christians who will deny that they are chargeable with this inequality of pace in the understanding and the heart. II. We will just show you what we think THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE INTELLECT BEING IN ADVANCE OF THE EXPERIENCE. If you know a doctrine whose power and preciousness you do not feel—and this is, in other words, the outstripping of the heart by the understanding—then you receive that doctrine only as an unconverted man receives it, and you must be chargeable even in a greater degree with its detention in the intellect, when it ought to be sent on to the affections; and there must be produced something of the like effect in two cases. You strip the doctrine of energy by allowing it to remain inert in the understanding; you reduce it into a dead letter, and thus you grieve the Holy Spirit, who intended it as an engine by which you might carry on the conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil; and we need not tell you that what grieves the Spirit must sensibly affect your well-being as Christians. Besides, in all your religious intercourse with others, the probability is that your conversation will take its measure from your knowledge and not from your experience. Take the case of a preacher. The preacher, and we suppose it to be his duty, will press upon his congregation the amount of truth which is known to himself, whether or not it be felt by himself. When I speak up to the extent of my knowledge, if

that knowledge outruns my experience, I represent myself as attaching value to certain truths of which, after all, I have not tasted the preciousness. And what is this but representing myself as a more thorough believer than I am? And what again is this but the playing the hypocrite, though I may have no distinct purpose of palming a false estimate upon others? And if the excess of knowledge over experience thus makes it almost certain that in attempting to instruct others we shall virtually be hypocrites, you have only to remember how hateful is hypocrisy in every degree, and under every disguise, to the Almighty, and you will have no difficulty in discerning the signal danger of allowing the intellect to outstrip the heart. It is true, you may say, we will avoid the danger by abstaining from all endeavour to instruct, but you will thus again be neglecting a positive duty—and is not this perilous? You may say, "We will never speak beyond our experience," and this will secure us against the alleged risk; but since your experience comes not up to your knowledge, you would thus be guilty of keeping back truths which God has given to be advanced, and you would hardly then think that the danger which you incur would be less than the danger you avoid. If, therefore, any one of you as a true Christian values peace, then his constant aim will be, that whatever of religious truth finds its way into the understanding may be sent onward at once to the affections, and that thus the precept of Moses may be sedulously obeyed—"Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul." (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Attention to the Scriptures:—Attention to the Word of God is strongly urged upon the Israelites in my text. At that time, however, only a small part of that Word—the five books of Moses—had been given by God to man. How much more strongly, then, is our attention called to the Holy Scriptures, now that every part of the Bible, containing the will of God, is made known to us! I. We have the reason given why we are to attend to the words of the Bible, namely, because they are the words of God; THEREFORE SHALL YE LAY UP THESE MY WORDS. If an earthly king were to write a book for his subjects, how eagerly would it be read! In proportion to his authority would be the attention paid to what he wrote, especially if he were a king from whom his subjects had received great blessings, and who had no other object in view than their real good. What attention, then, ought to be paid to the Bible! It is the word of the King of kings. It also contains treasures worth more than thousands of worlds, even the Gospel of salvation to perishing sinners. Yet, alas! nothing, in general, is more neglected than the Bible. Or, if it is read, it is only in a formal manner, as a matter of duty, undertaken in order to work out a supposed righteousness. The Bible must be searched into as for hidden treasures, by all that are really anxious for the salvation of their souls; and the glorious truths it contains must be laid up in the storehouse of the heart. II. We are commanded not only to lay up the Word of God in our own hearts, BUT ALSO TO TEACH IT TO THE RISING GENERATION. "And ye shall teach them your children." We have here another melancholy proof of the blindness of the natural man. We see children taught, indeed, but not taught the Word of God. We see boys taught to seek after the good things of this life. We see girls taught to adorn their perishing bodies. But we look around, almost in vain, for those who teach their children the words of the Lord. All, however, to whom the Word of God is precious, should teach it to the rising generation. III. The next command given is to speak of the words of God, WHEN THOU SITTEST IN THINE HOUSE, AND WHEN THOU WALKEST BY THE WAY, WHEN THOU LIEST DOWN, AND WHEN THOU RISEST UP. Alas! there is, in general, no subject so completely banished from conversation as religion. To hear men in their common discourse, we might suppose that God had commanded His creatures never to talk of His words. And, surely, if the command were given to the Israelites, it is urged with far greater force upon us, in proportion as the reason is stronger. The Israelites could only talk of the wonders of creation, of the history of their forefathers, and of the law of Moses—that law which, from its very holiness, is a law of sin and death to fallen man. But, beside all this, we can talk of the wonders of redemption, and of the gracious dealings of the Lord with His people in all ages. IV. But still further, the words of God should always be had in remembrance. The text commands the Israelites to WRITE HIS WORDS UPON THE DOORPOSTS OF THEIR HOUSES. There might be some reason for this, when printing was unknown, and therefore copies of the whole Word of God scarce—but that reason exists not now. Through the mercy of God the whole of His Word may now be in the hands of every one who wishes it. We therefore must enter into the spirit of the text. We should have the precepts and

promises of the Bible fastened to the gates of our hearts, to direct our actions, words, and thoughts. V. In the close of our text we are reminded of the encouragement given to obey the command—THAT YOUR DAYS MAY BE MULTIPLIED, AND THE DAYS OF YOUR CHILDREN, IN THE LAND WHICH THE LORD SWARE UNTO YOUR FATHERS TO GIVE THEM, AS THE DAYS OF HEAVEN UPON EARTH. Those who govern their lives by the Word of God are the only really happy people in this world. Faith in Christ delivers believers from the hard service and bondage of this world, and leads them into the glorious liberty of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (*H. Gipps, LL.B.*)

Vers. 19-21. **Teach them, your children.**—*Religious education:*—I. THIS IS THE SIMPLEST NOTION OF EDUCATION, for undoubtedly he is perfectly educated who is taught all the will of God concerning him, and enabled through life to execute it. And he is not well educated who does not know the will of God, or, knowing it, has received no help in his education towards being inclined and enabled to do it. II. The special thing meant to be taught to the Israelites was A KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S STATUTES AND ORDINANCES, not the Ten Commandments only, nor all the early history of their forefathers contained in the Book of Genesis, but God's law given to them His people, His will respecting them morally and politically, His will with regard to all the relations of private and public life; all this was laid down in their law; all this was carefully to be taught them in their youth, that so, in whatsoever line of life they might be thrown, or whatever questions might be agitated, they might know what was God's will, and therefore might know and do their own duty. III. For the Israelites the Bible contained both the rule and its application; FOR US IT CONTAINS ONLY THE RULE. In order, therefore, to instruct our children fully in God's will and enable them to execute it, we must bring in some other knowledge and other studies, not to be found in the Bible, in order to make up for that part of the Bible which gave this instruction to the Israelites, but which gives it us no longer. And hence it is clear that neither is the Bible alone sufficient to give a complete religious education, nor is it possible to teach history and moral and political philosophy with no reference to the Bible without giving an education that should be anti-religious. For in the one case the rule is given without the application; in the other the application is derived from a wrong rule. (*T. Arnold, D.D.*) *Parents the divinely appointed teachers of their families:*—I. THE LIGHT IN WHICH WE OUGHT TO REGARD THE FAMILY RELATION. Parents should never forget that the family is the school in which they are training the men and women of the future age, from whom the world will gain its votaries, the church its members, heaven its redeemed spirits, and hell its victims, and that their examples are making impressions which will extend their blissful or baneful influence on their eternal destiny. II. THE TEACHERS AND THEIR QUALIFICATIONS. Parents are constituted the teachers of their children by the express appointment of God, and any arrangement that sets aside this appointment can neither be wise nor safe. As God has thus clearly defined who are to be the teachers, so He has, in the text, no less clearly pointed out what are to be their qualifications. III. THE MATTER AND THE MANNER OF THE TEACHING WHICH GOD HAS ENJOINED. Surely nothing is so worthy of engaging the first recollections of the mind as "the words of God," nor anything so important as to have the heart—before it is immersed in the cares of life—fully brought under the guidance of God, the grace and love of Christ, and the attractions of heaven. And to attain this should elicit the daily efforts and the daily prayers of the Christian parent, as he sits in his house, or walks by the way, or lies down, or rises up. IV. THE HAPPINESS WHICH MAY BE EXPECTED TO RESULT FROM THIS. There are those who would make us believe that these, and all similar promises of a temporal nature, which we meet with under the Old Testament dispensation, have no place under the new. But so long as it is true that "in the keeping of God's commands there is a great reward," and that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come," and that there is a natural adaptedness in a life of piety to promote the universal well-being of man, I cannot see how such interpretations of Scripture can be according to truth. It is quite true, however, that the chief and most glorious part of "the recompense of reward" is spiritual, and such as can be fully enjoyed only in the heavenly state. (*M. T. Adams.*) *The training of children:*—The most powerful institution that abides to-day is not the regal, nor the noble; it is not political economy; it is not industry, nor is it the Church: it is the family, the

household. 1. In rearing children, the first step should be in securing health; and for this sake the requirement is healthy parents. Children that bear the sins of their fathers are not few, and miserable are they; but taking it for granted that children are born with fair chances of life, sound in every part, and well-tempered together, the very first parental duty is to secure for them, from year to year, air, exercise, and wholesome food, that they may grow up healthily. Under this general head of health parents need instruction against the early forcing of their children. See that your children are kept down to animal conditions, so that the brain shall not destroy them. 2. Next to health in importance in the family, as well as in order, is obedience. The child is born into a world of infinite subordinations, where the business of life itself is to suppress one's self, and to give way here and there to strength, to social arrangements, to law. There can, therefore, be nothing less wise in the parent, and nothing less beneficial to the child, than that questioning, hesitating obedience which finally dragged into an unwilling submission, the child at last yields; but that is family government, as it is seen in many households; and wherever you see this—especially if you see it in your own house—understand that you are bringing up your children to disobey God, and the magistrate, and their fellow-men, by teaching them to disobey you, or to give only a grudging instead of a cheerful and prompt obedience. It may be said that this is to break the will of the child, and that he needs all the will he is possessed of with which to fight his way through life. Now it is no more breaking the will of the child to teach him to obey his father and mother, than it is the breaking of the bones of my arms to teach me exactly how to use them, or exactly how to hold my hand to the keyboard of a piano. It is merely teaching the child how to use his will; and without teaching of that kind we are all brutes and barbarians. 3. We are next to consider that our children are not given to us for our accommodation and our pleasure. They are not, in one sense, our own children; they are lent to us; and no trust was ever reposed by king, by noble, by any human being upon another, so august, and of which the responsibilities are so tremendous, as the trust of a child placed in the hands of fallible, feeble, erring men, to be brought up for his destiny in this life, and in the life which is to come. These considerations reach backward. The laws of taking care of our children ought to go back further than the birth of the child, to antecedent conditions. I do not think that civilisation will ever take its last flight, or that religion will ever universally prevail, until physiological laws are observed to the letter. 4. Let me say that I regard a happy Christian family, consisting of wise parents and dutiful children, dwelling together in love as Eden restored. I regard the development of love in the family, its impartiality, its pitifulness to the weak, its watch and care, its patience, its suffering, its power to suffer, its stern requisition, its discrimination between right and wrong, its endurance of pain for the objects of its discipline, as the grandest, and as the only perfect revelation of Divine moral government. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Have the Word of God ready for use:*—It is a Word directive, explanative, consolatory, inspirational, redemptive. It is God's spoken wisdom for man's active guidance. And the wise man will ponder well these Divine revelations before he sets out, will get a good grip of heaven's instructions and promises before passing on to the stress and strain of conflict. The heart has need to store such things as these in readiness. They are not easily or readily found if left at one side till immediately wanted. It is an easier and wiser course for your railway official to light up his carriages amid broad daylight and before the train starts than it would be to send a man with flaming torch along the roof of a speeding train after it had dashed into the darkness of a tunnel. The ship that sails forth well equipped does not put her lifeboats in the hold because the day is fine—she carries them taut, furnished, ready fitted for immediate use, prepared beforehand even down to details for any moment's service. So must we equip ourselves with Divine wisdom for life's voyage. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly." Let it be a perpetual remembrance. Its interpretation of life's meaning and issue, its solution of the ways of Providence, its new and chivalrous setting of old moral obligations, its bright-hued promises, above all its message of grace to the needy soul—let us take a lively realisation of these truths with us. (*C. A. Berry, D.D.*) *Aids to memory required:*—The Hebrew prophet anticipated the difficulty of attaining this Divine consciousness. Our natural tendency in respect of spiritual verities is not towards remembrance but forgetfulness. Great emotions, bright visions, hours of keen insight, pass, leaving behind only a vague,

occasional reminiscence. We are alive at so many sensuous points, and there is so much to be alive to in the intensity of our worldly life, that we easily become absorbed in what is passing, our thought of the Divine becomes meagre, spasmodic, feebly influential—an occasional jerk, not a constant, steady, regnant force. Moses foresaw this: foresaw, too, that the only way to check this and to reverse it was to turn the outward into a ministering reminder of spiritual things. In the first place he asked them to associate everything in life with the gracious words of God, to turn their surroundings into memory helps, recalling to the mind the great lessons of heaven. In the next place, observing that men best learn what they oftenest teach, he directed them, in relation to God's Word, to follow a course of pupil-teachership, to fix in themselves by imparting to others the truths and promises of grace. Our first step towards the perpetual remembrance of Christ is to surround ourselves with memorials of Him, to put up tokens, symbols, writings, which shall recall past lessons and experiences. We must use our common-sense in this matter. We must give to the soul at least as many helps as we give to the mind in our efforts to produce and to fix great impressions. When I go into a schoolhouse I find the wise teacher calling into the service of his pupils' memory every sense with which they are gifted. He is not content to repeat a thing, nor even to make it clear: he seeks thereafter to set up a sensuous memorial of the thing taught. Now by a rhyme which captivates the ear, now by a picture or demonstration which masters the eye, he endeavours to render permanent the instruction of the hour. Every surrounding of life is thus turned into the service of the memory. Things are made vocal of ideas. The eye and the ear are made daily ministers to the intellect and the heart. Memory is built up of memorials. Every Christian home should be well furnished with memorial writings and suggestive memory-helps. Some vivid experience has lit up for you the full meaning and graciousness of an old Scripture promise. Put up that promise where it shall often meet the eye, and through the eye you shall be able to re-awaken the soul to that old and blessed experience. A blessed answer to family prayer has saved your home from disaster, has brought back to you a wanderer, has delivered you from the loss of members or fortune. Set up in the midst of your household a monument of that great answer. So ought it to be with all the cardinal truths and promises of the Gospel. But there is suggested another help to the realisation of Christ's Word. It is that which springs from teaching to others what we ourselves have learned. "Teach them your children." (*Ibid.*) *The young should be valued*:—Value the young. How precious these germs are! These spring buds are lovely to look upon, but their worth is greater than their beauty. An immortal life is opening there; heed it well. Proprietors rear strong fences round young trees, while they leave the aged forests to take their chance. Permit not the immortal to be twisted at the very starting of its growth for the want of such protection as it is in your power to afford. (*W. Arnot.*) *The mind of a child*:—The mind of a child is not like that of a grown person, too full and too noisy to observe everything: it is a vessel always ready to receive, and always receiving. (*Mrs. Child.*) *Scriptural instruction of children*:—Charles Dickens once addressed a letter to his son Henry while he was at college, advising him to keep out of debt and confide all his perplexities to his father. The letter concluded as follows: "I most strongly and affectionately impress upon you the priceless value of the New Testament, and the study of that book as the one unfailing guide in life. Deeply respecting it, and bowing down before the character of our Saviour, you cannot go very wrong, and will always preserve at heart a true spirit of veneration and humility. Similarly, I impress upon you the habit of saying a Christian prayer every night and morning. These things have stood by me all through my life, and remember that I tried to render the New Testament intelligible to you and lovable by you when a mere baby. And so God bless you." **That your days may be multiplied.**—*A long life and a happy one*:—I. That experimental godliness has a tendency TO ADD LENGTH OF DAYS TO MAN'S LIFE. 1. Genuine religion engenders and fosters states of mind highly conducive to physical health. 2. Genuine religion stimulates a practical regard to the laws of human health. II. That experimental godliness has a tendency TO ADD HEAVEN TO A MAN'S LIFE. 1. It gives him the spirit of heaven. 2. It engages in the service of heaven. 3. It introduces into the fellowship of heaven. (*Homilist.*) **As the days of heaven upon the earth.**—*The days of heaven upon the earth*:—The text implies a very elevated principle, that we should spend our days on earth as the days are spent

by angels and the spirits of the just in heaven. And, without doubt, men might be incomparably happier than they are, if they would. There is no hindrance in God; there is no obstacle in the Divine arrangements; but man destroys his own well-being, and is ofttimes miserable, amid all the opportunities of the sweetest peace and the deepest joy, and when he might have days of heaven upon the earth. I. WHAT ARE THE DAYS OF HEAVEN? "No night there." 1. In heaven they see the face of God. Manifestations of the excellence and glory of the Divine perfections: satisfying, felicitous, transforming. 2. In heaven they glorify Christ and celebrate His praise. 3. In heaven they are full of knowledge. 4. Full of love. 5. Prompt and perfect in obedience. Their delight is in doing God's will; they dwell together in perfect unity. And from this state of mind and nature unmingled satisfaction flows, like waters from a fountain. Deep and ineffable happiness is realised. The pulsations of their joy produce no exhaustion, but for ever increase in pleasantness and power. II. THE POSSIBILITY OF THIS, AND THE DUTY OF ATTEMPTING TO MAKE OUR DAYS LIKE THE DAYS OF HEAVEN, WHILST WE ARE UPON EARTH. 1. And, first, I would refer to the elements of happiness which have been already specified. Respecting the spiritual sight of the Deity, our Lord affirms, "Blessed are the pure in heart," &c. "The world seeth Me no more, but ye see Me." "I will manifest Myself to you, as I do not unto the world." If you delight in the complacency of God, be sure that His favour will be opened upon you as the sun shining in his strength. Then, as to glorifying and praising Christ; do we not now say, "Unto Him that loved us," &c.? And have we not love in exercise? Are we not ready to do the will of God? Do we not dwell in peace? When the light and fire of the Holy Ghost is given; when our best passions are kindled, when we are filled with the celestial communications and communion, there is a near resemblance of heaven upon the earth. 2. Let me appeal to some passages of Scripture which convey the same truth. The Gospel dispensation is the reign of heaven. It is the ascendency of holiness in the heart and mind. The kingdom of God is within you, and it consists of righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. 3. Let us advert to some of the recorded experiences of good men on the subject. It has been said, "Grace is glory in the bud, and religion in the soul is the glory of the soul." "A timorous faith will bring a man safely to heaven, but a strong and vigorous faith will bring heaven to us now." And I was startled by this sentiment: "It is better to be here than in heaven." Yes, so long as it shall please God it is so, and to think the contrary shows insubmissiveness to His will and discontent with His providential arrangements. III. HOW MAY THEY BE SECURED TO US? 1. Receive the Gospel. Christ is our life; if He and the Father come and abide in our souls, heaven is begun. 2. Settle the possibility of it in your own mind. 3. Observe the ordinances of Christ. 4. Avoid all known causes of disquietude. 5. Maintain your self-possession. Cultivate tranquility of spirit. 6. Take care of your thoughts. 7. Take care of your tongue. 8. Take care of your conscience. 9. Do not harass yourself concerning the future. 10. Study to be quiet, and to attend to your own business. 11. Do good every day to some one, either by example, instruction, or generosity. (*James Stratten.*)

Heaven upon the earth:—In this clause extremes meet. Things that are distant are brought together—"heaven" and "earth." 1. We know something of the "days . . . upon the earth." If we told our story, each would be different from the other; yet there would be a wonderful sameness. It would be a story of light and shade, beauty and barrenness, laughter and tears, success and failure. 2. We have dreamed, most of us, of "the days of heaven"; when the sun, no longer battling with the mists, should shine in the glory of his brightness; when fleecy clouds, like angel chariots, should fleck the blue expanse; when all the bustle and riot should be exchanged for unbroken peace and perpetual quiet; when vision should be no longer blurred by the uprising vapours of evil. 3. The text speaks to us of realisation, enjoyment, benediction, contentment. It contains the ideas of continuity and felicity, duration and fulness, or a blending of these ideas. I. THE TEXT FINDS A PLEASING ILLUSTRATION IN HAPPY CHILDHOOD UNDER KINDLY PARENTAL CONTROL. 1. Given all the healthful influences of a home where judicious training is linked with affectionate yearning; where example is set like a jewel in a circlet of gold, and the parents are recognised as priest and priestess of the home sphere: I know no words more fittingly appropriate to describe that period of life than these, "As the days of heaven upon the earth." 2. The child's best interests are secured by obedience and subjection, and his heaven is found in harmony with the parental

will. Then shall his course be crowded with sunny memories, for his way shall be illumined by the father's smile; voices shall cheer him in the darkness; while from day to day shall be added mercies new and many, the true value of which shall only be discovered upon review. II. THE TEXT IS SUGGESTIVE OF THE NEW EPOCH INAUGURATED AT CONVERSION. One summer morning a lady I know well went into her garden. She looked up at the blue sky, she gazed at the trees, she bent over the flowers, she examined everything as though she had not seen anything of the kind before. Her sister inquired, "Why are you looking at everything thus?" She replied with a smile, "Well, it is all so very lovely, and seems so new." She had been converted the previous evening, and that was the explanation of her awakened interest and evident admiration. III. VIEW THE TEXT AS THE EPITOME OF THE GRATEFUL SOUL'S ESTIMATE OF A LIFE THAT OFTEN SEEMS ANYTHING BUT HEAVENLY. The point of view makes all the difference in the estimate of the life of faith on the earth. I read somewhere of one who had moved into a new flat, which could hardly be described as cheerful in its surroundings. The outlook was not very pleasant, and the building had not what the Frenchman called "a sunny exposition." The ordinary woman would have regarded it but as a dismal shelter from the frosts of winter or the rains of summer. A friend called one day, and was asked by the cheerful housewife to notice the pleasant view from the window. "Yes," said the friend, "I see a remarkably fine lot of chimney-pots." "Chimney-pots," said her hostess in astonishment,—"why, I never saw any chimney-pots before. I looked over the chimneys, and saw only those trees which form the line on the horizon. I thought only of the trees and the sunsets." Happy are they who look beyond all which tends to depress and distress! IV. THE TEXT SINGLES OUT THE RED-LETTER DAYS IN THE SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE OF THOSE WHOSE FACES ARE HEAVENWARD SET. Cannot we recall seasons of elevation, times of transport, periods of exceptional delight? When thoughtfully reading, when quietly meditating, when kneeling in prayer, when gathered for worship, when observing the ordinances with our fellow-believers, have we not often been lifted out of and above ourselves? Such experiences are not to be forgotten. The record of them must be deeply engraven. (*Isaac O. Stalberg.*) *Days of heaven upon earth*:—The text shows us a Divine method in providence; a law for individual and national life, and for the larger life of the race; a law borne witness to by the history of the people whose history is a light for all time, and by which we have gleams through experience of bitter times, earnests of the inheritance of light, periods filled with special mercy and truth, times of quickening and spiritual growth, days of heaven upon earth. I. THE FIRST DAYS OF THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION were, in the highest and most absolute sense, days of heaven upon earth. A light began to shine amid the dark shadows of that time, and a Divine life to give forth sparks and gleams of a better world. God was manifest. He dwelt with men. He trod the common paths of life. Brief though the days were, all the great days of human history which preceded them had led up to them; and they were themselves, while they lasted, a vision of heaven for all time, an actual dawn of the possibilities to which Christ is conducting His Church, a demonstration of the power of that life of Christ in His people which, to-day as then, may be an opener of blind eyes, and a raiser of the dead, and may still go forth, as in the first apostles, to conquer the world. Those days were sent to us to create new days in our daily lives, and enable us, even amid the shadows and imperfections of our earthly life, to live lives of heaven upon earth. And these days still return to us. Times of revival are simply repetitions on a smaller scale of the first days of the Church. The light that shines upon human life at such times is light from heaven. Christ once more walks among men, and His presence seems to encompass them wherever they go. II. THE TIMES WHEN THE SOUL IS OPEN TO THE REVELATIONS AND OFFERS OF DIVINE LIFE are days of heaven upon earth. The dawns and sunsets of these days are in the soul itself. These are the blessed times when the heart is still impressible, when the eyes of the soul are undimmed, when the conscience is still tender. The soul is face to face with the claims of God. It has new views of its responsibilities, of its aims, and of its destiny. Christ's word and the Spirit of God and our own conscience work together to range us on the side of God. New visions of the Divine mercy and goodness are opened up to us, and we are placed under the argument of the love that died for us, to admit that love into our hearts. III. THE COMING OF CHRIST INTO A LIFE is the beginning of days of heaven for that life. We are not our true selves until the blood of the Divine life has been mingled with ours. In the midst of natural occasions for joy we are

not glad. Christ enters and joy begins. The long absent Friend has come—the life is heightened. The thoughts flow forth, the nature expands, the eyes kindle, and the whole wide world of circumstance and relationship takes on our joy. IV. TIMES OF SERVICE UNDER CHRIST are days of heaven upon earth. The soul has now entered into loving relations with the Lord. It is no longer its own, but His. Its joy is to live in Him. Its life is a daily consecration to His service. Sacrifice, gifts, labours, worship: Christ is the object of them all. V. THE BEAUTIFUL DAYS OF EARTH are types and sometimes actual realisations of such days. On such days every river becomes an emblem of the river of life; every tree, of the tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations; and the glory of the sky when the dawn burns into the perfect day, of the glory which is to lighten the streets of the New Jerusalem, and clothe the nations of the saved who shall walk in its light. I recall at this moment such a day of heaven upon earth. Here and there, all up the sides of a Highland mountain, patches of corn were yellowing for the sickle. These literally peeped out, so small they were, from amid great breadths of purple heather. Little hollows of meadow grass shot up over their edges the richest green; and, at irregular intervals, the bare rock displayed itself like protruding bones. The sun was setting. His rays came level and struck all that breast of colour at once, and seemed to touch it into active life. It expanded, it swelled, it rose upwards until clouds of colour floated about all the mountain-side. The whole scene glowed with coloured light—yellow and green and purple. It flamed upwards, outwards, downwards, casting back upon the naked granite an ethereal brightness, and down upon the spectator a glory as if the gates of heaven had been opened to his view. It was one among ten thousand glimpses of the glory of God in the face of harvest. To them who were present it was a day of heaven upon earth. VI. CHRIST IS THE LIGHT WHICH MAKES DAYS OF HEAVEN POSSIBLE. And such days fail of their purpose if they fail to increase our joy in Him. Man in his ordinary state can neither see nor enjoy such days. He is blinded and oppressed by his burdens—the well-known, the universally felt burdens, which only Christ can remove—of guilt and care and sorrow. (*A. Macleod, D.D.*) *Days of heaven:*—I. WHEN MAY OUR DAYS BE SAID TO BE "AS THE DAYS OF HEAVEN UPON THE EARTH"? When—1. We enjoy much of a sense of the Divine presence, and live in the contemplation of the glorious perfections of God. 2. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. 3. We enjoy a spirit of gratitude and praise. 4. We possess brotherly love and enjoy the happiness of fellowship with the saints. 5. We obtain great victories over sin and have intense love of purity. 6. We cheerfully obey God's commands. 7. We frequently meditate on the heavenly state. II. WHAT COURSE SHOULD WE TAKE IN ORDER THAT OUR DAYS MAY BE AS SUCH? We must—1. Be partakers of vital faith in Christ, and be renewed in the spirit of our minds. 2. Make the glory of God our highest aim. 3. Wean our hearts from earthly things. 4. Watch against grieving the Holy Spirit. 5. Be perpetually employed for God, and resign our wills to His. (*J. Ryland.*) *The spirit of heaven to be infused into the present life:*—He whose mind is here absorbed in the desire for the distant heaven is like a man walking through scenes of exquisite loveliness, and fields of delicious fruit, with his eye so fixed on a mirage scene in the distance, that he sees no beauty on his way, starves amid the exuberant provisions which lie about his path, and reaches what he sees, an exhausted pilgrim, to find the object of his search vanish into air. Infuse, then, the spirit of heaven into thy present life. Moral goodness of soul, springing from faith in Christ, is your way into the present and all the future heavens of your being. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Heaven on earth:*—It was said of an old Puritan, that heaven was in him before he was in heaven. That is necessary for all of us—we must have heaven in us before we get into heaven. If we do not get to heaven before we die, we shall never get there afterwards. An old Scotchman was asked whether he ever expected to get to heaven. "Why, man, I live there," was his quaint reply. Let us all live in those spiritual things which are the essential features of heaven. Often go there before you go to stay there. If you come down to-morrow morning, knowing and realising that heaven is yours, and that you will soon be there, those children will not worry you half so much. When you go out to your business or to your work, you will not be half so discontented when you know that this is not your rest, but that you have a rest on the hills eternal, whither your heart has already gone, and that there your portion is in the everlasting dwellings. "Lay hold on eternal life." Get a hold of it now. It is a thing of the future, and it is a thing of the present; and even your part of it that

is future can be, by faith, so realised and grasped as to be actually enjoyed while you are yet here. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Days of heaven on earth*:—A minister one day preached on heaven. Next morning he was going down town, and he met one of his old wealthy members. The brother stopped the preacher and said: "Pastor, you preached a good sermon about heaven. You told me all about heaven, but you never told me where heaven is." "Ah!" said the pastor, "I am glad of an opportunity this morning. I have just come from the hill-top yonder. In that cottage there is a member of your church. She is sick in bed with fever; her two little children are sick in the other bed, and she has not got a bit of coal nor a stick of wood, nor flour, nor sugar, nor any bread. If you will go down town and buy five shillings' worth of things—nice provisions—and send them up to her, and then go up there and say, 'My sister, I have brought you these nice provisions in the name of our Lord and Saviour,' then ask for a Bible and read the twenty-third Psalm, and get down on your knees and pray—if you don't see heaven before you get all through, I'll pay the bill." The next morning he said: "Pastor, I saw heaven, and I spent fifteen minutes in heaven as certainly as you are listening."

Vers. 26–29. **A blessing and a curse.**—*Two mountains*:—Mount Ebal, we are told, "is a barren, stony, and arid crag"; so would God "smite the apostates with barrenness, hunger, and misery." Gerizim was "covered with luxuriant verdure, streams of running water and cool and shady groves"; so would God "bless the faithful Israelites with abundance, beauty and peace." It is a grand prophecy in landscape of the judgments of God's eternal providence. Henceforth their future, in the country they conquer and colonise, is in their own hands. The two ways of national and individual life, to ruin or to glory, part plainly before their eyes. The things shown in that early age of symbols were only outward patterns of what goes on in facts and decisions within us. Gerizim and Ebal raise their significant and speaking summits before every life. I. For, in other words, LIFE IS OVERSPREAD, PERMEATED, AND BOUND IN, BY GOD'S LAW. That law occupies every inch of its extent and every fibre of its organisation. Obey and be blessed, disobey and be accursed; here is the sharp alternative imprinted on every department of our being. Your body, your business, your appetites, your affections, your intellect, your memory, your judgment, your imagination, your household manners, your talk at the table and in the street, your practice of your profession or performance at your trade, your levity or sobriety, your temper and your tongue, your bargains and your salutations, your correspondence and your meditation, your action and your reveries, your hands, heart, and brain, all are penetrated and encircled by this law. II. THIS LAW IS PERMANENT AND UNCHANGEABLE, AS ITS AUTHOR IS, BEING THE UNIFORM WILL OF AN UNCHANGEABLE MIND; not one thing for preachers and communicants, but for persons who never chose to confess themselves Christians another and easier thing; not strict for one seventh of your time and lax for six sevenths; not varying with situations and fluctuating with opportunities for concealment or degrees of temptation; not satisfied to be respected in the dwellings at one end of a city while it is despised in the warehouses and offices at the other end. III. Again, THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS LAW which we are born and live under, in its twofold working, whether as visiting penalties upon its violators or peace and strength upon its servants—ARE NOT TO BE PREVENTED THOUGH THEY SHOULD BE APPARENTLY OBSCURED OR POSTPONED. This truth requires something more than a theoretic admission. How many of us realise it—that every offence against the Divine Will is certain to bring on, at last, its penal pain and sorrow—even its delay aggravating its torment; that every faithful or religious act or feeling must yield its infallible return of joy—the very hindrance enhancing its richness and depth; that Gerizim is sure of the fulfilment of its promise, and Ebal sure of the execution of its warning? 1. Helps enough are given to enable us to realise it. Can we pretend the law is not made plain? 2. We let our short-sightedness be deceived by the slowness of its operation; and, because sentence against our evil works is not executed speedily, suffer our hearts to get set in us to do evil. But the majestic order of nature is not really so stable as the moral results of moral choice, from greatest to least. IV. With every right-minded Christian it must be a very earnest and very constant prayer, THAT HE MAY GAIN LARGER AND LARGER APPREHENSIONS OF THE EXTENT AND THE SANCTITY OF THIS LAW—the law that puts him on a perpetual choosing between holiness and worldliness, at between blessing and cursing. V. Another step in the doctrine is TO TRACE UP THIS COMMANDMENT TO ITS CONSCIOUS AND PERSONAL INFINITE

SOURCE. The law has its seat in the heart of God. No rigid, unfeeling abstraction is it, but the living Will of a living Father. Choose the right and scorn the wrong; and there will be growing within you a sense of His Almighty Presence, without whom no right could be, and all would be wrong. But remember that moral obedience can never be religious till it has God for its object, God's Will for its guide, and communion with God for its daily inspiration. VI. And thus we are led up by this order of our subject to discover, finally, THE POSITIVE GRANDEUR OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE DIVINE LAW. That grandeur is witnessed both by its nature and its effects. 1. In its nature. For obedience to the commandment is of itself a noble and valiant element in character. It is no paradox to affirm that the obedient mind is a commanding mind. The law that carries blessings in its right hand and curses in its left appeals to a deeper principle than selfishness. The blessings are not earthly advantages, but those spiritual gifts and honours, like confidence and holiness, love and faith, power and peace, which exclude all thought of self, and are kindred with the glory and purity of heaven. The curses are those elements of spiritual ruin—fear, hatred, passion, jealousy, despair, which impoverish the whole moral creation. The law does not reveal its encouragements and threatenings from Gerizim and Ebal, to make a rich or famous people, but a holy people. 2. So the effect is holiness of life. The commandment is holy, just, and good; and so must its fruit be. (*Bp. F. D. Huntington.*) *Practical alternatives*:—Moses does not divide the people into two classes: he sets before them alternative courses:—proceed upon the line of obedience, and you come to blessing; proceed along the line of disobedience, and a curse is the inevitable necessity—not a threatening, not an exhibition of fretful vengeance, but a spiritual necessity; a curse follows evil-doing, not as an arbitrary punishment, but as the effect, which can never be changed, of a certain, positive, operating cause. What if everything round about us be confirming the testimony of Moses? What if the Decalogue be written every day of the week? What if in the operation of moral influence it can be distinctly proved that the Bible is true, that the Word of the Lord abideth for ever, and that, whatever changes may have occurred, obedience still leads to blessing, disobedience still leads to cursing, and it is not within the wit or the strength of man to change that outgoing of law and consequence? A very precious thing it is that we have only to obey. At first it looks as if we were humbled by this course of service, but further inquest into the spiritual meaning of the matter shows us that in the definition of right and wrong, law and righteousness, God has been most tenderly pitiful towards us, and law is but the practical and more visible and measurable aspect of love. One who knows the universe, because He made it, and all eternity, because He inhabits it, has condescended to tell us what is good, what is true, what is pure, what is right. If we were inspired by the right spirit we would instantly stand up in thankfulness and bless the Giver's name, and ask but one other favour—that we might have eyes to see the innermost meaning of the law, and hearts trained, disciplined, and sanctified to accept and obey it, and express it in noble behaviour. Is it true, within limits that we know, that obedience leads to blessing and disobedience to cursing? Sometimes we have to interrupt the Divine reasoning that we may assist ourselves in its comprehension by the study of analogy upon lower ground. Is it true that there is a seed-time, which, if neglected, will be followed by desolation and death? . . . If all these little outside Bibles are true and can challenge facts to prove their truth, it is not difficult to rise to the higher level, and to say, There may be a Bible meant for the soul; there may be a revelation addressed to the reason, and to the higher reason called faith, and to the higher self called the spirit. This higher revelation has not the immediate advantage of the lower Bibles, because they deal with earth, body, space, time, measurable quantities; but the higher Bible deals with soul, spirit, thought, will, eternity. He who operates within a radius of a few inches can be, apparently, quicker in his movements, more precise and determined in his decisions, than the man who claims the globe as the theatre of his actions. So the Bible, having the disadvantage of dealing with spiritual quantities, must be judged, so far as we can approach it, by the spirit of the lower laws, or the laws applying to the lower economy. . . . The argument is this: seeing that in the field, in the body, in the social economy, there is a law of blessing and a law of cursing, who shall say that this same reasoning does not culminate in a great revelation of heaven, hell; "the right-hand," "the left-hand"; eternal life, everlasting penalty? If the analogies had been dead against that construction, we might by so much have stood in doubt and excused ourselves

from completeness of service; but every analogy becomes a preacher: all nature take up her parable and speaks the revelations of her God: all life beats with a pulse below a pulse, the physical throb being but an indication of a growing immortality. We stand in a solemn sanctuary. We cannot get rid of law. The spiritual is a present blessing or a present curse. We cannot be happy with a bad conscience: it hardens the pillow when we need sleep most, it upsets all our arrangements, or makes our hand so tremble that we cannot clutch our own property; and we cannot be unhappy with a good conscience: without bread we are still in fulness, without employment we are still inspired by hope, without much earthly charity or largeness of construction of our motive and force we still retire within the sanctuary of an approved judgment and conscience. Blessing is not a question of posthumous realisation, nor is cursing. Heaven is here, and hell in germ, in outline, in hint, in quick, burning suggestion. Even now sometimes men know not whether they are in the body or out of the body by reason of religious entrancement and ecstasy; and there are men who, if they dare put their feeling into words, would say, "The pains of hell gat hold upon me." "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked"; "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished"; "Be sure your sin will find you out." Who can fight God and win the battle? (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The blessing and the curse*:—1. What is the blessing set before us? The blessing of him whose sins are forgiven, who lives in God's favour and dies in peace. 2. What is the curse? Just this, "The soul that sins shall die." "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written," &c. 3. What is the way to escape the curse? By the death of Christ we are delivered from sin, redeemed from the curse, and by His obedience entitled to a blessing. 4. Which will you choose? Some people think they can make a compromise; that they need not be intensely Christian, as they are not, and will not be intensely worldly. If they do so, it is not really an alteration of their state, but a deception of themselves. You must take the sunshine or the shadow—the evil or the good—the "Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom"; or the withering sentence, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." (*J. C. Cumming, D.D.*)

Ver. 31. **Ye shall pass over Jordan.**—*Jordan and Canaan typical of death and heaven*:—I. THE ANTICIPATED INHERITANCE. 1. A land of promise. 2. A land of abundance. 3. A holy land. 4. A land of rest. 5. Permanence of residence. 5. A land freely given. II. THE MANNER OF POSSESSION. 1. The streams of Jordan rolled between the desert and the land of Canaan. So does the river of death flow between earth and heaven. 2. Jordan separated the Israelites from the inhabitants of Canaan. Death separates the church militant and the church triumphant. On this side is a parent, on the other side a child. 3. Jordan was subject to the command of God. When He gave the word, the waters rose and stood up (Josh. iii. 16). Death, too, is under His control. Christ "destroyed him who had the power of death" (Heb. ii. 14, 15). 4. Through Jordan was a necessary way to the land of promise. So is death, however painful and affecting. It is necessary that the river of death should be dark and formidable to render us content with the present state of existence. 5. Jordan was the last river they had to pass. Death will be the last conflict—the last enemy with which the saint will have to struggle. Observe that when the children of Israel passed over Jordan the following things were observable. (1) They were required to sanctify themselves previous to the passage (Josh. iii. 5). Before death Christ must be made unto the believer "sanctification" (1 Cor. i. 30). (2) The priests were to enter the river first. So Jesus entered the river before us—as our Forerunner. The eye of faith in the dying believer beholds His foot-prints at the bottom. (3) The priests stood firm in the midst of Jordan until all the people passed over (Josh. iii. 17). Christ stands by His people in their dying moments, and they "feel the bottom of the river, for it is good." (4) When they had passed over, they erected memorials of praise (Josh. iv. 5, 8, 20). So when the Christian reaches heaven he shall utter a song of praise. "We went through fire and through water, but Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place" (Psa. xlvi. 12). "Unto Him that loved us" (Rev. i. 5, 6). Application: 1. The possession of the heavenly inheritance is certain: "Ye shall possess it." "Faithful is He who hath promised it, who also will do it." 2. Meditate much on heaven and Christ as an important means of inducing to preparation for the last conflict. 3. All sinners will be overwhelmed in the swellings of Jordan. (*Helps for the Pulpit.*)

Ver. 32. **Observe to do.**—*Obedience to the Divine commands*:—I. It is a breach of the injunction in the text FOR ANY MAN TO SUBSTITUTE ANY CONTRIVANCE OR INVENTION OF HIS OWN, IN THE ROOM OF THAT WHICH GOD HATH PRESCRIBED IN HIS WORSHIP, when such prescription is plain and express. II. By virtue of the injunction in the text, we are bound to take heed, THAT WE DO NOT INTERPRET ANY PORTION OF SCRIPTURE, TO SUCH A SENSE AS TO PERVERT IT FROM ITS TRUE MEANING AND INTENTION. III. By these words WE ARE STRICTLY PROHIBITED FROM PRETENDING THAT ANY THING IS A DIVINE COMMAND, WHICH IS REALLY NOT SO. IV. But though we must not add anything to the Word of God, or detract anything from it, pretending that any such alteration is of Divine appointment, yet where the Lord hath not spoken, I mean in such things as may be left to human prudence and discretion, the lawful magistrates, and THE GOVERNORS OF THE CHURCH LAWFULLY APPOINTED, HAVE AN UNDOUBTED RIGHT TO ORDER AND APPOINT SUCH OBSERVANCES AS ARE NECESSARY AND CONVENIENT FOR EDIFICATION AND EXTERNAL DECORUM IN THE PUBLIC WORSHIP; and to take care that everything be done decently and in order; and so far as their commands are not in opposition or contrary to the Word of God, it becomes the duty of their people to comply with them. (*Alex. Grant, D.D.*)

CHAPTER XII.

VER. 2. **Destroy all the places.**—*Destruction of evil*:—The first thing Israel had to do appears to be a work of violence. All idols were to be destroyed. Israel could understand no other language. This is not the language of to-day; but the thing inculcated upon Israel is the lesson for the present time: words change, but duties remain. Violence was the only method that could commend itself to infantile Israel. The hand was the reasoner; the breaking hammer was the instrument of logic in days so remote and so unfavoured. Forgetting this, how many people misunderstand instructions given to the ancient Church; they speak of the violence of those instructions, the bloodthirstiness even of Him who gave the instructions to Israel. Hostile critics select such expressions and hold them up as if in mid-air, that the sunlight may get well round about them; and attention is called to the barbarity, the brutality, the revolting violence of so-called Divine commandments. It is false reasoning on the part of the hostile critic. We must think ourselves back to the exact period of time and the particular circumstances at which and under which the instructions were delivered. But all the words of violence have dropped away. "Destroy," "overthrow," "burn," "hew down," are words which are not found in the instructions given to Christian evangelists. Has the law then passed away? Not a jot or tittle of it. Is there still to be a work of this kind accomplished in heathen nations? That is the very work that must first be done. This is the work that is aimed at by the humblest and meekest teacher who shoulders the Gospel yoke and proceeds to Christianise the nations. Now we destroy by reasoning, and that is a far more terrible destruction than the supposed annihilation that can be wrought by manual violence. You cannot conquer an enemy by the arm, the rod, or the weapon of war; you subdue him, overpower him, or impose some momentary restraint upon him; fear of you takes possession of his heart, and he sues for peace because he is afraid. That is not conquest; there is nothing eternal in such an issue. How, then, to destroy an enemy? By converting him—by changing his motive, by penetrating into his most secret life, and accomplishing the mystery of regeneration in his affections. That mystery accomplished, the conquest is complete and everlasting; the work of destruction has been accomplished; burning and hewing down, and all actions indicative of mere violence have disappeared. (*J. Parker. D.D.*)

Vers. 5, 6. **Unto His habitation shall ye seek.**—*The Gospel of the holy places*:—I. God was pleased to choose out certain places to stand in A SPECIAL RELATION OF HOLINESS UNTO HIMSELF under the Old Testament. This holiness of places was twofold, either transient and merely for the present time, or else more permanent. 1. The transient holiness of places was where the Lord gave visible appearances of Himself in His glorious majesty to the eyes of His servants; such places were holy

during the time of such Divine appearances (Exod. iii. 5, xix. 11–25; Josh. v. 15; 2 Pet. i. 18). 2. There was also a more abiding holiness of places under the law. (1) The land of Canaan (Zech. ii. 12). (2) The cities of refuge. (3) The tabernacle, the temple, the ark, and all the places where they came (2 Chron. viii. 11). (4) Jerusalem was very eminent as being the place of the temple, and ark, and all the public worship thereunto belonging (Psa. lxxvi. 2, lxxxvii. 2). II. What is THE GROUND OF THIS HOLINESS OF THESE PLACES, AND HOW ARE WE TO CONCEIVE OF IT? 1. The Lord is said to choose these places to set His name there, and therefore they are called His habitation. (1) Here were the standing symbols and tokens of His presence. (2) In these places were visible appearances of His glory upon special occasions (Exod. xl. 34; Numb. xii. 5; 1 Kings viii. 10, 11; Isa. vi. 1). (3) These places had their typical significations of Christ and Gospel mysteries. (4) These places were appointed by God to be parts, yea, principal parts, of His worship (Exod. xx. 24; Ezek. xx. 40). (5) They were, by God's appointment, the seat of all the public church-worship of those times. 2. "Thither shalt thou seek," *i.e.* for answers and oracles from the holy places, and from the priest by Urim and Thummim (Exod. xxv. 22; Numb. vii. 8, 9, xxvii. 21). 3. "Thither shalt thou come," *i.e.* at all the appointed festivals, three times a year (Exod. xxiii. 14, 17), and whensoever they offered sacrifice (ver. 6). Lessons: 1. The cessation of this holiness of places under the New Testament (John iv. 21–23; Matt. xviii. 22; 1 Tim. ii. 8; Mal. i. 11). Every place is now a Judæa, every house a Jerusalem, every congregation a Zion. 2. Learn to present your worship unto God by Jesus Christ, for He is the true Temple and Tabernacle (Heb. vii. 25; 1 Pet. i. 21; John xiv. 6; Col. iii. 17). 3. Remember that there is a church-worship (Acts ii. 42, xx. 7). 4. Labour every one, that his soul may be a habitation for the Lord, a temple of the Holy Ghost. (*S. Mather.*)

Ver. 8. **Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day.**—*Restraint the Christian's blessing:*—The blessing, of which it is now proposed to speak more particularly, is that of being more under control—of having our lives and ways more exactly ordered—than as if we were not Christians. We are now come to the rest and to the inheritance which the Lord our God was so long preparing for us, and therefore we are no longer to think of doing every man what is right in his own eyes. And therefore the gate, into which we must strive to enter, is called "strait," and the way which leadeth unto life, "narrow." And our Saviour, inviting us to the blessings of the Gospel, describes them as a yoke and a burthen; easy indeed, and light, yet still a yoke and a burthen. And this very circumstance He mentions as a blessing; as the very reason why, coming to Him, the weary and heavy laden might find rest (Matt. xi. 28). So that it appears that both the law and the Gospel, both Moses and Jesus Christ, consider it a great blessing, a great increase of comfort and happiness, to be kept under strict rules. The Gospel was more strict than the law; and on that very account its subjects were happier. Canaan was a place where men could not do what pleased themselves so much as they could in the wilderness: and it was the more entirely and truly a place of rest. But now this way of thinking is by no means the way of the world. People in general like nothing so much as having their own choice in all things. They account it a burthen, and not a privilege, to be under the government of others. And there is not, one may venture to say, one man in a thousand who would not rather be rich than poor, for this very reason—that a rich man is much more his own master, has much more of his own way in choosing how to spend his time, what company to keep, what employments to follow, than a poor man generally can have. Again, every one has observed, I might say has experienced, the hurry which children are usually in to get out of the state of childhood and to be left to judge and act for themselves. But the worst, and, unfortunately, the most common instance of this ungovernable temper in mankind is, our unwillingness to let God choose for us, and our impatience under the burthens He lays upon us. How very commonly does it happen that the very condition people chose beforehand, the very place they wished to live in, and the persons they wished to live among, being obtained, becomes the ground of continual complaint and vexation. If they could but change at will, they say, they should like their situation well enough, but now they are tied down to it they cannot, that is, they will not, help being fretful and impatient. Yet this very circumstance of being tied down to rules and not having the power to change at will, is, as we have seen, reckoned a great blessing, both in the Old and New Testament, both by Moses and Jesus Christ. And the contrary (the having to choose for

ourselves, and to do what is right in our own eyes), is spoken of as a great disadvantage. So different is the judgment of God from the judgment of men. To have this thought steadily fixed within us, will prove, indeed, the greatest of all blessings, both as to our rest in this world, and as to our inheritance in that which is to come. In whatever counsel and pursuit we are sure we are guided by God, that, we are equally sure, must turn out well in the end; and soberly speaking, what can we wish for more? Once make up your mind to this most certain truth, that what is right in God's eyes is far better for you than what is right in your own eyes, and you will have but one care in the whole world, *i.e.* how to please God in making the best use of the present time, a care in which, by His gracious assistance, you are sure not to fail. But it was further said, that this temper of not choosing for ourselves leads directly to our everlasting inheritance in the other world, as well as making sure of our rest and refreshment in this. For it helps us greatly in the performance of our duty, because, in truth, it leaves us nothing else to do. It prepares and trains us for everlasting happiness in heaven. For the very secret of our enjoyment there will be that God's will shall be ours. We shall behold His works and ways, especially the glory which He has given to His beloved Son our Saviour, and shall rejoice in them as in so much good done to ourselves, more and more thankfully for ever. What a beautiful and comfortable thought is this, of the high and noble uses to which, if we will, we may turn all our worst disappointments—the bitterest thoughts of shame and remorse which ever come upon us. We may consider them as part of our heavenly Father's way of breaking us in, as it were, and training us to the desire and enjoyment of His own blessed presence in heaven. And if even the bitter thought of our past sins may be accompanied with so much of what is comfortable and hopeful, surely we may well leave it to Almighty God to do what He will with us in every other respect. (*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times."*) *Life a transitional state of being*:—"Ye are not as yet come to your rest." The present is a temporary and provisional state of things. Such is the reason (ver. 9) assigned by the great lawgiver of the Jews for the non-observance of many, and the imperfect observance of nearly all the statutes and ordinances which he was delivering to them. We are all, he says, to blame. Your leader is no more exempt from human infirmities than yourselves. He is as fond of having his own way, of doing what is right in his own eyes, as any of you. We have all done amiss, and we must all try to do better; and so prepare ourselves for that entirely altered state of circumstances which awaits us as soon as we have crossed the narrow dividing stream; you of Jordan, I of death. In applying these words to the objects of Christian instruction, observe—I. THE UNIFORMITY OF HUMAN CHARACTER. What describes the natural man in one age or country will suit him equally well at all times and in all countries. What were the Israelites doing in the wilderness? "Every man whatsoever was right in his own eyes." This is human nature. We like to have our own way. Restraint is irksome to us. We seek to be independent in our circumstances, in order that we may be so in our actions, and have no one's wishes or feelings to consult but our own. But if human wilfulness shows itself in one direction more than another, it is in our relations to God. Here we meet with no such checks as hem us in on every other side. Here the freedom of our will is not interfered with by the claims of family or the obligations of society. The world looks on, but never thinks of interfering. A man's religion, it holds, is something entirely between God and his conscience. In the concerns of the soul it is commonly said that every man ought to do whatever is right in his own eyes, without any regard to the opinions or feelings of others. What is most agreeable to our feelings, we easily persuade ourselves, is most profitable to our souls; and where we are most profited, where we "get most good," as it is called, there we feel sure it is God's will that we should go. So we "wrap it up" (Micah vii. 3). We settle the matter nominally between God and our consciences, but really between ourselves and our own wayward and corrupt wills. II. THE IMPROPRIETY OF THIS PRINCIPLE of doing "every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes." No day passes without some matters arising which involve the question of not what is right in our own eyes, but what is right in itself, and what is right in the sight of God and man. We are reasonable and accountable creatures. There is a sense of right and wrong implanted in us by nature. We cannot act contrary to it without violating our conscience, and causing a sensible disturbance to our peace of mind. Besides moral, there is also such a thing as positive right, arising out of the declared will of God; and this is just as binding upon our consciences as the other. When it

pleased God to promulgate the Fourth Commandment, by that very act He made it a right thing to keep holy the seventh day, and a wrong thing to do our ordinary work thereon, in the eyes of every man who believes in the existence and attributes of the Creator of the world. Unhappily, moral disorder is not attended with the same inconveniences as civil. Men may be "lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents," and many other things equally offensive to piety and virtue, without any particular shock to the peaceful and prosperous course of this world. Still, "these things ought not so to be." Wrong can never be right. There is one Lawgiver, and one holy and righteous and perfect law. To do as we like is to violate the fundamental law of our being. "For none of us liveth to himself," &c. To do that which is right in our own eyes is too often to do that which is abominable in the sight of God. III. THE NECESSARY IMPERFECTION OF OUR PRESENT STATE OF BEING. Perfect order and perfect happiness are not to be found on earth, but are reserved for that eternal existence to which this world is but a passage. 1. This thought will reconcile us, in a great degree, to the troubles of life. 2. It will encourage us under our moral failings and imperfections. It may be a poor consolation, but a consolation it certainly is, when we have done amiss, to know that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"; and that so long as man is man he will do "whatsoever is right in his own eyes." Hereafter it will be otherwise. In another world "we shall not do after all the things that we do here this day." 3. It will make us tolerant and indulgent to the failings of others. We must take the world as we find it. We must deal with things as they are, not as they ought to be. To bear and to forbear is no small part of our trial. And we cannot be required to show greater forbearance towards others than God is continually exercising towards us. IV. THERE IS NO SENTIMENT SO JUST AS NOT TO BE LIABLE TO PERVERSION AND ABUSE. The necessary imperfection of our present state might be urged as an excuse for those evils and disorders which need not exist, and therefore are inexcusable. But this must not be allowed. Sin must always be protested against. Our nature is corrupt; but that is a reason for striving against it, not for giving way to it. We live in a wicked world; but that should put us on our guard against an unreserved association with the world, or an undue compliance with its ways. Is this all that is required of us—to contend against the evil of our own hearts, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world? Not so. A Christian has a higher vocation: to make the world better; to season it with the salt of a pure and uncorrupt conversation; to set an example of that self-denying, self-sacrificing spirit which leads to conduct the very opposite of that described in the text. The Christian must be continually reminding both himself and others that what we are all doing here this day may be excused by considerations arising out of the frailty of human nature, but can never be justified. Let us take every opportunity of mortifying those deeds of the body, those sinful desires and depraved inclinations which, if they do not actually deprive us of "the rest and the inheritance which the Lord our God giveth us," cannot but make us less fit for it. Let us learn the pleasure of giving up our wills, instead of indulging them; of looking "not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others"; of doing, not "every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes," but every man whatsoever is right for him to do—what religion teaches, what conscience justifies, and what God approves. V. LET US LEARN FROM THIS SUBJECT TO UNDERSTAND MORE PERFECTLY, AND TO APPRECIATE MORE JUSTLY, THE GOSPEL METHOD OF SALVATION. Moses, we are told, "was faithful in all his house"; as the mediator of that former covenant, he performed his part on the whole faithfully and well; but that was all. He was no redeemer; he could not "save his people from their sins." He was a sinner like themselves: the things which, by reason of their frailty, they did there that day, he also did. Christ alone could say, "Ye shall not do after all the things which ye do here this day"; *ye*, not *we*,—excluding Himself from the number of those who do "every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes." Of Himself He says, "I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which sent Me." "I do always those things that please Him." On this principle—of seeking God's glory, not His own—He acted through life, and also "became obedient unto death." Without this act we should never have come to that rest, never have attained to that inheritance at all. We should have continued all our lives, as many do to this day, doing "every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes"; because we should have had no motive or inducement to do otherwise. If we have learnt better things, it is only because we have learnt Christ; learnt Him as "the way, the truth, and the

life"; "heard Him, and been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus." It remains that we should turn our lessons into practice, by "putting off the old man," &c. So shall we leave off by degrees to "do after all the things which we do here this day"; and under the renewing and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit we shall become daily more and more "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," and ripe for that "rest which remaineth for the people of God." (*Frederick Field, LL.D.*)

Ver. 9. Ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance.—*Not as yet*:—That is the beginning—the refrain—the very soul of a hymn. "Not as yet"—it is a blossom-like word—an unfulfilled prophecy. "Not as yet"—why, then, it may be some day. The meaning is that we are on the road: How far have we travelled? Are we home? The voice answers in the night, Not yet. But if we were on the wrong road the voice would not answer so; the voice would then say: Home: why, we are lost, we are on the wrong road; every mile we have travelled these last two days has been a mile in the opposite direction. But the very tone of the voice itself is a gospel. "Not as yet": presently; nearer and nearer. "Not as yet": every step is a battle won; every step is one more difficulty past. "Not as yet"; but sufficiently near to be getting ready. What is the meaning of all this stir on the ship, this running to and fro, this calling out from one to another? We have passed something, we have passed a signal, we shall land to-night! Getting ready, saying in effect, It is all over now, what remains to be done is a mere matter of detail; we are waiting, and presently we shall be there. How do we measure our journey? By the middle mile. We seem not to have begun the journey whilst we are on the first half of it, but as soon as we get in the middle of the sea, and are told that the middle mile has been passed, we say, It is all downhill now. Many people are more than half-way through life's road: what is it to be during the remainder of the days? Are we leaving heaven behind us, or are we going to it? Many men are leaving behind them the only heaven they have ever prepared for: what wonder if they do not sing during the last half of the voyage or the journey? Others have had a dreary time, a melancholy experience, a troubled disciplinary lot, and when they are told about half-way through that it is all home-going and the distance may in some unaccountable way be shortened, behold their faces are alight with a new expression, their soul has come up to look out of the window to see if it be even so. I heard a great voice from heaven saying: Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord: for they shall rest. Rest is promised, not as the reward of selfishness or self-indulgence, but as the crown of service. No man can rest who has not toiled. No man can have real joy who has not had real sorrow. What right have we to rest if we have been resting all the time? The week has Sunday in front of it. Cheer thee! It is Friday. When is Sunday? The day after to-morrow. Is Sunday in every week? Yes. Herein is the goodness of God. We need frequent Sabbaths, we need refreshment by the road, yea, at every seventh step of the journey we must sit down awhile. Sometimes we have a lift by the way. Does the Shepherd not need Himself to be carried sometimes? No: because He is not a shepherd, one of many, but The Shepherd, out of whose shepherdliness all other pastors are struck. The little candle dies, the sun burneth evermore. You need rest—why not have it? You are a very little one, and you are soon tired, and He, I repeat, carrieth the lambs in His bosom. The very principle that Christ went upon was the principle of "Not as yet." "A little while" is the length of time Christ gave Himself. He endured the Cross, despising the shame, because He looked for the joy that lay beyond. Men draw themselves through earth by laying hold of heaven. That is how the earth drags itself along; it is all looped up to the sun. No man has seen the filaments, the threadlets, but the sun feeds them every one. The tiny earth is hooked on by invisible tentacles to the great central chariot. It is so that life is drawn forward, it is so that life is sanctified; because that by which we are connected with the sun is that through which the centre also communicates to us. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The imperfection of the believer's earthly happiness*:—I. Let us notice THE TERMS IN WHICH THE END OF THE ISRAELITES' JOURNEY IS SPOKEN OF. They are the very same terms which are used in the New Testament as applicable to the Christian's everlasting home, and they point out respectively its blessedness, its certainty, its freeness. 1. For it is called a rest: "Ye are not as yet come to the rest." And this it is well known St. Paul applies to our eternal home, when he says to the Hebrews, "There remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God." And in this expression, I repeat, is conveyed to us the great blessedness of that our

eternal portion. For if there is one word which seems to contain within it an idea of what is really grateful and enjoyable in this world, it is the word "rest." Condemned, as we are, to eat our bread by the sweat of our brow, "and being born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward," rest is one of the greatest earthly blessings that God can bestow. The believer, then, is one day, and that perhaps no distant day, to rest completely and eternally from all that pains and grieves him here. He shall rest from suffering, "for there shall be no more pain": he shall rest from sorrowing, for "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying"; but above all he shall rest from sin. 2. But there is another expression here used, which the New Testament warrants us to apply to the rest that remaineth to the people of God, namely, "inheritance." This expression denotes the certainty of the believer's portion. There are only three things in the dealings of this world which can disappoint the heir of his inheritance; and, if it can be shown that these cannot take place as regards the believer, the case is clear. For, in the first place, in earthly things, the parent or the person owning the property may, from some cause or other, change his mind, and cut off the heir from the inheritance. But, in the case now before us, "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Or, secondly, the heir may rebel or run away, and so forfeit and give up all claim to the inheritance. But in this case this is provided against; for one part of the adoption into the family of God is the gift of the Spirit, to keep the heir in the love and fear of God, according as it is written: "I will put My fear within them, that they shall not depart from Me." Or, thirdly, the heir may die before the time appointed of the father, and so be disappointed. But, as regards the heavenly inheritance, this can never be: "The soul once quickened shall never die": "The heirs of God are kept by His power through faith unto salvation": "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish": "Because I live, ye shall live also." 3. But there is yet another expression here used, which appears to denote the freeness with which it is offered, and which we find used in the New Testament to denote the same idea. It is spoken of as a gift: "Ye are not come to the rest and the inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you." Now, the New Testament invariably speaks of this as a gift. St. Paul says, particularly, "The wages of sin"—*i.e.* the just reward of sin—"is death; but the gift of God"—observe, not the wages, nor the reward, but the free, undeserved gift of God—"is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." God is a sovereign: He has a right to do what He will: He is our Sovereign, and He has a right to our services: He is our Maker, and He has a right to ourselves. And there is no obedience, no service, which it is in our power to render Him, to which He has not already an undoubted right; and, consequently, we can never do anything for which God is bound in the least degree to bless us. All His gifts, therefore, to us are free and undeserved, and whatever He gives He gives of His own free and sovereign grace; and as such we must receive it or perish. II. Such being the terms in which the heavenly inheritance is spoken of, let us turn to THE PROOFS WHICH THE CHRISTIAN HAS THAT HE HAS NOT YET COME TO THE REST WHICH IS RESERVED FOR HIM. These are various, but we will take only a few which come more immediately in connection with the text. 1. The imperfection and vanity of every thing connected with this life—its sorrows, disappointments, pain, and bereavements—all these things are enough to remind us, as I believe they are graciously intended to remind us, that this is not our home. Thus the Israelites, wherever they rested, wherever they went, were still in the wilderness: turn where they would, the same barren scene would probably present itself, and remind them that this is not Canaan, this is still the wilderness. Let us be blessed with whatever joy or advantage we will, there is a worm at the root; and, with all its capabilities of affording happiness, still it is not permanent, it perishes in the using. Friends disappoint, children and those dear are removed, health decays, riches make to themselves wings, and fly away; so that, with all our earthly comforts, and they are not few, we are still reminded by them, and it is the crowning mercy of them all that we are reminded by them, that this is not our resting-place, and we are strangers and pilgrims here. 2. But the Israelites would be reminded, from time to time, that they had not entered into rest, by the continual attacks to which they were exposed from their enemies, and perhaps also by the continued murmurings and rebellions which arose among themselves. True it is, that even in Canaan, the nations greater and mightier than they, were to be dispossessed; still, even on their road they would feel that they had not yet attained what Moses had promised: "When the Lord God shall have given you rest from all your enemies round about." And this is an especial mark to a Christian that his rest and his

inheritance is not here. Wherever he looks the enemy meets his view; whether he look around or within him, the scene is the same. I mean not that he takes a gloomy view of all these things, but he cannot deny the fact that "the world lieth in wickedness." His own experience tells him that he has not yet reached that place or that state where ignorance shall not exist, where every murmuring disposition shall be for ever hushed, where every rebellious feeling shall be for ever slain, and every thought of his heart shall be brought in complete and eternal captivity to the obedience of Christ. 3. But I think it may be said that our very spiritual blessings are calculated to remind us of this. All our means of grace, and all our privileges, many and blessed as they are, are yet adapted for a state of ignorance and imperfection. The manna which the Israelites gathered from day to day, and the "spiritual Rock that followed them," would especially remind them of the truth adverted to in the text. How different from the grapes of Eshcol! how far short of the land flowing with milk and honey, to which they were repeatedly encouraged to look! and yet they were marvellous blessings in themselves. And so it is with us. The spiritual life is but a small foretaste of that fulness of life which is hid in Christ with God; and the very supplies of the Spirit are but the distant branchings of that river which "makes glad the city of God," issues from the living fountains to which the Lamb shall one day lead His people. How inferior, too, is the very written or preached word on earth to what the believer will hear in glory! How inferior the worship in the earthly courts to the worship of the redeemed! How inferior is that feast of the Lord's Supper, to which we are often invited, to that supper at which the bride of Christ is one day to be present. III. What, then, are THE LESSONS OF WARNING, OF DUTY, OR OF ENCOURAGEMENT WHICH WE ARE TO LEARN FROM THESE CONSIDERATIONS? 1. We learn a lesson of warning, not to fix our habitation here, still less to look back upon the world which we have left. God give you grace to be wise in time, that you may be happy in eternity. 2. But, again, we learn a large lesson of duty. We learn that we must not lay aside our armour while we are in the enemy's neighbourhood; we must not cease our watchfulness while we are beset by foes within and without; we must not be contemplating the length of road we have passed, but looking on to what remains. 3. And, lastly, let us learn a lesson of great encouragement. The very expression, "Ye are not as yet come," seems to imply that the day is at hand when you certainly shall come; and there is nothing so encouraging in any work as the certain conviction of success. Now you know of your heavenly journey what you know of no other, that you shall not be disappointed; "your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord." Gird up, then, the loins of your mind, and lay hold on eternal life. (*R. Sankey, M.A.*)

Emigration to a better country:—Emigration may, or it may not, be a very wise step. I lay it down as a rule, that emigration is decidedly the best thing for any man, whenever the following propositions are true, that is—1. When he cannot see any hope of supporting himself at home. 2. When prospects abroad are decidedly good, and likely to continue such. 3. When the journey can probably be performed free from accident. 4. When the means of paying the emigration expenses are secure; and—5. When family ties are of such a sort that they may with propriety be severed, or when those dearest to you can accompany you. I am not intending to say much more about emigration. Yet I have some valuable advice to offer you upon the subject. Agents, from various motives, often deceive men about the goodness of the distant country, or the cheapness of the voyage by their ship, or the certainty of employment at high wage when they reach the place of destination. You need not fear deceit in this case. There can be no motive for any deception. I say, then, you will be wise to go thither, for these two reasons—(1) Because sooner or later, you must leave here. "The longest life is but a lingering death," and your life may not be even long enough to prove the saying. "This is not your rest." "Ye are not as yet come to the inheritance, which the Lord your God giveth you." (2) But then again, even if you could live here for ever, it would not make you happy. I am sure that if your days were prolonged, you could not, as now constituted, enjoy life. It is really a melancholy sight to see an aged person who has outlived his friends and kinsfolk, and the manners and customs of his age. Everything is wrong with such a man. No sympathy of spirit, no word, no feelings seem in common with him. He stands decaying and shrivelling, like the one old oak, spared when the forest has fallen, only to look more drear as the sprightly new trees spring up about him. So here again is another good reason for your emigration. 1. Ask you why? Because sin has defiled and ruined everything, rendering the world unfit for us, and us unfit for life; because we are "to pass, therefore,

through the grave and gate of death to our joyful resurrection"; and so, "ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the Lord your God giveth you." 2. It may be necessary to emigrate; but are the prospects good elsewhere? Here is a description of the allotment offered to emigrants. It is called an inheritance, because an Elder Brother of yours has "gone before" and bought it, and He says "you are joint heirs with Me." It is called "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, and it is reserved," put by, kept ready, safe, all prepared "for you." Yes, all this in prospect, seen by faith, heard of by letter and by promise! But remember, "ye are not yet come to this rest and inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you." 3. It may be needful to emigrate, and the prospects beyond seem to baffle description in their beauty; but that swelling flood, those tossing waters, are too much for you—you have no great means for paying the costly freightage; and then there is the constant dread lest you should make shipwreck, and so never reach the land whither you would go. The prospects are all you can desire, if only you could get there. I have read the terms of the emigration, and I am confident that He who gives the inheritance grants a perfectly free passage thither. Christ said, when here on earth, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man cometh to the Father but by Me." The Saviour of sinners offers them a home. It is not a reformatory or a prison, but a home with Himself. He tells you that you must receive it as a gift, and not make bargains about it. And His law upon the matter is, that since, from first to last, it is not of works, but the free gift of Himself, so you are to claim the inheritance and journey thither entirely at His cost. Are family ties of such a character as to hinder you from emigration? I answer, Certainly not, because they, too, both friends and kinsfolk, must leave this place and go elsewhere. Therefore, I say, your course is plain. Resolve that you will, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, pass over from this present world of sin unto the future inheritance of the sons of God. And bring your kinsmen with you. (*S. Venables.*) *Our rest and inheritance beyond*:—I. THE REST. 1. From sin. 2. From temptation. 3. From enemies. (1) Physical. It is astonishing beyond measure to see what seemingly refined men will do to trip a Christian to whom they have taken a dislike. (2) Spiritual powers of darkness, &c. 4. From weariness. 5. From doubts. II. THE INHERITANCE. 1. Purchased. 2. Prepared. 3. Pure. 4. Sure. 5. For the saints. III. OUR PRESENT CONDITION. 1. Not a condition of ceaseless toil. 2. Not a condition of entire exclusion from our inheritance. 3. We here enjoy the means of grace. Lessons: 1. In view of all this we should rejoice—(1) Because of what God has done for us. (2) Because of what God is doing for us in heaven. (3) Because of what God is doing in us now. 2. Are we being fitted for that rest and inheritance? 3. Are there any here who are seeking their rest on earth? Oh! poor miserable souls, ye with all your seeking have not rest here, and will not have rest hereafter! (*Bp. Courtney.*) *The expected rest*:—I. THE REST WHICH AWAITS BELIEVERS. 1. A promised rest. 2. A complete rest. 3. Rest in the possession of an inheritance. 4. An eternal rest. II. SOME CONSIDERATIONS suggested by the fact that we are not yet come to our rest. And this fact requires us—1. To endure hardships. 2. To prize comforts. 3. To avoid present resting. 4. To be seeking the rest that is to come. All things encourage us to advance. A better than earthly Canaan before us; a greater Leader than Moses to guide us; and the millions of the glorified invoking us, by their reward, to imitate their example. Oh! be not slothful, but followers of them, who, through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises. We may infer—1. The infatuation of the wicked, who, besides not having come to this rest, are sedulously shunning it by a contrary course; and—2. The happiness of the righteous, who, though they have not yet come to this rest, are hourly coming to it, and whose very bereavements teach not more strikingly the vanity of this world than the proximity of a better. (*D. King.*)

Ver. 28. **That it may go well with thee.**—*Blessings for the obedient*:—Though salvation is not by the works of the law, yet the blessings which are promised to obedience are not denied to the faithful servants of God. The curses our Lord took away when He was made a curse for us, but no clause of blessing has been abrogated. We are to note the revealed will of the Lord, giving our attention not to portions of it, but to "all these words." There must be no picking and choosing, but an impartial respect to all that God has commanded. This is the road of blessedness for the father and for his children. The Lord's blessing is upon His chosen to the third and fourth generation. If they walk uprightly before Him, He

will make all men know that they are a seed which the Lord hath blessed. No blessing can come to us or ours through dishonesty or double dealing. The ways of worldly conformity and unholiness cannot bring good to us or ours. It will go well with us when we go well before God. If integrity does not make us prosper, knavery will not. That which gives pleasure to God will bring pleasure to us. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **And with thy children after thee.**—*Care for posterity:*—God is concerned for posterity. We may mock the suggestion, and put foolish questions concerning the generations yet to come, but the Book of God is as careful about the child unborn as about the old pilgrim born into the higher spaces. God does not insulate Himself by the little present; He contemplates the end from the beginning. All souls are His. He also puts it into our care to regard the welfare of our successors. There is a sense in which we all have a posterity—some in a narrower, some in a larger sense; but we all have a succession: we are influencing to-morrow by our spirit and action to-day. How mad are they, and how guilty of the cruellest murder, who go on indulging every desire, sating every appetite, satisfying every wish, forgetting that they are involving the yet unborn to pain, weakness, incapacity, and dooming them to lifelong suffering and distress. Here is the greatness of the Bible, the noble condescension of God, the infinite solicitude of the eternal Father. His speech runs to this effect: take care: not only are you involved, but your child and child's child, for generation upon generation: your drunkenness will reappear in the disease of ages yet to come; your bad conduct will repeat itself in a long succession of evil-minded men; your behaviour appears at present to be agreeable, to have some aspects that might be called delightful, but things are not what they seem: actions do not end in themselves; every bad thought you think takes out some spark of vitality from your brain—robs you, depletes you; be careful; have some regard for those who have to succeed you; learn from those who went before you how evil a thing it is to have sown bad seed, and by what you have learned from them conduct yourself aright; if you are true, wise, pure, generous, well-conducted altogether, generations will arise to bless you; if you take care of the poor, if any of your succession be doomed to poverty, with what measure you mete it shall be measured to you and them again; blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy; with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged. Life is one: touch it where we may, we send a thrill, a vibration, along all the vital lines. The law is twofold: sow evil, and reap evil; sow good, and reap good. This is no partial law, dealing with penalty and shame only: it is an impartial righteousness, dealing with reward and glory, and promising delight vast and tender as the heaven of God. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 30. **Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following after them.**—*Danger of a conquered foe:*—It is a remarkable fact, and is proved by Dr. Bell (in his *History of British Insects*), that the poison of the rattlesnake is even secreted after death. Dr. Bell, in his dissections of the rattlesnakes which have been dead many hours, has found that the poison continued to be secreted so fast as to require to be dried up occasionally with sponge or rag. The immoral author, like these rattlesnakes, not only poisons during his lifetime, but after death: because his books possess the subtle power of secreting the venom to a horrible degree. A moral sponge is constantly called into requisition to obliterate his poison for many years after he himself has been dead. (*Scientific Illustrations.*) *Revival of a conquered sin:*—As the bough of a tree bent from its usual course returns to its old position as soon as the force by which it had yielded is removed; so do men return to their old habits as soon as the motives, whether of interest or fear, which had influenced them, are done away. "Nature," says Lord Bacon, "is often hidden, sometimes overcome, seldom extinguished. Let not a man trust his victory over his nature too far, for nature will lie buried a great time, and yet revive upon the occasion or temptation; like as it was with Æsop's damsel, turned from a cat to a woman, who sat very demurely at the board's end till a mouse ran before her." The same philosopher gives the following admirable caution:—"A man's nature runs either to herbs or weeds; therefore let him seasonably water the one, and destroy the other." *Need for watchfulness:*—None are so likely to maintain watchful guard over their hearts and lives as those who know the comfort of living in near communion with God. They feel their privilege and will fear losing it. They will dread falling from their high estate, and marring their own comfort by bringing clouds between themselves and Christ. He that goes on a journey with little money about him takes little thought of danger, and cares little

how late he travels. He, on the contrary, that carries gold and jewels, will be a cautious traveller; he will look well to his roads, his horses, and his company, and run no risks. The fixed stars are those that tremble most. The man that most fully enjoys the light of God's countenance, will be a man tremblingly afraid of losing its blessed consolations, and jealously fearful of doing anything to grieve the Holy Ghost. (*Bp. Ryle.*)

CHAPTER XIII.

VERS. 1–3. **If there arise among you a prophet.**—*On the criterion of a false miracle*:—I. THE EVIDENCE DRAWN FROM MIRACLES, IN FAVOUR OF ANY DIVINE REVELATION, rests in general on the testimony of those who saw the miracles performed. But in addition to this, it is important to inquire, whether some consideration may not be at the same time due to the nature and tendency of the doctrines themselves, and whether there may not be in them some internal marks, which, in some cases at least, may enable us to distinguish false miracles from true. That such a criterion was given to the Jews appears plain from the words of the text, according to which, though a miracle should actually be performed, yet if its intention was to teach the doctrine of idolatry, it was not to be considered as a miracle authorised by God. II. Yet the text does not appear to be confined merely to fictitious miracles of human contrivance, BUT TO EXTEND TO REAL MIRACLES ACTUALLY PERFORMED, either by men permitted so to act, or by the agency of superior intellectual beings, with the permission indeed of God, but not by His authority. Not only no human art or deception, but also no superior, or supernatural power should undermine our faith, or draw us from the allegiance which we owe to God. III. I cannot dismiss the subject without taking notice of a DIFFICULTY WHICH MAY POSSIBLY BE THOUGHT TO ATTEND THE FOREGOING THEORY. It relates to the assertion that no internal doctrine can be brought in proof of a miracle. For it may be said, that there are certain doctrines conveyed by the help of miracles, which no human reason could ever have discovered; such are, that God on certain conditions will freely forgive sins, and that to the sincere, penitent, and faithful believer in Jesus Christ, He will grant life eternal. The answer is, that though the truth of these things be beyond the reach of the human reason to discover, yet the things themselves are not beyond the reach of the human imagination to conceive. Their truth therefore must depend on the evidence of the miracles which were wrought in their support, and the miracles must first be distinctly proved, before we can give an admission to the doctrines. (*W. Pearce, D.D.*) *The objection of the Jews to Christianity, as founded on this passage, answered*:—It has commonly, and with justice, been thought, that the two great pillars on which a revelation from God must stand, are miracles and prophecies. Without these we cannot be assured that any discovery which may have been made in man is really Divine. We must, indeed, inspect the matter of the thing revealed to see whether it be worthy of Him from whom it is said to come; and from its internal evidence our faith will derive great strength; but still in the first instance we look rather to external proofs. But the Jews imagine that they are precluded from judging of Christianity on such grounds as these, since Moses, in this passage, guards them against any such inferences as we are led to draw from the prophecies and miracles on which our religion is founded. He concedes that some prophecies may be uttered, and some miracles be wrought in favour of a false religion; and that, even if that should be the case, the Jews are not to regard any evidences arising from those sources, but to hold fast their religion in opposition to them. First, mark the supposition here made, namely, that God may permit miraculous and prophetic powers to be exercised even in support of a false religion. We are not indeed to imagine that God Himself will work miracles in order to deceive His people and to lead them astray; nor are we to imagine that He will suffer Satan to work them in such an unlimited way as to be a counterbalance to the miracles by which God has confirmed His own religion; but He will, for reasons which we shall presently consider, permit some to be wrought, and some prophecies to come to pass, notwithstanding they are designed to uphold an imposture. The magicians of Pharaoh, we must confess, wrought

real miracles. They were permitted to do so much as should give Pharaoh an occasion for hardening his own heart, but not sufficient to show that they could at all come in competition with Moses. In every age there were also false prophets, who endeavoured to draw the people from their allegiance to God; and in the multitude of prophecies that they would utter, it must be naturally supposed that some would be verified in the event. Now then, in the next place, let us notice the injunction given to the Jews notwithstanding this supposition. God commands them not to give heed to that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, even though his predictions should be verified, if his object be to turn them from Him; for that He Himself suffers these illusions to be practised upon them in order that their fidelity to Him may be tried, and their love to Him approved. It may seem strange that God should suffer such stumbling-blocks to be cast in the way of His people; but it is not for us to say what Jehovah may or may not do; we are sure that "He tempteth no man," so as to lead him into sin (James i. 13), and that the "Judge of all the earth will do nothing but what is right." But it is a fact that He thus permitted Job to be tried, in order that he might approve himself a perfect man; and in like manner He tried Abraham, in order that it might appear, whether his regard for God's authority and his confidence in God's Word were sufficient to induce him to sacrifice his Isaac, the child of promise (Gen. xxii. 1, 2, 12). It was for similar ends that God permitted His people to be tried for forty years in the wilderness (Deut. viii. 2), and in the same way He has tried His Church in every period of the world. It is God's express design in the whole constitution of our religion to discover the secret bent of men's minds; and whilst to the humble He gives abundant evidence for their conviction, He has left to the proud sufficient difficulties to call forth their latent animosity, and to justify in their own apprehensions their obstinate unbelief (Luke ii. 34, 35). He gave originally to the Jews, as He has also given to us, sufficient evidence to satisfy any candid mind; and this is all that we have any right to expect. The argument founded on this injunction comes now before us with all the force that can be given to it. A Jew will say, "You Christians found your faith on prophecies and on miracles; and admitting that Jesus did work some miracles, and did foretell some events which afterwards came to pass, God permitted it only to try us, and to prove our fidelity to Him. He has cautioned us beforehand not to be led astray from Him by any such things as these; and therefore, however specious your reasonings appear, we dare not listen to them or regard them." Having thus given to the objection all the force that the most hostile Jew can wish, I now come, in the second place, to offer what we hope will prove a satisfactory answer to it. It cannot but have struck the attentive reader that in this objection there are two things taken for granted; namely, that in calling Jews to Christianity we are calling them from Jehovah; and that our authority for calling them to Christianity is founded on such miracles as an impostor might work, and such prophecies as an impostor might expect to see verified. But in answer to these two points we declare, first, that we do not call them from Jehovah but to Him; and next, that our authority is not founded on such miracles and prophecies as might have issued from an impostor, but such as it was impossible for an impostor to produce; and lastly, that, in calling them to Christ, we have the express command of God Himself. 1. We do not call our Jewish brethren from Jehovah, but to Him. We worship the very same God whom the Jews worship; and we maintain His unity as strongly as any Jew in the universe can maintain it. As for idols of every kind, we abhor them as much as Moses himself abhorred them. Moreover, we consider the law which was written on the two tables of stone as binding upon us, precisely as much as if it were again promulged by an audible voice from heaven. With respect to the ceremonial law, we do indeed call you from the observance of that; and we have good reason so to do; for you yourselves know that all the essential part of your religion existed before the ceremonial law was given; and that Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, who lived hundreds of years before the ceremonial law was given, were saved simply and entirely by faith in that promised "seed, in whom all the nations of the earth are blessed." If you ask, Why then was the ceremonial law given? I answer, To shadow forth your Messiah, and to lead you to Him; and when He should come and fulfil it in all its parts, it was then to cease; and you yourselves know that it was intended by God Himself to cease at that appointed time. If then we call you from the outward observances of the law, it is not from disrespect to that law, but from a conviction that it has been fulfilled and abrogated by the Lord Jesus. We call you only from shadows to the substance. We call you to Christ as uniting in Himself

all that the ceremonial law was intended to shadow forth. I am aware that in calling you to worship the Lord Jesus Christ we appear to you to be transferring to Him the honour due to God alone. But if you will look into your own Scriptures you will find that the person who was foretold as your Messiah is no other than God Himself. Receive Him in the character in which the prophet Isaiah foretold His advent, as "the Child born, the Son given, the wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God, the Prince of peace." Call Him, as another prophet instructs you, "Jehovah our Righteousness," and know that in thus "honouring Christ you will honour the Father who sent Him." 2. The next thing which we proposed to show was, that our authority for calling you thus to Christ is not founded on such prophecies or miracles as might have issued from an impostor, but on such as it was impossible for an impostor to produce. Consider the prophecies; they were not some few dark predictions of mysterious import and of doubtful issue, uttered by our Lord Himself; but a continued series of prophecies from the very fall of Adam to the time of Christ; of prophecies comprehending an almost infinite variety of subjects, and those so minute, as to defy all concert either in those who uttered, or those who fulfilled them. Consider the miracles also; these were beyond all comparison greater and more numerous than Moses ever wrought. The whole creation, men, devils, fishes, elements, all obeyed His voice; and at His command the dead arose to life again. But there is one miracle alone which in particular we will mention. Jesus said, "I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again"; and the former of these He proved by speaking with a loud voice the very instant He gave up the ghost, showing thereby that He did not die in consequence of His nature being exhausted, but by a voluntary surrender of His life into His Father's hands. And at the appointed time He proved the latter also, notwithstanding all the preparations made to defeat His purpose, all which proved in the issue the strongest testimonies to the truth of His word. We therefore confidently call you to believe in Him, and to embrace the salvation which He offers you in the Gospel. But there is one great argument which we have reserved till now, in order that it may bear upon you with the greater weight. 3. We declare to you, then, in the last place, that in calling you to Christ we have the express command of God Himself. Moses, in chap. xiii., bids you, as we have seen, not to listen to any false prophet; but in chap. xviii. 18, 19, he most explicitly declares that a prophet should arise, to whom you should attend. Now I ask you, who is the prophet here spoken of? Where was there ever, besides Moses, a prophet that was a Mediator, a Lawgiver, a Ruler, a Deliverer? Was there ever such an one except Jesus? And was not Jesus such an one in all respects? Yes; He has wrought for you not a mere temporal deliverance like Moses, but a spiritual and eternal deliverance from sin and Satan, death and hell; He has redeemed you, not by power only, but by price also, even the inestimable price of His own blood. When therefore you plead the authority of Moses, we join issue with you, and say, Be consistent. Renounce false prophets, because he bids you; but believe in the true Prophet, whom God, according to His Word, has raised up to you, because He bids you. Let His authority weigh equally with you in both cases; and then we shall not fear, but that you will embrace the salvation offered you in the Gospel, and be the spiritual children, as ye already are the natural descendants of believing Abraham. (*C. Simeon, M.A.*)

The only pulpit worth having:—I. THAT NO INSTRUMENTALITY IS OF ANY REAL SERVICE TO MAN, AS MAN, THAT DOES NOT PROMOTE IN HIM A RIGHT SOVEREIGN AFFECTION. 1. Every man is under some one dominant affection. Love of—(1) Pleasure. (2) Money. (3) Power. (4) Knowledge. Man's loves are his sovereign laws. 2. A wrong dominant affection in a man will neutralise the highest services that may be rendered to him. II. THAT THE ONLY RIGHT SOVEREIGN AFFECTION IS SUPREME LOVE FOR THE SUPREMELY GOOD. All goodness streams from God as all light from the sun. Ought He not, then, to be extremely loved? III. THAT THE ONLY PULPIT THAT IS OF ANY REAL SERVICE TO MAN IS THAT WHICH GENERATES AND FOSTERS THIS SOVEREIGN AFFECTION. 1. It is the pulpit that works into man the conviction that God loves men, though sinners. 2. It is the pulpit that exhibits God as essentially good and benevolent in Himself. (*Homilist.*)

Danger and security:—This passage, by the inspiration of God, touches upon all the possible points of danger in a religious course. I. What are THE POINTS OF DANGER? 1. The first may be described as being somewhat after a philosophical sort. There is nothing rude in the assault, nothing violent or startling, from a merely physical point of view; it is a very delicate encroachment upon religious thought; it is impalpable as a dream. Surely this is harmless: it is more than harmless; it is

instructive: it may be a lesson in the deeper philosophy; it may be the beginning of a widening revelation. The mischief is this, that a man who would listen to such a dreamer, or seer of visions, and allow his religion to be affected by the nightmare, would turn the man out of his presence if he attempted to offer him a single idea upon any practical subject under heaven. We are easily beguiled from the religious point. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?" It would seem as if it were easier to murder the soul than to kill the body. The first point of danger, therefore, is thus clouded in a golden veil; and the man who may be said to be preparing for that danger is dreamy, hazy-minded, speculative, always looking into a mist if, haply, he may find a star; such a gentle, dozing creature, so harmless, and really so very attractive in many qualities of his character. 2. What is the second point of danger? It is not at all philosophical; it may be ranked among the social forces that are constantly operating upon life (ver. 6). Social influences are constantly operating upon our faith. The youngest member of the family has been reading a book, and has invited the head of the house to go and listen to some new speaker of theories, speculations, and dreams; the service is so beautiful; the idea is so novel; a great deal of the rush and tumult common to elementary religious life is totally escaped; the intellectual brother—the man supposed to have all the brains of the family—has got a new idea—an idea which in nowise associates itself with historical churches and traditional creeds, but a bran-new idea, altogether sparkling and daring, and whosoever professes it will at once take his place in the synagogue of genius; or the darling friend has caught a voice down some byway, and he will have his other self go with him in the evening to hear this speaker of anti-Christian ideas—a man who has undertaken to reconstruct so much of the universe as will allow him to touch it; a person of exquisite mind, of dainty taste, and of quiet latent power. The subtle purpose is to draw men away from the old altar, the old Book, the God of deliverance and beneficence, of mercy and redemption, to another God who will condescend to be measured for a creed, and who is not above sitting for his portrait. Do not follow a multitude to do evil. Do not always be at the string end, led about by those who are of more forceful and energetic will than yourselves. Be sure as to what they are taking you to; have a clear understanding before you begin. You would not allow those persons to interfere with anything practical: when the discussion of commercial questions arises, you stand at the front and say, There I can bear testimony, and there I ought to be heard. Why claim such a solemn responsibility in the settlement of nothing, and allow anybody to settle for you the great questions of religious truth and personal destiny? 3. What is the third point of danger? It is not philosophical; it is not, in the narrow sense of the term, social; it is a point of danger which may be characterised as public sentiment, public opinion—a general turning round, and a wholesale abandonment of old theologies and old forms of worship (vers. 12, 13). Some men may have courage to laugh at the dreamer; others may have virtue enough to resist the blandishments of the nearest friend; but who can resist the current or tendency of public opinion? II. What is THE COURSE TO BE TAKEN UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES OF DANGER? Moses had no difficulty about his reply: let us see what it was, and consider whether we can adopt it. "And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death" (ver. 5). The seducer in the family brings upon himself this penalty. "Neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: but thou shalt surely kill him" (vers. 8, 9); "thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die" (ver. 10). And as for the city—representative of public opinion—"Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword," &c. (vers. 15–17). That was a drastic course; there is no touch of compromise in that stern provision; there is no line of toleration in that tremendous answer. The same course is to be taken to-day, as to its spiritual meaning. Physical violence there must be none; the day of physical pains and penalties for spiritual offences has closed; but the great lesson of destruction remains for ever. What penalty, then, shall we inflict upon men who seek to destroy our faith? I hesitate not in my reply: Avoid them; pass by them; they would injure your soul. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *True tests are unfailing discoverers*:—Every substance is discoverable by some "test," which usually neutralises it, or rather, by uniting with it, forms a new compound. The whole fabric of chemistry rests upon this wonderful principle as one of its corner-stones. Thus if the least fragment of copper be dissolved in acid, and the fluid be then diluted with water until no trace of colour remains, so potent, nevertheless, is the affinity of the well-known fluid called "ammonia" for the copper, that a single

drop of the latter fluid will immediately reveal the presence of the metal by uniting with it and forming a new substance of the loveliest violet colour. Similarly, if a morsel of lead be dissolved in acid, and the acid be then diluted with water, a single drop of a solution of iodide of potassium will turn the whole to a brilliant crocus-yellow. The presence of iron, after the same manner, is discovered by the least drop of tincture of galls, which blackens it upon contact; that of silver by a little solution of common salt, which causes flakes of imitative snow to make their appearance; that of mercury again with iodide of potassium, which turns the fluid containing it to a beautiful red. (*Scientific Illustrations.*)

Ver. 4. **Ye shall walk after the Lord your God.**—*With, before, after* (with Gen. v. 22, and xvii. 1):—You see that these three fragments, in their resemblances and in their differences, are equally significant. They concur in regarding life as a walk—a metaphor which expresses continuity, so that every man's life is a whole, which expresses progress, and which implies a goal. They agree in saying that God must be brought into a life somehow, and in some aspect, if that life is to be anything else but an aimless wandering, if it is to tend to the point to which every human life should attain. But then they diverge, and, if we put them together, they say to us that there are three different ways in which we ought to bring God into our life. We should "walk with" Him, like Enoch; we should "walk before" Him, as Abraham was bade to do; and we should "walk after" Him, as the command to do was given to all Israel. I. "Enoch walked WITH God." Two men travelling along a road keep each other company. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" The Companion is at our side all the same, though the mists may have come down and we cannot see Him. Enoch and God walked together, by the simple exercise of the faith that fills the Invisible with one great, loving face. The one thing that parts a man from God, and makes it impossible for a heart to expatiate in the thought of His presence, is the contrariety to His will in our conduct. II. And now take the other aspect suggested by the other little word God spoke to Abraham: "I am the Almighty God, walk BEFORE Me and be thou perfect." That suggests, as I suppose I do not need to point out, the idea not only of communion, which the former phrase brought to our minds, but that of the inspection of our conduct. "As ever in the great Taskmaster's eye," says the stern Puritan poet, and although one may object to that word "Taskmaster," yet the idea conveyed is the correct expansion of the commandment given to Abraham. Observe how "walk with Me" is dovetailed, as it were, between the revelation "I am the Almighty God" and the injunction "be thou perfect." This thought that we are in that Divine Presence, and that there is silently, but most really, a Divine opinion being formed of us, consolidated, as it were, moment by moment through our lives, is only tolerable if we have been walking with God. We must first walk "with God" before the consciousness that we are walking "before" Him becomes one that we can entertain and not go mad. When we are sure of the "with" we can bear the "before." A master's eye maketh diligent servants. "Walk before Me" and you will be perfect. "If you will walk before Me you will be perfect." III. Lastly, take the other relation, which is suggested by the third of my texts, where Israel as a whole is commanded to "walk AFTER the Lord" their God. In harmony with the very frequent expression of the Old Testament about "going after idols," so Israel here is to "go after God." What does that mean? Communion, the consciousness of being judged by God will lead on to aspiration and loving, longing effort to get nearer and nearer to Him. "My soul followeth hard after Thee," said the Psalmist, "Thy right hand upholdeth me." That element of yearning aspiration, of eager desire to be closer and closer, and liker and liker, to God must be in all true religion. And I need not do more than remind you of another meaning involved in this same expression. If I walk after God, then I let Him go before me and show me my road. Do you remember how, when the ark was to cross Jordan, the commandment was given to the Israelites to let it go well on in front, so that there could be no mistake about the course, "for ye have not passed this way heretofore." Do not be in too great a hurry to press upon the heels of God, if I may so say. Do not let your decisions outrun His providence. Keep back the impatience that would hurry on, and wait for His ripening purposes to ripen and His counsels to develop themselves. Walk after God, and be sure you do not go in front of your Guide, or you will lose both your way and your Guide. I need not say more than a word about the highest aspect which this third of our commandments takes: "His sheep follow Him," "leaving us an example that we should

follow in His steps." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The ladder of attainment*:—From these words we gather that many expressions were needed to describe the true disposition and attitude of the mind of Israel toward God. Each expression denotes something different, and each seems to make a progressive advance. I. YE SHALL WALK AFTER THE LORD YOUR GOD. This means "follow Him," *i.e.* go whither He would have you go. We must follow as the sheep follows the shepherd. But, again, we are not simply like sheep. When Israel came out of Egypt the trumpets were blown, and all followed in order behind them. This is of the first importance, that men should joyfully obey the cry. Follow Him—follow after Jesus! II. FEAR HIM. Those who resolve to follow Him must so do it that they shall honour Him and remember that He has power to withstand those who oppose Him. God's people must be filled with a sense of His greatness, majesty, and righteousness as revealed in the Redeemer. Without the sense of this, we lose the attitude of mind in which we can best honour Him. Those who seek to follow Him without this fear are likely in time to become rebels in His kingdom. III. YE SHALL KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS. God has given commands—"Thou shalt"; "Thou shalt not." The fear of God impels to the keeping of these. Not a cringing dread is this fear. This would make the keeping of the commandments merely a secondary matter. God must be so feared that what He has commanded shall be our delight to perform. IV. YE SHALL OBEY HIS VOICE. Even when His way seems enigmatic, and also when He gives special intimations of His will besides the commands laid down, just as He led Israel by ways they knew not, &c. On the way of life we must ever be on our guard so that we may find the right way, so much the more as snares are laid in our way by the adversary—from which we cannot deliver ourselves, but which we shall be able to avoid if we listen to the voice of the Spirit, who teaches us to be circumspect, and points out the way to us. V. YE SHALL SERVE HIM, *i.e.* we must not be autocrats, but servants of God only. Thus we learn to please Him in self-denial, and in a jealous care for His glory. Then, too, we shall gladly be found where the honour due to Him is offered with prayer and adoration. VI. YE SHALL CLEAVE UNTO HIM, *i.e.* ye shall seek His presence with burning desires, and with deepest love and warmth of heart and spirit. When we have reached thus far, that we cleave to Him and grow up in Him, as the branch in the vine stem, great shall be our gain! Then may it be said of us, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be!" (*J. C. Blumhardt.*)

Vers. 6–11. **If thy brother . . . entice thee.**—*Temptation to idolatry from kindred*:—I. IT IS THE POLICY OF THE TEMPTER TO SEND HIS SOLICITATIONS BY THE HAND OF THOSE WE LOVE, whom we least suspect of any ill design upon us, and whom we are desirous to please, and apt to conform ourselves to. Satan tempted Adam by Eve, and Christ by Peter. We are therefore concerned to stand upon our guard against an ill proposal, when the person that proposeth it can pretend to an interest in us, that we may never sin against God in compliment to the best friend we have in the world. 2. The temptation is supposed to be private: he will "entice thee secretly"; implying that idolatry is a work of darkness, which dreads the light and covets to be concealed; and which the sinner promiseth himself, and the tempter promiseth him, secrecy and security in. II. IT IS OUR DUTY TO PREFER GOD AND RELIGION BEFORE THE BEST FRIENDS WE HAVE IN THE WORLD. 1. We must not in compliance to our friends break God's law (ver. 8). 2. We must not in compassion to our friends obstruct the course of God's justice (ver. 9). Those are certainly our worst enemies that would thrust us from God, our best friend; and whatever draws us to sin separates between us and God; it is a design upon our life, and to be resented accordingly. (*Matthew Henry, D.D.*)

Ver. 17. **There shall cleave nought of the cursed thing.**—*Destroy the cursed thing*:—Israel must conquer idolatrous cities, and destroy all the spoil, regarding all that had been polluted by idolatry as an accursed thing to be burned with fire. Now, sin of all sorts must be treated by Christians in the same manner. We must not allow a single evil habit to remain. It is now war to the knife with sins of all sorts and sizes, whether of the body, the mind, or the spirit. We do not look upon this giving up of evil as deserving mercy, but we regard it as a fruit of the grace of God, which we would on no account miss. When God causes us to have no mercy on our sins, then He has great mercy on us. When we are angry with evil,

God is no more angry with us. When we multiply our efforts against iniquity, the Lord multiplies our blessings. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

CHAPTER XIV.

VERS. 1-3. **Ye are the children of the Lord your God.**—*Israel's relationship to God*:—Moses here tells Israel—I. HOW GOD HAD DIGNIFIED THEM, AS A PECULIAR PEOPLE, WITH THREE DISTINGUISHABLE PRIVILEGES, which were their honour, and figures of those spiritual blessings in heavenly things with which God has in Christ blessed us. 1. Here is election. "The Lord hath chosen thee" (ver. 2); not for their own merits, or for any good works foreseen, but because He would magnify the riches of His power and grace among them. And thus were believers chosen (Eph. i. 4). 2. Here is adoption. "Ye are the children of the Lord your God" (ver. 1); formed by Him into a people, owned by Him as His people, nay, His family, a people near unto Him, nearer than any other. Every "Israelite indeed" is a child of God; partaker of His nature and favour, His love and blessing. 3. Here is sanctification. "Thou art an holy people" (ver. 2); separated and set apart for God, devoted to His service, designed for His praise, governed by a holy law, graced by a holy tabernacle and the holy ordinances relating to it. II. HOW THEY OUGHT TO DISTINGUISH THEMSELVES BY A SOBER SINGULARITY FROM ALL THE NATIONS THAT WERE ABOUT THEM. 1. In their mourning. "Ye shall not cut yourselves" (ver. 1). (1) They are forbidden to deform or hurt their own bodies upon any account. This is like a parent's charge to his children that are foolish, careless, and wilful. The true meaning of such commandments is, do yourselves no harm; and this is also the design of those providences which most cross us, to remove from us those things by which we are in danger of doing ourselves injury. The body is for the Lord, and is to be used accordingly. (2) They are forbidden to disturb and afflict their own minds with inordinate grief for the loss of near and dear relations. If your father die, "ye shall not cut yourselves," you shall not sorrow more than is meet, for you are not fatherless, you have a Father who is great, living and permanent, even the holy, blessed God, whose children ye are. 2. In their meat. Their observance of this law would make them to be taken notice of in all mixed companies as a separate people, and preserve them from mingling themselves with their idolatrous neighbours. (1) It is plain, in the law itself, that these precepts belonged only to the Jews, and were not moral nor of perpetual use, because not of perpetual obligation (ver. 21). (2) It is plain, in the Gospel, that they are now antiquated and repealed (1 Tim. iv. 4). (*Matthew Henry, D.D.*)

Vers. 4-20. **The beasts which ye shall eat.**—*God's provision for man's table*:—I. PROVISION, DIVINE IN ITS SOURCE. Israel could not have procured it and would not have known without Divine teaching what was good for them. Recognise that power which can "furnish a table in the wilderness" (Psa. lxxviii. 19). II. PROVISION GOOD IN QUALITY. Nothing unclean, nothing unwholesome, was specified. Not anything was to be eaten apt to stimulate sensual passions, or to foster coarse tastes and degrading habits. III. PROVISIONS ABUNDANT IN QUALITY. There was no stint in beasts, birds, or fish. The articles of food were nutritious and abundant. God's legislation for our lower reminds us of His care for our higher nature. There is no lack anywhere. Let us remember our Benefactor, for we cannot put a morsel of food into our mouths till God puts it into our hands—discern kindness not only in prescribing, but in prohibiting, and be grateful to "the living God who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. vi. 17). For a man may be blessed with riches, wealth, and honour; want nothing; "yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof" (Eccles. vi. 2). (*Ibid.*) *Food provided*:—In this provision of food we see—1. A mark of Divine condescension. If kings legislated for the diet of their people, is it beneath the King of Israel to appoint the food for His chosen people? "All that we know of God," says Dr. Cumming, "in creation, in providence, in redemption, leads us to see that He takes as much care of what the world calls, in its ignorance, little things, as He does of what the world thinks, in equal ignorance, great and weighty things." 2. A proof of Divine benevolence. It is kind to provide at all. But what thought indicated, in the choice of animals

which multiplied slowly, which were not difficult to obtain, found without leaving the camp, and without danger and contact with heathens around them! All this intended to reclaim and bless. (*Ibid.*) **Every creeping thing that flieth is unclean.**—*Gilded sin*:—1. There is a natural disgust in every one to the idea of eating, or even handling, a creeping worm or caterpillar. However difficult this feeling may be to analyse, God has given it to the race for some purpose. All things that are abhorrent to our human instincts—things which we call repulsive—are so many indications of the great truth that we are to make distinctions between clean and unclean, good and evil, right and wrong. 2. Now God saw fit to incorporate this natural instinct of man, which He had implanted, in the law for His people. He forbade their eating these repulsive, crawling things. We know how the natural instinct is often overcome by wilful habits, and we find degraded men taking pleasure in those articles of food which the human palate originally and instinctively rejects. Hence the necessity of a law behind the instinct, when God would teach by it His great spiritual lesson. 3. He would teach us that we may in conscience shrink from gross sins, and yet gradually blunt conscience and indulge in sins we formerly abhorred; and that, therefore, a Divine law must be made the norm of our lives, and not simply the protests of natural conscience. 4. We desire to call your attention to a different class of dalliers with sin—not the gross and vulgar, but the refined and elegant. Their refinement is such that gross forms of sin repel them—not because they are sin, but because they are gross. The nauseous caterpillar has dressed itself up as a beautiful butterfly, and in this form they sport with the creature. But what does God's law say? "Every creeping thing that flieth is unclean unto you." The wings and pretty colours have not altered the nature of the vermin. The same uncleanness is there as before. How many there are who would shrink with dismay from overt sensuality, and yet will, in the privacy of the chamber, gloat over a licentious novel! It is the very same crawling thing—only now it has pretty wings. 5. One of the most successful cloaks for sin at the present day is so-called art. Art is something very lovely and refined. It is a grand thing for the young to know all about art. It shows high breeding to admire and criticise art. Now, there is a grain of wheat and a bushel of chaff in all this talk. To one genuine artist who only looks to the art, there are a thousand hypocrites, who know nothing about art, and only adopt the language of art to hide their sinful tendencies. In the name of art they go to see the public performances of a loose woman, and watch the movements of a play that makes light of the marriage relation. In the name of art they fill their parlours with nudities, in voluptuous form and colour, by which the youth of the families are stimulated to sensuality and debauchery; and, in the name of art, the young artist sits before his nude model for her destruction and his. 6. In every way luxury can devise, passions are inflamed, and then modesty is called prudery. Indecent dressing, lascivious dances, immoral innuendo in conversation, form part of this refined system of destroying the soul, in which Christians engage because they must be in the fashion. The creeping thing down in a dance-house in Water Street they would exclaim against; but the winged creeping thing that flies in the uptown parlour they delight in; yet it is the same venomous beast. 7. Is it right for those who are washed in the blood of Christ, and who seek the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, to enter wilfully into a social life where books and pictures and statuary and entertainments are most unblushingly promotive of sensuality and vicious thought? Is it right to become accustomed to such gilded filth, so that we lose our Christian delicacy and reserve, and at last make impurity a fashionable virtue? Satan is cunning in his temptations. He does not come to us in a vulgar form and so disgust us. He puts the many-coloured wings on the slimy crawler, and so fascinates us into his service. "Beware!" (*H. Crosby, D.D.*)

Ver. 21. **Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk.**—*Cultivation of the feelings a Christian duty*:—I. That which commentators upon Scripture have found intricate and uncertain, WRITERS OF A MORE SECULAR CHARACTER HAVE SEIZED UPON AND READ RIGHTLY. Some of you may remember the use made of it in one of those classical works of fiction of which Englishmen are so justly proud; where the intended victim of a deep-laid plot is lured to her destruction by an imitation of her husband's signal, and one of the conspirators says to his more guilty accomplice, "Thou hast destroyed her by means of her best affections. It is a seething of the kid in the mother's milk!" A just and thrilling application of the

inspired charge; of which the simplest meaning is the true one. Thou shalt not blunt thy natural feelings, or those of others, by disregarding the inward dictate of a Divine humanity: human nature shrinks from the idea of using that which ought to be the food of a new-born animal, to prepare that animal to be man's food; of applying the mother's milk to a purpose so opposite to that for which God destined it: harden not thy heart against this instinct of tenderness on the plea that it matters not to the slain animal in what particular way it is dressed, or that the living parent, void of reason, has no consciousness of the inhumanity: for thine own sake refrain from that which is hardhearted; from that which, though it inflicts not pain, springs out of selfishness, indicates a spirit unworthy of man and forgetful of God, and tends still further to blunt those moral sensibilities which once lost are commonly lost for ever, and with them all that is most beautiful and most attractive in the human character. II. The text seems to teach us most of all THE WICKEDNESS OF USING FOR SELFISH OR WRONG PURPOSES THE SACRED FEELINGS OF ANOTHER; of availing ourselves of the knowledge of another's affections to make him miserable or to make him sinful; of trifling, in this sense, with the most delicate workings of the human mechanism, and turning to evil account that insight into character with which God has endowed us all, in different degrees, for purposes wholly beneficent, pure, and good. III. In proportion as you learn and practise early that regard for others' feelings which is almost synonymous with Christian charity, in that same degree will you become, not effeminate, BUT IN THE BEST OF ALL SENSES MANLY; having put away childish things, and anticipated the noblest qualities of a Christian maturity. We pray in the Litany, "From hardness of heart, good Lord, deliver us." Hardness of heart has two aspects; towards man, and towards God. Towards God it is brought about by acts of neglect, leading to habits of neglect; by a disregard of His word and commandments, issuing in what is called in the same petition, a "contempt" of both. Towards man, it is produced in us in a similar way; by repeated acts of disregard, leading to a habit of disregard; by blinding ourselves to others' feelings, and saying and doing every day things which wound them, till at last we become unconscious of their very existence, and think nothing real which is not, in some manner, our own. That is hardness of heart in its full growth; selfishness unrestrained and unlimited. Many people are walking about in that state; with a heart hardened utterly both towards man and towards God. And they pass for respectable men too: in them religion and charity, worship and almsgiving, have become alike workings of selfishness, regulated by calculations of self-interest, and never looking beyond earth for their reward. That you may not become thus seared, you must watch and pray, while you can, against hardness of heart. You must practise its opposite. Try to think more than you do of others, and less than you do of yourselves. Enter into the feelings one of another. Think not only what is your right, or what you can get, or what you are used to, in such and such a matter; but also what others would like, what would give pleasure, what would make their life happy, in small things or great; and sometimes do that; form the habit of doing that. (*Dean Vaughan.*)

Vers. 22–29. **Tithe all the increase of thy seed.**—*Systematic provision for beneficent work:*—I. THE DUTY OF GOD'S PEOPLE. In Jewish law God claimed tithes and gifts for the worship of the sanctuary and the necessities of the poor. Conspicuous features of these demands are—the priority of God's claim—that provision for it be made before man's self-enjoyment, that it bear some suitable proportion to the Divine glory and grace, and that for fullness and power, system is essential; *i.e.* that the work of God be provided for before man's indulgence (Lev. xix.; Numb. xviii.; Deut. xiv.). The New Testament has also its plan of meeting God's claim, containing the same elements of priority, certainty, proportion and system. See 1 Cor. xvi. 2, sustained and illustrated by the weighty arguments and motives of 2 Cor. viii., ix. II. THE FINANCIAL LAW OF CHRIST. Christ is sole King in His Church. The constitution of this Church is Christian, not Jewish. "As I have given order to the Churches of Galatia, even so do ye." The method taught by the apostle to provide the revenues of the Church is an expansion of Jewish and pentecostal church systems, an example for us, an implied and inferential obligation sustained by cumulative and presumptive argument. New Testament institutions are not given with Sinaitic form and severity. They meet us as sacred provisions for urgent occasions. They appeal to a willing heart more than to a legal mind. Christ rules in love, but His will should not have less authority or

constraining power on that account (John vii. 17). III. THE NECESSITY OF THE AGE. The present age needs loftiness of aim, seriousness of feeling, and ardour of devotion. Faithful consecration of substance to God, elevated by Christian love to a financial rule of life, would nourish every moral and spiritual principle in the soul. Storing the Lord's portion is the necessity of the age, from its tendency. 1. To check the idolatry of money and to strengthen the love of God in the heart. 2. To meet adequately the demands of religion and humanity. 3. To exhibit the power and beauty of godliness. By fostering simplicity of life and personal fidelity to God. By liberally sustaining the honour of Christ in the sight of men. (*John Ross.*)

CHAPTER XV.

VERS. 1, 2. **At the end of every seven years . . . a release.**—*Economical laws:*—One of the things that strikes a reader of Deuteronomy, and indeed of the Old Testament in general, is the way in which all kinds of subjects are brought under the scope of religion. The modern mind is ready with distinctions, and classifies subjects as religious, moral, political, scientific, economical, and so forth; but the Israelitish lawgivers, men with the prophetic spirit in them, subordinate politics, economics, and morals alike to religion. Laws, to whatever department of life they are applicable, are to be made and administered in the Spirit of God; they are not an end in themselves; their one end is to enable people so to live as that the purposes may be fulfilled for which God has called them into being and constituted them into societies. This high point of view must always be retained. If we know better than the Israelites the life which God intends human beings to live, we shall have a higher standard for our legislation than they; we shall be more bound than they to remember that law is an instrument of religion, a means to a spiritual end, and that it rests with us who make our own laws to adapt them, over the whole area of national life, to the ends which God sets before us. 1. In the first place, there is legislation regarding land. It proceeds upon the idea that the land belongs to God, and has been given by Him to the nation that on it as a foundation it may live that life of labour, of health, and of natural piety to which He has called it. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as unrestricted private property in land. An individual does not have the power of alienating any part of it for ever. One result, and no doubt one purpose of this was, to prevent a single worthless person from ruining his posterity by parting for ever with what he really held in trust for them; another, was to prevent the accumulation of great masses of landed property, which was then the only kind of property, in the hands of individuals. Such accumulations, in the circumstances, and in most circumstances, could only lead to the practical enslavement of those who tilled the land to those who owned it. These aims of the land laws in Israel will very generally be acknowledged as worthy of approval. I suppose there is not a statesman in Europe who would not give a great deal to resettle on the land hundreds of thousands of those who have been driven or drawn into the towns. There is not one but sees that private property in land *must*, if the moral ends for which society exists are to be attained, be limited somehow. Similarly, legislation is justifiable—that is, it is in the line of a Divine intention—which aims at making it hard to beggar the poor, and hard to heap up wealth without limit. It is not a morally healthy situation in which one man of enormous wealth has thousands practically at his mercy. It is not good for *him*—I mean for his soul; it is not good for their souls either; and the law may properly aim, by just methods, at making it hard to create such a situation and impossible to perpetuate it. Unhappily, in most new countries the need of bribing settlers and capital has proved a temptation too strong to be resisted; and land has been parted with in masses, to individuals, on terms which have simply sown for future generations the seed of all the trouble under which older countries labour. The instinct for gain has proved stronger than the devotion to ideal moral ends. The future has been sacrificed to the present, the moral interests of the community to the material interests of a few. 2. Besides the land, the Book of Deuteronomy contains a variety of laws regarding money, and particularly the lending of money. To begin with, the lending of money for interest was absolutely forbidden. The Israelites were not a commercial, but a farming people, and when a man borrowed,

it was not to float a venture too great for his own means, but because he had got into difficulties, and wanted relief. To assist a brother in difficulty was regarded as a case of charity; he was to be relieved readily and freely; it were inhuman to take advantage of his distress to get him into one's power, as a moneylender does his victim. It may be said, of course, that the effect of this law would be to discourage lending altogether; people would not be too ready to part with their money without some hope of profit. Probably this might be so, and to some extent with good effect. There are some people who borrow, and who ought not to do so. They ought not to have money lent to them. It is a mercy *not* to lend him money: it is a special mercy to protect him, as this law does, against the moneylenders. But I am not sure that the law which prohibits lending money for interest has not another moral idea at the heart of it. As distinguished from agriculture, commerce, which depends so much more upon credit, *i.e.* upon money lent for interest, has a much larger element of speculation in it; and speculation is always to be discouraged, on moral grounds. Every one knows that there are persons with little money of their own who contrive to make a livelihood by watching the ups and downs in the price of shares. This is a vocation which depends for its very existence on the lending of money for interest, and no one will say that it is morally wholesome, or that, whatever sensitiveness it may develop in certain of the intellectual faculties, it is elevating for the whole man. It would be far better for him to be doing field labour. But there is more still in this law. As it stands, I do not believe it is applicable to the vastly different conditions of modern life, especially in a trading community; here, to lend a trustworthy person money to carry on or extend his business may be what the law intended all lending to be, an act of charity. But the lender must consider his own position—I mean his moral position. His whole income may come—in many cases it does come—from investments. He lives on the interest of money he has lent. He takes no care of it, except to see at first that the investments are sound. He does no work in connection with it. He is largely ignorant of the use made of the power which it bestows. I am not going to say that no one should live on such terms: for many, life would be impossible otherwise. For many it is the proper reward of a life of labour: they are only reaping the fruit of their toils in earlier years. To such it is not likely to do any harm. But those who have inherited such a situation are undoubtedly exposed to moral perils of which they may easily become unconscious. They can live without needing to make their living; and there are very few people in a generation good enough to stand such a trial. Those who labour with the money are conscripts; let those who lend it be volunteers in all the higher services which society requires from its members. Let them be leaders in all philanthropies and charities, in all laborious duties which have it as their object to raise the moral and spiritual status of men. 3. A third class of economical laws which bulks largely in the Book of Deuteronomy, and to which special attention is due, is occupied with the care of the poor. This fifteenth chapter has a number of enactments bearing on this subject. The first is rather obscure, "At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release." In the Book of Exodus (xxiii. 10) this law refers to the land, and its meaning is that every seventh year it is not to be cropped. Here, there is a year of release established for debts, though it is not clear whether it means that a debt due seven years was to be irrecoverable by legal process, or that every seventh year there should be a period of grace, during which *no* debt should be recoverable by law. Then, in the laws about lending, the duty of charity is strongly enforced. The forgotten sheaf in the field, or the gleanings of the vineyard and the olive are not to be too carefully gathered in; they are to be left for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, "that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the works of thine hand." God is interested in humanity; He sees such consideration and rewards it, just as He sees inhumanity and judges it. But the most striking thing in these ancient poor laws is the way in which they realise the actual conditions of the life of the poor, and consider them. The lender is allowed to take a pledge, but if he takes the upper garment of the borrower he must not keep it all night. It is not only the poor man's cloak, but his blanket; he has nothing else to cover himself with, and God is angry with the man who inhumanly leaves his poor brother to shiver in the cold night air. So, too, no one may take the hand-mill or the upper millstone as a pledge; that is to rob the poor of the means of grinding the handful of corn with which he keeps the breath in his body. We see from laws like these how excessively poor they were, yet the lawgiver who has the Spirit of God in him enters into this deep poverty, realises the conditions of

life under it, and insists on due consideration for them. Business is business, of course; but humanity is also humanity, and it is an interest which no consideration of business will ever displace before God. And to refer in this connection to only one point more, what could be more beautiful than the law we find in verses 10 and 11 of Deuteronomy xxiv.? It is a mean and inhuman temper, which is here reproved by God. The poor man is not to be insulted because he is in distress; he is to be treated by the lender as courteously and respectfully as if he were—what he is—his equal. The sacredness of his home is to be respected; he is not to be needlessly affronted before his children by having an unfeeling or insolent stranger walk into the house and carry off what he pleases. Laws like these move us to reflection on the provision which we ourselves make for the poor. On what a large scale poverty exists in the great cities! The practical difficulties of relieving distress without doing moral injury are undeniably very great, but I do not believe they will be overcome by men whom habitual contact with dishonesty and incapacity has rendered hard and inhuman. Those who have the care of the poor should care for them with humanity. They should care for their feelings too, and respect the common nature which is in them. If they do not, they suffer for it themselves, and one can hardly find a more odious type of human being than the man who has been hardened and brutalised by the administration of charity. There is one kind of criticism which has often been passed, and will no doubt continue to be passed, on such laws as these. It is this: they have never been kept. There is no evidence, for instance, that the law of the jubilee year, when all property returned to its original owners, was ever observed in Israel: as a means for preventing the dissipation of family property, or its accumulation in a few hands, it was a failure. So have all laws been which attempted to regulate the business of lending money, either by prohibiting interest altogether, or by fixing a maximum rate of interest. No law written in a book can ever compete with the living intellect of man, with his cunning and greed on the one hand, with his distress, his passions, or his stupidity on the other. There is a certain quantity of truth in this; but taken without qualification it is only a plea for anarchy—an invitation to give up the whole of the economical side of social existence to the conflict of ability, selfishness, and capital with incompetence, need, and passion. Surely there is a moral ideal for this side of existence; and surely if there is, it must find some expression, however inadequate, some assistance, however feeble, from the laws. We cannot by law protect people against the consequences of their vices or their follies; but we can provide in the law a safeguard for those interests which are higher than private gain or loss. We can make it impossible for any one in the pursuit of private gain to trample humanity under foot. (*James Denney, D.D.*) *Proclamation of release*:—My text was intended as an especial law to the ancients, and prefigured to all ages Gospel forgiveness. The fact is that the world is loaded down with a debt, which no bankrupt law or two-third enactment can alleviate. The voices of heaven cry, "Pay! Pay!" Men and women are frantic with moral insolvency. What shall be done? A new law is proclaimed, from the throne of God, of universal release for all who will take advantage of that enactment. 1. In the first place, why will you carry your burden of sin any longer? "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from sin." Cut loose the cables which hold your transgressions, and let them fall off. Spiritual, infinite, glorious, everlasting release! "Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven and whose sins are covered." 2. Some of you, also, want deliverance from your troubles. God knows you have enough of them. Physical, domestic, spiritual, and financial troubles. How are you going to get relief? The Divine Physician comes, and He knows how severe the trouble is, and He gives you this promise: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Does it not take effect upon you? Here, then, He pours out more drops of Divine consolation, and I am sure this time the trouble will be arrested: "All things work together for good to those who love God." All the Atlantic and Pacific oceans of surging sorrow cannot sink a soul that has asked for God's pilotage. The difficulty is, that when we have misfortunes of any kind, we put them in God's hand, and they stay there a little while; and then we go and get them again, and bring them back. A vessel comes in from a foreign port. As it comes near the harbour it sees a pilot floating about. It hails the pilot. The pilot comes on board, and he says: "Now, captain, you have had a stormy passage. Go down and sleep, and I will take the vessel into New York harbour." After a while the captain begins to think: "Am I right in trusting this vessel to that pilot? I guess I'll go up and see." So he comes to the pilot, and says: "Don't

you see that rock? Don't you see those headlands? You will wreck the ship. Let me hold the helm for a while myself, and then I'll trust to you." The pilot becomes angry, and says: "I will either take care of this ship or not. If you want to, I will get into my yawl and go ashore, or back to my boat." Now we say to the Lord: "O God, take my life, take my all, in Thy keeping." We go along for a little while, and suddenly wake up, and say: "Things are going all wrong. O Lord, we are driving on these rocks, and Thou art going to let us be shipwrecked." God says: "You go and rest; I will take charge of this vessel, and take it into the harbour." It is God's business to comfort, and it is our business to be comforted. "At the end of seven years thou shalt make a release." 3. But what is our programme for the coming years? It is about the same line of work, only on a more intensified and consecrated scale. Ah, we must be better men and women. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *A new chance*:—God is putting lines of mercy amid all the black print of the law. It would seem as if wherever God could find a place at which He might utter some word of pity or compassion, He filled up that place with an utterance of His solicitude for the welfare of man. Flowers look lovely everywhere, but what must be the loveliness of a flower to the wanderer in a desert? So these Gospel words are full of charm wherever we find them, but they have double charmfulness being found in connection with institutions, instructions, precepts, and commandments marked by the severest righteousness. In the midst of time God graciously puts a year of release. We find in this year of release what we all need —namely, the principle of new chances, new opportunities, fresh beginnings. To-morrow, said the debtor or the slave, is the day of release, and the next day I shall begin again: I shall have another chance in life; the burden will be taken away, the darkness will be dispersed, and life shall be young again. Every man ought to have more chances than one, even in our own life. God has filled the sphere of life with opportunities. But moral releases can only be accomplished by moral processes. The man who is in prison must take the right steps to get out of it. What are those right steps?—repentance, contrition, confession—open, frank, straightforward, self-renouncing confession; then the man must be allowed to begin again; God will, in His providence, work out for such a man another opportunity; concealment there must be none, prevarication none, self-defence none. Where the case lies between the soul and God—the higher morality still—there must be an interview at the Cross—a mysterious communion under the blood that flows from the wounded Christ. All this being done on the part of the creditor and the owner, what happens on the side of God? The answer to that inquiry is: "The Lord shall greatly bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it" (ver. 4). God never allows us to obey the law without immediate and large compensation. We cannot obey the laws of health without instantly being the healthier; we cannot obey the laws of cleanliness without the flesh instantly thanking us, in stronger pulsations and wider liberties, for what we have done to it. A blessing is attached to all obedience, when the obedience is rendered to law Divine and gracious. The reward is in the man's own heart: he has a reward which no thief can take away from the sanctuary in which it is preserved; heaven is within. None can forestall God, or outrun God, or confer upon God an obligation which He cannot repay; He takes the moisture from the earth only that He may return it in copious showers. No man can serve God for nought. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The year of release*:—I propose to consider death as the Christian's release, and then you will easily perceive what pleasure it must give to the believer, who is waiting for his discharge, to be told that the year of release is at hand. I. FOR THEY SHALL BE RELEASED FROM ALL LABOUR AND SORROW. 1. From labour (Rev. xiv. 13). They know little of religion who think that a Christian has nothing to do. When Christ first calls us, He says: "Go, work to-day in My vineyard." There is not only a great variety of employments, but that which requires much application and labour. To mortify sin is difficult work. But courage, Christians, the year of release is at hand. In heaven there will be much service, but no kind of labour. They rest not, day nor night, from rapturous adorations, and yet feel no fatigue, for the joy of the Lord is their strength. 2. But I said also that you shall be released from sorrow as well as from labour. The sources of present grief are almost innumerable. There are personal, family, and national troubles; and these sometimes follow one another so quickly, that many have tears for their meat, night and day. But courage, Christians, the year of release is at hand, when they that sow in tears shall reap in joy. II. There will be A RELEASE FROM SIN. Though you go out of this world

lamenting your numerous infirmities, you shall be presented before the throne of God without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. III. It will be A RELEASE FROM TEMPTATION. Within the gates of the New Jerusalem you shall be free from all assaults and troubles whatever, and be proclaimed more than conquerors through Him that loved you. IV. There will be A RELEASE FROM THIS STATE OF EXILE AND CONFINEMENT. Mysteries of Providence will then be unfolded, and the most delightful discoveries made of the infinite wisdom and goodness of God. The much greater mysteries of grace shall be also laid open; and fill our hearts with love and admiration, and our mouths with never-ending praises. (*S. Lavington.*) *Forgiveness, freedom, favour*:—I. THE RELEASE WHICH THE LORD DESIRED HIS PEOPLE TO GIVE. 1. They were, at the end of every seven years, to release every man his debtor from the debt which he had accumulated. A man might pay if he could, and he should do so. A man might, at some future time, if his circumstances altered, discharge the debt which had been remitted; but, as far as the creditor was concerned, it was remitted. 2. They were never to exact that debt again. The moral claim might remain, and the honest Israelite might take care that his brother Israelite should not lose anything through him; but, still, according to the Divine command, there was to be no exacting of it. None but a generous Lawgiver would have made such a law as this. It is noble-hearted, full of loving-kindness; and we could expect that none but a people in whose midst there was the daily sacrifice, in the midst of whom moved the high priest of God, would be obedient to such a precept. 3. They were to do this for the Lord's sake: "because it is called the Lord's release." It is not enough to do the correct thing; it must be done in a right spirit, and with a pure motive. A good action is not wholly good unless it be done for the glory of God, and because of the greatness and goodness of His holy name. The most powerful motive that a Christian can have is this, "For Jesus' sake." You could not forgive the debt, perhaps, for your brother's sake; there may be something about him that would harden your heart; but can you not do it for Jesus' sake? This is true charity, that holy love which is the choicest of the graces. And then, like the Israelites, we may look believingly to the gracious reward that God gives. We do not serve God for wages; but still we have respect unto the recompense of the reward, even as Moses had. We do not run like hirelings; but yet we have our eye upon the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus. They were not only to perform this kindness once, but they were to be ready to do it again. It is the part of Christians not to be weary in well doing; and if they get no reward for what they have done from those to whom it is done, still to do the same again. Remember how gracious God is, and how He giveth to the unthankful and the evil, and maketh His rain to fall upon the field of the churl as well as upon the field of the most generous. 5. While they were to forgive and remit, on this seventh year, the loans which remained unpaid, they were also to let the bondman go. It was not to be thought a hardship to part with a servant man or woman. However useful they might have been in the house or field, however much they were felt to be necessary to domestic comfort or farm service, they were to be allowed to go; and, what was more, they were not to go empty handed, but they were to receive a portion out of every department of the master's wealth. 6. Further, this setting free of their brother at the specified time was to be done for a certain reason: "Thou shalt remember," &c. How can you hold another a bondman when God has set you free? How can you treat another with unkindness when the Lord has dealt so generously with you? Down at Olney, when Mr. Newton was the rector of the parish, he put in his study this text where he could always see it when he lifted his eyes from his text while preparing his sermon, "Remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee." Would it not do many Christians good if they had that text often before their eyes? Would it not excite gratitude to their Redeemer, and tenderness towards those who happened to be in subjection to them, tenderness to every sinner that is a bondslave under the law, tenderness to the myriads that swarm these streets, slaves to sin and self, and who are perishing in their iniquity? 7. The spirit of this release of the Lord is this, "Never be hard on anybody." It is true that the man made the bargain, and he ought to keep to it; but he is losing money, and he cannot afford it; he is being ruined, and you are being fattened by his mistake. Do not hold him to it. No Christian man can be a sweater of workers; no Christian man can be a grinder of the poor; no man, who would be accepted before God, can think that his heart is right with Him when he treats others ungenerously, not to say unjustly. II. THE RELEASE WHICH THE

LORD GIVES TO US. 1. Let me proclaim to every sinner here, who owns his indebtedness to God, and feels that he can never discharge it, that if you will come, and put your trust in Christ, the Lord promises oblivion to all your debt, forgiveness of the whole of your sins. 2. This release shall be followed up by a non-exacting of the penalty for ever. 3. God will do all this for thee on the ground of thy poverty. See the fourth verse: "Save when there shall be no poor among you." When you cannot pay half a farthing in the pound of all your great debt of sin, when you are absolutely bankrupt, then may you believe that Jesus Christ is your Saviour. 4. I may be addressing a soul here that says, "I like that thought, I wish I could catch hold of it; but I feel myself to be such a slave that I cannot grasp it." Well, the Lord may allow a soul to be in bondage for a time; indeed, it may be needful that He should. The Hebrew might be in bondage six years, and yet he went free when the seventh year came. There are reasons why the Spirit of God is to some men a Spirit of bondage for a long time. Hard hearts must be melted, proud stomachs must be brought down. 5. The man was set free at the end of the sixth year, paying nothing for his liberation. Though not free-born, nor yet buying his liberty with a great sum, yet he was set free. O Lord, set some soul free to-night! 6. And when the Lord sets poor souls at liberty, He always sends them away full-handed. He gives something from the flock, and from the threshing-floor, and from the wine-press. 7. This act never seems hard to the Lord. He says to the Hebrew, in the eighteenth verse, "It shall not seem hard unto thee, when thou sendest him away free." It never seems hard to Christ when He sets a sinner free. 8. One thing I feel sure of, and that is, if the Lord sets us free, we shall want to remain His servants for ever. We will go straight away to the door-post, and ask Him to use the awl; for, though we are glad to be free, we do not want to be free from Him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 4–11. **Save when there shall be no poor among you.**—*Rural poverty:*—These two sentences (vers. 4 and 11) seem, at first sight, to contradict one another. There are three ways of reading the fourth verse. "*Save when* there shall be no poor among you," says the text. "*To the end that* there be no poor," reads the margin. "*Howbeit*, there shall be no poor with thee," runs the Revised Version. The explanation may be briefly put thus: There would always be poor people among them; "howbeit," they must not let them be poor, *i.e.* not let them sink down in poverty. I. THE EXISTENCE OF POVERTY. My own experience has been that those who are most hurt cry out least. The most deserving, and generally the most pitiful, cases of distress have to be looked for. But, say some, is it not their own fault that they are so badly off? No doubt it often is so. Idleness, drink, waste, folly, incapableness may all cause poverty; but what of that? We cannot stand by and see people starve. It would be easier to die by hanging than hunger; but we do not even hang people except for high treason or murder. Much more must we not by any sin of omission condemn the innocent to suffer with the guilty—the hardworking wife or the helpless children for the sake of the worthless husband or father. The fact is that poverty is largely the consequence of an unequal struggle between the strong and the weak. II. THE DUTY OF RELIEVING POVERTY. Look at what Moses taught the Israelites. 1. That prevention is better than cure. There was never to be a "bitter cry of outcast" Canaan. (1) We may use our influence to encourage better education. With the next generation more intelligent, temperate, and capable, pauperism will be less. (2) We may exert our influence towards giving the labourer a heartier interest in the land he tills. (3) We may inculcate a love of independence. Poverty is no sin, but pauperism is a reproach, and should be felt as such. 2. That each nation, or community, or church, should care for its own poor. 3. That charity should be systematic. The time was precise—every third year; the quantity was precise—one tenth; the object was precise—"thy poor brother." Contrast with these laws of Moses the teaching of Christ. 1. The law of Moses aimed at preventing poverty. Christ came and found men poor. He did more than prevent; He cured. To heal sickness is a harder task than to maintain health. To deliver the needy when he crieth is often more difficult than to preserve him before he has had occasion to cry. Moses provided for keeping people up who were not overthrown; Christ actually went down to the low dark depths, and raised those who were sunk there. 2. Moses taught that each nation, or community, or church, should care for its own. To go beyond that was permitted, but not enjoined. Christ taught a much broader truth than that—charity without distinction. Our neighbour is not

the person who lives next door to us, or who has most affinity with us; but the person who is nearest to our helping hand, even though he be a Jew and we are Samaritans. Our first duty is to our own, but not our last. Charity begins at home, but does not end there. 3. Moses was systematic, but Christ was above systems. There was no fixed standard with Him, except this: "Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor." There was no stint in His giving. It was not certain objects of His kindness whom He blessed: "Whosoever will, let him come." It was not every few years merely that He was benevolent; but "yesterday, to-day, and for ever." (*Charles T. Price.*) *The poor-laws of the Bible; or, rules and reasons for the relief of the distressed:*—I. THE RULES THAT ARE HERE SUGGESTED FOR THE RELIEF OF THE POOR. 1. Contiguity. It is the poor "*in* thy land." Those living nearest us, other things being equal, have the first claim on our charity. Let it bless as it goes; work as the leaven in the meal, from particle to particle, until it gives its spirit to the mass. 2. Heartiness. "Thou shalt not harden," &c. The heart must go with the deed. 3. Liberality. "Open thine hand wide unto him." The liberality of men is not to be judged by the sums they subscribe, but by the means they possess. II. THE REASONS THAT ARE HERE SUGGESTED FOR THE RELIEF OF THE POOR. 1. Your relationship to the poor. "He is thy brother." He has the same origin, the same nature, the same great Father, the same moral relationships, as thyself. 2. The imprecation of the poor. "And he cry," &c. 3. The blessedness insured to the friend of the poor. 4. The Divine plan as to the permanent existence of the poor. (*Homilist.*) *General Gordon's benevolence:*—A poor dragoman told me that General Gordon used to come often to his house in Jerusalem when he and his wife lay ill, and that he would take any cushion or mat and put it on the floor as a seat, there being no chairs or furniture, and sit down with his Testament to read and speak to them about Christ. But his zeal did not end with such easy philanthropy. Ascertaining that a doctor's account had been incurred to the amount of three pounds, he went off secretly and paid it. Far away at Khartoum, he still thought of one whom he had thus striven to lead into the fold of Christ, and sent a letter to him which reached Jerusalem almost at the same time as the news of its writer's death. "That letter," said the poor Copt, "I would not part with for all that is in the world. General Gordon was a real Christian. He gave away all he had to the poor in Jerusalem and the villages round, and the people mourn for him as for their father." *Kindness to the poor:*—A poor sewing-girl, who went to the late Dr. John F. Gray for advice, was given a phial of medicine and told to go home and go to bed. "I can't do that, doctor," the girl replied, "for I am dependent on what I earn every day for my living." "If that's so," said Dr. Gray, "I'll change the medicine a little. Give me back that phial." He then wrapped around it a ten-dollar bill, and returning it to her, reiterated his order, "Go home and go to bed," adding, "take the medicine, cover and all." He who takes account of the cups of cold water will not forget such deeds of kindness and charity. Oh to hear Him say at the last, "Ye have done it unto Me!" *The misery of a niggardly spirit:*—In Rochester there lived a wealthy man who made a great profession of religion; he knelt at communion seasons and attended church with great regularity, but he would not give one shilling to the poor, nor to any other person. In the year 1862 I asked a trifle of money from him to relieve some families who were in great distress, but he refused, saying, "I am a poor man, sir; I am a poor man." Listen to what this thorny-ground hearer said, as he lay with glazing, dying eyes, to a clergyman who, noticing his lips move, bent down to catch the whisper, "Ninety thousand pounds, and I must leave it all behind me!" **If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren.**—*Brotherly love:*—As God had chosen all Israel, so He desired that they should love as brethren. Each was to stand by the other, and all were to be zealous for the Divine honour. Thus they would bear, in contradistinction to the heathen, the character of a people consecrated to God. But even in Israel there were rich and poor, happy and unhappy. Wherever men went the poor and afflicted would be met with. Therefore the people were exhorted to hold heart and hand open—not to harden the heart nor shut the hand. Each was to be ready to stand by his fellow to see that his brother should not suffer. I. GOD'S PEOPLE EVER HAVE SYMPATHY WITH THEIR BRETHREN. 1. If we belong to the people of God—if this were so in Israel, much more should it be among Christians—then there will be in our hearts a tender feeling toward our fellow-men—a feeling implanted by God Himself. The heart will say: "This is thy brother; help him." This results from God's love in the heart, which leads

the brethren to "love one another." 2. But this tender-heartedness can be destroyed and the heart be hardened, even among Christians, and this against the light of conscience. They often do as it is rumoured the New Zealanders did with their children. They pressed down the necks of the children under a flinty stone in order to harden them, so Christians make their hearts sometimes hard as flints through avariciousness. The avaricious heart ever thinks: "This belongs to me and to no one else, and none shall share it." 3. This is not well-pleasing to God. He sees that by covetousness men are led to destruction, and to reject His love toward them. For when men are so hard-hearted, how can they have the love of God in them? II. THE HEARTS AND HANDS OF GOD'S PEOPLE ARE OPEN TOWARD THEIR BRETHREN. 1. When this is so, then the love of God has full scope in their hearts; and thus He causes through those open hands and hearts much good to flow out into this evil world. For to His children who are ever ready to give to those who need He will give yet more, so that from their increased store they may give yet more fully to others, and that thus these also may learn to praise God. 2. Therefore he who has a kind heart and open hand will experience and receive a blessing. As he gives, so he receives. It is with such as with Cornelius: "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up before God." Thus, too, the way is made open for the reception of God's gifts both temporal and spiritual. Let us all, then, endeavour to preserve a tender heart, and not let our heart be hardened. (*J. C. Blumhardt.*) **And he cry unto the Lord against thee.**—*The cry of the poor*:—The poor cry to heaven—from the scenes of oppressive labour, from wretched hovels, from beds of straw, shivering in the cold, from the depths of starvation, they cry! Many a poor mother in these blood-freezing nights hugs to her shivering bosom her starving infant, and tries to hush its cries of cold and hunger with the wails of her own broken heart. God alone knows the cries that rise and pierce the heavens every night from this "great country"—as the cant is. Alas! alas! that from this land, overflowing with luxuries and burdened with wealth, such wails of wretchedness should rise! Against whom do they cry? Against their Maker? No! The most unobservant of them can scarcely fail to discover that He sends food enough for all. Besides, deep and ineradicably rooted in the heart of all is the sentiment that God is good—a sentiment this, which seems to me the core of conscience. Against the overreaching monopolist, the iron-hearted miser, the ruthless oppressor, the man who has the power to help but not the heart. Against all selfish men and unrighteous laws that grind the people down, they cry—and cry with unremitting vehemence too. Will He hear? Is the ear of Him who heard of old the cries of the enslaved millions in Egypt, and interposed with avenging thunders for their rescue, grown heavy? Nay, modern oppressor! Those cries shall be answered; not a solitary wail shall die away unheeded. Woe to the nation that oppresses the poor! Woe! and again, woe! when retribution comes, as come it must. (*Homilist.*) **The poor shall never cease out of the land.**—*God's ordinance of rich and poor*:—I. THE PERPETUAL EXISTENCE OF THE POOR AMONGST US. You must become reconciled to your poverty. And if you would become really reconciled to it do not regard it as something inflicted by the misgovernment or the management of your fellow-men. Put it before you in the light this text puts it, as God's ordinance and God's will concerning you; as something that rulers and governors can no more drive out of the world than they can drive midnight out of it, or sickness, or pain, or sorrow. Poverty is to be alleviated, and it is to be removed if honest industry will remove it; but if not so, it is to be welcomed and borne. I could tell you where it often comes from. From the poor man's own idleness, improvidence, intemperance, and waste; from the foolish indulgence of children; from the still more criminal indulgence of self. But even then it is from God; it is God's way of showing displeasure against these things. And when it comes not from these things, where does it come from? Often from a love that neither you nor I, nor any angel above us, can measure. The same love that provided a Saviour and built a heaven for sinners now sends poverty often to sinners, to turn them to that Saviour and heaven. II. OUR DUTY TOWARDS THE POOR. Now if we looked only at the declaration in the first part of the text, and were disposed to reason on it, we might say, Be our duty to the poor what it may, we must not interfere with their poverty; it is God's will they should be poor, and we must not interfere with His will. This would be like saying, God has sent sickness amongst us, and we must not make use of any means to cure or relieve it; or, He has made the winter, and we will do nothing to mitigate the rigour of it; or, He has created the dark-

ness, and it is wrong to have lights in our dwelling to enlighten it. Many of what we call the evils of our condition are designed of God to bring into lawful and healthy action the powers of man's mind and the feelings of man's heart, and this evil of poverty among the number. "The poor shall never cease out of the land"; that is My will, says God. "Therefore I command thee"—what? to let the needy alone in their poverty? No; I have placed them in the land to call forth and exercise thy bounty. The painful work is Mine—I have ordained poverty; the pleasant work shall be thine—thou shalt relieve it. "Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor and to thy needy in thy land." It is a touching circumstance that not only is the general duty of what we call charity to the poor enjoined in Scripture, but so great is the interest God takes in it that the measure and manner of it are strongly enjoined. Here we are told, in the first place, that it must be liberal. "Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother." And it must be extensive charity; that is, as extensive as we can make it. "I will not give my money," we sometimes say, "to this man or that; he has no claim on me; I must keep the little I have to spare for those who have claims on me." But look again, "Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother"—to "thy brother" first, to those who from relationship or from some other cause seem to have claims on thee; but not to "thy brother" only, "to thy poor and to thy needy in thy land." The words are multiplied; to those who have no claims whatever on thee but their poverty and their need. And it must be also a cheerful charity. III. We may go on now to THE MOTIVES BY WHICH WE ARE URGED TO THE EXERCISE OF THIS GRACE. For these, some of you may be ready to say, I must turn to the Gospel. But no, the God of the Gospel is the God of the law also, the God of the Christian Church was the God of the ancient Church, and there is no motive urged now on us in these Gospel days which was not urged in substance on the Jews in the days of old. 1. For instance, to begin, our own mercies are made use of under the Gospel to impel us to show mercy to others. "Freely ye have received," our Lord says, "freely give." Now look at this chapter. "Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor and to thy needy"—why? "For the Lord thy God," the sixth verse says, is opening His hand wide unto thee; He "is blessing thee," and blessing thee as abundantly as He said He would; "the Lord thy God blesseth thee as He promised thee." 2. But again, the special love of God to the poor is another reason why our hands should be opened to them. Of all the books that were ever written, no book manifests such care for the poor as the Bible. This has often been noticed by those who have closely studied this book, and many others with it, as one of the many internal evidences of its Divine original. But turn to the tenth chapter of the part of it now before us, the nineteenth verse. "Love ye therefore the stranger," says God. And why? Ye yourselves, He adds, "were strangers in the land of Egypt." But this is not the only reason; read what goes before. The Lord Himself "loveth the stranger." "The Lord loveth the stranger," "love ye therefore the stranger," says God. And this applies with much greater force to the widow and fatherless. If natural feeling, as we call it—if our own parental feelings—do not incline us to open our hand to them, let the feelings of God towards them incline us to do so. I love the fatherless, He says; let us, for His sake, because He loves them, love them also. 3. But here is a third motive pressed on you; this "opening of our hand" to the poor will lead the Lord to open His hand to us. "For this thing," we read in the verse before the text—"for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto." This is the legal promise, you may say. And true, it is; but the Lord is not less bountiful or less generous under the Gospel than under the law. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *Duty of the Church towards the poor*:—Consider—I. That poverty is a real evil which, without any impeachment of the goodness or wisdom of providence, the constitution of the world actually admits. II. That providential appointment of this evil in subservience to the general good, brings a particular obligation upon men in civilised society to concur for the immediate extinction of the evil wherever it appears. (*Bp. Horsley.*) *Poverty no accident*:—"The poor shall never cease out of the land." That is a remark which is not understood. Poverty is not an accident; there is a moral mystery connected with poverty which has never yet been found out. The sick-chamber makes the house, the infirm member of the family rules its tenderest thinking. Poverty has a great function to work out in the social scheme, but whilst we admit this we must not take the permanence of poverty as an argument for neglect; it is an argument for solicitude, it is an appeal to benevolence, it is an opportunity to soften the heart and

cultivate the highest graces of the soul. It is perfectly true that the bulk of poor people may have brought their poverty upon themselves, but who are we that we should make rough speeches about them? What have we brought upon ourselves? If we are more respectable than others, it is still the respectability of thieves and liars and selfish plotters. We, who are apparently more industrious and virtuous and regardful, are not made of different clay, and are not animated by a different blood. It is perfectly true that a thousand people may have brought to-day's poverty upon themselves, and they will have to suffer for it; but beyond all these accidents or incidents there is the solemn fact that poverty is a permanent quantity, for moral reasons which appeal to the higher instincts of the social commonwealth. We have that we may give, we are strong that we may support the weak, we are wise that we may teach the ignorant. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." No man has the slightest occasion or reason for reproaching any other man, except in relation to the immediate circumstance. If the assize were on a larger scale, and we were all involved in the scrutiny, the issue would be this, "There is none righteous, no, not one." (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Open thine hand wide unto thy brother.—*The duty of Christian charity*:—I. IT IS DUE TO THE CONSTITUTION OF SOCIETY. "The poor always ye have with you." We shall perhaps think correctly on the subject if we admit as the will of God that in every state of society there shall be poor, and that a provision for the production of this fact is laid in the gifts of His providence, in the constitution of men, and in the scheme of His moral government. II. CHARITY IS DUE TO OURSELVES. It is due to ourselves, as we would wish with uprightness to discharge the duties of that station in which we are placed. To administer relief to the poor is graciously connected with our present comfort and our future well-being. The very act of charity is accompanied with the most refined complacency; it is answering that sympathy which is born in the heart of every man, and which, unless stifled by unnatural discipline, calls loudly for gratification. They are happy who are the objects of your bounty, but ye who have experienced it can tell that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Connected with this is that blessing over our worldly concerns "which maketh rich, and to which is added no sorrow." And let it be remembered, that prosperity is but for a season; now, therefore, it is time to lay up a store of good deeds, the remembrance of which shall be the best support when misfortune overtakes the prosperous. Let it be remembered yet again that what possessions men have are not their own, but are the property of their Master, who hath committed it to their stewardship. All their opportunities, and all their means of doing good, must be accounted for. III. IT IS DUE TO RELIGION—to a religion which is in its origin, its effects, its principle, and its precepts a system of charity; a religion which, originating in the love of God, proposes to restore to happiness and dignity those who are "poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked." They to whom mercy is shown should be merciful. This is what Christianity requires, nay, what it affirms to be the amount and the criterion of a genuine profession. IV. IT IS DUE TO THE POOR. As a something voluntary is implied in the idea of charity, it may sound paradoxical to speak of the rights of the poor on the charity of the rich. But the incongruity is only in sound, for it is an acknowledged maxim of civil economy that the poor (the industrious poor, of whom only I now speak) have an absolute right to be supported by the State, whose agriculture, commerce, and manufactures have benefited by their exertions. Further, the poor have a right as brethren, and this is a right which the heart of a Christian cannot deny. V. IT IS DUE TO THE AGE IN WHICH WE LIVE—an age characterised for beneficence, an age distinguished above all others for the magnitude of its political events, for the advancement of science, for the general diffusion of literature, and more especially for a spirit that has amalgamated all classes of society, the most opposite ranks and professions, into one mass, and stamped the whole with benevolence. (*A. Waugh, M.A.*) *The best mode of charity*:—It is of importance not only that we should do good, but that we should do it in the best manner. A little judgment and a little reflection added to the gift does not merely enhance the value, but often gives to it the only value which it possesses, and even prevents that mischief of which thoughtless benevolence is sometimes the cause. 1. Mankind can never be too strongly or too frequently cautioned against self-deception. If a state of vice be a state of misery, a state of vice of which we are ignorant is doubly so, from the increased probability of its duration. It is surprising how many men are cheated by flighty sentiments of humanity into a belief that they are humane, how

frequently charitable words are mistaken for charitable deeds, and a beautiful picture of misery for an effectual relief of it. 2. Another important point in the administration of charity is a proper choice of the objects we relieve. To give promiscuously is better, perhaps, than not to give at all, but instead of risking the chance of encouraging imposture, discover some worthy family struggling up against the world, a widow with her helpless children, old people incapable of labour, or orphans destitute of protection and advice; suppose you were gradually to attach yourselves to such real objects of compassion, to learn their wants, to stimulate their industry, and to correct their vices; surely these two species of charity are not to be compared together in the utility or in the extent of their effects, in the benevolence they evince or in the merits they confer. 3. The true reason why this species of charity is so rarely practised is that we are afraid of imposing such a severe task upon our indolence, though, in truth, all these kinds of difficulties are extremely overrated. When once we have made ourselves acquainted with a poor family, and got into a regular train of seeing them at intervals, the trouble is hardly felt and the time scarcely missed; and if it is missed, ought it to be missed? 4. These charitable visits to the poor, which I have endeavoured to inculcate, are of importance, not only because they prevent imposture by making you certain of the misery which you relieve, but because they produce an appeal to the senses which is highly favourable to the cultivation of charity. He who only knows the misfortunes of mankind at second hand and by description has but a faint idea of what is really suffered in the world. We feel, it may be said, the eloquence of description, but what is all the eloquence of art to that mighty and original eloquence with which nature pleads her cause; to the eloquence of paleness and of hunger; to the eloquence of sickness and of wounds; to the eloquence of extreme old age, of helpless infancy, of friendless want! What pleadings so powerful as the wretched hovels of the poor, and the whole system of their comfortless economy! 5. You are not, I hope, of opinion that these kinds of cares devolve upon the clergy alone, as the necessary labours of their profession, but upon every one whose faith teaches and whose fortune enables him to be humane. 6. Nor let it be imagined that the duties which I have pointed out are much less imperative because the law has taken to itself the protection of the poor; the law must hold out a scanty relief, or it would encourage more misery than it relieved: the law cannot distinguish between the poverty of idleness and the poverty of misfortune; the law degrades those whom it relieves, and many prefer wretchedness to public aid; do not, therefore, spare yourselves from a belief that the poor are well taken care of by the civil power, and that individual interference is superfluous. Many die in secret,—they perish and are forgotten. 7. Remember that every charity is short-lived and inefficacious which flows from any other motive than the right. There is a charity which originates from the romantic fiction of humble virtue and innocence in distress, but this will be soon disgusted by low artifice and scared by brutal vice. The charity which proceeds from ostentation can exist no longer than when its motives remain undetected. There is a charity which is meant to excite the feelings of gratitude, but this will meet with its termination in disappointment. That charity alone endures which flows from a sense of duty and a hope in God. This is the charity that treads in secret those paths of misery from which all but the lowest of human wretches have fled; this is that charity which no labour can weary, no ingratitude detach, no horror disgust; that toils, that pardons, that suffers, that is seen by no man, and honoured by no man, but, like the great laws of nature, does the work of God in silence, and looks to future and better worlds for its reward. (*Sydney Smith, M.A.*)

Vers. 12–18. **Remember that thou wast a bondman.**—*Remember*:—In an autobiography of William Jay we read that on one occasion he called to see the famous Mr. John Newton at Olney, and he observed that over the desk at which he was accustomed to compose his sermons he had written up in very large letters the following words: "Remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee." To my mind this story invests the text with considerable interest; it was most fitting that such a remarkable convert as he should dwell upon such a theme, and place such a text conspicuously before his own eyes. Might it not with great propriety be placed in a similar position by each one of us? Mr. Newton lived and acted under the influence of the memory which the text commands, as was seen that very morning in his conversation with

Mr. Jay. "Sir," said Mr. Newton, "I am glad to see you, for I have a letter just come from Bath, and you can perhaps assist me in the answer to it. Do you know anything of So-and-so (mentioning the name)?" Mr. Jay replied that the man was an awful character, had once been a hearer of the Gospel, but had become a leader in every vice. "But, sir," said Mr. Newton, "he writes very penitently; and who can tell? Perhaps a change may have come over him." "Well," said Mr. Jay, "I can only say that if ever he should be converted I should despair of no one." "And I," said Mr. Newton, "never have despaired of anybody since I was converted myself." So, you see, as he thought of this poor sinner at Bath he was remembering that he also was a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord his God had redeemed him; and why should not the same redemption reach even to this notorious transgressor and save him? The memory of his own gracious change of heart and life gave him tenderness in dealing with the erring, and hopefulness with regard to their restoration. I. First let us consider OUR BONDAGE. It was exceedingly like the bondage of the children of Israel in Egypt. 1. First, when we were unregenerate, and sold under sin, we were enslaved to a mighty power against which we could not contend. If man had been capable of his own redemption there would never have descended from heaven the Divine Redeemer; but because the bondage was all too dire for man to set himself free, therefore the eternal Son of God came hither that He might save His people from their sins. The prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, held us beneath his iron sway, and sin exercised a tyrannical dominion over us, from which we could not break. 2. Our slavery had so degraded us that we had no heart to desire an escape. One of the worst points of slavery is, that it frequently degrades men into contentment with their condition. That would be thought by some to be a benefit, but it is a giant evil, for a man has no right to be satisfied in slavery. Such contentment is an ensign of debased manhood. 3. Remember, again, that you were in a bondage similar to that of Egypt, for while in that condition you toiled hard and found that all the service wherein Satan made you to serve was with rigour. The Israelites built treasure cities for Pharaoh, and they are supposed to have erected some of the pyramids; but their wage was very small, and their taskmasters were brutal. Could not many a sinner tell of horrible nights and woeful mornings, when under the power of his passions? Who hath woe? who hath redness of the eyes? who is filled with dread of death? who flees when no man pursueth? Of all tyrants, sin and Satan are the most cruel. If men were but in their senses, drunkenness, gambling, gluttony, wantonness, and many other vices would be rather punishments than pleasures, and yet they abide in them. 4. There was a time when, in addition to our hard toil, our bondage brought us misery. Do you not remember when you dared not think a day's conduct over for the life of you? I recollect also when a sense of sin came over me; and then, indeed, my life was made bitter with hard bondage. 5. All this while our enemy was aiming at our destruction. This was what Pharaoh was driving at with Israel; he intended to cut off the nation by severe tasks, or at least to reduce its strength. As his first policy did not succeed, he set about to destroy the male children; and even so Satan, when he has men under his power, labours by all means utterly to destroy them; for nothing short of this will satisfy him. Every hopeful thought he would drown in the river of despair, lest by any means the man should shake off his yoke. The total overthrow of the soul of man is the aim of the great enemy. What a mercy to have been redeemed out of the hand of the enemy! 6. And like Israel in Egypt, we were in the hands of a power that would not let us go. Your sins captivated you. Then came the reading of the Scriptures, or a mother's exhortation, or another earnest sermon, and again the voice was heard, "Thus saith the Lord, let My people go." You began to feel uneasy in your condition, and to venture somewhat into the border country, but you could not escape, the iron had entered into your soul, your heart was captive. Blessed was the day when the strong man armed that kept you as a man keeps his house was overcome by a stronger than he and cast out for ever. Then Jesus took possession of your nature, never to leave it, but to hold His tenancy world without end. We were bondmen in Egypt, but the Lord our God redeemed us, and let His name be praised. II. The blessed fact of OUR REDEMPTION: "The Lord thy God redeemed thee." Here again there is a parallel. 1. He redeemed us first by price. Israel in Egypt was an unransomed nation. God claimed of that nation the firstborn to be His. That portion had been His claim from the first, and the law was afterwards carried out by the setting apart of the Levitical tribe to take the place

of the firstborn; but Israel in Egypt had never set apart its firstborn at all, and was therefore an unredeemed people. How was all that indebtedness to be made up? The nation must be redeemed by a price, and that price was set forth by the symbol of a lamb which was killed, and roasted, and eaten, while the blood was smeared upon the lintel and the two side-posts. You and I have been redeemed with blood (Rev. v. 9; 1 Pet. i. 18). 2. But there would not have been a coming out of Egypt unless there had been a display of power as well as a payment of price, for with a high hand and an outstretched arm the Lord brought forth His people. Greater than Moses' rod was Christ's pierced hand. Our tyrant hath no more power to hold us in chains, for Christ hath vanquished him for ever. 3. Another form of redemption was also seen by Israel, namely, in the power exerted over themselves. I think sufficient stress has never been laid upon this. That they should have been willing to come out of Egypt was no small thing,—universally willing, so that not a single person remained behind. Marvellous display of power this; and so we will tell it to the praise of God this day, that He made us willing to come out of the Egypt of our sin to which we were rooted; and making us willing, He made us able too; the power of the Spirit came upon us and the might of His grace overshadowed us, and we did arise and come to our Father. Let grace have all the glory. Shall I need to press upon you, then, to let your minds fly back to the time when you realised your redemption, and came up out of the land of Egypt? (1) It was Divine interposition. "The Lord thy God redeemed thee." (2) And it was personally experienced, for "The Lord thy God redeemed thee." It was a matter of clear consciousness to your own soul. Thou wast a bondman; thou didst know it and feel it: the Lord thy God redeemed thee, and thou didst know it and feel that also. III. THE INFLUENCE WHICH THIS DOUBLE MEMORY OUGHT TO HAVE UPON YOU. 1. We should naturally conclude, without any reference to Scripture, that if a Christian man kept always in mind his former and his present state it would render him humble. Thou wouldst have been in hell now if it had not been for sovereign grace; or if not there, perhaps thou wouldst have been among drunkards and swearers, and lewd men and women, or at least among the proud, self-righteous Pharisees. When thou art honoured of the Lord and happy in the full assurance of faith, still remember that thou wast a bondman, and walk humbly with thy God. 2. In the next place, be grateful. If you have not all the temporal mercies that you would desire, yet you have received the choicest of all mercies, liberty through Jesus Christ, therefore be cheerful, happy, and thankful. 3. Being grateful, be patient too. If you are suffering, or if sometimes your spirits are cast down, or if you are poor and despised, yet say to yourself, "Why should I complain? My lot may seem hard, yet it is nothing in comparison with what it would have been if I had been left a prisoner in the land of Egypt. Thank God, I am no longer in bondage to my sins." 4. Next, be hopeful. What may you not yet become? "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." You were a bondman, but grace has set you free. Who knows what the Lord may yet make of you? 5. Then be zealous. Here earnestness should find both fire and fuel; we were bondmen, but the Lord has redeemed us. What, then, can be too hard for us to undertake for His sake? John Newton persisted in preaching even when he was really incapable of it, for he said, "What, shall the old African blasphemer leave off preaching Jesus Christ while there is breath in his body? No, never." He felt that he must continue to bear testimony, for our text was always before him, "Remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee." 6. But now follow me while I show you the Lord's own use of this remembrance; and the first text I shall quote will be found in chap. v. 14. You were a bondman. What would you have given for rest then? Now that the Lord has given you this hallowed day of rest, guard it sacredly. Rest in the Lord Jesus yourself, but endeavour to bring all your family into the same peace, "that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou." In chap. vii. we have another use of this remembrance. Here the chosen people are commanded to keep separate from the nations. They were not to intermarry with the Canaanites, nor make alliances with them. Israel was to be separated, even as Moses said, "thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God." And the reason he gives in the eighth verse is this: "the Lord redeemed thee out of the house of bondmen." Ah, if we are redeemed from among men, then as the specially blood-bought ones we are under solemn obligations to come out from the world and to be separate from it. In the eighth chapter redemption

is used as an argument for obedience, and they are exhorted not to forget the laws and statutes of the Lord, and above all warned lest in the midst of prosperity their heart should be lifted up so as to forget the Lord their God, who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. The same argument runs through the eleventh chapter, and is a very clear one. We ought to render glad obedience to Him who has wrought us so great a deliverance. We find in the thirteenth chapter that the redemption from bondage is used as an argument for loyal attachment to the one and only God. Our own text is set in the following connection. If a man entered into forced servitude, or came under any bonds to his fellow-man among the Jews, he could only be so held for six years, and on the seventh he was to go free. The Lord's people should be considerate of those who are in their employment. The recollection of their own bondage should make them tender and kind to those who are in subservience to themselves, and never should a Christian man be ungenerous, illiberal, severe, churlish with his servant, or with any who are dependent upon him. There should be in a man redeemed with the blood of Christ something like nobility of soul and benevolence to his fellow-men, and so even this stern book of law teaches us. I remind you that they were bound to keep the Passover because of their deliverance from Egypt as we find in the sixteenth chapter at the first verse. So let us also take heed unto ourselves that we keep all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly. Let us keep the ordinances as they were delivered unto us, and neither alter nor misplace them. Again, in the sixteenth chapter, verses 10 to 12, you have the great redemption used as an argument for liberality towards the cause of God: they were to give unto the Lord rejoicingly of that which the Lord had given to them. "Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He hath given thee"; and that because of the twelfth verse, "Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt: and thou shalt observe and do these statutes." In the twenty-sixth chapter the same teaching is reduced to a set form, for they were there commanded to bring each one a basket of first fruits and offer it unto the Lord, saying, "The Lord brought us forth out of Egypt," &c. Last of all, in the twenty-fourth chapter there remains one more lesson. We are there exhorted to be careful concerning the fatherless and the widow (chap. xxiv. 17). A generous spirit was to be exhibited towards the poor. Be ye thoughtful of all your fellow-men. You that have been redeemed with price, be ye tender-hearted, full of compassion, putting on bowels of mercy. In spiritual things take care that you never rake the corners of your fields. Do not rob the Gospel of its sweetness. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The release of bond-servants:*—In this ordinance we may see—I. AN ENCOURAGING EMBLEM. It represents—1. The redemption which God vouchsafes to His people. 2. The mercy which He exercises towards His redeemed. II. AN INSTRUCTIVE LESSON. We are to regard God's mercies as—1. A pattern for our imitation. 2. A notice for our exertion. (*C. Simeon, M.A.*)

Ver. 20. **Eat it before the Lord thy God year by year.**—*Memorial days:*—"Year by year." It might seem at first sight, antecedent to experience, a surprising thing that the mere mechanical movement of the earth through the heavens should have any special relationship to man's mind and spirit. Yet we know that it has. Our memory associates special experiences with certain seasons and days. As the season or day returns the event is recalled, and sometimes the impressions awakened by it have, apparently, all their original sharpness. So, in this regard, the course of the heavens comes to be, as it were, a colossal memorandum-book. 1. There is a sure evidence of the event seen in the fact of its commemoration. 2. We are taught how comparatively rare are these conspicuous and startling events which punctuate our public and private life. It is well for the sanity of the human mind that life is not filled with startling events. It would be like substituting pyrotechnics for the moonlight, or the stars for the silent skies. It is in the ordinary quiet on-going of life that we find healthfulness of heart. 3. Life is always serious. For we are ever treading on the edge of something unexpected, it may be something terrible. Let us walk circumspectly, and realise that we may always dwell under the shield of God's providence and under the light of His promises. 4. We see the innate superiority of mind to all temporary events. You recall perhaps your wedding day, the hour, the place, the guests, the joy, through a score of years, a half century ago. Intervals of time fade from view in presence of this supreme experience, just as you look from one lofty peak to

another and think not of field, valley, and river between. You see those shining points of life when you were at twenty, forty, or sixty years of age, and lesser experiences are hidden. The mind itself is superior to mere measurements of time, and so is constituted for immortality; is akin to Him to whom a thousand years are but as yesterday. 5. How deep in us is the element of affection which has its expression in the anniversary or festival. As we review the past our memory clings to those experiences in which the heart has a part, those which have touched its springs of joy and grief. We properly cultivate intellectual strength, power of will and endurance, but, after all, it is love that is supreme. Love brings us nearer Him who is perfect love. 6. A sweet illustration of the grace of God in the Gospel is furnished in the fact, with which every believer is familiar, that in these remembered events sorrow loses its sting and joy comes to be even more full in reminiscence than it was at first. Our sorrow only makes more glorious the preciousness and amplitude of Divine grace and sympathy, just as the glory of the sun, shot through a dark cloud, illumines and transfigures it by its splendour and its peace. 7. What a rest it is to the aged to recall the past when they are released from life's active and strenuous struggles! They are like ships home from long voyages, moored in a quiet harbour, where the memory of storms that are past only enhances the serenity and peace enjoyed. 8. Whatever measurements may hereafter be had as to time and eternity in our immortal life, one thing is certain: we will keep one point in vivid remembrance—that of our entrance into life, when we first knew the joys eternal. (*R. S. Storrs, D.D.*)

CHAPTER XVI.

VERS. 1-8. **Keep the Passover.**—*The yearly festivals:*—The darker side of the Jewish religion was more than relieved by its outlets for joy. It identified in a marvellous manner the holy-day and the holiday (see the two words translated "feast" in Lev. xxiii., meaning the one "holy convocation," the other "festival"), showing that the people with deepest religious feelings are, after all, the happiest people. The three great yearly feasts were—1. The Passover, in the middle of Abib (nearly our April); 2. Seven weeks after, Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks; and 3. The Feast of Tabernacles, or of Ingathering, in the end of autumn (October). Notice of all three—I. THEIR ORIGIN. They have their root in the weekly Sabbath. The Sabbath itself is the first of the feasts (Lev. xxiii. 2, 3), in which respect it also is a joyful day (Psa. cxviii. 24; Isa. lvi. 7, lviii. 14). And the great feasts are framed upon its model. They are ruled by the sabbatical number, seven. They begin and generally end on the seventh day. Two of them last for seven days each, and there are seven days of "holy convocation" in the year. Pentecost takes place seven weeks—a sabbath of weeks—after the Passover. The seventh month is specially distinguished (vers. 23-36). Moreover, every seventh year is of the nature of a Sabbath, and seven times seven years bring the Jubilee. Smaller festivals formed connecting links between the Sabbath and the yearly feasts. There was the Feast of Months, distinguishing the first Sabbath of each month with special sacrifices (Numb. xxviii. 11), and with blowing of trumpets (Numb. x. 10), which trumpets were used again on the first day of the seventh month—the "Feast of Trumpets" (Lev. xxiii. 24, 25). Our Sabbaths, like those of the Jews, form the backbone and safeguard of our own national festivities. II. THEIR PURPOSE. They accomplished on a larger scale what was already aimed at by the weekly Sabbath. 1. They called away from the round of yearly duty to the public recognition of God. In spring and summer and autumn they presented anew to the people's consciousness, through the most impressive vehicle of national festivals, their covenant relation to Jehovah. 2. They had a most important educational function. They were a compendium in dramatic form of early Israelitish history, "What mean ye by this service?" (Exod. xii. 26.) Moreover, they gave opportunity for special religious instruction. (Josiah's Passover, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 29ff.; and Ezra's Feast of Tabernacles, Neh. viii.) 3. They subserved important ends not directly religious. They promoted the national unity of the Israelites, stimulating their patriotism. (See the action of Jeroboam, 1 Kings xii. 26.) III. THEIR REGULATIONS. 1. The males from all parts of the country must assemble to the three feasts (Deut. xvi. 16);

for which purpose all ordinary labour ceases. 2. The worshippers are to bring contributions (Deut. xvi. 16, 17), both for the necessary sacrifices of themselves and others, and for hospitality (Neh. viii. 10). 3. The people are to rejoice in their feasts. So Lev. xxiii. 40 commands for the Feast of Tabernacles, and Deut. xvi. 11, 15 for the Feasts of Pentecost and Tabernacles. Ezra tells of the joy at the Feast of the Passover (Ezra vi. 22); and Nehemiah of the "very great gladness" at the Feast of Tabernacles (Neh. viii. 17). But where is happiness to be found if not in the recognition of God's relation to us? Special protection was promised during the celebration of the feasts. There are frequent promises that the fruits of the earth will not suffer, as Deut. xvi. 15. And it was specially promised that the absence of its defenders would not expose the country to invasion (Exod. xxxiv. 24). In short, Israel's compliance with God's will here as everywhere was to be to the advantage even of his worldly prosperity. A truth for all times and all peoples (Psa. i. 3, xcii. 13-15). (*W. Roberts, M.A.*) *The yearly festivals*:—Looking to these festivals separately, we find that a threefold meaning attaches to each of them—1. A present meaning in nature; 2. A retrospective meaning in history; and 3. A prospective meaning in grace. Moreover, in each of these three respects the three feasts stand in progressive order: the Passover, the first at once in nature, history, and grace; the Pentecost, in all three respects the second or intermediate; and the Tabernacles, in all three respects the consummation of what has gone before. I. THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER, occurring about the beginning of April. 1. Its natural meaning was necessarily an afterthought or addition of the wilderness legislation. Looking forward to the settlement in Canaan, and placed at early harvest, it marked the beginning of a people's enrichment in the fruits of the earth, and recognised in that the gift of a covenant God. Its place was "when thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn" (Deut. xvi. 9). And hence the special provisions of Lev. xxiii. 10-14. 2. What was first in nature was also first in history. The Passover night marked the beginning of Israel's national life. The month in which it occurred was henceforth to be the first of the year (Exod. xii. 2), and to be permanently observed (Exod. xii. 14; Deut. xvi. 1). Some modifications necessarily arose in the permanent observance of the Passover; the blood was now to be sprinkled on the altar; and the lamb was to be slain in the one place of sacrifice (Deut. xvi. 5-7; 2 Chron. xxx. 15, 16). The eating with unleavened bread and bitter herbs remained, as pointing to—3. The prospective and spiritual reference of the Passover. The observance of the Passover touched closely the spiritual welfare of the Israelites. It distinguished the reigns of Josiah and Hezekiah and the return of the Jews from captivity. And here we have the third and greatest beginning, the beginning of the kingdom of God, in the world's deliverance from sin. And we must deal with Christ as the Jews with the Paschal Lamb, taking Him—"eating" Him, as He Himself puts it—in His entireness as a Saviour, with the bitter herbs of contrition and the unleavened bread of a sincere obedience. II. THE FEAST OF PENTECOST—called also the Feast of Weeks, inasmuch as seven weeks were to be reckoned between Passover and Pentecost. And this distance of a Sabbath of weeks rules in all three meanings of this feast. 1. Its natural reference was to the completion of the harvest. It was the "Feast of harvest." Now, two loaves baked of the first-fruits are to be waved before the Lord, with accompanying offerings (Lev. xxiii. 17-20). In addition to which, a free-will offering, in recognition of God's blessing, is to be brought, and the people are called on specially to rejoice (Deut. xvi. 10, 11). 2. Its historical reference is a matter of inference. The seven weeks between Passover and Pentecost are paralleled by the seven weeks actually occurring between the deliverance from Egypt and the giving of the law from Sinai; and as the Passover commemorates the first, it is reasonable to infer that Pentecost commemorates the second. Moreover, the fulfilment which in nature Pentecost gives to the promise of the Passover is paralleled by the fulfilment which the Sinaitic law actually gave to the promise of the Exodus. For God's first object and promise was to meet His people and reveal Himself to them in the wilderness. And this connection becomes greatly more remarkable when we notice —3. The prospective meaning of this feast in the realm of grace. Under the Christian dispensation Pentecost has become even more illustrious than the Passover. Again God numbered to Himself seven weeks, and signalised Pentecost by the gift of the Spirit. And what the Pentecost was to the Passover, that the gift of the Spirit is to the atonement of Christ. Look at the natural meaning of the two feasts. In the sheaf of corn the Passover furnished the material for food; in the wave loaves Pentecost presented God's gift in the shape in which it could be

used for food. So the Passover atonement furnishes a material for salvation which becomes available only through the gift of the Spirit. Or look at the historical meaning of the feasts: the Passover atonement came to effect spiritually and for the world what the Paschal Lamb effected for the Jewish nation. And the Holy Spirit came to do for the dead law what Christ in His atonement did for the Paschal Lamb. He came to write universally on men's hearts what of old had been written for the Israelites on stone (Heb. viii. 8, 10; 2 Cor. iii. 3). As the end of harvest was the fruition of its beginning, and the law the fruition of the exodus, so the pentecostal Spirit was the fruition of the atonement. Should not we who live under the dispensation of the Spirit maintain our pentecostal joy? III. THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES, in the seventh month, or our October—called also the Feast of Ingathering. 1. Its natural meaning. It came after the harvest of the vineyards and oliveyards. It marked the close of the year's labours and their cumulative results, and was therefore the most joyous of the feasts (Lev. xxiii. 40; Deut. xvi. 14); but—2. The historical meaning of the feast gives us deeper insight into its joy. There is a special provision made in view of the coming settlement in Canaan, and made in order that the hardships of the wilderness may be kept fresh in the people's memory (Lev. xxiii. 40, 42, 43). That memorial was to emphasise God's goodness in the protection of the fathers and in the settlement of their posterity. The Feast of Tabernacles therefore marked the consummation of God's covenant, and called for highest gratitude and joy. Specially interesting is the celebration of this feast by the Jews on their return from Babylon, where God's goodness in bringing their forefathers through the wilderness had been a second time, and no less wondrously, manifested to them (Neh. viii. 13–17; Psa. cxxvi.). But—3. The fullest meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles is in the kingdom of grace. The wonder of God's goodness finds last and highest manifestation in the final home-bringing of His universal Church. The anti-type is the ingathering of God's good grain into the heavenly garner. Canaan after the wilderness, Jerusalem after Babylon, are paralleled and fulfilled in the multitude that have come out of great tribulation. (*Walter Roberts, M.A.*) *Jewish commemorative feasts*:—The Scriptures record two chief outbursts of miraculous power: one at the foundation of the Hebrew commonwealth at the exodus from Egypt, and one at the time of Christ's appearing and the foundation of Christianity. It is a matter of infinite importance to every man to ascertain whether these great miracles of the exodus and of Christ's first advent were really wrought. I. THE FACTS OF THE CASE ARE THESE: (1) The Hebrew people and the ancient Hebrew books now exist, and they throw light on one another. (2) Wherever the Jewish people exist they celebrate in the spring the festival of the Passover, which they universally regard as a historical memorial of the deliverance of their forefathers from Egypt, about fourteen hundred years before Christ, by the supernatural intervention of God the Almighty. II. In the same manner, the feast of Pentecost, or the festival of the wheat-harvest, fifty days after the Passover, came to be regarded as A MEMORIAL OF THE GIVING OF THE LAW ON MOUNT SINAI on the fiftieth day after the Exodus. In like manner, the autumnal festival of Succoth, or Booths, called "The Feast of Tabernacles," is now celebrated just as universally as the Passover in the spring, as a memorial of the children of Israel dwelling in huts or booths. These festivals and commemorations have been celebrated now for more than three thousand years. III. The rule is that NATIONAL CELEBRATIONS AND PUBLIC MONUMENTS MAINTAIN THE REMEMBRANCE OF REAL EVENTS IN PAST AGES. It may be objected that if Athens, with all its wisdom, could celebrate the fictitious history of Minerva, why may we not believe that the Jews were capable of commemorating things that happened only in the imagination of later writers and poets? To this we answer: (1) that even in the festivals of mythology there has been a strange interweaving of historical truth and a constant tendency to give this element prominence in the lapse of time; (2) that the Jews were utterly destitute of the dramatic imagination of the Greeks: to them the origination of a myth like that of the Exodus, if it were a myth, would be an uncongenial exercise, its adoption as history an impossibility. (*E. White.*) *Conditions of worship*:—The time is specified, and the reason is given. Every month has a memory, every day has a story, every night has a star all its own. Selected instances help us to ascertain general principles. Acting upon these instances, we become familiar with their spirit and moral genius, so much so that we begin to ask, are there not other memorable events? Are there not other times of deliverance? Have we been brought out of Egypt only? Are not all the days

storied with providential love? If God is so careful about time, has He any regard for place? (Vers. 5, 6.) This is morally consistent with God's claim for gracious recollection of definite times. May we not slay the Passover where we please? Certainly not. May we not insulate ourselves, and upon little church appointments of our own creation carry out the ceremony of our worship? Certainly not. We should strive to move in the direction at least of unity, commonwealth, fellowship, solidarity. The sacrifice is the same, the man who offers it is the same; but because it is not offered at the place which God has chosen the sacrifice and the sacrificer go for nothing. That is in harmony with all the social arrangements which experience has approved. There are fit places for all things, as well as fit times. The time having been fixed and the place determined, what remains? (Ver. 10.) Here is the beginning of another kind of liberty. A wonderful word occurs in this verse: "a freewill offering." How wonderfully God educates the human race: He will insist upon definite claims and obligations being answered, and yet He will also give opportunity for freewill action, as if He had said,—Now we shall see what you will do when left to yourselves; the law no longer presses you: the great hand is lifted, and for the time being you shall do in this matter as it may please your own mind and heart. That is an element in the Divine education of the human race. God gives us opportunities of showing ourselves to ourselves. He only would count the gift: no one should know what had been done: the sweet transaction should lie between the one soul and the living Lord. Another singular word occurs in this tenth verse:—"a tribute." The literal meaning is that the gift is to be proportional. It would have been easy to throw a dole to the Lord that had no reference whatever to what was left behind: that would be a broad, easily-opened gate to heaven; but such is not the condition stated in the bond. Even the freewill offering is to be tributary: it is to be based upon the original substance, the actual property, whatever is in the hand as momentary possession. Thus, sacrifice is to be calculated; worship is to be the result of forethought; nothing is to be done of mere constraint or as consultative of ease and indulgence. A word of taxation touches the very poetry and pathos of oblation. "And thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God," &c. (ver. 11). This gives us the joyous aspect of religion. An ancient Jewish annotator has made a beautiful remark upon this verse, to the effect that "thy four, O Israel, and My four shall rejoice together." "Thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant"—let them rejoice, let them be glad in response to music, and let them call for more music to express their ever-increasing joy; but God's four must be there also—the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow; they represent the Divine name as authority for admission to the feast. The religious servant, the poor stranger, the orphan, and the widow—they sit down, in seats divinely claimed for them, at the festive board. So the company shall be representative:—son, daughter, manservant, maidservant; priest, stranger, orphan, widow;—this is the typical company sitting down at the symbolical feast. God will not have our small house-parties, made up of people of one class, equally well-dressed and accosting one another in the language of equality; He will have a large feast. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Unleavened bread*:—What does this unleavened bread mean? Two things, I think. 1. First, Christ; for He is the believer's food. The unleavened bread sets forth Christ in one aspect, as much as the lamb sets Him forth in another. In the Israelite feeding upon unleavened bread, we have presented to us the believer drawing his strength from Jesus, the spotless and Holy One—the unleavened bread. "I am the bread of life." 2. But there is another meaning of the unleavened bread, and that is holiness, uprightness, singleness of eye. Just as the bread was not the main staple of the Passover feast, but the lamb, so holiness is the accompaniment rather than the principal portion of the Christian feast. In the case of every believer the unleavened bread must accompany feeding upon Christ as the lamb. God has joined these two things together, let us not put them asunder. If we are redeemed by the blood of the lamb, let us live upon the unleavened bread; let us show forth the sincerity and truth which God requires in our life. "For even Christ our passover was sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. v. 7). (*S. A. Blackwood.*)

Vers. 9–12. **Keep the feast of weeks.**—*The Feast of Pentecost* (a Harvest Thanksgiving sermon):—I. THE SACRED CHARACTER OF THE HARVEST. Indicated by

time appointed for it—fiftieth day after Passover. As God hallowed the seventh day, so He hallowed the harvest-fields of the world. II. THE GREAT TROUBLE GOD TOOK TO IMPRESS HIS PEOPLE WITH THE SIGNIFICANCE AND MEANING OF COMMON THINGS. We walk along streets of gold, set with jewels, as though they were granite cubes. In the hand of Him who saw the kingdom of God everywhere and in everything, a grain of corn contained in its suggestiveness the deepest mysteries of the kingdom. III. THIS FEAST WAS A PROVIDENTIAL MIRROR IN WHICH TO SEE AGAIN ALL THE WAY IN WHICH THE LORD THEIR GOD HAD LED THEM. Happy, thrice happy, is the man who, in the land of plenty, has a wilderness history on which to look back. There is nothing more sublime to the mariner in the haven of rest than the conflicts with the tempests in mid-ocean through which he passed. IV. THIS FEAST WAS A NEW BOND OF BROTHERHOOD FORGED IN THE FIRES OF THE EVER-NEW AND NEVER-CEASING LOVE OF GOD. They were to call the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. Plenty in some natures petrifies, but this is not its legitimate effect. It should enlarge the heart, and broaden and deepen the sympathies of a man. V. THIS FEAST WAS TO BE A TIME OF GREAT MORAL AND SPIRITUAL RECTIFICATION ON THE PART OF THE PEOPLE. Repentance. Thanksgiving. (*H. Simon, Ph.D.*) *Harvest home a national festival:*—Harvest to the Jews was an event of great and general interest. It was the occasion of one of their grand national festivals. This feast was called by different names—the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Harvest, and the Feast of First-fruits. From commencement to close, their harvest festivities included seven weeks. I. THE HARVEST HOME WAS A SEASON FOR NATIONAL GRATITUDE. What they offered conferred no favour on God, it was His own; but it expressed the sense of their obligation and the depth of their gratitude. Three things are necessary to the very existence of gratitude towards the giver. 1. That the gift should be felt to be valuable. 2. A belief that the favour is benevolently bestowed. 3. A consciousness that the favour is undeserved. II. THE HARVEST HOME IS A SEASON FOR NATIONAL REJOICING. Where there is gratitude, there is joy, will be joy; gratitude is praise, and praise is heaven. The revelation of the Creator in the harvest-field may well make human hearts exult. The God of the harvest there appears, mercifully considerate of the wants of His creatures; as a loving Father, with a bountiful hand, furnishing the table with abundant supplies for His children. There He appears punctual to the fulfilment of His promise. There He appears rewarding human labour. III. THE HARVEST HOME IS A SEASON FOR NATIONAL PHILANTHROPY (see chap. xxiv. 19–21). 1. Where God gives liberally, He demands liberality. 2. The liberality demanded is to be shown to the poor. God has planted the poor amongst all peoples, in order that the benevolence of the rich may have scope for development. (*Homilist.*) **Rejoice before the Lord thy God.**—*Thanksgiving Day:*—I. We may be thankful for this day of thanksgiving, ON ACCOUNT OF ITS HAPPY RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE. It is a day which, in all its appropriate exercises and enjoyments, presents to us our life as a blessing, and our God as a Benefactor; the seasons as a circle of elemental adaptations to our comfort, and the Regulator of the seasons as the Almighty Being who takes care for our varied good; the course of our rolling days, as a series of lessons and opportunities, and the Everlasting and Uncreated One as the Friend who crowns our days with His loving-kindness. Thus a great deal is done every year, by a common and hearty expression of thankfulness, to break up, or at least to modify the alliance brought about by several causes in many minds, between religion and great strictness and gloominess. We find that "it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord; yea, a joyful and a pleasant thing it is to be thankful"; for when we dwell on the causes of thankfulness, our gratitude must needs flow naturally and spontaneously out of our bosoms, and go to swell the general stream of praise and gladness which spreads over the land. And we find that it is not at all inconsistent with thankfulness to God for the bounties of His providence, that we should enjoy those bounties freely and honestly and smilingly. II. We have reason to rejoice in our feast, on account of ITS HAPPY DOMESTIC INFLUENCE. The day is peculiarly a domestic day; a day for the reunion of families. The houses of the land are glad on this day. III. Our festival is to be honoured, ON ACCOUNT OF ITS HAPPY POLITICAL INFLUENCE. If it exerts a happy influence on our religious sentiments and on our domestic relations, it cannot but act with a benign power on those relations which hold us all together in one community. A genial nationality is fostered by that mingling together of prayers, and common interests, and pleasant hospitalities, which occurs on this day. And so far as our nationality is brought

about in this manner, there is nothing repulsive or exclusive in it. (*F. W. P. Greenwood, D.D.*)

Vers. 13-15. **Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine.**—*Harvest home*:—The Feast of Tabernacles was the harvest home of Israel. Where is the antitype of the festival of Tabernacles? The vision of the "great multitude which no man could number" is a vision throughout of a heavenly Feast of Tabernacles; the harvest home of the Church triumphant. I. These festivals are OCCASIONS OF HOSPITALITY AND OF REUNION. A selfish life is an unchristian life. A man might possibly remember God in solitude, a monastery has ere now fostered devotion: but there is one virtue which cannot be practised in seclusion—charity; the Gospel virtue—without which we are nothing. The very exertion which it costs some men to come out is salutary. If some are made frivolous by the love of society, some are made selfish by isolation from their kind. II. Two things were especially required of the Israelites when they assembled for their three annual feasts: first, that THEY SHOULD NOT APPEAR BEFORE THE LORD EMPTY; secondly, that CHILDREN AND SERVANTS, THE LEVITE AND THE STRANGER, THE FATHERLESS AND WIDOW, SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO REJOICE WITH THEM. The feast only becomes a blessing when it remembers God, and remembers man. III. THE LAW OF GOD WAS READ OVER, once in seven years, to the assembled Israelites at their Feast of Tabernacles. If there be a time when we remember duty, surely it should be when our hands are full of gifts. A time of feasting, nay, a time of prosperity, nay, a time of unmarked, of average sufficiency, brings its own peculiar risk of practical ungodliness. IV. Yet we recognise in this festival THE COMFORTING SIDE OF TRUE RELIGION. God's voice never comes to make us miserable. If it condemns, it is that we may rise out of condemnation into a state altogether joyous. A harvest home is a glimpse of the love and of the peace and of the joy of the Gospel. V. It is also a MEMENTO OF THE PLACE OF THANKFULNESS IN THE GOSPEL. Is there any test so condemning as that which touches us on the point of gratitude? Who really gives God thanks for life, for health, for motion, for speech, for reason? Well may we have one day in the year set apart for the work of simple praise. VI. Recognise in this celebration THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE GOD OF NATURE AND PROVIDENCE WITH THE GOD OF REVELATION AND OF THE GOSPEL. The things that are seen become a very sign and sacrament of the things that are not seen. The harvest of the natural world indicates to us, by its marvellous yet now familiar phenomena, the working of the same power which alone can melt the heart of stone, and impress upon a trifling soul the realities of a life and a home in heaven. VII. Finally, let the service which gives thanks for an earthly harvest carry your thoughts to that GREAT "REAPING AFTER SOWING," which is before every one of us, in the resurrection of the body and in the eternity which is yet beyond (Matt. xiii. 39; Gal. vi. 7, 8). God grant us all a place in that ingathering, the close of a world's labour, the inauguration of a heavenly rest! (*Dean Vaughan.*)

Vers. 16, 17. **Three times in a year.**—*The command respecting festivals*:—We are informed by ancient writers that the Egyptians kept many stated festivals and religious assemblies in honour to the gods, and that they held no less than six every year at different places. It is probable that this custom was of great antiquity, and observed when Israel dwelt in Egypt. Therefore, when Moses went to Pharaoh, and asked leave for the Hebrews to celebrate a feast to the Lord, the Egyptians could not say that it was an unreasonable request, since they accounted it a duty to do the like. This opens to us one reason for which these festivals were appointed in the law, namely, in compliance with the inclinations of the people, who doubtless were desirous to have their feasts and assemblies, as well as the Egyptians with whom they had dwelt. I. THE WORK OR ACTION ENJOINED—to appear before the Lord. God condescended to take upon Him the government of the Jewish nation, and is here represented as their King; and they, as dutiful subjects, and required to come and salute Him, and present themselves before Him at certain times. The same respect which other nations showed to their princes, the Jews were to show to God, as He was their King. Thus far it was a civil or political duty. But as their King was also the Almighty, to appear before Him was a religious duty; it was to serve and worship Him in a public manner; and herein this law is moral, universal, and everlasting. II. THE PERSONS WHO WERE TO APPEAR at these solemn feasts. "All thy males shall appear before the Lord,"

These words are to be understood not as excluding the females from being present at these assemblies, but as giving them leave of absence, and intimating that it might sometimes be more proper for them to stay at home. The reasons for which the females had an exemption from this solemn duty seem to have been these: first, the weakness of the sex, not so fit to bear the fatigue of these frequent journeys; secondly, the care of their children and families, which could not be thus wholly abandoned; and, thirdly, the dangers to which they would be exposed in such a numerous and mixed assembly. The Egyptians, when they repaired to the feasts, sailed together upon the river Nile in large companies, men and women, and many indecencies were committed, which this law seems to have been intended to prevent. Thus were they excused from these religious journeys when it was inconvenient. But at other times, and on other occasions, they frequented the places appointed for instruction and for the worship of God; as we may conclude from such examples as are recorded in Scripture, and from that piety and gratitude which are usually more observable in them than in the other sex. III. THE PLACE WHERE THE MEN WERE TO APPEAR—in the place which the Lord shall choose, namely, in the place where the ark and the tabernacle of God should be, which at the first was at Shiloh, in the country of Samaria and tribe of Ephraim, and afterwards at Jerusalem in the tribe of Judah, where David erected a tabernacle, and Solomon built a magnificent temple. One reason for which these festivals were appointed, and appointed at one place, was to keep up peace and friendship and unity, both in Church and State. Nothing is more likely to conduce to this end than a religious association and intercourse, and a participation of the same sacred rites. IV. THE TIME WHEN THE JEWS WERE TO MEET TOGETHER—it was thrice in the year; in the Feast of Unleavened Bread, in the Feast of Weeks, and in the Feast of Tabernacles. From these religious institutions it may be observed that the hallowing unto God more days in the week than one is not, as some have fancied, against the design and meaning of the Fourth Commandment. For by these three solemn feasts, which were each of them of a week's continuance at least, it is manifest that "Six days thou shalt labour" was no commandment, but expressed only an ordinary permission of working; and to think that God would contradict His own law by a contrary ordinance is inconceivable. As, therefore, when He commanded the Jews to give Him the tenth part of their increase, He forbade not free-will offerings; so, when He enjoined them to keep holy one day in seven, this hindered not but that they might hallow unto Him other days even of the six. Hence it is concluded that the Christian Church hath likewise a power to set apart days for the more solemn service of God. But this should be done sparingly, discreetly, and cautiously; it should rather be recommended than required, and never without manifest reasons. V. A PARTICULAR DUTY REQUIRED of all the people when they came to worship God at these feasts, namely, not to appear empty. It was a custom in those parts of the world when subjects came before their king, to make him a present; and even a little fruit, or a single flower, was favourably accepted from one who was not in circumstances to offer more. The Jews were commanded to bring a present; not a burnt-offering or a sacrifice by fire; for these, though at the same time they were also required, yet were of another nature, and for another end; but a heave-offering, a freewill-offering, which was a tribute of thankfulness to God, and likewise an acknowledgment of His supreme lordship and dominion over all. (*J. Jortin, D.D.*) **They shall not appear before the Lord empty.**—*The law of gifts in the Pentateuch:*—Empty in one sense, empty of blessing, none of us can appear before the Lord, or our prayer has mocked Him, and our praise. Crowned with His goodness, you have come up hither; crown His goodness in return with praise. I. A leading feature, *the* leading feature of the Old Testament revelation is, THAT LIFE AND ALL THAT CROWNS IT—its crown of blessings—IS THE GIFT OF A LIVING INTELLIGENT BEING, AND COMES TO US BEARING THE SEAL OF HIS LOVE. The Jews were separated to this end, that God's methods and purposes with all men might be laid bare; that for once the Hand might be clearly manifest which is busy about every life. II. THE MOTIVE WHICH IS PLEADED FOR ALL THE NOBLEST HUMAN EFFORT IS GOD'S EXAMPLE. God has done thus and thus for you: "Go ye and do likewise" for your fellow-men. It is the plea which is constantly urged in the Old Testament, which we accuse of low and material views, both of man and of God. It is the highest witness to man's essential God-likeness which can be conceived. Man's nature only finds free, that is joyful play, when it is doing God-like things, when it is striving to think, will, and act like God. The only complete form of man's life is the life which is also Divine. III. THE EXHORTATIONS OF THE

SCRIPTURE ARE AMPLY SUSTAINED BY OUR OWN EXPERIENCE OF LIFE. There is no joy that fills man's heart which is comparable with that which he shares with God. He who does a deed purely unselfish, who yields free play to the most generous, heavenly impulses. IV. Part of this God-like duty finds expression in the text. "NONE SHALL APPEAR BEFORE THE LORD EMPTY." The Lord has filled you with good; you are "fearfully and wonderfully made," and in fearful and wonderful harmony with the world. Your organs, exquisitely fashioned, and all the beauty and splendour of the creation, form a concord which at once expresses God's loving-kindness, and is to you a fountain of intense delight. And there is an inner harmony which He is striving to develop by uniting your heart to fear His name, which will make this great universe a Father's house, and the awful future an eternal home. Help God, for His great mercy's sake, to help the world. V. Another great thought of the Old Testament is THE HELP WHICH IT IS IN MAN'S POWER TO RENDER TO GOD. His ends can never be reached without us, in the way in which His wisdom has ordered the world. He might have ruled as a despot; He has chosen to seek rather to rule—as the Bishop of Argyll has happily phrased it—as a constitutional king. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*) *Is giving a help or a hindrance?*—I. EVERY INDIVIDUAL IS ADDRESSED. 1. All have been blessed; all are under obligations to recognise this fact by giving. Every one should help. It is the mites that make the great aggregations. 2. Giving in accordance with God's command is husbanding—it is investing. Said a great millionaire when asked, "Where can I safely invest my money?" "Give to God's cause, where I have put uncounted thousands, and I find that the interest due is always promptly paid, and the investment is perfectly safe. I shall meet it beyond the river, laid up in heaven, and shall enjoy it for ever." II. THIS COMMAND REQUIRES US TO GIVE AS NECESSITY REQUIRES, AND ACCORDING to blessings received. Give, because you have received. Bless, because you have been blessed. Love, because you have been loved. Help, because you have been helped. Be liberal, because you thus glorify your Benefactor. The great giver is a great gatherer. He gathers love, power, influence, and revels in the smile of God. (*J. D. Fulton, D.D.*) *An offering of gratitude*:—One day an Indian asked Bishop Whipple to give him two one-dollar bills for a two-dollar note. The Bishop asked, "Why?" He said, "One dollar for me to give to Jesus, and one dollar for my wife to give." The Bishop asked him if it was all the money he had. He said, "Yes." The Bishop was about to tell him, "It is too much," when an Indian clergyman who was standing by whispered, "It might be too much for a white man to give, but not too much for an Indian who has this year heard for the first time of the love of Jesus." *Giving according to conscience*:—A minister was about to leave his own congregation for the purpose of visiting London, on what was by no means a pleasant errand—to beg on behalf of his place of worship. Previous to his departure he called together the principal persons connected with his charge, and said to them, "Now, I shall be asked whether we have conscientiously done all that we can for the removal of the debt. What answer am I to give? Brother So-and-so, can you in conscience say that you have given all you can?" "Why, sir," he replied, "if you come to conscience, I don't know that I can." The same question he put to a second, and a third, and so on, and similar answers were returned, until the whole sum required was subscribed, and there was no longer any need for their pastor to wear out his soul in going to London on any such unpleasant excursion. (*Christian Age.*)

Ver. 19. **Thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift.**—*Equality before the law*:—I. SOME FACTS AND TENDENCIES IN LEGAL ADMINISTRATION. 1. The sentence pronounced against a poor man is often very heavy, and that against a rich man very light. In New Jersey a poor man was sentenced to five years of hard labour in prison for stealing a ham; in the same court a rich banker, who had ruined two banks and stolen the money of hundreds of people, received the same sentence. 2. After conviction rich convicts receive favours. In the case just cited the poor man and the rich man went to the same prison. But the poor man was put at hard labour; the rich man was made clerk in the prison library. 3. Rich men have an unfair advantage over poor men when brought to trial. The big fee that hires the eloquent pleader "buys out the law." 4. Even judges are sometimes corrupt. 5. Juries are accused of taking bribes. II. THE PERILS OF THESE FORMS OF INJUSTICE. 1. They threaten the property and lives of the poor. 2. They weaken the spirit of obedience (Numb. xxii. 23). 3. They develop the communistic spirit of destruction. 4. We are all unsafe when one poor wretch is unsafe only because he

lacks money or friends. III. THE REMEDIES FOR EXISTING EVILS. 1. More and better teaching, in home, school, and church, on God's law of equality. 2. Wiser conversation on such matters when citizens meet together. It is dangerous and unpatriotic to treat the miscarriage of justice as a jest. 3. A sound public opinion should be cultivated by press, pulpit, and platform. 4. Our social power may be used to condemn a triumph over the law. 5. Seek to associate in all minds the idea of obedience to God with that of just judgment. (*Homiletic Monthly.*) *An upright judge:*—Judge Sewall, of Massachusetts, went into a hatter's shop in order to purchase a pair of shoe-brushes. The master of the shop presented him with a couple. "What is your price?" said the judge. "If they will answer your purpose," replied the other, "you may have them and welcome." The judge, upon hearing this, laid them down, and bowing, was leaving the shop; upon which the hatter said to him, "Pray, sir, your honour has forgotten the principal object of your visit." "By no means," answered the judge; "if you please to set a price, I am ready to purchase; but ever since it has fallen to my lot to occupy a seat on the bench, I have studiously avoided receiving to the value of a single copper, lest at some future period of my life it might have some kind of influence in determining my judgment." *The acceptance of bribes discouraged:*—In the Soudan, he said, he had £6000 a year, as Governor, but he brought nothing out of the country when he returned to England. He spent his income in adding to the insufficient salaries of the officials, to keep them from accepting bribes, and thus to secure justice for the people at large. (*Memoir of General Gordon.*)

Ver. 20. **That which is altogether just shalt thou follow.**—*Justice the decorum of the character of judges* (preached at the Assizes):—The duties which are incumbent upon us may be very properly divided into two classes—such as are incumbent upon all men, and such as are incumbent upon particular ranks of men. I. JUSTICE IS IMMEDIATELY CONNECTED WITH THE END OF THAT OFFICE WHICH MAGISTRATES, JUDGES, AND RULERS BEAR. The exercise of justice itself is the proximate means of answering the purposes of government and judgment. One of the principal ways in which other virtues promote these purposes is by contributing to the steady and vigorous exercise of incorruptible justice. Injustice, directly and of itself, defeats these purposes, and is in every instance absolutely inconsistent with them. Other vices obstruct them sometimes very strongly, but always more remotely and indirectly, often by preparing the way to injustice. II. RULERS AND JUDGES HAVE, FROM THEIR OFFICE, OPPORTUNITY FOR MANY EXERTIONS OF JUSTICE WHOLLY PECULIAR TO THEMSELVES. On this account also justice may be considered as in a special manner the virtue of their character and station. The poor man, who cannot himself resist the oppression of the great; the peaceable man, who is harassed by the encroachments of the man of violence; the orphan, whose rights are invaded by him that hath no bowels, claim the protection of the judge, and can obtain redress only by bringing their cause under his cognisance. Differences arising from the ignorance or the self-partiality of persons well disposed can be determined only by the superior knowledge and unbiassed justice of the judge. When individuals are injured or the public disturbed by crimes, it is to the integrity of the judge that they must look up for help. How extensive, then, is the sphere of public justice which is peculiar to the ruler and the judge! In every instance of public justice he must make conscience of doing what is right, else he forfeits the character of a just and honest man, in the very same way as another person would forfeit it by being convicted of a transgression of private justice. III. Justice may be considered as in a peculiar manner belonging to rulers, judges, and magistrates because THEY ARE UNDER PECULIAR OBLIGATIONS TO IT. Every act of injustice brings positive hurt on the person who is affected by it; but an unjust judgment hurts with the cutting aggravations of its being done under form of law, and of its impeaching the person whom it injures, as if he had been injurious. Private persons are connected only with a few, and therefore only a few can be hurt by their injustice; but the injustice of a judge is of more extensive consequence, it hurts all who are subject to his jurisdiction. Private injustice may be checked or redressed by the righteousness of the judge; but if the judge be unrighteous, by whom shall his injustice be restrained? (*Alex. Gerard, D.D.*) *Civil justice:*—That which the air is in the elementary world, the sun in the celestial, the soul in the intelligible, justice is the same in the civil. It is the air which all afflicted desire to breathe; the sun which dispelleth all clouds; the soul which giveth life to all things. The unhappiness is, it is more found on the paper of writers than in the manners of the living. To be

just is to be all that which an honest man may be, since justice is to give every one what appertaineth to him. (*N. Caussin.*) *Justice in small things*:—Nouschirvan, the Persian king, having been hunting, and desirous of eating some of the venison in the field, several of his attendants went to a neighbouring village, and took away a quantity of salt to season it. The king suspecting how they had acted, ordered that they should immediately go and pay for it; then turning to his attendants, he said, "This is a small matter in itself, but a great one as it regards me: for a king ought ever to be just, because he is an example to his subjects; and if he swerves in trifles, they will become dissolute. If I cannot make all my people just in the smallest things, I can, at least, show them it is possible to be so."

Vers. 21, 22. **Thou shalt not plant thee a grove.**—*Idolatry forbidden*:—I. IDOLATRY IS ENTICING. This on many accounts. 1. By its prevalence. In some form or other it is the most popular religion in the world. Men bow down to the idols of luxury, ambition, pleasure, and avarice. "For all people will walk every one in the name of his god" (Mic. iv. 5). 2. By its use. We naturally forsake God and cling to sin. Evil inclination leads to wrong choice, and men choose darkness rather than light. II. IDOLATRY IS TREASON AGAINST GOD. God is the sum of all moral qualities, the proprietor of all resources, and the giver of all existences. What more rational than to worship Him? Nothing belies God nor degrades man like the worship of images and statues. III. IDOLATRY MUST BE UTTERLY FORSAKEN. We must neither join the worshippers nor sanction the worship. Plant no grove of trees, for truth loves light and reproves darkness. (*J. Wolfendale.*) **Neither shalt thou set up any image.**—*Images forbidden*:—Thus imagery is forbidden—even religious imitation and attempted reproduction of things Divine and inexpressible. We are prone to do something to show our handiwork in God's sanctuary; it pleases us to try to add something to the circle; it delights us to run one rim of gilt around the refined gold which burns with the image and superscription of God. We are told not to interfere; we must keep our hands off everything. We must learn to stand still; sometimes to do everything by doing nothing; and we must learn to rebuke our inventive faculty and become learned in the utterance of simple prayer. God will have His altar untouched: He will have human attention undistracted by any human devices. The altar is to stand alone in its simple dignity—most adorned when unadorned. There must be no attempt to link true religion and false religion, inspired worship and idolatrous worship, groves humanly planted and altars Divinely built. The Lord will have a time for Himself, and place for Himself, a gift for Himself, an altar for Himself. Why for Himself? Because He is the Lord, and because He means to train the human mind and heart without distraction towards the highest sublimity of law. Who will not set up his reason against the altar, and delight because his religion is rational?—as well hold up a candle to the sun, because all fire is of the same quality; because there is but one fire in the universe, and that is God. The sun says, Thou shalt not light a candle in my presence. We do it, but the candle is literally of no service in the presence of the midday sun. Jesus Christ is the Light of the world—the Sun of the great firmament of the soul—and He alone can light the space that is to be illumined. Who will not throw the little flower of self-approval upon the altar, saying, I am not as other men: I fast, I pay tithes, I do not practise extortion: I am not as the publicans are? The Lord has forbidden all groves and all images and all distractions. Only one man is permitted near the altar; only one soul is heard in heaven. His name?—the broken-hearted sinner! (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

CHAPTER XVII.

VERS. 14, 15. **Set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose.**—*Christ our Brother and our King*:—What I desire now to lay before you is the counsel of God in Christ, which is set forth to us in these words. What is contained in them is that we are to have a king over us, and that this king is to be our brother; by which is expressed the reigning of love. It is exceedingly important that we be taught to feel that our place is that of being reigned over—that it does not belong to us to be independent or to be our own masters; and again, that the

control under which we are to be is one which is to govern us through the heart—that the obedience which is to be rendered is to be the obedience of the will—not an outward obedience, an obedience in word or in action, but an inward obedience, an obedience in our will. To this end it is needful that, in obeying, we should have that confidence in him whom we obey, and that understanding of the principle of his government, and that consenting to it, which will carry our hearts along with his requirements; and this our God has considered in giving us a brother to reign over us. When it is here said that God will not give us a king who is not our brother, that we are not in any wise to have a stranger to reign over us, we are taught the great truth, which is the foundation of our religion, that Christ took our very nature and became in very truth our very Brother, so that there is nothing in the whole of our human nature with which He has not personal acquaintance. The knowledge which our Creator has of us, as our Creator, is a knowledge that we cannot comprehend. But when we see Christ having our nature, then we see how He should have this knowledge of us. We might have felt as if God were a stranger—we might have said to ourselves, How very different are His circumstances from ours: He is the Creator of all things—He is independent—He is not at the mercy of any outward thing, and therefore He can have no sympathy with us—He cannot know what our situation is—this language we might have held, in our ignorance of God, were not God revealed in Christ as our Brother. God says thou mayest not set a stranger over thee which is not thy brother; and He says also, "I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have no other god before Me." And thus when our God says that we shall have no stranger to reign over us, and yet that He will reign over us, He teaches us that He is not a stranger—that there is no lack of interest and sympathy in His heart with all the evil of our state. I shall now occupy your attention with the acquaintance and sympathy with our condition which Christ has as our Brother. He has, in truth, no sympathy with man in his natural state, while He has a perfect understanding of our natural condition. He knows thoroughly the flesh which we have, but has no sympathy whatever with our feelings in sowing to it. But, considered as regenerate persons, contending with the flesh, then we are in the condition in which Christ not only knows our state but has perfect sympathy with it. It is of much importance that you should see where Christ's sympathy begins; that it is in our experience as living in the Spirit. What is the principle of our being judged by our equals? It is not needful that they should have any fellowship in that respecting which they are to judge—that they should have themselves transgressed; but that they be in a condition fairly to estimate the circumstances of those upon whom they sit in judgment, because they are their own. The acquaintance which Christ has with us, as our Brother, while it does not justify us in holding that He has any sympathy with the workings of the carnal heart, justifies us in holding that He is deeply alive to the evil of being under the power of the carnal heart—that He knows what it is, with such a knowledge as enables Him fully to estimate what an awful condition it is to be sowing to the flesh. Now this in our Lord is a source of exceeding great comfort. To show what comfort it is, I just press on you that, as truly as the will of Christ was opposed to sin in His own flesh, so truly is it opposed to sin in our flesh, because there is but one flesh—that Christ as truly wills my sanctification as He willed His own—as truly wills that I should be holy, in this body of sin and death, as He willed Himself to be holy in it. Now while this is a source of exceeding great comfort, when we consider that it is the strength of Christ that is to give us the victory, it is also a source of exceeding great self-reproach, because it shows us how we have grieved Christ. For what must it be to Him to see in the members of His body that rebellion against the Father which He never had in Himself, while He has in Him all that is needful for us, and is longing to impart it all to us, that He should see us choosing to live in the flesh—choosing to live in sin, rather than to receive out of that full provision for holiness which we have in Him! And while we consider Christ's understanding of our condition, for comfort in our conflict with sin, and for self-reproach in the consciousness of sinning, let us consider how His being our Brother prepares Him for being our Judge. There is ever a voice in the flesh offering to excuse sin. There is ever proceeding from the Lord a voice condemning sin—a voice declaring that sin is altogether a thing that need not be; and I beseech you consider what an entire putting down it is of all unbelief that Christ was holy in our nature. The will that Christ has as to us, in our condition of sowing to the flesh, is a holy will that we should be holy; but it is also the will of love—of love to us. It is

exceedingly important that we should never lose sight of this, that the person is not forgotten. It is not the sin simply that is considered by Christ, but the person who sins. Just as it is with a good man who has a son that is a prodigal. Inasmuch as he is a righteous man, the exhibition of evil in his son is a source of pain to him; but inasmuch as he is his son, it is a peculiar source of pain to him, seeing that he has an interest in the person apart from the character altogether, and that this interest is not destroyed by the evil of the character, but that both work on him jointly. Christ's having a personal tie to us, as well as an acquaintance with our condition, is a part of the revelation of God which is in Him; and is that first part of the truth concerning our God which addresses itself to our desire of salvation; and is therefore to be kept in the foreground, that men, convinced of God's interest in them, may give heed to the things that the Lord has spoken. There is, indeed, in the word "brother," viewed apart from the word "king," only a partial expression of the character of God. But I must consider what it expresses still further. First, there is actual sympathy for us in Christ our Brother. In this word "sympathy" there is contained the idea of a person—the idea of one being feeling along with another being: and so knowing Christ's sympathy, and ever turning to it, we learn personal communion with God, which is that which His heart longs for; for His heart has not the fulfilment of its desire for us, but in our having this personal communion with Him. Oh, be very jealous of reposing your hearts in any other bosom than that of God: be very jealous of telling your grief to any other ear than God. Oh, be very jealous for Christ, that He should have the confidential trust of every heart. But Christ's sympathy in our conflict is the sympathy of one who can succour us. This is a part of what properly belongs to His character as King. It belongs to His character as King to be strong in us, to supply our need and sustain our weakness. I would, therefore, now consider what we are taught in this Brother's being a King. Why is it not enough to tell us that He is our Brother? Why must we have a King? Now, this word "king," taken along with the word "brother," is, to my mind, what is expressed in God's being a Father, and brings out to us the necessity that there is for our being in a subordinate place, learning the will of another, and receiving that will to be our will. Our service, to be a right service, must be a free-will service; but still, in announcing His will, God announces it as King. In short, the sceptre is held out, and we are called to bow to it; and the love is revealed in order that the heart may bow to that sceptre; but it is as a sceptre that it is held out. Now, in Christ as King, there is the provision for strength, as well as the provision for authority. Our King is one who has power, not merely to be used against us if we refuse Him to reign over us, but to be used for us in our submitting to Him. He is a King to minister to our need, to supply the wants of the poor and needy. The true king is one in respect of whom we have nothing, but to whom we are altogether debtors. And this Brother, who is to be our King, we do not see rightly as King if we see him merely as exercising a control without us. We must see Him as the fountain of power within us; one who is to act in us by His might in the conflict with that evil with which we are contending, in assurance of His sympathy. This is the influence of the knowledge that He is King, that it makes His sympathy strength, as that of one of whom we know that He has strength for us. There is another blessedness besides that of conscious dependence on God which is connected with realising the Kingship of Christ, that thus, and thus alone, can we, as intelligent beings, meditating on the wide universe, have peace as to its government. Unless we had the omniscience of God we could not have the peace of God directly; but we may have the peace of God, without the omniscience of God, indirectly: that is, we may have the peace of God through the knowledge of God, and confiding, in regard to what we know not, in the character of Him whom we know to be King. In this way there is blessedness in having a Brother as a King, in respect of ourselves and in respect of all things; for it is when we see the Lamb in the midst of the throne, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God—it is then that we can have perfect peace about all things, because then we see the character of Him who governs, and can say that all must be well. But what I am so desirous that you should seek to realise is the sweetness of being reigned over—the blessedness of having to do with a King; and that it is not the sympathy of the Brother, as reconciling to the condition of being reigned over, that you are to learn, but that while learning the character of the King in the Brother you are to learn that being reigned over is itself a blessedness. (*J. M. Campbell.*)

Ver. 16. **Ye shall henceforth return no more that way.**—*Never again!*—Touching and sad is the last look of the emigrant leaving his old home and the white cliffs of his native land. Some partings have in them more than sorrow. Never again! is a mournful utterance. It has in it warning, admonition, and counsel. 1. The ways of youth are not to be trodden by us again. We are ever entering into new paths. Personality is ever changing, while individual identity remains the same. 2. The ways of possible improvement in the past cannot be trodden again. The capabilities of the organ are limited by its compass and the number of its stops. But within the necessary limits what marvellous varieties of music can be brought out of it! Our life, with measured capacities, is the instrument, and we the players. In the exercise of responsible will we can bring out heavenly harmonies, or unearthly discords. How the great player wishes the audience could come back and hear what he feels he can do now. But the chance is gone. Nothing can be done with the past. 3. If the past cannot be lived over again, it is our duty to make the best of our present. There is much to be done for ourselves and others. (*Preacher's Monthly.*) *Once for all*:—If I can pass this way no more, then—I. I CANNOT DO WHAT I THEN MISSED DOING. 1. What thought I of myself? 2. Did I seek God's way or my own? II. I CANNOT UNDO WHAT I HAVE DONE. What manner of tracks did I leave in the way? 1. Oaths. 2. Drunkenness. 3. Temptations to others to do wrong. III. IN VIEW OF THIS, HOW SHOULD I WALK? 1. Confessing my past sins. 2. Repenting of, and forsaking them. 3. Exercising a cheerful faith. 4. Doing good to all men as opportunity offers. Lessons: 1. Sad and solemn things are in the past. 2. Eternal things are before us. (*B. Knepper.*) *Never this way again*:—We are told that at one of those splendid pageants in Berlin, not long ago, the wife of the English ambassador unfortunately unfastened the necklace she was wearing, and lost a costly pearl somewhere in the roadway. Perhaps it might have been regained if a serious scaroh had been in order at such a time. But the grand procession must hurry along, and a lost place in the rank was of more account than a lost pearl. They did not return by the same way. We may be in equal peril if an accident should occur in this ceaseless rush of our years. An admonition in it for the close of the year. I. IT IS NOW A MOST SIGNIFICANT TIME FOR THE TAKING OF SPIRITUAL STOCK. Most religious people would be glad to know just where they are, and how the balance stands. It is well to have a clearing out, even if one is afraid he may be suffocated with the lifted dust. II. THEN, AGAIN, THIS IS A GOOD TIME FOR US TO GIVE OVER LACKADAISICAL COMPLAININGS ABOUT SHORT CHANCES IN THE PAST. You will not have to take the same chances again. "Ye shall henceforth return no more by that way" of youth. But does anybody really want to do that? Victor Hugo confessed to his close friends that the most disagreeable advance in age to him had been that from thirty-nine to forty. "But," said his companion, "I should think it a great deal brighter to be forty than fifty." "Not at all," replied Hugo, gaily; "forty years is the old age of youth, while fifty is the youth of old age." Ah, just think how many fine chances yet wait for a brave heart in the beautiful future which we hope to enter on after next New Year's day! III. IT IS BEST FOR US NOW, ALSO, TO KEEP A CLEAR LOOK-OUT FOR WHAT IS STILL AHEAD. Almost all of us have some past worth looking over. But the glory of every true life is in the time to come. God has not yet exhausted Himself in apocalypses of splendid radiance to His waiting people. There certainly is, in the distance, that which "eye hath not seen nor ear heard." And wise men, while the years chime on, might well think of readiness to make the great journey and meet the revelations. IV. ONCE MORE; BY THIS TIME WE OUGHT TO LEARN TO ESTIMATE RESULTS AND FORGET PROCESSES. We do really respect hills that we have climbed painfully over; but it awakes no emotion in others when we keep rehearsing the steps which we took, and the snows we met, and the winds that we resisted. Wiser is it always to let the dead past bury its dead out of sight. "Ye shall henceforth return no more that way"; and to some the past year has been a year of conflict; and who wants to go over all that again? Please remember, moments of success are not always moments of happiness; much depends on what the success has cost. "Ye shall henceforth return no more that way"; to some the past year has been one of self-discipline. How much it costs just to make a slender progress in Divine things! V. FINALLY, THIS IS THE TIME IN WHICH TO INQUIRE AFTER WORK YET LEFT UNFINISHED. We should bring our unfulfilled resolutions to God, and ask Him to grant us time to complete them. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The irrevocable past; or, no going back*:—I. "Ye shall henceforth return no more that way," TO UNDO EVIL. It matters not

how black may have been your deed, nor how terrible soever its burden, it must stand. It cannot be undone. It is man's dread prerogative to do; but he cannot undo. In the drift of a far-off period in the geological ages, long before Adam was created, we find the feet-marks of gigantic fowls. The mud, once soft, hardened into rock, and became the permanent record of life and activity now extinct from the globe. The effects of human action are as unchangeable. This it is that makes sin so terrible: when it has gone forth we cannot recall it. Sin is a monument of everlasting shame. A single careless miner, by a momentary act of folly, can do what can never be undone, and in an instant fill a land with sorrow, and hundreds of homes with the tears of widows and orphans. The shocking gap in human life and relationship nothing can repair. Reparation may be effected only within narrow limits; and then the wrong done cannot in the most trivial instance be wholly undone. II. "Ye shall henceforth return no more that way," TO MAKE IMPERFECT GOOD BETTER. The merchant who has been slothful, inattentive, cannot live over again the months that are gone. The transactions and figures in his books are unalterable. He cannot transport industry into past idleness, nor introduce a single item of gain into past losses. Not a stroke of work is possible in time that is over, not a sixpence of profit can be added to the accounts which are closed. It is the same thing with the student. When his examinations are over, if his session has been indolent, unsuccessful, he cannot improve the work which has been unsatisfactorily performed. He may be grieved and ashamed that his time has been so little devoted to his vocation. But the insufficiency of the past is beyond his reach. The culture of the field and the vineyard exhibits the same law. If there has been neglect or inadequate tillage, when harvest-time arrives there is no going back to re-sow or re-tend. There must be scanty crops, dwindled grain and fruit, and only half-filled ears and half-laden boughs. These laws have their fulfilment in the domain of spiritual life. In the day of reckoning you cannot number profits where there have been no gains, nor number victories, if no achievements have been won. The popular proverb says, "It is never too late to mend." True, it is never too late to mend in the present, but always too late to mend in the past. The path of time gone by is closed. III. "Ye shall henceforth return no more that way," TO USE NEGLECTED OPPORTUNITY. Christian, thou hast had thine opportunities. Perhaps, when thou wert blind—blinded by thy tears—thy opportunities were the nearest to thee. The Lord, it may be, laid Himself out with parental tenderness to purify thee by disappointment, crosses, and suffering. Yet thou sawest no bright avenues crossing the path of thy shade, and conducting to beauty and peace. Has seed been put into thy hand, and hast thou not sown it? Has fruit hung within thy reach, and hast thou not plucked it? Has blessing been committed to thy solemn trust, and hast thou not scattered it? To all neglecters, opportunity is a narrowing path, which at length vanishes in trackless wilds; to the obedient, it is an ever-expanding, ascending, and illumined career, and into it all courses run which lead to glory, honour, and immortality. Every precious opportunity of each departed year is now dead to thee, dead to thine effort and industry. IV. "Ye shall henceforth return no more that way," TO ENCOUNTER PAST TRIAL, GUILT, AND SUFFERING. Do manifold imperfection and unworthiness bow thee down? Have they cost thee tears? Are they the burden of thy prayers? Dost thou daily struggle for the mastery of self, and sin, and Satan; and yet do thy besetments discourage thee? In the years now behind thee, has the firmament of thy soul often been dull and sunless, and even louring and tempestuous? Thou wilt never tread that path any more. New ground is before thee, and every step is towards the light. Conclusion: 1. The peculiar character of the Gospel is due to the fact that we cannot undo the past. Sin remains. Moral laws are immutable in their foundations, and their penalties are irrepealable. But the Lord Jesus has effected a saving work. He stands between the sinner and the woe that pursues him. He fulfils, honours, and satisfies broken laws, and covers the defenceless head of the contrite, and turns aside the merited destruction which was sweeping towards him. 2. Since what is done cannot by you be undone, are you to sit down and weep the tears of despair? My message is salvation, but not salvation which you can effect in time that is gone. The great lesson is, Act in the present. 3. Let the sincere Christian be comforted. The Lord has borne your sins. Your holy life is watched and guarded by His sheltering love. Ponder what you have done. Throw away no lessons which it offers. Be true to your past experience and conviction. But brood not over bygone evil. 4. Let us be up and doing; for all things pure and beautiful sweep

along the upward groove of progress to perfection. The movement of every world and sun and system is onward. 5. In a few more breaths thy life may close. The Lord may be saying with the most literal emphasis, "Ye shall henceforth return no more that way"—"no more" the way to business, "no more" the way to the house of thy friend, "no more" the way to the church, "no more" the way to thy family and home, "no more" the way from the grave whither thou thyself shalt have been carried. (*H. Batchelor.*) *The past irrevocable*:—I. I can conceive THAT TO SOME OF US THERE MAY BE RELIEF AND EVEN COMFORT IN THIS ASSURANCE. The experiences through which we have come may have been such that we cannot wish for their renewal. The path over which we have passed may have been so rough and steep and dangerous that we cannot contemplate traversing it again without a shudder. When I was in Chamounix, last summer, a friend who had crossed the glacier and come down by the "Mauvais Pas," on which the iron railing put for the safety of travellers had parted from its fastenings in his grasp, assured me that he would not go through that experience again for all that earth could give. And there may be not a few among us who feel just in the same way concerning some chapters in our last year's life. We are, perhaps, thankful to be through them, but we do not wish to repeat them. We feel regarding them as one does who has come safely out of a terrible railway accident, or who sets his foot on land after a dangerous and tempestuous voyage. We are glad that we have escaped, but, even although we should escape another time, we do not desire to be again in the same peril. Some, too, may have had such a time of labour and anxiety that they are glad to think that it is now behind them and not to be renewed. And some there are who have had such a fierce fight with temptation, and have come out of it, victorious indeed, yet with such exhaustion that they cannot but rejoice in the thought that now it is all behind them in "the irrevocable past." They are glad for the result, but they would not willingly go back into the agony of the conflict. So this text, taken as an assurance, that we cannot re-live our lives, or go again through the experiences of the past, has in it an element of comfort. It is a relief to know that some things are over and done with. II. But there is ANOTHER SIDE TO THE SUBJECT, AND THAT IS FULL OF SOLEMNITY, NOT UNATTENDED WITH SORROW. For in the past there are many things which now we wish had been otherwise. Our afterthought has shown us much to which our forethought was blind; but we cannot alter anything now. The past is always seen more correctly after it has become the past than it was when it was present. Lost opportunities cannot be recalled, and no cement of human device can mend a broken vow. Ah! what a sad reflection have we here! You cannot recall the profane word; you cannot wipe out the impure act; you cannot undo the sins you have committed. What then? What is to be done with it? I answer, that if we cannot cancel it, we can confess the evil that is in it, and seek through Jesus Christ forgiveness for that. If we please, we can obtain, through the great atonement, acceptance with God notwithstanding our sins. The sting of our guilt may be extracted, and the past may cease to be a clog upon our spiritual progress. III. And then, turning the thought which the words of my text express, WE MAY MAKE IT FULL OF ADMONITION TO OURSELVES FOR THE FUTURE. We are about to enter upon a path in which there will be no possibility of retracing our steps; let us be very careful, therefore, where we plant our feet. We have only once to live; therefore let us live to purpose. The day that dawned this morning will never dawn again. So let us seize every moment as it comes, and use it as we shall wish we had done when we look back upon it from eternity. Remember, the year does not come to you all at once, in twelve months at a time, nor even in twelve distinct instalments of a month each; no, nor yet in three hundred and sixty-five separate portions of a day apiece: but in individual moments. Do not, therefore, lose the moments in thinking that you will secure the year; but consider that the year is to be redeemed by the consecration of each moment to the Lord Jesus. Fill every day with His service. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*)

Vers. 18, 19. **He shall read therein.**—*How we may read the Scriptures with most spiritual profit*:—The Holy Scripture is, as Austin saith, a golden epistle sent to us from God. This is to be read diligently. "Ignorance" of Scripture is "the mother of" error, not "devotion." "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures" (Matt. xxii. 29). We are commanded to "search the Scriptures" (John v. 39). The Greek word signifies to search as for a vein of silver. How diligently doth a child read over his father's will and testament, and a citizen peruse his charter!

With the like diligence should we read God's Word, which is our Magna Charta for heaven. It is a mercy the Bible is not prohibited. Trajan, the emperor, forbade the Jews to read in the book of the law. But there is no danger of touching this tree of Holy Scriptures; if we do not eat of this tree of knowledge we shall surely die. 1. REMOVE THOSE THINGS WHICH WILL HINDER YOUR PROFITING. 1. Remove the love of every sin. The body cannot thrive in a fever; nor can the soul under the feverish heat of lust. 2. Take heed of the thorns which will choke the Word read. A covetous man is a pluralist; he hath such diversity of secular employments, that he can scarce find time to read; or if he doth, what solecisms doth he commit in reading! While his eye is upon the Bible, his heart is upon the world; it is not the writings of the apostles he is so much taken with, as the writings in his account-book. Is this man likely to profit? You may as soon extract oils and syrups out of a flint, as he any real benefit out of Scripture. 3. Take heed of jesting with Scripture. This is playing with fire. II. PREPARE YOUR HEARTS TO THE READING OF THE WORD. The heart is an instrument that needs putting in tune. This preparation to reading consists in two things—1. In summoning our thoughts together to attend that solemn work we are going about. The thoughts are stragglers; therefore rally them together. 2. In purging out those unclean affections which do indispose us to reading. Many come rashly to the reading of the Word; and no wonder, if they come without preparation, that they go away without profit. III. READ THE SCRIPTURE WITH REVERENCE. Think every line you read God is speaking to you. When Ehud told Eglon he had a message to him from God, he arose from his throne (Judg. iii. 20). The Word written is a message to us from Jehovah; with what veneration should we receive it! IV. READ THE BOOKS OF SCRIPTURE IN ORDER. Though occurrences may sometimes divert our method, yet for a constant course it is best to observe an order in reading. Order is a help to memory: we do not begin to read a friend's letter in the middle. V. GET A RIGHT UNDERSTANDING OF SCRIPTURE (Psa. cxix. 73). If the Word shoot above our head, it can never hit our heart. VI. READ THE WORD WITH SERIOUSNESS. Well may we be serious if we consider the importance of those truths which are bound up in this sacred volume. "It is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life" (chap. xxxii. 47). If a letter were to be broken open and read, wherein a man's whole estate were concerned, how serious would he be in reading of it! In the Scripture our salvation is concerned; it treats of the love of Christ, a serious subject (Titus iii. 4). VII. LABOUR TO REMEMBER WHAT YOU READ. The memory should be like the chest in the ark, where the law was put. Some can better remember a piece of news than a line of Scripture; their memories are like those ponds where the frogs live, but the fish die. VIII. MEDITATE UPON WHAT YOU READ. Meditation is the bellows of the affections: "While I was musing the fire burned" (Psa. xxxix. 3). The reason we come away so cold from reading the Word is, because we do not warm ourselves at the fire of meditation. IX. COME TO THE READING OF SCRIPTURE WITH HUMBLE HEARTS. An arrogant person disdains the counsels of the Word, and hates the reproofs; is he likely to profit? "God giveth grace unto the humble" (James iv. 6). The most eminent saints have been but of low stature in their own eyes; like the sun in the zenith, they showed least when they were at the highest. X. GIVE CREDENCE TO THE WORD WRITTEN. Believe it to be of God; see the name of God in every line. The Romans, that they might gain credit to their laws, reported that they were inspired by the gods at Rome. Believe the Scripture to be "Divinely inspired." Whence should the Scripture come, if not from God? 1. Sinners could not be the authors of Scripture. Would they indite such holy lines? or inveigh so fiercely against those sins which they love? 2. Saints could not be the authors of Scripture. How could it stand with their sanctity to counterfeit God's name, and put "Thus saith the Lord" to a book of their own devising? 3. Angels could not be the authors of Scripture. What angel in heaven durst personate God, and say, "I am the Lord"? Believe the pedigree of Scripture to be sacred, and to come from the "Father of lights." XI. HIGHLY PRIZE THE SCRIPTURES (Psa. cxix. 72). St. Gregory calls the Bible "the heart and soul of God." It is the library of the Holy Ghost. It is the compass by which the rudder of our wheel is to be steered; it is the field in which Christ, the Pearl of price, is hid; it is a rock of diamonds; it is a sacred "eye-salve"; it mends their eyes that look upon it; it is a spiritual optic-glass in which the glory of God is resplendent; it is the "universal medicine" for the soul. XII. GET AN ARDENT LOVE TO THE WORD. Prizing relates to judgment, love to the affections. "Consider how I love Thy precepts" (Psa. cxix. 159; Rom. vii. 22).

He is likely to grow rich who delights in his trade; "a lover of learning will be a scholar." St. Austin tells us, before his conversion he took no pleasure in the Scriptures, but afterwards they were his "chaste delights." XIII. COME TO THE READING OF THE WORD WITH HONEST HEARTS. 1. Willing to know the whole counsel of God. 2. Desirous of being made better by it. XIV. LEARN TO APPLY SCRIPTURE. Take every word as spoken to yourselves. XV. OBSERVE THE PRECEPTIVE PART OF THE WORD, AS WELL AS THE PERMISSIVE. Such as cast their eye upon the promise, with a neglect of the command, are not edified by Scripture; they look more after comfort than duty. The body may be swelled with wind as well as flesh: a man may be filled with false comfort, as well as that which is genuine and real. XVI. LET YOUR THOUGHTS DWELL UPON THE MOST MATERIAL PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE. The bee fastens on those flowers where she may suck most sweetness. Though the whole contexture of Scripture is excellent, yet some parts of it may have a greater emphasis, and be more quick and pungent. XVII. COMPARE YOURSELVES WITH THE WORD. See how the Scripture and your hearts agree, how your dial goes with this sun. Are your hearts, as it were, a transcript of Scripture? Is the Word copied out into your hearts? XVIII. TAKE SPECIAL NOTICE OF THOSE SCRIPTURES WHICH SPEAK TO YOUR PARTICULAR CASE. Were a consumptive person to read Galen or Hippocrates, he would chiefly observe what they writ about a consumption. Great regard is to be had to those paragraphs of Scripture which are most apposite to one's present case. I shall instance only in three cases—1. Affliction. 2. Desertion. 3. Sin. XIX. TAKE SPECIAL NOTICE OF THE EXAMPLES IN SCRIPTURE. Make the examples of others living sermons to you. 1. Observe the examples of God's judgments upon sinners. They have been hanged up in chains *in terrorem*. 2. Observe the examples of God's mercy to saints. Jeremy was preserved in the dungeon, the three children in the furnace, Daniel in the lions' den. These examples are props to faith, spurs to holiness. XX. LEAVE NOT OFF READING IN THE BIBLE TILL YOU FIND YOUR HEARTS WARMED. XXI. SET UPON THE PRACTICE OF WHAT YOU READ. "I have done Thy commandments" (Psa. cxix. 166). A student in physic doth not satisfy himself to read over a system or body of physic, but he falls upon practising physic: the life-blood of religion lies in the practical part. So, in the text: "He shall read" in the book of the law "all the days of his life; that he may learn to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them." Christians should be walking Bibles. XXII. MAKE USE OF CHRIST'S PROPHETICAL OFFICE. He is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," to whom it is given "to open the book" of God, "and to loose the seven seals thereof" (Rev. v. 5). Christ doth so teach as He doth quicken. XXIII. TREAD OFTEN UPON THE THRESHOLD OF THE SANCTUARY. Ministers are God's interpreters; it is their work to expound dark places of Scripture. We read of "pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers" (Judg. vii. 16). Ministers are "earthen" pitchers (2 Cor. iv. 7). But these pitchers have lamps within them, to light souls in the dark. XXIV. PRAY THAT GOD WILL MAKE YOU PROFIT. "I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit" (Isa. xlviii. 17). Make David's prayer: "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law" (Psa. cxix. 18). Pray to God to take off the veil on the Scripture, that you may understand it; and the veil on your heart, that you may believe it. Pray that God will not only give you His Word as a rule of holiness, but His grace as a principle of holiness. I shall conclude all with two corollaries—1. Content not yourselves with the bare reading of Scripture, but labour to find some spiritual increment and profit. Get the Word transcribed into your hearts: "The law of his God is in his heart" (Psa. xxxvii. 31). Never leave till you are assimilated into the Word. Such as profit by reading of the Book of God are the best Christians alive; they answer God's cost, they credit religion, they save their souls. 2. You who have profited by reading the Holy Scriptures, adore God's distinguishing grace. (*T. Watson, M.A.*)

CHAPTER XVIII.

VERS. 9–14. **Thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.** —*Heathen abominations avoided:*—One reason to shun the practices of idolatry springs from the nature of the evils themselves. 1. They are cruel. Children

"pass through the fire." "Cruelty is one of the highest scandals to piety," says Secker. "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty—homesteads of violence" (Psa. lxxiv. 20). 2. They are enticing. Divination, enchanter, and witch have their spells. Idolatry, "a shameful creed of craft and cruelty," delights in what fills the sensuous imagination. "Who hath bewitched (fascinated) you, that ye should not obey the truth?" (Gal. iii. 1.) 3. They are defiling "abominations." Paintings and sculptures, laws and legends, reveal the awful corruptions of the heathen world. 4. They are destructive. "Because of these abominations the Lord doth drive them out." Sin drives away from God here and from heaven hereafter. The fruit of idolatry and superstitions is death (Lev. xx. 23). (*J. Wolfendale.*) **That useth divination.**—*Magical arts and divination*:—1. Different names are here assigned to persons dealing in the arts of magic. "One that useth divination"; professing to gain power and knowledge more than human. "One that practiseth augury" or covert arts. "An enchanter": the original suggesting the serpent, and implying the practice of charming serpent, yet always connected with the arts of divination. "A sorcerer": the Hebrew word signifying one who mutters incantations, but only in the bad sense of seeking help from others than God. "A charmer": a word which suggests *binding* as with the spell of enchantment. "A consulter with a familiar spirit": the English phrase signifies spirits who stand in such a relation to the performer that they *come at his call.* Of course it is pretended that these spirits are other and greater than human. The original Hebrew (Ob) comes down to us in the African "Obe-man," who still follows the same profession, by means of similar arts. "A wizard" is one who claims superhuman wisdom, the old English accurately translating the Hebrew; the distinctively *wise one.* The word is restricted in usage to superior wisdom gained by the arts of magic. "A necromancer": precisely the spiritist of modern times, or rather of all time, who claims to have communion with the spirits of dead men. 2. This analysis of the original words may aid toward some just conception of the associated ideas which cluster round the *magic arts* of the Hebrew age. Their name and their arts are legion. Think of so many classes—professions—of men and women naturally shrewd, sharp, cunning; practising upon the superstitions and fears of the million; working upon their imagination, haunting them with the dread of unknown powers, bringing up to them ghosts from the invisible world, claiming to give auguries of the future, playing in every way upon their fears and hopes, to extort their money or to make sport of their fears or to gratify their own or others' malice. A system so near akin in spirit and influence to idolatry, which so thoroughly displaces God from the hopes and fears of men, and which seeks so successfully to instal these horrible superstitions in His place—a system which perverts the powers of the world to come to subserve ungodliness, and which practically rules out the blessed God from the sphere of men's homage, fears, and hopes—this system has always been worked by wicked and never by good men, has always subserved all iniquity, but piety and morality never—this has been a master-stroke of Satan's policy, and one of the most palpable fields of his triumph through all the ages. (*H. Cowles, D.D.*) **The Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.**—*The deterring power of Divine grace*:—It is recognised as a principle amongst legislators and magistrates, that the great end of punishment is the prevention of crime. And there is no doubt that, up to a certain point, this object is gained. The public execution will strike terror into many, though numbers, again, more hardened in wickedness, will depart from the spectacle, and perhaps commit the very crime for which they have just seen a fellow-creature die. It is not, however, that they actually set at nought the punishment; it is rather that there are always so many chances of escape, the men transgress in the hope that they shall elude detection. The fearfulness of a threatening, even though combined with the certainty of execution, will not always, nor even commonly, deter men from violating the commandments of God. There is no need for having recourse to imagination for the destruction of a people on account of their wickedness, and their inheritance passing into the possession of others. This is only what actually occurred in the instance of the land of Canaan, whose inhabitants were exterminated because of their crimes, and it was then handed over to a new population. There was here what might strictly be called a public execution. There was no giving a secret commission to the angel of death to move through the doomed ranks, and lay them low; which might perhaps have left it doubtful whether or not there had been any judicial interference; but the Israelites were put visibly into the place of public

executioners, being charged with the terrible commission—"Thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them." They were sent expressly to punish a guilty and condemned population. And the first memorable thing, if you examine the Scriptural record, is that God Himself placed no dependence on the influence and effect of the public execution; for His Word is full of warning to the Israelites, that they would fall under the like condemnation if they imitated the practices of those whom they destroyed. So far from its being reckoned on as an insupposable or even an improbable thing, that they who had been commissioned to slay multitudes on account of their sin would themselves practise the sin so fearfully and openly visited, there is the frequent repetition of energetic denunciations of that sin; and Moses is directed to urge the Israelites, with all earnestness and affection, to take heed that they provoke not the Lord by following the example of their predecessors in the land. You must be further aware, that so far from having been unnecessary, the warning actually failed in deterring the Israelites from the accursed practices; so that it was not against improbable danger that Moses directed his parting admonitions. For when the Israelites had destroyed the Canaanites, and taken possession of their land, they quickly gave in to the very abominations which had been visited with all the fearfulness of a public execution. You read of them in the earliest period of their settlement—"They forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth." And their whole history, up to the time when God was provoked to let loose against them the power of the Assyrian, is a record of rebellion under those special and flagrant forms which had marked the guilty career of the tribes which had perished by their sword. Where, then, was the supposed influence of a public execution? What ground is there for the imagination, that even were the Almighty visibly to interfere, and in His character of moral Governor of the universe to anticipate in certain cases those judgments which shall hereafter be poured out on the impenitent, there would be wrought any permanent effect on the great mass of men?—as though the thing wanted in order to repress the actings of unrighteousness were only a more open and express demonstration that punishment is to follow upon sin. And now you may be disposed to ask with what view we have endeavoured to show, that even what might be called a public execution, the present visible descent of the vengeance of God on the perpetrators of certain sins, would probably be ineffectual in deterring others from the practice of those sins—ineffectual even in regard of such persons as had the best means of knowing that the infliction was the direct and judicial consequence of the crime. We have but one object; not that of merely presenting a severe and repulsive picture of the depravity of our nature, but that of shutting you up to the conviction of the necessity, the indispensableness of the Divine grace, in order to your being withheld from the commission of sin. We would withdraw you, if we could, from all reliance on anything but the immediate workings of the Spirit of God, when the matter in question is the being able to resist this or that temptation, or to keep oneself undefiled by this or that wickedness. We would teach you, however harsh the teaching may sound, that there is no wickedness of which you are not capable, and that if you think yourselves secure against a sin just because the sin may be held in abhorrence, or because you may be thoroughly aware of God's purpose of visiting it with extraordinary vengeance, you display a confidence in your own resolution and strength which, as savouring of pride, can only be expected to issue in defeat. This is virtually the doctrine of our text. For you will perceive that God ascribes it wholly to Himself that the Israelites were preserved from the abominations of the heathen. "These nations hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners; but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do." They would have been just as bad had they been left to themselves; but God had not suffered them to fall into such flagrant transgression. He had so acted upon them by His grace as to preserve them from sins, of which they had the seeds in their hearts, just as much as others, in whom those seeds were allowed to bring forth their fruits. And though the text speaks only of the past, making mention of preventing grace as having hitherto wrought upon the Israelites, it is clearly implied in the fact of a remonstrance against any future imitation of the heathen, that there would be no security for them except in their being still withheld by the influences of God's Spirit. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Ver. 15. **A Prophet . . . like unto me.**—*Christ the greatest of the prophets:*—I. THE OFFICE OF A PROPHET IN ANCIENT ISRAEL. He was the voice of God to the

nation. 1. Prophets are found from the earliest times in Israel (Gen. xx. 7; Psa. cv. 15). In the times of the Judges (chap. iv. 4, 6, 14, vi. 7). Samuel the founder of a settled order of prophets (Acts iii. 24). Continued now in Christian ministry. 2. Note that God appoints prophets (or speakers), not the priests, as His representatives and specially commissioned messengers. 3. The awful responsibility of the speaker for God to say only what God has commanded. 4. The word of the prophet was to be tested by its fulfilment (ver. 22). II. THE PROMISE OF THE TEXT PERMANENTLY FULFILLED IN CHRIST. Applied by Christ and His apostles (Acts iii. 22, v. 37; John v. 46). 1. Christ and Moses alike in some points. (1) Both founders of God's kingdom. (2) Both received God's will from immediate and direct communion with God; not in visions, dreams, &c., like the other prophets. 2. Christ and Moses contrasted in other respects. (1) Moses a sinful man; Christ absolutely holy. (2) Moses gave the law which kills; Christ brought grace and truth, which take away sin. (3) Moses founded an outward worldly theocracy, which could only be imperfect and temporary; Christ a spiritual kingdom of God, which overcomes sin and death, and is eternal. (4) The relations of God to Moses were given among the terrors of Sinai, which men could not bear. Christ came veiling the splendours of God in His lowly humanity, and drawing men to Him. III. IMPERATIVE DUTY TO HEARKEN TO CHRIST (Matt. xvii. 5). (*Cunningham Geikie, D.D.*) *The similarity between Moses and Christ*:—As Moses, in the early part of his career, refused the Egyptian monarchy, because it could be gained by him only by disloyalty to God, so Jesus turned away from the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, because they were offered on condition that He would fall down and worship Satan. As Moses became the emancipator of his people from their house of bondage, so Jesus lived and died that He might save His people from their sins; as Moses, penetrating to the soul of the symbolism of idolatry, introduced a new dispensation wherein symbolism was allied to spirituality of worship, so Jesus, seizing the spirituality of the Mosaic system, freed it from its national restrictions, and ushered in the day when neither at Jerusalem nor at Gerizim would men seek to localise the service of Jehovah, but the true worshipper would worship the Father anywhere, believing that the character of the worship is of infinitely higher importance than the place where it is offered; as Moses was pre-eminently a lawgiver, so Jesus speaks with authority, and has, in His Sermon on the Mount, laid down a code which not only expounds, but expands and glorifies, or, in one word, fulfils the precepts of the Decalogue; as Moses stood the mediator of a covenant between God and Israel, representing God to the people, and representing the people to God, interceding for them when they sinned, while at the same time he admitted and condemned their guilt, so Jesus is the Mediator of the New Covenant, standing between God and man, and bridging, by His atonement and intercession, the gulf between the two. We cannot wonder, therefore, that, in the vision of the Apocalypse, they who have gotten the victory over the beast and his image are represented as singing "the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *The prophet like unto Moses*:—I. THE NECESSITY for a Mediator. 1. There was a necessity for a mediator in the case of the Israelites, first, because of the unutterable glory of God, and their own inability to endure that glory, either with their eye, their ear, or their mind. 2. This sufficient reason is supported by another most weighty fact, namely, that God cannot commune with men because of their sin. II. THE PERSON of the appointed Mediator. Dwell upon this fact, that our Lord Jesus was raised up from the midst of us, from among our brethren. In Him is fulfilled that glorious prophecy, "I have exalted One chosen out of the people." He was not one who boasted His descent, or gloried in the so-called blue blood, or placed Himself among the *Porphyro-geniti*, who must not see the light except in marble halls. He was born in a common house of entertainment where all might come to Him, and He died with His arms extended as a pledge that He continued to receive all who came to Him. The main point, however, upon which I want to dwell is, that Jesus is like to Moses. There had been no better mediator found than Moses up to Moses' day; the Lord God, therefore, determined to work upon that model with the great prophet of His race, and He has done so in sending forth the Lord Jesus. 1. I can only mention in what respects, as a Mediator, Jesus is like to Moses, and surely one is found in the fact that Moses beyond all that went before him was peculiarly the depositary of the mind of God. 2. Moses, to take another point, is the first of the prophets with whom God kept up continuous revelation. To other men He spake in dreams and visions, but to Moses by plain and perpetual testi-

mony. 3. Moses is described as a prophet mighty in word and deed, and it is singular that there never was another prophet mighty in word and deed till Jesus came. 4. Moses, again, was the founder of a great system of religious law, and this was not the case with any other but the Lord Jesus. 5. Moses was faithful before God as a servant over all His house, and so was Jesus as a Son over His own house. He is the faithful and true Witness, the Prince of the kings of the earth. 6. Moses, too, was zealous for God and for His honour. Remember how the zeal of God's house did eat him up. When he saw grievous sin among the people, he said, "Who is on the Lord's side?" and there came to him the tribe of Levi, and he said, "Go in and out, and slay ye every one his men that were joined to Baal-peor." Herein he was the stern type of Jesus, who took the scourge of small cords, and drove out the buyers and sellers, and said, "Take these things hence: it is written, My Father's house shall be a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves"; for the zeal of God's house had eaten Him up. 7. Moses, by Divine grace, was very meek, and perhaps this is the chief parallel between him and Jesus. I have said, "by Divine grace," for I suppose by nature he was strongly passionate. There are many indications that Moses was not meek, but very far from it, until the Spirit of God rested upon him. He slew the Egyptian hastily, and in after years he went out from the presence of Pharaoh "in great anger." Once and again you find him very wroth: he took the tables of stone and dashed them in pieces in his indignation, for "Moses' anger waxed hot"; and that unhappy action which occasioned his being shut out of Canaan was caused by his "being provoked in spirit so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips." Divine grace had so cooled and calmed him that in general he was the gentlest of men. But what shall I say of my Master? Let Him speak for Himself! "Come unto Me, all ye," &c. 8. Our Lord was like to Moses in meekness, and then to sum up all—Moses was the mediator for God with the people, and so is our blessed Lord. Moses came in God's name to set Israel free from Pharaoh's bondage, and he did it: Jesus came to set us free from a worse bondage still, and He has achieved our freedom. III. THE AUTHORITY of our great Mediator; and let this be the practical lesson—Hear ye Him. If sin had not maddened men they would listen to every word of God through such a Mediator as Jesus is. Alas! it is not so; and the saddest thing of all is that some hear of Him as if His story were a mere tale or an old Jewish ballad of eighteen hundred years ago. Yet, remember, God speaks by Jesus still, and every word of His that is left on record is as solemnly alive to-day as when it first leaped from His blessed lips. Note how my text puts it. It saith here, "Whosoever shall not hearken unto My words which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him." To-day God graciously requires it of some of you, and asks why you have not listened to Christ's voice. You have not accepted His salvation. Why is this? You know all about Jesus, and you say it is true, but you have never believed in Him: why is this? God requires it of you. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Of Christ's prophetical office*:—This passage foretells the Saviour; it is spoken of Christ. There are several names given to Christ as a Prophet: He is called "the Counsellor": in Christ alone the angel of the Covenant is completed; "the Messenger of the covenant," "a Lamp," "the Morning Star." Jesus Christ is the great Prophet of His Church. I. HOW DOTH CHRIST TEACH? 1. Externally, by His Word (Psa. cxix. 105). 2. Christ teaches these sacred mysteries inwardly by the Spirit (John xvi. 13). II. WHAT ARE THE LESSONS CHRIST TEACHES? 1. He teaches us to see into our own hearts. The heart of man is a great deep, which is not easily fathomed. But Christ, when He teacheth, removes the veil of ignorance, and lights a man into his own heart; and now he sees swarms of vain thoughts, he blusheth to see how sin mingles with his duties, his stars are mixed with clouds, he prays, as Austin, that God would deliver him from himself. 2. He shows us the vanity of the creature. A natural man sets up his happiness here, worships the golden image, but he that Christ hath anointed with His eye-salve hath a spirit of discerning, he looks upon the creature in its night-dress, sees it to be empty and unsatisfying, not commensurate to a heaven-born soul. 3. The excellency of the things unseen. Christ gives the soul a sight of glory, a prospect of eternity. III. HOW DOES CHRIST'S TEACHING DIFFER FROM OTHER TEACHING? 1. Christ teaches the heart. All that the dispensers of the Word can do is but to work knowledge, Christ works grace; they can but give you the light of the truth, Christ gives you the love of the truth; they can only teach you what to believe, Christ teacheth how to believe. 2. Christ gives us a taste of the Word. The light of knowledge is

one thing, the savour another. Christ makes us taste a savouriness in the Word. 3. Christ, when He teaches, makes us obey. 4. Christ teaches easily. He can with the least touch of His Spirit convert; He can say, "Let there be light"; with a word He conveys grace. 5. Christ, when He teacheth, makes men willing to learn. 6. Christ, when He teacheth, doth not only illuminate, but animate. He doth so teach, as He doth quicken. Use—1. See here an argument of Christ's Divinity: had He not been God He could never have known the mind of God, or revealed to us those secrets of heaven, those deep mysteries, which no man or angel could find out. Who but God can anoint the eyes of the blind, and give thee not only light but sight? 2. See what a *cornucopia*, or plenty of wisdom is in Christ, who is the great Doctor of His Church, and gives saving knowledge to all the elect. The body of the sun must needs be full of clarity and brightness, which enlightens the whole world: Christ is the great luminary, "in whom are hid all treasures of knowledge." 3. See the misery of man in the state of nature. 4. See the happy condition of the children of God, they have Christ to be their Prophet: "all thy children shall be taught of the Lord": "God is made to us wisdom." Labour to have Christ for your Prophet; He teacheth savingly, He is an interpreter of a thousand, He can untie those knots which puzzle very angels. Till Christ teach, we never learn any lesson; till Christ is made to us wisdom, we shall never be wise to salvation. IV. WHAT SHALL WE DO TO HAVE CHRIST FOR OUR TEACHER? 1. See your need of Christ's teaching. You cannot see your way without this Morning Star. 2. Go to Christ to teach you. And that we may be encouraged to go to our great Prophet—(1) Jesus Christ is very willing to teach us. Why else did He enter into the calling of the ministry but to teach the mysteries of heaven? (2) There are none so dull and ignorant but Christ can teach them. Every one is not fit to make a philosopher's scholar of—a Mercury is not made out of every block of wood; but there is none so dull but Christ can make a good scholar of. Even such as are ignorant, and of low parts, Christ teacheth them in such a manner, that they know more than the great sages and wise men of the world. (3) Wait upon the means of grace which Christ hath appointed. Though Christ teacheth by His Spirit, yet He teacheth in the use of ordinances. Wait at the gates of wisdom's door. (4) If you would have the teachings of Christ, walk according to that knowledge which you have already. Use your little knowledge well, and Christ will teach you more. (*T. Watson.*) *Our great Prophet*:—I. First, consider THE PROPHETIC OFFICE OF CHRIST IN HIS CHURCH, for which He was pre-eminently qualified; and the first feature of His qualifications for that office which we shall mention is His Divine prescience. He sees the end from the beginning. Moreover, orthodox teaching pertains to the prophet's office, and here also our blessed Lord hath the pre-eminence, for He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes. The sum of His teaching when on earth, as well as by His Spirit to this day, is life in Himself alone. II. Now proceed TO THE UNION AND AFFINITY DESCRIBED; "like unto Moses, and of their brethren." This sets forth Moses eminently a type of Christ, and we will name a few particulars in which the type and antitype are alike, though the latter infinitely surpasses the former. Moses was a man of fame, he was proclaimed "king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together." Jesus was proclaimed King of Zion by God the Father, saying, "I have set My King upon My holy hill of Zion," and there He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet; but here the antitype infinitely exceeds the type, for Moses could only reign over the people, but Jesus reigns both over and in their hearts. Moses was famed as a warrior, and Amalek and Moab felt his prowess—Sihon and Og fell before him; but Jesus, as the Captain of our salvation, has "spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them," yea, He has vanquished death, hell, and the grave, and is still going forth upon His white horse (Gospel truth) from conquering to conquer. Moses was famed for meekness (Numb. xii. 3). Jesus, our Prophet, was like unto Moses, meek and lowly, and His meekness never failed, even when He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself. The faithfulness of Moses is also recorded by the apostle to his honour, "Moses, verily, was faithful in all His house as a servant." He was faithful to God for his people, and he was faithful to the people for God. So our glorious Prophet was like him, and far surpassed him, as a Son over His own house: His very name is "Faithful and True," as the Holy Ghost tells us in the Apocalypse; and by His servant Isaiah He says, "Faithfulness is the girdle of His reins." III. Notice HIS BEING RAISED UP SUPERNATURALLY—"The Lord thy God" raised Him up. In

fact, overything pertaining to Christianity must of necessity be supernatural; and all that religion which originates with fallen nature, and which fallen nature can comprehend, must be spurious. The question which our Lord put to the Jews respecting the ministry of John fixes the standard of real religion—"Is it from heaven, or of men?" "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above," and, consequently, is supernatural—every act of faith, as well as the gift of it, is supernatural; yea, the very life of godliness in the soul is supernatural life. IV. This brings us to show THAT OUR GREAT PROPHET IS ENTITLED TO OBEDIENCE, YEA, THAT IT IS DEMANDED, "Unto Him ye shall hearken." Without this we cannot be reckoned among His sheep, for He says, "My sheep hear My voice"; when He speaks in His Word, by His ministers, or in the secret whispers of His love; they hearken to Him in these communications, whether they be for instruction, reproof, or comfort. As a Prophet He hath graciously said, "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go." It is, therefore, our privilege, and must be our wisdom, to sit at His feet and hearken to His words. By hearkening to Him I understand the embracing of His embassy, as the sent of God the Father on the great errand of salvation; and this will include the receiving of every doctrine He preached—every privilege He bestows—and every precept He enjoins; all which requires great grace from Him. Again, in embracing His embassy, and so hearkening to this Prophet, there will be a settled reliance upon His person and work as the great subject of Old Testament prophecy; so that whoever reads the prophecies without an eye to Jesus, will find them but a dead letter without spirit or life. (*J. Irons.*) *The need of a Mediator between God and man felt and acknowledged:*—I. ON THIS GREAT OCCASION GOD WAS DEALING WITH THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL AS THE MORAL GOVERNOR OF MEN, THE LAWGIVER AND JUDGE OF HIS ACCOUNTABLE CREATURES. II. THIS GRAND PUBLICATION OF GOD'S HOLY LAW AND SOVEREIGN WILL TO THE ASSEMBLED ISRAELITES, WAS ACCOMPANIED WITH SUITABLE ATTENDANT CIRCUMSTANCES OF AWE AND MAJESTY. III. THE ISRAELITES, BY THESE SYMBOLS OF AWFUL POWER AND HOLINESS, WERE FILLED WITH SOLEMN DREAD, AND MADE APPLICATION TO MOSES, THAT IMMEDIATE COMMUNICATIONS FROM GOD MIGHT NO MORE BE GIVEN; BUT THAT HE WOULD BE THEIR MEDIATOR, RECEIVE THE COMMANDS OF GOD, AND DECLARE THEM TO THE PEOPLE. IV. OBSERVE GOD'S APPROVAL OF THE APPLICATION OF THE PEOPLE, AND HIS COMPLIANCE WITH IT. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *The resemblance between Moses and Christ:*—I. CONSIDER MOSES AS A LEADER AND LAWGIVER. You are to observe that both Moses and Christ proved their commission by miracles—a thing that cannot be affirmed of any among the prophets of Israel. They both came to an enslaved race; they both set loose the prisoners; and, when proof of their authority was demanded, they both wrought wonders beyond human power—wonders which equally showed their dominion over the elements, and over life and death. Though one used his might in destroying, and the other only in works of benevolence, yet there was much the same opposition raised against the one and the other—the magicians contending with Moses, and evil spirits contending with Christ. And the deliverances effected by the two were singularly alike, bearing evidently the one towards the other, the relation of type and antitype. Moses broke the yoke from the necks of the captive people; Christ the yoke from the necks of the whole human race. But when Moses made a passage for Israel out of Egypt, all danger was not escaped, nor all difficulties surmounted. The former tyrants pursued the free tribes, and sought to recover the ascendency they had lost; and though Christ hath redeemed us from the power of Satan, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, who knows not that evil spirits, eager to regain their former dominion, pursue those that follow the Captain of Salvation, and strive, with ceaseless energy, to prevent their final escape? When Moses led Israel out of Egypt, he did indeed tell them of a rich and goodly land, which God appointed as their inheritance, but he did not at once put them in possession of it; on the contrary, he conducted them into a dreary wilderness, where they were exposed to continual trials, and harassed with various afflictions. Is it not thus, also, with regard to our redemption? By Christ we hear of a mighty Canaan, reserved for the followers of the Redeemer, but there is not an immediate entrance; a wide desert has to be traced, set with snares and peopled with enemies, and it is only through much tribulation that we can take possession of the heritage. It is not only as a leader, but equally as a lawgiver, that Moses bears a striking resemblance to Christ. II. But we do not think that it was in his capacity as a leader and a lawgiver that Moses most eminently typified Christ. We go on to observe that MOSES ACTED AS A MEDIATOR between

God and the Israelites; and if as mediator, then was he indeed like the Lord our Redeemer. The name of mediator is expressly given by St. Paul to Moses; for you will remember that, in writing to the Galatians, he says, "The law was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator." The reference here is unquestionably to Moses; and, therefore, his claim to being reckoned a mediator rests upon evidence which admits of no dispute. III. OBSERVE, MORE MINUTELY, THE PARTICULARS OF MOSES' LIFE. With regard to the very infancy of the two whom we wish to set before you as type and antitype, you will remember that Moses was wonderfully preserved when in childhood—preserved from Pharaoh's order; and thus was Christ preserved when Herod slew all the children in Bethlehem. Moses fled from his country to escape the wrath of the king, and then there came to him a message, "Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life." Christ fled in like manner, and then there came a message, in almost the same words, to Joseph, "Return, for they are dead which sought the young child's life." Moses, as we before said, contended with the magicians, and forced them to acknowledge his power—Christ contended with evil spirits, and obtained from them a similar confession. Immediately before the emancipation of Israel, Moses instituted the Passover—immediately before redeeming mankind, Christ instituted the Lord's Supper. When Moses had to appoint elders, he appointed seventy—when Christ chose His disciples, He also chose seventy. Into the land that was to be conquered Moses sent twelve men as spies—when the world was to be subdued, Christ sent twelve men as apostles. How did Moses overcome Amalek? By extending both his arms, and keeping them stretched out. How did Christ subdue all men? Only by suffering His hands to be nailed to the Cross. As a prophet, Moses had to deal with a barbarous generation, who were not to be won over to the obeying of God; and who, consequently, with the exception of two, all perished in the wilderness, in forty years. And was not Christ sent to an obdurate people? Moses had to endure ill-treatment from his own family—his brother Aaron and his sister Miriam rebelled against him; and we are told of Christ, "Neither did His brethren believe on Him." Moses fed the people miraculously in the wilderness; Christ fed thousands miraculously in the desert. And, in making a covenant of blood between God and the people, did he not again represent the Redeemer, who, by His own blood, hath "brought nigh those who were sometime afar off"? It was not until Moses was dead that the people could enter the promised land; it was only by the death of Christ that the kingdom of heaven was opened to believers. It was, in one sense, for the iniquities of the people that Moses died: "The Lord was angry with me for your sakes, and sware that I should not go over Jordan, and that I should not go in unto that good land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance; but I must die." We need not tell you that it was for the sins of the world that Christ poured out His soul unto death, in the fulness of His strength, when His eye was not dim nor His natural force abated. Did Moses go up in the sight of the people to the top of Mount Nebo, on purpose to die? and when Christ was yet in the flower of His age, unworn by any sickness, did He go up in the presence of the nation, to the summit of Calvary, on purpose to endure death? Before he went up to die, Moses comforted the disconsolate tribes with an assurance that God would raise them up another prophet; before He went up to die, Christ said to His desponding disciples, "I will not leave you comfortless; I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter." And, to add but another point of correspondence, Moses was buried, but no one knew where his body lay; Christ was buried, and yet were not His remains in vain sought for by the Jews? (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The prophetic office of Christ*:—1. The prophetic office of Christ is one of a peculiarly gracious and encouraging nature to sinners. 2. The prophetic office of Christ is one of infinite dignity, inasmuch as He transacted in it with God for our salvation, and was able to sustain that manifestation of the Divine glory and holiness which no mere man can behold and live. 3. The text presents us with an interesting view of the security and blessedness of all who enjoy an interest in the benefits of Christ's mediation. They shall not hear God's voice nor see His face as the holy, and righteous, but deeply offended arbiter of the destinies of the moral universe, taking vengeance upon His enemies—they shall not have to encounter a conflict with His outraged holiness, and violated justice, and insulted power; but as He shall look upon them through the medium of a Saviour's imputed righteousness and merits, so shall they, on the other hand, see Him in the attractive and winning light of a Saviour's compassion, benignity, and love. (*J. Forbes, D.D.*) *Moses the type of Christ*:—I. If we survey the general

history of the Israelites, we shall find that it is a picture of man's history as the Gospel displays it to us, and that in it MOSES TAKES THE PLACE OF CHRIST. II. CHRIST REVEALS TO US THE WILL OF GOD, AS MOSES DID TO THE ISRAELITES. He is our Prophet as well as our Redeemer. Favoured as he was, Moses saw not the true presence of God. Flesh and blood cannot see it. But Christ really saw, and ever saw, the face of God, for He was no creature of God, but the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father. Christ has brought from His Father for all of us the full and perfect way of life. III. MOSES WAS THE GREAT INTERCESSOR WHEN THE ISRAELITES SINNED. In this he shadows out the true Mediator between God and man, who is ever at the right hand of God making intercession for us. Moses was excluded from the Promised Land, dying in sight, not in enjoyment, of Canaan, while the people went in under Joshua. This was a figure of Him that was to come. Our Saviour Christ died that we might live; He consented to lose the light of God's countenance that we might gain it. Moses suffered for his own sin; Christ was the spotless Lamb of God. His death is meritorious; it has really gained our pardon. (*J. H. Newman, D.D.*) *Moral and typical character of Moses:*—I. CONSIDER MOSES IN HIS MORAL EXCELLENCIES. 1. His vigorous faith in the declarations of God. 2. His cheerful obedience to the commands of God. 3. He was distinguished for a spirit of fervent devotion. 4. He was distinguished for enlarged and unwearied benevolence. 5. He was celebrated for astonishing meekness. 6. His religion was characterised by its constancy and perseverance. II. CONSIDER MOSES AS AN ILLUSTRIOUS TYPE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. 1. The wonderful preservation of both in infancy. 2. The intellectual qualifications of both. 3. The voluntary poverty and reproach of both. 4. The offices which both sustained. 5. The signs and miracles which both wrought. 6. Both fasted forty days and forty nights. There are many other traits of likeness between Moses and Jesus, but the above must suffice. In many things there was a great disparity between them. (1) Moses was a frail man, he had his infirmities. Jesus was free from all sin, and guile was never found in His mouth. (2) Moses was a servant; Jesus a son. (3) Moses received power from God to do the works he did; Jesus possessed all power both in heaven and earth. (4) The spirit of prophecy dwelt largely in Moses, but wholly in Christ. (5) Moses was a leader, but Christ a Saviour. (6) The rewards Moses principally offered were temporal; Christ's spiritual and eternal. (7) Moses established a perishing economy, one that waxed old, and is now abrogated. Christ's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and of His rule there shall be no end. Application: 1. We may admire Moses; but Jesus demands our supreme love. 2. We may read the law of Moses, but believe and trust in the Gospel of Christ. 3. It is well to contemplate the moral excellencies and official engagements of Moses; but it is better to meditate upon the scene on the holy mount of transfiguration, where Moses and Elias both did homage to Jesus, and conversed of His decease, which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem, and where the voice from the excellent glory was heard, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him." (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *Moses a type of Christ:*—I. THE PECULIAR CIRCUMSTANCES CONNECTED WITH THEIR BIRTH. II. THEIR VOLUNTARY ABASEMENT AND HUMILIATION. III. BOTH WERE ESPECIALLY APPOINTED TO BE THE DELIVERERS OF THE AFFLICTED AND THE OPPRESSED. IV. BOTH OF THEM DELIVERED THE LAWS AND MIND OF GOD TO THE PEOPLE. V. BOTH OF THEM WERE APPOINTED LEADERS OF THE PEOPLE. VI. BOTH OF THEM ACTED AS MEDIATORS BETWEEN GOD AND THE PEOPLE. VII. BOTH OF THEIR ENGAGEMENTS WERE CONNECTED WITH THE MINISTRATIONS OF ANGELS. VIII. BOTH WERE DISTINGUISHED FOR HIGH MORAL ENDOWMENTS. IX. BOTH WERE EMINENT PROPHETS OF THE MOST HIGH GOD. X. BOTH OBTAINED UNSPEAKABLY VALUABLE BLESSINGS FOR THE PEOPLE. XI. BOTH LIVED AND LABOURED FOR THE WELL-BEING OF OTHERS. XII. BOTH WERE TREATED WITH INGRATITUDE BY THOSE WHOSE WELFARE THEY LIVED TO PROMOTE. Application: 1. Moses was the head of that dispensation which was legal and ceremonial, and which passed away. Jesus is the head of that economy which is spiritual, gracious, and abiding. 2. Let us rejoice that we are not come to Sinai, but Zion; not under the law, but under grace; not the followers of Moses, but the disciples of Christ. 3. If disobedience to Moses and his law was visited with God's displeasure, how shall those escape who neglect Christ's salvation, and obey not His Gospel? (*Ibid.*) *The resemblance of Jesus to Moses:*—I. THESE WORDS PRINCIPALLY CONTAIN A PROPHECY OF THE MESSIAH. First, the word "prophet" is expressed in the singular number, and intimates plainly the raising up of a certain illustrious prophet at a fixed time,

rather than a constant succession of prophets. Moses expressly adds, "like unto me," that is, in the principal part of his character—one who should not only be a prophet, but also a legislator. But, from the time of Moses to the days of our Saviour, there was no prophet who had the same authority as Moses had, for the succeeding prophets were only interpreters of the Mosaic law, they only exhorted the people to obey the law of Moses; reproved the transgressors of it; and, by foretelling punishments to be inflicted upon them by God, awakened them to return to the obedience of this law. Jesus appeared in the world at that period when the Jewish nation had the highest expectation of the coming of their Messiah. There is no doubt but the ancient Jews acknowledged this text to be particularly applicable to the Messiah (Acts iii. 22, vii. 37). II. THE DESCRIPTION HERE GIVEN EXACTLY CORRESPONDS TO JESUS OF NAZARETH; AND HE RESEMBLED MOSES IN MORE RESPECTS THAN ANY OTHER PROPHET EVER DID. III. THE JEWISH NATION HAVE BEEN, AND STILL ARE, SEVERELY PUNISHED FOR THEIR DISOBEDIENCE TO THIS PROPHET. IV. CONCLUDING INFERENCES. 1. We may see that Christianity is indeed near as old as the creation. The two dispensations resemble a building supported by two pillars, joined and cemented together, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone whom God has placed in Zion; so that if you remove either of the two, the whole must fall to the ground. 2. We may see that the infidelity of the Jewish nation is unreasonable and inexcusable. 3. We may see the folly and inevitable ruin of such as reject Jesus Christ, whose mission God has attested by so many proofs. 4. We may see the just foundation all true Christians have for zealously promoting the interests of the Gospel. (*James Robertson, M.A.*) *Moses a type of Christ*:— I. Christ is a prophet like unto Moses; AND HE IS SO IN TWO RESPECTS: FIRST, AS TO HIS TEACHING; AND SECONDLY, AS TO HIS PREDICTIONS. The office of the prophet was twofold; he not only revealed, by the inspiration of God, the things which should be hereafter; but he also, by the same inspiration, declared unto the people the mind and will of God, as well as their duty towards Him: he was a preacher as well as a prophet. It was so in the case of Moses. He made known to the people of Israel the glorious character of the Most High—His holiness, His majesty, His mercy, His justice. But not only did Moses deliver to Israel heavenly doctrine, and gave them precepts for their guidance; but he foretold their future fortunes, yea, he foretold that they would disobey those very precepts. "I know," he says, "that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger with the work of your hands." But let us turn from Moses to Christ, "a Prophet mighty in word and deed before God and all the people"; that greater Prophet, whom Moses himself foretold, and of whom he was but a type. We find in our blessed Lord the same union of the two qualifications of the prophet. He is our great Teacher; and He also foretold things to come. Christ is our great Teacher; and "who teacheth like Him?" The teaching of Christ is so full, so important, and so adapted to promote our real welfare, that it demands our most intense and diligent study. Let us just glance at some of the truths which His teaching conveys to us. Moses revealed to the children of Israel only just so much of the character of God as God saw fit to make known to him; but our Divine Teacher comes from the very bosom of the Father; He is the Revealer of the Father to the sons of men; yea, He is Himself "Immanuel, God with us." Moses gave to Israel precepts whereby they might live; but the blessings attached to them were but temporal: the great truths connected with the life to come were but obscurely revealed to them. But our great Teacher has "brought life and immortality to light." He teaches us the necessity of a change of heart, if we would dwell for ever in the realms of holiness and peace: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He has told us of the absolute necessity that our sins should be forgiven, if we would obtain everlasting life, and the way by which we are to obtain that forgiveness. And He does what Moses could never do: He sends His Holy Spirit to write His law upon our hearts. Moses gave to Israel the law of the Ten Commandments, as well as the ceremonial law; but our Teacher has made known to us the Gospel. The moral law was indeed glorious, its holiness was its glory: but it could not save: it could but convince of our sins, and condemn us for our disobedience. But Jesus has come to us with better tidings: He tells us how we may escape the condemnation of the law. "He hath redeemed us from its curse, being made a curse for us." Christ our Prophet also foretells things to come. He foretold, as Moses did,

the destruction of the city of the Jews, and of their magnificent temple; and, in the prospect of the inconceivable misery which they were about to suffer, His heart was filled with anguish. II. Other points of resemblance between Moses and Christ are presented to us in the text. We are told, "THE LORD THY GOD WILL RAISE UP UNTO THEE A PROPHET LIKE UNTO ME." Moses was commissioned by God as a prophet to Israel; and he came to them with all the authority of such high commission. His words were as though they had been spoken by God Himself; and it was at their peril that the Israelites refused to hear him. So also is Christ sent unto us by God. The same almighty Being who created the heavens and the earth, who formed the spirit of man within him, our Creator, Benefactor, and Preserver, has sent unto us Jesus, to be our great Teacher. What greater inducement can we have to hearken to His voice? III. Moses was a prophet raised up in Israel FROM AMONG THEMSELVES. God sent not an angel to be their instructor, but a man of like passions with themselves; one who could sympathise and bear with them, and one whom they might approach without fear. So also was Christ raised up to us from among our brethren; forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same. IV. Again, Moses prophesied that the Lord would raise up this mighty Prophet UNTO ISRAEL; and it is true that Jesus came to preach salvation first to the Jew. He said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But there is a spiritual Israel, the seed of Abraham by faith, even the company of all true believers; and unto them Christ was raised up to be a Prophet, the great Prophet of His Church. (*M. T. Spencer, M.A.*) *The acceptance of Christ as a Prophet*:—What strikes one perhaps most of all in looking at the old castles in England is the meagre openings that they have for light. How did the people inside of them contrive to live and read and write? With these apertures and passages out to the glorious day no bigger than the barrel of a gun, how did they manage their existence? What incomparable comforts men have to-day in the great windows that open back and front, and often on the sides, out into God's ample and beautiful world! Those old castles, with the stray beams struggling in upon broken-down halls and dungeons, with the glorious floods of light forbidden to enter, are a picture of the men who shut out the Lord. The rejection of Christ is the refusal to let in the light, is the shrinking back into the dark castle, into the rude home of barbarism and privation. The acceptance of Christ is the acceptance of modern life in its highest meaning, giving a welcome to its ideas, its spirit of reform, its determination to conquer the world. It is a coming out of the dark prison of self-containment into an utter openness toward the infinite God. (*George A. Gordon.*)

CHAPTER XIX.

VERS. 1–13. **That every slayer may flee thither.**—*Cities of refuge*:—I. THERE ARE MANY, besides the murderer of Uriah, WHO HAVE NEED TO CRY WITH HIM, "DELIVER ME FROM BLOODGUILTINESS, O GOD." 1. And, first, since a preacher must address his own conscience, as well as those of the hearers, I cannot forget the fearful applicability which this charge of bloodguiltiness may have to Christian ministers. If ministers neglect to warn the wicked, if they keep back from the people any part of the counsel of God, either doctrinal or practical, and do not declare it; if they omit in their teaching either "repentance towards God," which is the beginning of the Gospel, or "faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," which is the body and substance of it—blood lieth at their door, the angel of Divine vengeance is abroad in pursuit of them: blood for blood, life for life, this is His legal requirement; His eye shall not pity, neither shall It spare; the manslayer's life—not the life of his body, but the life of the soul—is justly forfeit, unless, indeed, there be, under the economy of grace, some spiritual city of refuge appointed for him, into which he may flee and be safe. 2. Consider, then, I pray you, that subtle, undefinable thing, conveyed in a single remark, or in a single glance, or even sometimes in a single gesture, called influence. Consider how it propagates itself, and runs along like beacon fires—how alarmingly contagious and infectious its nature is. 3. But the influence which all people professing religion exercise on society at large, and claim to exercise, is too important to go without some remark. II. THE

SINNER'S SPIRITUAL REFUGE, I NEED NOT TELL YOU, IS JESUS CHRIST, who represents also the merciful elders and the anointed high priest; and the road by which we flee to Christ spiritually is the road of faith. 1. First, he must fly to Christ, as if for his life, as a man flies from a falling house or a beleaguered town—as righteous Lot was directed to flee from the cities of the plain. 2. As impediments were removed out of the manslayer's way, and the road was made as easy and obvious to him as possible, so it is a very simple thing to believe in Christ, and thus to flee to our spiritual City of Refuge—so much so, that its extreme simplicity sometimes puzzles us, and makes us look with distrust upon faith, as if so very obvious a thing could not be the appointed way of coming to God. 3. When the merciful Elder, Jesus Christ, comes to the gate of the city of refuge, what have we to plead with Him? We have nothing to plead but our own sin and misery, and the Divine covenant which was ratified by His blood—the Divine assurance that He is able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him. We must insist upon our right to receive a "strong consolation" for our troubled conscience, even because we have in God's appointed way "fled for a refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us" in Him. And surely the merciful Elder will receive and comfort us, and give us a place that we may dwell with Him. 4. Again, the manslayer was to abide in the city of his refuge—and so must we abide in ours, if we would be safe. The justice of God may arrest us the moment we are out of Christ. III. Such, then, are some of the points of analogy between the Jewish city of refuge and its New Testament Antitype. THERE ARE TWO POINTS OF GLORIOUS CONTRAST. 1. The city of refuge was permanently available only to such manslayers as had acted without any evil intent. Not so our City of Refuge! Christ is able to save to the uttermost. 2. The manslayer was to remain in the city until the high priest died. But our High Priest never dies. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." IV. DO WE WISH TO KNOW WHETHER WE ARE ABIDING IN THIS CITY OF REFUGE, UNDER THE WING OF THE MERCIFUL ELDER, UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST? There is only one safe test of this, and it is very easily applied. "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked"; and again, "Whosoever abideth in Him, sinneth not"; and again, "He that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him." As the evidence of our being in Christ at all is our bearing fruit, so the evidence of our abiding in Him is our bearing much fruit; "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." And the fruit is this: "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against which there is no law." (*Dean Goulburn.*) **Deliver him into the hand of the avenger.**—*No refuge for a man-hater*:—The universe was not constituted to give security to murderers: there is no shelter for a man-hater. He may get into a city of refuge, but he is to be dragged out of it: the evil-doer may make a profession of religion, but his cloak, though of velvet and gold-braided, must be torn from his shoulders. The universe has no lodgment for the man of malicious heart and murderous spirit; the city of refuge in Israel was not built for him; he has no right in it; to pity him is to despise the law; to pity the murderer is to forget the murdered. The eyes of justice are fixed upon both points in the case. It is an evil sentiment that spares the wrong-doer and forgets the wrong-endurer, the sufferer of wrong. There is one place appointed for the murderer. Who is the murderer? Not the shedder of blood:—whoso hateth his brother without a cause is a murderer. This is the great law, not of Israel only, but of the Church of Christ in all ages. Beware of malice! It does not always begin in its broadest form, or leap at once in all its intensity into human action: it begins in little frets and spites and jealousies; it starts out of a root of criticism, of fault-finding, and investigations into consistency; it may begin as a clever action, showing the spirit of judgment, and proving itself to be equal to the analysis of the most hidden motive; but it grows; disappointed, it begins to justify itself; foiled in its attempts to succeed, it retires that it may increase the supposed evidence that is at command; then it returns to the onslaught; it grows by what it feeds on; at last, philanthropy—love of man—dies, and misanthropy—hatred of man—takes its place. Then is the soul a murderer; and, thank God, there is no city of refuge for the murderer of life, of hope, of love, of trust!—open the door and thrust ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness!—the sun will not spare a beam to bless the murderer. Christ is not a refuge in the sense of a criminal being able to outrun justice. The picture in Israel was the picture of a man fleeing for refuge and an avenger fleeing after him; and if the avenger were swifter of foot, the man-

slayer might be killed outside the city. There is no such picture in Christianity. In Christ we do not outrun justice: justice itself, by a mystery we can neither understand nor explain, has been satisfied by Christ. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 14. **Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark.**—*Ancient landmarks removed:*—Stones indicating boundaries might easily be removed. Ditches could be secretly levelled. This would materially affect property, and be a great evil in land where territory was distributed by lot. Removal would be—I. To DISREGARD ANCIENT CUSTOM. "They of old have set," with care and justice. "Custom is held as law." Fixed law and fixed boundaries should be respected. But many scorn ancient landmarks as relics of bygone days. Impatient of restraint, they seek wider range of thought and action, indulge in novelties, and cry, Down with temples, and away with creeds and the Bible! II. To VIOLATE THE LAW OF GOD. Heathen nations held every landmark as sacred. God, as the proprietor of all the earth, set bounds for Israel, allotted their lands which they held in trust, and bound them in terms imposed by His will (chap. xxvii. 17). Hence removal of landmarks is violation of His command, and direct insult to His authority. III. To DEFRAUD OUR NEIGHBOUR. Landmarks were witnesses of the rights of each man. Removal was selfish and unjust invasion of property. To enlarge your own estate at the expense of your neighbour's is theft. Each one should know his own, and not defraud another by concealment, forgery, or robbery. "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him" (Lev. xix. 13; Mark x. 19; 1 Thess. iv. 6). IV. To EXPOSE TO A DREADFUL CURSE. The execration of men is something, but who can bear the curse of God? The field of the fatherless is under Almighty protection. The poor may seem helpless, but special warning is given against their oppression. "Remove not the old landmark, and enter not into the fields of the fatherless" (by acts of violence or removal of boundaries), "for their Redeemer is mighty to vindicate outraged innocence" (Prov. xxiii. 10, 11). This in after-times was the great affront of national provocation (Hos. v. 10). (*J. Wolfendale.*)

CHAPTER XX.

VERS. 1–4. **When thou goest out to battle.**—*Righteous war:*—I. UNDERTAKEN TO ACCOMPLISH THE PURPOSE OF GOD. "In the name of our God we will set up our banners." II. SANCTIONED BY THE WILL OF GOD. 1. God's will is ascertained by His presence. 2. God's will is declared by His servants. III. CONDUCTED BY THE PRECEPTS OF GOD. (*J. Wolfendale.*) *Christian life a warfare:*—I. THIS WARFARE IS AGAINST MIGHTY ENEMIES. 1. Great in number. 2. Terrible in equipment. II. IN THIS WARFARE RIGHT MEN ARE WANTED. 1. Good leaders. 2. Good soldiers. (1) Soldiers conscious of right. (2) Soldiers willing to serve. (3) Soldiers full of courage. III. IN THIS WARFARE WE SHOULD NOT BE DISHEARTENED. 1. God's providence encourages us. "Brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." There is constant reference to this deliverance most striking and instructive. History unfolds Divine providence; abounds with proofs of omnipotence, and pledges of help. Examples are cited to animate to fortitude and virtue. 2. God's presence is with us. "The Lord thy God is with thee." Not merely as commander, but "goeth with you" into the greatest danger. Not as a spectator, like Xerxes, who viewed the conflict from on high, but "to fight for you" with the determination "to save you." "The Lord thy God, He it is," not a common general, "that doth go with thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." (*Ibid.*) **Be not afraid.**—*Fear forbidden:*—Israel had seen little of war, only a few brushes in their journey with inferior adversaries. Things would soon become more serious. Hence alarm and need of admonition and encouragement. All Christians are soldiers, and wage a good warfare. It is a necessary and trying warfare—continues through every season and in every condition. The forces of their enemies may be superior in number, vigilance, wisdom, and might. Hence danger of alarm and need of fortitude in the warrior. None have better grounds for courage than we; not in ourselves, for then we must fail. I. THE DIVINE PRESENCE: "For the Lord thy God is with thee." Antigonus said to his troops, dismayed at the numbers of the foe, "How many do you reckon me for?" But God is all-wise and almighty. "They

that be with us are more than they that be with them." "Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world." II. His AGENCY: "Who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." To a Jew, this was not only a proof, but a pledge; not only showed what He could do, but was a voucher of what He would do. He is always the same, and never suffers what He has done to be undone. Strange would it have been, after opening a passage through the sea, to have drowned them in Jordan. What would have been thought of His great name, after placing Himself at their head to lead them to Canaan, if He had suffered them to be overcome by the way? He, who begins the work, is not only able to finish, but begins it for the very purpose. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (*W. Jay.*)

Vers. 5–9. **Let him go and return to his house.**—*The exemptions in war*:—Soldiers must be as free from care and cowardice as possible. Wellington declared "that the power of the greatest armies depends upon what the individual soldier is capable of doing and bearing." Four classes are here exempted:—I. THOSE INVOLVED IN BUSINESS. The soldier leaves his private business when he enlists to serve his country. The farmer leaves his plough, the mechanic his shop, and the merchant his store. In Israel those were not called to serve who, from circumstances and prospects, would feel most keenly the hardship. 1. Those engaged in dedicating a house. They must return to their house lest another dedicate it. 2. Those engaged in planting a vineyard must enjoy the fruit of it. Building and planting are good and needful for the community, but encumber the soldier. II. THOSE HINDERED BY SOCIAL TIES. "What man hath betrothed a wife and not taken her" (ver. 7, xxiv. 5). "It was deemed a great hardship to leave a house unfinished, a new property half-cultivated, and a recently contracted marriage unconsummated, and the exemptions allowed in these cases were founded on the principle that a man's heart being deeply engrossed with something at a distance, he would not be very enthusiastic in the public service." In an army there should be one heart, one purpose, and one desire to please the commander. In the corps of Christian soldiers there is entire obedience to the will of the Captain of our Salvation. III. THOSE DEFICIENT IN PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS. The fearful and faint-hearted were not permitted to war. 1. In moral qualifications. Some think that the fear named arose from an evil conscience, which makes a man afraid of danger and death. Men of loose and profligate lives are often cowards and curses to an army. Hence those conscious of guilt were to be sent away. "A guilty conscience needs no accuser." "Conscience makes cowards of us all." 2. In natural qualification. The allusion seems to be natural cowardice. Men reverence bravery, but cowards are objects of scorn. Wellington said of some foreigners who ran away from the field of Waterloo, "Let them go; we are better without them." There must be no fear in officers or men. No cowards in the ranks lest the army flee before the enemy. (*J. Wolfendale.*) **Fearful and faint-hearted.**—*Faint-heartedness*:—The army might thus be greatly reduced; we must remember, however, that reduction may mean increase. We do not conquer by number but by quality. One hero is worth ten thousand cowards. Cæsar is in himself more than all his legions. Quality counts for everything in the greatest battles and the most strenuous moments of life. Given the right quality, and the issue is certain. Quality never gives in; quality is never beaten; quality flutters a challenge in its dying moments, and seems to say, "I will rise again and continue the fight from the other side." So the army was reduced, and yet the army was increased in the very process of reduction. To-day the great speech is made over again—"What man is there that is fearful and faint-hearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart." We cannot deny the fact that most Christian professors are faint-hearted; they are not heroic souls. What is the explanation of faint-heartedness? Want of conviction. Given a convinced Church, and a heroic Church is the consequence; given a Church uncertain, unconvinced, and you have a Church that any atmosphere can affect and any charlatan can impose upon. We must, therefore, return to foundations, to central principles, to primary realities; and having made sure of these the rest will arrange itself. Where is conviction? There may be a good deal of concession: there may be a strong indisposition to object to, or to deny, or to bring into discredit, theological problems and religious usages, but what is needed is something more—clear, well-reasoned, strongly-grounded conviction; and where this rules the mind every faculty is called into service, and the battle of life is conducted with heroic decision and chivalrous self-

forgetfulness. It was well understood in Israel that the faint-hearted man does more harm than he supposes he does. It is the same all the world over and all time through. The timid man says, "I will sit behind." Does his retirement behind mean simply one man has gone from the front? It means infinitely more —it is a loss of influence, a loss of sympathy, a loss of leadership. A Christian professor is not at liberty to say he will abide in the shade; he will allow the claims of others; any place, how obscure soever, will do for him. Have no patience with men who tell such lies! They have no right to be behind; their mission should be to find the best place, and to wake up every energy—to stir up the gift that is in them; and every man should feel that the battle depends upon him. The discouraging influence of faint-heartedness it is impossible to describe in words. Better have a congregation of six souls of light and fire and love, than have a great crowd without conviction, easy-going, flaccid in sentiment and thought —without central realities and foundations that can be relied upon. "What man is there that is fearful and faint-hearted? Let him go": he is not a loss—his going is the gain of all who are left behind. How marvellously faint-heartedness shows itself! In one case it is fear of heresy. In another case it is fear of criticism. What will the people next door say? What will the adjoining Church think? What will other men declare their judgment? In another case it is fear of sensation. We must not advertise, because some people might misunderstand it; we must not have too much music, because there are persons unable to follow the mystery of praise; we must not have anything unusual. To have such faint-hearted men in the Church is the bitterest trial that Christ has now to undergo. There is another faintness which is rather to the credit of the man who experiences it—a faintness arising from great service, long-continued effort, and noble sacrificial consecration. When a man pours out his life for the cause he may well be faint now and then. A beautiful sentiment in Scripture describes his condition: "faint, yet pursuing"—putting out the arm in the right direction, looking along the right road, and saying in mute eloquence, "Give me breathing time, and I will join you again; let me rest awhile; do not take my sword away—in a day or two at most I will be at the front of the fight." That is a faintness which may be the beginning of great strength. So God is gracious to us; having no sympathy with timidity and fear and cowardliness, He has infinite compassion upon those who, having worn themselves out in service, need space and time for breathing. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Vers. 16–18. **Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth.**—*Extermination of Canaanites:*—Is not this fierce irruption in Canaan with fire and sword precisely similar to the wave of Mahomedan conquest? Is it any way different from the most pitiless of heathen invasions? How can we justify such an acquisition of territory as this, whilst we are, at least in theory, so scrupulous about adding one acre of unjustly acquired land to our dominions, and cannot let one drop of blood be shed, even in a conquered race, without inquiry? The key to this difficulty was given in the very first confirmation of the grant made to Abraham. When the land of Canaan was made over to him and his descendants, he was told that they could not at once enter on possession, "because the iniquity of the Amorites was not full." The transference of territory was thus from the first viewed and treated as a judicial transaction. God reserves to Himself the right which all sovereigns must and do reserve—the right of removing offenders from the earth, and of confiscating their goods. In other respects this invasion finds a parallel in almost every century of history, and in every part of the world. It is, in point of fact, by conquest that civilisation has spread and is spreading upon earth, and in the career of progress the nations whose iniquities are full—that is to say, which have fallen too low for national redemption—have been swept away by the purer and stronger races. In this, therefore, there is no difference between the conduct of Israel and the conduct of other great nations. The difference consists in this—that while other nations have pushed their conquests for love of gain or glory, or through pride in their leader or mere lust of adventure, Israel entered Canaan as God's servant, again and again warned that they were merely God's sword of justice, and that if they forgot this, and began to think it was their own might that had emptied the land for them, they should themselves suffer the like extermination. Between this and many other outwardly similar conquests there was, in short, all the difference which there is between a righteous execution which rejoices the hearts of all good men, and a murder which makes us ashamed of our nature.

(*Marcus Dods, D.D.*) *Unselfish conquest*:—The difference between the Jews and other people is precisely this:—All the great nations that we read of have effected extensive and, on the whole, salutary conquests. Their triumphs have been the means of spreading law, government, civilisation, where they would otherwise not have reached. They have swept away feeble, corrupt, sensualised people, who had become animal-worshippers or devil-worshippers, and had lost all sense of their human dignity. But we feel that the nations who have done these works have done them in great part for their own glory, for the increase of their territory, at the instigation and for the gratification of particular leaders. All higher and more blessed results of their success, which it is impossible not to recognise, have been stained and corrupted by the ignoble and selfish tendencies which have mixed with them, and been the motives to them; so that we are continually perplexed with the question, what judgment we shall form of them, or what different causes we can find for such opposite effects. There is one nation which is taught from the very first that it is not to go out to win any prizes for itself, to bring home the silver or gold, the sheep or the oxen, the men-servants or the women-servants; that it is to be simply the instrument of the righteous Lord against those who were polluting His earth, and making it unfit for human habitation. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) *The command to extirpate the Canaanites*:—This command to extirpate the Canaanites is regarded by many as one of the chief difficulties in the Old Testament. The difficulty lies not so much in the thing itself, as in our defective views of God, or of man's relation to Him, or of the supernatural character of the revelation made to Moses. The objection, it will be observed, is grounded (or it has no force) upon the supposed inconsistency of this command with the Divine righteousness and equity. Yet there are other acts of God, equally terrible and equally indiscriminate in their effects, which we never presume to call in question. When, for example, the Almighty sends an earthquake or a pestilence, there is no complaint of injustice; and yet earthquake and pestilence spare neither age nor sex nor rank, but involve all in the same ruin. Do fire or famine or cholera discriminate between the sexes, or spare the aged or the young? If the sword of Israel was commissioned to destroy all that breathed of the Canaanites, it certainly was not more indiscriminate than these other judgments of God. If we dare not assert or even insinuate injustice in the case of the one, neither can we rationally do so in the case of the other; nor can we deny to the Almighty the right to choose this or that method of chastising a guilty people, whether earthquake or famine, pestilence or war. We may further remember that the annihilation of a people is so far from being a new or an unexampled occurrence, that similar events in the overruling wisdom of God have been continually taking place ever since the dawn of history. For an example of it we need not travel beyond our own shores. Where are the original inhabitants of England? The Briton was subdued by the Saxon, the Saxon was driven out by the Norman and the Dane, each race leaving, however, some trace of itself in the stock and blood of the country. Yet the original race has been more completely extirpated than ever the Canaanitish races were during the Hebrew occupancy of Palestine. Still more complete has been the disappearance of the North American Indians. The red man has been driven farther and farther towards the setting sun, till the race seems threatened with absolute extermination, and is actually extinct over an area twenty times as great as that of Palestine. It appears to be an unvarying law, that the savage recedes before the civilised man. We cannot justify all the means by which this result is accomplished, or palliate the dark and monstrous crimes which have been perpetrated in the name of civilisation; yet it is an evident fact that the Ruler of nations is pleased to ordain, or to permit, that nations should be driven from their ancestral inheritance, and their places filled by others. Thus we see that what happened to the Canaanites is happening continually in the history of nations. In this view the phenomenon of the destruction of the Canaanite nations does not stand alone. It can be referred to a class. And there is no more ground for disputing the Divine justice in regard to the destruction of those people than in regard to the disappearance of scores and perhaps hundreds of other ancient races from the face of the earth; for it cannot be contended that there is any difference, as it regards justice and equity, whether a nation be extirpated by war, destroyed by famine or pestilence, or left to perish, like the aborigines of Australia, by hopeless and helpless exhaustion. (*L. H. Wiseman, M.A.*)

Ver. 19. **Thou shalt not destroy the trees.**—*Cutting down fruit trees*:—It will be

observed that this instruction is given to the Jews in the event of their going to war against any city. No question of mere horticulture arises in connection with this injunction. It is wantonness that is forbidden; it is not art that is decried. Trees that did not bear fruit were of course available for war, but trees that could be used for purposes of sustaining human life were to be regarded as in a sense sacred and inviolable. A prohibition of this kind is charged with lofty moral significance. When men go to war they are in hot blood; everything seems to go down before the determination to repulse the enemy and to establish a great victory. But here men in their keenest excitement are to discriminate between one thing and another, and are not to permit themselves to turn the exigencies of war into an excuse for wantonness or for the destruction of property that bears an intimate relation to human sustenance. Dropping all that is merely incidental in the instruction, the moral appeal to ourselves is perfect in completeness and dignity. Civilisation has turned human life into a daily war. We live in the midst of contentions, rivalries, oppositions, and fierce conflicts of every kind, and God puts down His law in the very midst of our life, and calls upon us to regulate everything by its sacredness. God has not left human life in a state of chaos; His boundaries are round about it; His written and unwritten laws constitute its restraints, its rewards, and its penalties; and even war in its most violent form is not to blind our eyes to the claims of God. Men say that all is fair in love and war, but this proverbial morality has no sanction in Holy Scripture. We are too apt to plead the exigency of circumstances in extenuation of acts that would not have otherwise been committed. It is evident that there are points in life at which circumstances must triumph or law must be maintained. Thus an appeal is made to reason and conscience nearly every day. When the human or the Divine must go down, the Christian ought to have no hesitation as to his choice. Victories may be bought at too high a price. He who gives fruit-bearing trees in exchange for his triumphs may be said to have paid his soul for the prizes of this world. The young life, boastful of its energy, insists upon having its pleasures, cost what they may, and the old man is left to ruminate that in his youth he won his victories by cutting down his fruit-trees. Two views may be taken of the circumstances and objects by which we are surrounded; the one is the highest view of their possible uses, and the other the low view which contents itself with immediate advantages. The wood of the fruit-tree might be as useful as any other wood for keeping back an enemy or serving as a defence; but the fruit-tree was never meant for that purpose, and to apply it in that direction is to oppose the intention of God. We are to look at the highest uses of all things—a fruit-tree for fruit; a flower for beauty; a bird for music; a rock for building. Power and right are not co-equal terms. We have the power to cut down fruit-trees, but not the right; we have the power to mislead the blind, but not the right; we have the power to prostitute our talents, but not the right. The right is often the more difficult course as to its process, but the difficulty of the process is forgotten in the heaven of its issue. To have the power of cutting down fruit-trees is to have the power of inflicting great mischief upon society. A man may show great power in cutting down a fruit-tree, but he may show still greater power in refusing to do so. The first power is merely physical, the second power is of the nature of God's omnipotence. Forbearance is often the last point of power. To love an enemy is to show greater strength than could possibly be shown by burning up himself and his house, and leaving nothing behind but the smoking ashes. There are times when even fruit-trees are to be cut down. Perhaps this is hardly clear on the first putting of it. The meaning is that a fruit-tree may cease to be a fruit-tree. When Jesus came to the fig-tree and found on it nothing but leaves, He doomed it to perpetual barrenness, and it withered away. Even the husbandman pleaded that if the fruit-tree did not bear fruit after one more trial it should be cut down as a cumberer of the ground. Fruit-trees are not to be kept in the ground simply because in years long past they did bear fruit. Trees are only available according to the fruit which they bear to-day. "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Fruit or timber:—A fruit-tree may be used for timber, or it may be kept for fruit. In the legislation of Moses there is a command which directs the Hebrews to spare the fruit-trees of the Promised Land. Moses knew that the land would be occupied by conquest. The Hebrews would have to besiege many of its towns and cities before they could enter them. For the siege they would require timber, and would be apt to destroy the groves of olives and palms and oranges, which have always been the wealth of Palestine. Inasmuch as they were expecting to find their homes

in these conquered towns and cities, it was very important that the fruit-trees should be preserved. 1. Life's opportunities and institutions are our fruit-trees. They may be used for timber, or they may be preserved for fruit. It is possible to exhaust their power and vitality now, or they may be protected and developed, and made to yield fruit from generation to generation. The law of Moses—and his words here, or elsewhere, are confirmed by other portions of Holy Scripture—commands men to regard the future. Life's advantages are designed for those who shall come after us, as well as for those who now enjoy them. We are only stewards. Our interest is but a life interest. The future must not be sacrificed to the present. 2. Yet how often this sacrifice is witnessed! When I see a man who is making a fortune by dishonest practices, I feel that he is converting fruit-trees into timber; when I see a young Christian, who is absorbed in all the gaieties of social life, eager for the dance and the card-party and the race, I feel that he is turning his fruit-trees into timber; when I see a schoolboy who refuses the education which his father offers him, I feel that he is raising an axe against the fruit-trees; when I hear a man say that his business will be ruined if he becomes a Christian, I look about me to see what he is building with the timber of his fruit-trees; when I meet with individuals who are neglecting the salvation of their souls for the sake of worldly pleasure, I tremble for the fruit-trees; when I hear distant nations calling in vain for the Gospel, and then realise that the Church has wealth and influence, I wonder if the fruit-trees are used for timber. 3. There are many ways of violating this law. The axe is busy all the time. Our fruit-trees are constantly sacrificed. For men too often prefer a present gratification to a future good; and they try and gain the whole world, even at the risk of losing their immortal souls. The rich man of the parable did so, and Lazarus did not. And by and by the one was comforted and the other was tormented. 4. In our regard for the Sabbath this principle has place and importance. The Sabbath is a fruit-tree. It may be converted into timber. If you have a journey to make, you can use the Sabbath; if you have any work to accomplish, you can employ the hours of holy time; if you wish to live for pleasure, you can count the days of pleasure in a week seven instead of six. A present and temporary advantage may thus be gained. But how about the future? Is it right or wise to break in upon the sanctity of the Sabbath? Can we prosper, can the nation prosper, without this holy day? Yet if we secularise the day now, there will soon be no Sabbath left; and when the Sabbath disappears, will not freedom disappear also, and will not the comfort of our happy homes be gone? (*H. M. Booth.*)

CHAPTER XXI.

VERS. 1–9. **If one be found slain.**—*God's value of individual life*:—"This narrative," says one, "sets forth the preciousness of human life in the sight of God." Dr. Jamieson believes this singular statute concerning homicide is far superior to what is found in the criminal code of any other ancient nation, and is undoubtedly the origin or germ of the modern coroners' inquests. I. DISCOVERED IN THE LOSS OF ONE MAN. Only one missing! But God counts men as well as stars, and "gathers one by one." Ancient philosophy and modern socialism overlook personality, and legislate for men in a mass. The individual exists only for the race, has no rights, and becomes a tool or slave of society. Christianity does not belittle man, but recognises and renews individuals, exalts them to responsibility, and appeals to them for right. "Adam, where art thou?" II. DISCOVERED IN THE INJURY TO ONE MAN. One man was missing, but he was murdered. His blood, like that of Abel, was crying for justice. Society was wounded in one of its members. An inquiry was demanded, and the reproach must be wiped away. III. DISCOVERED IN THE INTEREST WHICH THE COMMUNITY SHOULD TAKE IN ONE MAN. "Am I my brother's keeper?" Formerly heavy fines were inflicted on districts to prevent the murder of Danes and Normans by exasperated Englishmen. We are members one of another; related one to another, and none of us can turn away like Cain. IV. DISCOVERED IN THE PROVISION MADE FOR EVERY MAN'S SALVATION. Christ died for one and for all. It is not the will of God "that one of these little ones should perish." If one sheep goes astray, the ninety and nine are left by the shepherd.

He seeks the one that is lost, and its restoration brings greater joy than over all the remainder. "Dost thou believe?" (*J. Wolfendale.*) *Expiating unknown murder:*—We shall endeavour—I. TO EXPLAIN THE ORDINANCE. In doing this we must notice—1. Its general design. God intended by this law—(1) To prevent the commission of murder. (2) To provide means for removing guilt from His land. 2. Its particular provisions: the victim, the death, the place; the protestations and petitions of the elders. II. TO POINT OUT SOME LESSONS WHICH MAY BE LEARNED FROM IT. 1. The importance of preventing or punishing sin. 2. The comfort of a good conscience. 3. The efficacy of united faith and prayer. (*C. Simeon, M.A.*)

Vers. 15–17. **The right of the firstborn.**—I. THE RIGHTS OF PRIMOGENITURE DEFINED. "A double portion of all that he hath." As head of the family, the eldest son would be put into power and privilege, be heir of his father's rank and wealth. He was not to be limited in his allowance, nor deposed from his authority. The Divine Ruler entrusts him with possessions and entails them by His will. II. THE RIGHTS OF PRIMOGENITURE UPHELD. Individual preferences and partialities are not to set aside the rights of the firstborn. 1. Rights upheld through successive marriage. When an Israelite had two wives together or in succession, one might be loved and the other hated (ver. 15). God might tolerate polygamy, but right must be upheld. 2. Rights upheld against human partiality. The influence of the second wife was later and more permanent. Justice must not bend to personal like or dislike. Amid divided affections and divided authority, God and not caprice must rule. 3. Rights upheld by Divine injunction. Man is changeable; entails discord, feud, and litigation in his family; but God is just and impartial. He will protect our rights and vindicate our character. (*J. Wolfendale.*)

Vers. 22, 23. **He that is hanged is accursed of God.**—*Hanging:*—I. HANGING A DISGRACEFUL PUNISHMENT. The body was exposed to insult and assault. Shameful deeds were kept in public memory, and the dead was a spectacle to the world. It was only inflicted on most infamous offenders. Cicero calls it a nameless wickedness. Its pain and disgrace were extreme. II. HANGING A DEFILEMENT OF THE LAND. "That thy land be not defiled." The vices of the living and the bodies of the dead defiled the land (Numb. xxxv. 34). 1. Physically it would be defiled. In the hot climate its decomposition would injure the health and peril the life of others. 2. Morally, as the land of Jehovah, it would be polluted. Remembrance of crime would harden the heart and breed familiarity. III. HANGING A WARNING TO OTHERS. The punishment was designed to deter others. They saw the terrible consequences of guilt. Alas! "hanging is no warning," and men leave the very gibbet or the gallows to commit their crimes. IV. HANGING A TYPE OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST (Acts v. 35; Gal. iii. 13). 1. He became our substitute. 2. He was buried in the evening (John xix. 31). 3. As the land was cleansed by removal of curse, so the conscience and the Church purified by Christ. (*J. Wolfendale.*) *The accursed tree:*—I. A SHAMEFUL DEATH AWAITS ABOMINABLE CRIME. "Worthy of death," lit., if there be on a man a right of death, "he was hanged upon a tree." II. PUBLIC IGNOMINY EXPRESSED IN THIS SHAMEFUL DEATH. Penalty for crime, detestation of the perpetrator, and the curse of God. III. THE DESIRABILITY OF TAKING AWAY THE MEMORY OF THIS SHAME. "He shall not remain all night," take him down from the tree and bury him; blot out his name and remove the curse. IV. CHRIST ALONE REMOVES THE CURSE. The best of men treated as one of the vilest, died the just for the unjust, "who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." (*Ibid.*)

CHAPTER XXII.

VERS. 1–4. **Thy brother's ox or his sheep.**—*Restoration of stray cattle and lost goods:*—Moses urges right action in manifold relations of national life, and teaches Israel to regard all arrangements of God as sacred. They were never to cherish any bitterness or hostility towards a neighbour, but restore stray animals and lost goods. I. AN INDICATION OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE. "Doth God care for oxen?" Yes; and

observes them go astray, or fall beneath their heavy burden. He legislates for them, and our treatment of them is reverence or disobedience to His command. "Thou shalt not see," &c. II. AN OPPORTUNITY OF NEIGHBOURLY KINDNESS. "Thy brother" comprehends relatives, neighbours, strangers, and enemies even (Exod. xxiii. 4). The property of any person which is in danger shall be protected and restored. Love should rule in all actions, and daily incidents afford the chance of displaying it. 1. Kindness regardless of trouble. "If thy brother be not nigh unto thee, and if thou know him not," seek him out and find him if possible. 2. Kindness regardless of expense. If really unable to find the owner, feed and keep it for a time at thine own expense. "Then thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it." If such care must be taken for the ox, what great anxiety should we display for the temporal and spiritual welfare of our neighbour himself! III. AN EXPRESSION OF HUMANITY. "Thou shalt not hide thyself." Indifference or joy in the misfortune would be cruelty to dumb creatures and a violation of the common rights of humanity. 1. In restoring the lost. Cattle easily go astray and wander over the fence and from the fold. If seen they must be brought back and not hidden away. 2. In helping up the fallen. The ass ill-treated and over-laden may fall down through rough or slippery roads. Pity must prompt a helping hand. "Thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again." Thus common justice and charity are taught by the law of nature and enforced by the law of Moses. Principles which anticipate the Gospel and embody themselves in one of its grandest precepts, "Love your enemies." (*J. Wolfendale.*) *Fraternal responsibilities:*—The word "brother" is not to be read in a limited sense, as if referring to a relation by blood. That is evident from the expression in the second verse, "If thou know him not." The reference is general—to a brother-man. In Exodus the term used is not brother, but "enemy"—"If thine enemy's ox, or ass, or sheep . . ." It is needful to understand this clearly, lest we suppose that the directions given in the Bible are merely of a domestic and limited kind. "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray." That is not the literal rendering of the term; the literal rendering would be, "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep driven away"—another man behind them, and driving them on as if he were taking them to his own field. We are not to see actions of this kind and be quiet: there is a time to speak; and of all times calling for indignant eloquence and protest there are none like those which are marked by oppression and wrong-doing. Adopting this principle, how does the passage open itself to our inquiry? Thus—1. If we must not see our brother's ox being driven away, can we stand back and behold his mind being forced into wrong or evil directions? It were an immoral morality to contend that we must be anxious about the man's ox but care nothing about the man's understanding. We do not live in Deuteronomy: we live within the circle of the Cross; we are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ; our morality or our philanthropy, therefore, does not end in solicitude regarding ox, or sheep, or ass: we are called to the broader concern, the tenderer interest, which relates to the human mind and the human soul. Take it from another point of view. 2. If careful about the sheep, is there to be no care concerning the man's good name? We are told that to steal the purse is to steal trash—it is something—nothing; 'twas mine, 'twas his—a mere rearrangement of property; "but he that filches from me my good name robs me of that which not enriches him, and makes me poor indeed." We are the keepers of our brother: his good name is ours. When the reputation of a Christian man goes down or is being driven away, the sum-total of Christian influence is diminished; in this sense we are not to live unto ourselves or for ourselves; every soul is part of the common stock of humanity, and when one member is exalted the whole body is raised in a worthy ascension, and when one member is debased or wronged or robbed a felony has been committed upon the consolidated property of the Church. Thus we are led into philanthropic relations, social trusteeships, and are bound one to another; and if we see a man's reputation driven away by some cruel hand—even though the reputation be that of an enemy—we are to say, "Be just and fear not,"—let us know both sides of the case; there must be no immoral partiality; surely in the worst of cases there must be some redeeming points. Take it from another point. 3. "In like manner shalt thou do with . . . his raiment." And are we to be careful about the man's raiment, and care nothing about his aspirations? Is it nothing to us that the man never lifts his head towards the wider spaces, and wonders what the lights are that glitter in the distant arch? Is it nothing to us that the man never sighs after some larger sphere, or ponders concerning some nobler

possibility of life? Finding a man driving himself away, we are bound to arouse him in the Creator's name and to accuse him of the worst species of suicide. 4. Can we see our brother's ass being driven away and care nothing what becomes of his child? Save the children, and begin your work as soon as possible. It is sad to see the little children left to themselves; and therefore ineffably beautiful to mark the concern which interests itself in the education and redemption of the young. A poet says he was nearer heaven in his childhood than he ever was in after days, and he sweetly prayed that he might return through his yesterdays and through his childhood back to God. That is chronologically impossible—locally and physically not to be done; and yet that is the very miracle which is to be performed in the soul—in the spirit; we must be "born again." It is a coward's trick to close the eyes whilst wrong is being done in order that we may not see it. It is easy to escape distress, perplexity, and to flee away from the burdens of other men; but the whole word is, "Thou shalt not hide thyself," but "thou shalt surely help him." Who can undervalue a Bible which speaks in such a tone? The proverb "Every man must take care of himself" has no place in the Book of God. We must take care of one another. Christianity means nothing if it does not mean the unity of the human race, the common rights of humanity: and he who fails to interpose in all cases of injustice and wrong-doing, or suffering which he can relieve, may be a great theologian, but he is not a Christian. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *A kind heart:*—One day President Lincoln was walking out with his secretary, when suddenly he stopped by a shrub and gazed into it. Stooping down he ran his hands through the twigs and leaves as if to take something. His secretary inquired what he was after. Said Mr. Lincoln, "Here is a little bird fallen from its nest, and I am trying to put it back again." True kindness ever springs instinctively from lives permeated with goodness. "Kind hearts are more than coronets." *Helping up:*—We have lately been doing a blessed work amongst the cabmen of Manchester, many of whom have signed the pledge. I heard the other night that one of them had broken his pledge, and I went to the cab rooms to look after him. I saw him there, but he tried to avoid me. He was ashamed to face me. I followed him up, and at last he presented himself before me, wearing a most dejected look. I said to him, "When you are driving your cab, and your horse falls down, what do you do?" "I jumps off the box and tries to help him up again." "That is it, my friend," I replied. "I heard you had fallen, and so I got off my box to help you up. Will you get up? There is my hand." He caught hold of it with a grasp like a vice, and said, "I will, sir; before God, and under His own blue heavens, I promise you that I will not touch a drop of strong drink again; and you will never have to regret the trouble you have taken with me." Oh, Christian friends, there are many poor drunkards who have fallen down. "Will you not get off the box, and help them up?" (*C. Garrett.*)

Ver. 5. **The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man.**—*Dominion of fashion:*—God thought womanly attire of enough importance to have it discussed in the Bible. Just in proportion as the morals of a country or an age are depressed is that law defied. Show me the fashion-plates of any century from the time of the Deluge to this, and I will tell you the exact state of public morals. Ever and anon we have imported from France, or perhaps invented on this side the sea, a style that proposes as far as possible to make women dress like men. The costumes of the countries are different, and in the same country may change, but there is a divinely ordered dissimilarity which must be for ever observed. Any divergence from this is administrative of vice, and runs against the keen thrust of the text. In my text, as by a parable, it is made evident that Moses, the inspired writer, as vehemently as ourselves, reprehends the effeminate man and the masculine woman. 1. My text also sanctions fashion. Indeed, it sets a fashion! There is a great deal of senseless cant on the subject of fashion. A woman or man who does not regard it is unfit for good neighbourhood. The only question is, what is right fashion and what is wrong fashion. Fashion has been one of the most potent of reformers, and one of the vilest of usurpers. Sometimes it has been an angel from heaven, and at others it has been the mother of abomination. As the world grows better there will be as much fashion as now, but it will be a righteous fashion. In the future life white robes always have been and always will be in the fashion. The accomplishments of life are in no wise productive of effeminacy or enervation. Good manners and a respect for the tastes of others are indispensable. The Good Book speaks favourably of those who are a "peculiar"

people; but that does not sanction the behaviour of queer people. There is no excuse, under any circumstances, for not being and acting the lady or gentleman. Rudeness is sin. As Christianity advances there will be better apparel, higher styles of architecture, more exquisite adornments, sweeter music, grander pictures, more correct behaviour, and more thorough ladies and gentlemen. But there is another story to be told. 2. Wrong fashion is to be charged with many of the worst evils of society, and its path has often been strewn with the bodies of the slain. It has often set up a false standard by which people are to be judged. Our common sense, as well as all the Divine intimations on the subject, teach us that people ought to be esteemed according to their individual and moral attainments. The man who has the most nobility of soul should be first, and he who has the least of such qualities should stand last. Truth, honour, charity, heroism, self-sacrifice should win highest favour; but inordinate fashion says, "Count not a woman's virtues; count her adornments." "Look not at the contour of the head, but see the way she combs her hair." 3. Wrong fashion is productive of a most ruinous strife. The expenditure of many households is adjusted by what their neighbours have, not by what they themselves can afford to have; and the great anxiety is as to who shall have the finest house and the most costly equipage. 4. Again, wrong fashion makes people unnatural and untrue. It is a factory from which has come forth more hollow pretences and unmeaning flatteries than the Lowell mills ever turned out shawls and garments. Fashion is the greatest of all liars. It has made society insincere. You know not what to believe. When people ask you to come, you do not know whether or not they want you to come. When they send their regards, you do not know whether it is an expression of their heart or an external civility. We have learned to take almost everything at a discount. 5. Again, wrong fashion is incompatible with happiness. Those who depend for their comfort upon the admiration of others are subject to frequent disappointment. Somebody will criticise their appearance or surpass them in brilliancy, or will receive more attention. Oh, the jealousy and detraction and heartburnings of those who move in this bewildered maze! Poor butterflies! Bright wings do not always bring happiness. 6. Again, devotion to wrong fashion is productive of physical disease, mental imbecility, and spiritual withering. Apparel insufficient to keep out the cold and the rain, or so fitted upon the person that the functions of life are restrained; late hours filled with excitement and feasting; free draughts of wine that make one not beastly intoxicated, but only fashionably drunk; and luxurious indolence—are the instruments by which this unreal life pushes its disciples into valetudinarianism and the grave. Wrong fashion is the world's undertaker, and drives thousands of hearses to churchyards and cemeteries. 7. But, worse than that, this folly is an intellectual depletion. What is the matter with that woman wrought up into the agony of despair? Oh, her muff is out of fashion! 8. Worse than all, this folly is not satisfied until it has extirpated every moral sentiment and blasted the soul. A wardrobe is the rock upon which many a soul has been riven. The excitement of a luxurious life has been the vortex that has swallowed up more souls than the maëlstrom off Norway ever destroyed ships. What room for elevating themes in a heart filled with the trivial and unreal? (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Vers. 6, 7. **If a bird's nest chance to be before thee.**—*How to take a bird's nest:*—Does God take thought for birds, then? Yes, even for birds. They sow not, neither do they reap; yet our heavenly Father feedeth them. Christ cared for birds, then; and therefore we may be sure that God cares for them. And this God, says Jesus, is your "Father." He loves you even more than He loves the birds, and guards you with a more watchful care. You would laugh if I were to ask you, What does your mother love best, the canary that sings in the cage, or the little girl who sits in her lap? And you may be quite as sure that you are "better" to your Father in heaven "than many sparrows"; yes, and better than all the birds He ever made. But if you are so dear to God, your Father, should you not love Him because He loves you, and prove your love by caring for what He cares for? Well, He cares for birds. He marks the trees "where the birds build their nests," and "sing among the branches"; and He shows us, in one of the Psalms (civ. 12, 17), that He observes what kinds of trees the different birds select for use; does He not say, "As for the stork, the fir-trees are her house"? Now, I dare say some of you boys are pleased to find that there is such a law, or rule, as this in the Bible. You have not been quite sure in your minds, perhaps, whether it was right or

wrong to take a bird's nest, or even to take the eggs from the nest. And, I dare say, when you heard me read my text you thought, "Well, that's a capital rule! If I mustn't take the old bird, at least I may take the young ones or the eggs." But are you sure that that is the right way to read the Rule? But, to be honest with you, I am afraid it is wrong. As God loves the birds and takes care of them, so will you, if you are good children of our Father who is in heaven. And is it taking care of them to rob them of the beautiful little houses which they have spent so much toil in building? Of course, if we really want eggs or birds we may take them, whether we want them as food for the body or food for the mind; for God has put them all at our service. But to take them wantonly, without thought, without necessity, simply for the fun of it, is to wrong creatures whom God loves. I. IT SET A LIMIT TO THE NATURAL GREED OF MEN. What would be the first impulse of a Jew who found the nest of a quail, or a partridge, with the mother-bird sitting on the young ones or the eggs? Of course, his first impulse would be to take all he could get, the old bird as well as the eggs or the young. But to do that might be very poor thrift, and very poor morality. For in destroying the parent-bird with the young the man might be helping to destroy a whole breed of valuable birds. He would get a dinner for to-day, but he would be lessening his chance of finding one to-morrow. He would be helping himself, but he might also be injuring his neighbour. "Don't be greedy," then, is the first lesson we find in our bird's nest. "Don't snatch at all you can for to-day, careless about to-morrow." II. Another lesson taught by this law about a bird's nest is this—IT BRINGS THE LAW OF GOD INTO THE LITTLE THINGS OF LIFE. And that is just where we most need it, and are most apt to forget it. III. But this rule about birds-nesting teaches us that ALL LOVE IS SACRED; and this is the most beautiful lesson I have found in it. Now, think. If you were to find a nest, and saw the mother-bird with a brood of young ones under her wings, what would it be that would give you a good chance of catching her? It would simply be her love for her nestlings. If she cared only for herself she could fly away out of your reach. But if the love of a bird is sacred, how much more sacred is the love of a boy or a girl, of a woman or a man! All love is sacred. It is base and wicked to take advantage of it, to turn it against itself, to use it for selfish ends. I would have you think, therefore, how great a power love gives you, and how base and wrong it is to abuse that power. Love is the strongest thing in the world. People will do for love what they would do for nothing else. And there are those who know that, and who take such base advantage of it that they sometimes ruin the character and spoil the life of those who love and trust them. There is nothing in the world so wicked, so base, so vile. If you have parents, or brothers and sisters, or young companions and friends, who love you dearly, oh take heed what you do! Their love will be the comfort and joy of your lives if you retain and respond to it. But that love puts them in your power. You may hurt them through it, and grieve them through it, and make them go wrong when, but for you, they would have gone right. And if you do, you will be scorned by all good men and women. If you do, what will you say to the God of all love, and what will He say to you, when you stand before Him? And that brings me to the very last word I have to say to you. Who is it that loves you best of all?—most purely, most forgivingly, most tenderly? And perhaps you are abusing God's love. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *The law of the bird's nest*:—Does God think it worth while to make mention of the nest of a bird? Yes, He does. In those old Hebrew days, if the people saw a lad coming with a bird's nest, and bringing the old bird as well as the young, they could tell him that his father and mother would most likely live to attend his funeral! He would not live to be a grey-headed man. No; length of days went with obedience. Birds' nests are much more wonderful things than many people think. What labour, skill, and patience each little builder displays before he has a home for his bride! Has it ever occurred to you that each kind of bird builds its own kind of nest? The thrush makes his home very like the blackbird, only always papers it. By a clever mixture of decayed wood and clay he puts a lining inside the home. But it is in foreign lands, where birds have other enemies besides men to fear, that greater ingenuity is displayed. Some build their little homes so as to hang from the bough of a tree right over a sheet of water, so that if the monkey finds the nest he cannot get at it, because his weight would sink him into the water. The entrance to the nest of others is made at the bottom, and the little house is suspended from the branch of a tree. There is one kind of bird called the tailor, who sews two leaves together so as to deceive the eye, for they look like one leaf and not two. We should think it a

wonderful thing if we saw a horse building its own stable, yet this is not more wonderful than the bird building its own dwelling. God has shown His wisdom and power in putting the skill into the life of the bird, and this skill gives him rights. We always count it due to originality that it should be benefited by its productions. Invention gives rights. If this be so, does not God's originality give Him a claim? What I am anxious to teach is this: Where you see the mark of God's hand, listen for His voice. Where creation comes, kingly claims must be met. Let this rule be followed, and what a change would come over the world! None but God can make things grow. Ought He not, then, to be revered and obeyed wherever He creates? Who but God could have designed the horse, so strong and fleet? What a marvellous combination of muscular and nervous force there is in the noble animal! Did the Creator endue this splendid beast with this vigour and activity that men should meet by the thousand to win or lose money? But it is time we considered "the law of the bird's nest." If you saw the mother-bird sitting, you might take eggs or young birds, but you must "let the dam go." Why? Because God sees that it is not wise to take all that is within your reach. Let the old bird fly; she will live to have another brood. This law acts beneficially on all sides. If George III. had known this, he would not have been so greedy with the settlers in America. He strove to grasp all, and lost the United States. What might not that land have been under the Union Jack? It is a great nation, but not what it might have been. And how it would have nourished England, instead of being her rival! Many a family would have been saved irritation and heart-break if grasping at all had not been the rule. Taking all within reach often means that affection is slain by selfishness, and duty driven away for want of knowing that God wants you to leave something for others to enjoy. When will Capital and Labour learn that to take all you can is to injure self? To grasp at too much is to lose greatly. When men have learned to let the old bird go, strikes and lock-outs will be no more. Commerce flourishes by not grasping at too much. One of the cleverest tradesmen I ever knew told me that one secret of his success was the way he bought his stock. He had great skill in this matter, and, said he, "When I buy well, I say, how much of this extra profit can I give to my customers?" Is it any wonder that his shop had a name for good stuff at a low price, and that he made money when others lost it? When men have learned to let the old bird go they will keep the Sabbath day holy. God gives men six days but claims the seventh. But we shall fail to get all the good taught in the text if we do not see that here we have God's tribute to maternal affection. It is wonderful how brave a little timid bird will become in the defence of her young. She will sit there, and not try to save herself in her anxiety for the helpless brood which nestles under her wings. Is there some poor woman reading this who wonders how she is to provide for the children, now that her husband is no more? Poor widow, dost thou not see that if God cares for the bird's nest He cares for thy home, and if He would protect the thrush or the wren He will not forget thy little ones? Does not God speak to young people here? If He thinks so much of a mother's love as to mark the affection of a bird for her young, how does He feel when He sees us treat our parents with neglect or cruelty? It is an old, and we fear true, proverb, that "The old cat catches mice for the kittens, but the kitten never brings the old cat one." Should that old saying apply to us? Yes, God has shown His approval here of a mother's affection. Do not let any of us feel as some men feel when they are summoned to see their mother die. I don't want you to feel as a man did who had been sent for to bid his mother good-bye. She had worked hard for her large family; washed and baked and wrought to bring them up and save a bit of money to start them in the world; and just when she ought to have been in her prime she broke down and had to die. As the young man looked at her face, wrinkled and faded, he thought of the way she had toiled for her children, he remembered that he had never shown her any attention, had not even kissed her since he was a little child, and the tears came into his eyes! He bent down and put his lips to hers, lovingly though awkwardly, and said, "You have been a good mother to us, you have that!" She looked at him as though she could not understand the kiss and the words of appreciation, and said with a sigh, "Eh, John, I wish thou had said so before!" (*T. Champness.*) *The bird's nest*:—We are very much struck with this law, not because it has to do with a matter apparently trifling, but because there is annexed to it the same promise as to commandments of the highest requirement. The commandment may have to do with a trivial thing: but it is evident enough that it cannot be a trivial commandment; indeed, no commandment can be which pro-

ecods from God. Let us endeavour to ascertain on what principles the precept before us is founded, what dispositions it inculcates, and we shall find that there is no cause for surprise in the annexment of a promise of long life to obedience to the direction, "If a bird's nest chance to be," &c. Now, you will see at once that, had the precept been of a more stringent character, it might, in some sense, have been more easily vindicated and explained. Had it forbidden altogether the meddling with the nest, had it required that not only should the mother-bird be let go, but that neither the young birds nor the eggs should be taken, it would at once have been said that God was graciously protecting the inferior creation, and forbidding man to act towards them with any kind of cruelty. But the precept permits the taking the nest; it does not even hint that it might be better to let the nest alone; it simply confines itself to protecting the parent-bird, and thus allows, if it does not actually direct, what may be thought an inhuman thing, the carrying off the young to the manifest disappointment and pain of the mother. It should not, however, be unobserved that the precept does not touch the case in which there is an actual looking for the nest. It is not a direction as to what should be done if a nest were found after diligent search, but only as to what should be done if a nest were found by mere chance or accident. Without pretending to argue that God would have forbidden the searching for the nest, it is highly probable that there was something significant in this direction as to taking the nest, in the particular case when that nest had been unwisely placed. We are sure, from various testimonies of Scripture, that God has designed to instruct us in and through the inferior creation, the birds of the air and the beasts of the field being often appealed to when men have to be taught and admonished. And we know not, therefore, that there can be anything far-fetched in supposing that, by sanctioning a sort of injury to the bird, which had built its nest in an insecure place, God meant to teach us that, if we will not take due precautions for our own safety we are not to expect the shield of His protection. But now as to the permission itself. Were not the Israelites here taught to be moderate in their desires? It was like giving a lesson against covetousness, a lesson so constructed as to be capable of being reproduced in great variety of circumstances, when the finder of a prize, who might fancy himself at liberty to appropriate the whole, was required to content himself with a part. There was also in the precept a lesson against recklessness or waste. It required man, whilst supplying his present wants, to have due regard to his future; yea, and to the wants of others as well as to his own. You may apply the principle to a hundred cases. Whenever men live upon the capital, when the interest would suffice; whenever they recklessly consume all their earnings, though those earnings might enable them to lay something by; when, so long as, by eager grasping, they can secure what they like for themselves, they are utterly indifferent as to interfering with the supplies and enjoyments of others—in every such case they are violating the precept before us; they are taking the old bird with the young: as, on the other hand, by treating as a sin anything like wastefulness, by a prudent management of the gifts and mercies of God, by such a wise husbandry of resources as shall prove a consciousness that the Divine liberality, in place of sanctioning extravagance, should be a motive to economy, they may be said to be virtually obeying the precept; they are taking the young, but letting the dam go. But now let us look more narrowly into the reasons of the precept: we shall probably find, if we examine the peculiarities of the case, that the commandment before us has a yet more direct and extensive application. It could only be, you will observe, the attachment of the mother-bird to its young which, for the most part, would put it in the power of the finder of the nest to take both together. And when you bring this circumstance into the account you can hardly doubt that one great reason why God protected the mother-bird by an express commandment was, that He might point out the excellence of parental affection, and teach us that we were not to take advantage of such an affection, in order to any injury to the parties who displayed it. You must be all quite aware that the affection which one party bears to another may be taken advantage of, and that, too, to his manifest detriment. For example, circumstances place the child of another in your power; you are about to oppress or ill-use that child; the parent entreats; you agree to release the child, but only on conditions with which the parent would never have complied had it not been for the strong pleadings of natural affection—what do you do in such a case but make use of a power, derived solely from the parent's love, to effect the parent's injury? you seize, so to speak, the mother-bird, when it is only her being the mother-bird which has given you the opportunity of seizure. But evidently the involved principle is of very wide appli-

cation. A parent may take improper advantage of a child's love, a child of a parent's. A parent may work on the affections of a child, urging the child, by the love which he bears to a father or mother, to do something wrong, something against which conscience remonstrates; this is a case in which improper advantage is taken of affection, or injurious use is made of a power which, as in the case of the bird and her young, nothing but strong affection has originated. But our text has yet to be considered under another point of view. We have hitherto contended that, though it be apparently an insignificant matter with which the commandment before us is concerned, principles are involved of a high order and a wide application, so that there is no reason for surprise at finding long life promised as the reward of obedience. But we will now assume the Jews' opinion to have been correct; they were wont to say of this commandment, that it was the least amongst the commandments of Moses. Admit it to have been so; yet is there any cause for wonder that such a blessing as long life should be promised by way of recompense to obedience? God enjoins a certain thing; but we can hardly bring ourselves to obey, simply because He has enjoined it. We have our inquiries to urge—why has He enjoined it? if it be an indifferent thing, we want to know why He should have made it the subject of a law; why not have let it alone? Why not? Because, we may venture to reply, He wishes to test the principle of obedience; He wishes to see whether His will and His word are sufficient for us. In order to this, He must legislate upon things which in themselves are indifferent, neither morally good nor bad; He must not confine laws to such matters as robbing a neighbour's house, on which conscience is urgent: He must extend them to such matters as taking a bird's nest, on which conscience is silent. It is the same as with a child. He is walking in a stranger's garden, and you forbid his picking fruit; he knows that the fruit is not his, and therefore feels a reason for prohibition. But he is walking on a common, and you forbid his picking wild flowers; he knows that no one has property in these flowers, and therefore he cannot see any reason for your prohibition. Suppose him, however, to obey in both cases, abstaining alike from the flowers and the fruit, in which case does he show most of the principle of obedience, most of respect for your authority and of submission to your will? Surely, when he does not touch the flowers, which he sees no reason for not touching, rather than when he does not gather the fruit, which he feels that he can have no right to gather. It is exactly the same with God and ourselves. He may forbid things which we should have felt to be wrong, even had they not been forbidden; He may forbid things which we should not have felt wrong, nay, which would not have been wrong unless He had forbidden them. But in which case is our obedience most put to the proof? Not, surely, as to the thing criminal even without a commandment; but as to the thing indifferent till there was a commandment. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Bird's nest:*—A singular word to be in a Book which we might have expected to be wholly occupied with spiritual revelation. Men are anxious to know something about the unseen world, and the mystery which lies at the heart of things and palpitates throughout the whole circle of observable nature, and yet they are called upon to pay attention to the treatment of birds' nests. Is this any departure from the benevolent and redeeming spirit of the Book? On the contrary, this is a vivid illustration of the minuteness of Divine government, and as such it affords the beginning of an argument which must for ever accumulate in volume and force, on the ground that if God is so careful of a bird's nest He must be proportionately careful of all things of higher quality. Jesus Christ so used nature. "If, then, God so clothe the grass," said He, "how much more will He clothe you, O ye of little faith!" So we may add, If God is so careful of birds' nests, what must He be of human hearts, and human homes, and the destinies of the human family? God's beneficence is wonderfully displayed in the care of the birds' nests. God is kind in little things as well as in great. The quality of His love is one, whether it be shown in the redemption of the race, in numbering the hairs of our head, in ordering our steps, or giving His beloved sleep. Did we but know it, we should find that all law is beneficent—the law of restriction as well as the law of liberty. The law which would keep a man from doing injury to himself, though it may appear to impair the prerogative of human will, is profoundly beneficent. Was not man to have dominion over the fowls of the air? Truly so, but dominion is to be exercised in mercy. The treatment of birds' nests is a sure indication of the man's whole character. He who can wantonly destroy a bird's nest can wantonly do a hundred other things of the same kind. To be cruel at all is to be cruel all through and through the substance and quality of the

character. Men cannot be cruel to birds' nests and gentle to children's cradles. The man who can take care of a bird's nest because it is right to do so—not because of any pleasure which he has in a bird's nest—is a man who cannot be indifferent to the homes of children and the circumstances of his fellow-creatures generally. It is a mistake to suppose that we can be wanton up to a given point, and then begin to be considerate and benevolent. We are all apt scholars in a bad school, and learn more in one lesson there than we can learn through much discipline in the school of God. The little tyrannies of childhood often explain the great despotism of mature life. Is not kindness an influence that penetrates the whole life, having manifold expression, alike upward, downward, and laterally, touching all human things, all inferiors and dependants, and every harmless and defenceless life? On the other hand, we are to be most careful not to encourage any merely pedantic feeling. Hence the caution I have before given respecting the purpose for which a man considerately handles even a bird's nest. Every day we see how possible it is for a man to be very careful of his horse, and yet to hold the comfort of his servant very lightly. We have all seen, too, how possible it is for a man to be more careful of his dogs than of his children. But the care which is thus lavished upon horse or dog is not the care dictated by moral considerations, or inspired by benevolence; it is what I have termed a pedantic feeling, it is a mere expression of vanity, it is not an obedience to conscience or moral law. There are men who would not on any account break up a bird's nest in the garden, who yet would allow a human creature to die of hunger. The bird's nest may be regarded as an ornament of the garden, or an object of interest, or a centre around which various influences may gather; so whatever care may be bestowed upon it, it is not to be regarded as concerning the conscience or the higher nature. We must beware of decorative morality; calculated consideration for inferior things; for selfishness is very subtle in its operation, and sometimes it assumes with perfect hypocrisy the airs of benevolence and religion. What if in all our carefulness for dumb animals we think little of breaking a human heart by sternness or neglect? Kindness to the lower should become still tenderer kindness to the higher. This is Christ's own argument: when He bids us behold the fowls of the air, that in their life we may see our Father's kindness, He adds, "Are ye not much better than they?" When He points out how carefully a man would look after the life of his cattle, He adds, "How much, then, is a man better than a sheep?" It ought to be considered a presumptive argument in favour of any man's spirit that he is kind to the inferior creatures that are around him; if this presumption be not realised in his case, then is his kindness bitterest wrong. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 8. **Make a battlement for thy roof.**—*Prudential assurance:*—A careful study of the tone and teaching of Deuteronomy can hardly fail to impress the reader with its profound ethical and religious spirit. What an emphasis is laid upon the unity and the uniqueness of the Godhead! What an insistence upon the love of God as the motive of all actions! Humanity, philanthropy, and benevolence are insisted upon. Forbearance, equity, and forethought underlie all regulations. The preceding precept as to the bird's nest and the sitting dam are a striking example of the humanity of the Jewish law. When a man built a new house, a battlement or, as we should say, a parapet was an almost necessary protection. It would prevent accidents. Some through carelessness or foolhardiness, others through short-sightedness or a slip of the foot, might fall off; such a tumble would certainly fracture limbs, and in some cases be fatal to life. A selfish man might say, "I shall always remember that there is no battlement, and keep well away from the sides. It is very unlikely that any will fall over if I leave the sides unprotected. If any accident should occur it can only be through gross carelessness. I see no reason why I should be put to this expense." The superior person might say, "I will have no battlement on this roof. I have nothing but contempt for fashion. Why should I do a thing because other people do it? I will leave my roof unprotected; if only to show my superiority to the caprice and tyranny of custom." Now, the spirit of this law is recognised in all civilised communities. Private tastes and individual eccentricities are not allowed to imperil public safety or destroy public comfort. Private persons cannot build houses without public authorities approving the plans. So this precept of the Jewish law is found, in spirit at least, in our modern legislation. We are to be alive to a sense of danger, we are not to forget the duty of prudence, we are to take all reasonable precautions against injury to ourselves and others. But there is a sense in which we are

builders. We found families, we make fortunes, we acquire reputations, we form friendships, we embark on undertakings, we profess moral principles, we hold religious views—in regard to all it is well for us, nay, for all Christians it is a duty, to make a battlement to their roof. Let us in imagination walk round the house. 1. First of all here is the economic wing. In the economic management of life, a battlement to the roof is a duty. We build our houses, we settle in life, we make a home for ourselves, we set up an establishment. Of course, it must bear some proportion to our means. But how many do it on such an imprudent, not to say extravagant scale, that there is nothing left for a battlement! They spend all that they have. They are the victims of expensive habits and large ideas of things. They burn incense to the demon of respectability. They sink their all in building up the roof-line, and leave no margin for prudent provision against possible misfortune or untimely death. How many have brought blood upon their houses, how many have inflicted suffering on their own children and loss on others, by neglecting to build a parapet of thrift out of the materials of simplicity of taste, moderation in appetite, and prudence in management! Thrift is the very gospel that some people need, and some, too, who bear the Christian name, and aspire after a Christian reputation. What renders this a matter of really spiritual concern is that often the battlement goes unbuilt from causes that are not only irreligious but antichristian: a thirst for social distinctions, for recognition and patronage by some more highly placed than ourselves. 2. But we pass to another wing. How necessary it is for Christian people in their social life to make a battlement to the roof. The power of social influence is immense, you can hardly over-estimate it. No character can defy the subtle influences that flow in upon them from others. No man is absolutely impervious to social pressure. Therefore this is one of those points on which Christian people should exercise conscientious care and prudence. They will erect a battlement to their social life by choosing friends from those who will be a help rather than a hindrance to a godly life. In this we think not of ourselves only, but of our children. We may be able to run risks with comparative immunity, because our principles are strong and our characters fixed. We can walk on the unprotected roof with safety. But are not our children very liable to fall? Surely the prime duty of Christian parents in the culture of their children's minds and hearts, and the discipline of their habits, is to deepen in them a sense of the inviolable sanctity of goodness. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." The world puts gentility before character. It does not inquire too closely into the morals of those who have birth and wealth. If we are wise and faithful we shall rightly estimate the importance of social forces. We shall discriminate between those fighting on Christ's side and those that are fighting against Him. We shall leave no one in doubt as to our affinities and alliances. We shall put up a battlement to the roof of our social life. There is a kind of separation from the world which is as impracticable as it is undesirable; there is another which is simply essential if we are to save our own souls and help to save others. A battlement to the roof of our social life fortifies the sanctity and simplicity of our homes. 3. But there is another wing to this house. It is the moral, it is the sphere of character. He who builds well and wisely, sees that the roof here has a battlement, namely, the battlement of religion. "By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil." When the heart has been touched by the love of God in Christ, when the Lord Jesus Christ has been admitted to its throne, there is a defence and proof against the assaults of the evil one. It is just here that some question the need of a battlement. They are building the structure of character, they are morally sensitive, they are anxious and careful in doing what is right, but they have no religion, no personal concern for or interest in the redemption of Jesus Christ. They have builded their house, but there is not a battlement to the roof. Now, far be it from us to shut our eyes to the fact that even those who have the battlement do sometimes fall. The parapet itself may be out of repair, the stones may have fallen out and not been replaced. Now, a battlement out of repair may be more dangerous than to have none. But these cases are the exception and not the rule. There was one Judas among the twelve apostles. But what candid and fair-minded man will deny that the fear of God is the greatest of all restraints from evil? "The fear of the Lord is the treasure of the godly," for "He is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the throne of His glory, with exceeding joy." 4. But there is yet one other wing to the house. Here the social and religious wings join. Our religious life itself needs a battlement. Here is a word for those who are giving their heart to God, who are determining the great ends and principles

that are to rule their life. "When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof." Now, the Episcopalian contends that in order to be completely furnished unto all good works our religious life needs something in addition to God, the Bible, and Christ Himself, namely, the Church. We entirely agree with him. Until a man is in the Church he has not built a battlement to his house. It brings individual believers into actual and visible association with those who have taken the same holy vows and enlisted in the same holy warfare. It will be good for the Church that he shall do so, but will it not be good for him? Will he not be a stronger and better Christian if he "stir up the gift of God" that is in him, and add it to the totality and variety of the spiritual forces that operate in the world? Will he not be encouraged by the fellowship of others? We contend that the Church is the battlement of the religious life, not its foundation, "other foundation can no man lay than hath been laid, Jesus Christ." By some it is regarded as putting a restraint and imposing a limit. So it does. The purpose of a parapet or battlement is to prevent you falling over. If your foot slips on the edge of a precipice, what you want is something to catch hold of. But remember, anything that is inconsistent in the Church member is equally so in the Christian, though he be outside the Church. If you are holding back from a duty to Christ for the sake of liberty to do things inconsistent with Church membership, you are imperilling your soul by doing them now. (*R. B. Brindley.*) *Battlements round the roofs:*—To understand the primary significance of these words, you have simply to remember two things. First, that the houses referred to were covered with flat roofs, and, secondly, that on these roofs amusements, business, conversation, and worship were frequently carried on. There is the suggestion of great principles—principles which abide. I. WHAT ARE THESE PRINCIPLES? 1. One is, the sacredness of human life. The great reason assigned in the text for the building of the balustrade round the roof was this: "that thou bring not blood upon thine house." If human life were a thing of no account, no battlement would be necessary—let a man or a child fall over, what matters it? Now, that is a principle which in a general way we all recognise, but which in our commercial life is continually violated by that which calls itself "the trade" pre-eminently. 2. But another principle underlying the text is this, the inhumanity of selfishness. Observe, the builder of a house might have reasoned thus with himself: "Why should I make a parapet about the roof of my house? I am in no danger of falling over, and when my friends and neighbours come to see me, let them take care of themselves." Every man for himself! Is that the principle on which society can hold together? If I am a man, nothing that is human will be alien to me. If I consult only my own safety and comfort and well-being, I am worse than a brute! 3. For another principle suggested here, closely allied to that of which I have just spoken, is, our responsibility in relation to others. If any man fell, the blood was upon the owner's house. They could not say—"It was the man's fault who met with the accident. He should have been more careful. He ought to have kept away from the edge of the roof." Yes, perhaps so, but that was no excuse for him who had failed to set up the balustrade. II. Now, having set before you, in a general way, the principles underlying this text, I want to look at its TEACHING AS IT APPLIES MORE PARTICULARLY TO THE BOYS AND GIRLS OF OUR HOMES AND OF THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE. The making of the battlement is not to be an after-consideration; it must be part of the original plan. The house is not complete without it. There is to be no waiting until someone has fallen over. The building of the battlement is intended to be preventive of harm from the very beginning. And is not that the line on which we work when we seek to train our boys and girls in the principles of total abstinence? 1. And will you allow me to say that one of these protections—a battlement for their safety—is the protection of the law. 2. Then another battlement to be reared about the young life of our country may perhaps be summed up in the word education. 3. But I come back to the home again, and I say that around your own household, you, father, mother, must rear the balustrade of your own example. (*Josiah Flew.*) *Building battlements:*—Many are building homes which immortal souls are filling. Are the homes made safe? 1. Our homes ought to have every moral and spiritual safeguard that God's Word and the best experience suggests. 2. The guards are most needed where there are pleasant places, the heights from which it is so easy to fall. 3. When evil comes through neglect of these safeguards, the builder's soul is stained with blood. Builder of a home, do your duty, let not the blood of dear ones stain your soul. (*F. W. Lewis.*) *House-*

building:—We are all builders—building character, building for eternity. The text gives an important principle—that prevention is better than cure. Better put up the barrier above, than have to pick up the mangled body from the pavement below. Better prevent the formation of bad habits than attempt their eradication later in life. I. NOTICE SOME OF THE BATTLEMENTS WHICH NEED TO BE REARED ABOUT OUR SOUL-LIFE, AND ABOUT THE LIFE OF SOCIETY. 1. The Christian Sabbath, one of the oldest balustrades reared for man's protection. A week without a Sabbath is a year without a summer, a summer without flowers, a night without a morn. 2. Family prayer. Some are ready to talk in meeting, whose lips are dumb in prayer at home. The devoutness of heathen rebukes such prayerlessness. Pericles, before an oration, used to plead with the gods for guidance, and Scipio, before a great undertaking, went to pray in the temple of Jupiter. 3. Reverence for God's Word. Men of real culture, though not believers, well know that all that is noblest in art, sweetest in song, and most inspiring in thought, had its source in this volume. 4. Gospel temperance. Guard the young. Keep them pure. Even the blood of Christ cannot wash out the memory of sin. It mars and pollutes the soul. 5. The all-inclusive battlement is personal faith in Jesus Christ. II. The battlement of old was FOR ORNAMENT AND FOR PROTECTION. Through the lower part an arrow could be shot, and in later years a bullet. So religion serves this double purpose. See to it that your house is thus built, and when this earthly tabernacle is taken down, you will have another, not built with hands, eternal in the heavens. (*R. S. McArthur, D.D.*) *Battlements*:—Not only is this an extraordinary instruction, it is the more extraordinary that it appears in a book which is supposed to be devoted to spiritual revelations. But in calling it extraordinary, do we not mistake the meaning which ought to be attached to the term "spiritual revelations"? Are not more things spiritual than we have hitherto imagined? This instruction recognises the social side of human life, and that side may be taken as in some sense representative of a Divine claim; it is not the claim of one individual only, but of society; it may be taken as representing the sum-total of individuals; the larger individual—the concrete humanity. Socialism has its beneficent as well as its dangerous side. Socialism, indeed, when rightly interpreted, is never to be feared; it is only when perverted to base uses, in which self becomes the supreme idol, that socialism is to be denounced and avoided. The social influences continually operating in life limit self-will, develop the most gracious side of human nature, and purify and establish all that is noblest and truest in friendship. There are certain conditions under which an instruction such as is given in the text may excite obvious objections. Suppose, for example, that a man should plead that his neighbour calls upon him only occasionally, and should upon that circumstance raise the inquiry whether he should put up a permanent building to meet an exceptional circumstance. The inquiry would seem to be pertinent and reasonable. On the other hand, when closely looked into, it will be found that the whole scheme of human life is laid out with a view to circumstances which are called exceptional. The average temperature of the year may be mild, for most of the twelve months the wind may be low and the rain gentle; why then build a house with strong walls and heavy roofs? Our neighbour may call to-morrow—see then that the battlement be ready! But ought not men to be able to take care of themselves when they are walking on the roof without our guarding them as though they were little children? This question, too, is not without a reasonable aspect. It might even be urged into the dignity of an argument, on the pretence that if we do too much for people we may beget in them a spirit of carelessness or a spirit of dependence, leading ultimately to absolute disregard and thoughtlessness in all the relations of life. We are, however, if students of the Bible, earnestly desirous to carry out its meaning, bound to study the interests even of the weakest men. This is the very principle of Christianity. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." By thinking of one another we lay claim upon the affection and trust of neighbour and friend. We are not to reason as if this action were all upon our own side. Whilst we build our battlement for the sake of another man we must remember that that other man in building his house builds a battlement for our sake. All services of this kind are reciprocal; no man, therefore, is at liberty to stand back and decline social responsibilities: in every sense, whether accepted or rejected, no man liveth unto himself. The Christian application of this doctrine is clear. If we are so to build a house as not to endanger the men who visit us, are we at liberty to build a life which may be to others the very snare of destruction? Is there not to be a battlement around our conduct? Are our habits to be

formed without reference to the social influence which they may exert? Remember that children are looking at us, and that strangers are taking account of our ways, and that we may be lured from righteousness by a licentiousness which we call liberty. Is the Christian, then, to abstain from amusements and delights which he could enjoy without personal injury lest a weaker man should be tempted to do that which would injure him? Precisely so. That is the very essence of Christian self-denial. How many life-houses there are which apparently want but some two or three comparatively little things to make them wholly perfect! In one case perhaps only the battlement is wanting, in another case it may be but some sign of spiritual beauty, in another case there may be simply want of grace, courtesy, noble civility, and generous care for the interests of others. Whatever it may be, examination should be instituted, and every man should consider himself bound not only to be faithful in much, but faithful also in that which is least; and being so he will not only see that there is strength in his character but also beauty, and upon the top of the pillars which represent integrity and permanence will be the lilywork of grace, patience, humbleness, and love. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Battlements:*—I. GOD HAS BATTLEMENTED HIS OWN HOUSE. There are high places in His house, and He does not deny His children the enjoyment of these high places, but He makes sure that they shall not be in danger there. He sets bulwarks round about them lest they should suffer evil when in a state of exaltation. God in His house has given us many high and sublime doctrines. Timid minds are afraid of these, but the highest doctrine in Scripture is safe enough because God has battlemented it. Take the doctrine of election. God has been pleased to set around that doctrine other truths which shield it from misuse. It is true He has chosen people, but "by their fruit ye shall know them." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Though He has chosen His people, yet He has chosen them unto holiness; He has ordained them to be zealous for good works. Then there is the sublime truth of the final perseverance of the saints. What a noble height is that! A housetop doctrine indeed! "The Lord will keep the feet of His saints." "The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." It will be a great loss to us if we are unable to enjoy the comfort of this truth. There is no reason for fearing presumption through a firm conviction of the true believer's safety. Mark well the battlements which God has builded around the edge of this truth! He has declared that if these shall fall away, it is impossible "to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame." Take another view of the same thought. The Lord has guarded the position of His saints if endowed with wealth. Some of God's servants are, in His providence, called to very prosperous conditions in life, and prosperity is fruitful in dangers. Yet be well assured that, if God shall call any of you to be prosperous, and place you in an eminent position, He will see to it that grace is given suitable for your station, and affliction needful for your elevation. That bodily infirmity, that want of favour with the great, that sick child, that suffering wife, that embarrassing partnership—any one of these may be the battlements which God has built around your success, lest you should be lifted up with pride, and your soul should not be upright in you. Does not this remark cast a light upon the mystery of many a painful dispensation? "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Thy word." The like prudence is manifested by our Lord towards those whom He has seen fit to place in positions of eminent service. You may rest assured that if God honours you to win many souls, you will have many stripes to bear, and stripes you would not like to tell another of, they will be so sharp and humbling. Do not, therefore, start back from qualifying yourself for the most eminent position, or from occupying it when duty calls. He will uphold thee; on the pinnacle thou art as secure as in the valley, if Jehovah set thee there. It is the same with regard to the high places of spiritual enjoyment. Even much communion with Christ, though in itself sanctifying, may be perverted, through the folly of our flesh, into a cause of self-security. Lest a soul should be beguiled to live upon itself, and feed on its frames and feelings, and by neglect of watchfulness fall into presumptuous sins, battlements are set round about all hallowed joys, for which in eternity we shall bless the name of the Lord. Too many of the Lord's servants feel as if they were always on the housetop—always afraid, always full of doubts and fears. They are fearful lest they shall after all perish, and of a thousand things besides. To such we say you shall find when your faith is weakest, when you are just about to fall, that there is a glorious battlement all around you; a glorious

promise, a gentle word of the Holy Spirit shall be brought home to your soul, so that you shall not utterly despair. II. From the fact of Divine carefulness we proceed by an easy step to the consideration that, as imitators of God, we should exercise the like tenderness; in a word, WE OUGHT TO HAVE OUR HOUSES BATTLEMENTED. A man who had no battlement to his house might himself fall from the roof in an unguarded moment. Those who profess to be the children of God should, for their own sakes, see that every care is used to guard themselves against the perils of this tempted life; they should see to it that their house is carefully battlemented. If any ask, "How shall we do it?" we reply—1. Every man ought to examine himself carefully whether he be in the faith, lest professing too much, taking too much for granted, he fall and perish. Lest we should be, after all, hypocrites, or self-deceivers; lest, after all, we should not be born again, but should be children of nature, neatly dressed, but not the living children of God, we must prove our own selves whether we be in the faith. 2. Better still, and safer by far, go often to the Cross, as you think you went at first. 3. Battlement your soul about well with prayer. Go not out into the world to look upon the face of man till you have seen the face of God. 4. Be sure and battlement yourself about with much watchfulness, and, especially, watch most the temptation peculiar to your position and disposition. III. As each man ought to battlement his house in a spiritual sense with regard to himself, so OUGHT EACH MAN TO CARRY OUT THE RULE WITH REGARD TO HIS FAMILY. In the days of Cromwell it is said that you might have gone down Cheapside at a certain hour in the morning and you would have heard the morning hymn going up from every house all along the street, and at night if you had glanced inside each home you would have seen the family gathered, and the big Bible opened, and family devotion offered. There is no fear of this land if family prayer be maintained, but if family prayer be swept away, farewell to the strength of the Church. A man should battlement his house for his children's sake, for his servants' sake, for his own sake, by maintaining the ordinance of family prayer. We ought strictly to battlement our houses, as to many things which in this day are tolerated. I shall not come down to debate upon the absolute right or wrong of debatable amusements and customs. If professors do not stop till they are certainly in the wrong, they will stop nowhere. It is of little use to go on till you are over the edge of the roof, and then cry, "Halt." It would be a poor affair for a house to be without a battlement, but to have a network to stop the falling person half-way down; you must stop before you get off the solid standing. There is need to draw the line somewhere, and the line had better be drawn too soon than too late. IV. The preacher would now remind himself that this church is, as it were, his own house, and that he is bound to BATTLEMENT IT ROUND ABOUT. Many come here, Sabbath after Sabbath, to hear the Gospel. Ah! but it is a dreadful thing to remember that so many people hear the Gospel, and yet perish under the sound of it. Now, what shall I say to prevent anyone falling from this blessed Gospel—falling from the house of mercy—dashing themselves from the roof of the temple to their ruin? What shall I say to you? I beseech you do not be hearers only. Be dissatisfied with yourselves unless ye be doers of the word. Rest not till you rest in Jesus. Remember, and I hope this will be another battlement, that if you hear the Gospel, and it is not blessed to you, still it has a power. If the sun of grace does not soften you as it does wax, it will harden you as the sun does clay. Do not die of thirst when the water of life is before you! Let me remind you of what the result will be of putting away the Gospel. You will soon die; you cannot live for ever. The righteous enter into life eternal, but the ungodly suffer punishment everlasting. Oh, run not on in sin, lest you fall into hell! I would fain set up this battlement to stay you from a dreadful and fatal fall. Once more. Remember the love of God in Christ Jesus. He cannot bear to see you die, and He weeps over you, saying, "How often would I have blessed you, and you would not!" Oh, by the tears of Jesus, wept over you in effect when He wept over Jerusalem, turn to Him. Let that be a battlement to keep you from ruin. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Putting up parapets*:—There is a most lamentable waste of power in the Christian Church; in fact, among the best elements of society. This waste arises from misdirection. The power is applied at the wrong time and in the wrong quarter. Instead of being applied in the way of prevention, which would commonly be certain, it is applied in the effort to reform and restore, which is always difficult, and often impossible. An ounce of prevention is worth a ton of cure. This principle is happily illustrated in an ancient regulation among the Jews. The regulation was this: "When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement [or

'parapet'] for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thy house if any man fall from thence." No intelligent reader need be told that the roofs of Oriental houses are perfectly flat, and that they are constantly used for promenading, for rest, for drying fruits, for sleeping, and often (as in Peter's case) for religious devotions. It required but small expenditure of time and money to build the parapet. When that measure of precaution has been taken, the little children may romp there with impunity; good old grandfather may walk there, without danger of stumbling over, through dimness of vision. But if the inviting roof was left unprotected, and even a single child was pitched into the street below, what skill could restore the mangled form? This Oriental law of the parapets teaches that prevention is well-nigh certain, but cure is exceedingly difficult. Often all attempts in that direction are well-nigh hopeless. The percentage of inebriates who are reformed by any method is pitiably and painfully small.. "Inebriate asylums" do not cure one half of those who are sent there. Of the converted drunkards who are received into our churches, nearly all have had one or more temporary lapses into drinking, and every man of them is in constant danger to their dying day. Such men as Gough, and Sawyer, and McAuley are only upheld by the omnipotent grace of God. Yet all the multitudes of victims of the bottle who have gone down to darkness and their doom might have been saved by the very simple process of prevention. If one-twentieth part of the effort which is put forth in attempted reformation of the dissipated had been spent in persuading them never to drink at all, how different would have been the result! The right time to put up the parapet of total abstinence is in childhood or early youth. The right place to plant the parapet is at home and in the Sabbath-school. 1. But there are other lessons taught by the Jewish battlements besides those which apply to the bottle. One lesson is that wilful neglect is as fatal as wilful crime. Not-doing is twin brother to wrong-doing. Many a father and mother have had their hearts broken by the disgraceful sins of a son; and yet the blame of the boy's ruin rested on themselves. They had either set him a most pernicious example, or else they had left him to drift into bad practices unrestrained. Building battlements after our children have broken their own necks and our hearts is a sort of posthumous precaution that comes to nothing. 2. It is from the neglect of the cultured, influential classes in our towns that the terrible harvests of the streets (in the shape of thieves, rioters, and criminals) are constantly reaped. If tenement-houses reek with filth and debauchery, if the young are unreached by any mission school or church, or any kind of purifying agency, what else can we expect than wholesale demoralisation among "the masses"? Prisons, pauperism, and gibbets are God's assessments upon society for neglecting the children. If society fails to put up parapets, society must "foot the bill." These are the very times for parapet-building. The Bible furnishes plenty of good precepts with which to build parapets. The Fifth Commandment and the Eighth are peculiarly good timber. Happy is the man whose daily life is walled around with a Bible conscience. His religion is a prevention. Half of his life is not lost in attempting to cure the effects of the other half. (*T. L. Cuyler.*) *The duty of the strong*:—There is a mixture here of the temporary and the permanent. The symbol is temporary and local; but the principle symbolised is eternal and universal. "When thou buildest a new house." It is not to be an after-thought; the battlements are to be in the original plan. The man is not to wait until an accident occurs and the necessity for the battlements is proved, but he is to take precautionary measures. He has to do with human life, which is too sacred to be experimented with in order to find out the percentage of probabilities. But I can imagine the selfish man saying, "Nay, I will not build battlements to my house. I can walk the flat roof of my house without any danger of falling, and why should I provide for others? I am perfectly safe." The same argument is used with regard to abstinence. "Erect battlements so that others may not fall over? Nay," says one, "I am in no danger. I can take my glass of beer or wine, and feel perfectly safe; and why should I abstain for the sake of those who know not how to control their appetites?" Now just look at that. By the law of self-preservation the man would build battlements to prevent danger to himself; as there is none for him he will not build those battlements; so that, after all, the highest impulse in that man's life is just this—self-preservation. Are you prepared to say, "Nay, I will not abstain from intoxicating drinks, and thus erect a battlement, a balustrade, simply because I know I am perfectly safe myself"? If there is any danger to another, and it is in your power, by your example, to erect a barrier which shall prevent the fall of another, then it is your evident duty to do it. But the cynic comes forward and says, "Yes, I know it is possible for a man to fall

over, but it must be through culpable neglect or very exceptional weakness, and am I to conform to such conditions? Am I to build a balustrade or abstain from intoxicating drinks merely because of the weaklings by whom I am surrounded? Am I to take account of them?" God's law does, and human law, in so far as it is Christian, does. It is the duty of the strong to deny themselves for the sake of the weak; we who are strong ought not to please ourselves. . . . Now the question is not whether you can with safety to yourself indulge in intoxicants, but whether by taking your glass you encourage another who is weaker to take his glass also, and who in due time may become a drunkard and a prey to the passion from which you are so happily free. . . . But there is the self-assertive man who says: "I am not going to give up my liberty; it is a limitation to my personal liberty." That cry is as fallacious as it is selfish. Personal liberty must ever run parallel with the well-being of the community. (*D. Davies.*) *Modern battlements:*—Obviously the letter of this precept applies only to the flat-roofed houses of the East. There the housetop has always been a place of resort. Rahab took the scouts to the top of her house in Jericho, where her flax was spread out, and hid them there. King David walked on the housetop at the hour of evening. Our Lord spoke to the Twelve of preaching "upon the housetops." It is not improbable that even in our climate more use may hereafter be made of the housetops than heretofore. The pressure of crowded cities may lead to this. Already the plan of having recreation-ground for children on the flat roof of a school-house has been tried, where a playground could not otherwise be obtained; and it has been found to answer well. In any such case the need of a strong balustrade is, of course, as imperative as it was in Palestine. God requires that human life shall not be trifled with. Precaution should be taken that it be not, even through inadvertence, sacrificed. And this principle belongs peculiarly to our holy religion. Other forms of religion have breathed a cruel spirit, and a contempt for human life. We can imagine an Israelite chafing at such a command as this. "Religion," he might say, "is religion. Sacrifice is sacrifice. Prayer is prayer. But business also is business, and has its own necessities. May not a man build a house as he likes with his own money?" But he might be answered thus: "There is no such separation as you desire between piety and conduct. Religion does not consent to be shut up in tabernacle, temple, or synagogue. It must come out into the streets and highways, a witness for righteousness and love. It absolutely denies your right to build or to do anything whatever just as you like. The question is not what you choose, but what you ought to do." That God of order and of mercy who gave directions about stray sheep, an ox or ass that had fallen by the way, and even about the eggs in a bird's nest, did not omit to legislate against fatal accidents to men, women, and children. Now, this is our God; and what He deemed worthy of His notice, and even of His legislation in the time of Moses, is certainly not forgotten or disregarded by Him now. He will not hold any man guiltless who builds a house, whether for his own residence or to be let or sold to another, and does not in the building guard against whatever is perilous to human life. A house built, or run up with defective supports, damp walls or bad drainage, violates this law. It is a structure unsafe or pernicious for man, and therefore displeasing to God. Let the owners of house property look to it. The spirit of the enactment suggests other and wider applications. Religion has something serious to say to those who possess and those who manage mines and railways, and those who send ships to sea. Calamities will happen even in the most carefully excavated and managed mines, on the most skilfully built and regulated railways, and in the stoutest and best found ships; but when they occur through parsimony, or through recklessness, the parties who are really responsible, whether or not made answerable to human justice, incur the heavy displeasure of God. He requires that all precautions which are possible shall be taken to prevent a wanton sacrifice of life. Precaution is not an interesting word. It has not a heroic sound; but it denotes a thing that is wise and that pleases God. A dashing rescue of men out of deadly peril attracts more admiration; but he does well who prevents them from falling into the danger. Neglect of due precaution is, in fact, the mother of all sorts of mischief. No harm is intended, but a little indolence or heedlessness grudges the trouble, or parsimony grudges the expense of preventive measures; and so harm is done, which no skill can remedy. The watertight doors between the compartments of the ship are left open on the very night when she is struck, and it is too late to close them when the water rushes from stem to stern and she begins to settle down into the hungry sea. Often a man falls short in his precautionary duty through overmuch confidence in himself. He needs

no parapet to protect him. It is thus that men ungenerously disregard the moral safety of others. One has what is called a "strong head." Whether it be from strength or sluggishness, he can drink much wine or strong drink with apparent impunity; and on this account he laughs at abstinence. But his own son may be unable to govern himself. Far be it from us to disparage the remedial efforts that in any measure bless the world. The Gospel itself is the announcement of a Divine remedy for human sin and woe; and men act in the spirit of the Gospel when they bring cleansing and healing to those who have fallen. But what folly it is to let things go wrong in order to right them again! Surely the first duty is to prevent preventable evils. Towards such objects a good deal has been done by modern English legislation, and by the action of philanthropic societies and institutions. The influence of the Christian family, of Church, and of Sunday school ought to form a still better parapet to guard the youth of England. Is the relation to the Lord which is implied in their baptism seriously and intelligently explained to children? Are the claims of the Saviour on their love and allegiance unfolded to them? Without any premature strictness being forced upon the young, a moral parapet might be quietly and insensibly raised around them by the prayer of faith, the charm of good example, and a careful, patient training in upright speech and conduct. Alas! there are those who will, in their infatuation, leap over every such battlement and throw their lives away. But it is none the less desirable that the battlement should be there. It will save some, though not all. It is a check, though not a panacea. It gives time for reason, for conscience, for reflection, for self-respect; above all, for the grace of God, to act, and preserve men from moral self-destruction. Possibly some of you have fallen and are broken. No parapet was placed round their heedless youth, or if there was a battlement, they laughed at it and jumped over. They had taken their own way, done their own will and pleasure, ridiculed the scruples of their best friends; and let us hope they at last begin to recognise their own folly, and are bruised, and sore, and self-vexed. The mercy of God is for them. They have destroyed themselves, but in Him is their help. Jesus Christ, the Son of the Highest, is the Good Physician. He has come to heal the broken and to save the lost. (*D. Fraser, D.D.*) *The law of home life*:—I. THE SACREDNESS OF HUMAN LIFE. Of all the earthly blessings which man enjoys, he considers life the greatest. So highly does he appreciate it that he will part with all things else in order to retain it. Yet notwithstanding these facts there seems to be a growing disregard for human life. II. THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY LIFE. The Jews were a nation of home-makers and home-lovers. If the family was an important institution among the Jews, it is no less important to us as a nation. No one doubts that the State is necessary to our welfare as a people. We must have laws, and we must have them executed, if we maintain a civil government. And no one doubts that the Church is necessary unto our national existence. But important as are the State and the Church, it is generally conceded that the family is more important than either. It has to do with the physical, the social, the moral, and the spiritual well-being of each member of the household. In view of the fundamental position and character of the family, and in view of its vast importance, it becomes us more highly to appreciate it, and more earnestly to strive for its preservation and perpetuity. III. SOME SAFEGUARDS WHICH SHOULD BE PLACED ABOUT THE HOME. Natural instinct, parental love, and the Divine Word demand this of them. 1. One such means is good reading in the homes. 2. Another safeguard to the family is making the home pleasant: making it the happiest place on earth. Seemingly the trend of modern life is away from the home. 3. Another safeguard to the family is religious instruction. (*R. L. Bachman, D.D.*)

Ver. 10. **Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.**—*A law for the ox and the ass*:—There was a reason for this prohibition. The step of an ox and an ass being different, they could not pull together without causing one another much exertion and weariness. The work would be nearly twice as hard for the ox and the ass as it would be for two oxen or two asses. The law teaches us to consider differences in human beings, and not to yoke those who differ from one another to the same tasks. The law forbidding the people to plough with an ox and an ass applies to children. Injury is done to children when they are treated as though they had precisely the same bodily and mental capabilities. Children are so variously constituted, that what one boy can do with ease in school-work is to another boy a difficult labour. The sum in arithmetic which is to one a pleasure is

to another a torture. The seemingly dull boy is not to be reproached because he cannot do what his bright companion can do. Some day the apparently stupid fellow may awake to intellectual activity, and get a long way before the boy who, for a time, made rapid progress in scholarship. The ass, which could not keep pace with the ox in dragging the plough, has sometimes developed into a steed grand as the war-horse described in the Book of Job. Children should not be put to trades irrespective of their gifts and preferences. The timid, shrinking boy should not be mated with the bold, adventurous type in employments needing a daring spirit. The bold, adventurous boy, whose heart is already on the ship's deck, and who dreams day and night of voyages over great spaces of ocean to the region of the walrus and white bear, or to the clime of the palm and the tamarind, should not be kept behind a grocer's counter. What is right for one is not necessarily right for another. Fathers and mothers should honour individuality in their boys and girls, and not fret because their children do not pull together in the same yoke. The law forbidding the Israelites to plough with an ox and an ass applies to young people. They are not to be treated religiously as though they were all in the same condition, and had all to pass through a like process to become disciples of Christ. Hard theologians and unthinking revivalists have done harm to such young people by passing on them a sweeping condemnation, and insisting that there is no true conversion without agonies of repentance and ecstasies of joy. No distinction has been made between them and those guilty of flagrant sins, and they have been cruelly yoked with the very worst of mankind. The law forbidding the Israelites to plough with an ox and an ass applies to men and women. All the members of the Church are not to be expected to manifest their religion precisely in the same way. Some are naturally lively and joyful; before their conversion they were noted for their cheerful disposition. It is as impossible for them to be dull as it is for the sun to be dull when shining in the blue of an unclouded sky. It is as impossible for them to be silent as it is for larks and linnets to be silent when May is kissing the April buds into flower. It would be as bad as yoking the ox and the ass together to insist that they must repress their jubilant feelings and be quiet as Christians whose voices are never heard in religious demonstration. It would be equally cruel to insist that those quiet Christians must break through their natural gravity, and manifest the enthusiasm which is ever pealing out song after song, hallelujah after hallelujah. Violence is not to be done to natural feeling by forcing every one to the same kind of Christian work. The timid and retiring are not to be compelled to pull in the same yoke with the brave and bold. (*J. Marrat.*)

Ver. 11. **Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts.**—*The moral and the positive in the duties of life:*—I. THAT THIS PRECEPT EXHIBITS A "POSITIVE" DUTY. The ground of this ordinance is to be sought for, not in the nature of things, but in the will of God. II. THAT AS THE INCULCATION OF A POSITIVE DUTY THE PRECEPT OF THE TEXT WAS NOT SO BINDING UPON THE JEWS AS THOSE DUTIES WHICH WERE WHOLLY MORAL. A Jew might be reduced to the alternative either of wearing no garment at all, or of wearing one woven of woollen and linen together. The preservation of health is a moral duty, and therefore more important than the observance of a ritual precept. III. THAT WE, WHO LIVE UNDER THE GOSPEL DISPENSATION, ARE NOT BOUND TO OBSERVE THIS PRECEPT AT ALL. Neither sowing your fields with wheat and rye together, nor ploughing with horses and oxen together, nor wearing a garment of wool, or of linen, or of divers sorts, availeth anything, "but a new creature." IV. THAT WHILE WE ARE UNDER NO MANNER OF OBLIGATION TO OBSERVE THIS PRECEPT IN ITS LITERAL MEANING, STILL THE MORAL PRINCIPLE WHICH UNDERLIES THAT MEANING, AND WHICH IT WAS INTENDED TO ILLUSTRATE, IS AS BINDING NOW AS EVER—AS BINDING UPON US AS IT WAS UPON THE JEWS. This prohibition, in its primary application to the Israelites, was doubtless intended to show that they were not to mingle themselves with the heathen, nor to weave any of the usages of the Gentiles into the ordinances of God. This is the spirit of the precept, and it is as binding upon us as it was upon them. We are to avoid an accommodating way of dealing with the Divine law. We are not to alter its sacred principles to suit the temper of the times, and the habits of the world. (*R. Harley.*) *The robe of Christ's righteousness, and the sin of wearing anything with it:*—I. THE ROBE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH ALL GOD'S PEOPLE MUST WEAR. It may perhaps be said, that as the text merely forbids our interweaving woollen and linen together, it leaves it at our choice whether the garment of our salvation shall be woollen or linen. But it is not so. It must be of linen, and of fine linen only (Rev. xix. 7, 8).

This robe of righteousness is for two purposes. 1. For their justification. The robe of righteousness must not only be such as Jehovah can accept, but it must be such as He cannot reject—it must be the pure, perfect, supernatural, Divine righteousness of an incarnate God. 2. And this robe of righteousness is not only for our justification, but for our sanctification also. The man who has the robe of Christ's righteousness upon him, must have the influences of Christ's Spirit within him, for it is only by our sanctification that we can prove the reality of our justification. There is a renowing process as well as a reconciling one. II. THE OFFENSIVENESS OF ALL ATTEMPTS TO WEAVE ANYTHING WITH IT. 1. It is an insult to God the Father, who has determined that every child of His family shall be habited in the one robe of the family—the perfect spotless garment of His only begotten Son, "unto and upon all them that believe." How, then, must that man expect to be dealt with, who, in the wantonness of his resistance to God's method of salvation, shall refuse to rest solely on the righteousness of God's own Son, or shall dream of adding thereto his own imperfect and perishable doings? The consequence can only be, that all the sanctions and severities of God's unchanging law will be let loose upon him in all their force, if he ventures either on his own merits only, in a woollen garment, or conjointly on his own and on the Saviour's in a garment of linen and woollen together, and thus refuse his undivided reliance on Him alone, who magnified the law and made it honourable. 2. Nor, assuredly, is there less insult offered to God the Son, in this attempt to combine works and grace in the matter of salvation. For what purpose was His mission to our world? Did He not pour out His soul an offering for sin, and by His obedience unto death bring in everlasting righteousness? Think you, then, that this great and gracious Saviour will consent to be insulted by men's attempts to join their works with His, and to "wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together," when the fine linen only of His finished work—dyed in His precious blood—is the righteousness of the saints? Know ye not that He lays an absolute claim to all the honour of our salvation? That He will suffer no righteousness to be put in competition with His? That He will not give His glory, nor the least degree of it, to another? (*R. C. Dillon, D.D.*)

The linsey-woolsey garment:—The woollen garment in the text is a shadow of the righteousness of the law or the righteousness of works; the linen also is a shadow of the righteousness of faith, or Christ's righteousness. To speak after the manner of the Gospel, the text teacheth us not to blend both together. There are three sorts of preachers who receive the Scripture and confess the God of Abraham. 1. The first are such as preach the law alone, and these are generally Jews, and men of their spirit. 2. The second sort are evangelists or true Gospel preachers, ministers of the New Testament, who preach only the Lord our righteousness, and who will know nothing among their congregations, and souls committed to their charge, but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. 3. There are others who sin against the law, and against the Gospel, blending both together, and teaching the people to wear the garment of linen and woollen, of all which I intend to speak freely. I do not wonder that St. Peter calls the law a yoke, which neither they nor their fathers could bear, because it must have been so to them who heard not plainly of Jesus and His salvation. Who, under the law, could have any comfort when he knew he was under the curse as long as he continued not in all things of the book of the law to do them? The more sincere the more unhappy such were who served under the law, and heard of no way to heaven but a perfect obedience to all the ordinances of God. The true Christian preacher is one whom the God of the whole earth, the Lord who gave the law, has taught, and who is convinced that the law was given to make sin known, and to make it more exceedingly sinful, and that righteousness comes not by that means, but by Christ Jesus, who is become righteousness to every one that believeth; and having heard the Gospel with ears to hear, and having understood the gracious sayings of Jesus, and been a witness himself both of the deplorable estate under the law and the deliverance by the merits and Cross of the Lamb, determines only to know and preach Him crucified everywhere. This is the only white linen, the only righteousness which the saints wear above, and which can make them beautiful and fair in the eyes of God Almighty, and in the sight of His holy angels. There are yet other preachers who, in a measure, preach the law, and seem as if they believed morality and obedience were the only cause of our being accepted with God. They insist upon the necessity of making ourselves righteous, but lest they should awaken the consciences of those who hear them, they tell them, When you have done all you can, Christ will do the rest; He will make perfect your good works with His righteousness; you must begin and set

about the work by repenting and living a religious life; and if that is not sufficient, when you come to die He will supply the deficiency and make it up with His merits. This is the device of man entirely, and cannot be found in all the Scripture. This is crying peace when there is no peace, and healing the wound slightly. This is mingling the woollen and linen together, and making the commandment of God void by the traditions of men. However the Lord approves of the faithfulness of His people, and will greatly reward their good works and labours of love which have been done for His name's sake, and blames such whose works were faulty; yet that righteousness which saves the soul, and is the only proper righteousness, is the obedience, sufferings, and merits of our crucified God and Lord Jesus Christ; and this is imputed to us by believing in Him. This was the way in which the father of the faithful found righteousness, and was justified in the sight of God, and in this only a soul can be clothed at the great day. Have you never made any show of religion, but have lived altogether without seeking righteousness hitherto? Now let it be so no more; come now to Jesus, the Friend of publicans and sinners, and He who hanged naked on the Cross will hide your shame. Or, are you devout and religious? Have you attempted by the law and striven by works to become righteous, and when ye failed patched up your rags with Christ's merits, God's mercy, and the like? Have ye, to quiet your conscience, mingled the woollen and linen together? Now, then, throw away the linsey-woolsey cloth, the forbidden garment, the unclean and illegal dress, and approach naked to Him who clothes the lilies of the field, and He will be your covering, and you shall appear at His wedding in linen clean and white. (*John Cennick.*) *The unmixed garment:*—1. Such a command may seem very strange to us—that they were not to mix wool and linen in the same garment; but after mature reflection, we are led to see the infinite care God has over the smallest interests of His people; it shows, also, that God sees an infinite fitness of things which is too fine for our gross apprehension. 2. Scripture has its only true and pre-eminent meaning when applied to the inner moral robing of Christians. We are not to have our soul's garniture mixed, partly of the wool of carnality and partly of the linen of spirituality. Grant that the great majority of believers, or more strictly half-believers, are sadly mixed in their religious character and experience; grant also that every Christian is mixed—partly spiritual and partly carnal—in the first stage of grace, yet the only and universal standard in the Scriptures of Divine truth is unmixedness of moral character. (*H. Daniel.*)

CHAPTER XXIII.

VER. 5. **The Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing.**—*Balaam's curse turned into a blessing by God:*—Here a difficult question meets us. Was there any reality whatever in Balaam's curse? Or was it altogether a harmless thing—in fact, nothing at all? If there was nothing in it, why should it have been averted? Why should it be said that God "would not hearken unto Balaam"? Why not let it be pronounced? The result would have shown that there was no power or reality in it. On the other hand, it is difficult to suppose that such power could reside in a curse, especially when spoken by such a man as Balaam. One thing is certain, that God Himself never did give false prophets power to curse. Could they, then, derive it from any other quarter? Why not from Satan? No creature is absolutely independent; all are instruments in the hands of another. If through grace we have been placed in the kingdom of light, then we are instruments in the hands of God. If we are in the kingdom of darkness, we can only be instruments in the hands of Satan; a curse and not a blessing to others. Now, heathenism is one great territory of Satan's power—one chief part of his kingdom of darkness. He reigns supreme there. We believe, then, that within the sphere of his kingdom of darkness Satan has power to employ false prophets as his instruments—has power to enable them to curse, and to fulfil their curse when pronounced. The conflict here, then, was not merely one between the king of Moab and Israel, but between the kingdom of light in Israel and the kingdom of darkness in Moab and Midian. Balaam's curse would have been the utterance of the power of darkness; but he was obliged, however reluctantly, to confess his impotency before God. It was an act of

Divine power when God turned the curse into a blessing. It showed His watchful care and love towards His people. And what is it that God is accomplishing now by the gift of His son and the power of His grace, but turning the curse into a blessing? Oh, there is a widespread curse, which has long been resting upon this guilty world, the curse pronounced on man's disobedience; and what makes it so awful is, that it is a righteous curse. Wherever we look we see its tokens—man doomed to a life of weary labour, suffering from different kinds of sickness, and at last seized with the irresistible hand of death; so that St. Paul says, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." But to the children of God this threefold curse is changed by the grace of God into a blessing. Look at the lowest element of the curse, that of labour, according to the sentence, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." How wearisome is ceaseless toil in itself! But to the true Christian how different is toil and labour! He consecrates his powers to Him who has redeemed him with His precious blood! Or look at sickness. What is it but the visible reflection of a spiritual disease within? If the image of God had not been obliterated from the soul by sin there would have been no sickness or sorrow in the world. No miracle is exerted to exempt the Christian from this trial. But its nature is changed; there is no longer any curse in it. How many can bless God for it, painful as it may have been—can bless God for His sanctifying and sustaining power—for the near communion with Jesus which they then enjoyed—for the hallowed impressions made upon their souls; and, most of all, for the manifestations of God's faithfulness and tenderness—of His power and gentleness. But of all the elements of the curse the most manifest and the most awful is death—so universal in its reign—so tremendous in its power—so mysterious in its nature. We can scarcely stand by a dying bed without the question pressing itself upon our thoughts—oh, why this convulsion? Why this distressing and humiliating close to our life here? One answer can only be given—It is because of sin. "Death passed upon all men in that all have sinned." To the Christian its sting is drawn. It is but the rending of the veil which separates his soul from the visible presence of his Redeemer. (*G. Wagner.*)

Ver. 14. **The Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp.**—*Camp law and camp life:*—I. AN INSTRUCTIVE COMPARISON. The Church of God is in many respects comparable to a camp. 1. It is a camp for separation. We are crusaders, and are separated from the mass for the service of the Cross which we bear on our hearts. We are in an enemy's country, and we must keep ourselves to ourselves very much, or else we shall certainly fail of that holy military discipline which the Captain of our salvation would have us strictly enforce. 2. It is a camp, because it is on the defensive. 3. It is a camp, especially, because it is always assailing the powers of darkness. We have a world to conquer, and we cannot afford to loiter. We have a kingdom to set up for the Lord of hosts, and we must not sleep, for the adversaries of the Lord are raging. We are an army, sworn to war against the Canaanites of error and sin, to cast down their walled cities, to break their idols, and to cut down their groves. 4. It is a camp, because we are on the march. We ought to be advancing in grace, in knowledge, in earnestness, in holiness, in usefulness, and if not we scarcely realise the figure of a camp. 5. Yet, once more, no doubt, a camp, as formed for temporary purposes, was a token of the Church; for although the Church stands still and abides, yet in her individual members she is subject to the same law of decay, and death, and change as the rest of the world. Soon shall the camp cease, and the soldiers become citizens, and the tents be exchanged for mansions. II. A SPECIAL PRIVILEGE. 1. God is present in the camp of His people with a special presence of love. The Church is the garden of the Lord, His paradise. Where is a father most at home but with his children? 2. God is present in the camp of His people with a special presence of observation. He sees all things; but His eyes are, in the first place, fixed on His Church. With burning glance He searches the very heart of professors. 3. The peculiar privilege of Israel is to have a special presence of salvation. "The Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp to deliver thee." God is with His people, to help them in their times of trouble, to rescue them out of danger, to answer their cries in their necessity, to save them in the hour of temptation. 4. The Lord is with the camp of His people, as a special presence for victory. 5. It is a special presence in covenant. "The Lord *thy* God." III. A CORRESPONDING CONDUCT. 1. This rule, that the camp be holy, applies to the commonest places wherein we are found. The Holy Spirit arrays you in the white raiment of holiness, that you may shine out

bright and clear and distinct before the sons of men. 2. While this holiness pertained to their commonest things, it was also ordered that every unclean thing was to be put from them. Let us come continually to the washing-place—even to the fountain opened. Let us beseech the cleansing Spirit to operate as with fire, and burn His purifying way through and through our souls. 3. Note well the fearful warning which is added. If there be in the camp an unclean thing tolerated and delighted in, and He see it—if it becomes conspicuous and grievous to Him, then the worst consequences will follow—"Lest He turn away from thee." Oh! what would happen to us if the Lord were to turn away from us as a Church? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 15, 16. **Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped.**—*The escaped slave:*—A Flemish artist was painting a picture when two friends noticed the high finish of a broom which was only an insignificant item in the composition. He told them he should spend three more days in working on the broom, intending to be mindful of detail in the general effect of his picture. Moses gave grand laws to the Israelites. His legislation as to the religious duties of the people is sublime. But he was not indifferent to regulations touching their common life, and bent his mind to the task of showing the minute as well as the vast in the order of right-doing. The word servant as used by Moses meant slave. Remembering what the Israelites had to endure in their Egyptian bondage, he had great sympathy with those who were held in servitude and compelled to work without remuneration. He could well understand that a man or woman in slavery, badly treated, and with no hope of an ameliorated lot, would, if possible, get away from the cruel owner and make a desperate rush for liberty. He did not blame the slave for stealing away from the owner. If technically there was theft in such an action, there was no dishonesty. The slaves who at one time escaped from southern plantations to Canada did no wrong. The masters suffered loss, but they lost what did not belong to them by any righteous law. There is a moral and spiritual application of this. Many people are in slavery. It is true they have not lost their civil liberty; they have not been sold in any slave-market; they know nothing of literal chains, scourges, and labour for which there is no payment. They are proud of the freedom which is one of the glories of their native land. But they are slaves, for they are in bondage to evils which they have allowed to obtain mastery over their souls. There are powers in them which make them feeble for action when they would do good, and almost force them to transgression of Divine law. They have a right to break loose from the enthralling powers of sin, for sin holds nothing by legal proprietorship. Every sinner has a right to freedom, and is urged to rush to Jesus as a refuge from tyranny. The escaped slave was to be kept from the pursuer. When in the morning the master called for the slave, and there was no answer, and looked for him, but could not find him, he would conclude at once that the slave had gone away. Making inquiries, the master would ascertain the direction the fugitive had gone, and follow him until he found the place in which he was hiding. He would say to the elders: "My slave is here, and I must have him. Give him up to me." "No, no" was to be the reply; "we shall never give him up, and so long as these walls stand the poor man shall be kept out of your hands." We rejoice that our country has long been what the Israelitish village and city were to be to the escaped slave in the old time. The footprint of the slave on British soil is the certificate of his manumission. When the slaves of sin get loose from their bonds, and escape into Immanuel's land, they at once experience the blessedness there is in the liberty of the children of God. Christ never gives up to any old master those who have fled for refuge to His land; He loves them so much that He does not wish to have them out of His sight; and to defend them from the powers which would tear them back to sin He throws around them the awful grandeur and radiant blaze of His own perfections. The escaped slave was to be kindly treated. The man who had made a rush for freedom was not to rush into a new slavery. Those to whom he fled for refuge were not to take advantage of his necessities and use him in compulsory labour for their own profit; no service or tax was to be levied on him as the price of security from his old master. He was to be treated as a free Israelite, and to be allowed to live and work where he liked. The sinner who escapes from slavery to Immanuel's land is to be welcomed and cared for by members of the Church. He is to be recognised as having a claim to brotherly love, and to all the dignities and privileges that distinguish the Christian life. Even if members of the Church do look shyly on a newly converted

sinner, Jesus does not, but bids him welcome to the palace of love, and opens to him immensities of blessing. (*J. Marrat.*)

Ver. 22. **If thou shalt forbear to vow.**—*Extraordinary and particular vows considered as not necessary under the Mosaic or expedient under the Christian institution:*—I. THE NATURE OF VOWS UNDER THE JEWISH DISPENSATION: which, as they are particularly voluntary engagements, we ought to observe when made, though we cannot infer a necessity of making them from the Divine law or the nature of things. It would seem but an ill consequence should we thus argue: God has commanded us in general to honour Him with our substance, and therefore we ought to make ourselves liable to His judgments, if in such a particular case, at such a particular time, and to such a particular degree we do it not. This I say would be but an ill consequence, though there may be some fit reasons assigned why such particular vows were used by good and pious men under the circumcision (Gen. xxviii. 20; Judg. xi. 20, 31; 2 Sam. xv. 7, 8). Hence we observe that things consecrated or descerated, though they are in a vulgar sense styled devoted, are not always reducible under the general nature of a vow, in the proper and scriptural sense of the word, and there seems to be a greater difference than is commonly apprehended between them. Thus much may suffice to determine the notion of vows as they are distinguished from other sacrifices under the Jewish dispensation; but it will still be more clear from some further reflections upon the lawful matter of them. For this we need only in general observe that everything which was not appropriated to God, which was not profaned, or which was not properly under the right or arbitrament of another, was the subject matter of them. From whence it follows that tenths in the first place were, under the Mosaic law, excluded from it, and that these could not be vowed to the Almighty, or be accepted by Him as a freely promised offering, because they were properly His before both by prescription and command. Again, nothing which was profaned or unclean, unless as it was redeemable, could be the matter of a vow. The heathens, for the generality, had more exalted notions than to think their gods would be gratified with such sacrifices as were held in contempt by themselves, and were in their kind of least estimation with them. Lastly, whatsoever was under the right and power of another was excluded from the matter of a vow, and therefore those who were subject to the authority of fathers or husbands were by the law not obliged to the performance of vows made without their consent during their right and power over them. II. UNDER THE GOSPEL THE CHRISTIAN'S VOWS ARE COMPREHENDED UNDER THE SACRAMENTAL, AND THEREFORE PARTICULAR VOWS ARE NEITHER NECESSARY NOR EXPEDIENT. It may be proper to give a fit instance or two of particular vows in order to settle what are so. We are, in general, by our baptismal covenant, obliged to renounce all the sinful lusts of the flesh, and in consequence of this are obliged to make use of the means prescribed, suppose mortification by fasting. But should we by a solemn promise to God Almighty oblige ourselves to abstain such a number of days or hours, this circumstance nowhere enjoined would make it a particular vow. Again, we are obliged by our general vow to acts of charity and piety; but should we make a voluntary promise to God to bestow at such a future time such a certain sum to such an assigned use in view of such a desired blessing, this would also be a particular vow. And these are the vows which I undertake to prove neither necessary nor expedient. If they had been necessary, we might reasonably suppose that as our Saviour appointed that grand one for the initiation of His followers, He would also have prescribed the other, either by precept or practice, for the perfection of them, that so the use of them might have been derived by authority to the Christian Church, as it was to the Jews from the patriarchs. But we have no instance of this kind, either from our Saviour, His apostles, or followers, in the New Testament. And if we take them, under the general notion, as acts of gratitude, by which the good Christian promises to God the acknowledgment of a blessing by a suitable offering and oblation, though it is lawful and not absurd, as Calvin expresses it, to enter into such engagements, yet what advantage this method of acknowledgment has above others is not easily discerned. Should the pious Christian be made a peculiar favourite of heaven, and blessed with extraordinary advantages, either in prospect or possession, he may by his free gifts and offerings give a more noble and generous instance of his pious resentment, which under the law were always deemed the most acceptable sacrifices, and must recommend to the favour of the Almighty, who loveth a cheerful giver, whereas he, who lays a constraint upon himself, may give afterwards with an

unwilling mind, and though he pays the vow, may not answer the end of it. And it is for these reasons, I presume, that the Jewish doctors discouraged and deterred their scholars from such kind of vows. But were they ever so expedient, the ill use which has been made of the doctrine of particular vows by the Church of Rome would be enough to give us a prejudice against them. (*T. Silvester, M.A.*)

Vers. 24, 25. **Thou mayest eat grapes.**—*Grapes and ears of corn free*:—Thus a privilege was granted, but one strictly limited. A man who was thirsty might help himself to as many grapes as he cared to eat, but he was not to take any away. A man who was hungry might pluck ears of corn, as the disciples of Jesus did, and eat the grains, but he was not to carry a sheaf from the field. In this manner property was guarded. This is in harmony with the biblical law of property generally honoured at the present time. Even those who denounce individual property in land and minerals, and wish to nationalise them, do not advocate such nationalisation without payment to the proprietors. If ownership in land were set aside, the poor might lose the farm or the field bequeathed for their benefit. If ownership in money or goods were set aside, the widow might lose her small annuity, and even have to give up the old watch she values as having belonged to her husband, and the treasured curiosities brought by her sailor son from a foreign land. Still, the best property human beings possess is the mental and spiritual wealth they carry in their mind and heart. In other words, they may have history, biography, poetry, religion as the treasures of their inner life. The owners of property are not to be greedily selfish. Nothing was said by Moses to the proprietor or tenant of the vineyard or corn-field, but much was implied. If he saw a man, woman, or child pulling a cluster of grapes, he was not to be in a tempest of wrath, as though some great wrong had been done him, or to threaten the intruder with a criminal action. The man was rather to be glad that out of his abundance thirsty and hungry wayfarers could have their needs so readily supplied. Those who have are to be generous to those who have not. Every rich man in the country who does not value his riches as power to do good is an enemy to himself and the country. The limitation of privilege in the vineyard and the corn-field enjoined by Moses was an implied exhortation to industry. Grapes might be eaten in the vineyard, but no vessel was to be filled with them and carried away. Those who wanted grapes for the wine-press were to grow grapes. Ears of corn might be plucked, but the sickle was not to be used in the field. Those who wanted corn to grind were to plough, to sow, and reap in their own fields; there was to be no greedy appropriation of the fruit for which other men had laboured. It is much better for human beings to act for themselves than indolently to lean on others. There is no food so good as that which a man earns with his own hands. Labour is the law of the spiritual as well as of the temporal sphere. Those who wish to attain a good degree in the Church, and to win the eulogiums pronounced on Christ's faithful servants, must work hard for themselves, that they may learn how to work hard for others. They must read much, think much, pray much. In one of his books Lord Beaconsfield represents a youth as saying, "I should like to be a great man." The counsel given him was: "You must nourish your mind with great thoughts." Those who wish to rank high in Christ's service must appropriate great thoughts, and make them their own by reflection and meditation. There is no way to usefulness except by ardent toil. It is only by setting ourselves to work that we shall be able to afford grapes and corn to famishing souls. (*J. Marrat.*)

CHAPTER XXIV.

VER. 5. **Free at home.**—*Home*:—Some words contain a history in themselves, and are the monuments of great movements of thought and life. Such a word is "home." With something like a sacramental sacredness it enshrines a deep and precious meaning and a history. That the English-speaking people and their congeners alone should have this word, indicates that there are certain peculiar domestic and social traits of character belonging to them. When we study their history we find that from the very first they have been distinguished, as Tacitus tells us, by the manly and womanly virtues of fidelity and chastity; by the faithful devotion of

wife to husband and husband to wife; by the recognised headship and guardianship of the married man as indicated in the old word "husband," and the domestic dignity and function of the married woman as indicated in the old word "wife," betokening the presence of those home-making, home-keeping, home-loving qualities of mind and heart which have always belonged to this sturdy race. And when upon these qualities the vitalising, sanctifying influence of Christianity was brought to bear, the outcome has been the building up of the noblest of all the institutions of the Christian life. No man is poor, no matter what storms of ill-fortune have beaten upon him, who can still find refuge beneath its sacred shelter; and no man is rich, no matter how splendid his fortune or his lot, who cannot claim some spot of earth as his home. My purpose, however, is neither philological nor ethnological; it is rather to speak of the function of Christianity in the home. It is upon God's special enactment that this great institution rests. Its function is to carry out His purposes in training and ennobling men to do His will. Its perfection is the reflection of His love in the majestic order of His Godhead with fatherhood, sonship, life; its beatitude is the maintenance on earth of the peace and purity of heaven. Taking the Christian home as we know it, then, there are certain broad features of its economy, the mention of which will serve to bring out its character. I. The first of these is ITS UNITY OF ORDERLY ADMINISTRATION, in the supreme headship of one man, the husband; the supreme dignity of one woman, the wife; the providence of parental love in the nurture of children, and the natural piety of children in their reverence and obedience to their parents. 1. First, with reference to the discipline of the home, it is to be remembered that there is a home discipline to which all the members thereof are subject—the father and mother not less than the children. The husband and father, the wife and mother, while they are the source of authority in the home, are themselves under the authority of the God and Father of all, of whose great economy they are the earthly representatives. 2. The only basis, for instance, on which the headship of the husband can securely rest is in its conformity to the headship of Christ over His Church. From Christ he learns that all his true authority is derived from self-surrender, all his real power from self-sacrifice. Nor is the wife, the husband's consort, exempt from this discipline of self-sacrificing love. Such service, indeed, the fond mother-heart of woman is quick to render, and therein lies the hiding of her power. But this service is due not to children only, but to the husband as well. And this is to be shown not only in those gentle ministries of the home which every good wife is glad to render, and in the rendering of which her true queenship lies, but it is to be shown likewise in the reverence which she ought always to feel towards the husband. Whensoever the wife acts on this principle, she calls out what is noblest in her husband. To such parental authority I need not say that children ought to be altogether obedient in all things. Obedience is the crown and grace of childhood, without which no child can learn to be strong and great; without which no child can be lovable or lovely. II. In the next place, let me speak of THREE DANGERS THAT BESET THE CHRISTIAN HOME—care, worldliness, and passion. 1. First, care. The lives of all earnest men are full of care. Men have to toil and struggle to keep their place while the busy world is moving. There is one thing that can be done, however, and that is, we can keep care away from the sacred precincts of the home. 2. Even more fatal to the peace and safety of the home is worldliness—the worldliness of the husband which takes him away from his home in the calm evenings. But even worse is the worldliness of the wife. No woman is fit to be the queen she ought to be in her own household who does not, no matter what her station may be, find her chief pleasure and count her chief delight in the employments and endearments of her home. 3. And lastly, passion. Not to speak of its darker aspects—the fretful, peevish, ungovernable temper, the hasty word, the harsh unloving look, the little unkindnesses—oh, how often do these break up the peace, and finally desolate the home! Therefore there is need of prayer in the home. Therefore there is need that the fire of sacrifice should be always kept burning on its altars. But when this is so, then we see the blessedness of a Christian home. Beneath its shelter alone can the care-worn toiler and thinker lay his heavy burden down; in its calm haven alone can the weary or storm-tossed spirit find rest. (*Bp. S. S. Harris.*)

Ver. 6. **No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge.**—*The law respecting millstones:*—The Jewish law was important to that people as their national code. Its enactments were wisely adapted to their condition and the land they inhabited, and were calculated to secure their prosperity. But these

considerations alone would not have justified its adoption in the Word of God. The Divine mind aims at higher objects than those which are included in this world's prosperity. Who can imagine, with a worthy idea of infinite wisdom, the laws of this and the two foregoing chapters to have come from God, unless besides the letter in which they served the Jews, they have some deeper import by which they can give wisdom to Christians? Before proceeding further with the subject before us, let me remind you of that most important fact, which is equally true in vegetable growth and in the growth of religion, that all progress is gradual. It is "first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear." But corn, before it is fit for human food, must be brought to the mill and ground; and this operation is more especially connected with the subject before us. I. THE USE OF GRINDING IS TWOFOLD: FIRST, THE SEPARATION OF THE HUSK AND LESS NUTRITIOUS PORTION FROM THE RICHER INTERIOR SUBSTANCE OF THE CORN; AND SECONDLY, THE TRITURATION AND PULVERISING, WHICH REDUCES THE GRAIN TO FLOUR, AND THUS PRESENTS IT FULLY PREPARED FOR THE SUSTENTATION OF MAN. Both these essential services are done by the mill. In ancient times each family had its own mill, and the flour for daily use was ground each day. The mill was composed of two circular flat stones; one the upper, the other the lower. In the upper one there was a hole, in which a wooden handle was fixed, by which it was made to go round. The persons grinding sat to their work, and frequently when women did it there would be two, and one passed the handle round to the other, and so the work went on. To this our blessed Lord alludes when He says, at the end of the Church, meant by the end of the age, or world: "Two women shall be grinding at the mill, the one shall be taken and the other left" (Matt. xxiv. 41). These circumstances all guide us to the correspondence. Corn corresponds to the good in life to which truth leads. The virtues which our views of religion open up to us are a harvest of graces; but, as general principles, they are not quite ready for daily use. They require to be rationally investigated, to be stripped of the forms in which we learned them, and to be accommodated to our own wants and circumstances. This is one of the works of the rational faculty in man. In this respect it is a spiritual mill. To know and understand the truth, that we may love and practise it, this is the spirit in which to read and hear the Word. The wisdom we understand enters into the mind, the wisdom we love enters into the heart. "The opening of Thy words giveth light, it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Psa. cxix. 130). The words which remain in the memory, and do not enter the intellect, leave us, and have left the world, unenlightened and unedified. The grand use of the rational faculty, then, as a spiritual mill is evident. May we never surrender it, or barter it away. But the mill had two stones, an upper and a nether millstone. Stones represent truths of doctrine, especially in relation to the firmness they afford as a foundation and a defensive wall to our faith. In this sense stones are constantly employed in the Word (Isa. xxviii. 16; Matt. vii. 24, 25; Luke xx. 17; 1 Pet ii. 5). The two stones of which the mill consists represent the two grand truths into which the whole Word divides itself: those which teach love to God and love to man. The upper stone is the symbol of the first and great commandment. Our Lord refers to this when answering the question, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. xxii. 36–38). The two tables of stone, upon which the Ten Commandments, the first and the essential principles of all the Divine Word, were written, were intended to represent the same twofold division of all heavenly lessons. The mill, then, with its two stones, represents the rational faculty when it is furnished with these two grand truths. With these two universal principles it can do, and is intended to do, the utmost service to man. Everything that enters the mind should be submitted to its inspection and action. Whatever is taught in relation to God which is inconsistent with love to God and love to man should be rejected; whatever is in harmony with both should be received. All that love would do God will do, for God is love; all that love would reject, God will reject, for God is love. So in relation to man. Our duty in all things is to measure our conduct by the great law, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. vii. 12). Such is the spiritual mill, and such is its operation. What a wide field of use it has; and how essential is that use! To try to sift, to discriminate, to adapt all that we learn, so that fallacy and mere appearance may be rejected, and only what is really conducive to salvation and blessing be retained: "What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord." II. With this view of the important objects

and indispensable character of the millstones, seen in their correspondence, we shall be prepared to see in spiritual light THE REASON OF THE COMMAND IN OUR TEXT: "No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh a man's life to pledge." The rational faculty, and its two grand essential principles, must never be parted with, nor even be placed in abeyance. Oh! that this great truth that we ought never to suspend, never to forego the use of this grand principle, our rational faculty, were engraven on every heart. In this sublime portion of our nature the essential means of manhood reside. He will never become a man who never thoughtfully dares to reason for himself; who never strives to penetrate the appearances of things, and see with a single eye Divine realities. Here is the judgment-seat for each mind. How poor a being he becomes who fears to use this glorious capability, let degenerate millions answer. He has not the fixed instincts of brutes and their obedience to the laws of their order, and while he is born with debased affections, he does not use this grand means of rising for ever higher. Without that we cannot free ourselves from our own passions and prejudices, much less from the domination of other men. Without that we cannot rise to the freedom of citizens of heaven. We are things, not men. Let, then, no man take your mill; it is your life. But neither the lower nor the upper millstone must be taken. The two grand essential truths, upon which all others hang, must neither of them be given up. Whatever is not in harmony with them ought not to be received. Whatever is unworthy of our love to God, whatever would lessen our love to man, should be rejected at once. How great a source of elevation should we constantly have, if in all our hearing and reading we should bring our spiritual corn to the mill, furnished with these spiritual stones! III. Finally, let me earnestly impress upon you all THE IMPORTANCE OF USING THE MILL. There is no possibility of true manhood being attained without a conscientious use of reason in receiving the things of God. Have no fear in employing the glorious faculties Divine mercy has blessed you with. Oh! that men would rise manfully to the dignity of their high character, as rational and immortal beings capable of receiving the truth, judging of it, loving it, and making it their own by practice. Reject every attempt to place this heavenly mill in pledge, for it is your real manhood, your life, that is wished to be taken, when you are told to forego the use of your reason. Above all, let us see well that our mill is ever, in good condition, the nether and the upper stones. Let us receive no instruction that is inconsistent with love to our neighbour, the spiritual nether millstone. Let no sectarian sentiments, no idea that heaven was made just for this small party who think with us, or that gain our assent. Let us unite with men of love and virtue, of every name, assured that "of such is the kingdom of heaven." Let not the upper millstone go into pledge. Let us unceasingly try every sentiment proposed to us as true by the great supreme law of love to God above all things. (*J. Bayley, Ph.D.*)

Ver. 18. **Remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt.**—*Important recollection:*—The admonition may seem needless, but we are prone to forget God's works and wonders. We have need to be stirred up to remembrance for four purposes. 1. For the purpose of humility. We think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. With the lowly is wisdom. If wise, we were once foolish; if justified, we were once condemned; if sons of God, we were once servants of sin. Look to the rock from whence hewn. 2. For the purpose of gratitude. If affected by kindness from our fellow-creatures, should we overlook our infinite Benefactor? We have no claims upon Him and should be thankful for all His benefits. But herein is love. Blessed be the God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people. 3. For the purpose of confidence. David argued from the past to the future. Because Thou hast been my help, therefore under the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice. Here we have peculiar reason for encouragement. What were we when He first took knowledge of us? Was the want of worthiness a bar to His goodness then? Will it be so now? Is there variableness or shadow of turning with Him? Is there not the same power in His arm and the same love in His heart? Did He pardon me when a rebel, and will He cast me off now that He has made me a friend? "He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all," &c. 4. For the purpose of piety and zeal. How many round about you in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity ready to perish? You know the state they are in, and the blessedness of deliverance from it. You are witnesses of what God is able and willing to do. Invite the prisoners of hope to turn to Him—you can speak from experience. (*W. Jay.*) *Remembrance of the past:*—I. THE EXERCISE OF MENTAL

ACTIVITY. II. THE PARTICULAR OBJECT OF CONSIDERATION. 1. Our original state. 2. Our redeemed condition. III. THE ESPECIAL GAIN TO BE DERIVED FROM THIS CONSIDERATION. 1. It will make us humble. 2. It will render us grateful. 3. It should give us confidence and faith. 4. It should kindle our piety and zeal. (*Homilist.*) *The necessary remembrance:*—I. THE CHRISTIAN'S ORIGINAL STATE. 1. Degraded. 2. Oppressed. 3. Helpless. II. THE CHRISTIAN'S HAPPY DELIVERANCE. "Redeemed." God redeemed Israel by His mighty arm. Our redemption, like theirs—1. Originated in God's free compassion. Without claim or merit. He saw our self-procured ruin, and exercised His infinite mercy towards us. 2. Was effected by the mission and work of His Son. 3. Is connected with faith and obedience to our great Deliverer. III. THE CHRISTIAN'S OBLIGATION TO REMEMBER HIS REDEMPTION. But can we forget? Why, the Israelites did. Our own hearts are prone to forget; the cares of the world choke the soul, and cause us to forget God. Satan, by his temptations, would seduce us from this remembrance. 1. We should remember it with intentness of soul and gratitude of heart. Such love and goodness should never be obliterated. A lively remembrance will keep the flame of gratitude burning on the altar of our hearts. 2. We should remember it with feelings of humility and contrition. If self-righteousness would spring up, if we would glory at all in ourselves, this remembrance will lead us back to our original state, and then all boasting will be slain. 3. We should remember that we may feel for those around who are still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. The love of Christ to us should fill us with love to our fellowmen. 4. We should especially remember, when in the means of grace, and at the table of the Lord. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *The memorable deliverance:*—I. THE DELIVERANCE OBTAINED. 1. From the curse of the law. 2. From the bondage of sin. 3. From the tyranny of Satan. 4. From the evils of the world. II. THE DELIVERER DESCRIBED. 1. Redemption originally proceeds from the mercy and love of God. 2. Redemption is meritoriously procured by the Lord Jesus Christ. 3. Redemption is personally realised by the power of the Holy Ghost. III. THE REMEMBRANCE ENJOINED. This command is applicable to the people of God in every age, and extends to all the blessings we receive. As it regards our redemption, we must cherish—1. A grateful remembrance. We should frequently call to mind the deplorable state from which we are redeemed, the inestimable privileges with which we are honoured, and the ineffable felicities to which we are entitled. Such pious reflections will always be profitable, and associated with deep humility, devoted admiration, unfeigned gratitude, and fervent praise (Psa. ciii. 1-4; Isa. xii. 1). 2. An affectionate remembrance. A consciousness of the unspeakable love of God to us should deeply interest and inspire our souls with a reciprocation of love to Him. Our love to God must be supreme, vigorous, manifest, and progressive. It must be the ruling principle of the heart, and the actuating motive of the life (Matt. xxii. 37, 38; Rom. v. 5; 1 John v. 3, 5). 3. An obedient remembrance. This is the specific argument of the text: "Thou shalt remember, therefore I command thee to do this thing." Their obedience was demanded on the ground of Divine goodness. 4. A perpetual remembrance. Redeeming grace deeply involves our immortal interests, and therefore should never be forgotten. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*)

Vers. 19-21. **It shall be for the stranger.**—*Care for others:*—This beautiful passage speaks of the harvest, of the olive, and of the grape. You say, "Well, I am not a farmer, I know nothing of the harvest. Olives do not grow in this cold country. And it is only a few people in England who can grow grapes. What is the meaning of this?" I will tell you what it means, because when God tells us to deal in this way with the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, He means us to do it. You know what the harvest means. It was the in-gathering of the corn, and you know what that was for—to be made into bread. And you know what bread was for—to give strength. The olive was a symbol of fruitfulness, and the grape typified joy. So that the three things God teaches us here to do, are to give strength and peace and joy to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. How can we do that? Turn to Proverbs xii. 25, and let us see how we can do it for the Master. (I am going to take the very lowest thing it is possible for a child of God to do. I am not going to speak to those who can give their hundreds and thousands of pounds and be none the poorer; but let the very poorest of us here to-day see if we cannot be the means of bringing strength and peace and joy to those who need it.) "Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop." We all

know that is true. What is going to make it glad? A fifty-pound note? No! "But a good word maketh it glad." It is not only the wealth or the riches that God speaks about. Here it is a kind, loving word, "a good word," that makes the heart glad. I was thinking only to-day about the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, and about the works, the miracles of Christ. Why, the Lord Jesus accomplished more by His words than by His miracles. And He wants us to be imitators of Him. When He was here He had no long purse, but He had a kind word for everybody except the self-satisfied, the self-righteous, the Scribes and Pharisees. We too can give these and be none the poorer for it. Turn to Isa. l. 4: "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." Perhaps you say, "Oh, I would like to have the tongue of the learned to show people how clever I am!" The Lord Jesus had "the tongue of the learned" for one purpose, and that was to know how to speak a word in season to him that was weary. Here again it is the word; it is not the power or the miracle. Read also in Colossians iii. 17: "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." Has it ever struck you that this is a very strange way of putting it, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed"? We may be disposed to think it ought to have been, "Whatsoever ye say in word or do in deed." But it is not so: "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed." As if God said, "Every word you speak for Me is a good work." And what we want is to have "the tongue of the learned," to know how to speak a word to those that are weary. If we want to be happy, if we want to be joyful and glad, let us try to make others glad. Let us try to give them strength and peace and joy. The most miserable man here to-day is the man who lives for self; the happiest man is the one who forgets self, and lives for others. What a sweet thing it is to know that God has told us, "Whatsoever ye do in word." Up yonder He is keeping a record of it. (*H. Moorhouse.*)

CHAPTER XXV.

VERS. 13–16. **Thou shalt have a perfect and just weight . . . measure.**—*The Christian in commerce:*—I. ENDEAVOUR TO POINT OUT WHAT CHRISTIANITY REQUIRES OF A MAN IN HIS DEALINGS IN BUSINESS WITH HIS FELLOW-MEN. 1. The most rigid adherence to the principles of moral integrity. Truth. Honesty. 2. The exercise of love and kindness. 3. That a man should preserve his soul in peace and patience. 4. That commerce be consecrated and elevated by the spirit of holiness. II. Having described what a Christian should be in commerce BRIEFLY SHOW WHY HE SHOULD BE IT. All considerations by which religion and morality are commended and enforced are applicable here. The course pointed out is right in itself, what we owe to God and connected with eternal destiny. It is necessary to inherit the kingdom of heaven. It is presented to us in the example of Christ, whom all disciples should imitate. In one word, Christianity requires it; all its precepts, principles, blessings, and prospects require it. (*A. J. Morris.*) *Fluctuation of trade:*—Trade is a fluctuating thing; it passed from Tyre to Alexandria, from Alexandria to Venice, from Venice to Antwerp, from Antwerp to Amsterdam and London—the English rivalling the Dutch; the French are now rivalling both. All nations, almost, are wisely applying themselves to trade, and it behoves those who are in possession of it to take the greatest care that they do not lose it. It is a plant of tender growth; it requires sun and soil and fine seasons to make it thrive and flourish. It will not grow like the palm-tree, which, with the more weight and pressure, rises the more. Liberty is a friend to that, as that is a friend to liberty. But the greatest enemy to both is licentiousness, which tramples upon all law and lawful authority, encourages riots and tumults, sticks at nothing to support its extravagance, practises every art of illicit gain, ruins credit and trade, and will ruin liberty itself. Neither kingdoms, commonwealths, public companies, nor private persons, can long carry on a beneficial and flourishing trade without virtue and what virtue teaches—sobriety, industry, frugality, modesty, honesty, punctuality, humanity, charity, the love of our country, and the fear of our God. (*Bp. Newton.*) *Justice:*—From these specific instances of justice let us extend our views to justice in general; let us consider its true nature and importance to human society; the obliga-

tions we are under to adhere to it inviolably; and the fatal consequences of every deviation. Justice is that virtue which teaches us to respect the rights of others, and to refrain from all injurious acts or purposes. 1. Some rights men are born to—such as the use of their own limbs, the free and uncontrolled exercise of their faculties of body and mind—these faculties, derived from the Author of life, sufficiently speak the intention of the Giver—that they should be freely, but at the same time innocently used—this is the equal birthright of every man. 2. Again, if every human being that God has made has a right to live, to breathe, to move, to thiuk—he must also have a just claim to the product of his labour and his thought. 3. Another source of right springs from mutual, voluntary engagements—expressed, or implied—which ought all to be candidly interpreted, and conscientiously fulfilled. 4. Of all obligations the most binding and indispensable is to do no wrong to any; to hold the rightful claims of our fellow-creatures sacred. First, all restraint upon personal liberty exercised by one man upon another—uncompelled by previous aggression—tends wantonly to defeat man's whole destination; and is therefore a daring outrage against the Author of his being. Equally, or rather more unjust and more criminal is it, to forge chains for the mind—to prohibit the use of reason—to compel men to violate their conscience. Next to the undisturbed use of our bodily and mental faculties, the fruits of their exertion, justice maintains inviolable—and consequently enjoins—the exact observance of those civil laws by which the disposal of property is regulated, "not merely for wrath, but for conscience sake." Moreover, independently of government and laws, that those contracts which are entered into for mutual aid and benefit, and without which mankind could not act collectively and in concert, are to be formed on fair and upright principles, and fulfilled with punctuality—is as evident as that man was created to be a social being, and that no one should undermine that mutual confidence and that willingness to combine and to co-operate together, on which the common good so manifestly depends. Nor do commercial or pecuniary concerns form the only province of justice. She is equally solicitous to render unto all their dues of every kind. She abstains as carefully from violating another's reputation as his property; of which, indeed, it often constitutes the most valuable part; and as scrupulously shuns taking any unfair advantage in the most secret transaction, as in the sight of all the world. Who is not sensible of the discordant and tumultuous state into which mankind would fall were justice to take her flight? Selfishness and rapine on all sides prevailing—in a short time little would remain for the one to covet or the other to prey upon and monopolise. Justice is essential not only to the comfort, but to the subsistence of the species. But where neither the eye of man can penetrate, nor the hand of man can reach—there the claims of justice are felt by the truly upright; the reasonable expectations of their fellow-creatures weighed in an impartial scale, and answered with the same conscientious care and unswerving rectitude, as if they were defined by the strictest statutes, and enforced by the severest penalties. Far beyond all formal compacts, all legal obligations, is the demand of reason and conscience on the just man. In comparing his own rights with those of others, his justice stretches into the domain of generosity; in comparing the claims of others between themselves his generosity never deviates from impartial justice. So imperceptible are the shades of difference that separate justice from generosity—whether we consider their motives, obligations, or effects—that, amongst the ancient philosophers justice was the common name assigned to both; and denoted the general principle of all the social virtues—and our Saviour comprehends all that is equitable and all that is kind and disinterested in one and the same precept—"Do unto others, as ye would that they should do unto you." I shall only add, that as justice is that virtue which is most essential to every social state, and that state which is reserved for the spirits of the just will be pre-eminently social; so the habits of justice, which have in this world been interwoven with all their sentiments and actions, must there attain their highest perfection and produce the happiest issue. (*P. Houghton.*)

CHAPTER XXVI.

VER. 5. **A Syrian ready to perish was my father.**—*Humiliation in connection with gratitude:*—Such was the confession required of every priest of Israel when he

presented, before the altar, the offering of first-fruits. It was, therefore, in the midst of abundance, a memorial of former destitution, and an acknowledgment of utter unworthiness, under circumstances of peculiar obligation. The text is capable of divers renderings; but take whichever we may, the lesson is the same. It teaches us, that when the Divine promises are all fulfilled, and our salvation is complete, we are still to remember the past (Isa. li. 1). The connection between acceptable thanksgiving and profound humiliation is a fact which none but a Pharisee would dare to disregard, and which it behoves the Christian to bear in mind in all his devout meditations and religious exercises. Should pride ever rise within his bosom —"Who maketh thee to differ?" is a consideration which may suffice to put it down: nor will he, if walking in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, when, by virtue of his "royal priesthood," he has "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," forget to say there—"A Syrian ready to perish was my father." The natural philosopher may rejoice that he is not a brute, and a pagan may glory in the attributes peculiar to man, but the devout student learns some very humbling facts concerning the position of our race. Among the rest is this, that, of intelligent beings, man is probably the lowest in the scale. That angels excel us in strength is obvious from everything we know concerning them; and that devils have far greater intellectual power than belongs to man, none acquainted with their devices will be disposed to question. To boast of our mental superiority, then, is but to mingle ignorance with pride. The humiliation which these considerations may be supposed to engender is deepened by the recollection, that our case is not one of poverty alone, but of degradation. Whatever may have been man's original glory, that glory has long since departed. His boast of heraldry is vain; traced back to its earliest antiquity, it bespeaks his ruin. His crest is an inverted crown. And this is his motto—"Man that was in honour abode not." The grace of God works wonders. It copes with depravity, and subdues it. It rescues the sinner from his degradation, and renders him meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. But it also teaches him never to forget, even amidst the splendours of the heavenly temple, to which it ultimately introduces him, the ancient acknowledgment of the adoring Israelite—"A Syrian ready to perish was my father." (*D. E. Ford.*)

Ver. 11. **Thou shalt rejoice in every good thing.**—*Rejoice in every good thing:*—It is our duty to give unstinted welcome to every visit of enjoyment with which we may be favoured. We frequently allow streams of refreshment or exhilaration to run past us without dipping into or tasting them; we blunderingly overlook many a cup of soothing and pleasing that is offered to us as we go trudging by. We are slow to discover and seize our golden chances, and hardly know how to make the most of them. At times we are afraid, it would seem, pausing now and then to squeeze a drop or two of severe or melancholy reflection into the goblet, as if there might be sin in having it too rich and sweet. The angel descending to solace us in our Gethsemane with a brief pleasant thrill, with a brief glimpse and gust of pleasure, flashes by under the sombre, wailing olives in vain, is allowed to vanish unharboured and unutilised. I. NEVER TURN, IN YOUR BITTERNESS OF SPIRIT, FROM ANY MINISTRY OF TEMPORAL ENJOYMENT THAT MAY INTERVENE; NEVER BE SO WEDDED TO YOUR WOES, SO SHUT UP AND SUNK DOWN IN THEM, THAT YOU CANNOT ISSUE FORTH TO ACCEPT SUCH MINISTRY. For, remember, we want to be made joyful for our education quite as much as we need to be tried and troubled. To laugh, to luxuriate, to ripple and glow with delight, at times is just as essential for us as it is at times to weep and suffer. II. At times SOME OF US MAY HAVE HAD THE FEELING THAT THERE IS SO MUCH MISERY IN THE WORLD THAT IT IS HARDLY RIGHT TO IGNORE AND FORGET IT FOR A MOMENT IN REJOICING. But let us reflect that, since God is our Father and we His children, we are justified in losing sight of trouble for a time when He gives us a joy to taste. Being only a child, however, I must feel about His world, and share in His travail concerning it; I need not be afraid at intervals to cast the entire load upon Him and let Him carry it alone. Souls must turn aside at times to bask in what sunshine they can find, and be mellowed, and warmed, and raised with it, in order to be of service in the darkness and to help to soften and relieve. (*S. A. Tipple.*) *Rejoice with a rejoicing universe:*—Rejoice with the morning stars, and let your adoring spirit march to the music of hymning spheres. Rejoice with the jocund spring in its gush of hope, and its dancing glory, with its swinging insect-clouds and its suffusion of multitudinous song; and rejoice with golden autumn, as he rustles his grateful sheaves, and clasps his purple hands, as he

breathes his story of fruition, his anthem of promises fulfilled; as he breathes it softly in the morning stillness of ripened fields, or flings it in Æolian sweeps from lavish orchards and from branches tossing bounty into mellow winds. Rejoice with infancy, as it guesses its wondering way into more and more existence, and laughs and carols as the field of pleasant life enlarges on it, and new secrets of delight flow in through fresh and open senses. Rejoice with the second youth of the heaven-born soul, as the revelations of a second birth pour in upon it, and the glories of a new world amaze it. Rejoice with the joyful believer when he sings, "O Lord! I will praise Thee; though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation." Rejoice with him whose incredulous ecstasy has alighted on the great Gospel-secret, whose eye is beaming as none can beam save that which for the first time beholds the Lamb; whose awe-struck countenance and uplifted hands are evidently exclaiming, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend." Rejoice with saints and angels, as they rejoice in a sight like this. Rejoice with Immanuel, whose soul now sees of its travail. Rejoice with the ever blessed Three, and with a heaven whose work is joy. "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." (*J. Hamilton.*)

CHAPTER XXVII.

VERS. 2, 3. **That thou shalt set up great stones.**—*Memorial pillars:*—On the boundary line between European and Siberian Russia there is a square pillar of brick bearing on one side the coat-of-arms belonging to the province of Perm in Europe, and on the other side the coat-of-arms belonging to the province of Tobolsk in Asia. That pillar has more sorrowful associations than any other pillar in the world. For many years the exiles to Siberia had to pass it, and there bade a long farewell to home and country. Strong men wept; some pressed their faces to the loved soil they were leaving, some collected a little earth to take with them to their new abodes, and some passionately kissed the European side of the pillar. The plaister on the bricks was covered with inscriptions, plaintive and pathetic as the epitaphs in a graveyard. Moses thought of pillars which were to have not a mournful, but a joyful significance. The stones were afterwards set up by the people as memorials of God's work on their behalf. The stones were to be a perpetual memorial of indebtedness to God for rescue from slavery and guidance to prosperity and honour. The disciples of Christ have experienced a change wonderful as that experienced by the Israelites. They have passed from bondage to liberty, from darkness to light, from moral debasement to spiritual glory. They are not to boast as if by their own endeavours they had wrought out the salvation in which they rejoice, but gratefully to confess that God has made them what they are. They are themselves to be monuments of God's power such as all can see and understand. Something more is needed from them than activity in setting up great stones as abiding witnesses of the great revolution in their life. They are to stand before the world as witnesses of God's saving, hallowing work in the human soul. The stones the Israelites were to set up were to be plaistered, and the law written on the plaister. There was a deep significance in the words thus inscribed. The people would be reminded by them that though they were out of the wilderness they had not ceased to be under the law. The horrors of Egyptian slavery would have been better for them than luxurious life in Canaan unrestricted by Divine precepts. The written stones were an attestation of God's supremacy over them, and as a restraint from the moral laxity to which they would be tempted when at ease amid "the limpid wells and orchards green" and all the other charms of the land "where Abraham fed his flock of yore." The disciples of Christ are to be as pillars inscribed with the law of the Lord. They do not bear the words of the ceremonial law, nor are they under direct obligation to bear those of the social law enacted in the wilderness. It is the moral law they bear as a sacred inscription on their life. Special prominence is to be given to the two great commandments, love to God and love to man, which, according to the teaching of Jesus, include the whole of the Decalogue. Faith in Christ does not mean freedom from the law as a rule of life. Truth, honesty, amiability are as much required in members of the Church as if those qualities were the sole

condition of salvation: evangelical righteousness implies practical righteousness. (*J. Murrat.*)

Vers. 9, 10. **Obey the voice of the Lord thy God.**—*Of obedience to God's revealed will:*—I. WHAT IS THE RULE OF OBEDIENCE? The written Word. II. WHAT ARE THE RIGHT INGREDIENTS IN OUR OBEDIENCE TO MAKE IT ACCEPTABLE? 1. Obedience must be free and cheerful, else it is penance, not sacrifice (Isa. i. 19). Willingness is the soul of obedience; God sometimes accepts of willingness without the work, but never of the work without willingness. Cheerfulness shows that there is love in the duty; and love doth to our services, as the sun doth to the fruits, mellow and ripen them and make them come off with a better relish. 2 Obedience must be devout and fervent: the heart must boil over with hot affections in the service of God. 3. Obedience must be extensive, it must reach to all God's commands (Psa. cxix. 6). True obedience runs through all duties of religion, as the blood through all the veins, or the sun through all the signs of the zodiac. 4. Obedience must be sincere—namely, we must aim at the glory of God in it, in religion the end is all. The end of our obedience must not be to stop the mouth of conscience, or to gain applause, but that we may grow more like God, and bring more glory to God. 5. Obedience must be in and through Christ, "He made us accepted in the Beloved." 6. Obedience must be constant, "Blessed is he who doeth righteousness at all times." True obedience is not like an high colour in a fit, but it is a right sanguine; it is like the fire on the altar which was always kept burning. III. WHENCE IS IT THAT MEN DO NOT OBEY GOD? 1. The not obeying of God is for want of faith: "Who hath believed our report?" Did men believe sin were so bitter that hell followed at the heels of it, would they go on in sin? Did they believe there were such a reward for the righteous that godliness were gain, would they not pursue it? 2. The not obeying God is for want of self-denial. God commands one thing, and men's lusts command another, and they will rather die than deny their lusts; now, if lust cannot be denied God cannot be obeyed. IV. WHAT ARE THE GREAT ARGUMENTS OR INCENTIVES TO OBEDIENCE? 1. Obedience makes us precious to God; we shall be His favourites (Exod. xix. 5; Isa. xliii. 3). 2. There is nothing lost by obedience. To obey God's will is the way to have our will. (*T. Watson.*) *Implicit obedience:*—Implicit obedience is our first duty to God, and one for which nothing else will compensate. If a lad at school is bidden to cipher, and chooses to write a copy instead, the goodness of the writing will not save him from censure. We must obey whether we see the reason or not; for God knows best. A guide through an unknown country must be followed without demur. A captain, in coming up the Humber or Southampton Water, yields complete authority to the pilot. A soldier in battle must fight when and where he is ordered; when the conflict is over he may reflect upon and perceive the wisdom of his commander in movements that at the time of their execution were perplexing. The farmer must obey God's natural laws of the seasons if he would win a harvest; and we must all obey God's spiritual laws if we would reap happiness here and hereafter. *Obedience proceeding from love:*—The son of a poor man that hath not a penny to give or leave him, yields his father obedience as cheerfully as the son of a rich man that looks for a great inheritance. It is, indeed, love to the father, not wages from the father, that is the ground of a good child's obedience. If there were no heaven God's children would obey Him; and though there were no hell yet would they do their duty; so powerfully doth the love of the Father constrain them. (*J. Spencer.*)

Vers. 15-26. **Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark.**—*The landmarks of faith:*—The landmarks of faith are just the truth which God has revealed to men, and the duty which He requires of them. Among the sins, the criminality of which it was the will of God should be deeply impressed on the minds of the children of Israel, that of removing the ancient landmarks was one. The reference manifestly is to landmarks that were set up, when the land of Canaan was divided among the tribes and families of Israel, to determine the boundaries of the portion belonging to each individual family, or tribe. This is a kind of crime which is spoken of and pointedly prohibited in other parts of Scripture as well as that quoted above. (Prov. xxii. 28.) God saw meet to employ men of high character in the division made of the land, and that division He so sanctioned that it was His will that it should be maintained throughout the successive generations of Israel. But however great a crime it was to remove any of these landmarks, the criminality of the removal

of such landmarks and its evil consequences were exceedingly small compared with the guilt that has been and is being contracted by the removal of the landmarks of faith. The dishonour done to God, and the injury to society by the one form of wickedness, is as nothing compared with the other. Of this there is ample illustration and confirmation furnished in the past history of our fallen world. The landmarks of faith were set up progressively by God Himself in the special revelation which He was pleased to give to men regarding His own character and will in relation to doctrine and practice; to the truth to be believed and the duty to be performed to Him and to one another. In most cases, though not in all, the removal of those Divinely erected landmarks has been a gradual process. Of Abraham God said, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment" (Gen. xviii. 19). By this patriarch we can have no doubt the landmarks of faith as to truth and duty were faithfully set up in his household, both by precept and instruction, commended by the best example. But except in the line of Jacob, how speedily did these come to be removed among all the other branches of his posterity. His son Ishmael, and his children by Keturah, as well as Isaac, were no doubt highly favoured in their early years with the advantages of earnest paternal counsel. Reminiscences of this behoved to follow them to their respective places of sojourn and location. But the light which might thus shine for a time became gradually more and more obscure, till at length there was scarcely anything left to distinguish them from the other branches of Noah's descendants, who had at an earlier date sunk into that state of moral debasement which is inseparable from idolatry. How brief the time during which these landmarks stood up erect in the days of David and the first years of the reign of his son Solomon! In the history of Judah we see the same issues realised so far as a similar course was pursued in that kingdom; and in the conduct of the Jews after their restoration from the Babylonish captivity, when the landmarks of faith were set up anew among them—by such notable instruments as Ezra and Nehemiah—and to which they bound themselves to adhere by solemn covenant. How soon did they also fall back and become hardened in unbelief. Again, at the era of the glorious Reformation from Popery, God graciously interposed for a blissful restoration of the widely obliterated landmarks of faith in a number of the nations of Europe. Distinguished instruments were simultaneously raised up in different countries, by whom these were anew set up in a remarkable degree of conformity to the Divine pattern. These, alas, have been, to a very lamentable extent, practically removed in all the Reformed Churches on the Continent—in France, Switzerland, Holland, and Germany. (*Original Secession Magazine.*) **Amen.**—*Amen:*—I. A LESSON OF ACQUIESCENCE IN THE DIVINE LAW. "Amen" is understood to denote truth or certainty. Such, without doubt, was its signification here. The leading principles of the moral law were then being enunciated, in the hearing of all the people, and in token that these met with their acquiescence, they were to superadd the emphatic "Amen." Now, every believer knows that the God in whom we live and move, is a God of infinite holiness, and that the Scripture is filled with precepts which every responsible creature is bound to carry into hourly practice. "Be ye holy, for I am holy"—"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them"—"Except your righteousness shall exceed"—such are precepts whose import may not be misunderstood, leaving it as one of the clearest and most intelligible of Gospel maxims that to God's moral law the Christian is called upon to append his sanction—his solemn "Amen." 1. The Christian Church is not placed under the law, as a covenant of works. An acquiescence, therefore, in the moral law, or of our saying "Amen" to every one of its precepts, does not imply that we have elevated these to be the conditions of our salvation, or the grounds of an acceptance before God. 2. This does not stand in the way of an acknowledging the surpassing excellency of every such precept. The law may in itself be good and holy, although we cannot keep it—just as the light of the sun's meridian splendour may be pure and glorious, although there are eyes too weak to bear it. And this we affirm. 3. We must consider the law as still the rule of our life. Our inability to realise the lofty standard of holiness indicated in the Decalogue, no more releases us from our obligation to perform it, than the mere declaration of bankruptcy cancels a debt, discharges the conscience from the duty of paying it, should there be ability to do so at any future time, or authorises a man to contract fresh obligations with the secret purpose of getting quit of them by a similar process. 4. As Christians, we are necessarily anticipating a restoration to that moral perfection which the law

requires. II. A LESSON OF CONFORMITY TO THE DIVINE METHOD OF SALVATION. Momentous, of course, are the effects which ensue upon the acceptance or rejection, but every one who listens to the overtures of the Gospel does so in the attitude of an independent and rational being. There is no restraint, no compulsion. "My son, give Me thine heart," is, indeed, the impressive demand; but we ought to know, that if we choose to risk the fearful consequences of embracing the alternative, there is no constraining influence compelling us to believe against our will. The thing, indeed, is impossible. Faith is a voluntary act; and this is the most important principle suggested by the text, that to God's method of salvation, our heart, in the hour of regeneration, must respond with an unreserved and cordial "Amen." III. A LESSON OF SUBMISSION TO GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL DISPENSATIONS. It is obvious to even the natural judgment of man, that, of all methods of meeting the calamities which flesh is heir to, the worst is to murmur and oppose. Not only does this involve the turpitude of virtual rebellion against the authority of heaven; it positively adds to and renders more poignant the distresses we are called upon to endure. It were folly to imagine, for a single instant, that affliction can be thereby either mitigated or removed. The dying soldier may cherish the fiercest resentment against the enemy who has smitten him, but that resentment will not heal the deadly wound. The chances are that death will be thereby precipitated. So is it with our calamities. Whether we will or no, these will descend upon us; and our spiritual enemies can desire no greater victory over us than that these should crush and drive us to despair. Submission, then, is the lesson inculcated upon us by the afflictive dispensations of God. Whatever these may be, let the tendency of the Christian's heart be to acknowledge them with a cordial "Amen." Peace will be his in the present. He will experimentally know the meaning of that apostolic paradox, "Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing"; in the world's chastisements realise a pledge of his heavenly Father's love; and anticipate with gladness unspeakable the approval of that blissful era when "God the Lord shall wipe away," &c. IV. A LESSON OF CONFIDENCE IN THE DIVINE PROMISES, AND OF ASSURANCE REGARDING THE EXECUTION OF THE DIVINE PURPOSES. (*James Cochrane, M.A.*) **That maketh the blind to wander out of the way.**—*Against imposing on the ignorant*:—In this chapter, curses are pronounced against several heinous crimes, such as idolatry, contempt of parents, murder, rapine, and the like; and amongst these crimes is mentioned this, of causing the blind to go out of their way; a wickedness of a singular nature, and which one would not expect to find in this list of vicious actions. It is a crime which is seldom committed; there are few opportunities for it; there is little temptation to it: it is doing mischief for mischief's sake, an enormity to which few can easily bring themselves. We may therefore reasonably suppose that more is intended than barely to condemn those who should lead a blind man out of his way. And what that may be, it is not difficult to discover. Blindness in all languages is put for error and ignorance; and, in the style of the Scriptures, ways and paths, and walking, running, going, wandering astray, stumbling, falling, mean the actions and the behaviour of men. These obvious observations will lead us to the moral, mystical, spiritual, and enlarged sense of the law, or commination; and it is this: Cursed is he who imposeth upon the simple, the credulous, the unwary, the ignorant, and the helpless; and either hurts, or defrauds, or deceives, or seduces, or misinforms, or misleads, or perverts, or corrupts and spoils them. 1. As to the ministers of the Gospel, they may be said to mislead the blind when, instead of endeavouring to instruct and amend their hearers, they deal in false opinions, or unintelligible doctrines, or unprofitable disputes, or uncharitable reproofs, or personal reflections, or flattery, or in any subjects foreign from religion and void of edification; much more when they teach things of an evil tendency, and which may have a bad influence on the minds and manners of the people. 2. In all our worldly affairs and intercourse with others, as we ought to act fairly, justly towards every person, so more especially ought we to behave towards those whom we might injure with impunity, that is, without danger of being called to account for it in this life. 3. As nations subsist by trade, so trade subsists by integrity. In commerce upright dealing is an indispensable duty, and defrauding is a vice. But if it be a fault to make unreasonable advances in our dealings even with those who are skilful as ourselves, it is far worse to impose upon the ignorant and the necessitous, and to wrong those who have a good opinion of us, and place an entire confidence in us. 4. Of the same bad nature is giving wrong counsel and hurtful advice, knowingly and wilfully, to those who have an opinion of our superior skill, and apply to us for direction. As likewise all dishonesty in

offices of trust and confidence. 5. To take bad courses, to keep bad company, to be vicious amongst the vicious, dissolute amongst the dissolute—this is confessedly a great fault. But yet there is a greater, which is, to seek out the weak, the young, the ignorant, the unsteadfast, to instil bad principles into them, to entice them to sin, to spoil an honest disposition, to seduce an innocent mind, to rob an unspotted person of virtue, of honour and reputation, of peace of mind, of a quiet conscience, and perhaps of all happiness present and future. This is not an ordinary offence; it is to be agents and assisters to the devil, and to do his work and imitate his example. It is a crime attended with this terrible circumstance, that even repentance itself can be attended with no suitable reparation to the injured person. (*J. Jortin, D.D.*)

CHAPTER XXVIII.

VER. 3. **Blessed shalt thou be in the city.**—*Blessed in the city:*—The city is full of care, and he who has to go there from day to day finds it to be a place of great wear and tear. It is full of noise, and stir, and bustle, and sore travail: many are its temptations, losses, and worries. But to go there with the Divine blessing takes off the edge of its difficulty; to remain there with that blessing is to find pleasure in its duties, and strength equal to its demands. A blessing in the city may not make us great, but it will keep us good; it may not make us rich, but it will preserve us honest. Whether we are porters, or clerks, or managers, or merchants, or magistrates, the city will afford us opportunities for usefulness. It is good fishing where there are shoals of fish, and it is hopeful to work for our Lord amid the thronging crowds. We might prefer the quiet of a country life; but if called to town, we may certainly prefer it because there is room for our energies. To-day let us expect good things because of this promise, and let our care be to have an open ear to the voice of the Lord, and a ready hand to execute His bidding. Obedience brings the blessing. "In keeping His commandments there is great reward." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *City life:*—We have accustomed ourselves so long to think that the glory and beauty displayed on the open fields of the country, where life lies palpitating and warm with the impress of His creative hand, and where all the works of the Lord are ceaselessly singing His praise, must in itself impress more vividly those who linger amid its beauties, and do their work in the glow of its magnificence, than do the streets and lanes and the visible signs of man which stretch out through the city. And yet we do not seek from the hard-working farmer the highest appreciation of nature as such, nor from the toiling agricultural labourer the keenest poetic sentiment. Men are crowded into the city, the villages become more and more depleted. What does it mean? Ask them, and they would tell you that they are going to see life. To the labourer town life means a more stirring existence, he thinks he sees there a wider field, a quicker return, a more brilliant career, and too often he is bitterly disappointed in these hard times. To the pleasure-seeker the city is the great lamp towards which he flies with outstretched wings to flicker for a short space around it, to scorch his wings, to burn himself in the nearest approach to nothingness. But life is a very real thing to seek for. In the city there are gathered together various forms of excellence. Here art treasures are collected, and art studies are at their fullest perfection; here music receives its fullest development; here perfection of all kinds tends to aggregate; here the blood courses fuller and stronger; here might be realised that which we speak of so often in the Creed—"the communion of saints." (*Canon Newbolt.*) **Blessed shalt thou be in the field.**—*Blessed in the field:*—So was Isaac blessed when he walked therein at eventide to meditate. How often has the Lord met us when we have been alone! The hedges and the trees can bear witness to our joy. We look for such blessedness again. So was Boaz blessed when he reaped his harvest, and his workmen met him with benedictions. May the Lord prosper all who drive the plough! Every farmer may urge this promise with God, if, indeed, he obeys the voice of the Lord God. We go to the field to labour as father Adam did; and since the curse fell on the soil through the sin of Adam the first, it is a great comfort to find a blessing through Adam the second. We go to the field for exercise, and we are happy in the belief that the Lord will bless that exercise, and give us health, which

we will use to His glory. We go to the field to study nature, and there is nothing in a knowledge of the visible creation which may not be sanctified to the highest uses by the Divine benediction. We have at last to go to the field to bury our dead; yea, others will in their turn take us to God's acre in the field: but we are blessed, whether weeping at the tomb or sleeping in it. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 5. **Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store.**—*A blessing on basket and store:*—Obedience brings a blessing on all the provisions which our industry earns for us. That which comes in and goes out at once, like fruit in the basket which is for immediate use, shall be blessed; and that which is laid by with us for a longer season shall equally receive a blessing. Perhaps ours is a hand-basket portion. We have a little for breakfast, and a scanty bite for dinner in a basket when we go out to our work in the morning. This is well, for the blessing of God is promised to the basket. If we live from hand to mouth, getting each day's supply in the day, we are as well off as Israel; for when the Lord entertained His favoured people He only gave them a day's manna at a time. What more did *they* need? What more do *we* need? But if we have a store, how much we need the Lord to bless it! For there is the care of getting, the care of keeping, the care of managing, the care of using; and, unless the Lord bless it, these cares will eat into our hearts, till our goods become our gods, and our cares prove cankers. O Lord, bless our substance. Enable us to use it for Thy glory. Help us to keep worldly things in their proper places, and never may our savings endanger the saving of our souls. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 12. **The Lord shall open unto thee His good treasure.**—*The Lord's treasure:*—This refers first to the rain. The Lord will give this in its season. Rain is the emblem of all those celestial refreshings which the Lord is ready to bestow upon His people. Oh, for a copious shower to refresh the Lord's heritage! We seem to think that God's treasury can only be opened by a great prophet like Elijah, but it is not so, for this promise is to all the faithful in Israel, and, indeed, to each one of them. O believing friend, "the Lord shall open unto thee His good treasure." Thou, too, mayest see heaven opened, and thrust in thy hand and take out thy portion, yea, and a portion for all thy brethren round about thee. Ask what thou wilt, and thou shalt not be denied, if thou abidest in Christ, and His words abide in thee. As yet thou hast not known all thy Lord's treasures, but He shall open them up to thy understanding. Certainly thou hast not yet enjoyed the fulness of His covenant riches, but He will direct thy heart into His love, and reveal Jesus in thee. Only the Lord Himself can do this for thee; but here is His promise, and if thou wilt hearken diligently unto His voice, and obey His will, His riches in glory by Christ Jesus shall be thine. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 13. **The head, and not the tail.**—*The saints leading the way:*—If we obey the Lord He will compel our adversaries to see that His blessing rests upon us. Though this be a promise of the law, yet it stands good to the people of God; for Jesus has removed the curse, but He has established the blessing. It is for saints to lead the way among men by holy influence: they are not to be the tail, to be dragged hither and thither by others. We must not yield to the spirit of the age, but compel the age to do homage to Christ. If the Lord be with us we shall not crave toleration for religion, but we shall seek to seat it on the throne of society. Has not the Lord Jesus made His people priests? Surely they are to teach, and must not be learners from the philosophies of unbelievers. Are we not in Christ made kings to reign upon the earth? How, then, can we be the servants of custom, the slaves of human opinion! Have you taken up your true position for Jesus? Too many are silent because diffident, if not cowardly. Should we allow the name of the Lord Jesus to be kept in the background? Should our religion drag along as a tail? Should it not rather lead the way, and be the ruling force with ourselves and others? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 15-19. **If thou wilt not hearken.**—*Blessing and cursing—an Ash Wednesday sermon:*—Does the Commination Service curse men? Are these good people (who are certainly right in their horror of cursing) right in the accusations which they bring against it? I cannot but think that they mistake when they say that the Commination Service curses men. For to curse a man is to pray that God may vent His anger on the man by punishing him. But I find no such prayer and wish

in any word of the Commination Service. Its form is not "Cursed *be* he that doeth such and such things," but "Cursed *is* he that doeth them." Does this seem to you a small difference? A fine-drawn question of words? Is it, then, a small difference whether I say to my fellow-man, I hope and pray that you may be stricken with disease, or whether I say, You are stricken with disease, whether you know it or not? I warn you of it, and I warn you to go to the physician! For so great, and no less, is the difference. I. WE KNOW THAT THE WORDS OF THE TEXT CAME TRUE. We know that the Jews *did* perish out of their native land, as the author of this book foretold, in consequence of doing that against which Moses warned them. We know also that they did not perish by any miraculous intervention of providence, but simply as any other nation would have perished—by profligacy, internal weakness, civil war, and, at last, by foreign conquest. We know that their destruction was the natural consequence of their own folly. Why are we to suppose that the prophet meant anything but that? He foretells the result. Why are we to suppose that he did not foresee the means by which that result would happen? For even in this life the door of mercy may be shut, and we may cry in vain for mercy when it is the time for justice. This is not merely a doctrine: it is a fact; a common, patent fact. Men do wrong, and escape, again and again, the just punishment of their deeds; but how often there are cases in which a man does not escape; when he is filled with the fruit of his own devices, and left to the misery which he has earned; when the covetous and dishonest man ruins himself past all recovery; when the profligate is left in a shameful old age, with worn-out body and defiled mind, to rot into an unhonoured grave; when the hypocrite who has tampered with his conscience is left without any conscience at all. They have chosen the curse, and the curse is come upon them to the uttermost. So it is. Is the Commination Service uncharitable, is the preacher uncharitable, when they tell men so? II. TRULY TERRIBLE AND HEART-SEARCHING FOR THE WRONG-DOER IS THE MESSAGE—GOD DOES NOT CURSE THEE: THOU HAST CURSED THYSELF. God will not go out of His way to punish thee; thou hast gone out of His way, and thereby thou art punishing thyself. Just as, by abusing the body, thou bringest a curse upon it; so by abusing thy soul. God does not break His laws to punish drunkenness or gluttony. The laws of nature, the beneficent laws of life, nutrition, growth, and health, they punish thee; and kill by the very same means by which they make alive. And so with thy soul, thy character, thy humanity. III. LET US BELIEVE THAT GOD'S GOOD LAWS AND GOD'S GOOD ORDER ARE IN THEMSELVES AND OF THEMSELVES THE CURSE AND PUNISHMENT OF EVERY SIN OF OURS; and that Ash Wednesday, returning year after year, whether we be glad or sorry, good or evil, bears witness to that most awful and yet most blessed fact. (*C. Kingsley, M.A.*) *The prophecy*:—1. Look, first, at the intensity of the sufferings which it denounces upon the Jewish race. The prophet seems to labour under the weight of the theme, and strives to give it adequate expression, as though it were beyond his power. There is scarcely anything that could go to heighten human anguish bodily and mental that is not thrown into the frightful conglomeration, to make up such an assemblage of miseries as was hardly ever elsewhere known or imagined. Dante's pictures are terrific, but they are dispersed and distributed into portions, and every man has his own torment, from which other sufferers are exempt. But Moses concentrates his, and pours them all in one terrible mixture on the same devoted head. War, pestilence, and famine in their extremest terrors combine to swell the bitter grief, until they rise to those intolerable anguishes in which the bonds of society are dissolved, human sympathies are quenched, natural affection obliterated, and society transformed into a herd of ravening wolves, preying on one another without conscience and without pity. And this horrid state of things is to be without respite, affording no moment of relief; so that men are driven to madness, and rave with the frantic incoherence of despair. And now, if we turn to the page of history, we find the correspondence exact to a wonderful degree. No more revolting picture of human misery, and of the demoralisation and unhumanising effect of extreme distress is anywhere to be found in the annals of the world than that which is exhibited in the last days of Jerusalem as the accounts of it have come down to us. What in the prophecy might have seemed antecedently impossible, the faithful record of history has shown to be possible, because actual. 2. Look next at their dispersion, almost as wonderful as their miseries. This, too, Moses explicitly foretells (vers. 64, 65). Alone of peoples that inhabit the earth, foreigners everywhere, having no country that they call their own, and dwelling in all countries as a distinct element in their society, nay, always a society that

adheres to general society only by a kind of parasitical life, sucking strength from its substance without assimilating to its character, it is a sort of mistletoe that drapes the branches of trees, and lives upon their sap, but sends no roots into the earth to draw from the soil a life of its own. 3. And now, finally, look at his preservation. I mean his preservation as a Jew. His physiognomy everywhere tells the tale of his lineage. And yet never was a people so unfavourably situated for the preservation of its identity. They did not go out in colonies to any considerable extent. Units they have been, floating like waifs and strays upon the great ocean of human society. Yet wherever he strays, there is the Jew, unabsorbed, unamalgamated, unmistakably a Jew. National bounds hedge in nations, and with some admixtures preserve substantially national marks and qualities. But this is a nation that has no such protection, without a country, without a home. Yet it remains a nation; and there is not another nation in all the limits of civilisation to-day that can boast so pure a blood, so unmixed and genuine a pedigree. 1. A lesson of danger. If the Israelites were punished beyond other men, it was because they had been favoured beyond other men. Privilege and responsibility are correspondent and parallel. The sins of Christians are far worse than the like sins of heathens, more criminal, more dangerous (Rom. xi. 20, 21). 2. A lesson of duty. None can look upon the ancient people of God in their fallen condition, it might seem, without sensibility and compassion. God has made their fall an occasion of benefit to the Gentile world. "We have obtained mercy through their unbelief." The fall broke through the wall that threatened to confine Christianity within the narrow precincts of Jewish pride and prejudice, and gave it to "have free course and be glorified." Surely, however, it becomes us not to look coldly or scornfully on the disfranchised heir. (*R. A. Hallam, D.D.*) *The dispersion of the Jews*:—Davison, in his *Discourses on Prophecy*, uses the following beautiful illustration when speaking of modern Jews. Present in all countries, with a home in none; intermixed, and yet separated; and neither amalgamated nor lost, but, like those mountain streams which are said to pass through lakes of another kind of water, and keep a native quality to repel commixture; they hold communication without union, and may be traced as rivers without banks, in the midst of the alien element which surrounds them.

Ver. 47. **Because thou servedst not the Lord.**—*Right service*:—The text brings before us a subject essentially important—that as the service of the Lord Jesus Christ must be such as answered the great end that was to be brought about, and did answer it, so the object of the service of the people of God is to bring them into possession of what the Lord has for them. Let us take a twofold view of this service. 1. First, then, the true service of the Lord; it must be by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us hear what the Scriptures say upon this, for it is a most essential matter: either we are serving God as Abel did, acceptably; or as Cain did, not acceptably. We cannot serve God by the works of the law; for the apostle saith, "Whatsoever the law saith"—and I may mention two things which it saith: first, that "he that offendeth in one point is guilty of the whole." Now, that one thing said by the law is enough to stop the mouth of any one. Then again, it saith, "Cursed is he that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." There are three things especially essential to serve God acceptably; these must be knowledge, faith, and love. You cannot do without these three. It is true, there are many other excellencies arising from them. 2. Now, a word or two upon this—to serve Him with joyfulness and with gladness of heart. I think we need the spirit of prayer upon this subject. So then may the Lord give us the spirit of prayer, that we may pray to be quickened, and to be made more and more lively in the service and ways of the Lord; for it is sure well to repay us; as saith David, "In keeping His ways there is indeed great reward"; a reward that far surpasseth gold, even much fine gold; and there is a sweetness therein sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. So, I say, we need the spirit of prayer for the Lord to keep us more and more in His blessed ways. (*J. Wells.*)

Ver. 67. **Would God it were even!**—*Sufferings of the Israelites*:—This chapter is an awful communication: it threatens the Israelites with every conceivable evil if they departed from serving the Lord their God; it leaves them absolutely without hope unless they turned with all their hearts, and repented them of their disobedience. So the Israelites entered Canaan and took the lands of the heathen into possession, not without much to sober their pride, and to make them not high-

minded, but fear. The severe judgments spoken of in this chapter declare also another great law of God's providence, that "to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required." It was because the Israelites were God's redeemed people, because He had borne them on eagle's wings and brought them to Himself; because He had made known to them His will, and promised them the possession of a goodly land, flowing with milk and honey; it was for those very reasons that their punishment was to be so severe if they at last abused all the mercies which had been shown to them. For theirs was to be no sudden destruction, to come upon them and sweep them away for ever: it was a long and lingering misery, to endure for many generations, like the bush which burned, but was not consumed. We know that Ammon, Amalek, Moab, Assyria, and Babylon have long since utterly perished; the three former, indeed, so long ago, that profane history does not notice them; its beginnings are later than their end. But Israel still exists as a nation, however scattered and degraded; they have gone through for ages a long train of oppressions, visited on them merely because they were Jews. Nay, even yet the end is not; however much their condition is bettered, still, taking them the world through, they have even now much to bear; their hope is still deferred, and as far as their national prospects are concerned, the morning dawns on them with no comfort, the evening descends upon them and brings no rest. This is one remarkable part in their history; and there is another which deserves notice. It is declared in this chapter that amongst the other evils they should suffer for disobedience, they should endure so long a siege from their enemies as to suffer the worst extremities of famine (ver. 56). Now, this has, in fact, befallen them twice over. Of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar we have, indeed, no particulars given; it is only said, in general terms, that after the city had been besieged for eighteen months the famine prevailed in it, and there was no bread for the people of the land, so that the king and all the fighting men endeavoured to escape out of the town as the only resource left them. But of the second siege, by Titus and the Romans, we have the full particulars from Josephus, a Jew, who lived at the time, and had the best authority for the facts which he relates. And he mentions it as a horror unheard of amongst Greeks or barbarians, that a mother, named Mary, the daughter of Eleazar, from the country beyond Jordan, was known to have killed her own child for her food, and to have publicly confessed what she had done. Now, we know that the horrors of war have been felt by many nations; but such an extremity of suffering occurring twice in the course of its history, and under circumstances so similar, as in the two sieges of Jerusalem, there is hardly another nation, so far as I am aware, that has experienced. Indeed, the history of the calamities of the last siege of Jerusalem, as given by Josephus, is well worthy of our attentive consideration: it is a full comment on our Lord's words (Luke xxiii. 28, 30; Matt. xxiv. 22). Eleven hundred thousand Jews perished in the course of the siege, by the sword, by pestilence, or by famine. I do not believe that the history of the world contains any record of such a destruction within so short a time, and within the walls of a single city. I said that this dreadful story was well worth our studying; and it is so for this reason. These miseries, greater than any which history mentions, fell upon God's Church, upon His chosen people, with whom He was in covenant, to whom He had revealed His name, while all the rest of the world lay in darkness. To us, each of us, belongs in the strictest sense the warning of the text. For us, each of us,—if we do fail of the grace of God, if Christ has died for us in vain, if, being called by His name, we are not walking in His Spirit,—there is reserved a misery of which, indeed, the words of the text are no more than a feeble picture. There is a state in which they who are condemned to it shall for ever say: "In the morning would God it were even," &c. There is a state in which the tender and delicate woman shall hate those whom once she most loved; in which they who lived together here in friendship wherein God was no party, will have their eyes evil against one another for ever. For when selfishness has wrought its perfect work, and the soul is utterly lost, there love is perished for ever, and the intercourse between such persons can be only one of mutual reproaches and suspicion and hatred. An eternal restlessness and eternal evil passions mark the everlasting portion of the enemies of God; just as an eternal rest and a never-ending life of love and peace are reserved for those who remain to the end His true children. (*T. Arnold, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. **The Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive.**—*Men without heart, sight, or hearing:*—Feeling, sight, hearing! What wonderful things these are! If we could exist without them, what a wretched condition ours would be! The outer world would be unknown to us if the gates of the senses were shut, and the soul would be famished, like Samaria when it was straitly shut up, and there was no going in nor coming out. When any one of the senses is gone it involves great deprivation, and subjects the person enduring it to the pity of his fellows, but if all were absent what wretchedness must ensue! Transfer your thoughts now from these external senses by which we become conscious of the external world to those spiritual senses by which we perceive the spiritual world, the kingdom of heaven, the Lord of that kingdom, and all the powers of the world to come. There is a heart which should be tender, by which we perceive the presence of God and feel His operations, and even behold the Lord Himself, as it is written, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." There is a spiritual eye by which the things invisible are discerned; blessed are they to whom the Lord has given to see the things of His kingdom, which to the unrenewed remain hidden in parables. There is a spiritual ear by which we hear the gentle whispers of the Spirit, which frequently come to us internally, without the medium of sounds that can affect the ear. Blessed are those who have the ear which the Lord has purged, and cleansed, and opened, so that it listens to the Divine call. But there is no blessedness in the case of men devoid of spiritual feeling, sight, and hearing. Theirs is a miserable plight. I. We shall think upon a MOURNFUL FACT. Here was a whole nation, with but very few exceptions, of whom their leader, who knew and loved them best, was obliged to say, "The Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive unto this day." 1. The mournful part of it was, that this was the nation that had been specially favoured of God above all others. 2. Note again, that not only were they a highly favoured people, but they had seen very wonderful acts performed by the Lord Himself. 3. In addition to this, these people had passed through a very remarkable experience. 4. In addition to all this sight and experience, the Israelites had received remarkable instruction. 5. One thing else is worth notice, that these people had been associated with remarkable characters. They were not all blinded, there were a few among them who were gracious, and so were made to perceive. Caleb and Josbua were there, and Aaron and Miriam; but chiefly there was Moses, grandest of men, true father of the nation II. Let us note THE MOURNFUL REASONS FOR ALL THIS. 1. The reasons for their incapacity to see and perceive lay, first, in the fact that these people never believed in their own blindness. They had no heart to perceive, and they did not perceive their absence of perception; they had no eyes wherewith to detect their own dimness of vision. They were such fools as to dote on their own wisdom, so poor as to think themselves rich, so hypocritical as to profess to be sincere. Pride is the great creator of darkness; like Nahash, the Ammonite, it puts out the right eye. Men seek not the light, because they boast that they are the children of the day and need no light from above. 2. More than this, these men never asked for a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear. No man hath ever asked for these things and been refused; no soul has cried in its blindness and darkness, "Open Thou mine eyes," but what a gracious answer has always come. It is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus to open the blind eyes; but this He is ever ready to do whenever men call upon His name. Then, moreover, what little light they did have they resisted. When they were forced to see, it was only for a moment that they would be instructed, and then they shut their eyes again. III. What was THE MOURNFUL RESULT of these people being so highly favoured, and yet not seeing their God? 1. The result was, first, that they missed a happy portion. I can hardly imagine how happy the children of Israel might have been. They left Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm, their ears were hung with jewels, and their purses were filled with riches, while around them manna dropped from heaven, and cool streams flowed at their side. They might have made a quick march to the promised land, and at once entered their rest, for their God who had sent the hornet before them would soon have driven out their adversaries. They would have known no invading enemy, and felt neither blast, nor blight, nor mildew; in fact, they would have been the happiest nation under heaven: "He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the

rock should I have satisfied thee." They flung all this on one side: they would not have God, and so they could not have prosperity. They walked contrary to Him, and He walked contrary to them; they would not obey Him, and therefore His anger smoked against them. 2. Think, moreover, what a glorious destiny they threw aside. Had they been equal to the occasion, by God's grace they might have been a nation of kings and priests, they might have been the Lord's missionaries to all lands, the light-bearers to all peoples. 3. Another result was that while they missed so high a position, they went on sinning. As they did not learn the lesson God was teaching them, namely, that He was God, and that to serve Him was their joy and their prosperity, they went from one evil to another, provoking the Lord to jealousy. 4. Hence they frequently suffered. A plague broke out at one time, and a burning at another; at one time they were visited with fever, and anon the earth opened beneath them; one day the Amalekites smote them, another day fiery serpents leaped up from the sand, and they died by thousands, being poisoned by their bites. They suffered much and often, and in all their trials they did but reap what they had sown. 5. At last this evil ended terribly. The Lord lifted His hand to heaven, and swore that the rebellious generation should not enter into His rest, and they began to die by wholesale till Moses cried, "We are consumed by Thine anger, and by Thy wrath are we troubled." Not one of the men that came out of Egypt, save only Joshua and Caleb, reached the promised land. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *A perceiving heart the gift of God:*—To complete the sense of the words, we must have recourse to the two precedent verses; which, being compared to the text, present us with a description of such a brutish temper as is not to be found in any people mentioned throughout the whole Book of God, or any history whatsoever. I. WHAT IS MEANT BY GOD'S GIVING TO THE SOUL A PERCEIVING HEART? We have grace here set out by such acts as are properly acts of knowledge; as understanding, seeing, hearing; not because, as some imagine, grace is placed only in the understanding, which, being informed with such a principle, is able to govern, and practically to determine the will, without the help of any new principle infused into that. For grace is a habit equally placed in both these faculties, but it is expressed by the acts of the understanding:—1. Because the understanding has the precedency and first stroke in holy actions, as well as in others; it is the head and fountain from whence they derive their goodness, the leading faculty: and therefore the works of all the rest may, by way of eminence, be ascribed to this, as the conquest of an army is ascribed to the leader only, or general. 2. Because the means of grace are chiefly and most frequently expressed by the word "truth"; 1 Tim. i. 15, "This is a faithful (or a true) saying, that Christ came into the world to save sinners." And in John iii. 33, "He that believeth hath set to his seal that God is true." And in John xvii. 17, "Thy Word is truth." From hence, therefore, I collect—(1) That to understand and receive the Word, according to the letter and notion, by a bare assent to the truth of it, is not to have a heart to perceive nor an ear to hear: because it is evident, both from Scripture and ordinary observation, that such a reception of the means of grace is not always attended with these spiritual effects: as, for instance, the Jews heard Christ and admired Him, but afterwards they rejected His doctrine and crucified His person. To hear the Word of God, and to hear God speaking in His Word, are things vastly different. (2) Therefore, in the second place, to have a perceiving heart and a hearing ear is to have a spiritual light begot in the mind by an immediate overpowering work of the Spirit, whereby alone the soul is enabled to apprehend the things of God spiritually, and to practise them effectually: and without this we may see and see, and never perceive, and hear again and again and never understand. II. WHENCE IT IS THAT, WITHOUT THIS GIFT OF A PERCEIVING HEART, THE SOUL CANNOT MAKE ANY IMPROVEMENT OF THE MEANS OF GRACE. It arises from these two reasons—1. From its exceeding impotence and inability to apprehend these things. 2. From its contrariety to them. And there are two things in the soul in which this contrariety chiefly consists. (1) Carnal corruptions. (2) Carnal wisdom. III. ALTHOUGH UPON GOD'S DENIAL OF A PERCEIVING HEART THE SOUL DOES INEVITABLY REMAIN UNPROFITABLE UNDER THE MEANS OF GRACE, SO AS NOT TO HEAR NOR PERCEIVE; YET THIS HARDNESS, OR UNPROFITABLENESS, CANNOT AT ALL BE ASCRIBED TO GOD AS THE AUTHOR OF IT. In order to the clearing of this we know that God's "not giving a heart to perceive" may admit of a double acceptation. 1. As it implies only a bare denial of grace. 2. As it does also include a positive act of induration. IV. HOW GOD CAN JUSTLY REPREHEND MEN FOR NOT HEARING NOR PERCEIVING,

WHEN, UPON HIS DENIAL OF A HEART, THERE IS A NECESSITY LYING UPON THEM TO DO NEITHER. Now, there can be no just reprehension but for sin, and nothing can be sin but that which is voluntary and free, and how can that be free for a man to do or not to do which from necessity he cannot do? Application—1. This doctrine speaks refutation to that opinion that states a sufficiency of grace in the bare proposal of things to be believed and practised, without a new powerful work of the Spirit upon the heart, that may determine and enable it to believe and accept of these things. 2. Is of exhortation; that in the enjoyment of the means of grace we should not terminate in the means, but look up to God, who alone is able to give a heart to improve them. (*R. South, D.D.*) *Men's blindness in spiritual things:*—Consider this complaint—I. AS UTTERED BY MOSES AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF HIS CHARGE. They had "seen" with their bodily eyes all the wonders that had been wrought for them. They understood not. 1. The true character of that dispensation. 2. The obligations which it entailed upon them. II. AS APPLICABLE TO OURSELVES AT THIS DAY. 1. By the great mass of nominal Christians the nature of the Gospel is very indistinctly seen. 2. The effects of it are very partially experienced. Address—(1) Those who are altogether blind. (2) Those who think they see. (3) Those whose eyes God has opened. (*C. Simeon, M.A.*)

Vers. 10–13. **Ye stand . . . before the Lord your God.**—*On covenanting with God:*—I. THAT COVENANTING WITH GOD, AND THAT PUBLICLY, IS NOT AN UNPRECEDENTED THING IN THE CHURCH OF GOD, BUT HAS BEEN USUAL IN FORMER AGES. II. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THAT COVENANT INTO WHICH THE PEOPLE OF GOD HAVE ENTERED, AND INTO WHICH WE ARE CALLED TO ENTER WITH HIM? AND HOW DO WE ENTER INTO IT? The Christian covenant is founded "upon better promises" (Heb. viii. 6). Its ceremonies are only two, baptism and the Lord's Supper, both most significant. Its conditions or duties are most reasonable, necessary in the nature of things, and easy. Its worship is pure and spiritual, and confined to neither time nor place. Its privileges and blessings are spiritual and eternal. Now, this covenant can only be entered into by a Mediator (Gal. iii. 19; Heb. vii. 22–28). III. THE END FOR WHICH WE SHOULD ENTER INTO OR RENEW OUR COVENANT. "That He may establish thee for a people to Himself." 1. A believing people, receiving in faith all His truths and promises. 2. A loving people (Deut. xxx. 6, 16, 20), esteeming, desiring, grateful to, and delighting in Him. 3. An obedient people (Deut. xxx. 20). (*J. Benson.*) *On standing before God:*—1. Surely there is a warning—for the forgetful a startling, for the guilty a terrible, even for the good man a very solemn warning—in the thought that not only our life in its every incident, but even our heart in its utmost secrets, lies naked and open before Him with whom we have to do. 2. The thought that we stand before God involves not only a sense of warning, but a sense of elevation, of ennoblement. It is a sweet and a lofty doctrine, the highest source of all the dignity and grandeur of life. 3. A third consequence of life spent consciously in God's presence is a firm, unflinching, unwavering sense of duty. A life regardful of duty is crowned with an object, directed by a purpose, inspired by an enthusiasm, till the very humblest routine carried out conscientiously for the sake of God is elevated into moral grandeur, and the very obscurest office becomes an imperial stage on which all the virtues play. 4. The fourth consequence is a sense of holiness. God requires not only duty, but holiness. He searcheth the spirits; He discerneth the very reins and heart. 5. This thought encourages us with a certainty of help and strength. The God before whom we stand is not only our Judge and our Creator, but also our Father and our Friend. (*Dean Farrar.*) *On the covenant of God with His people:*—This is a covenant day between God and us. This is the design of our sacraments, and the particular design of the Holy Supper we have celebrated. This being understood, we cannot observe without astonishment the slight attention most men pay to an institution, of which they seem to entertain such exalted notions. One grand cause of this defect proceeds, it is presumed, from our having, for the most part, inadequate notions of what is called contracting or renewing our covenant with God. The covenant God contracted with the Israelites by the ministry of Moses, and the covenant He has contracted with you, differ only in circumstances, being in substance the same. Properly speaking, God has contracted but one covenant with man since the Fall, the covenant of grace upon Mount Sinai. The Israelites, to whom Moses addresses the words of my text, had the same sacraments (1 Cor. x. 2, 3), the same appellations (Exod. xix. 5), the same promises (Heb. xi. 13). On the other hand, amid the consolatory objects which God displays

towards us at this period, in distinguished lustre, and amid the abundant mercy we have seen displayed at the Lord's table, if we should violate the covenant He has established with us, you have the same cause of fear as the Jews. We have the same Judge, equally awful now as at that period (Heb. xii. 29). We have the same judgments to apprehend (1 Cor. x. 5-10). Further still, whatever superiority our condition may have over the Jews; in whatever more attracting manner He may have now revealed Himself to us, will serve only to augment our misery if we prove unfaithful (Heb. ii. 2, 3, xii. 18-25). Hence the principle respecting the legal and evangelical covenant is indisputable. The covenant God formerly contracted with the Israelites by the ministry of Moses and the covenant He has made with us in the sacrament of the Holy Supper are in substance the same. And what the legislator said of the first, in the words of my text, we may say of the second, in the explication we shall give. I. Moses requires the Israelites to consider THE SANCTITY OF THE PLACE IN WHICH THE COVENANT WAS CONTRACTED WITH GOD. It was consecrated by the Divine presence. "Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord." The Christians having more enlightened notions of the Divinity than the Jews, have the less need to be apprised that God is an Omnipresent Being, and unconfined by local residence. But let us be cautious lest, under a pretence of removing some superstitious notions, we refine too far. God presides in a peculiar manner in our temples, and in a peculiar manner even where two or three are met together in His name: more especially in a house consecrated to His glory; more especially in places in which a whole nation come to pay their devotion. The more solemn our worship, the more is God intimately near. And what part of the worship we render to God can be more august than that we have celebrated in the Lord's Supper? In what situation can the thought, "I am seen and heard of God," be more affecting? II. Moses required the Israelites, in renewing their covenant with God, to consider THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE CONTRACT. "Ye stand all of you before the Lord." Would to God that your preachers could say, on sacramental occasions, as Moses said to the Jews, "Ye stand all of you this day before the Lord your God; the captains of your tribes, your elders, your officers, your wives, your little ones, from the hewer of wood to the drawer of water." But alas! how defective are our assemblies on these solemn occasions! There was a time, among the Jews, when a man who should have had the assurance to neglect the rites which constituted the essence of the law, would have been cut off from the people. This law has varied in regard to circumstances, but in essence it still subsists, and in all its force. III. Moses required the Israelites, in renewing their covenant with God, TO CONSIDER WHAT CONSTITUTED ITS ESSENCE: WHICH, ACCORDING TO THE VIEWS OF THE LAWGIVER, WAS THE RECIPROCAL ENGAGEMENT. Be attentive to this term reciprocal; it is the soul of my definition. What constitutes the essence of a covenant is the reciprocal engagements of the contracting parties. This is obvious from the words of my text, "that thou shouldest (stipulate or) enter." Here we distinctly find mutual conditions; here we distinctly find that God engaged with the Israelites to be their God; and they engaged to be His people. We proved at the commencement of this discourse that the covenant of God with the Israelites was in substance the same as that contracted with Christians. This being considered, what idea ought we to form of those Christians (if we may give that name to men who can entertain such singular notions of Christianity) who venture to affirm that the ideas of conditions and reciprocal engagements are dangerous expressions, when applied to the evangelical covenant: that what distinguishes the Jews from Christians is, that God then promised and required, whereas now He promises and requires nothing? IV. Moses required the Israelites to consider, in renewing their covenant with God, THE EXTENT OF THE ENGAGEMENT: "That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into His oath; that He may establish thee to-day for a people unto Himself; and that He may be unto thee a God." This engagement of God with the Jews implies that He would be their God; or, to comprehend the whole in a single word, that He would procure them a happiness correspondent to the eminence of His perfections. Cases occur in which the attributes of God are at variance with the happiness of men. It implies, for instance, an inconsistency with the Divine perfections, not only that the wicked should be happy, but also that the righteous should have perfect felicity, while their purity is incomplete. There are miseries inseparable from our imperfection in holiness; and, imperfections being coeval with life, our happiness will be incomplete till after death. On the removal of this obstruction, by virtue of the covenant, God having engaged to be our God,

we shall attain supreme felicity. When God engaged with the Israelites, the Israelites engaged with God. Their covenant implies that they should be His people; that is, that they should obey His precepts so far as human frailty would admit. By virtue of this clause, they engaged not only to abstain from gross idolatry, but also to eradicate the principle. It is not enough to be exempt from crimes, we must exterminate the principle. For example, in theft there is both the root and the plant productive of wormwood and gall. There is theft gross and refined; the act of theft, and the principle of theft. To steal the goods of a neighbour is the gross act of theft; but to indulge an exorbitant wish for the acquisition of wealth, to make enormous charges, to be indelicate as to the means of gaining money, to reject the mortifying claims of restitution, is refined fraud or, if you please, the principle of fraud productive of wormwood and gall. V. Moses lastly required the Israelites to consider THE OATH AND EXECRATION WITH WHICH THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF THE COVENANT WAS ATTENDED: that thou shouldest enter into covenant, and into this oath. What is meant by their entering into the oath of execration? That they pledged themselves by oath to fulfil every clause of the covenant, and, in case of violation, to subject themselves to all the curses God had denounced against those who should be guilty of so perfidious a crime. The words which we render, "that thou shouldest enter into covenant," have a peculiar energy in the original, and signify that thou shouldest pass into covenant. The interpreters of whom I speak, think they refer to a ceremony formerly practised in contracting covenants. On immolating the victims, they divided the flesh into two parts, placing the one opposite to the other. The contracting parties passed in the open space between the two, thereby testifying their consent to be slaughtered as those victims if they did not religiously confirm the covenant contracted in so mysterious a manner. Perhaps one of my hearers may say to himself that the terrific circumstances of this ceremony regarded the Israelites alone, whom God addressed in lightnings and thunders from the top of Sinai. What! was there no victim immolated when God contracted His covenant with us? Does not St. Paul expressly say, that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins? (Heb. ix. 22.) What were the lightnings, what were the thunders of Sinai? What were all the execrations, and all the curses of the law? They were the just punishments every sinner shall suffer who neglects an entrance into favour with God. Now, these lightnings, these thunders, these execrations, these curses, did they not all unite against the slaughtered victim when God contracted His covenant with us—I would say, against the head of Jesus Christ? Sinner, here is the victim immolated on contracting thy covenant with God! Here are the sufferings thou didst subject thyself to endure, if ever thou shouldest perfidiously violate it! Thou hast entered, thou hast passed into covenant, and into the oath of execration which God has required. Application: No man should presume to disguise the nature of his engagements and the high characters of the Gospel. To enter into covenant with God is to accept the Gospel precisely as it was delivered by Jesus Christ, and to submit to all its stipulations. This Gospel expressly declares that fornicators, that liars, that drunkards, and the covetous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Therefore, on accepting the Gospel, we submit to be excluded the kingdom of God if we are either drunkards, or liars, or covetous, or fornicators, and if after the commission of any of these crimes, we do not recover by repentance. And what is submission to this clause if it is not to enter into the oath of execration, which God requires of us on the ratification of His covenant? Let us be sincere, and He will give us power to be faithful. Let us ask His aid, and He will not withhold the grace destined to lead us to this noble end. (*J. Saurin.*)

Ver. 18. **A root that beareth gall and wormwood.**—*The root that beareth wormwood:*—I. SIN IS THE ROOT WHICH BEARETH GALL AND WORMWOOD. 1. That this was true in the case of the Israelites is very manifest. Their history tells us the whole generation which came up out of Egypt died in the wilderness because of their sins. Their sin then was a root which bore to them the poisonous hemlock, for they left a line of graves along their line of march as a sad memorial to their iniquities, and only Joshua and Caleb ever entered into the promised land. 2. Again, not only does the history of the Jews prove that sin is a root of bitterness, but our judgment tells us that it is most fitting it should be so. If sin were in the long run pleasurable, and really produced advantage to man, it would be a very strange arrangement in the Divine economy. Sin is a root which has not always budded and blossomed in this life, but which will bud and blossom and bring forth

its fruit in the life to come, and the fruit of sin will be more bitter than hemlock and wormwood. I gather this from my reason. Let an intelligent person only think a minute, and I am sure he will be convinced that there must be a terrible punishment for sin. Reflect, there are other laws in the world besides moral laws: there are what is called by the philosopher physical laws, that is to say, laws which concern matter rather than mind. Now, if men break these laws, does any ill result follow from the violation? For instance, the law of attraction, or gravitation, that certain bodies shall attract other bodies, can that be infringed without risk? If you rebel against gravitation, it will just crush you up as a man would a beetle, or a fly, and without a particle of pity will avenge its insulted authority. Again, we are not left to this argument alone, for there is one out of the Ten Commandments, to which I can only allude, which involves more especially the bodies of men. Now, when a man offends against the one command, we shall see if God does really punish sin; we shall see in the man's body whether or not sin does produce gall and wormwood. I allude, of course, to the command, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," which forbids all classes of lasciviousness and uncleanness. The men or women who violate this precept soon find that they have not only done wrong to God, but wrong to themselves. Our hospitals and asylums could tell you into what a fearful state men have brought themselves by sins of the flesh. Now, if the violation of this one command, which happens to touch the body, does beyond all doubt make men smart for it, why not with the rest? 3. But we are not, happily, left to our reason about it; we can turn to the Book of God, and call up the witnesses. Ask Noah, as he looks out of his ark, "Does sin bring bitterness?" and he points to the floating carcases of innumerable thousands that died because of sin. Turn to Abraham: does sin bear bitterness? he points to the smoke of Sodom and Gomorrah that God destroyed because of their wickedness. Listen to James, or Jude, or Peter, and you hear them speak of chains of darkness and flaming fire. Let the Saviour Himself speak to you. He cries, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." II. IS THERE SUCH A ROOT AS THIS GROWING IN THE HEART OF ANY ONE OF US HERE? Some have this root that will bear gall and wormwood in them who are not actually gross outward sinners: they are described as those who forget God. 1. The non-loving of the Most High, even though you never curse or swear, even though you do not break the Sabbath, is that root that will bear gall and wormwood. 2. Next we read of "men seeking after another God." Are you loving some one better than God? Are you living for money—is that your great object? Is there no one here who is living for self? If so, though you may be outwardly most respectable people, if you are living for anything but God, that root will bring forth gall and wormwood. 3. Again, this root is in every man who disbelieves the penalty. The verse following the text speaks of one who said, "I shall have peace though I walk after my own heart." Are you saying that? If so, you have the evil root in your heart. There is no more sure sign of reprobation than callousness and carelessness. III. The last point was to be, HOW ARE WE TO GET RID OF IT? Is there a possibility of being delivered from the gall and wormwood? There is. As many as trust in Christ shall be rid of the gall and wormwood. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 19. **To add drunkenness to thirst.**—*The sin of drunkenness:*—Among the vices which stamp upon human nature its fallen condition, there is not one which causes such misery, or which leads on to such reckless crime, as drunkenness. 1. It is a most selfish as well as degrading vice: it debases man, created in the image of God, lower than the brute creation. God denounces this sin most strongly in His Holy Word. Under the law of Moses, the son who would not obey the voice of his father, but gave himself up to gluttony and drunkenness, was put to death by stoning; and, in the Gospel, drunkenness is classed with murder, as one of the works of the flesh, of which it is said they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Drunkenness is a vice which destroys soul and body. It weakens the intellect, making a man a madman in his rage, and an idiot in his sober moments. It ruins the health, producing the most painful diseases, and causing premature decay and death. It involves his family in poverty and misery. There is no peace in the drunkard's home. Who can describe all the misery which follows in the train of drunkenness, all the crime to which it leads, all the sorrow which it causes to others? How fitly the words of the text describe it, when Moses warns the Israelites to beware "lest there should be among them a root that beareth gall and wormwood"; or, as the marginal

reading is, a poisonful herb. Never did Satan plant a more fearful seed in the human heart than the love of strong drink. Drunkenness is, indeed, a root which beareth gall and wormwood; nothing sweet, or pleasant, or excellent, or beautiful can spring from it, or grow in the heart beside it. Like the deadly upas tree, it poisons all which rests under its shade, or comes near to it. The drunkard cannot be a high-principled, virtuous, or amiable man. In his sober moments the testimony of every drunkard must be, that the root of that fatal passion beareth gall and wormwood—that it is a poisonful herb. 2. The next particular—which the text points out—is the deceptive nature of the vice. Of all self-deceivers, the drunkard is the most deluded, the most blinded. "And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination" (or as the marginal rendering is), "the stubbornness of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." There is no man so difficult to convince of his folly and sinfulness as the drunkard, and no man so hard to turn away from his evil course. Satan's most powerful weapon against our holy religion is drunkenness. A drunkard cannot be a true Christian, a child of God. He is more often an infidel, a blasphemer, and he is on the high road to every kind of sin and crime. Let us not stretch forth our hand to save the far-off heathen idolater, and remain indifferent and effortless about the drunkard dwelling close to us, and even one admitted into the fellowship of the same holy faith as ourselves. (*S. Charlesworth.*) *Degradation of drunkenness:*—Drunkenness is the shame of nature, the extinguisher of reason, the shipwreck of chastity, and the murder of conscience. Drunkenness is hurtful to the body; the cup kills more than the cannon; it causes dropsies, catarrhs, apoplexies; it fills the eye with fire, and the legs with water, and turns the body into an hospital. (*T. Watson.*)

Ver. 29. **The secret things belong unto the Lord.**—*Things secret and things revealed:*—Man has always had a quarrel with God over secret things. In the Garden of Eden there was one prohibition—"Thou shalt not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil"—and in the Garden of Eden began the quarrel with God. Now there are certain secrets to be left unto God, and they may be classified under five headings. 1. Secrets in the nature of God Himself. One of the first things that a man has to learn is that his mind has not the capacity of that of God. Just as well might you expect a tiny cup to embrace the boundless ocean as to get God within the compass of man's mind. And this is the very proof of God's superiority to man. If we understood God we should be equal to God. If we could explore the mysteries of this world we could have made it. If we found no difficulties in the Bible we could have written it. 2. Those mysterics which lie in the will of God. A parent always shows his or her wisdom by their reserve. There are many things which a child ought not to know, and these are withheld by a wise parent. Eventually the child has growth, and then the knowledge comes in. Now, God is the universal Father, and there are some things that God sees which would be unwise for Him to communicate. 3. Secrets that have to do with the nature of truth. Truth is a sphere. In other words, you cannot see it all at once. It is a great globe which has two aspects. Looked at from one side, only half is seen, the other part is hidden. Now, man can only see one hemisphere at a time. If he could only learn that truth is greater than his vision takes in at a glance, he would at once surmount many difficulties. Now, many apparent contradictions are found in the Bible, but there is no attempt on the part of the writers to reconcile them. The reason is, that no matter how many explanations we received, we could never take in the grandeur of God's purpose. 4. Secrets that have to do with the nature of man. 5. Secrets that have to do with the nature of language. Words represent things. If we do not understand a word, we can have no conception of the thing which it represents. When we hear the words "tree," "cloud," and "sun," immediately these objects are presented to our imagination. But if I use a word which you have never heard of, it would have no signification to you whatever. Now when God describes a thing which we have never seen, He is obliged to use words that are familiar to us, no matter how insufficient they may be. When Robert Moffat was in Africa he came across a tribe that had never seen an ox-waggon. With great curiosity they examined the wheels, axles, and other parts. But most of all they were taken with his kettle. Their curiosity was, however, turned to wonder when Dr. Moffat told them that "in England they placed on the ground iron rods, and on these tied in a row several ox-waggons, put a big steam-kettle at their head, and away they went!" You see, he had to take

something which the natives had seen in order to describe what they had not seen; they then readily caught some idea of the original. Did it ever occur to you that when God tries to make known to us the mysteries of heaven and the heavenly life, that He is obliged to use words which are familiar to us, but do not even touch the reality? Heaven is described as having pearly gates, streets of gold, and jasper walls. God is obliged to thus describe it because no thoughts of man could possibly reach to the reality. Now, what are the things revealed? 1. Facts. We know that there is such a thing as sin, and we know that we can have salvation if we only seek it; but the mysteries of these are not understood. Christ's death and resurrection are well attested—they are facts, but the mystery surrounding them cannot be explained. You cannot understand these mysteries, but you can accept the facts. Admit these facts, and then adapt your own conduct to the fact. 2. Laws. The law is the express will of the sovereign. There may be ten thousand things which you do not understand, but there is not a single law in the Bible which a little child cannot understand, and a willing child obey. The laws of God, which once belonged to Him, now "belong unto us and to our children for ever." What is the lesson? First, we must learn humility. We should all find out and limit the extent of our knowledge. The province of reason is not to explore the mysteries of God, but to answer—1. Is this the law of God? 2. What does this law mean? 3. What does it require of me? When these have been answered, all that reason demands is satisfied. When we go beyond the reach of reason, Faith must take its place. In addition, we are taught Obedience. This should be unquestioning and unhesitating. Finally, we have the lesson of Blessedness. The blessedness of the man who keeps the law of God is only just inferior to the blessedness of the angels themselves. (*J. Pierson, D.D.*) *Mystery and revelation*:—The fact that there are some mysteries which are insoluble is attested—1. By the long and painful experience of mankind. 2. By the teaching of the materialistic thinkers of the day. The text recognises alike the spirit of uninquiring reverence and of rational freedom. I. SOME MEN SAY, "WE CANNOT ACCEPT REVELATION. We accept the excellent moral teachings of the Bible, because they commend themselves to our reason and to the reason of the race; but what we cannot accept are these mysteries which are revealed in the New Testament." In answer to this we reply, A mystery is not a revelation. It is the very opposite of a revelation. We freely admit that there are mysteries confronting us in the Old and New Testaments. Truths are intimated, suggested, pointed at, dimly outlined, like a mountain castle scarce seen through the mists of evening which fill the valley; but, inasmuch as they are not clear, to that extent they cannot be said to be revealed. These things are beyond us. They are Divine mysteries, which it is reverent for us to place with the secret things which belong unto the Lord God. II. THERE ARE THOSE WHO SAY THEY CANNOT RECEIVE A REVELATION ON THE GROUND THAT IT IS SUPERNATURAL, THAT THEY ONLY KNOW THAT WHICH COMES THROUGH THE MIND OF MAN AND IS CAPABLE OF JUSTIFYING ITSELF TO THE HUMAN REASON. Now we affirm that the Bible revelations have come through the mind of man. They were convictions, certainties, in some man's mind, which he declared to his fellows. A truth of inspiration is no truer than a truth of induction or demonstration. Truth is simply truth, wherever it may come from, or however it may be demonstrated. Revelation is natural and at the same time supernatural. It comes from the mind of man; it comes according to the mind and demonstration of God. III. THE ONE EVER-SPEAKING REVELATION OF THE MIND OF GOD IS THE HISTORY OF MAN. "If we miss the truth," says Jeremy Taylor, "it is because we will not find it, for certain it is that all the truth which God hath made necessary He hath also made legible and plain; and if we will open our eyes we shall see the sun, and if we will walk in the light we shall rejoice in the light." (*W. Page Roberts, M.A.*) *Divine secrets*:—I. THAT THERE ARE IN THE UNIVERSE CERTAIN DOMAINS ACCESSIBLE TO NONE BUT GOD. This holds true in reference to—1. Material creation. Secrets of nature. 2. The decrees of Providence. "Clouds and darkness are round about Him." Social inequalities. 3. The mysteries of redemption. "Great is the mystery," &c. II. THAT IMPENETRABLE SECRECY IS COMPATIBLE WITH PATERNAL BENEVOLENCE. 1. All nature proves this. 2. Family mercies prove this. 3. Never make God's secrets a plea for neglecting His bounties. III. THAT DIVINE SECRECY IS NO ARGUMENT FOR HUMAN DISOBEDIENCE. "Those things which are revealed belong unto us." 1. An acknowledgment of a Divine revelation. 2. The confession of our relationship to God. 3. An implication of our power to obey the Divine requirements. IV. THAT INQUISITIVENESS INTO SECRET THINGS IS A FRUITFUL

CAUSE OF SCEPTICISM. Let us leave God to deal with His own decrees, to manage the boundless realm of causes, and to work out His inconceivable purposes. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Of mysteries*:—I. THAT IT IS A VAIN AND FOOLISH CURIOSITY TO INQUIRE INTO THINGS THAT WE CANNOT COMPREHEND, AND WITH RESPECT TO WHICH WE HAVE NO LIGHT TO DIRECT US, EITHER FROM REASON OR REVELATION. II. THAT THERE ARE, PROPERLY SPEAKING, NO MYSTERIES IN RELIGION. The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, and only things revealed, things that are intelligible, belong to us. III. THAT THE GREAT END OF REVELATION IS PRACTICE, THE PRACTICE OF SUBSTANTIAL VIRTUE; that we may do all the works of this law. From whence it necessarily follows—IV. THAT NO DOCTRINES WHICH IN THE LEAST ENCOURAGE IMMORALITY CAN BE PARTS OF A DIVINE REVELATION. V. That the importance of the several doctrines of revelation is to be judged of by this rule, namely, THEIR TENDENCY TO PROMOTE AND ESTABLISH A BECOMING REGARD TO PURITY AND TRUE GOODNESS. (*James Foster.*) *Mysteries no real objection to the truth of Christianity*:—I. THE DIFFICULTY OR IMPOSSIBILITY OF CONCEIVING THE SACRED MYSTERIES OF OUR FAITH IS NO REASONABLE OBJECTION TO THE TRUTH OF THEM. Not a thing in the whole compass of nature, were we to pursue our inquiries to the utmost, but would puzzle the wisest. Can we wonder, then, at our inability to understand the world of spirits? II. IN MATTERS SO VASTLY BEYOND THE REACH OF OUR CAPACITIES, IT IS NOT ONLY NEEDLESS BUT DANGEROUS PRESUMPTION, TO BE TOO CURIOUS AND INQUISITIVE CONCERNING THEM. That it is needless, appears from the difficulty to understand them; and that it is dangerous, the many heresies and errors which have sprung up in the Christian Church may abundantly convince us. III. THERE ARE OTHER MATTERS OF MUCH GREATER CONSEQUENCE TO EMPLOY OUR MEDITATIONS, WHICH IT IS OUR DUTY TO STUDY AND EXAMINE. Revelation discovers to us many secrets of nature, many great designs of Providence, many engaging motives to the practice of our duty, which would otherwise have been concealed from us. III. THIS AND ALL OTHER KNOWLEDGE WILL BE VAIN AND INSIGNIFICANT UNLESS IT HAS AN INFLUENCE ON OUR LIVES AND MANNERS. (*J. Littleton.*) *Secret and revealed things*:—I. THE SECRET THINGS ARE THE LORD'S. 1. In nature. Science has its bounds. 2. In Providence. 3. In religion. II. "THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE REVEALED BELONG TO US AND TO OUR CHILDREN FOR EVER." 1. God has revealed them that we might be profited by them. Where are these revealed things? In the Bible. 2. God has made revelations to man elsewhere. In the different departments of science and discovery. 3. These revealed things belong to us and to our children. 4. It is the Church's duty to foster the education of the whole people. (*D. L. Anderson.*) *Secret things and things revealed*:—I. Let us endeavour to illustrate the first truth here stated—"SECRET THINGS BELONG UNTO THE LORD OUR GOD." 1. In reference to the nature, character, and perfections of the Deity, there are many secret things which belong exclusively to the Lord our God. It is true that God has told us something of His own nature; but it is equally true that there is much more that He has not told us. Something He has revealed; but much still remains concealed. 2. Not only in the doctrines of revelation, but in science, in natural operations, and in the ordinary occurrences of life, we find many things which exceed the comprehension of reason, and which we must class among the secret things belonging to the Lord our God. 3. In the dispensations of Divine Providence there are many things secret and mysterious. To this subject we may apply those declarations: "Thy judgments are a great deep"; "The Lord reigneth"; "Clouds and darkness are round about Him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne." 4. All those events which lie in futurity are to us secret things. We have the means of acquiring some knowledge of things past and of things present; but we have no faculty by which we can penetrate into the future. We know not what a day will bring forth; we know not what shall be on the morrow. 5. We may very properly inquire, "Why is our knowledge confined within such narrow limits? Why are so many things kept secret from us, and reserved for the exclusive cognisance of the Lord our God?" (1) To this inquiry it may be replied, Such a mode of treatment is proper and necessary in reference to creatures like us, who are at present in the mere infancy of our being. (2) These secret things are also designed to exercise our faith. (3) By keeping many things secret, the Almighty designs to humble us, under a consciousness of our ignorance and weakness. (4) Finally, it is our heavenly Father's purpose in keeping these secret things to Himself, to teach us that we should be diligent and faithful in the discharge of the various duties incumbent on us, and, at the same time, should be in a state of habitual preparation

for death and eternity. II. Let us turn our attention, therefore, to the second truth stated in our text, namely, "THE THINGS THAT ARE REVEALED BELONG UNTO US AND TO OUR CHILDREN FOR EVER, THAT WE MAY DO ALL THE WORDS OF THIS LAW." 1. Among the "things revealed" we are to include the whole of the sacred Scriptures. This Divinely-inspired volume comprehends all that God has been pleased to reveal to man. And, oh! what a cause of gratitude is it that we possess this heavenly treasure! Possessing the Word of God, we are laid under the most solemn obligations to read it, so that we may, by Divine assistance, understand its meaning, apply its principles, and obey its precepts. 2. "Those things which are revealed," says the man of God in our text, "belong unto us and to our children for ever." It was Jehovah's design that the deposit of Divine truth with which the Jews were favoured should be carefully guarded and transmitted from parents to children, from one generation to another, as long as that dispensation continued. And professed Christians are under equal obligations to perpetuate the knowledge and influence of Divine truth from age to age, by instructing their children in these revealed things. (*W. P. Burgess.*) *Man's relation to the unrevealed*:—I. THERE ARE SECRET THINGS. The world is full of mysteries. Man is not the measure of the universe; and certainly the mere understanding is not the measure of the man. There are things to which faith is the anchor and hope the hand; there are scenes which eye cannot see nor heart imagine; there are truths which science cannot discover nor reason utterly explore. II. THESE SECRETS BELONG TO GOD. 1. Consider that great secret of the coincidence of the human and the Divine will. Who shall say that there is no profound mystery there? How have the eyes of men's spirits ached as they peered into this thick darkness! You know the old legend of the ancients: that one of the mortals stole fire from heaven, and the terrible punishment of the eagle gnawing his vitals was inflicted by the angry Jove. What is it but a symbol of that heedlessness which has made man seek to prove himself one of the counsellors of heaven, and in dreadful retribution has his error recoiled upon himself. 2. Another mystery which is often brought up as an argument against the Divine revelation is the presence of evil and sin in the world. The wise and devout will abstain from pronouncing any judgment on the question. And let not the man of science, or the philosopher, despise the preacher who would speak of things not seen, not felt, but trusted in. Are there no mysteries in science? Can the most skilful observer explain the great series of events that we term life? And what of our philosopher? Can he answer all the profound questionings of the moral nature of man? Lessons: 1. The fact that there are these great mysteries, that there is something more than we can know, that there is a Being, a Personality, to whom these truths are clear, to whom all things are known; these facts ought to make us careful to live in the light of these unseen realities, and, whilst engaged in earthly service, not to forget our heavenly destiny. Have you never known a man in whose life there seemed the unseen Divinity? He had filled himself with God. His life was passed in the continual thought of God. That man awes his fellows. His life is a power everywhere. 2. Another result of this faith in the unseen will be not only to give fulness to this life, and satisfaction to the higher wants of nature, but, believing that secret things belong to God, we shall never allow merely intellectual difficulties to overwhelm our spiritual powers. Doubt is difficult, I know; but there is no sword like life to cut the knot. Live down your doubts. 3. There is another frame of mind that the perfect knowledge and obedience of the truth will produce, and that is complete submission to the will of God. (*L. D. Bevan, LL.B.*) *The secret things of God*:—I. Let us begin with GOD HIMSELF. The doctrine of the Divine existence, if put to popular vote the world over, would be pronounced impregnable. Plato was right in calling atheism a disease. And yet when we come to ask for an *à priori* demonstration, when we would make it certain to ourselves that there is a personal God, in the same sense and to the same degree that we are certain of some mathematical propositions, our logic is not triumphant. We have only to require some sensible assurance, or some incontestable demonstration of the Divine existence, and our faith inevitably dies. God will take His leave of us. We shall soon see no footprint and hear no rustling of Him. That God might have made atheism absolutely impossible by an instant impression of Himself upon our minds, rendering Himself every whit as palpable to the spiritual vision as material objects are to the bodily vision, cannot be questioned. The human soul might have been so fashioned as to see God, just as our eyeballs see the sun in the firmament. Our intuitions, about which philosophy is still in doubt whether they give us not the

absolute only, but also and equally the personality of the absolute, might surely have been so vivid and so peremptory as to leave no room for doubt. But such is not the established economy of things. Not as the eagle gazes at the sun gaze we on God. We are required rather to turn our backs upon this intolerable light, see it by reflection, and judge of all other objects, in their Divine relations, by the shadows which they cast. The three sources of proof on which mainly we rely to establish, for popular effect, the Divine existence and perfections are, accordingly, the material world around us, the moral world within us, and the general consent of men. Insufficient, doubtless, if counsel be taken of mental arrogance, and absolute scientific assurance be asked for; but altogether sufficient if knowledge be pursued with reverent docility as the condition and gateway to holiness. II. Let us now turn, in the second place, to TAKE NOTE OF MAN. We pass here at one bound from the infinite to the finite. Philosophy asks for some bridge between them; but thus far always in vain. That there should be Divine Sovereignty is plain enough; and equally plain is it that there should be human freedom. But the two united are an enigma. The things revealed are the facts themselves unreconciled; on the one side, a Divine efficiency, which seems to clasp the universe as with iron arms; on the other side, a human freedom, which seems to threaten riot and anarchy. These two elements we must accept, and hold them together as we can, denying neither, and abating the force of neither. And as to the harmony between them, let us despair of finding it in this world. Let us rather leave it, and leave it cheerfully, till we stand on higher summits, in a clearer light. For the present, let us take care only that God be honoured, and our own destiny happily accomplished. If God only is great, man surely is responsible. III. It remains for us to consider now, in the third place, THE NEW RELATION OF GRACE WHICH HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED BETWEEN GOD AND MAN. From sin we pass on to redemption as the great radiant centre, not less of all knowledge than of all hope. If the Scriptures reveal no speculative solution of the mystery of evil, they do yet propound a practical solution of it in the proffered deliverance of men from its power and curse. And yet this deliverance opens up yet other mysteries, and at every point we come across these secret things of God, which belong unto Him and not to us or our children. Human philosophy, in its pride and self-reliance, comes along discoursing of culture. It understands a change of purpose accomplished by moral suasion. It comprehends what is meant by a moral improvement and progress. It believes in growing better. But it has no conception of that radical transformation of character by the Spirit of God, which is described as the new birth, the passing from death unto life, Christ in us the hope of glory. Speech of such things sounds fanatical. The new birth is a stupendous mystery of life, which can be known only by being experienced. Consider the revelations of Scripture in regard to the future life. Definite and comforting beyond all the guesses of unaided reason; and yet, as compared with what we sometimes pine to know, how meagre. So also of the life that now is in its duties and its discipline. The great human duties are Prayer and Work: Prayer for every needed blessing, and Work to realise it; Prayer, as though God must do the whole, and Work, as though we must do it all ourselves. These are the two poles of the great galvanic battery. But who that waits to know the philosophy of answered prayer will ever pray? And who that waits to be sure there shall be no mistake will ever work? The hand that beckons us to glory waves at us out of impenetrable clouds. Partial revelation, then, is the method, and obedience the end. In the practicable improvement of our subject, it may be remarked—1. First of all, we are taught a lesson of humility, and that, too, at the very point where we most need it. There is no pride on earth like the pride of intellect and science. A modest confession of ignorance is the ripest and last attainment of philosophy. But childlike docility is of the very essence of religion, required of us all at the very threshold of our Christian experience. And in order to this, no better discipline could be imagined than the discipline to which we are actually subjected under the existing economy of revelation. The secret things do so vastly outnumber the things which are revealed! The greater portion of all our inquiries and all our reasonings must always have for their issue, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." 2. We may learn to distinguish the more vital articles of our faith. Controversy is apt to rage the hottest about the subordinate points. But the stress of revelation is on the grand essentials. The very design of the Book necessitates this feature. What the Bible is fullest of is therefore, of course, most vital. 3. And finally, our shortest way to the end of doubt and controversy

is by the path of an humble obedience. (*R. D. Hitchcock.*) *Of the desire of knowledge*:—I. THERE IS NATURALLY IN MAN A VERY STRONG DESIRE AFTER KNOWLEDGE. II. THIS OUR DESIRE OF KNOWLEDGE OUGHT TO BE REGULATED AND LIMITED BY THE CONDITION OF OUR NATURE AND BY THE WORD OF GOD. 1. We ought not to be ambitious of that knowledge which the condition and circumstances of our nature make it impossible for us to obtain. 2. As we ought not to be ambitious of what it is impossible for us to attain, so neither ought we to be solicitous after that which it is unlawful for us to desire. And here that which the Scripture determines in respect of our desire after knowledge is this—(1) That we ought not to endeavour to penetrate into things too deep for us, such as are the hidden and secret counsels or unrevealed decrees of God. (2) The Scripture further forbids the desire of that knowledge, the means of obtaining which are unlawful. (3) The Scripture forbids us so to search after the knowledge of anything else whatever as in the too earnest pursuit of that to neglect the study of the law of God. Those Divine truths which influence our practice, which furnish our mind with worthy notions of God and charitable dispositions towards our neighbours, and make men wise unto salvation, are the things which God has proposed to fix our thoughts and our studies upon. III. To show HOW GREAT A SIN IT IS NOT TO REGULATE OUR DESIRES OF KNOWLEDGE BY THE FOREMENTIONED RULES. And—1. To determine dogmatically in things not clearly revealed, and to take delight in imposing upon each other such determinations, is in effect directly striving against that order and constitution of things which God has appointed, and endeavouring to make ourselves what God has not made us. 2. The not regulating this desire by the forementioned rules was the occasion of our first parents' fall. This appears from the description of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. iii. 6). It is also evident from the description of the manner of the temptation (ver. 5). A desire of knowledge not regulated by the rules before set down is very apt to put men upon unlawful practices to attain what they so desire. For that which is not to be attained but by unwarrantable practices, the desire of it cannot but be also sinful. From what has been said it follows—(1) That the vain desire of knowing beforehand things to come is such a desire of the knowledge of secret things as is not permitted us by the present circumstances and condition of our nature, or by the Word of God. (2) That a desire of prying into the unrevealed decrees, counsels, and purposes of God, and desiring to impose upon others our opinions concerning them, is also such a desire of the knowledge of secret things as is not permitted us by the law of our nature, or by the Word of God. (3) An over-earnest desire of knowing things subtle and unnecessary to be known, so as in the pursuit of the knowledge of these things to neglect the study of that which more nearly concerns us, is also a sort of that search after knowledge which is forbidden in the Scripture. (*S. Clarke, D.D.*) *Things secret and things revealed*:—I. WHAT, THEN, ARE THOSE SECRET THINGS WHICH BELONG UNTO THE LORD GOD? A moment's thought will bring many such deep matters to our minds. Look at God Himself, and we are lost at once! Who can understand His nature? Who can comprehend His ways? And look at what we call "His dwelling-place!" Oh, who can say what heaven is—what kind of world—what sorts of beings are those angels who inhabit it? And think of that world of wretchedness beneath! But let us turn to our own selves, and we shall find mysteries enough even here. How long are you and I to live? What is to be the hour, the day, the month, the year of our departure from this world? Are we to die suddenly or slowly? by accident or by disease? And it is just the same with respect to those events that may occur in the mean season. Such, then, are some amongst "the secret things" which belong unto the Lord our God. And what, then, should be our conduct with respect to them? Are we to try to lift the curtain up? Alas! fain would our proud hearts teach us so! We are naturally more inclined to know our fortune, as we call it, than to know our duty, and would rather satisfy a forbidden curiosity than search those treasures which God hath laid before our eyes. But it becomes us to be willingly ignorant of what our God hath been unwilling to communicate. III. SO MANY ARE THE THINGS WHICH GOD HATH REVEALED THAT ALL I SHALL ATTEMPT TO DO IS JUST TO TOUCH UPON A FEW OF THEM. I observed that our great God Himself is the greatest of all mysteries to minds like ours. He hath uncovered so much of His perfections to us, He hath so far "laid bare" to us "His holy arm," and made known the thoughts He thinketh with regard to us, that His people may say, in some measure, "we know Him and we have seen Him." Only look at Christ, and say whether the love and mercy of our God

are not among "the things revealed" to us! I have said that we know little or nothing about heaven. But observe, our gracious God has revealed to us as much about heaven as "belongs to us and to our children." We observed that the duration of our lives is kept a secret from us. Yes, but our blessed Lord has told us that which does concern us, namely, how to be prepared for death whenever and howsoever it approaches us. We know not what is to happen to us in this life. No; that is a "secret thing belonging to the Lord." But this is a "revealed thing," that "all things work together for good to those that love God." III. And now, FOR THE USE WE ARE TO MAKE OF THESE "THINGS WHICH ARE REVEALED TO US." What says our text of the reasons why they are revealed? "The things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children, that we may do all the words of this law." It is not, then, to fill our heads with notions that God hath revealed to us the things we read of in our Bibles. If He hath told us of the path of life, it is that we might rise up and walk in it. Let us not err, then; let us not mistake knowledge for religion; let us not suppose ourselves enlightened men merely because we can talk well about the Gospel. Better not to know the way of righteousness at all than to know it and be idle. (*A. Roberts, M.A.*) *The presumption of prying into religious mysteries*:—I. THAT WE SHOULD NEVER PRY INTO MATTERS WHICH INFINITE WISDOM HATH CONCEALED. For we shall seldom, if at all, be wiser for such inquiries; we shall never be happier or better; and we shall usually be more wretched, and less innocent. In what reason or experience discovers to us, further speculations may produce new discoveries. But of articles depending on mere revelation, as we could have discerned nothing without it, we shall be able to discern very little of anything beyond it. In the shortest, and seemingly most obvious, consequences drawn concerning subjects that lie naturally out of our reach, we must be exceedingly liable to mistakes; and venturing far into the dark is the sure way to stumble. Another state may probably withdraw the veil, and acquaint us clearly with what now perplexes our reasonings and wearies our conjectures. Let us wait, then, contentedly for the time, which of necessity we must wait for. II. The next rule which Moses gives is, THAT WE SHOULD RECEIVE WITH ATTENTIVE HUMILITY WHATEVER INFINITE WISDOM COMMUNICATES TO US. For those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever. III. The last rule implied in the text is, THAT WE SHOULD ALLOW EVERY DIVINE TRUTH ITS DUE INFLUENCE ON OUR BEHAVIOUR. For we are to learn them, that we may do all the words of this law. Indeed, merely receiving the truth in the love of it is a moral act, and in some cases may be one of great virtue. When our Saviour saith of St. Thomas, "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." Blessed in proportion to the integrity of their judgment, not the positiveness of their persuasion. But scarce will it be found that any article of faith is proposed for the probation of this only. Each hath its practical consequences, either flowing of necessity from it or built with propriety upon it. (*Archbishop Secker.*) *Secret and revealed things*:—I. SECRET THINGS ARE THE LORD'S. II. REVEALED THINGS BELONG TO US AND TO OUR CHILDREN. Now notice—1. That the Holy Scriptures contain these revealed things (2 Tim. iii. 16; 2 Pet. i. 19-21). 2. The things revealed we could not have known without the Scriptures. (1) We could not have known God. (2) We could not have known the nature and evil of sin. (3) We could not have known the way of salvation (Rom. x. 14). (4) We could not have known of the eternity before us; whether it be an everlasting sleep, or what? 3. The things revealed meet all the demands of the mind of man. 4. The things revealed are adapted to every state and variety of condition. 5. The things revealed are to be regarded as a sacred deposit from God to man. We are responsible for—1. Their reception. (2) Reading and understanding them. (3) Their diffusion. Application—1. Let the subject teach us to avoid presumptuous curiosity. 2. Let the subject teach us the true test of all doctrines, ordinances, and duties. 3. We shall have to give an account of revealed things at the last day. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *Secret things*:—These words remind us that in scanning God's works and ways there is a limit beyond which we cannot go. Consequently, true wisdom is to be contented with that degree of knowledge which God gives of Himself and His works. In this world, and with infinite capacities, we must remain in the dark as to many mysteries, both in nature and in heavenly things, which we should exceedingly like to know more about. We cannot be surprised at this. Our minds are too small to grasp the mind and thoughts of the Infinite. Besides, God conceals some things which perhaps we could understand on purpose to test and try our faith. We must take

Him on trust, and feel sure where He is silent it is best for us to be satisfied, and remain ignorant. But this is not easy to men of great minds and powers of thought. Man in his natural condition resists these limitations. He would fain be wiser than God would have him. This desire becomes disastrous in its results to many. Man becomes "vain in his imaginations, and professing to be wise, becomes a fool." Man, not being permitted to know all, refuses to accept the little he is permitted to know if he seeks to learn in God's own way. Yet, after all, how little do we know of all the things around us and about us and within us! We are limited on every side. We are mysteries to ourselves, being fearfully and wonderfully made. The union between body and mind, between reasoning powers and the matter or substance on which they act, "such knowledge is too wonderful for me, I cannot attain unto it." The action of electricity; the movement of the needle towards the pole; the maintenance of the vital spark within us; the atmosphere in which God makes us "live, move, and have our being"; the gravitation of everything to the centre of the earth, and the way the same principle acts on all the heavenly bodies; those heavenly orbs themselves—all these are mysteries of which we know next to nothing beyond the fact of their existence and something about their action. Can we wonder that those spiritual things which are not visible to the human eye, and those eternal verities concerning the great and almighty Creator of all, should be shrouded in mysteries beyond our power to unravel? Can we be surprised to be continually met with the prohibition from on high, "Thus far, and no farther"! Secret things belong to God; the things that are revealed are for us, and even for our very babes, to understand. God has in a measure and in a way revealed Himself to us. Created things reveal His "eternal power and Godhead." The eye of faith sees Him in Christ. Having this knowledge to begin with, the other revealed truths become plain, and bring contentment as to all God keeps close in His own bosom. We are content to wait. We know enough of God as in Christ to make us love Him with all our hearts, to make us sure He is acting wisely and lovingly in all that befalls us. We know for certain that we need lack no good thing here, and certainly shall not want anything hereafter that makes for eternal happiness. (*C. Holland, M.A.*) *Secret things*:—1. Amongst the things which are secret may be placed a complete knowledge of nature, of the visible world, and of the effects of matter and motion. 2. Amongst the things pertaining to religion which have occupied the minds of men to no purpose, we may reckon what has been called absolute predestination, or the everlasting decrees of God concerning the salvation and destruction of particular persons. 3. Another secret is an accurate knowledge of God, of His nature and perfections. He is infinite and eternal, and we are limited both in time and place, and there is something in infinity, eternity, and absolute perfection which perplexes us and involves us in difficulties. 4. Amongst the things which we must not expect thoroughly to understand is God's providence, the manner in which He presides over rational beings, the reasons of His conduct, the ends which He proposes, and the methods by which He accomplishes them, and how far He is assisting, hindering, or permitting in all events. 5. Under this head, which concerns the mysteries of providence, may be placed the reasons for which God bestows prosperity upon one and adversity upon another. 6. The future condition of the righteous and of the wicked is one of those things of which we cannot have a distinct and particular knowledge. 7. Amongst those things which are hidden from us we may place many difficult parts of the Scriptures. 8. There are some parts of Scripture which seem to be designedly concealed from us, and they are those prophecies which are as yet unfulfilled, for which many reasons might be assigned. As the prophecies concerning Christ were never perfectly understood till He came and fulfilled them, so those predictions which relate to future ages and have not received their completion are dark to us, and will continue so till the day itself unfolds them; and all attempts to interpret them have been unsuccessful. Indeed, it concerns us very little to know what shall be done upon earth after we are gone from it, and we might as well be solicitous to learn what passed a thousand years before man was created. 9. Lastly, the knowledge of things to come, of the good and evil which will befall us in this life, and of the time when our life will end, are secrets which God hath concealed from us. (*J. Jortin, D.D.*) *The revealed will of God the only rule of duty*:—I. CONSIDER WHAT THE SECRET WILL OF GOD RESPECTS. Before the foundation of the world He formed in His own mind a complete scheme of His own conduct through all future ages. This scheme comprehended all things that ever have been and ever will be brought into existence. It was

His secret will that not only holiness and happiness, but that sin and misery also should take place among His intelligent creatures. Though He loved only holiness and happiness, and perfectly hated sin and misery, yet He determined that both should take place. II. CONSIDER WHAT THE REVEALED WILL OF GOD RESPECTS. It respects what is right and wrong, what is good and evil, or what is duty and sin, without any regard to the taking place of these things. III. SHOWS THAT GOD'S REVEALED WILL, AND NOT HIS SECRET WILL, IS THE RULE OF DUTY. 1. That God has revealed His will in His Word for the very purpose of giving us a rule of duty. No secret purpose, intention, or design of the Deity can annul or diminish our obligation to obey this His revealed will. 2. The will of God revealed in His Word is a complete rule of duty. The obligation of a child to do what his parent requires does not depend upon his knowing the secret will of his parent, or the reason why he commands him to do this or that lawful thing. The obligation of a subject to do what a civil ruler requires him to do does not depend upon his knowing the reasons of state, or why the civil ruler requires certain acts of obedience. So the obligation of creatures to obey the revealed will of their Creator does not depend upon their knowing His secret will or the reasons of His commands. It is the revealed will of God, therefore, and not His secret will, which is our infallible rule of duty. 2. God's secret or decretal will cannot be known, and for that reason cannot be a rule of duty to any of His creatures. 4. Supposing God should reveal to us all His purposes respecting all His intelligent creatures in every part of the universe, this knowledge of His decretal will would be no rule of duty to us. His decretal will is only a rule of conduct for Himself: our knowing what it becomes Him to do cannot inform us what it is becoming us to do. 5. That the secret will of God cannot, if it were known, be a rule of duty, because it is entirely destitute of both precept and penalty, and consequently of all Divine authority. Improvement—1. If God's secret will respects one object, and His revealed will respects another object, then there is no inconsistency between His secret and revealed will. 2. It appears from the representations which have been given of the secret and revealed will of God that our text has often been perverted and misapplied. 3. If God's secret will respects the taking place of future events, then all uninspired men who pretend to reveal God's secret will, or to foretell future events, are guilty of both folly and falsehood. For secret things belong to God only, and He only can reveal them. 4. If God's secret will cannot be known, then it can have no influence upon the actions of men. 5. But if God has a secret will respecting all future events, and will always act according to His secret will, then it is easy to see the real cause why mankind are generally so much opposed to the doctrine of Divine decrees. It is entirely owing to their fears that He will execute His decrees, or bring to pass whatever He has decreed. 6. If God will certainly execute His wise and holy secret will, then all His friends have a constant source of joy under all circumstances of life. For He has assured them that in executing His secret will He will cause all things to work together for their good. 7. If God's secret will be His governing will, and respects the existence of everything that comes to pass, then it is very criminal in any to deny or to complain of His secret will. It is the same thing as to deny that God governs the world, or to complain that He does not govern it in the wisest and best manner. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *The benevolence of the Divine secrecy:*—We have come to associate secrecy with selfishness, yet all nature proves that in Divine administration secrecy and benevolence may co-exist. As rapidly as we are pointed to the mystery we should direct our eyes to the fatherhood. Do men say that God keeps to Himself the mystery of the sun? Our answer should be that He turns upon us the full revelation of the light. Does God keep to Himself the secret of germination? On the other hand, He gives us the revelation of golden harvests; the spring kept the secret of her heart, but the autumn has filled our barns with plenty. Thus enough is kept back to prove the power, and enough is given to establish the mercy. It is not only right, it is necessary that the father should know more than the child. Is a father less a father because of his superior knowledge? Is not his very superior knowledge one of his highest qualifications for discharging his duty as a father? Mystery is the seal of the infinite, yet benevolence is perpetually present in the providence which guides human life. You have seen a blind man led along the highway by a little child, to whose young bright eyes he commits himself in faith and hope. Man is that poor blind wanderer through the way of God's mysteries, and that little guide represents the benevolence, the mercy, the tenderness with which God leads us from day to day, and will lead until the time of the larger revelation. The commonest mercy

of the daytime flames up into a fire column that lights men through the gloom and trouble of the night. We must not look at the mystery and forget the benevolence. The very wealth of God makes us covetous. Does poverty provoke envy? We look not so much at what God has given as what He might have given. We read the love through the mystery, rather than the mystery through the love. Men like to penetrate into the hidden. They flatter it, they exalt it, they say it is good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise; and having wrought themselves up into this delusive appreciation of its value, they put forth the thievish hand, and the fancied blessing turns to a scorpion's sting. We are not to anticipate our course of study; the volumes will be handed to us one by one. Let us understand what we now can, and in doing so let us increase in knowledge; understand that in all the wastes of folly there could be no greater fool than he who would not believe his father's telegram because he cannot understand the mystery of the telegraph. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The limitation of human powers*:—One of the most sad and saddening aspects of modern life is the lack of a humble acknowledgment of the limitations of human powers. There has been engendered a pride and even arrogance of thought which knows not how to veil its face in the presence of the infinite God, and of Truth which is as infinite as He. There is an audacity of speculation which will acknowledge no mystery, and which rejects all that transcends the limits of reason. And especially is this the case in those departments of truth which relate to the moral and spiritual government of God. Concerning the material world, there is no such presumptuous daring. Men feel that as yet of this they know but in part—and in small part. No man of science will step forth and profess a universal acquaintance with the universe. He would be regarded as a laughing-stock. He might as soon pretend that he can hold the waters in the hollow of his hand, or that he can mete out heaven with a span, or comprehend the dust of the earth in a measure, or weigh the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance. Slowly and patiently do men of science work, winning now the knowledge of one fact, and then another, but feeling as Newton felt when he had achieved even his noblest discoveries, that they have but picked up a shell or a pebble on the great shore of truth, while the vast ocean lies yet undiscovered before them. The map of science is filled in here and there, but over the greatest portion of it are written the words "unknown land." Year by year a little more is filled in, and yet a little more, but when shall the whole be defined, and when shall the map itself be large enough to include the whole material creation which stretches illimitably around us on every hand? There is no discovery that has yet been made which has not immediately suggested new mysteries, and the wisest men are those who feel that the disproportion seems ever growing between the limits of human mind and the boundlessness of the creation which it seeks to explore. (*Enoch Mellor, D.D.*) *Mystery and its mission*:—I. THE UNIVERSE IS CROWDED WITH MYSTERIES. 1. Physical nature is full of the mysterious. 2. The Divine Providence is full of the mysterious. 3. The sacred Scriptures are full of the mysterious. II. THE OBJECTIONS OF THE MODERN SPIRIT TO THE CHRISTIAN MYSTERIES WEIGHED IN THE BALANCE. III. THE MISSION OF MYSTERY. 1. It strongly suggests the superhuman origin of Christianity. 2. It is the mission of mystery to fill us with the spirit of genuine humility. 3. It is the mission of mystery to inspire human activity. 4. It is the mission of mystery to keep our faith-faculty in constant exercise. 5. It is the mission of mystery to keep alive our spirit of adoration. 6. It is the mission of mystery to intensify the enjoyments of heaven. (*J. Ossian Davies.*) *A wise agnosticism*:—We are all conscious of the immense inquisitiveness of the human mind and the limitations of human knowledge. The desires to be, to know and to become are the strongest desires of human nature. In the first ardour of life we are sensible of no law of limitation in our powers. Life is boundless, and our power of knowing seems boundless too. But sooner or later we are all apt to be overcome by the humiliating sense of the limitation of our faculties. We ask questions for which there are no replies. In the true sense of the word, we are all agnostics, and the term really expresses humility of mind rather than stubborn pride of reason. We have all of us to say upon a thousand matters: "I do not know; I have no means of knowing!" Agnosticism is merely another term for the limitations of human knowledge. But because we are ignorant of many things it does not follow that we are absolutely sure of none. We may be ignorant of the laws of light, but we know there is light; we cannot explain the origin of life, but we know there is such a thing as birth. Thus we may have a sufficient working knowledge of a subject without knowing much about it, just as a

man may avail himself of the railway or the electric light without being in the least able to explain the mechanics of the one or the chemistry of the other. The fact is, that for the working business of life, if one may use the term, very little knowledge is needed. And it is so in religion. We may be bad theologians, and yet good Christians; agnostics in intellect, yet believers in spirit. Granting the fact of judgment, we are troubled by our incompetence to understand its method, and we say with the Israelite, "Wherefore hath the Lord done this unto this land? What meaneth the heat of this great anger?" And as we ponder the problem we can start a hundred questions for which we have no reply. Why, if this were a judgment, did it not come before? Why has it never been repeated? The one thing for us to learn is the thing that is revealed, and that is that sin is punished, and terribly punished. Learn that, and for you the judgment is justified. So again, with the secret of character and destiny. When we begin to examine character in the light of destiny, how perplexed are we! Who has not met a type of church-going goodness which has repelled and disgusted him, and a type of natural piety which has allured and satisfied him? And then we ask, "Which are the sheep and which the goats?" And here, throughout the world, are thousands of men and women whom you cannot classify on any rigid method. They pass out of the world with what seem to us indeterminate characters; they have never refused the truth, but rather have simply stood outside the sphere of the spiritual; and as our thoughts pierce into the dim profound of that unseen world, out of the darkness the words ring back upon us: "And what of these?" Every step deepens the mystery, increases the bewilderment. Why try to reduce to definiteness that which the Bible has left mercifully indefinite? Is not this part of God's secret, and is there nothing revealed to us clearly that we cannot fail to understand it? Yes, this much at least is clear: Whether there be probation or not hereafter, there is probation now. Passing on to the Discipline of Sorrow in Life, the same truth applied. God did not ask us to say that "All was for the best." For the best that little children shall be left motherless! All God asks that we shall say, "Thy will be done," leaving the secret with Him, and taking to ourselves the lesson of obedience and trust. But still more forcibly does the lesson apply to the great mysteries of Christian truth. For whosoever approaches Jesus Christ is met by four great secrets of Christianity, four great mysteries of the faith: the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Atonement, and the promise of Immortality and Redemption through the death of Christ. We are unable to grasp these mysteries. Is there any theologian who has actually explained either, or made them possible to the human intellect? The keener the intellect which applies itself to the task, the more certain is it of failure, because the more numerous will be the difficulties which it will discern. And that is precisely where men make so fatal a mistake; they try to force themselves into faith by a process of reason, to apprehend intellectually that which can only be spiritually discerned. I may be alive without knowing anything of physiology; my heart may beat though I cannot tell how it beats, and have never heard of the circulation of the blood. I may be conscious without understanding the philosophy of consciousness; I may think without knowing how thought is generated; I may be a good citizen with but small knowledge of my country's law; and a good soldier with small understanding of imperial politics. And so I may be a good Christian though I can prove neither to my own nor any other person's satisfaction the credibility of the Incarnation, the Resurrection, or the Atonement. It is not stubbornness of intellect, but humility, that says in such a case, "I do not know." The working knowledge that we need for the Christian life is relatively small. Christianity is not a thing of high philosophies and subtle inferences; it moves along the plane of common life; it proves itself by the silent revelation of its power to save within the heart. It asks of us nothing more than to do our duty in the sight of God. (*W. J. Dawson.*) *Secret and revealed things*:—I. THE SECRET THINGS THAT BELONG TO GOD. Probably there are many material existences of which we know nothing, and, indeed, can know nothing. There are perhaps many properties of mind of which we can form no notions in our present state. Probably there are many kinds of moral government displayed in the universe under the control of God of which we have no conception. Yet it is certain that from objects of this kind no temptation to pry into them too curiously can arise. All that we can affirm is, probably other objects besides those with which we are acquainted do exist; but we know too little of them to excite any curiosity. There is no unholy prying. With respect to them all is distant and all is dark. Another class of objects from which we are more in danger of indulging the curiosity reproved in the

text are those which are partly hidden and partly revealed; partly found exposed in the revelations of this book, shining with different degrees of light; but in all their reasons and detail considerably obscure. Part is prominent on the sacred page; and part is hidden under a veil which Divine wisdom has not seen proper to remove. With respect to objects of this kind, we are in more danger of penetration into God's secrets. We ask, "Where is the harm in indulging in these speculations? Is it not a part of our duty, a part of the glory of our nature, to cultivate religious knowledge?" I answer, This is true to a certain extent; but how many persons forget what it is important to remember, that one great part of our moral discipline on earth is to submit in matters of faith to God! Religion must have its secrets. It cannot be supposed that a religion which is so intimately connected with the character of the infinite God, whose perfections even angel minds cannot comprehend, on the abyss of which they must ever stand and cry, "Oh, the depth, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" should be without mysteries. They belong to God—1. Because He knows them. They are His secrets. Of these secrets He is completely the master. It matters not whether we discern the whole truth clearly or not; it is enough that we discover what concerns our salvation, and that the rest, however cloudy to us, burns with brightness in the bosom of God. 2. They are His, because they are the reserves He has made in communicating knowledge to man. God has a right to determine in what manner, and where, and to what extent He will communicate knowledge. All we have to do is to say (thankful for what we have and are), "Even so, Father; for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight." 3. They belong to Him in another sense; they are His property. As they are His secrets, it is an act of great boldness for any man to pry into them. II. THE THINGS REVEALED. 1. A revelation of God. 2. A revelation of man. 3. It is a revelation of Christ. Here the peculiar character of the Gospel scheme comes forth in all its glory. In fact, both the Old and New Testaments are a revelation of Christ in different modes. 4. It is a revelation of a future state, and of the means to secure final happiness. Of what importance is the Gospel in this respect! It has brought life and immortality to light. It has dissipated the gloom; it has burst the involving cloud; and all is day. (*R. Watson.*) *Things secret and revealed*:—There are two spheres of spiritual things—a secret or hidden sphere and a revealed sphere. Time was, however, when there was only the one sphere, and that the secret one. Away back in the primal ages, when as yet man had not been called into existence, there was no sphere, and could not be, of things revealed. It was not till man had opened his eyes upon this fair earth, and by his side beheld the kindly face of God, that the sphere of things revealed had its beginning. Then did God lift up the tiniest corner of the great curtain which covered the spiritual world, and so gave rise to a new sphere of spiritual things—the revealed. Thence did the sphere of revealed things begin to grow apace. The number of revealed things is growing every day larger, and the number of secret things every day smaller. Not that we can expect the secret things to disappear altogether. I. THERE ARE MANY THINGS WHICH GOD ONLY PARTLY KEEPS SECRET, AND EVIDENTLY WITH NO ULTIMATE INTENTION OF KEEPING SECRET AT ALL. These are such things as the Inspiration of the Scriptures, the Trinity, the Atonement, Prayer, Providence, and the like. In these cases God may be said, generally speaking, to have revealed the fact, but to have kept the explanation secret. Why should we not understand God as saying to us: "Here is the fact of Inspiration; find out the theory of it"; "Here is the fact of the Trinity and the Atonement; search out the explanations of them"; "Here is the fact that prayer is efficacious, and that providence is always beneficent; see if you cannot sweep away the difficulties of the one position, and unravel the mysteries of the other"? The only condition that God seems to lay down is this: that we are to make these inquiries reverently, and that we are to take on trust whatever we cannot explain, remembering that it is the fact of things, and not the theory, which is, after all, the important matter. II. THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT GOD SEEMS INTENTIONALLY TO KEEP SECRET. These are things which to pry into is apt to bring us some kind of natural punishment rather than reward. 1. His time of bringing any event to pass. 2. The way by which He means to lead His people. It is in mercy that He always keeps this secret. Put it to yourselves, if you could have come all the way you have come in the event of your knowing beforehand what it was to be like. Would you not have shrunk back from entering upon the journey of life? But when you cannot see beyond the first bend of the way—when all beyond this is God's secret—you are emboldened to step out

right manfully or right womanfully. III. THERE ARE MANY THINGS WHICH GOD HAS FULLY REVEALED. God has fully revealed all that is necessary both for our weal here and for our wealth hereafter. (*D. Hobbs, M.A.*) *Limit to theological knowledge:*—Everything now unknown is not to be considered as belonging to the secret things of God, and unfathomable by man. Every day is revealing to us some things and facts of which we were ignorant. We have the largest, the freest, the most highly trained intellects everywhere exploring nature on the soundest philosophical principles, and with the aid of mechanical and scientific appliances unknown to the men of ancient times. The discoveries of the last half-century have propelled civilisation with a speed which, if it had been predicted to our ancestors, would have been deemed fabulous. And yet we are only learning the letters of the alphabet of unknown knowledge. God has created, and will yet create, men whose genius, constitutional temperament, and gigantic intellect shall explore and explain the unknown parts and races of our own planet, investigate still further the laws of the universe, bring everything that has had life (not excluding man), and everything that has not had life, either under anatomical, telescopic, microscopic, or chemical investigation, and every revelation that the explorer can give to us, based upon facts, will illustrate the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator, and contribute to the well-being and advancement of mankind. But there are yet secret things, known only to God, which men have employed themselves for ages to discover, and have failed. One is, the essence and nature of God. We speak of God as the First Cause, the absolute Being, the infinite One, but the discussion even of these terms soon places before us contradictions necessarily involved in their use. The soul of man, its origin, varied power, and duration, is another secret thing, known only to God. The moral evil, the physical suffering, the mental degradation and moral debasement of the races of mankind for thousands of years, under the dominion and rule of a benevolent and merciful God—these are secrets the reason of whose existence we have no power to reveal. Our text tells us there are things which are revealed, and that they belong to us and to our children for ever. The first great doctrine of revelation is the oneness of God. The incomprehensible God, the Creator and Ruler of all worlds, we adore and love. It is the surrender of the mind, the culture of the affections, and a life obedient to the will of heaven that are required of us, and though we often fail, even our failures may be expressive of progress, and of our earnest desire to lead a spiritual and holy life such as Christ lived. It is also revealed to us that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," &c. In the Gospels we have the history, the doctrines, the commandments of Jesus, and His relationship to mankind. There must be no selfishness in our reception of Christianity. If we embrace it cordially, if we believe the Christian faith to be the truest, purest, and most powerful; if it will give light to the understanding, love and piety to the heart, integrity to the life; if it will make man benevolent, generous, unselfish, self-sacrificing, and will lead him to God for the forgiveness of his sins, then it is a faith, a Divine religion, which we ought not only to embrace, but to propagate by every means we possess. We have also other revelations; one is of law, summed up by Jesus in the love of God and of our neighbour. The physical and moral penalties of violating the laws of our nature and the laws of God are also revealed to us. The fact of a Divine Providence over mankind and all creatures, and over all human affairs, was plainly revealed by Jesus Christ. And the fact of its existence is almost all we know of it. Other facts and doctrines are disclosed to us, and the great purpose is, to bring our hearts and lives under the authority of God, that we may be the children of our Father who is in heaven. This was the aim and end of Christ's teaching, example, prayers, and of His life and death. Nothing less than conformity to the spirit, the love, the virtue and holiness, and the benevolent deeds of Jesus, can make us worthy to bear His honoured name. The inference drawn by the writer of the text from the subject under consideration was this: "that we may do all the words of this law." We have habitually to recognise the fact that secret things belong unto the Lord our God. Whatever belongs to the infinite, which is not revealed, is far, far beyond us; and it is not profitable to spend our time habitually on that which is and ever must be beyond our grasp. Thank God, the path of life and the path of duty are both equally plain and intelligible. In doing all the words of this law, we must remember that satisfaction and happiness may be attained from the Christianity we in common profess. The Bible contains solace for the troubled heart and comfort for the wounded spirit. (*R. Ainslie.*) *The presumption of prying into religious mysteries:*—It is one material consideration, amongst many, in favour of the Jewish

and Christian Scriptures, that they preserve throughout so due a medium in the discoveries which they make of Divine truths, as to direct the faith and practice of men without indulging their curiosity. I. THAT WE SHOULD NEVER PRY INTO MATTERS WHICH INFINITE WISDOM HATH CONCEALED. For we shall seldom, if at all, be wiser for such inquiries: we shall never be happier or better; and we shall usually be more wretched, and less innocent. II. THAT WE SHOULD RECEIVE WITH ATTENTIVE HUMILITY WHATEVER INFINITE WISDOM COMMUNICATES TO US. For that God is able to communicate many important truths to us, which we have no means of knowing otherwise, concerning His own nature, His designs and dispensations concerning the inhabitants of the invisible world, and our future state in it, can no more be doubted than whether we ourselves, according to our various knowledge of men and things, are able to give unexpected and serviceable notices one to another. And that we should understand nothing further of His secrets than is unfolded to us, nor be capable of answering many questions that may be asked about them, otherwise than by confessing our ignorance, is so far from being a plea against their being really His, that it is a necessary consequence of it: so far from being strange in supernatural things, that it is common in natural ones. III. THAT WE SHOULD ALLOW EVERY DIVINE TRUTH ITS DUE INFLUENCE ON OUR BEHAVIOUR. In proportion as we know God, we are to glorify Him as God: according to every particular which the Scripture hath manifested concerning Him. And the several obligations incumbent on us towards Him, ought not to be estimated, however commonly they are, by their influence on the affairs of our present life, but by the stress which He, who alone knows the proper one, hath laid upon them. Our performance of these obligations, as it was the true motive to the delivery of each article, is the just measure of our belief in it. If we know enough of the mysterious doctrines in religion to fulfil those duties, of which they are each respectively the foundation, our knowledge, however imperfect, is sufficient. And if those duties remain unfulfilled, the completest knowledge will not avail us. (*Archbishop Secker.*) *Follow the road that is visible*:—The other day I was walking across the Northumberland Fells to call at a shepherd's house that lay distinctly enough before me on the Fellside. The directions I received from a Fellsider, whom I had just left, after the manner of those who live every day in the midst of ample space, were vague indeed. The rutty, half-formed road on which I was walking was plain enough immediately before me, but when I strove to trace the course of the road a greater distance ahead, it became blended with the frowsy bracken and bronzed heather and was utterly lost to view. To have struck boldly out across country to reach my destination by what seemed the shortest route, would have entangled me among the spongy bogs and numerous streams with which the hillside was intersected. However, by carefully following the road that was visible before me, I managed to pick my way, and arrived at my calling-place in safety. So is it in our daily search after the knowledge of the Divine will. When, in our impatient eagerness, we wish to look too far into the future, all is indistinct and hazy; but if we carefully note what is near and sufficiently revealed, we shall be led up infallibly to safety and rest. *The difficulty of explanation*:—The Rev. E. A. Stuart remarks, A little child was playing in the garden, and the crabbed old gardener came up to her and said, "Cissie, your father is going to kill a man to-morrow." "Oh no, William, I am sure he is not!" "Yes, he is, to-morrow morning, at eight o'clock, up there on the hill close to the grey old prison." "Oh no, William, I'm sure he is not! My father is too good and kind and gentle to do that." . . . "Father, it is not true, is it? You are not going to kill a man to-morrow? William says you are." The father was sheriff for the county, and had to superintend next morning the execution of a murderer, and it had been haunting him like a nightmare for the last three weeks. He was angry with the man who had so cruelly slandered him to his child, and yet he saw it was quite impossible for him to explain his duty to the little one, so he simply said, "Cissie, can't you trust father?" and the little one smothered all her doubts in her father's breast. And so when men come and perplex me with life's mysteries, I simply answer, "I can trust my Father, and throw myself upon His character." **Those things which are revealed.**—*Revealed things*:—I. THE THINGS THAT ARE REVEALED. 1. The state of man. Perverted and depraved. Incapable of purifying himself. Turning away from the things of God, and seeking the things of man. 2. The means by which man may be delivered from the threatened evil. Gospel of Christ. 3. In what way man is to be interested in the Saviour. II. FOR WHAT END THESE THINGS ARE REVEALED. "That we may do," &c. Right thinking, right feeling, right action. (*J. Burnet.*) *Man's relation*

to the revealed:—I. THERE ARE THINGS REVEALED. There are two ways in which we are able to get hold of the unknown—either by the exercise of human faculties and capacities, or through some supernatural revelation. The Framer of nature has arranged means for the conveyance of knowledge to the human mind. Sensation and reflection are the two powers whereby man comes to know the facts and laws of the internal world—the facts and laws of his own mind. Now, beyond the utmost sweep of the human intellect there lies a vast universe into whose awful depths we are ever striving to penetrate. But there are limits beyond which the human mind acknowledges it is not competent for it to pass. Now, it is here that the Bible comes to man's assistance. God interposes, and reveals to man. The Divine nature and affections, the future condition of man, and the work of Christ for, and His relation to the human family, are the three great topics on which the Bible treats. II. THESE REVEALED THINGS BELONG TO MAN FOR EVER. 1. They are objects of interest. 2. They are objects of knowledge. Our faith should have an intelligent basis. 3. This revelation is a solemn trust. It is our duty to hand it on. III. THESE THINGS ARE REVEALED THAT WE MAY DO ALL THE WORDS OF THIS LAW. This is the key to revelation. The Bible read in the light of this truth: that it reveals in order that men may be changed and turned to God; and that it reveals that men may do the words of God's law—the Bible thus considered will everywhere exhibit consistency, and never seriously harass and disquiet by difficulties of comprehension and harmony. (*L. D. Bevan, LL.B.*) *The things revealed:*—There is a valuable property which Christians possess on earth, and which, in the enjoyment of it, may be counted as an earnest of that better and enduring substance which is reserved in heaven for the believer. This property of the people of God is spoken of in the words before us. It is here called "those things which are revealed"; these, it is said, "belong unto us and to our children." I. THE SIGNIFICANT EXPRESSION BY WHICH THIS PROPERTY OF CHRISTIANS IS HERE DESIGNATED. "Those things which are revealed"—revelation and mystery are correlative terms, hence we are reminded—1. Of the original mystery connected with these things. They are still "revealed mysteries," but without revelation they had indeed been a mystery in the most unrestricted sense of the word. Man's dim eye never penetrated them, his feeble mind never comprehended them, his puny intellect never grasped them. 2. Of their source. If these things were originally superior to man's research, if they lay beyond an angel's ken, then surely we are at no loss to ascertain their origin. We perceive at once that they are an emanation of the Infinite mind—a brightsome ray from the throne of glory. If we consider the love they display, it bears the impress of heaven; the wisdom they proclaim, it bears the impress of heaven; the mystery they bespeak, it bears the impress of heaven. 3. Of the importance of "those things which are revealed." If it be true that these things were a mystery, but have been revealed—that God is their author, and that He hath made them known unto us, then without controversy they are clothed with a transcendent importance. Yes, it is important that those who are far removed from God should be brought back and restored to His image. It is important that those over whom the leprosy of sin hath diffused its loathsome disease, should be washed, clothed, and be brought to sit in their right mind at the feet of Jesus. It is important that the soul should be snatched from the fearful doom that threatens the sinner, and prepared for that blissful reward which awaits those "who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality." II. THE REMARKABLE ADAPTATION OF THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE REVEALED TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THOSE TO WHOM THEY BELONG, EVEN "UNTO US AND TO OUR CHILDREN." 1. Man is a sinner, and because he is a sinner, conscience upbraids him. Now, behold how beautifully the "things which are revealed" harmonise with man's circumstances in this respect. Here we are told—"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself"; here we are assured that the blessing of reconciliation is to be secured on the simple terms—"only believe." Thus moved by a sense of our own weakness, and encouraged by the revelation thus made, we raise the silent cry, "Lord, give us of this faith," teach us how to believe, "Lord, save or we perish!" 2. Man being a sinner is in circumstances of present suffering. But when we turn to the "things which are revealed," we learn at once the Author, the cause, and the end of all that comes upon us. 3. Man being a sinner is exposed to death. Death natural. This is in consequence of sin, and this cometh to all, "to the good, and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not." This constitutes part of the curse so solemnly pronounced on the apostasy (Gen. ii. 17,

iii. 17-19). But in the case of the believer the curse is converted into a blessing. Revelation has made known the cheering truth that the death of Christ has drawn the sting of death, and now "blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." (*J. Gaskin, M.A.*) *Man's rights:*—I. LET US ATTEND TO THE CHARACTER OF OUR RIGHTS. "The things that are revealed." 1. It conducts us to the mysterious nature of our rights. They are revealed things; they are not the result of human reasonings, however deeply pursued—however long continued. They are revealed things; things, therefore, of a Divine and mysterious nature. Now, they are called "the purposes of God"; then, "the mystery of His will": at one time, "the deep things of God"; at another, "the will of God"; and again, "the wisdom of God in a mystery." If we look at the being and attributes of God—a trinity in unity—the Godman Mediator—His sacrifice and atonement—the effects of faith in that atonement—the doctrine of a future resurrection—and all, in fact, that is called revelation—we shall see how much they are above the level of mere human intellect. "The things that are revealed!" I love this designation; because—2. It marks our religious immunities in the glory of their manifestation. If they be revealed, let us remember that God only could reveal them; and that He has. They are truly revealed, or manifested things. The whole has been the scene of Divine manifestations from the beginning. The Bible is a history of manifestations. 3. It points out the transcendent importance of them. They are "revealed things." II. THE VALIDITY OF OUR CLAIMS TO THESE IMMUNITIES. They "belong unto us"; so it is said in the text. But what is the ground of our claim to the things that are revealed? It cannot be natural to us, considering us abstractedly, as men. It is true, indeed, that there began to be a system of revelation and communication from the first, to sinless and innocent man. But the things which are revealed to us contain much, certainly, which was not adapted to man in his first state. This revelation could not belong to man, then, as he was created. And though we are sinners, and this revelation is made to us as sinners, still, the fact of our sinfulness could give us no claim to such a revelation; no claim to a revealed God—to a revealed Saviour—to a revealed heaven—to a revealed immortality. No; we can support no claim, either natural or meritorious. How, then, are these things ours? Simply because of the sovereign will of God. But, beside this, we have other collateral grounds of claim. In proof that the things that are revealed belong unto us, I would appeal—1. To their astonishing adaptation to our circumstances. 2. To the legitimated means of their transmission. God has not left the truths of revelation to themselves, to make their own way, and subdue the world to obedience. 3. To the wonderful preservation of these things. How wonderfully God has taken care to preserve His truth pure and unadulterated, notwithstanding the prevalence of error, the tyranny of passion, and the cruelty of persecution. 4. To the influence of these things upon the nature of Man. Think on what would have been the state of the world if these things had not been revealed. (*J. Anderson.*) *The things that are revealed:*—The words invite us to contemplate our heritage—"the things that are revealed"; our title to that heritage—they "belong unto us and to our children for ever." 1. Many are the designations given of Holy Scripture. Those designations are all of them expressive and beautiful. When studied, they each present to us some new aspect of God's Word. But the designation in this passage is exceedingly striking and plain. It is, "Those things which are revealed." By being "revealed," then, or by revelation, is meant opening up, uncurtaining, disclosing; bringing to view what was not seen or known, or only partially or imperfectly seen and known. This is done by the Spirit of God. Man's intellect did not discover these things; man's diligence and science did not find them out; man's wit and skill did not arrive at them. They are not the results of logic, or of philosophy, or of genius; but they are the disclosures of God's own Spirit. So that "all Scripture," all revelation, "is given by inspiration of God." 2. These "things that are revealed," how manifold, how marvellous, how gracious, how glorious they are! "Eye" had "not seen them," "ear" had "not heard them"; it had "not entered into the heart of man to conceive them." Without this revelation, how dark, how desolate, how desperate were the lot of fallen man! Take the sun from the sky, what would become of the world? Take the Bible from the Church, what would become of the Church? 3. Amongst the "things that are revealed" are the things of God, and amongst the "things that are revealed" are the things of man; amongst the "things that are revealed" is the past in this world, and amongst the "things that are revealed" are the things to come, not only of this world but in

the world of eternity. 4. And, therefore, we are bound to sum up and say, the "things that are revealed," how glorious they are! how inconceivable, and yet how clear! how incomprehensible, and yet how simple! how inscrutable, and yet how level to us all! How wonderful in their adaptation to our wants! how gracious in their condescension to our infirmities! "Those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever." Our little ones have a claim. "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (*H. Stowell, M.A.*) *The education of the young*:—Let me open my subject with the thoughts of a great man of science. "Supposing," he says, "that the life and fortune of every one of us would one day depend on his winning or losing a game of chess, don't you think that we should all consider it a primary duty to learn, at least, the names and moves of the pieces, to have a notion of a gambit, and a keen eye for all the means of giving or taking a check? Do you not think that we should look with a disapprobation almost amounting to scorn upon the father who allowed his son, or on the State which allowed its members to grow up without knowing a pawn from a knight? Yet it is a very plain and elementary truth that the life, the fortune, and the happiness of every one of us depend on our knowing something of the rules of a game infinitely more complicated than chess. It is a game which has been played by the human race for untold ages, every man and woman of us being one of the two players in a game of his or her own. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that His play is always fair and patient; but we know to our cost that He never overlooks a mistake, or makes the smallest allowance for culpable ignorance. Well, what I mean by education is learning the laws of that mighty game—in other words, education is the instruction of the intellect in the laws of nature, under which name I include, not merely things and their forces, but men and their ways, and the fashioning of the affections and the will into an earnest and living desire to move in harmony with those laws." Now, I will not criticise this passage, nor expand its suggestive metaphor, nor point out the elements in which it is wanting. Education is surely something very much more and deeper than merely training the intellect in the laws of nature. Its alpha and its omega should be rather to train the spirit in the knowledge of God. But leaving the passage and its general suggestiveness, I will try to point out something of what we are neglecting and of what we are doing, some of the ends at which we now aim in our schools, and some at which we should aim more and more. To begin with, we ought undoubtedly to connect all our higher education with the development of health, the happiness of the children, and the welfare of the nation. 1. Firstly, we too much neglect physical vigour. It depends on health; and if we injure the health of the children of the nation, we blight their whole lives. Our system is certainly too rigid and too mechanical. It tends to keep back the gifted and the eager, and to oppress the weak and the dull. It expects the same polish from the slate as from the agate. It makes but scant allowance for differences of ability and circumstance. 2. Then, secondly, how woefully do we fail to train the sense of beauty which God has given us, and which He, for His part, has endeavoured amply to satisfy! Our schoolrooms, instead of being, as they almost everywhere are, dingy, dirty, stuffy, and generally repellent, ought to be the airiest, happiest places in each parish; fresh and clean, and with flowers in them, and with beautiful pictures and simple works of art, and most of all in cities like this, where our children live, for the most part, in a wilderness of squalor and ugliness. 3. Then, thirdly, as to the cultivation of special gifts. A gift is a very rare and sacred thing, and it would be well if we could have the gifts of our children watched for and trained. Far too much have we, as a nation, confused the notion of education with the infructuous cramming of so much reproducible knowledge. "What is the education of the majority of the world?" asked Edmund Burke. "Reading a parcel of books? No! Restraint and discipline, examples of virtue and of justice—these are what form the education of the world." 4. And, fourthly, we have, as a nation, I am convinced, great need to pay attention to the subject of technical training. This is a most serious national question, for, amid the universal competition of nations, the empire of British commerce is being seriously threatened. They who watch over the future interests of England, and not merely its present comforts, point to facts like these. The web of lace curtains is made in England, but before they can be sold they have to be sent to France and Belgium to have a pattern put on them, because we have not the requisite machinery. The steamers built on the Clyde for the Germans, as soon as they can float, are manned by German crews and sent over to that country to have

their interiors completed, because that can be done better and more cheaply in Germany than in England. We have too much book-work, depend upon it, and too little exercise for the powers and faculties of the body; and I feel sure that even the book-work would be the better if our system were more human and more humane, if there were less grinding routine and more activity of soul. Our present wooden system tends at once to quench the glow and enthusiasm of many teachers, and the brightness and animation of many a child. Here, then, you have the fact which constitutes the central use and inestimable blessing of such schools as these you are asked to support, and to support with generous liberality, to-day—they are religious schools, or they are nothing. In these schools at least we have a moral education that endeavours to form the judgment and the character, which are too often neglected by official pedagogy. Here, at least, we do try to get the saving facts and saving doctrines of Christianity apprehended and appropriated by our school children. "The aim of teaching," says a great schoolmaster, "is to train generally all who are born men to all that is human." Let us do our best, and leave the rest to God. On the tombstone of one Fröbel, the great loving German teacher, are carved the words: "Come let us live for the children." I would say the same to you. If we neglect them, depend upon it, the devil will not. Let us teach our children, on the other hand, that the end of all education is to learn that all happiness depends, not on external good, but on inward blessings, because the kingdom of God is within them, let them be educated in such a way as to know that education is not to have and to rest, but to grow and to become, forgetting all the evil behind and reaching forward to all the good that is before; that the true end of life is not selfishness but beneficence, looking not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of others; that life, true life, is to be found in Christ and Christ alone, and consisteth not in the multitude of things we possess. (*Dean Farrar.*) *Revealed knowledge, our heritage:*—Revealed knowledge may be said to "belong to us"—I. BECAUSE IT IS LEVEL TO OUR UNDERSTANDINGS. All that is needful for us to know of "the common salvation" is so plain in itself, and so plainly declared, that he who runs may read. On this point we may safely appeal to general experience. If the Bible be, generally speaking, a hard book, how is it that it has made its way into every house where a reader is to be found? How does it happen that the most fond and delighted readers of it are those whose understandings have had the least assistance from education? Such persons prefer the Bible even to other devotional books in which the same things are professed to be set forth; partly, perhaps, from habit, but in a great measure because, with respect to the most interesting religious truths, they cannot be more plainly set forth than is there done already; they are rather obscured than otherwise by a multitude of words and subtle reasonings and human illustrations. And what is the nature of those truths? For, if they were not in themselves easy to be understood, no plainness of speech could make them so. But now, what are they? "God is, and is a rewarder," &c. "All flesh have corrupted their way." "Jesus Christ came," &c. "Repent, and believe the Gospel." II. BECAUSE IT CONCERNS US. The Bible is about us, and our affairs. Open it where you will, you are the person spoken to; and you, or some other of like passions with you, are the person spoken of. Of God Himself, only so much is revealed as relates to His dealings with man; and how small a part is that of what might be known of the Author of the universe! Of the angels, their natures, orders, powers, and past history, we know next to nothing; only a few individuals of them are introduced to us, as ascending and descending between God and man; and we are told of them in general, that they are "all ministering spirits," &c. Nay, even of Jesus Christ Himself, whatever is revealed strictly concerns us and the scheme of our redemption. Of man, his origin, nature, history, condition, duties, destiny, every page of the Bible tells us something; and the whole together gives us such a full and luminous account as leaves nothing to be desired. With reference to its author, we call the Bible God's Book, but in respect to use and advantage it is our book, and none but ours. Suppose it to be put into the hands of a quite different order of creatures, inhabiting some other world: of what service would it be to them? Would they, who perhaps had never sinned, feel any interest beyond that of mere curiosity in the fall of man, or in the succession of the Divine dispensations for his recovery? To them it would be as a letter mis-sent. But when we open this letter we see at once that it "belongs to us"; and we put it by, only to refer to it again and again, and prepare ourselves, "that we may do," &c. III. BECAUSE WE DO, IN FACT, POSSESS IT. Was it not "written for our learning"? delivered to us at the

first, and handed down by a providential arrangement, for our benefit? Let this suffice. Where there is no other claimant, possession alone is a valid title. This is an acknowledged maxim in regard to other kinds of property; and so it would be in regard to this, were it not for one consideration, namely, that we do not see men using and enjoying this part of their possessions as they do the rest. What should we think if we saw the supposed owner of a large landed property carefully abstaining from the usufruct of it? either letting it remain unproductive, or storing up the produce of it from year to year, or by any other means taking good care that he himself shall derive no benefit from it? Should we not say at once, "The estate is not legally vested in that person. There is some flaw in his title, and he fears to apply the proceeds to his own use, lest the real owner should presently appear and call him to account"? Now, apply this to the case before us. "Those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." That is the use of this property—to "do all the words," &c. It is the absence of that, and nothing else, that casts a suspicion upon our real title to the property. If men were always seen doing those things which are contained in the Bible—obeying its precepts, copying its examples, believing its truths, appropriating its promises; in short, living and feeding upon the oracles of God, instead of remaining all their lives "hearers only, deceiving their own selves,"—there would, there could be, no question as to their right of possession. (*Frederick Field, LL.D.*)

CHAPTER XXX.

VER. 2. **And shalt return unto the Lord thy God.**—*The proper signs of repentance:*—Moses is here dealing with the signs of "repentance," which begin in the humiliation of the heart, and end in the reformation of the life. In the New Testament there are two words translated by our English word "repentance": one of them conveys specially the notion of being sorry for having done wrong; the other conveys specially the notion of changing one's mind as to things—seeing things in a different light, and then shaping one's conduct accordingly. But it is necessary for us to distinguish even between sorrow for sin and repentance. Sorrow has two results; it may end in spiritual life or in spiritual death; and, in themselves, one of these is as natural as the other. Sorrow may produce two kinds of reformation—a transient or a permanent one. Sorrow is in itself, therefore, a thing neither good nor bad; its value depends on the spirit of the person on whom it falls. Fire will inflame straw, soften iron, or harden clay; its effects are determined by the object with which it comes in contact. Warmth develops the energies of life, or helps the progress of decay. It is a great power in the hot-house, a great power also in the coffin; it expands the leaf, matures the fruit, adds precocious vigour to vegetable life; and warmth, too, develops with tenfold rapidity the weltering process of dissolution. So too with sorrow. There are spirits in which it develops the seminal principle of life; there are others in which it prematurely hastens the consummation of irreparable decay. Repentance is a state of mind and heart, but it may be merely a cherished sentiment, in which, as a mere sentiment, the man hopes to find his satisfaction. Such repentance is, and it always must be, ineffective. It is self-centred; it is disguised pride. By its fruits you must know it. The repentance that does nothing is nothing. This is our constant difficulty—men are perpetually trying to sever sentiment from conduct. They want to keep the two spheres separate, and hope to be right towards God in heart, and to do what they like in their life. This self-delusion God's Word persistently resists. Religion cannot keep only in the heart-sphere. It must come out and show itself in the life. It will be white and frail as a plant growing in a dungeon if it be kept wholly within. Every element of the religious life must act, must speak. Shut it up and it will fade away. And now let us see if we can trace the stages of the Divine dealing still, with individuals, in Moses' foreshadowings of God's dealings with His people Israel. 1. God's will, as He has been pleased to reveal it, controls heart and conduct; and enables each man to judge and appraise himself. When Job came into the full sense of God, what could he do but exclaim, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." 2. Man's self-will, resisting the Divine will, brings man into sin. Pollok pictures, in his

poem, the misery of lost souls as this, that they see the words wherever they turn, "Ye knew your duty, and ye did it not." That is sin. 3. Sinful man comes under Divine discipline, which may take the ordinary forms of the natural consequences of transgression, or which may be special afflictive Divine dispensations. The prodigal son only came into the sufferings and humiliations that always follow a life of vice. 4. The aim sought to be reached by Divine discipline is the conviction of sin, self-humiliation on account of sin, and the earnest desire to recover from sin. The sufferings following sin may bring remorse, but that is no holy feeling. God would work the godly sorrow of repentance. Remorse keeps a man away from God, hugging to himself his bitterness. Repentance leads a man to God, dissolves him in the tears of confession, and yet kindles a new hope in the soul. And now—5. We come to the point of our text. When a penitent comes back to God, He looks for the signs of the penitence. He finds them partly in that very return to seek His forgiveness; but He looks for it also in the steadfast endeavour of the penitent henceforth to obey. (*The Weekly Pulpit.*) *Repentance necessary:*—We have heard much of the Gospel containing comfort for the mere sinner, and if by the mere sinner be meant one that has nothing to plead but the mercy of God, through the atonement, like the publican in the parable, it is for such, and only such, that the Gospel contains consolation. But if by the mere sinner be meant the impenitent, though distressed sinner, it has no comfort for such in their present state. Repentance is necessary to forgiveness, in the same sense as faith is necessary to justification; for it is not possible for a sinner either to embrace the Saviour, or prize the consolations of the Gospel, while insensible to the evil of sin. There is no grace in the Gospel, but upon the supposition that God is in the right, and that sin is exceedingly sinful, and, consequently, none to be perceived or prized. (*Andrew Fuller.*) *Thoroughness in repentance:*—In the *War Cry* there was a picture of a man kneeling at a table and praying, "Lord, make a good job of me." The words are rough enough, but the meaning is, in many respects, admirable. The poor man feels that he is a failure, and that he needs new making. His feeling is that none but the Lord can accomplish the necessary renewal. His fear is lest he should not have the full work wrought upon him, and that his conversion should not be thorough and complete. He has no need to fear that the Lord would not operate effectively, for the great Worker never leaves His work half done. Still, the very fear of being but partly sanctified shows his earnestness and his desire to be truly and fully converted from the error of his ways. Lifeless, questionable religion is poor stuff. Oh, that the Lord would make a good job of us. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Repentance:*—Repentance is neither base nor bitter, it is good rising up out of evil. It is the turning of the soul from the way of midnight to the point of the coming sun. Darkness drops from the face, and silver light dawns upon it. True regret for wrong never weakens, but always strengthens the heart. As some plants of the bitterest root have the whitest and sweetest blossoms, so the bitterest wrong has the sweetest repentance, which, indeed, is only the soul blossoming back to its better nature. *Whole-heartedness in religion:*—A dealer in pictures who makes it his business to find as many new painters as possible, both in this country and abroad, was asked recently in regard to his methods of selecting pictures to buy. He was very frank in his talk, and one thing which he said is shrewd enough to be worth quoting. "Of course," he said, "with my experience I am able to judge whether there is promise in a painter's work, but I never buy with any idea of putting the painter on my list until I have seen the man and talked with him myself. I always watch him closely, and I never buy his pictures unless his eye lights up when I talk to him about his work and about his profession." The artist whose heart was really in his work could not discuss it without kindling, and the man who did not paint from the heart was not the one whose pictures the dealer wanted. And so God desires whole-hearted obedience to His commands.

Ver. 6. **Circumcise thine heart.**—*Circumcision:*—Circumcision was the sign of the covenant God made with Abraham, mention of which we have in Gen. xvii., and which the first martyr, St. Stephen, quoted in that remarkable address in Acts vii. 8, where he said, "And He gave him the Covenant of Circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day." And St. Paul in writing to the Romans (iv. 11), speaking of Abraham, says, "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be

not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also." This sign was also made with Abraham's seed—that is, Christ—as St. Paul tells us in Gal. iii. 16. This was then the Covenant of Grace, the Gospel which preceded the law. To Israel this covenant was an outward sign that God would give them rest in Canaan; and to all of us it is a sign continued in Christian baptism, and a seal that "God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city." This rite of circumcision was performed by the cutting off of the flesh of the foreskin; this was cut off and cast away, to show that the body of the sins of the flesh must be put off; a list of what some of these are we have in Col. iii. 5. On this account we are told in Deut. x. 16, "Circumcise the foreskin of your hearts," and in the text, "Circumcise thine heart." Ishmael was circumcised although the covenant was made with Abraham and Isaac, for the children of believing parents must be sealed with its seal for the reasons given by St. Paul in 1 Cor. vii. 14. The act of circumcising the male child was a painful ceremony, and was full of meaning, suggesting then what the New Testament teaches now, "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost." This rite of circumcision was administered to a child who could know nothing except pain. What good was it? How unreasonable! and how cruel—we would be prompted to ask. Following our own reason, no child would have received the rite; but we should remember what Locke says, "Whatever is Divine revelation ought to overrule all our opinions, prejudices, and interests, and hath a right to be received with full assent. Such a submission as this of our reason to faith, takes not away the landmarks of knowledge, this shakes not the foundations of reason, but leaves us that use of our faculties for which they were given us." But God's commands upon this subject far outstrip man's reason and man's feelings upon the subject. For there was a penalty attached to disobedience; the child not circumcised was to be cut off from his people, he was to die. In Col. ii. 11, 12, we are told this of baptism, which now answers to the rite of circumcision, "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead." This rite of baptism is equally for babes as well as for those of mature years, even for those only a few weeks old. Parents ought to see that their children receive it. I shall now endeavour to show you in what two points circumcision differs from baptism. 1. Baptism in its literal sense, taken as an outward rite, is of universal and continual obligation, that is, as long as this dispensation (the dispensation of the Spirit) lasts, though it is only in the first of these that it differs from circumcision. 2. Taken in its literal sense, circumcision was the initiatory rite of the old covenant, as baptism is of the new; both are placed at the threshold of church privileges. In circumcision a man was pledged to keep the whole law (Gal. v. 3), whereas in baptism a man is pledged to put on Christ. The case of the Ethiopian eunuch. As there are two points of difference between circumcision and baptism, there are on the other hand three points of resemblance. 1. In a spiritual sense both have the same signification, both point to the renewal of the heart, which is required of all. 2. Neither circumcision nor baptism are of value as mere rites, unaccompanied by the spiritual grace which they typify; "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." 3. "Baptism doth also save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Above all, the Spirit of God is all essential. The truths which circumcision teach us, and the blessings of which it was the pledge, are the birthright of every real child of God. It taught what baptism now teaches us, the total depravity of the human nature, its inability to please God, and its unfitness to partake of His mercy. Circumcision was also like our initiatory sacrament baptism—a sign and pledge of the remedy which infinite love has devised for the depravity of the heart. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." "I will be their God, and they shall be My people." All these blessings are now communicated to every genuine member of the Christian Church. Our blessed Lord therefore submitted to the rite of circumcision. It was right that He should bear the evidence of being a descendant of Abraham according to the flesh. Although He had no personal pollution to put off, yet His submitting to circumcision was an essential part of His humiliation, and of the obedience by which He fulfilled all righteousness. It was also one of those sacred actions in which He sustained the character of the representative of His people. Now, what are we to learn from

all this, and more especially those that are parents and guardians? As circumcision was originally an admission unto covenant relationship with God, Jesus, the Son of the Highest, submitted to it the eighth day, when Joseph exercised his parental right over Jesus, as man, in giving Him His name, and by His baptism by St. John, He fulfilled the law by obedience. From the manger at Bethlehem to the Cross on Calvary, He did the will of God till it was finished. What an example for us all to follow in His blessed steps. In order to do so, we must see that our hearts are circumcised. In like manner baptism as the covenant of grace, of which it is the symbol, is higher than that of the law, with greater privileges and blessings. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? The last act of grace is, as the promise under our consideration implies, ensured by the first act of grace. The primary change of heart effected by the operation of the Holy Spirit, is the pledge of the final accomplishment of the purposes of sovereign love. "The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart that thou mayest live." (*C. T. Buchanan.*) *The circumcision of the heart: a description of true religion*:—I. THE PURITY OF ITS CHARACTER: "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart," &c. Circumcision was originally instituted to ratify the covenant which the Lord made with Abraham His faithful servant (Gen. xvii. 10, 11). It subsequently became a distinguishing and standing rite in the Jewish Church. It was an outward and typical sign of an internal and spiritual grace. Hence we read of "the circumcision of the flesh made with hands," and also of "the heart made without hands," by Jesus Christ. Circumcision, therefore, of the heart implies—1. The renovation of its moral powers. Human nature is totally depraved, and every man's heart is "desperately wicked." Hence we must be spiritually circumcised and made holy, or we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven (Heb. xii. 14). This inward circumcision includes a deliverance from the power and pollution of sin, and an actual participation of the Divine nature. 2. The special result of Divine operation. "The Lord thy God will, &c., and the heart of the seed," who shall believe in His name. He only is able to achieve this great and glorious change. II. THE EXCELLENCY OF ITS PRINCIPLE: "To love the Lord thy God," &c. Purity of heart is invariably accompanied with the principle of Divine love. When grace becomes predominant, it sways the whole empire of the soul, and reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. The object which the believer's love embraces, "The Lord thy God." 1. His essential character demands our love. He is the Lord—the uncreated, infinite, and eternal Jehovah. 2. His relative character also demands our love. He is thy God—not only Creator, Legislator, Benefactor, but also Redeemer, Saviour, Portion. Thine by innumerable obligations, relations, and endearments: by right, by purchase, by covenant, by adoption, by enjoyment, by profession, and by anticipation. 3. The degree to which the believer's love extends. "With all thy heart, and with all thy soul." (1) It must be sincere, and not in word and tongue only, but in deed and in truth. (2) Intense, not a lukewarm and languishing desire, but a vigorous and hallowing flame, ever burning on the altar of the heart. (3) Supreme, admitting no rival, but refining and regulating all subordinate attachments to inferior objects. (4) Entire in its character, casting out all tormenting fear, reaching to all the faculties of the soul, and engaging all the powers and energies of the mind. (5) Progressive, "abounding yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment, being rooted and grounded in love, and filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph. iii. 17–19). III. THE FELICITY OF ITS SUBJECTS. "That thou mayest live." This assertion affords both instruction and encouragement. It plainly intimates the destructive tendency of sin, and the quickening and saving efficacy of Divine grace. 1. The misery of the impenitent is fairly implied. Life's opposite is death: and those who lose the former must endure the latter. The wicked are already legally dead by the condemning sentence of the law, are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins; and except they speedily repent, they will eternally perish. 2. The reward of the righteous is Divinely promised: "That thou mayest live." This gracious promise is very comprehensive. It not merely includes a negative deliverance from a death of sin, but is also expressive of the peculiar excellency and perpetuity of religion as a principle of spiritual and eternal life. We may conclude by observing—I. The necessity of personal purity, without which the external ordinances of Christianity are insufficient and unprofitable. And—2. The exalted character and blessedness of the pious, as participants of saving grace, and heirs of the glorious "inheritance of the saints in light." (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *Circumcision of heart*:—I. THE BLESSING TO BE BESTOWED—CIRCUMCISION OF HEART.

1. The truths which circumcision taught, and the blessings of which it was the pledge, are the birthright of every real child of God. 2. All these blessings are communicated to every genuine member of the Christian Church through Christ. A circumcised Saviour affords a pledge of—(1) A perfect obedience on behalf of His people. (2) The putting away of the guilt of sin. (3) The personal and internal circumcision which distinguishes all the real children of God. 3. God, as sovereign, retains to Himself the application of these blessings. 4. Their extension to the seed of those who partake of this spiritual circumcision is a further illustration of God's sovereignty and benignity towards His people. II. ITS IMMEDIATE RESULT: LOVE TO GOD. 1. The source of this love: God Himself. 2. The ground on which He lays claim to it—(1) His absolute excellencies. (2) His particular relations. 3. Its extent and intensity. We must love God with all our heart. III. ITS ULTIMATE ISSUE; EVERLASTING LIFE. A life of—1. Enjoyment. 2. Activity. 3. Growth. 4. Permanency. Learn—1. The due distinction between the symbolical and spiritual. 2. The blessed character of true religion. (*J. Hill, M.A.*) *The true circumcision*:—I. THE AUTHOR OF IT. "The Lord thy God." He alone can deal effectively with our heart, and take away its carnality and pollution. II. WHERE IT IS WROUGHT. It is not of the flesh, but of the spirit. It is the essential mark of the covenant of grace. III. THE RESULT. "That thou mayest live." To be carnally minded is death. In the overcoming of the flesh we find life and peace. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 11–14. **This commandment . . . is not hidden.**—*Three characteristics of salvation*:—I. CLEARNESS. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." "Ah," you say, "there it comes in again. Whenever we go elsewhere the intellect is exalted." And then you feel that the Church is to be condemned. But a man's brains are not the wisest part of him; there is a great deal about a man that is wiser than his brains. Thank God for that! He has insights, intuitions, sympathies, that are as reliable as the testimony of the senses or the inferences of logic. We cannot know God intellectually. "God is great," as Job says, "and we know Him not." Are we then to be Agnostics? Oh, no! There is another way of interpretation. John Bunyan had a blind daughter. She lived much with him; he was very fond of her. They said he would not let the wind blow on her. She never saw Bunyan; it was impossible for her to comprehend his genius; she was pathetically incapable of reading his books. But will anybody in this place tell me that that blind girl did not know Bunyan? She did not know him visually, did not know him historically or technically, but she knew Bunyan; she knew the man, and looked into his heart. With the heart man knows God. And so Paul says it is by the heart that you are to understand the redemption that is in Christ. You are not to follow it out as a scholar, not to master it as a reasoner, but with the instinct of the soul you are to grasp the love of God in Christ Jesus. "Ah," you say, "it is the old thing over again. Whenever we go to a school, to an institution, it is the old intellect, it is science; but as soon as ever we come here, it is sympathy." What! you understand nature by science? You understand nature a long while before you are a scientist, and a great many people have a wonderful delight in nature who have never had a tincture of science. A little child gets at it, and the poet, the painter, without any technical knowledge or mastery whatever. I tell you, there are thousands of people in this country who enjoy the sunshine—when they get it—but they do not know anything about astronomy. Their heart leaps up when they behold a rainbow in the sky, but they do not know anything about optics. And just as it is with your apprehension of nature, so it is with your apprehension of God, of Christ, of the mercies that have been declared in Christ Jesus to perishing men. Why, there is no greater mistake than for a man to preach Christianity philosophically and theologically. When I look at the sky I can see it is the sky; there is the sun, the moon, and the stars, it is superb. But when I take an astronomical book down and look at the sky they have covered the page with strange figures. There is the Ship, and the Whale, and the Swan, and the Little Bear, and the Great Bear, and a good many other things, and I should not know it was the sky if they were not to write underneath, "This is the sky." II. NEARNESS. All the best things are near us, as your poet tells you,—a man's best things are nearest to him, close about his feet. The things that you cannot get are the things you do not need. I do like that idea of the country people, to the effect that if there is any disease in a neighbourhood there is sure to be a remedy if you have only the wit to find it. They say that the bane and the antidote always

go together. Whether it is a marshy district, a mountain-side or a flowing river, they say that the plant always grows close by that cures the diseases peculiar to the district. Some of our scholars of late years have given a good deal of attention to the sacred books of the Orientals—the Hindu, the Greek, and the Persian—and I daresay have done it with great advantage, but mind you, there is no necessity for us to go to any Oriental oracle for God's last words on the greatest questions. I noticed that a traveller who had been in Algiers said the other day that the natives of the Sahara have a curious idea that Europe is a waterless waste, and the reason why travellers go to the Sahara is that they may find a spring of water. Of course, if they had lived here a little lately they would have known better! What with our flowing rivers, our weeping skies, and our brimming reservoirs, we do not need to go to Algerian deserts for a spring of water. And I tell you that whatever purpose may be served by our great scholars going to Oriental countries, we need not go there for the vital truth that saves; for, blessed be God, here, close by us, is a Fountain of living water, of which, if a man shall drink, he shall never thirst again. You know that when the bad weather comes all our rich people leave us. They go for the good of their health, let us hope, and if you are rich you are pretty nearly sure to have bad health, and then leave us! They go to Algiers, they go to Egypt, they go to Malta, they go to the Nile, they go to the South of France, and they leave us to the fogs of London, and we have to get on as best we may. We have not the leisure nor the resources to go away. But what a lovely thing it is when we come to need a spiritual specific, when we need a remedy for the wrong of our spirits, that we need not cross the sea, for it is here. "Lo, God is here, and I knew it not." He has been talking to you for years, persuading you to a nobler life. Your great difficulty has not been to find Christ, your great difficulty has been to keep Him out. Did you not notice when I read the lesson that the apostle speaks of men who go about seeking to establish their own righteousness, go about restless, dissatisfied, wandering? You never knew a flower go a-gypsying to find the sun. A flower never goes on a voyage of circumnavigation to look after a bee or a butterfly. It never strikes its tent and wanders about looking for the dew. Everything comes to it, and all that the flower has to do is to open its heart and take in the sweet influences of the sky, and everything that you want, the light to illuminate, the grace to save, the power to perfect, the peace that passeth all understanding, the hope that is full of glory—everything is near to you, and all that you have to do at this very moment is to open your heart and take it in. III. FREENESS. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *The basis of belief*:—The writer of this book—the second giving of the law—declares, then, that the law is primarily in the heart of man. It is not outside of him—brought to him; it is within him. As the printer takes the white sheet of paper, on which nothing is written, and presses it against the bosom of the type and lifts it off, and there is written what was on the type, so the heart of man is pressed against the bosom of Almighty God, and on the heart of humanity itself is written the Divine law transferred thereto. And what is true of the law of God is true of the Gospel of God and of all religious truth. Not all the truth that is educed from religion, but all religious truth, is in the heart of humanity, and brought out from the heart of humanity by the providence, the influence, or the ministry of God. We know some things by reason of our external observation. They are not proved to us, they are brought to us by our senses. But all that science can do is to examine, to classify, to investigate, to arrange, to study the phenomena that are thus brought to us by our observation. Our eyes bring to us the trees and the flowers: out of them science makes botany. Our observation brings to us the stars: out of them science educes astronomy. In an analogous method, the soul's eyes bring to us knowledge of great, transcendent facts which lie in the inner world. Theology (which is the science of religion) cannot create them, any more than natural science can create natural phenomena. All that theology can do is to examine, to investigate. We know the facts of the inner life by the inner testimony, as we know the facts of the outer life by the outer testimony. If we do not know, it is because we are dead. If a man does not know there are trees and flowers, he is blind. What he wants is not argument, but an oculist. All that the logical faculty can do is to deal with the facts which the observation without or the observation within brings to our cognisance. It is thus that we know that there is a difference between right and wrong. We know that there is righteousness and unrighteousness, as we know that there is the beautiful and the ugly, the true and the false. This is a fundamental fact. It is not brought to us

by any external revelation; it is not in the heaven above and brought down to us; it is not across the sea and brought over to us; it is within the soul and heart of man—he knows it. Knowing this, he may analyse, he may study, the nature of the difference. This is the anchor-ground of religion—we know that there is righteousness. It is the foundation on which everything else is built. In precisely the same way, the great majority of men have some inward consciousness of God. They have some inward consciousness of a help on which they can lay hold and by which they can be aided. This consciousness does not define God to them. This consciousness of God within us we analyse, we examine, and the result of our investigations, we call theology. It is our creed. It may be right. It may be wrong. As a tree is something different from a definition of a tree, and a flower is something different from a definition of a flower, and a star is something different from the description of a star, so God is different from our theological definitions of God. And we have not to go back four thousand years to get the testimony of Moses that there was a God. Our belief in Christ is something more than a historical or theological belief. We believe in righteousness, and when we read this life of Christ we see there righteousness luminous and eloquent. We believe in God, and as we read this life we see the masked God withdrawing His mask, and letting His own face shine through. The world thought power was Divine, majesty was Divine, justice was Divine, greatness was Divine; and then there came One upon the earth, without power, and without external majesty, and without the signs and symbols of greatness; but He was patient, gentle, heroic, sympathetic—nay, more, He rejoiced to bear not only the sorrows but the sins of others. And when that life was held up before humanity, humanity said, That is the Divinest yet; there is more majesty in love than in power, there is more strength in patience than in force. The heart of humanity answered to the portraiture of Christ, and responded to it. If, when that life is held up before a man, he says, "I do not see anything beautiful in that life; there is nothing in it that attracts me. I would have liked Him better if He had made a fortune; I would have thought more of Him if He had organised an army; I should have some admiration for Him if He had lived the life of a statesman; I do not care for Christ; give me Napoleon Bonaparte," you cannot argue with him. In him is lacking moral life, not understanding. There are not a few in our time who are asking for the evidence of immortality. They study nature, and evolution, and the Scriptures, and buttress, by these methods, a frail faith in immortality. The witness is in ourselves. Not a witness that we are going to live for ever. That is not immortality. The witness is in ourselves that we are something more than the physical organisation which we inhabit. What is the fundamental evidence of immortality? To live a life that is worth being immortal. If we are living in the sphere of the immortal, we know where we are living. We know what we are if we are living in the realm of faith, and hope, and love. We know that this spiritual life does not depend on the physical organisation. So our faith in the Bible, in its foundation, is this: There is that in us which answers to that which is in the Bible. If there is nothing in us which answers to that which is in the Bible, we shall not get a faith in the Bible by argument. We need a new life. The moral life in us responds to the record of the moral life in this Old Testament and this New Testament; and if there is nothing in us which does respond, it is life that is lacking. We are not to go up into the heavens to bring down the message, nor to cross the sea to search for it. In our own hearts we are to find the witness of God. (*Lyman Abbott, D.D.*) *The Bible in itself*:—The Bible is more acknowledged than believed; and where it is believed, in the ordinary acceptation of the word, it seldom gives that decision to our purposes, that spring to our actions, which it ought to give. I. First, THEN, AS TO THE CLOSENESS WITH WHICH IT ADDRESSES THE SOUL, AND THE PATERNAL FAMILIARITY OF ITS STYLE. Why is it that sensible persons rejoice in having a pious, well-informed and accessible neighbour? It seems almost childish to ask. But the answer is, "Because his word is very nigh unto them": because they have the benefit of his counsel, his stock of knowledge, which is freely and benevolently open to them, and they are sure that at all times he will be influenced by upright and conscientious motives in advising them. But there is more than this in it. They look to his example—to his thoughts and sayings carried out in his actions. They are conscious of its influence on themselves and those around them; and they value it. And the nearer it is to them—the more available it also is to them and the more influential; yes, even when through perversity they struggle against its influence. Now, the Word of God is such a neighbour, only of infinite instead

of finite, of Divine instead of human wisdom, goodness, and power of exhortation. It is, as the text says, "very nigh unto us." I do not take the words figuratively. I mean that it is, by its very cast and structure, by its very form and style, nigh to us, at hand to our hearts and minds, to our understandings and feelings. It is nigh as a teacher: it is nigh as a counsellor: it is nigh as a setter forth of example. Consider how largely, too, God speaks in the Bible to man by man; I do not mean merely through the pen of man, for that, of course, is true of all Scripture, but by the speech of man as man, partaking of all our natural views, feelings, hopes, fears. What a familiar tone, without lowering any of its dignity, does the Word of God thus take with us! How "very nigh" it comes to us! II. The second I would take occasion to illustrate from the words "IN THY MOUTH": "The Word is very nigh thee, in thy mouth." It was said that this indicates that the Word of God was to be avowedly our counsellor. We were intended to cite it as commandment and promise to us, as our law and Gospel. This is clearly laid down and exemplified. It will be remembered how emphatically it was charged Joshua: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth" (Josh. i. 8; Psa. cxix. 46). What was the conviction which sustained the martyrs of old in their freedom of speech, in bonds, and at the stake? Was it not this, that it was not their own word, but the Word of God, which they had in their mouths? III. The next clause in our text descends to WHERE THAT POWER CENTRES AND FIXES ITSELF: "And in thy heart." Again the Psalmist is our expounder: "Thy Word have I hid in my heart" (Psa. cxix. 11); "Thy law is within my heart" (Psa. xl. 8). The patriarch Job had counselled this: "Lay up God's words in thy heart" (Job xxii. 22). And here seems to be the place in which we may aptly refer to the application of our text by the same apostle writing to the Romans (chap. x. 6–10). Yes, it is to be heart-work—the Word "in the heart"—else it will be of no purpose that it be in the mouth. But is it so constituted as to speak to the heart, to go to the heart? That is the question to our present purpose. It is; after an inimitable manner, and with inimitable force. So then is the Word of inspiration framed to be embraced by affections though they may be debased, and to dwell in them though they be yet enslaved. IV. Now, in the last place, the emphatical passage which is guiding our reflections asserts that "the Word is very nigh unto us that we may DO IT." This pronounces obedience to it to be the necessary proof of a believing reception of it. Most amply is this test elsewhere recognised in it. "Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven" (Exod. xx. 22), said the Lord to the children of Israel: "Ye shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments" (Lev. xviii. 5). And they said, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Exod. xix. 8). "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only" (James i. 22), is a precept as ancient as the Word itself. But our inquiry is, whether it be invested with any impressiveness, exclusively its own, of a practical tendency. For, if so, in this most important respect, too, the Bible will be its own witness. The answer is, Come and see! Who indeed is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John v. 5.) Now "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. x. 17). I have thus endeavoured to show that the Bible in itself, being an inspired composition, is thereby endued with an influential bearing, close and direct, upon the affections and conduct, as well as on the profession, of all who really study it, or listen to it with any willingness, even a passive willingness, to profit by it. The Bible, as those who are most grateful for it will most readily own, is but the instrument of God's Holy Spirit. And it is not an instrument that will act mechanically on the soul: there must be prayer, continual prayer, as the Bible itself teaches, for its progressive operation upon us. (*W. Dalby, M.A.*) *Plain Gospel for plain people:*— What is meant by these words is this—that the way of salvation is plain and clear; it is not concealed among the mysteries of heaven. But the way of salvation is brought home to us, given to us in a handy form, and laid within grasp of our understanding. It is a household treasure, not a foreign rarity. It is not so remote from us that only they can know it who travel far to make discoveries, neither is it so sublimely difficult that only they can grasp it who have soared to heaven and ransacked the secrets of the book sealed with seven seals. It is brought to our doors like the manna, and flows at our feet like the water from the rock. I. THE WAY OF SALVATION IS PLAIN AND SIMPLE. As saith Moses in the last verse of the previous chapter: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever." 1. I think we might have expected this if we consider the nature of God, who has made

this wonderful revelation. When God speaks to a man with a view to his salvation, it is but natural that in His wisdom He should so speak as to be understood. God, who is infinitely wise, would not give to us a revelation upon the vital point of salvation, and then leave it so much in the dark that it was impossible for common minds to comprehend it if they desired to do so. God adapts means to ends, and does not allow men to miss of heaven from lack of plainness on His part. We expect a plain and simple revelation, because God has made a revelation perfectly adapted for its end, upon which no improvement can be made. You might have expected this from God, because of His gracious condescension. When He deigns to speak with a trembling seeker, it is not after the manner of the incomprehensible doctor, but after the manner of a father with his child, desirous that his child should at once know his father's mind. He breaks down His great thoughts to our narrow capacities: He has compassion on the ignorant, and He becomes the Teacher of babes. 2. We might also expect simplicity when we remember the design of the plan of salvation. God aims distinctly by the Gospel at the salvation of men. It had need be a simple Gospel if it is to be preached to every creature. Moreover, we might expect the Gospel to be very plain, because of the many feeble minds which else would be unable to receive it. What, think you, would become of the dying if the Gospel were intricate and complex? How would even the saints derive consolation in death from a labyrinth of mysteries? We should expect, therefore, from the design of the Gospel to save the many, and to save even the least intelligent of men, that it should be very simple; and so we find it. 3. Furthermore, we see that it is so, if we look at its results. God's chosen are usually a people of honest and candid mind, who are willing rather to believe than to dispute. The Holy Spirit has opened their hearts; He has not made them subtle and quibbling. 4. But I need not argue from what we expect or see; I bid you look at the revelation itself, and see if it be not nigh unto us. Even in the days of Moses, how plain some things were! It must have been plain to every Israelite that man is a sinner, else why the sacrifice, why the purgations and the cleansings? Not a day passed without its morning and evening lambs. Equally clear it must have been to every Israelite that the faith which brings the benefit of the great sacrifice is a practical and operative faith which affects the life and character. Continually were they exhorted to serve the Lord with their whole heart. So that, dim as the dispensation may be considered to have been as compared with the Gospel day, yet actually and positively it was sufficiently clear. Even then "the word was nigh" to them, "in their mouth and in their heart." 5. If I may say this much of the Mosaic dispensation, I may boldly assert that in the Gospel of Christ the truth is now made more abundantly manifest. Moses brought the moonlight, but in Jesus the sun has risen, and we rejoice in His meridian beams.

II. THE WORD HAS COME VERY NEAR TO US. To us all the Gospel has come very near: to the inhabitants of these favoured isles it is emphatically so. If you perish it is not for want of plain speaking. The Word is on your tongue. Moses also added, "and in thy heart." By the heart, with the Hebrews, is not meant the affections, but the inward parts, including the understanding. You can understand the Gospel. That whosoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved, is not a dark saying. III. THE DESIGN OF THIS SIMPLICITY AND NEARNESS OF THE GOSPEL IS THAT WE SHOULD RECEIVE IT. Observe how the text expressly words it—"The Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." 1. The Gospel is not sent to men to gratify their curiosity, by letting them see how other people get to heaven. Christ did not come to amuse us, but to redeem us. His Word is not written for our astonishment, but, "These are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye may have life through His name." Ever has the Gospel a present, urgent, practical errand. It says to each man, "I have a message from God unto thee." Observe again how the text puts its last address in the singular. You can hear it in the plural—"That we may hear it, and do it"; but the actual doing is always in the singular—"That thou mayest do it." 2. As the Word of the Lord is not sent to gratify curiosity, so also it is not sent coolly to inform you of a fact which you may lay by on the shelf for future use. God does not send you an anchor to hang up in your boathouse; but, as you are already at sea, He puts the anchor on board for present use. The Gospel is sent us as manna for to-day, to be eaten at once. It is to be our spending money as well as our treasure. 3. It is not sent to thee merely to make thee orthodox in opinion as to religious matters, although many persons seem to think that this is the one

thing needful. Remember that perdition for the orthodox will be quite as horrible as eternal ruin for the heterodox. It will be a dreadful thing to go to hell with a sound head and a rotten heart. Alas! I fear that some of you will only increase your own misery as you increase your knowledge of the truth, because you do not practise what you know. "That thou mayest do it!" What is to be done? There are two things to be done. (1) First, that thou believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as thy Saviour. (2) The second thing is that thou confess thy Lord with thy mouth. Avow thyself to be a believer in Jesus, and a follower of Him. But let thy confession be sincere; do not lie unto the Lord. Confess that thou art His follower, because thou art indeed so; and henceforth all thy life bear thou His Cross and follow Him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **Very nigh unto thee.**—*Personal religion*:—Much is said of the importance of personal religion, as what alone is pleasing to God, or can secure human salvation. We should know the precise meaning intended in this expression; and my object will be to define it. And, first, an idea is given in the text and the circumstances connected with it—the idea that religion consists in nothing external and formal, nor in any sudden impressions made from without upon the mind. Great revivals may bear away thousands on a torrent of sympathy; but it is all in vain, if men do not retire from the tumult to the silent culture of every right disposition and the quiet practice of every duty; unless they hear a still voice in the soul, and retain a steady warmth there when the noise has ceased and the flames have died away, as on the ancient mount of revelation. But there is yet a stricter meaning in the phrase, "personal religion." Our duties may be divided into two great classes; those belonging to social connections, and those included in the mind itself. To the latter, personal religion has primary respect. But there is a third and still closer view of religion, as a personal thing, to which I invite your thoughts. I believe it is the Creator's design, that religion should be in every soul a peculiar acquisition, and have a solitary, unborrowed character; so that Christians should not be, as we commonly suppose them, mere copies of each other, but possess each one an original character. As the principle of beauty in nature shows itself in no monotonous succession of similar objects, but is displayed in a thousand colours and through unnumbered forms, so should the principle of piety ever clothe itself in some fresh trait and aspect. I say this is the Creator's design. The view I offer may be made more clear by considering some of the proofs of this design. 1. The first proof that each individual should reach a peculiar excellence is, that each has received a peculiar constitution. Use faithfully the materials put into your hands. Despise not nor faint before what in them may seem rugged and unpromising. You shall find nothing in them so rough and hard, that patient toil will not transform it into shapes of wondrous beauty. The house built of light materials, though soon erected, will not stand the blast like that of marble, hewn with long, exhausting labour. Obey the maxim on the ancient oracle, "Know thyself," and you will not fail of that personal religion for which you were made. 2. But again: God's design, that every spirit should reach a peculiar excellence, is seen in the dispensations of Providence, as well as in the facts of creation. While the general fortunes of humanity are the same, every man receives his peculiar discipline from the hand of God. Whatever your state, sickness or health, prosperity or misfortune, view it with no atheistic eye, but accept and use it in the culture of that personal religion for which you were made. 3. Once more: God's design, that every soul should reach a peculiar and unborrowed excellence, appears in the fact that all spiritual exercises, to be genuine, must have a peculiar character. No man can perform any exercise for another in religion. Who, then, in view of these considerations, has made religion a personal thing? He only who knows his own nature, and brings all its powers and dispositions to contribute to the building up of a good character. He only who makes all the dispensations of Providence, all events of joy and grief, conspire to guide him towards his perfection. He only whose spiritual exercises are genuine and sincere, consisting not in profession or appearance, but expressing real convictions, springing from a strong consciousness of want, and moving the deep places of the soul. The man who has formed these habits will continually make progress in strong, unborrowed excellence; and when his time to depart shall come, while earth loses a precious possession, it is not too much to say that heaven itself shall gain a new treasure, inasmuch as it will receive a character of fresh, original strength and beauty. But what is the reliance of those multitudes that make their preparation for another world in no such strict and solemn way as I have described? Every one must die by himself, and go to the great bar alone; and there all the excellence of friends, all the fame of forefathers,

will avail him nothing. The traveller in a foreign land often feels sorely the loss of that character given him by accidental relations at home. Everything adventitious being stripped off, he is thrown back upon his personal qualities, and must stand or fall, according to the judgment passed upon those. Now, how much more surely must such things forsake us, when we proceed, each one in his own time, attended by no companion, leaning on no arm of flesh, a solitary pilgrim, on our last journey to the skies! The heir of rich estates shall leave behind the splendour of wealth and the flattery of retainers. Thus for every one the question at last will be, not of outward connections, but of personal character; not merely what religious institutions have you supported, but how far have you made religion itself a personal thing. (*C. A. Bartol.*) *Instruction nigh at hand*:—A blacksmith's wife in Tennessee recently handed to a physician of the village where she lived a diamond ring, worth £300, which her husband had found in the hoof of the doctor's horse. In paring down the hoof to prepare it for a new shoe his knife touched something hard, which, on being dislodged, proved to be a ring, and the honest man sent his wife with it to the owner of the horse. It appeared that the doctor's daughter had dropped the ring while out riding, and it had lodged between the horse's hoof and the shoe, and had remained there. She had ridden to and fro many times over the road searching for the lost gem, yet it had been near her all the time. The search reminds us of men who go hither and thither consulting priests, and who read theological treatises to find the way to heaven, when all the time instruction is nigh at hand. *Moral teaching nigh at hand*:—In the original constitution of things, it is wisely ordered that happiness should be found everywhere about us. We do not need to have a rock smitten to supply the thirst of the soul; it is not a distant good; it exists in everything above, around, and beneath our feet; and all we want is an eye to discern, and a heart to feel it. Let any one fix his attention on a moral truth, and it spreads out and enlarges its dimensions beneath his view, till what seemed at first as barren a proposition as words could express, appears like an interesting and glorious truth, momentous in its bearings on the destinies of men. And so it is with every material thing; let the mind be intently fixed upon it, and hold it in the light of science, and it gradually unfolds new wonders. The flower grows even more beautiful than when it first opened its golden urn and breathed its incense on the morning air; the tree, which was before thought of only as a thing to be cut down and cast into the fire, becomes majestic, as it holds its broad shield before the summer sun, or when it stands like a ship, with its sails furled, and all made fast about it, in preparation for the winter storm. (*North American Review.*)

Vers. 15–20. **I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil.**—*Life and good, death and evil*:—1. The matter propounded. Life as the end, good as the means leading to life; or else, life, that is, the enjoyment of God; and good, the felicity following it. 2. The manner of proposing. Here is good and evil, life and death, put together, that we may embrace the one and eschew the other. As the poets feign of Hercules when he was young, virtue and vice came to woo and make court to him; virtue, like a sober chaste virgin, offering him labours with praise and renown; vice, like a painted harlot, wooing him with the blandishments of pleasure. The word exciting attention, "See"; I have done this in order to choice; for so it is, ver. 19, "Choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." It is the duty of the faithful servants of the Lord in a lively manner to set before the people life and death as the fruit of good and evil. Our work, the matter of it, and the manner in which we are to propound it to you. I. THE MATTER: WE MUST SET BEFORE THE PEOPLE—1. Life and good. 2. Death and evil. This I shall open in these propositions—First, that there is a distinction between good and evil, vice and virtue. He that doth not acknowledge it is unworthy the name, not only of a Christian, but of a man. Secondly, the matching these two, death and evil, life and good. And here I shall speak—(1) of the suitableness of the connection between them. (2) The greatness of both. (3) The certainty of both these, life and death, as the fruit of good and evil. II. THE MANNER HOW THIS IS TO BE DONE. It must be set forth with all evidence and conviction as to the reason of men, with all earnestness and affectionate importunity to awaken their affections. Use of exhortation. 1. Suffer us to discharge our duty in this kind (Heb. xiii. 22). Would you have us compound with you, and deceive your souls with a false hope, which will leave you ashamed when you most need the comfort of it? Men would live with the carnal, die with

the sincere; therefore suffer us to be earnest with you. 2. The next thing that we exhort you to is to believe the certainty, consider the weight and importance of these truths, that there is a difference between good and evil, that the fruit of the one is death, of the other life; and consider how irrational it is for a man to love death and refuse life. No man in his right wits can make a doubt which to choose. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *Life or death*:—I. THE ALTERNATIVE PLACED BEFORE ALL MEN. Life or death—good or evil (Psa. cvi. 4, 5; 1 Cor. ii. 9; John xiv. 1, 2; Isa. xxxv. 10). 1. A choice must be made. Death decides for us when it comes (Luke xvi. 22, 23; Heb. ix. 27), and it may come in an hour (Mark xiii. 35, 37). 2. The undecided are really decided against God: therefore against "life and good" (John v. 40, iii. 19; 2 Tim. iii. 4, 5; Prov. i. 24–27). 3. The choice, however made, is final and eternal. On the one hand life, love, and happiness for evermore (John x. 28). On the other death and evil eternally (1 Sam. ii. 9; Matt. v. 41). II. THE RESULT OF DECISION FOR GOD (Heb. vi. 18–20; 1 Tim. vi. 12). 1. Life (ver. 19). First temporal, as under the law (Exod. xx. 12); then life eternal (John x. 10, xiv. 19; Heb. vii. 16); for Christ, "who is our life," is eternal (Col. iii. 4). 2. Love (ver. 20; 1 John iv. 8, 16). "God is love," therefore if God's life be in us, as John x. 28, then God's love must also be in us. 3. Obedience, "that thou mayest obey His voice" (ver. 20). Yielding to our Father the obedience of love (2 Thess. i. 8; Rom. i. 5; 1 Pet. i. 2; James i. 23). 4. To dwell in the land of promise (ver. 20). A shadow of a better land—of an inheritance that fadeth not (John xiv. 1, 2; 1 Pet. i. 4, 5). All these blessings resulting from decision for God and good are not for ourselves only, but also for our children (ver. 19; Acts ii. 39). III. THE POWER OF THIS NEW LIFE. "He is thy life" (ver. 20). He is "the resurrection and the life" (John xi. 25, 26). He is "the Prince of Life" (Acts iii. 15). With Him is "the fountain of life." Hence Christ Himself is the power of the new life (1 John v. 12). He alone can by His Spirit quicken (John v. 26). If therefore we desire the life that never fails, that cannot be dissolved (Heb. vii. 16), we must come to Him, that, like St. Paul, we too may say, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 19, 20; John xiv. 6; Heb. x. 19, 20; see also vers. 11–14, and Rom. x. 4–9). (*H. Linton, M.A.*) *The good choice*:—Moses said these words first to Israel. But God says them to each of us, to every one who has a conscience, a sense of right and wrong, and sense to see he ought to do right and shun wrong. I have heard a great man call this the granite on which all other spiritual beliefs rest, and so it is. It is taken for granted and built on in all God's revelation, in all Christ's atoning work, in all the Holy Spirit's operation. This is a choice we must each make, not, like the fabled one, for once, but day by day, continually. It is the resultant of all our life. I. THIS DAILY ENDEAVOUR TO BE HOLY, TO BE LIKE CHRIST, WILL BE A SPRING OF INTEREST WHICH WILL NEVER FAIL, WHEN OTHER INTERESTS FAIL WITH OUR FAILING SELVES. II. If we choose well, WE MUST END WELL. If we grow here fit for a better place, pure, kind, hard-working, unselfish, we cannot be a failure. III. It is not for ourselves only, either here or hereafter, that God bids us choose good. WE HAVE GOT IN OUR KEEPING THE WORLDLY PEACE OF OTHERS. IV. LOVE TO THE REDEEMER, WHO DIED FOR US AND LIVES FOR US, IS THE GREAT SPRING OF ALL RIGHT-DOING. Only by the grace of God can we choose good. (*A. K. H. Boyd, D.D.*) *The law of God sets before us good and evil*:—I. AS A MATTER OF INFORMATION, TO SHOW US THE REAL DIFFERENCE THAT IS BETWEEN THEM, AND THE DIFFERENT CONSEQUENCES WHICH THEY PRODUCE. 1. The Word of God sets before us this difference, in so plain convincing terms that, though we may be perverted by evil, yet it is hard for us to be mistaken. Though God has sent us into this wilderness of a world, where there are many intricate passages to perplex us, and much variety of objects to distract our thoughts, yet He has not left us without a guide, nor Himself without a witness. He has given us His Word, as a perfect rule, by which we shall certainly be tried at last: and therefore by this rule we ought to try our own actions now. 2. Conscience, when it comes to speak for itself, as it will sometimes do, is as convincing as any revelation, and as obliging as any law; it is a witness that will not be silenced, and a judge that cannot be suborned. It is this that makes us look upon some actions with abhorrence, and upon others with delight; and according to this inward relish or disgust so we learn to discover the difference between good and evil, and find that every action of man has an indelible character stamped upon it, by which its value is easy to be known. II. AS AN OBJECT OF YOUR CHOICE. When things of so very different natures are set before us, one would think it an

easy matter to be determined. If our notions of good and evil are too weak to work upon us, and hold our minds for some time in suspense; yet surely life and death admit of no dispute. One is the sole delight, and the other the utter abhorrence of our nature, and a powerful instinct within us always inclines us to the better part. What indefatigable pains do we take to gratify our foolish lusts, when with half the pains we might learn to live much happier without them. What violence do we use upon ourselves, to lay our souls and consciences asleep, for fear the beautiful prospect of life should tempt us to be virtuous, or the dismal apparitions of death should affright us from our vice, when half that force employed against our vanities and corruptions would suffice to take heaven itself by violence, and make us for ever happy. (*C. Hickman, D.D.*) *Choose death or life*:—The central thought of the text lies in the word choose. The Israelites are on the point of entering the promised land, and Moses entreats them to choose between idolatry and the religion of Jehovah. A similar alternative is before us now. I. THE CHOICE IS PERSONAL AND FREE. These words which were addressed to Israel as a people, applied to each individual in particular; for the individual alone is free and responsible. To each human being the command is given, "Choose." The power of making such a choice is ours, else the words of the text had in them no meaning. It has been said that religion enthrals conscience and thought, and that it must be rejected in the name of liberty. That is false. The Bible, on the contrary, reveals and holds out to us that glorious liberty of the children of God which is inseparable from holiness; and freedom of choice is affirmed in its pages as the primary condition and starting-point of our enfranchisement. There can be no more energetic appeal than that contained in the word "Choose!" But the Bible never separates the idea of liberty from that of responsibility. The liberty of which it tells is that which takes the Divine law as its binding yet not coercive rule. Such a religion is, more than any other, fitted to form strong characters and free nations. Together with human liberty, the Bible teaches that mutual dependence which unites all the sons of Adam, and which we call human solidarity. A thousand influences, over which we have no control, act upon us; yet, however numerous and powerful these may be, they do not affect our liberty. We can resist them, and it is our duty to do so. Again, the Bible speaks of supernatural powers that are brought to bear upon our will, but without enchaining or destroying it. There is an enemy that prowls around you; but if you resist him he will flee from you. You have a God who loves you, but He will not save you against your will. You have a Saviour, but if you will not open your hearts to Him, He will not enter them by force. In relation to God and in relation to Satan, you are free. There is one thing, however, that you are not free to do: you cannot refuse to make your choice. And this choice, whether good or bad, is the one essential business of life. II. THIS CHOICE IS TO BE MADE BETWEEN TWO OPPOSITE COURSES. "I have set before you life and death." Jesus Christ speaks of the broad and of the narrow way: no middle course or third way. This classification does not exclude certain differences of degree which morally exist between men. In the broad as well as the narrow way various stages may have been reached; but there are only two courses leading to two opposite ends. At this hour you are standing at the junction of these two ways, but henceforth you shall be walking in one or the other of them. Your destinies will vary infinitely, but all outward diversities are as nothing in comparison of the moral difference which shall result from your personal choice. Each day you will take a step further in either of these two paths; the greater your progress, the riper shall you be for salvation or for condemnation. Whilst this choice is still possible and comparatively easy, choose life! III. THIS CHOICE MUST BE MADE TO-DAY. In the life of individuals as well as in that of nations there are certain decisive moments that determine their future. Such a time was it when Adam was subjected to the trial that involved issues of such moment for the human family. He chose. He disobeyed, and by the disobedience of one man sin entered into the world. We find such another hour in the life of Jesus. He is tempted in the wilderness. He chooses, and by the obedience of one man we have eternal life. Would you know what a moment of blind folly may cost a family, an individual, a nation? Remember Lot casting a covetous eye on the plain of Sodom; Esau selling his birthright; the Jews shouting: "Not this man, but Barabbas"; Felix putting off his conversion, "Go thy way, and when I have," &c. Would you know, on the contrary, how fruitful in blessing may a moment of fidelity be? Remember Abraham obeying the Divine call; Moses preferring the affliction of his people to the delights of sin; Solomon praying for wisdom; the disciples of Jesus leaving all to follow Him.

Will you follow the first of these examples or the last? Choose. IV. THE WITNESSES OF YOUR CHOICE. "I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day." The witnesses that surround you are not against you but for you. They are parents, pastors, the Church, the angels. And who can tell if among the invisible witnesses there are not some for whom you mourn! These witnesses might one day rise up against you and exclaim: "We were present on such a day, at such an hour, in such a place; the exhortations of the preacher were pressing; the Christian life presented itself to this young man, with its duties, its joys, its sorrows; Jesus was there, ready to forgive the past and—that young man WOULD NOT!" To this outward testimony will be added that of your own conscience: "That is true," it will say; "you might have decided for God." Oh! how overpowering shall be the confusion of the hardened sinner! There is but one way of escaping it. Choose life to-day. V. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS CHOICE. "Blessing or cursing, life or death." Many will find these words too stern. They are Divine. They are logical. The sinner cannot be blessed, else God would cease to be holy. There are two ways open before you. If you choose the straight way you shall be blest in your youth, in your manhood, in your profession, in your family, in your days of joy and of sorrow, in eternity. If you choose the broad way, whatever be your lot here below, you shall not be blest. What shall you become when Christ shall say to you: "I know you not!" Choose life! (*Bonnefon.*) *The service of God chosen*:—I. THE SERVICE OF GOD IS EVER A MATTER OF FREE PERSONAL CHOICE. Surely irresistible grace is contrary to Scripture and experience. It reduces religious service to mechanism, and destroys that free-willingness which gives worth to all religious actions. True, that exemption from compulsion is not release from obligation, and that it is man's bounden duty to serve God. To man God's grace should be indeed irresistible. Yet if man turn from God the responsibility is with man, and not God. II. Further, the address of Moses demonstrated that the SERVICE OF GOD IS BASED UPON REASONABLE CONSIDERATIONS. If they turned from God, then upon them would fall His judgments, but if they cleaved unto Him they would know His blessing. Religion is "our reasonable service," and careful thought ever leads to the conclusion that to choose God is —1. To obey conscience; 2. To follow wisdom. (1) To choose God is to obey conscience. Woe be to man if the voice of conscience he disregards. (2) To choose God is to follow wisdom. That is demonstrated in the history of Israel, and of every nation and individual. If self is served, server and served are ruined (Prov. iii. 17). (3) To choose God is to express the gratitude we should feel towards Him. III. Lastly, the address of Moses WAS MADE FORCEFUL BY HIS NOBLE PERSONAL EXAMPLE. No desire to please the people led him to qualify his words. The experience of a long life spent in the service of God had convinced him of the glory of God's service, and from that conviction he would not swerve. (*C. E. Walters.*) *Choosing life*:—I. THE SOLEMN ALTERNATIVE WHICH IS OFFERED TO EVERY SOUL. Now, young people come into life, and as you look forward, it has roseate tints, and there is a natural buoyancy in living by impulse, which is one of God's best gifts to you, and which I would be the last man to try to darken; but what I would press on you is that life, as it is opening before you, is no pleasure-ground, still less a factory, or a shop, or a warehouse, least of all a place for dissipation. But that it is set before every one of you—a tremendous "either . . . or," which you have to deal with whether you will or no. You have the alternative of, on the one hand, a life of sense, and on the other hand a life of spirit. Is it to be sense, or is it to be spirit? Is it to be the lower needs of your nature gratified, and the higher ones starved? Is it to be licence or self-control,—which? To gather it all into one, the choice which every son of man has to make is between self and God. Now, mind! it is an alternative; that is to say, you cannot ride the two horses at once. There are plenty of us that try to do that. If we have religion at all it must be the uppermost thing in us, and must rule us. If it does not, we do not really possess it in any measure. Further, let me remind you of the issues which are wrapped up in this sharp alternative. Remember my text: "life or death, blessing or cursing," said Moses. You say, "Oh, I surely may indulge in these natural requirements of my corporeal nature." Yes! But in electing whether you will live for sense or spirit, for self or God, make clear to yourself that the one is life, the other is death; the one is blessed, the other is cursed. Eternal issues of the gravest sort hang upon your relation to Jesus Christ, and you cannot alter that fact. II. THE NEED FOR A DELIBERATE ACT OF DECISION. An enormous number of us do not live by the deliberate choice of our wills, but are content to take our

colour from circumstances, like some lake that, when the sky above it is blue, is all sparkling and sunny, and when the great clouds are drawn over the azure is all dull and sad. So hosts of us have never once deliberately sat down to look realities in the face, or said to ourselves, in regard to the deepest things of our lives, "I see these alternatives before me, and here I now, deliberately, make my choice, and take this, and reject that." Circumstances rule us. There are fishes that change the hue of their spots according to the colour of the bed of the stream. How many of you owe your innocence simply to not having been tempted? How many of you are respectable people for no other reason than because you have always lived amongst such, and it is the fashion of your circle to be like that? Now, you cannot get away from the influence of your surroundings, and it is no use trying, but you can determine your attitude to your surroundings. And you can only do that by bringing a resolved will to bear upon them as the result of a deliberate choice. Now, remember that any man who lives by anything else than deliberate choice and resolve is degrading himself by the act. Have you not got reason, judgment, common sense—call it what you like—which is meant to be your pilot? And have you not got a conscience which is meant to be your compass? And what becomes of the ship if the pilot goes to sleep and lashes the helm right away up on one side, and puts a cover over the binnacle where the compass is, and never looks at the chart? Let me remind you, still further, that unless you make for the great things of life, the deliberate choice of the better part, you have in effect made the disastrous choice of the worse. The "policy of drift" always ends in ruin for a nation, for an army, for an individual. To go down stream is easy, but there is a Niagara at the far end. You choose the worse when you do not deliberately choose the better. I do not suppose that any of you have deliberately said to yourselves, "I do not mean to have anything to do with Jesus Christ," but you have drifted. You have not resolved that you will have something to do with Him. Not choosing, you have chosen. It is that widespread indifference, and not either intellectual or any other kind of opposition to Christianity, that I for one am afraid of, and into which so many of you have fallen. And so there is need for decision. "If the Lord be God, follow Him; and if Baal, then follow him." III. SOME REASONS WHY THAT DECISION SHOULD BE MADE NOW. 1. I pray you to make choice of Jesus Christ for your Saviour and your King now, because this is your plastic, formative time. The metal is running fluid, as it were, out of the furnace when you are young. Its gets hardened into heavy bars when you get a little older, and it needs a great deal of hammering in order to bring it into other shape than that which it has taken. 2. Let me remind you, too, of another reason for immediate decision—that you need a Guide. Your desires, longings, passions are strong. They were meant to be. Your experience is little. You need a Guide; you will never need Him more. Take Him now. 3. Another reason is, because you will save yourselves from a great deal of pain, and sorrow, and disappointment, and perhaps remorse, if you now begin your life as a disciple of Jesus Christ. 4. And the last reason that I suggest to you is this, that every moment that you put off decision, and every appeal which you leave unobeyed, will make it harder for you if ever you do choose Jesus Christ. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The choice of life:* —What an awful alternative—if it were true! Who, where are they who would not choose life, if the choice were really offered them? The martyr has chosen death, but we shudder at the cruel times which have demanded such self-sacrifice; the devotee has chosen death, and chooses it to-day, but we pity his fanatic faith; the maniac has chosen death, but only because bereft of reason; the suicide is the remaining exception—and his example "proves the rule." But this alternative is not true. Life and death, in this physical sense, are not matters of rational choice. We are started on our journey, and spontaneously and rightly we do all that we can to keep in the way until the bodily machinery either breaks down at some weak point, or wears out generally, and all our endeavours are at an end. Duty and instinct compel us in the same direction; there is no choice here. Let us pass from the physical to the spiritual, which is also the scriptural sense. I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose the inner life of goodness on which the blessing is pronounced, and not the inward deadness which destroys your true being. And again we say—What an alternative, if it were true! What a crowning choice—if it were indeed ours! But actual life—spiritual life—this true inward life, cannot be chosen or cast aside at once and for ever, with our eyes wide open, and our minds made up, and our wills prepared to take all the consequences—the blessing or the curse. For us life does

not concentrate its chances and hazard all its prospects at one only point; it is not even a series of points, at each of which this chance is renewed. It is not a single, nor yet an occasional, game of "touch and go." Rather is it an ever-varying, many-winding river, its course now this way, now that; its waters muddy or clear, shallow or deep, at one time swollen and turgid, at another peacefully gliding through quietest scenes—but never at rest, always advancing resistlessly on, and often luring us by its motion into drowsy content. We wend our way through "the everydayness of this week-day world" attended by associations, painful or pleasant, which touch us at every point, surrounded by interests of varying import, and more numerous than we can name, with our plans in one direction, then new hopes in another—before, behind, on either side is this ever-shifting scenery, this crowded landscape of circumstance, through which we float for evermore—this is what life means to us. Where is there space, or chance, or stopping-point for that single choice between two things only, as though all the rest would vanish at a word? This is a very plausible plea, especially for busy men. But however admissible in a general sense, there are several cases which it does not cover. There are times in human experience when the vast difference between these two only things is brought so bluntly before men—when that unlovely blank between what has been and what might be seems to cover so completely their whole horizon, that they are impelled to "pull up," to face a choice of two conditions, and to decide abidingly for one or the other. Then the single, final alternative—"life or death"—is placed before them, and it is, moreover, felt to be absolute and exclusive. When Paul heard the voice say, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" and straightway transformed himself from persecutor to preacher; when Augustine was stayed by the childlike tones chanting, "Tolle, lege," and opened at words which to him were salvation; when Bunyan was suddenly stopped at his game by the warning appeal in his heart, "Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell?" this difference was realised, this alternative accepted. But if these times, in which we are compelled to face an inner alternative, are rare, there are other times, happily less rare, when we are not compelled, but quietly prompted to face our choice. We are not forced, but asked, to look into our hearts. Our better self makes a secret suggestion that all there is not as it might be, that the lower self is allowed far too much prerogative, that one can only triumph by the other's fall, and that, in fact, we must know our own mind and say deliberately which it shall be. "Choose," whispers the secret voice: "shake off all seeming, put away your coloured spectacles of prejudice, strip yourself of every proud thought, whether of wealth or position or ability, lay aside your little worldly triumphs, pray to be shown your transgressions as they truly are; and then look at yourself in the light of heaven, as a child of God." Such a time, surely, is the opening of a New Year. It is no mere return of habit, but a resistless instinct that invests this time with a special significance. A New Year, if it means anything beyond an altered almanac, means new life to every one amongst us, but it will mean that only so far as we are faithful to our inner light. It may mean, and ought to mean, the awakening of holier desires, the birth of higher ideals, the death or defeat of a whole army of little sins and shallow ways, the oft-convicted traitors to our true being. It may be—let it be—"a secret anniversary of the heart" on which we take stock of ourselves, clear our accounts if we can, and start afresh. It is indeed a charge upon our weak wills that we need such outward promptings to attempt utterly the thing that is in us to be. The true Christlike life is an even progress towards perfection, not a series of jumps, or starts, or sudden ascents. But so long as our very weakness itself cries out for these helps, so long as these times of renewal are offered to us, let us not pass them by without hearing their message. "Take them lest the chain be broken, ere thy pilgrimage be done." (*F. K. Freeston.*) *Freedom of man's will; or, the great decision:*—Two orders of men are generally fatalists—the eminently successful and the supereminently unfortunate. The former regard themselves as the children of destiny, for whom a place in the temple of the ages has been prepared, and without whom its glory would be incomplete. To this class belong the Cæsars, the Napoleons, and Mahomets, whose wonderful abilities were only equalled by their complacent confidence in their own guiding star. In the ranks of the second are to be found many of those unhappy ones who have failed in life's battle, with whom everything has fallen out badly, and who have steadily gone from loss to loss, or from crime to crime. Such people seem to derive comfort from the belief that they are the victims of fate; that they too would have

succeeded if the Supreme Power had only been propitious; and that, consequently, circumstances or something else beyond their control, and not themselves, are to blame for the disasters attending their career. It is not to be denied that there is much in the philosophical speculations and the religious creeds of mankind to encourage such opinions. In India, in Greece, in Arabia, as well as among Western nations, the most ancient faiths affirmed the doctrine of necessity. Back of gods and men, and above them, in the Greek mythology reigned the unspeakable and unchangeable Fates, to whom the oppressed, like Prometheus, could appeal, and on whose final decisions everything from Olympus down to Hades absolutely depended. Buddha, also, and with him the wisest Eastern sages, regarded the race as practically in bondage to a Sovereign Soul, and as sweeping along a pre-ordained course to its final goal. He had no logical place in his system for will-freedom, and was as far from doing justice to its phenomena as Spinoza or Mr. Buckle. This, however, is not the doctrine of the Scriptures. The Bible not only directly affirms the moral liberty of God's intelligent creatures, but its entire revelation proceeds on the assumption that they are free to choose. Eden's garden and the Fall lose their significance unless Adam was free. So when we come to study redemption the Bible does not hesitate to teach that its efficacy depends on the volition of the sinner, and that he is really able to accept or reject eternal life. On what other hypothesis can such passages as these be explained: "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil." The material universe which He has made cannot but obey His law. From age to age, and through all dispensations, the sun rises and sets, the stars peep out at night, the seasons come and go in their order, and the tides of the sea throb and surge with an exactness and regularity which precludes the possibility of derangement. Not one of these ponderous orbs or these Titanic forces has chosen the service which it renders. Blind, unknowing, uncaring, winds and waves below, and planet and constellation above, apply themselves to their allotted work. No wonder that a heart like the heart of God, full of fatherhood and brotherhood, should yearn to develop among these enthralled masses an order of service different from theirs—a service that should be freely offered and which should be preferred beyond all others. The guilty must choose to be saved, and must choose to be saved in the way acceptable to the Almighty. Doubtless this interpretation of the Bible will to some minds be regarded as incompatible with what it seems to teach concerning God's sovereignty. Unquestionably there is an appearance of contradiction; and yet I do not think it is as serious as many suppose. We know that even among men a great many wills come into play, and that frequently they coincide without infringing on each other; and why may not the same be possible on the part of the Creator and the creature? But when we meditate on this subject we should remember that we tread the border-land of two worlds—the natural and the supernatural—and that, like all other domains, it is next to impossible to tell how and where they flow into each other. Scientists find it difficult to trace the exact boundaries between the vegetable and animal kingdoms; they cannot tell exactly where the one ends and the other begins, and neither can they explain how and why they interpenetrate each other. Psychologists are equally perplexed. They are constrained to admit the relations between mind and brain to be inexplorable. No one can successfully deny the movement of history in which the Divine has been manifest in the human—as in the Incarnation, the founding of Christianity, and in those surprising providences which have vindicated right and confounded wrong—and yet no one can explain their harmony with the human, or prove that they in any way intrenched upon its freedom. The meeting-place is veiled from us. Neither can we see in the application of redemption where these twain meet, how they interact on each other, and how they do so without limiting the power of the one or controlling the freedom of the other. Contact and interpenetration here is like contact and interpenetration in other departments of God's wonderful cosmos, an unsearchable mystery, a mist-covered ocean, where only wreck awaits us if we insist on braving its darkness. Were not the Scriptures as decisive as they are on this general subject, I should be inclined to the doctrine already set forth by considerations of the weightiest character. What these are I shall briefly set before you, that you may be delivered from the illusions of modern fatalism, if unhappily you have been caught in their wiles. I would first of all remind you that some of the profoundest philosophers, such as Kant, Jacobi, and Hamilton, contend that consciousness is the most reliable witness of what we are, and that it testifies to our moral freedom. Analyse your own nature, and see whether it does not confirm the report which these thinkers give of its dignity. Do

you not find that it discriminates between the voluntary and the involuntary, and that it attaches responsibility to the one and irresponsibility to the other? Let any man look within himself, and he will hear many voices declaring that he is free. Conscience, as it reproves him for wrong-doing, says, or there is no meaning in its voice, "Thou art free"; Remorse, dogging his footsteps and driving him from place to place, thunders in his ear, or his terror is absurd, "Thou art free"; Deliberation, as it ponders two paths and balances the reasons in favour of each, whispers distinctly, or this care and forethought are superfluous, "Thou art free"; and Desire, as it sways him and develops in his soul fierce contests with convictions of right or of prudence, proclaims above the battle, "Thou art free!" Thus he has the witness in himself, and if he doubts its reliability he may easily satisfy it by appealing from within to without. What says society, what say its leaders, what its members? Hegel, having taken a comprehensive view of humanity as revealed in history, gives utterance to the profound sentiment: "Freedom is the essence of spirit, as gravitation is the essence of matter." That is, there could be no spirit without freedom, even as there could be no matter without gravitation. Society is organised on this principle. Its laws, its duties, its penalties, its censures and its praises, all centre in and derive their significance from the firm belief that whatever else man may or may not be, he is free. And the course of history, which influenced the thought of Hegel, confirms this judgment. It is seen that no mechanical theory, no doctrine of averages and of hard necessity, can be reconciled with its singular and eccentric movements, or its surprising and revolutionary changes. This Mr. Froude has clearly and admirably set forth in a paper reviewing Mr. Buckle. In opposition to that gentleman's so called "Science of History," Froude reminds us that the first result of real science is the power of foresight, that when knowledge on any subject is systematised we can as accurately speak of its future as of its past. Thus, because astronomy is a true science, we can calculate eclipses and anticipate the most striking occurrences. But, he argues, when we come to the field of human endeavour certainty disappears, and we cannot tell what man will do to-morrow. He insists that such phenomena as Buddhism and Mohammedanism could not have been foretold, and he adds: "Could Tacitus have looked forward nine centuries to the Rome of Gregory VII., could he have beheld the representative of the majesty of all the Cæsars holding the stirrup of the Pontiff of that vile and execrated sect, the spectacle would scarcely have appeared to him the fulfilment of a rational expectation or an intelligible result of the causes in operation around him." We cannot anticipate the future of the world. Our soberest calculations may be deranged in a moment, and some unforeseen circumstances may frustrate all our expectations. Why? Why can we not as accurately predict the social convulsion that may be as the eclipse which cannot fail to be? Because in the domain of the stars there is no volition, while in that of history liberty of will is a controlling force. The freedom of man's will is vitally associated with the idea of morality. They are inseparable. Kant has exerted himself to show that they stand or fall together, and enters with so much zeal upon his task that he sometimes makes them appear synonymous. He says, "We have now reduced the Idea of Morality to that of Freedom of Will," and in another place he writes, "Autonomy of Will is the alone foundation of Morality." Hamilton likewise, following the sage of Königsberg, declares that "virtue involves liberty"; "that the possibility of morality depends on the possibility of liberty; for if man be not a free agent he is not the author of his actions, and has therefore no responsibility—no moral responsibility—at all." In opposition to this position we find Spencer (*Data of Ethics*, p. 127) asserting that "the sense of duty or moral obligation is transitory"; and he has certainly allowed no permanent place for it in his system. Now, I agree that we find here one of the strongest reasons for upholding the doctrine of free will. Under the declining sense of its truthfulness the colour and meaning are disappearing from the idea of duty. Indeed, we rarely hear a word now about "duty," but endless talk about rights. We are ready to fight and contend for "rights"; but, alas! our zeal for "duties" groweth cold. I insist on this doctrine, as it is the key to man's greatness. It shows that he is endowed with a wonderful and real power of conquering what to the faint-hearted seems the unconquerable. Hamilton teaches that man "is capable of carrying the law of duty into effect in opposition to solicitations, the impulsions of his material nature"; and he declares that liberty is "capable of resisting and conquering the counteraction of our animal nature." Kant likewise says: "The instincts of man's physical nature give birth to obstacles which hinder and impede him in the execution of his duty.

They are, in fact, mighty opposing forces which he has to go forth and encounter." What a grand conception is here presented of the will striving with inner enemies and overcoming their hostility. And if it can subdue inner foes, can it not resist and repel outer antagonists? I do not claim that your volition can change your nature, but I do claim that you are accountable for it, as your volition decides whether your nature shall be brought within the influence of heaven's grace or not. More volition never built a ship, or a house, won a battle, or accomplished a voyage; and neither did it ever sanctify a soul. There is a difference between "will" and "power." The "will" to be saved is of man, "the power" is of God. But whosoever wills cannot fail to find the power; for He has promised to confer on all such the water of life freely. For your choice, then, you are accountable, and your eternal destinies hang on your volition. (*G. Lorimer, D.D.*) *The offer of life and death*:—I. THE TWO COURSES SPECIFIED. "Life and good, and death and evil." We shall take the latter first; that is, "death and evil." Now, we observe —1. That this is the course in which all men are involved by nature and practice. 2. This state is one of extreme wretchedness and misery. 3. It is only the shadow of the woes which await the sinner in the eternal world. Now, that is the dark side of the text. Let us look at the other course specified, "life and good." 1. Life is presented to us. For we are already dead, and life is the first essential blessing we need. Now, the life offered to us is—(1) Freedom from the sentence of death. (2) Regeneration of spirit. 2. Good is also presented to us. The favour of God the chief good; the love of God in the soul; the good providence of God; the good promises of God; the good enjoyments of God; and last of all, in eternity, pure unmixed good for ever and ever—fulness of joy. II. THESE THINGS ARE SET BEFORE US. 1. Where are they set before us? (1) In the Word of God. In the Law, in the Prophets, the Gospels, Epistles, &c. (2) In the ministry of the Gospel. See the great commission: it is to publish these great truths. (3) In the influence of God's truth on the conscience. Do you not feel an internal something speaking to you, &c., warning, &c.? 2. For what are they set before us? (1) For our solemn consideration. (2) For our own determination and choice. APPLICATION—1. The way of life and good is easy and free to you all. Repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. God is the willing Saviour of all men 2. None can perish but those who willingly choose death and evil. Every lost soul has destroyed itself. 3. The necessity of now choosing life and good. Did you ever know the diseased man to choose death; the condemned man, the shipwrecked man, &c.? (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *Life*:—I. WHAT IS LIFE, AND WHO IS THE AUTHOR OF IT? 1. The life spoken of here is threefold. (1) Natural, which consists in the union of the soul and body. (2) Spiritual, which consists in the union of Christ and the soul. (3) Eternal, which consists in the communion of the soul and body with the Triune God through eternity. 2. God alone is the Author of this life, for—(1) It is He who hath made us, and not we ourselves. (2) He infuses the Spirit of His Son in our hearts, and He is life. (3) By His grace and power He supports and brings believers to eternal life. II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THIS LIFE? 1. Knowledge. 2. Feeling. 3. Tasting. 4. Movement. 5. Speech. 6. Hearing. All faculties exercised in God's service. III. HOW ARE WE TO OBTAIN SPIRITUAL AND ETERNAL LIFE? 1. Through Jesus Christ. 2. Patient continuance in well-doing, watching, praying, fasting, &c. (*W. Stevens.*) *The blessing and the curse*:—These words were spoken by Moses to all the Israelites shortly before his death. He had told them that they owed all to God Himself; that God had delivered them out of slavery in Egypt; God had led them to the land of Canaan; God had given them just laws and right statutes, which if they kept they would live long in their new home, and become a great and mighty nation. Then he calls heaven and earth to witness that he had set before them life and death, blessing and cursing. If they trusted in the one true God, and served Him, and lived as men should, then a blessing would come on them and their children, on their flocks and herds, on their land and all in it. But if they forgot God, and began to worship the sun and the moon, then they would die; they would grow superstitious, cowardly, lazy, and profligate, and therefore weak and miserable, like the wretched Canaanites whom they were going to drive out; and then they would die. Then he says—I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. He called heaven and earth to witness. That was no empty figure of speech. If you will recollect the story of the Israelites you will see plainly enough what Moses meant. The heaven would

witness against them. The same stars which would look down on their freedom and prosperity in Canaan had looked down on all their slavery and misery in Egypt, hundreds of years before. They would seem to say—Just as the heavens above you are the same, wherever you go, and whatever you are like, so is the God who dwells above the heaven: unchangeable, everlasting, faithful, and true, full of light and love, from whom comes down every good and perfect gift, in whom is neither variableness nor shadow of turning. Do you turn to Him continually, and as often as you turn away from Him: and you shall find Him still the same; governing you by unchangeable law, keeping His promise for ever. And the earth would witness against them. That fair land of Canaan whither they were going, with its streams and wells spreading freshness and health around; its rich corn valleys, its uplands covered with vines, its sweet mountain pastures, a very garden of the Lord, cut off and defended from all the countries round by sandy deserts and dreary wildernesses; that land would be a witness to them, at their daily work, of God's love and mercy to their forefathers. The ruins of the old Canaanite cities would be a witness to them, and say—Because of their sins the Lord drove out these old heathens from before you. Copy their sins, and you will share their ruin. Does not the heaven above our heads, and the earth beneath our feet, witness against us here? Do they not say to us—God has given you life and blessing? If you throw that away, and choose instead death and a curse, it is your own fault, not God's. Look at the heaven above us. Does not that witness against us? Has it not seen, for now fifteen hundred years and more, God's goodness to us, and to our forefathers? All things have changed: language, manners, customs, religion. We have changed our place, as the Israelites did; and dwell in a different land from our forefathers: but that sky abides for ever. The same sun, that moon, those stars shone down upon our heathen forefathers, when the Lord chose them, and brought them out of the German forests into this good land of England, that they might learn to worship no more the sun, and the moon, and the storm, and the thunder-cloud, but to worship Him, the living God, who made all heaven and earth. And shall not the earth witness against us? Look round upon this noble English land. Why is it not, as many a land far richer in soil and climate is now, a desolate wilderness; the land lying waste, and few men left in it, and those who are left robbing and murdering each other, every man's hand against his fellow, till the wild beasts of the field increase upon them? Why but because the Lord set before our forefathers life and death, blessing and cursing; and our forefathers chose life, and lived; and it was well with them in the land which God gave to them, because they chose blessing, and God blessed them accordingly? In spite of many mistakes and shortcomings—for they were sinful mortal men, as we are—they chose life and a blessing; and clave unto the Lord their God, and kept His covenant; and they left behind, for us their children, these churches, these cathedrals, for an everlasting sign that the Lord was with us, as He had been with them, and would be with our children after us. And then when one reads the history of England; when one thinks over the history of any one city, even one country parish; above all, when one looks into the history of one's own foolish heart: one sees how often, though God has given us freely life and blessing, we have been on the point of choosing death and the curse instead; of saying—We will go our own way, and not God's way. The land is ours, not God's; our souls are our own, not God's. We are masters, and who is master over us? That is the way to choose death, and the curse, shame and poverty and ruin; and how often we have been on the point of choosing it! What has saved us from ruin? I know not, unless it be for this one reason, that into that heaven which witnesses against us, the merciful and loving Christ is ascended; that He is ever making intercession for us. Yes. He ascended on high, that He might send down His Holy Spirit; and that Spirit is among us, working patiently and lovingly in many hearts—would that I could say in all—giving men right judgment; putting good desires into their hearts, and enabling them to put them into good practice. (*C. Kingsley, M.A.*) *Choosing life or death*:—I. THE PERSONAL AND FREE CHARACTER OF THE CHOICE TO BE MADE. The religion of the Bible is the religion of liberty. I know of no bolder affirmation of the free will than that which is contained in my text. But the Bible never separates the idea of liberty from that of responsibility; the liberty of which it speaks is that which takes the law of God as its rule, not coercive but obligatory, and of which we shall have to give an account on the judgment day. II. FREE AND PERSONAL

CHOICE IS BETWEEN TWO PARTIES, BETWEEN TWO OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS. Two, said I; not three, nor a greater number. "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing." Thus also the Lord Jesus speaks of two ways, the narrow way and the broad way; and in the picture He draws of the last judgment He calls some "blessed," and the others "cursed"; nowhere does He speak of an intermediate class. This moral dualism runs through the whole of Scripture. III. NOW IS THE TIME TO CHOOSE. Would you know how much an hour of blindness, of impiety, may involve of malediction for an individual, a family, a nation? —Remember Esau selling his birthright, and afterwards shedding useless and bitter tears on the consequences of his shameful bargain; the Jews crying in blind fury, "Not this man, but Barabbas"; the governor Felix, placed by providence in contact with St. Paul, and putting a stop to conversation which troubles him, by the plea in bar so common and fatal, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." Would you know, on the contrary, how fruitful in blessings may be one hour of fidelity, one generous and heroic choice?—Remember Abraham, obedient to the Divine calling and deserving to be called "the father of the faithful"; Moses, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." The decisive hour has come. IV. THE WITNESSES OF THE CHOICE. Our text tells us of witnesses, sublime though speechless, heaven and earth: "I call heaven and earth to record against you," says the Lord. Faithful to the Spirit of the New Covenant, we shall tell you that the witnesses you are surrounded by are not against you, but for you. Those witnesses are, in the first place, parents who ardently desire to see their children walk faithfully in the ways of the Lord; ministers, whose greatest joy would be to see you walking in the ways of piety and truth; the Church that presents you to God as its fondest hope; the holy angels who rejoice over every sinner who repents and gives himself truly to God. V. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE CHOICE. "Blessing or cursing; life or death." If you choose life you shall be blessed. You shall be blessed in your youth and in your manhood; blessed in your career, be it long or short, obscure or brilliant; blessed in your family, present and future; blessed in your successes and in your reverses; blessed in your joys and in your griefs. At the end Christ will place you amongst those to whom He will say, "Come, ye blessed of My Father," &c. If you do not choose life, I know not what may be your lot on earth. One thing is certain—you shall not be blessed. What will you do when, to all those who will not have done the will of His Father, He will say, "I know you not"? It does not behove me to decide what will be the end of such a way, the result of such a choice, but you have heard those two words of my text, "Cursing! Death!" Choose life! (*C. Babut, B.D.*) *The decisive choice*:—I. "I CALL HEAVEN AND EARTH TO RECORD AGAINST YOU," says Moses. This was no idle rhetorical formula. The open sky over his head was the witness and pledge of permanence, the sign that in the midst of perpetual change there is that which abides. The earth at his feet had been given to man that he might dress it and keep it, and bring food for his race out of it. The one said to man, "Thou art meant to look above thyself. Only in doing so canst thou find endurance, illumination, life." The other said, "Thou art meant to work here. Thou must put forth an energy which is not in me, or I will not yield thee my fruits." II. But Moses says, "I HAVE SET BEFORE THEE LIFE AND DEATH," &c. There is no hint given to the Israelite upon which he can build a dream of security; he is warned in the most fearful language against forgetting the things his eyes had seen. But all the terrible warnings and prophecies of what he and his descendants may do hereafter imply that he is in a blessed condition, and that they will be. III. And therefore he goes on, "CHOOSE LIFE." Say deliberately to thyself, "I do not mean to give up the ground on which I am standing. God has placed me on it; all that is contrary to God will not prevail against God, and therefore need not prevail against me." "Choose life" is still the command at all times. IV. The great reward of choosing life is, "THAT THOU MAYEST LOVE THE LORD THY GOD," &c. The growth of love and knowledge is always proclaimed in Scripture as the reward and prize of a man who walks in the way in which God has set him to walk, who chooses life, and not death. V. "THAT IT MAY GO WELL WITH THEE AND WITH THY SEED AFTER THEE." The great lesson that the fathers are to teach their children is, that God will be the present and living Guide of each succeeding race as much as He has been of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) **For He is thy life, and the length of thy days.**—*The God of our life*:—I. UPON WHAT ACCOUNT IS GOD SAID TO BE OUR LIFE? 1. God gives life. He is the Author

and Fountain of our being. All living creatures have their life from God (Acts xvii. 25; Psa. civ. 30); but especially man (Isa. xlii. 5), who is the object of His peculiar care. 2. God maintains life. Life in man is like a lamp kindled, which wastes and consumes, and will be soon extinguished, without fresh supplies of oil. And this supply is from God, who doth not only light the lamp at first, but keeps it burning. How liberal is God to the benefit and comfort of man; other creatures die that we may live. 3. God preserves life. He doth not only maintain and keep it from inward wasting, by daily supplies, but doth also preserve and keep it from outward dangers in daily protections. He holdeth our soul in life (Psa. lxvi. 9). His daily visitation preserveth our spirits (Job x. 12). 4. God sweetens life. We have not only life from Him, but all the comforts of life, which tend to make life pleasant and delightful; and without which it would be little better than a continuing death. 5. God prolongs life. Long life is very frequently in Scripture spoken of as a special gift of God. 6. God restores life. Elijah, Elisha, Christ, and His apostles, have done it. And He will do it for all mankind at the general resurrection at the great day (John xi. 25; 1 Cor. xv. 42; 1 Thess. iv. 16; John v. 26–28). 7. God is the sovereign Lord of life. The life of all the creatures is entirely at the disposal of the living God. II. THE EXPLICATION and illustration of such truths as those doth all aim at the application of them. What fruit, then, may we gather from this tree of life? 1. The greatness and goodness of God. If God be our life, then He is a great God. 2. The wisdom and happiness of the saints. Their wisdom, to choose this God to be theirs, and to be solicitous to keep themselves in His favour. 3. The evil of sin, and misery of sinners. Exhortation—1. Own and acknowledge your dependence upon God. 2. Make God your friend, and be very careful also to keep yourself in His love. (*Matthew Henry.*)

CHAPTER XXXI.

VERS. 1–8. **Joshua, he shall go over before them.**—*Joshua:*—Joshua's taking possession of the land of Canaan is the figure of our entering into the promised kingdom on the descent of the Holy Ghost. But the courage of Joshua speaks of something far more deep and extensive than this; as the apostle in explaining Joshua and Canaan as the true rest to be found in Christ, adds, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help." It is not, then, of boldness in battle that God would teach us by Joshua, but it is altogether a figure of something else, of a brave courage in Christ; for "we wrestle not against flesh and blood," but against spiritual powers; our weapons are not carnal, but mighty through God. Such is our Joshua, who hath taken upon Him not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. But as for all warfare the requisite is courage, so Joshua represents in particular that courage of heart which is a great ingredient in the "faith that overcometh the world," and in that "perfect love" which "casteth out fear." Joshua speaks not of human virtue and affection, but of power; not of man's disposition, but of victory in God. And what is this but of God in Jesus Christ? The one lesson, therefore, is that in all, and beyond all, His saints, we are to look to Jesus, remembering that He is God as well as man; that it is altogether different to that of looking to the example of any man, on account of His Godhead, His atonement, the gift of His Spirit; we look to Him and have power, we have power by looking; nay, by looking, as the apostle says, we "are changed into the same image, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." His example, indeed, seems in some sense to set us afar off; for He is all perfection, we full of imperfections. He is at such an infinite distance that we cannot approach Him. But the name of Joshua brings us near; for by that we know He has power to put His own mind into us, and to make us like Himself. And the reason of this is, because we can never look to Him merely as our Example without remembering at the same time that He is in manifold ways unspeakably more. It is when we believe in Him as our God that His example itself becomes profitable to us in a way perfectly different from any example of good men. (*Isaac Williams, B.D.*) **Be strong and of a good courage.**—*Strength and courage:*—Strength and courage are inseparable, and the injunction to be strong is nearly equivalent to the injunction to be courageous.

"Be strong" can only mean, "Rally the strength you have." "Be courageous" means, "Concentrate your strength against danger or difficulty." Courage, then, is the application of manly force in confronting obstacles. Courage is strong-heartedness. Etymologically, it suggests that the heart is the innermost centre, "the rallying-ground," of the forces of moral manhood. Of one who does not or cannot rally his resources of strength we say that he is discouraged, disheartened, has lost heart. We are dealing, therefore, with a rational rather than with an animal quality. It is a virtue in so far as it involves a rational, self-determined effort in confronting the contradictions of life. It is a quality of character rather than a condition of nerve or muscle. It is the courage of intelligence and freedom, the courage of self-determined moral purpose, the courage of moral strength, and it has many forms. 1. Such courage is pre-eminently the courage of a rational faith. In every struggle, physical, political, moral, whatever it may be, a man needs good footing. The moral athlete who makes a successful stand against the difficulties of life must have a good standing-ground. Faith gives us footing. Scepticism is a sapper and miner. It takes the ground from under our feet. In any difficulty or danger the mind must be in a positive attitude of confidence. There is nothing but moral imbecility in perpetual distrust or doubt. An over-sceptical habit of mind involves moral paralysis. Faith is vantage-ground for the battle. A man may find a certain standing-ground in himself. Well, God has put strength into manhood, and He gives men ample opportunity to test it, and a man ought to be able to believe in himself. To distrust one's self in a pinch is to invite defeat. It is not safe to suspend one's self in the uncertainty of self-distrust. One must trust other men also. No one can stand alone. We are obliged to believe in our fellow-men. A surrender of faith in God and providence would leave the world in the imbecility of despair. And I question if there be not in all rational faith in personal manhood, in fellow-men, and in the world in which we live a certain latent or implicit confidence in a higher power and in a moral order that has a rational and moral beginning and goal. Certain it is that when men begin to think ethically and rationally they are obliged to postulate the reality of God as a basis of confidence in the ultimate victory of life. This courage of faith in God is the old Hebrew courage. The same stress is put upon faith in the ethics of the Christian life. And this is no insignificant thing as related to the moral conflict of life. Faith is a fundamental virtue in the battle of life, because it is only unto faith that we shall add a manly courage. It is the God of redemption that is committed to us and will see us through the struggle of life. 2. It is the courage of rational moral conviction. Conviction involves the action of truth in the conscience. It gets lodged there in the way of moral conquest. Moral truth is well intrenched only when it is intrenched in an intelligent conscience, and the only valiant soldier in its army is the man who carries it about with him in his moral conviction as a man carries his life and force in the blood of his heart. The man who is morally mastered by the truth is himself masterful. Moral realities do not get very deep root in the soil of the mind alone. Convince and persuade a man, and he may not remain convinced or persuaded. The truth must get below the mind and below emotion, that only transiently dominates the will. But it has won a great victory when it gets hold of the conscience and wins men to its intelligent service. When a man invests with moral sacredness what he holds for truth he will maintain it against all comers and will advance with it in the face of all opposition. Men do not sacrifice much for nor stand by what they hold indifferently. But the quality of correctness is not enough. Living things hold by the root, and they need good soil. Rational moral soil is the only soil that is fit for the truth one holds with tenacity and defends with courage. The passive virtue of humility is indeed a Christian virtue, but it is a humility that should be matched by the most heroic and aggressive boldness. That was a brave Church, that Apostolic Church. They did not stop to balance dangers against duties. They spoke and acted and took the consequences, and they won a victory unmatched in human history. It was not temporising, it was not political trimming, it was not partisan cowardice, that founded Christianity. Strength is what this world is looking for, and what it is sure to respect. Not too bold, not shallow audacity; the sober courage of strong moral conviction—this is Christian courage, and this is what the world needs to-day. 3. A rational devotion also lies at the foundation of strong and courageous character. Devotion implies an object to be attained, upon which one concentrates his energies. There is a goal to be reached. It lies beyond all intervening obstacle, difficulty, or danger, and to reach it one concentrates effort upon it. Any sort of

devotion, even the commonest, involves a rallying of one's personal forces about a central and commanding purpose to reach the desired object at all hazard and despite all difficulty. And here is the rallying-ground of courage. In fact, what is courage but devotion to a desired object in the face of all obstacles? Now, all concentrated and persistent effort in the work of life must rally about this central purpose, and this purpose will successfully meet all difficulty that lies scattered along the entire life-path. Such a life must be a strong and courageous life. It is the life of one who puts the object of his striving far over and beyond the farthest mountain peak of earthly difficulty, and who has an inclusive and commanding purpose to go over, mastering every barrier till he compass the object of his life. This mighty purpose to reach the goal of life is a species of devotion. The moral life of the world is dependent on personal relations. Some form of piety is necessary to morality. It is pre-eminently true in the higher domain of religion. The constraint of Christ's love is the heart of Christian devotion. And what is Christian courage but the soul's trusting and loving self-preservation for the tasks of life, in face of all difficulty and obstacle and danger, out of a sentiment and principle of gratitude to Him who is of right the Lord and Master of life? 4. To a rational faith, conviction, and devotion there should be added a rational hope as the crown and completion of a strong and courageous Christian life. What we strive for must be attainable in some measure and form at least, or strength and courage fail. If hope should fail the battle of life would end. All over the field men would drop and rise no more. The powers of manhood would fail, and the end would be a universal wail of despair. Therefore you hope, and therefore you have courage for the battle of life. And there is always an abundant stock of hope on hand for the world at large. All over the world we see its conquests. The heart of man in a struggling life is demonstration that good lies behind and before. It is God's witness. That it is possible amid life's mountain barriers is intimation that good is the law of life and good its final goal. What a world it is, and what a life is this human life! If this small fragment of it were the end it sometimes seems as if no power of last defeat could crush the energies of this strange struggling creature, man. It is clear enough that the world was built for conquest by him, even material conquest. But it was built, too, for moral conquest, and what we need is hope for moral conquest. To conquer the world is not to conquer the untrained forces of the soul, nor to conquer sin, nor to conquer death. We are conquering the material world in this nation of ours, but materialism and animalism and sordid selfishness are conquering us. But not all men are conquering in the battle of material life. The notes of discontent all about us are bodeful. They may portend the desolation of a coming tempest. Many give up the struggle. What shall we do with the baffled? After all, is it not the larger number with whom the world goes ill? And there is a little joyous section of this struggling world, weighted with the common sorrows, but joyful still, that for almost nineteen centuries has been singing the song of hope to keep the weary brotherhood and sisterhood in heart. The literature of hope is very rich. And it suggests how much the song of hope is needed in the bafflings of life. The true goal of life is "where beyond these voices there is peace." We need a Divine hand to tear away the darkness of life and disclose the crown that glitters for the conqueror amid the glories of the perfected kingdom of redemption. The song of the redemption hope is a new song for earth. It is this hope of eternal redemption that holds the soul to its heavenly inheritance. Courage for the moral conflict of life, courage to meet the power of sin and of the last great enemy, is the courage of Christian hope. (*L. O. Brascow, D.D.*) **The Lord, He it is that doth go before thee.**—*The new year:*—I. "THE LORD." Lordship, kingship, governorship—call it what you may, the central authority of any order of government embodies a truth which is universally desired, a power which can hold in control other powers, and round which they can centre. I can see along the untrodden path terrible threatening, defying, resisting foes within and without. Sorrow, suffering, sin, and temptation; a prosperity when we may forsake Him, an adversity when we may forget Him. Is there any one who can lord it over all these? It is in the finding of that lordship that the happiness, the safety of the year is ensured. Keep that word, "The Lord," before you all through the year; take orders from Him for the daily march; report yourself to Him each night. The Lord reigneth! II. "HE IT IS THAT DOTH GO BEFORE." You have a year before you. You cannot live without thinking of the future. The error lies in thinking of to-morrow without thinking of to-morrow's God. God has gone before you. III. "HE WILL BE WITH THEE." Out of providence grows

the desire of fellowship—companionship. I do not doubt that God finds some pleasure in being with us; but surely the greater pleasure should be in our being with Him. He knows that, and He meets our wishes for fellowship. IV. "HE WILL NOT FAIL THEE." How little do we believe in the omnipotence of God, which backs all His love! We cannot exhaust His resources. In no possible position can we be placed where He cannot assist us. V. "NEITHER FORSAKE THEE." Then fear not, neither be dismayed! (*A. D. Spong.*) *Courage, with God as our leader*:—Think what a difference it makes to men in meeting difficulties, privations, dangers if their eyes are set on a leader whom they know and trust, even though he be but a man like themselves. I shall always remember a description given to me once of a body of English troops charging up a slope under heavy fire to gain a strong position. As they charged on, and when the enemy's fire had begun to tell seriously on them, they came for a while under shelter; the losses and the danger ceased, and they stopped to pull themselves together. But then came the real trial; beyond the shelter there was another open stretch of slope, fully exposed; they had found out what advancing under fire meant, and they saw it would be worse than ever on there. It was one of those moments that bring out in men the natural love of life, that make it hardest to keep straight and firm. It was the starting again that went so much against the grain; starting again, with the experience of past loss, to the certainty of more loss—no one quite liked to begin,—and they were already staying under the shelter a bit longer than was needed; it seemed almost as if they might refuse to come out and go on. And then, by one man's act, through God's grace, it all came right again; a young officer sprang out on to the mound at the edge of the shelter, and with a cheer the men followed him unfalteringly. It was the lead they wanted, the sense of some one going before them, the sense of having someone to follow loyally—unto death if need be. That call to follow one we trust, that sense of one who goes before us: it is a wonderful help for courage and perseverance, when things are hard with us. And there is one fight in which we all want it, in which we all may have it: the fight, the very real, stiff fight against our temptations to do wrong. "The Lord, He it is that doth go before thee." It is hard to face being laughed at, being scored off, being looked down on for doing what is right. But Christ has gone before us on that road; He was despised, mocked, laughed at; we have a Leader to follow when we are tried that way. It is hard to put up with injustice, to forgive quite heartily one's enemies; but He has gone before us there: He prayed for the men who were driving the nails through His hands on Calvary. It is hard to give up pleasures, to say "No" to one's natural desires, to keep one's body in subjection; but He has gone before us in that: He fasted forty days; He spent whole nights in prayer upon the hills; He had nowhere to lay His head. It is hard to bear pain patiently, or to go on with the same weary burden day after day; but we can never have so much to bear as He bore. It will be hard, perhaps, to face death rightly, calmly, when the time comes; but on that mysterious journey also He has gone before us, and thousands upon thousands of His soldiers have quietly and fearlessly advanced to die, because they were sure He would not fail or forsake them. It is wonderful to think of the great army that has followed, that is following Him who has gone before upon that way of truth and loyalty and patience. Some in one sort of work, and some in another, they have set themselves to pass on up that rough, weary road; stumbling often, it may be, but not falling out; sticking to it day after day, to keep a pure unselfish purpose, and to do their duty. Men and women, rich and poor, young and old, soldiers, students, statesmen, labourers, men of business: temptation comes on them, and weakness hinders them, and past sins, it may be, shame them; but they seek His pardon and they humbly long that anyhow He will not cast them off, or leave them desolate in the darkness. And so they struggle on, nearer, it may be, all the while than they at all imagine, to Him who goes before them; surer year by year of His constant care and love for them; surer that for all the roughness and steepness there is no way like His: no other way in which a man so grows in manliness and strength, so learns to love both God and man. (*Bishop Paget.*) **Fear not, neither be dismayed.**—*No fear*:—Glorious words of encouragement to a people going forth to meet opposing forces, terrible foes, and unknown dangers. I. THE ASSURER. "The Lord." The very word implies kingship, governorship, authority, power. II. THE ASSURANCE. Three promises. 1. Prevision. "Go before." 2. Fellowship. "Be with thee." 3. Constancy. "Will not fail." III. THE INFERENCE. Our Father never sleeps, never tires; and if He is all that He promises, how can we fear? (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 10–12. **Thou shalt read this law.**—*The public reading of the law*:—Directions here given for public reading of the law. 1. To be read at "the feast of tabernacles," the greatest of all their festivals, when, harvest and vintage being completed, they had most leisure to attend to it. This feast was celebrated in "the year of release," the most proper time that could be chosen for reading the law; for then the people were freed from debts, troubles, and cares of a worldly nature, and at liberty to attend to it without distraction. 2. The law was to be read by Joshua, chief governor, and by others who had the charge of instructing the people. Thus Joshua himself read to the congregation (Josh. viii. 34, 35); Josiah and Ezra (2 Chron. xxxiv. 30; Neh. viii. 2). But Jehoshaphat employed priests and Levites (2 Chron. xvii. 9). This public reading was in part the duty of the king, the Jews say, who began it, and that afterwards it was taken up by the priests. 3. The law was to be read in the hearing of all Israel (ver. 11). (1) Pious Jews who had copies doubtless read in their own houses. (2) Some portion was read in the synagogue every Sabbath day (Acts xv. 21). (3) In Jehoshaphat's time it was read by his command in the different cities of Judah, and the people were instructed out of it by the priests and Levites, but (2) at every year of release the law was read, not only publicly to all the people, but throughout, and read from an original copy, which served as a standard by which all other copies were tried. 4. The whole congregation must assemble to hear the law. Hence learn—1. That when our debts are remitted, and we are brought into the liberty of God's children, we shall then delight to hear and obey our delivering Lord in every call of duty. 2. The Word of God, being our only rule, should be read and known of all; how cruel the attempt, and how contrary to the Divine will, to keep it locked up from the people in an unknown tongue, and to establish ignorance by law! 3. Nothing should engage us more solicitously than the early instruction of our children in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, which alone can make them wise unto salvation. (*J. Wilson.*)

Ver. 13. **That their children . . . may hear, and learn to fear the Lord.**—*Early piety*:—I. GODLINESS IN CHILDREN IS ACCOUNTED BY CHRISTIANS GENERALLY TO BE EXTRAORDINARY, OR AT LEAST UNCOMMON; AND PERHAPS THERE ARE BUT FEW GODLY CHILDREN. Compared with the number of children who are blessed with godly parentage, and taught in Christian schools, who are present when the public ordinances of Christ's Church are administered, the children who manifest true piety are certainly not many. If our observation be accurate, Christian parents and teachers and pastors do not, with sufficient confidence, look for, or expect to find, godliness in children. If we employ those means which are divinely ordained for the conversion of human beings in our efforts on behalf of children, why should we not expect immediate and early results? II. IT IS TRUE THAT THE SIGHS OF A CHILD ARE NOT HEAVY; THEY ARE NOT, AS IN THE SOUL OF MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD, OCEAN WAVES, BUT THEY ARE RATHER LIKE THE RIPPLE UPON THE WATERS OF SOME SHELTERED LAKE. It is true that the emotions of a child are not the hardy blossoms of a sturdy fruit-tree, but the tender and delicate bloom of a tree that has as yet yielded little more than promise of fruit. Nevertheless, that blossom, which winds will tear and shake, is the outflowing of life; that ripple on the lake shows susceptibility in the water towards its sister element, air; and those dewdrop tears show that earth and heaven, man and God, are working upon the child's nature. If the understanding of a child be less enlightened, the soul is more sensitive; if the judgment be less formed, the conscience is more tender; if there be but little strength of purpose, the heart is less hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. III. If decided piety be within reach of a child, HOW IS IT THAT THE ABSENCE OF GODLINESS FROM CHILDREN DOES NOT MORE DISTRESS US, AND THAT PIETY IN CHILDREN IS NOT MORE OUR AIM AND HOPE, AND THAT IT IS NOT MORE FREQUENTLY THE BURDEN OF OUR PRAYER? Why, as some, always suspect a child who professes to be godly? Godly children are God's workmanship, created by Jesus Christ, and if we would be the means of leading children into true godliness, we must bid them look to our Saviour Jesus. I say to Him, not at Him. There is a vast difference between these things. The child looks at the King when he goes to see him proceed in state to open the Parliament; but he looks to his mother when he relies on her for the supply of his daily wants. (*S. Martin, D.D.*) *Susceptible periods of life*:—In fresco painting it is necessary to throw on the colours while the plaster to be decorated is damp. The rule is, "Work while the moisture remains"; hence the need in this particular branch of art of a definite plan of well-mixed colours, and of a swift and steady hand. The principle has a wider application. There are

times when the human character is especially susceptible to impression, such as the period of early youth, the occasion of a great sorrow, a great joy, or a great change —times when the influence you exert will be received readily and sink deeply. Would you stamp lives and hearts around you with the beauty of heavenly patterns, make them glow with the hues of heavenly grace? Be sure of your plan, have your materials ready, and paint while the plaster is wet. (*W. A. Gray.*)

Ver. 14. **Thy days approach that thou must die.**—*The approach of death:*— I. THOSE WHO LIVE CHIEFLY FOR THIS WORLD TRY NOT TO THINK OF DEATH, BECAUSE THEY WOULD LIKE NOTHING BETTER THAN TO LIVE ON HERE FOR EVER. But the shutting of our eyes to the approach of death does not make him turn away from us, and therefore our wisest and safest course is to prepare for his coming, whether it be near or far off. II. DEATH DOES NOT OCCUPY THAT PLACE IN THE WORD OF GOD WHICH IT DOES OCCUPY IN THAT RELIGION OF OURS WHICH PROFESSES TO BE DERIVED FROM THE WORD OF GOD. In the New Testament death is simply treated as an abolished thing. The second coming of Christ is always, in the exhortations of the New Testament, substituted for death. Death, in the eye of faith, is not the end, but the beginning, of all; it is the commencement of the "life that knows no ending." III. IF CHRIST HAS ROBBED DEATH OF ITS STING, IT DOES NOT BEHOVE US TO LOOK AT DEATH AS IF HE HAD NOT DONE SO. Let us view the approach of death as something which He means should bring us nearer to Him. We must pray Him, since the days approach in which we must die, that death may not find us unprepared. And as we look forward to the future we must commit our way and ourselves into His keeping. (*F. E. Paget.*) *Nearing the end*:—There is no day fixed; it is an "approach" that is spoken of. The word may therefore be addressed to every man well advanced in life. There is a period at which the road becomes a slope downwards, and at the foot of the hill is the last earthly resting-place. This is the way of God. He tells them that the end is "approaching." Now and again He seems to cut them off suddenly as with an unexpected stroke; yet perhaps the suddenness is in appearance rather than in reality. To be born is to have notice to quit; to live is to die. Every sin takes out of us some portion of life; we cannot have an evil thought without the quantity of life within us being diminished. We cannot think a noble thought, or find a free way in our hearts for a sublime impulse, without increasing the sum-total of our life—without beginning our immortality. Thus is a man stronger after prayer than before; thus does every sweet and holy hymn send a thrill of gladness through the soul that sings. Let every man take notice that he must die. From a literary point of view that is a pitiful commonplace; but from the point of view of actual experience and all the issues of death it is a sublime and an appalling announcement. But Moses must die. We have never associated the idea of death with Moses. He has always been so strong: the camp never halted because of his ill-health; he was always at the head; his voice was clear and mellow; his eye was bright and darting, and yet so genial—as if it could not conceal the smile that was in his heart. Yet the strongest trees yield to silent time; the mightiest strength bows down itself in weakness and trouble: Samson dies, Hercules becomes but a figure in ancient history; there is no man who abideth for ever. Now that Moses is walking up the mountain, we cannot but think of the life-long hardship he has endured. Read the history of his association with Israel, and say if there is one "Thank you" in all the tumultuous story. Does one man speak out of the host and say, In the name of Israel I give thee thanks? We do not know some men until we see them wandering away from us. What a strain there was also upon the religious side of his nature! He had no recreation: the bow was never unbent; he was always being called up to hear the Lord communicate some new law, some new charge or address. To his veneration a continual appeal was addressed. What wonder if his face wore the aspect of solemnity? What wonder if his eye was alight with the very splendours he had beheld? Then is Moses not to see Canaan? Moses would not care now to see any land flowing with milk and honey. He shall see the upper Canaan—the happy land where the flowers never wither, where the summer is guaranteed to last eternally. Thus God educates men. Moses goes upon the mountain to die. It is well; such a man ought to die upon a mountain. The scene is full of symbolism; it is quick with spiritual suggestiveness. Men may die upon mountains if they will; or men may perish in dark valleys if they like. To die upon the mountain is to die into heaven. The place of our death, as to its significance and honour, will be determined by the life we lead. We die just as we

live, and, so to say, where we live. Moses lived a mountain life: he was a highlander; he lived on the hills, and on the hills he died. May it not be so with us? By well-done duty, by well-endured affliction, by well-tested patience, by complete self-surrender, by continual imitation and following of Christ, we may die on some lofty hill, cool with dew or bright with sunshine, the point nearest to the skies. To die at such an elevation is to begin to live. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Vers. 22–30. **Moses therefore wrote this song.**—*The last song:*—The old man whom we have known so long dies singing. All men should die so; all men may so die; God is not sparing in His gift of song or privilege of music; music was in His purpose long before speech; all things are to end in a great song. There are songs without words; there is singing without articulate and audible voice: we may sing with the spirit and with the understanding. Blessed are they who, before going up to Nebo to die, sing in the valley, and, so to say, pass out of sight with their singing robes around them; to this end we are invited in Christ, and in Christ this is the only possible end—namely, triumph, song; the rapture of expectancy and the inspiration of hope. The song was to be a "witness" for God "against" the children of Israel—say, rather, as between Himself and the children of Israel. Witness does not always imply accusation; it quite as frequently implies confirmation, approval. It embodies in itself a sure testimony, strong because of its indisputableness. Moses wrote the song "the same day." We speak of our efforts of genius and the time required for the elaboration of this or that attempt to serve the sanctuary; but if you can write a song at all you can write it at once. Herein the great French poet's dictum is true: said one to Victor Hugo, "Is it not difficult to write epic poetry?" "No," said the great genius of his day—"no, easy or impossible." What are the characteristics of a great song? 1. The first most noticeable characteristic of this song is that it is intensely theological. The keyword is GOD—in His majesty, in His compassion, in His righteousness, in His tears—God is a species of incarnation thousands of years before the event of Bethlehem. 2. Another characteristic of the song is its broad human history. Read the thirty-second chapter from end to end, and you will find it a record of historical events. Facts are the pedestals on which we set sculptured music. We must know our own history if we would know the highest religious arguments, and apply with unquestionable and beneficent skill great Christian appeals. The witness must be in ourselves: we must know, and taste, and feel, and handle of the Word of Life, and live upon it, returning to it as hunger returns to bread and thirst flies swiftly to sparkling fountains. When you are doubtful as to religious mysteries, read your own personal record: when metaphysics are too high or too deep, peruse facts, put the pieces of your lives together, see how they become a shape—a house not made with hands, a temple fashioned in heaven. The days are not to be detached from one another, they are to be linked on and held in all the symbolism and reality of their unity. 3. Hence, another characteristic of the song is its record of providence. God found Jacob "in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about," &c.; and then comes all the detail of providential care and love, and all the sublime appeal arising out of the undisputed goodness of God. We do not need providence to be proved by wordy argument, for we ourselves are living illustrations of God's nearness, and greatness, and love. We must never give up this arm of our panoply; this weapon is a weapon strong and keen; we must in the use of it testify what we have seen and known, and we must magnify God by facts that have occurred within the limits of our own observation and experience. Every Christian man is a miracle; every Christian life is a Bible; every devout experience is a proof of the possibility of inspiration. 4. The song is also accusatory: "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked; thou art waxen fat," &c. When a song accuses, how terrific is the indictment! Who expects a song to double back upon the singer and accuse him of ingratitude, presumption, or forgetfulness? Our hymns are witnesses for us and against us; our very music has some plain things to tell us; even in song we do not escape justice. The songs of the Bible are not mere sentiments melodised and turned into a species of æsthetic luxury: Bible songs are Bible theology, Bible statutes, Bible precepts, Divine interventions and providences. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Farewell song of Moses:*—A most noticeable and outstanding feature of this great song is its series of pictures for the popular imagination, and its long array of vivid figures, to school and chasten a stiff-necked people. There is nothing here of abstract reasoning or cold analysis. Everything is presented in concrete

form as to a nation still in its spiritual childhood. This is the educative song of Israel. In tone it is both tender and terrifying. Its imagery, sometimes winning, sometimes startling, lends itself to warmest expostulations and appeals. How graphic and memorable are its emblems! The Divine words are at the outset likened to the gentle rain and dew; God Himself is the Rock, for stability and faithfulness; His training of Israel, like the eagle with its fledglings; the people, an intractable and stubborn ox resentful of the yoke; their apostate conduct, that of a faithless wife; the Divine love glowing and gleaming about them like the fire of spousal jealousy, and His indignation like an armed host—these and other figures follow in quick succession, many of them derived from Israel's wilderness experiences. For it is the poetry of the desert that dominates the song. But while the imagery is derived from the past, the song itself reaches out to the future. It is, in fact, a prophetic outline of Jewish history, designed to lodge in the nation's heart the solemn truth that

"Sorrow tracketh wrong,
As echo follows song."

This is the primitive or moral prophecy, the type and canon of all future prophetic work, as Moses' first song was the type of all that was to be spiritually poetic. (*A. H. Drysdale, M.A.*) *The farewell ode:*—For poetic sublimity, for devout piety, for holy expostulation, and for solemn warning, this farewell ode has never been surpassed, and it furnishes an incidental proof of the fact that, unlike most other men, Moses continued, to the very end of his long life, to grow in those qualities of imagination and fiery enthusiasm which are usually regarded as the special characteristics of youth. There is in it a wondrous combination of the strength of manhood with the experience of old age, and of the imaginative force of youth with the wisdom which increasing years supply. Nor is this all: there is a marvellous interblending of the various relationships in which Moses stood at once to God and to the people. He praises Jehovah with the fervour of a seraph, and he pleads with the people with the tenderness of a father. He deals with national subjects in the spirit of a statesman, and warns of coming doom with the sternness of a prophet. Now the strains are soft and low, as if they came from the cords of an Æolian harp stirred by the breeze of a gentle summer eve; anon they are loud and stormful, as if some gust of passionate intensity had come sweeping over his spirit; now they are luminous with the recollection of God's mercies, and again they are lowering, as if laden with the electric burden of God's coming wrath. Of course, in all he spoke as he was moved by the Holy Ghost; but, as the Spirit used not the vocal organs only, but the soul of the man, this ode conclusively proves that if Moses had not been the grandest lawgiver and statesman of his nation, and even of the world, he might have been one of the noblest poets. It shows, too, that there was in him the exceedingly rare alliance of a mind which was alive to the importance of the minutest details of legislation, with a soul whose wings could soar into the loftiest regions of thought and feeling. With undimmed eye he looked on more trying light than that of the common sunshine, and with unabated force he ascended, even at the age of six-score years, a more ethereal height than that of Pisgah; so that, if this ode had been found elsewhere than in the Bible, mere literary critics would have risen into ecstasies over its exquisite manifestation of beauty in the lap of terror. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *The dying song of Moses:*—The subject of the song is Jehovah and His people, and the substance of it is given in xxxii. 3–6. The faithfulness of Jehovah, the God of truth, the Rock of salvation, and the unfaithfulness of His fickle and foolish people—such are clearly to be the main ideas of the song. In the after developments there are three things very powerfully set forth. I. WHAT ISRAEL OWES TO GOD (vers. 7–14). Here the great things which God had done for them are brought out in a few bold delineations, mingling strength and pathos in a marvellous degree. He shows how from the beginning God had set His regardful eyes upon them, how He had guided the history of all other nations in a manner subservient to their welfare, making them and their development the historic centre of the ancient world; how He had found them poor, helpless wanderers in the wilderness, and formed them into a people there—His own people, whom He had fed and led and trained as a tender mother might—and at last brought into the goodly land He had promised them, exalting them high among the nations of the earth, and giving them richly all things to enjoy.

II. How will Israel pay the debt? To this question the prophetic song gives a sad answer. Israel will pay her debt of gratitude to God by base ingratitude, beginning with self-indulgence, and going on to neglect of Jehovah and the worship of strange gods. Such is the sad prophetic picture in verses 15–18. Thus Israel requites God. III. How will God requite Israel? Almost all that remains of the song is taken up with the fearful answer to this question, setting forth how God takes notice of it first, and is filled with indignation; how He hides His face and leaves His people to themselves and to the bitter fruits of their ingratitude; how He takes their precious privileges from them, and gives them to those who till then had been "no people"; how, finally, He lets loose on them all the fury of His vengeance, and utterly destroys their place and nation. All this we find realised in history. The entire history of the founding of the Christian Church, especially in the light in which it is put by the great apostle, who again and again quotes the words of this song in connection with the calling of the Gentiles, is a fulfilment of these warning words of Moses. All this is very dark; but it is dark only to those who "forsake God, and lightly esteem the Rock of their salvation" (ver. 15). The very faithfulness of God to His most terrible threatenings is an additional reason why those who believe in Him should exercise most unshaken confidence in Him. Then, too, if you examine the song throughout, you will find it full of evidence of the goodness and long-suffering of the Lord. Though there is inflexible justice, both in the prophecy itself and in its fulfilment, yet throughout all it is evident that He speaks and acts, "who delighteth not in the death of him that dieth"; who "willeth not that any should perish, but that all should turn unto Him and live." We have looked at this song as a witness against Israel. This was doubtless its original design; but its scope is far wider. This song was written for a witness against all who enjoy Israel's privileges and follow Israel's sins. Even among the Gentiles, though all are alike welcome, and exclusive privileges are now done away entirely in Christ Jesus, there have been and are those who are far in advance of others in respect to the advantages they enjoy. First came the Greek and Latin races, united in the mighty Roman Empire. To them first, among the Gentiles, the Gospel was preached; and by them first, as a nation and race, was the Gospel received. Three hundred years had not passed away from the death of "Jesus of Nazareth" till the faith of "that same Jesus" was the established religion of the Roman Empire; and not long thereafter the privileges of the Gospel were within reach of almost the whole of that vast population. What a change from the martyr days, the days of hiding in the catacombs! Was it not as true of the Christians of the Roman Empire as it was of ancient Israel, that God had "found them in a desert land," had "led them about," had "kept them as the apple of His eye," and had at last "made them ride upon the high places of the earth," and given them to "eat the increase of the fields"? Well, how did the favoured people then pay their debt of gratitude? Was it not the old story over again? "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked." They "waxed fat, grew thick, were covered with fatness; then they forsook God, and lightly esteemed the Rock of their salvation." They became self-indulgent, "earthly, sensual, devilish." Corruption of manners and corruption of doctrine set in "like a flood"; they turned to "strange gods"; they worshipped saints and relics, and bowed down to images; they adored the consecrated wafer. The very light that was in them became darkness, and "how great was that darkness!" And as, before, the heritage of truth and blessing had passed from the Jew to the Gentile, so now it passed from the Roman to the Teuton. These Teutonic races of the north had been "no people" in the eyes of the empire of Rome. They had been known only as barbarians, both in the Greek and Latin tongues. Yet these "no people," these "barbarians," who had fallen one by one before the all-conquering might of Rome, became the very people who fell heirs to the legacy of Divine truth, and the great blessings which accompany its possession. For, though the first reformation seemed for a time to work among the Latin races also, it was only for a time; the hold of corruption was too firm for it to last, and they all relapsed into the darkness from which at first they had seemed ready to emerge, while among the Germanic races the light of truth continued to shine and to diffuse itself over a widening area. And now it is the Teutonic races who are in the position of Israel of old, and principally those who speak the English language. Who can tell what we who speak the English tongue owe to Jehovah, "the Rock of our salvation"? Where did He "find" us? Was it not "in a desert land" indeed—a very howling wilderness? See what the early

Britons were when first they heard Jehovah's name. And how has the Lord "led" them since then! How tenderly did He "bear" our fathers on, teaching them by degrees the use of that liberty which has grown with Britain's growth, and strengthened with her strength. And how has He now "made us to ride upon the high places of the earth," and given "us the increase of the fields"! For is it not a patent fact that the destinies of the world are at this moment, under God, swayed by those who speak our mother tongue, while the great mass of the world's wealth is in their hands? And all this we owe to Him who is "Head over all things." Not only our rich spiritual privileges, but even our temporal greatness, our position and power and wealth in the world, we owe to Jehovah, God of Israel, "the Rock of our salvation." Well, how do we "requite the Lord"? Is it not very much in the old way? Is not wealth breeding self-indulgence and luxury; and are not these leading us, as a people, to forget God, and "lightly to esteem the Rock of our salvation"? Are there not many "strange gods" among us: Mammon, Fashion, Pleasure? And what of this sad revival of Middle-Age superstition? Has not the sign of Rome been written with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond? And why this haste to be partakers again of her sin and of her plagues? Oh, is not this song a witness against us too? God is long-suffering indeed, and it is well that He is, or where should we English-speaking people be to-day? But His long-suffering has a limit, as is evident from the past. (*J. M. Gibson, D.D.*)

Ver. 27. **Thy stiff neck.**—*Stiff necks*:—There are many stiff-necked people. They are met with in the workshop, in the office, and almost everywhere. I should not be surprised at all if we had many in this assembly whose necks are as stiff as it is possible to be. There are a great many necks stiff with pride and selfishness. There are some men who are saving money; who live in their freehold cottages; whose necks are too stiff to see that they ought to pay the rent of the cottage in which their poor old parents live, who, perchance, in some country village are getting parish relief. There are other kinds of stiff necks. From our childhood most of us have been taught to love the Saviour, to trust in God, and do good. Yet I am afraid that a great many of us have disregarded the advice of those who loved us, and we have grown so unwise that many of us have stiffened our necks against religion. There is a tendency, now and again, to sneer at religion, and to talk about it as if it were all nonsense. There are a great many men who stiffen their necks. This is unwise. Take the New Testament and study that life of Jesus Christ, as sensible men. Look at the book, examine its pages, and learn its religion. Do not stiffen your necks against God, against purity, against holiness. (*Charles Leach.*)

CHAPTER XXXII.

VERS. 1, 2. **Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak.**—*Moses' adjuration*:—Isaiah makes a similar sublime commencement to his prophecies, apostrophising heaven and earth in nearly identical language. Moses had already used the same sentiment in simple didactic form when he said, "I call heaven and earth to witness this day, that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse," and thereby he explains the meaning of this more highly poetic style of adjuration. Such an adjuration indicates great intensity, elevation, and sincerity of feeling, while calling attention to the solemn importance of what is about to be said. It is like a herald's cry, the sound of the tocsin, or the summoning of an assize. For heaven and earth had both of them been witnesses of the covenant and giving of the law. By a sudden but suggestive transition we are introduced to the style and theme of the song. The change is from the awe-inspiring to the tenderest of moods; but it is made without derogating from the loftiness of the thought. The imagery of the gentle rain and the softly distilling dew is a fit sequel to the opening appeal to heaven and earth, and bespeaks attention to the source, the quality, and the design of the song. 1. Its source. The reference to dew and rain implies, first of all, that the whole subject, suggestion, and origin of the song is from above. Nothing but a voice Divine will ever avail to soften human nature, come home to the conscience, subjugate the will and reign in the affections. "Ascribe ye greatness,"

therefore, that is, authoritativeness, "unto our God." 2. Its quality. "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew." The song is just the pith and substance of the Book of Deuteronomy; the distilled quintessence of the Deuteronomic law and covenant. It is a protestation that no community can ever thrive, surmount their dangers and slough off their corruptions, by simply confining their attention to earthly relations and requisitions. They need a higher motive and spirit of life as a sustaining and self-cleansing principle—in one word, a Gospel of God. 3. Its design. "As the small rain upon the tender grass, and as the showers upon the herb"; gentle, yet copious and penetrative; soft, seasonable and saturating; not like a sudden but soon spent thunderstorm, nor the beating of hail that dashes where it alights; rather like small rain, the softer it falls the deeper it sinks; or like the dew, the more insinuating it is, the more fertilising and lastingly effective. (*A. H. Drysdale, M.A.*) **My speech shall distil as the dew.** —*God's doctrine as the dew*:—What a representation of gentleness! The doctrine shall not fall in torrents, but it shall drop; the speech shall not even be felt in its descent, for it shall distil. Yet who is it employs this gentlest of all gentle imagery? It is Moses: the self-same man who had pronounced the terrific judgments on Egypt. He had promulgated a system which was given forth in thunder, and lightning, and thick darkness, and a terrible tempest; the publication of this law was attended with the severest penalties. Notwithstanding every appearance to the contrary, it was true of every word which God spake by Moses, as well as of every word which Jesus spoke, that His doctrine dropped like the rain, and distilled like the dew. We need scarcely tell you that the term "doctrine" includes all God's teaching in every portion of His revelation to man. It matters not whether truth be found in direct assertions of great principles, or whether it be wrapped up in the imagery of poetry, the shadows of the types, the facts of history, or the allegories of parables; it is all the same truth. Thus not only is every form of God's Word "doctrine," but in its fertilising effects on the soul may most appropriately be compared to the dropping rain and distilling dew. But in order to understand this gentle character ascribed by Moses to God's doctrine, you must take heed that you do not fall into several errors which will perplex your belief in the dew-like influence of Divine truth. The first of these errors is to confound the effect of doctrine itself with that outward teaching by which it may often be set forth. The mere manner of teaching is no just criterion of the matter of teaching. There are differences of character which even demand differences of outward instruction. But, secondly, we must warn you against supposing that God does not sometimes adopt an internal as well as an external mode of teaching, which may appear to conflict with the statements of our text. How often do the threatenings of Divine wrath seem to lay hold on the spirit, and for a time keep it shrinking beneath the prospect of inevitable destruction! But notwithstanding these modes of teaching which God may often employ, yet we maintain that the substance of that teaching is what Moses describes it—gentle as the dropping rain, the distilling dew, the small rain, the soft shower. You will remark that the sacred writer declares that his doctrine is to be like "small rain on the tender herb"; and this sentence it is which explains the entire seeming anomaly we have noticed. God's truth does not fall like small rain on the hardy, tough, strong herb, but like small rain on the tender herb. There must be a preparation—a softening of the soul to receive the gentle influences of the Gospel. And not only at our first conversion to God, but even afterwards, the herb may become hardened, and require occasional softening, before the small rain is given. The advanced Christian sometimes complains of waves and billows; he hears deep calling to deep at the noise of God's waterspouts. But the sole reason of this is that there is some deficiency in the tenderness of the herb—some setting up of the head which needs the blast of the storm to bring it low. God loves not to see a proud look; He loves not a stiff-necked obedience; He loves not to find His servant chafing against the bit; He must have the herb tender. The ground being thus prepared, the doctrine of the Lord always drops as the rain and distils as the dew. But let us glance at a few brief practical truths which the imagery of our text suggests. 1. If you are watered by this heavenly dew, it must be all-pervading. Look at the grass after the dew has fallen; it is thoroughly covered with moisture; nothing saturates it so completely; a storm would not wet it half so effectually; the plant is all over the same; no leaf but it sparkles with dewdrops; no blade escapes; all are steeped in dew. Now, is it the same with you? The operation of the Spirit is always total and entire. All things become new where He works. 2. Then, secondly, recollect that another of the character-

istics of this dew is its diffusiveness. Not only is the dew the most equal and general giver of moisture, but the plants which receive it pass it on to others. From leaf to leaf, and from blade to blade it falls, so that if you pass through a forest on a dewy morning it is one constant dropping. So must it be with the Christian. He is not only to be influenced by the Spirit himself, but by the aid of the same Spirit he must pass on that influence to others. 3. Thirdly, still another feature of this dew is its fertilising effects. It often falls most heavily at times of the year when drought prevails, and when the plants would otherwise be scorched and withered. Its final effect is not superficial; it does not merely wet the leaves and flowers, but it percolates to the very root. The dew thus develops itself in fruits: it waters the plant, and makes it bring forth abundantly. And so with our dew. Whenever the influences of the Spirit are felt, the fruits of the Spirit are seen. 4. But, lastly, another feature of this dew is that it will prove specially and abundantly operative in the time of trial. It is not when the sun shines that the dew falls; it principally descends when the day is wrapped in evening shades or when the morning is still hidden in twilight, or when dark night has already set in: so likewise is sorrow a time of special dew falling. When have the promises and love of God so gentle and yet powerful an influence as in affliction's sad hour? When are His cheering truths so sweet as when trouble embitters the soul? (*D. F. Jarman, M.A.*) *The dew of the Word*:—"Distil as the dew." Who hears the dew fall? What microphone could reveal that music to our "gross unpurged ears"? 1. The dew distils in silence. So does the speech of God. In stillness God's love is condensed into dewlike communications; not read, nor heard, but known by direct power of the Spirit upon the soul. Not much in noise, turmoil, and bustle. 2. The dew distils in darkness. You look out some dark night: there is no storm, no rain, not the least token to your senses of what is going on. In the morning you see every blade and leaf tipped with a dewdrop, everything revived and freshened, prepared for the heat of the day. So His words fall on your souls in darkness, not with sensible power; nothing flashes out from the page, nothing shines to shed pleasant light on your path. You do not hear sound of abundance of rain, but the words are distilling as the dew and preparing you for day. 3. The dew falls not in one mass of water, but innumerable little drops. What one drop does not reach another does. It is not one overwhelmingly powerful word which does this holy night work in the soul, but the unrealised influences of many, dropping silently on the plants of the Lord; one resting here, another there; one touching an unrecognised need, another reaching an unconsciously failing grace. "Each drop uncounted hath its own mission, and is duly sent to its own leaf or blade." 4. Sometimes God's dew goes on falling many hours of night. Watches seem long, and starlight does not reveal it. But none is lost; some is already doing hidden work as it falls around the very roots of our being, some ready to be revealed in sparkling brightness when the night is over; lessons learnt among the shadows to be lived out in the sunshine. 5. The object of the dew is to maintain life in dry places and seasons. In rainless regions this is better understood. Any dry week in summer we see enough to understand the beauty of the figure. This speech is spirit and life to souls, however feebly, yet really alive to God. Dew does nothing for stones, nor a dead leaf. It falls on little fading plants, whose leaves absorb life, renewing moisture, and closed blossoms open out again with fresher fragrance than before. Dryness is more to be dreaded than darkness. (*F. R. Havergal.*) *Genuine religious teaching*:—I. Genuine religious teaching is GENTLE. Descends on the soul as the dew and small rain. The great religious teachers have been quiet talkers. II. Genuine religious teaching is PENETRATING. Goes down through the intellect into the conscience and heart. III. Genuine religious teaching is REFRESHING. Descends with quickening influence into the soul. (*Homilist.*) *Soothing nature of Christian doctrine*:—The lovely gentleness, the refreshing and cheering nature, of Divine doctrine is here most beautifully set forth. And, indeed, very useful is it that the amiable character of our blessed religion should be as much as possible presented to the view of men. For could they once see it they would be so in love with its beauty that their whole soul would be ravished with delight in thinking of it, and would teem with desire to be effectually possessed of it. But how is the beauty of religion to be shown to men? It cannot be really apprehended but by experience. Wherefore offer a fervent prayer to heaven for grace to dispose your hearts to receive this Word. We cannot be surprised at finding the "yoke easy and the burden light" of that Master who is thus "meek and lowly in heart." He graciously promises that if we take this yoke upon us we shall "find rest to our

souls." This doctrine does, indeed, drop upon the souls of troubled sinners with the softness of a gentle rain falling upon a fleece of wool. Is, then, all forgiven? Am I cleansed from all my sin, relieved from all my guilt? Am I at peace with God? Do I partake of His love? "Blessed is he whose unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sin is covered." But when we come to consider the new life, the service of Christ, which must follow if we are to walk in favour with God, shall we then find this comfort and gentleness of Christian doctrine? Most assuredly we shall in the doctrine itself. The resistance which our passions and inclinations make to the Divine law causes all the discomfort and painfulness in submitting our hearts to be ruled by it. But it may be acknowledged that holiness of heart and life when attained may be comfortable, delightful; and yet a man may say, Doubtless it would be good for me to give up my unchaste and intemperate manner of living, but I cannot endure the self-denial necessary for it. A man may say, It would be good indeed for me to be a devoted servant of Jesus, but I don't know how to tear myself from my old habits, and leave my former companions. Could I see all this done, see myself become a new creature, and become associated with religious people, I believe that I could be happy. But now think of this one thing. What kind of Master are you called upon to serve? Is it not Jesus Christ, the kind and forbearing? Will not He be a gentle Master to you? With what gentleness is He represented administering spiritual food to the souls of His people! How considerate is He set forth of the different spiritual condition and circumstances of men, how tender to those who are in weakness, or in a great trial and difficulty! By the gentle influences of the Holy Spirit He can convert the soul, and change all its dispositions and affections. Thus will Jesus, in the most gentle and yet the most powerful manner, lead those who commit themselves to Him. (*R. L. Cotton, M.A.*) *Doctrine as rain; speech as dew*:—The earth without rain cannot grow one tiny grass-blade; when the clouds keep away the flowers hang down their heads, and shrivel and burn, and represent the very spirit of necessity and pain. We must have the black clouds; how welcome they are after a time of drought and scorching, when the earth is opening its mouth and asking for a draught of water! So God's doctrine is to be poured out upon thirsty souls, burnt and scorched lives, ruined and unproductive natures. The rain-plash is a sweet music, a tender appeal, a liquid persuasion. The rain will accommodate itself to all forms and shapes, and it will impartially visit the poor man's little handful of garden and the great man's countless acres. Such is the Gospel of Christ: it is impartial, gentle, necessary; it finds the heart when the heart is scorched, and asks to heal its burning, and to make the barren land of the inner life beautiful with summer flowers. We cannot tell how the Word gets into the heart—how softly, how silently: it is there, and we knew it not; we expected it, and at the very time we were looking out for it, it was already there; it is the secret of the Lord, and it moves by a noble mystery of action, so that no line can be laid upon it, and no man may arbitrarily handle the wealth of gold. "As the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." There shall be adaptation between the one and the other: if the herb is "tender" the rain must be "small." Do not thunder upon us with Thy great power; do not plead against us with all the winds of Thine eloquence, for who could stand against the storm? On the other hand, the tenderer the grass the better it can bear even the scudding shower and the heavy downpour. Great trees are torn, or wrenched from their roots, or are thrust down in contempt, but all the grass of the meadow is but the greener for the winds which have galloped over it, or the great rivers that have poured themselves upon the emerald bed. Jesus will bless the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peace-loving; but as for those who in heathen vanity set themselves up against Him, He will dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. The Word does not always produce an instantaneous effect: the Word has sometimes to filter well down into the thought and into the heart and life; and the Word does not report itself in the mere quantity of the doctrine, but in the greenness of the young grass, in the beauty and fruitfulness of the tender herb: no statistical return shall be made of the number of discourses heard, or the number of chapters read, but the life shall be the more verdant in spring-like beauty, and the more splendid in all the colouring of summer. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **As the small rain upon the tender herb.**—*Small rain for tender herbs*:—The highest power is consistent with the lowliest tenderness. He that is mightiest in word is mighty, not so much in thunder, and earthquake, and fire, as in a silent persuasiveness. I. MOSES MEANT TO BE TENDER. Moses intended, in the sermon he was about to preach, to be exceedingly gentle. He would water

minds as tender herbs, and water them in the same fashion as the small rain does. He would not be a beating hail, nor even a down-pouring shower, but he would be "as the small rain upon the tender herb." 1. And this is the more remarkable, because he was about to preach a doctrinal sermon. Does he not say, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain"? 2. It is equally remarkable that this discourse of Moses was a sermon of rebuke. He rebuked the people, with no small degree of sternness, when he said, "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked; thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick; then he forsook God which made him." He warned the people of their great sin, and he did not hesitate to say, "They are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them." Yet he felt that he had rebuked with the utmost meekness, and had still been as the soft dew and gentle rain. Upbraiding must be done in tenderness. 3. Furthermore, his style of speech was compassionately considerate, even as the dew seems to consider the withered grass, and the small rain to adapt itself to the tender herb. In his teaching he evidently thought of the feebler sort, and suited himself to those depressed by grief. 4. Furthermore, note well that the truth which our Lord spoke had always a refreshing effect upon those who were spiritually alive. Our blessed Master's sermons were "as the small rain upon the tender herb," not merely for the softness of their descent, but for the wondrous efficacy with which they came. His words fell not as fire-flakes to destroy, nor as the dust from the wilderness to defile, but ever as the warm shower to cherish. So we learn that Moses meant to be tender, and Jesus was tender. What else do we learn? 5. Why, that all the servants of Jesus Christ ought to be tender; for if Moses was so, much more should we be. II. MOSES HOPED TO BE PENETRATING: "as the small rain upon the tender herb." Now, small rain is meant to enter the herb, so that it may drink in the nourishment and be truly refreshed. The rain is not to drench the herb, and it is not to flood it; it is to feed it, to revive it. This was what Moses aimed at. That is what all true preachers of Christ aim at. Why is it some people never seem to take in the Word, "as the small rain upon the tender herb"? 1. I suppose it is, first, because some of it may be above their understanding. If you hear a sermon, and you do not know at all what the good man is about, how can it benefit you? 2. Many do not drink in the sacred Word because it seems to them too good to be true. This is limiting the goodness of God: God is so good that nothing can be too good to be looked for from Him. 3. Many persons do not receive the Gospel promise to the full because they do not think it is true to them; anybody else may be blessed in that way, but they cannot think it probable that they shall be. Though the Gospel is particularly directed to sinners, yet these good folks think, "Surely grace could never reach to us." Oh, how we lose our labour, and fail to comfort men, because of the unbelief which pretends to be the child of humility, but is really the offspring of pride! The small rain does not get at the tender herb, because the herb shrinks from the silver drops which would cherish it. 4. No doubt many miss the charming influences of heavenly truth because they do not think enough. Is it not strange that people should think sermons worth hearing, but not worth meditating upon? It is as foolish as if a man thought a joint of meat worth buying, but not worth cooking; for meditation is, as it were, a sort of holy cookery by which the truth is prepared to be food for the soul. 5. And, once more, we ought to pray that when we hear the Word we may be prepared to receive it: it is of great importance that we should open the doors of our soul to let the Gospel enter us. Hospitality to truth is charity to ourselves. III. MOSES HOPED TO SEE RESULTS. "As the small rain upon the tender herb." Now, observe, in looking about among mankind, that whenever wise men expect any result from their labours, they always go to work in a manner adapted to the end they have in view. Finding the people to be comparable to tender herbs, he adapted his speech to them, and made it like the small rain. Now, what will be the result if we do the same? It will come to pass there will be among us young converts like tender herbs, newly planted, and if we speak in tenderness we shall see the result, for they will take root in the truth, and grow in it. Paul planted, and then Apollos watered. Why did Apollos water? Because you must water plants after you have planted them, that they may the more readily strike into the earth. Happy shall you be if you employ your greater experience in strengthening those whose new life is as yet feeble! Next, when a man's discourse is like small rain to the tender herb, he sees the weak and perishing one revive and lift up his head. The herb was withering at first, it lay down faint and ready to die; but the small rain came, and it seemed to say, "Thank you," and it looked up, and lifted its

head, and recovered from its swoon. You will see a reviving effect produced upon faint hearts and desponding minds. You will be a comforter, you will cheer away the fears of many, and make glad the timid and fearful. What a blessing it is when you see that result, for there is so much the more joy in the world, and God is so much the more glorified! When you water tender herbs, and see them grow, you have a further reward. It is delightful to watch the development and increase of grace in those who are under our care. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 3. **Ascribe ye greatness unto our God.**—*The greatness of God:*—I. OUR PRIMARY CONCERN SHOULD BE TO ATTEMPT TO REALISE THE GREATNESS OF GOD, however inadequate all our conceptions may be. 1. His underived, independent, and eternal existence. In this His nature stands out in distinction from all created being. 2. The infinitude of His knowledge. There is no evading His glance, no travelling beyond the reach of His omniscience, no baffling His skill, no frustrating His plans, "no searching of His understanding." 3. The boundlessness of His power and dominion. "Great is the Lord, and of great power." Take the microscope, and all the orders of existence which it reveals are embraced in His providence. Take the telescope, and as worlds on worlds pass before your vision, you only survey other parts of His great and boundless empire. 4. The grandeur of His moral perfections. His holiness is unspotted, the standard and pattern of righteousness to all creatures and to all worlds. His goodness is vast and unutterable. It gave us "His unspeakable gift." His faithfulness endureth to all generations, giving stability to the world which He created. II. THE PRACTICAL LESSONS ENFORCED IN THE CALL TO "ASCRIBE GREATNESS TO OUR GOD." 1. Our adoration is a fitting tribute to His greatness and majesty. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me." It is the acknowledgment on our part of His natural and moral perfections. 2. It is not only, however, by the direct exercise of adoration that we are to fulfil the exhortation of the text, but by cultivating a humbling impression of the Divine Majesty ever on our hearts. What humility should we, as creatures, cherish in the presence of the greatness of God! What lowliness of spirit should there be in our supplications and pleadings with God! How unseemly is all that is irreverential before Him! 3. Whilst the Divine greatness should humble us, however, it may also inspire us with confidence, if living and walking before Him. What a friend and helper is He to those who loyally serve Him! It is related of one of the greatest of the French preachers that, when called to preach a funeral discourse for Louis XIV. before a crowded audience and in the presence of the French Court, he broke the hushed silence of the vast assembly when he entered the pulpit and began to speak, by the exclamation, "There is nothing great but God!" and then, having nerved himself for his work, addressed himself to his subject. In sorest bereavements He can sustain, and in the solemn void which they have created can make His own presence all the more realisingly felt. Specially let us cherish such confidence in reference to the interests of religion in the world, and look forward to a great future for the Church of God, though earth and hell oppose. (*E. T. Prust.*) *The Great Supreme:*—I. A CAUTION. Inasmuch as Moses had said, "Ascribe ye greatness unto our God," he intended to hint to us that we ought to ascribe greatness to none else. 1. If I worship a created being, if I seek the intercession of any save the one Person who is ordained to be the Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, I do in that degree derogate from the greatness of God. 2. Though we do not bow down and worship images, yet, I am sorry to say, there is scarce a congregation that is free from that error of ascribing greatness to their minister. If souls are converted, how very prone we are to think there is something marvellous in the man. We are but your servants for Christ's sake. 3. Pay deference unto authorities as ye should do; but if in aught they swerve, remember your knee must bow to God, and to God alone. If in aught there be anything wrong, though it should have a sovereign's name attached to it, remember one is your Master and King. 4. In the case of those who are in the employ of masters, it is but right that they should render unto their masters that which is their due; but when the master commands that which is wrong, allow me solemnly to caution you against giving to him anything which you are not bound to do. Your master tells you you must break the Sabbath. You do it because he is your master; ye have violated this command, for it is said, "Ascribe ye greatness unto God." 5. This text has a bearing upon certain philosophic creeds which I will just hint at. Some men, instead of ascribing greatness to God, ascribe greatness to the laws of nature, and to certain powers and forces which they believe govern the

universe. They look up on high; their eyes see the marvellous orbs walking in their mystery along the sky. They say, "What stupendous laws are those which govern the universe!" And yo will see in their writings that they ascribe everything to law and nothing to God. Now, all this is wrong. Law without God is nothing. God puts force into law, and if God acts by laws in the government of the material universe, yet it is the force of God which moves the worlds along and keeps them in their places. Law without God is nullity. Reject every philosophy that does not ascribe greatness to God, for there is a worm at the root of it, and it yet shall be destroyed. II. A COMMAND. 1. This command comes to the sinner when he first begins seriously to consider his position before God. When you look at your sins ascribe greatness to God's justice. 2. Let the sinner who is already convinced of this ascribe greatness to God's mercy. 3. Further, let me appeal to the Christian, "Ascribe ye greatness unto our God." Thou art in trouble; thou art wearied with the hardness of thy journey; thy poverty has got hold of thee. It is a dark night with thee just now; thou seest not thy signs; thou hast no sweet promise to light upon. "Ascribe ye greatness unto our God." Great as your troubles are, remember He is greater. And when the devil tempts you to believe that God cannot help you, tell him that you think better of Him than that; you ascribe greatness to the Almighty, and you believe He is great enough to deliver you from all your sorrows. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The greatness of God:*—I. OFFER A FEW REMARKS ON THE NATURE OF GOD'S GREATNESS. 1. Greatness is not a distinct attribute of the Divine nature, but an excellency which belongs to all His attributes. Whatever is in God is great. He is great in His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and truth. There is such a mixture of greatness and goodness in God, that those who know Him best will fear and love Him most; and even devils are constrained to believe and tremble. 2. There is an essential and also a relative greatness in God, a greatness interwoven in the whole of His character, and appearing in all His works. Is He our Father? He is our Father who is in heaven, dwelling in the most exalted state of majesty; demanding our reverence and exciting our highest hopes (Eccles. v. 2). Is He a King? He is a great King, the King of kings. 3. The greatness of God is unsearchable and incomprehensible. With increasing knowledge we shall have an increasing sense of our own deficiency. II. INQUIRE IN WHAT MANNER WE ARE TO ASCRIBE "GREATNESS TO GOD." 1. We are to ascribe greatness to our God by acknowledging and declaring His greatness and His glory. 2. In ascribing greatness to the Lord, we are to do it practically; not only with our lips, but in our lives. 3. In approaching to God with reverence and holy fear we ascribe to Him the glory due unto His name, striving against wandering thoughts and vain imaginations, and cherishing a deep sense of our own unworthiness. The higher we rise in our apprehensions of God, the lower we shall fall in our own esteem. 4. By entertaining the most enlarged expectations from God we in effect ascribe greatness to Him. Great faith ought to be exercised towards a great God; nor should we say, "Can He pardon? can He help? or can He save?" for what can He not do? What wants are so great that He cannot supply? what works so great that He cannot enable us to perform? what burdens so great that He cannot support us under? what dangers so great that He cannot deliver us out of them? 5. If we ascribe greatness to the Lord, that greatness will be to us a matter of joy and gladness, and we shall glory in His holy name. 6. Fearing to offend against God, and dreading His displeasure, are included in the duty prescribed. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*)

Ver. 4. **He is the Rock.**—*The Rock and its associations:*—Seven times does this strong figure the Rock occur in the song. The metaphor is self-explanatory, the stability of rock being a fit emblem of the Divine immutability of purpose, and of God being faithful to His covenant and promises. This is the ruling and recurring idea of the song, coming in like a refrain, and giving unity to the whole. And how deeply did this image of God, the Rock, take hold upon the mind of Israel! Here it stands in the very forefront; the first word in the construction, to mark the importance we must assign to it. For, besides its native significance of impregnable strength and security, an additional depth of meaning was imparted to the emblem from Moses' own history and experience (Exod. xvii. 6, xxxiii. 21, 22). It gradually passes upwards from an objective to a subjective or experimental application, when not only the nature of the rock, but its various uses, afforded fresh and serviceable emblems. The Gospel to the Old Testament Church was not merely, "God is a rock, firm and faithful," but "He is the Rock," with all the

precious associations and all the realised practical value added to the term, whether it were employed for a hiding-place and protection or for shade—"the shadow of a great rock in a weary land"—or, most significantly of all, suggested by the smitten rock in Horeb, a source and guarantee of suitable and sufficient supply in case of dire necessity to the perishing. It is emphatically a covenant made, and speaks the language of redemption. The song proceeds to develop the applicability of the word in a threefold direction, attaching it at once to God's work, His ways, and His character. "The Rock—1. His work is perfect." It is not as artificer, but as architect, we are here to regard His work as perfect. He has a providential and redemptive plan, complete in all its details; having no need for after-thoughts, and not requiring reconstruction or amendment. In this respect "His work is perfect"; and when fully accomplished will justify and vindicate itself. 2. To understand the Divine plan or speak of it aright, we must wait till then. "For all His ways are judgment," nothing being subject to caprice or arbitrariness. His is an immutability of counsel, carried into execution by the goodwill He hath purposed in Himself. What a contrast to the feeble, vacillating, arbitrary ways of man! 3. But, above all, He Himself in His own character is the Rock. This confidence in the Divine nature itself; in Jehovah's absolute truth and equity; in His unerring rectitude and all-wise faithfulness—this is the supreme resting-place. It is also set forth here as the high well-spring of all dutiful submission, of all loyal-hearted allegiance, and of all uncorruptness in religion and piety. In it the singer finds the strongest ground for rebuke, remonstrance, and reproach to the people. (*A. H. Drysdale, M.A.*) *God as a Rock*:—"He is the Rock," a Rock indeed. If we speak of strength, lo, He is strong; if of stability, He is the Lord, and changes not—the Ancient of Days. Hast not thou heard and considered this, that the Almighty faints not, and wearies not? He holds forth Himself in such a name to His people, a ready, all-sufficient, and enduring Refuge to all that trust in Him; and this is the foundation that the Church is built on, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. God's omnipotency for defences, His eternity, faithfulness, and unchangeableness to make that sure, His mercy and goodness make a hole in that Rock to enter in, a ready access for poor shipwrecked and broken men, who have no other refuge. This is our Rock, on which the Church is built, Jesus Christ (1 Cor. x. 4; Matt. xvi. 18). God were inaccessible in Himself—an impregnable Rock; how would sinners overcome Him, and enter into Him to be saved from wrath? Oh, how sad is the secret reproof contained in this commendation of God! He hath been a Rock to us, our Refuge that we fled unto, and found sure, yet have we left our Rock, gone out from our Strength; He offers Himself a Rock unto us—His all-sufficiency—and yet we leave the Fountain of living waters and dig broken cisterns; had rather choose our own broken ship to toss up and down into. He abides for ever the same; though we change, He changes not. How may it reprove our backslidings, that we depart from our Rock, and where shall we find a refuge in the day of indignation? Is there any created mountain, but some floods will cover? Therefore it is folly and madness to forsake this Rock. (*H. Binning.*) **His work is perfect.**—*God's works perfect*:—As He doth not trouble Himself when all is troubled about Him, so He keeps him all in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Him; so also what He doth among men, though it cannot pass without man's censure, yet it is in itself perfect, complete, without defect. 1. His works are perfect in relation to the beginning and original of them—His own everlasting purpose. Men often bring forth works by guess, by their purpose, so no wonder it answer not their desire; but known to Him are all His works from the beginning, and so He doth nothing in time but what was His everlasting pleasure. Often we purpose well, and resolve perfectly, but our practice is a cripple—execution of it is maimed and imperfect; but all His works are carved out and done just as He designed them, without the least alteration; and, if it had not been well, would He have thought on it so and resolved it beforehand? 2. His works are perfect in relation to the end to which He appointed them. It may be it is not perfect in itself—a blind eye is not so perfect as a seeing eye; nay, but in relation to the glory of His name, who hath a purpose to declare His power by restoring that sight, it is as perfect. And in this sense all the imperfection of the creatures and creation, all of them are perfect works, for they accomplish the end wherefor they were sent; and so the night declares His name, and utters a speech as well as the day, the winter as the summer, the wilderness as the fruitful field; for what is the perfection of the creature but in as far as it accomplishes His purpose as the Maker of it? And therefore all His work is perfect, for it is all framed in wisdom to His

own ends, in number, measure, and weight; it is so exactly agreeing to that, that you could not imagine it better. 3. Again, His work is perfect if we take it altogether, and do not cut it in parcels and look on it so. Letters and syllables make no sense till you conjoin them in words, and words in sentences. Even so it is here: if we look on the day alone, the light of it being perpetual would weary us, the night alone would be more so; but the interchange of them is pleasant. Day and night together make a distinct language of God's praise. So God has set prosperity and adversity the one over against the other; one of them, it may be, seems imperfect; nay, but it is a perfect work that is made up of both. Spots in the face commend the beauty of the rest of it. If you would, then, look upon God's work aright, look at it in the sanctuary's light, and you shall say, "He hath done all well." 4. Entertain this thought in your heart, that He hath done all well; let not your secret thoughts so much as call them in question. If once you question, you will quickly censure them. Hold this persuasion, that nothing can be better than what He doth. 5. Let this secretly reprove your hearts, the perfection of His works stains our works. Oh, how imperfect are they! And which is worse, how bold are we to censure His and absolve our own! If He have a hand in our work, yet these imperfect works are perfect in regard of Him; as we have a hand in His perfect works, yet His perfect works are imperfect in regard of us. (*Ibid.*)

All His ways are judgment.—*God's ways perfect:*—This is to the same purpose—His ways and His works are one; and this is the perfection of His work, that it is all right and equal. Whether they be in justice or mercy, they are all righteous and holy—no iniquity in them. His ways are straight and equal, exact as if they were measured by an exact, even rule; but because we make application of a crooked rule to them, we do imagine that they are crooked—as the blind man judges no light to be because he sees it not. How may the Lord contend and plead with us, as with the people? (Ezek. xviii. 25.) And yet behold the iniquity of men's hearts; there is a secret reflection of our spirits upon His majesty as if His ways were not equal, whenever we repine against them. Behold, the Lord will assert His own ways, and plead with all flesh this controversy, that all His proceedings are full of equity; He walks according to a rule, though He be not tied to a rule. But we walk not according to a rule, though we be bound to a rule, and a rule full of equity. Here is the equity of His ways; the Gospel holds it forth in a twofold consideration. 1. If any man turn from his iniquity, and flee unto My Son as the City of Refuge, he shall live. Iniquity shall not be his ruin, although he hath done iniquity. Oh! "who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity?" Is not this complete mercy? And on the other hand, whosoever continueth in sin, though he appear to himself and others never so righteous, shall not he die in his iniquity? Is there any iniquity in this, that he receive the wages of his works, that he eat of the fruit of his own ways, and drink of his own devices? 2. This way of the Lord is equal and right in itself, but it is not so to every one; the just man shall walk in it, and not stumble—as in an even way; nothing shall offend him (Hos. xiv. 9). Yet, equal and straight as it is, many other transgressors shall fall therein; they stumble even in the noonday and highway, where no offence is. By all means embrace the Word, and be satisfied with it, when you do not comprehend His work; it teaches as much in general as may put us to quietness. All His ways are judgment; just and true in all His ways is the King of saints. If I do not comprehend how it is, no wonder, for He makes darkness His covering; He spreads over His most curious pieces of workmanship a veil of darkness for a season. Therefore let us hearken to His Word, and believe its sentence on His work, when reason cannot comprehend it. (*Ibid.*)

A God of truth.—*The truth of God:*—I. WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE TRUTH OF GOD. Not only His veracity, but His faithfulness. II. THAT THIS PERFECTION BELONGS TO GOD. And this I shall endeavour to prove. 1. From the dictates of natural light. Natural light tells us that truth and faithfulness are perfections, and consequently belong to the Divine nature; and that falsehood and a lie are imperfections, and to be removed from God. 2. From Scripture. The Scripture doth very frequently attribute this to God (2 Sam. vii. 28; Psa. xxv. 10, xxxi. 5; Rev. iii. 7, vi. 10; Psa. xv. 3, xvi. 7). And the Scripture doth not only in general attribute this perfection to God, but doth more particularly assure us of His sincerity and truth and faithfulness. Of His sincerity, that He deals plainly with us and speaks what He intends, that His words are the image of His thoughts and a true representation of His mind. And as the Scripture assures us of His sincerity, so of His truth and faithfulness in the accomplishment of His predictions and

performance of His promises. I come now to the last thing I proposed, to make some use of this doctrine. I. If God be a God of truth, then this gives us assurance that He doth not deceive us, that the faculties which He hath given us are not false, but when they have clear perceptions of things, they do not err and mistake. 2. If God be a God of truth, then there is reason why we should believe whatever we are satisfied is revealed to us by God. A Divine revelation is a sufficient ground for the most firm assent; for this very thing, that anything is revealed by God is the highest evidence, and ought to give us the most firm assurance, of the truth of it. Hence it is that the Word of God is called the Word of truth, yea, and truth itself: "Thy Word is truth" (John xvii. 17). 3. If God be a God of truth, and faithful in performing His promise, then here is a firm foundation for our hope and trust. 4. The truth of God is matter of terror to the wicked. 5. Let us propound to ourselves the truth of God for our pattern and imitation. Would you be like God? be true and faithful. (*Abp. Tillotson.*) *A God of truth*:—Strange it is that His Majesty is pleased to clothe Himself with so many titles and names for us. He considers what our necessity is, and accordingly expresses His own name. I think nothing doth more hold forth the unbelief of men and atheism of our hearts than the many several titles God takes in Scripture; there is a necessity for a multitude of them, to make us take up God, because we, staying upon a general notion of God, rather frame in our imaginations an idol than the true God. Needed there any more to be said but "I am your God, I am God," if our spirits were not so far degenerated into atheism and unbelief? Therefore wonder at these two when you read the Scriptures, God's condescension to us and our unbelief of Him. There is not a name of God but it gives us a reproach. This name is clear—He is a God of truth; not only a true God, but Truth itself, to note His eminency in it. It is Christ's name—"I am the Truth," the substantial Truth, in whom all the promises are truth, are yea and amen. His truth is His faithfulness in performing His promises and doing what His mouth hath spoken: and this is established in the very heavens (Psa. lxxxix. 2). His everlasting purpose is in heaven, where He dwells, and therefore there is nothing done in time that can impair or hinder it. He may change His commands as He pleases, but He may not change His promise. This puts an obligation on Him, as He is faithful and true, to perform it; and when an oath is superadded, oh! how immutable are these two!—when He promises in His truth and swears in His holiness. Is there any power in heaven and earth can break that double cord? (Matt. v. 18; Heb. vi. 18.) There is no name of God but it is comfortable to some, and as terrible to others. What comfort is it to a godly man that trusts in His Word, He is a God of truth! You who have ventured your souls on His Word, you have an unspeakable advantage: His truth endures for ever, and it is established in the heavens; the ground of it is without beginning, the end of it without end. Mercy made so many precious promises, and truth keeps them. Mercy is the fountain of our consolation, and truth and faithfulness convey it to us, and keep it for us. It is these two that go before His face when He sits on a throne of majesty and makes Himself accessible to sinners (Psa. lxxxix. 14), and so they are the pathway He walks in towards those who seek Him (Psa. xxv. 10). But this precious name, that is as ointment poured forth to those who love Him, how doth it smell of death to those who walk contrary to Him! He is a God of truth, to execute His threatenings on those who despise His commands; and though you flatter yourselves in your own eyes, and cry, "Peace, peace," even though you walk in the imagination of your heart, yet certainly He is a God of truth. It was unbelief of God's threatening that first ruined man; it is this still that keeps so many from the remedy and makes their misery irrecoverable. But if any man have set to his seal that God is true in His threatening, and subscribed unto the law, then, I beseech you, add not the unbelief of the Gospel unto your former disobedience. You have not kept His commands, and so the curse is come upon you. Do you believe that? If you do, then the Gospel speaks unto you, the God of truth has one word more—"He that believes shall be saved," notwithstanding all his breaking of the law. If you do not set your seal to this also, then you say He is not a God of truth; you say He is a liar. And as for you who have committed your souls to Him, as to a faithful keeper, and acquiesced unto His word of promise for salvation, think how unsuitable it is for you to distrust Him in other lesser things. (*H. Binning.*) **Without iniquity.**—*Man's sinfulness as contrasted with God's infinite perfections*:—There are none can behold their own vileness as it is but in the sight of God's glorious holiness. Sin is darkness, and neither sees itself nor anything else; therefore

must His light shine to discover this darkness. Among all the aggravations of sin, nothing doth so demonstrate the madness of it as the perfection, goodness, and absolute unspottedness of God. It is this that takes away all pretence of excuse; and therefore it is that Moses, when he would convince this people of their ways and make them inexcusable, he draws the parallel of God's ways and their ways, declares what God is, how absolutely perfect in Himself and in His works, and had given no cause for provocation to them to depart from Him. And then how odious must their departing be! When both are painted on a board before their eyes, it makes sin become exceeding sinful. There are two things in sin that exceedingly abuse the creature, the iniquity of it and folly of it. It is contrary to all equity and reason to depart from Him that hath made us and given us a law, to whom we are by so many obligations tied. But what is the madness of it, to depart from the Fountain of living waters and dig broken cisterns that can hold none! This is a thing that the heavens may be astonished at; and if the earth had the sense to understand such a thing, the whole fabric of it would tremble for horror at such folly of reasonable souls. And this evil hath two evils in it—we forsake life and love death, go from Him and choose vanity. It is great iniquity to depart without an offence on His part. He may appeal to all our consciences, and let them sit down and examine His way most narrowly. "What iniquity have ye found in Me? What cause have ye to leave Me?" But when withal He is a living Fountain, He is our glory, He is a fruitful land, a land of light, our ornament and attire; in a word, our life and our consolation, our happiness and our beauty. What word shall be found to express the extreme madness of men to depart from such an one, and change their glory into that which doth not profit? If either He were not a Fountain of living waters, or if there were any fountain beside that could yield water to satisfy the unsatiable desires of men, it were more excusable; but what shadow shall be found to cover such an iniquity, that is both infinite sin and incomparable loss? Oh, that men would consider how good the blessed Lord is, how He is alone and nothing beside Him in heaven and earth; all broken cisterns, all unprofitable; He only self-sufficient, all others insufficient, and therefore a proportioned good for our necessity and desires; and I am sure you would be constrained to cry out with David, "Whom have I in heaven with Thee, or in earth beside Thee? It is good for me to draw near to God." You would look on drawing near and walking with Him and before Him not only as the most reasonable thing, but the best thing, most beautiful for you, most profitable for you, and all other ways would be looked on as the ways of death. (*Ibid.*) **Just and right is He.**—*The justice of God*:—By the justice of God we understand that universal rectitude of His nature whereby, in His government of the world, He does all things with perfect righteousness, giving to every one his due. 1. We are to consider God, not only as the Maker and Preserver of men, but as their Governor also. He who made man has an unbounded right to prescribe laws for his conduct, and to enforce the laws by rewards and punishments; and in so doing He consults the good of His creatures as well as His own glory. 2. God is just in punishing disobedience to His holy law. 3. If we consult the Scriptures we shall find that God has displayed His justice, in many awful instances, by the punishment of sinners. 4. But the most affecting display of Divine justice was made in the sufferings and death of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. (*G. Burder.*) *The justice of God*:—I. LET US THINK OF JUSTICE AS RESIDING FROM ETERNITY IN THE DIVINE BEING, AND AS OPERATING INDEPENDENTLY OF THE EXISTENCE OF CREATED BEINGS. 1. In this view, justice must be contemplated as rising out of the very existence of Deity. Justice exists necessarily and infinitely in the glorious Godhead. 2. It may be viewed as operating within the Divine Being itself, distinctly from every prospect of the future existence of a universe of creatures, in such ways as these: in a righteous valuing and honouring of the distinct preciousness of other Divine excellencies, such as power, holiness, goodness, &c.; in a fair arrangement, union, and well-adjusted harmony of all the other Divine perfections; and in the mutual acknowledgments of the equal rights, dignity, and relations of each of the Three Persons in the Godhead. II. LET US THINK OF THE NATURE OF MORAL GOOD AND EVIL, AS FOUND IN CREATURE AGENTS, WHICH IS THE PROPER OBJECT OF JUSTICE. 1. Such agents possess the natural image of God, in spirituality, in intelligence, in capacity of choice, in voluntary activity, in discernment of good and evil. These things are necessary to the existence of either moral good or moral evil. It may be asked, What is the meaning of these words? 2. Moral good and evil are opposite qualities of such creatures, as to their dispositions and actions. 3. The chief

moral good and evil must be found in the dispositions and actions of the creature towards God Himself. Here must be the greatest, the noblest beauty, or the foulest deformity, the richest flavoured sweetness or the most poisonous bitterness. 4. There is a wide range of good and of evil, in disposition and in action, relative to man made in the image of God. 5. There is a general importance in all moral good and evil, even in their most ordinary and tranquil movements; for they are the acts of a creature endowed with the natural image of the great God, to whom also these acts and qualities have an ultimate reference. 6. In connection with these things we have to think of the vast multitude of moral agents, men and angels, whom we know with certainty, and of the vast variety of circumstances and events, and also the long flight of ages, before the final judgment; besides the numberless worlds of intelligent agents which may lie behind an impenetrable veil of obscurity and uncertainty. And thus we have some view of that awful, wide-extended, moral empire, the direct object of the cognisance and procedure of Divine justice, and of which every one who now thinks on this subject is an interested and important part. Application—1. How contrary to this whole doctrine of the justice of God is that spirit of frivolous, presumptuous ease and gaiety which generally reign in the world! 2. Let us consider the majesty and power of the justice of God as the guardian attribute of all the other excellencies of Divinity. 3. Who can sufficiently estimate the preciousness of deliverance from the wrath to come by the sufferings and blood of Jesus, the Son of God? III. THE NATURE OF THIS GLORIOUS JUSTICE, AND OF ITS EXERCISE RESPECTING GOOD AND EVIL. 1. His penetrating and transcendently perfect inspection of moral good and evil (Isa. iii. 8; 2 Chron. xvi. 9; Rev. i. 14). 2. His approbation of moral good, and His complacency and delight therein. 3. His honouring and rewarding moral goodness. 4. Let us think of the aspect and procedure of this great Judge against moral evil, by rejection, disapprobation, and vengeance. Application—1. In review of the things spoken on this subject, the glorious justice of Jehovah, it is of importance to notice the place which this excellency holds among the other perfections of Deity. It is, in some respects, a consequence of the general rectitude of the Divine Being and of some other particular excellencies of God. But it is specially to be remarked that to justice belongs the high character of the guardian attribute, both in relation to the glory of all that is Divine, and in reference to the rights and interests of created beings among one another. 2. It demands our most serious consideration, that it is not without very great difficulty that an apostate creature can attain genuine and powerful views of the attribute of justice. 3. How solemn are the exercises of an awakened believing soul, making express application to God for reconciliation and peace by the blood of Jesus! 4. How perfect is the glory of the sacrifice and righteousness of Jesus, the Son of God! (*John Love, D.D.*) *The justice of God*:—I. THE EXCELLENCE OF HIS NATURE PROVES IT. If "he that ruleth over men must be just," if human rulers must be just, how much more must He be who requires them to be so, the Governor, the Maker of all the world! And if it suits His office that He should be so, what is there to induce Him to depart from His character? II. HIS OWN WORD SHOWS IT (Jer. ix. 24; Psa. xix. 9, cxlv. 17; Acts xvii. 31). III. HIS COMMANDMENTS TO MEN PROVE IT. The qualities He requires in them are those which exist in Himself, and the end of man's obedience is to be likened to his Maker. IV. HIS DEALINGS WITH MEN SHOW IT. To them He declares Himself to be eminently holy and just; that He will by no means clear the guilty, and that He will finally render to every man according to the things he has done. V. THE NECESSITY OF HIS VERY NATURE SHOWS IT. It is utterly impossible that a being holy, good, and wise as the Deity should be indifferent to the actions of His creatures, or that having given a law for their guidance, He should be indifferent as to the measure of their obedience to it. What, then, do we mean when we speak of the justice of God? It means that He will execute His whole law; that He will fulfil His word, and render to every one according to his works. To make this justice perfect, as all the attributes of God must be supposed to be, it will descend to every particular in our conduct; nothing will be too small to be noted; nothing can be concealed from Him; nothing will be overlooked by Him. To make it consistent with the spiritual character of His nature, and with that spiritual holiness which He requires in His people, it will extend to every thought, to every purpose, to every hidden wish of the heart, as well as to every work and to every action. (*H. Raikes, M.A.*)

Ver. 5. **They have corrupted themselves.**—*Man corrupting his way*:—If we

consider what this people seemed once to be, and thought themselves to be, we may easily know how they corrupted themselves. If ye look on them at one time (Exod. xix. 8; Deut. v. 27) ye would call them children. There was never a fairer undertaking of obedience. But compare all this people's practice with this profession, and you shall find it exceeding contrary; they indeed corrupted themselves, though they got warning to take heed of it (chap. iv. 15). But, alas! it was within them that destroyed them; there was not such a heart in them as to hear and obey; but they undertake, being ignorant of their own deceitful hearts, which were desperately wicked. And therefore behold what corruption followed upon such a professed resolution: they never sooner promised obedience but they disobeyed; they did abominable works and did no good, and this is to corrupt their way (Psa. xiv. 1). We may make this song our own. We have corrupted ourselves. Once we had a fair show of zeal for God, of love and desire of reformation of life, many solemn undertakings were that we should amend our doings. But what is the fruit of all? Alas! we have corrupted ourselves more than Israel promised, but we vowed to the most High amendment of life. Lay this rule to our practices, and are we not a perverse generation? Oh! that we were more affected with our corruptions, and were more sensible of them; then we could not choose but mourn for our own and the land's departing from God. There is a great noise of a public reformation of ordinances and worship; but, alas! the deformation of life and practice outcries all that noise. Every man useth to impute his faults to something beside himself. Ere men take with their own iniquity, they will charge God that gave no more grace. But if men knew themselves, they would deduce their corruption and destruction both from one fountain, that is, from themselves. What was the fountain of this people's corruptions and apostatising from their professions? The Lord hints at it (Deut. v. 25). Oh, that they had such a heart! Alas! poor people, ye know not yourselves that speak so well; I know thee better than thou dost thyself. I will declare unto thee thy own thought: thou hast not such a heart as to do what thou sayest. If thou knewest this fountain of original corruption thou wouldst despair of doing, and say, I cannot serve the Lord. Why is our way corrupted? Because our hearts within were not cleansed, and because they were not known. If we had dried up the fountain, the streams had ceased; but we did only dam it up, and cut off some streams for a season. We set up our resolutions and purposes as an hedge to hold it in, but the sea of the heart's iniquity, that is above all things, hath overflowed it, and defiled our way more than in former times. Times do not bring evils along with them, they do but discover what was hid before. All the evils and corruptions you now see among us, where were they in the day of our first love, when we were as a beloved child? Have all these risen up of late? No, certainly; all that you have seen and found were before, though they did not appear. Before they were in the root, now you see the fruit. Now, so it is with us; we have corrupted ourselves still more. Backsliding cometh on as grey hairs, here and there, and is not perceived by beholders. No man becometh worst at first. There are many steps between that and good. Corruption comes on men's way as in fruits; some one part beginneth to alter, and then it groweth worse, and putrifieth and corrupteth the rest of the parts. An apple rots not all at once, so it is with us. Men begin at leisure, but they run post or all be done. (*H. Binning.*)

Not the spot of His children.—*The secret spot:*—There are frequently great difficulties in identifying the persons of men, even when they have been distinctly seen. Our police courts have given us most serious evidence that men may be utterly deceived as to the identity of individuals. Turning to the moral universe, identity there is far more difficult to be made out, for both the moral and religious world swarm with pretenders. You cannot know to a certainty who among your acquaintances is a Christian and who is not. You see the text talks about certain secret spots. These are tokens in which men cannot so readily deceive as to their identity. The mother will be able to tell whether this is her child or not by the spot which is known to none but herself. The pretender may be very like her child: the voice may be the voice of Jacob, and the hands may not be dissimilar, and he may be able to relate many things concerning his youth which it would seem that none but the real child could know; but the mother recollects that there was a secret spot, and if that be not there, she turns aside the pretender; but if she discovers that private token, she knows the claimant to be her child. There are secret marks upon every Christian, and if we have not the spot of God's child too, it will little avail us how fairly in our outward garb and manner we may

conform ourselves to the members of the heavenly family. 1. First, then, at the mention of private spots which are to be the insignia of the regenerate, there are thousands who say, "We do not shirk that examination. Truly, the signs of saints are in us also! Are others Israelites? so are we: we challenge an investigation." Be it so, then! LET US COMMENCE A MINUTE EXAMINATION. I am not now to deal with anything that is public. We are not speaking now about actions or words, but concerning those secret things which men have judged to be infallible marks of their being saved. Here is a friend before us, and as he lays bare his heart he indicates to us the spot which he thinks proclaims him to be a child of God. I will describe it. The man has embraced sound doctrine. Wherever he goes, his whole talk is of his favourite Shibboleth, "The truth! The truth!" Not that the aforesaid truth has ever renewed his nature; not that it has at all made him a better husband or a kinder father; not that it influences him in trade. Now, sir, we do not hesitate to say concerning you, although you will not be best pleased with us for it, that your spot is not the spot of the children of God. No form of doctrine, however Scriptural, can ever save the soul if it be only received by the head, and does not work in its mighty energy upon the heart. "Ye must be born again," is the Saviour's word; and unless ye be born again, your carnal nature may hold the truth in the letter without discerning the spirit; and while the truth shall be dishonoured by being so held, you yourself shall not be benefited thereby. II. WHAT IS THE TRUE SECRET SPOT WHICH INFALLIBLY BETOKENS THE CHILD OF GOD? "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." Here it is, then: if I have received Christ Jesus into my heart, then I am a child of God. That reception is described in the second clause as a believing on the name of Jesus Christ. If, then, I believe on Jesus Christ's name, I am a member of the family of the Most High. III. THE DISCRIMINATION OF DEFILING SPOTS. The term "spot" as used in the text will not be read usually as we have read it. It will, no doubt, to most readers suggest the idea of sin, and very properly so—then the text would run thus: the sin of the people mentioned here is not the sin of God's people. There is a difference between their guilt and the offences of the Lord's chosen. There is a discrimination to be made, even as to sinful spots. God forbid that you should imagine that I wish to excuse the sins of believers. In some views, when a believer sins, his sin is worse than that of other men, because he offends against greater light; he revolts against greater love and mercy; he flies in the teeth of his profession; he does despite to the Cross of Christ, and he brings dishonour upon the name of Jesus. Believers cannot sin cheaply. The very least speck on a Christian is more plainly seen than the foulest blot on the ungodly, just as a white dress shows the dirt the sooner. Sin is a horrible thing, and it is above all things detestable when it lurks in a child of God; yet the sins of God's people do differ from the sins of other men in many important respects: they do not sin with cool determination, meaning to sin and sinning for its own sake. A sinner in his sins is a bird in the air, but the believer in sin is like the fish that leaps for a while into the air, but must be back again or die. Sin cannot be satisfactory to an immortal spirit regenerated by the Holy Ghost. If you sin, you "have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"; but if you sin and love sin, then you are the servant of sin, and not the child of God. Again, the child of God cannot look back upon sin with any kind of complacency. The ungodly man has this spot, that after the sin he even boasts of it; he will tell to others that he enjoyed himself greatly in his wicked sport. "Ah," saith he, "how sweet it is!" But no man of God ever sins without smarting. IV. AN EXHORTATION. To make sure work for eternity, and to make it clear to your own consciences that you are the children of God. A famous case is now pending, in which a person claims to be the son of a deceased baronet. Whether he be or not I suppose will ere long be decided by the highest authorities; meanwhile the case is pending, a very weighty case for him, for upon the decision will hang his possession or non-possession of vast estates and enormous property. Now, in your case you, many of you, profess to be the children of God, and heaven hangs upon the question of the truthfulness of your profession. A child of God! Then your portion is eternal life. An heir of wrath, even as others! Then your heritage will be eternal death. Is it uncertain now whether you are a child of God or not? Is it uncertain now whether your spot is the spot of God's children? Then let not an hour pass over your head till you have said, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way ever-

lasting!" (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The children and the spots*:—I. GOD'S CHILDREN HAVE THEIR SPOTS IN THIS LIFE. How many spots does the holy eye of God observe upon us every day! II. THERE IS AN ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SPOTS OF GOD'S CHILDREN AND THE SPOTS OF THE UNREGENERATE. Certainly in the sight of God there is no difference in sin. Its nature is the same. And sin upon one of God's children, abstractedly considered, is hateful. 1. Unregenerate men sin deliberately and habitually. When did you find a good man that was an habitual sinner? 2. Unregenerate men sin freely: there is no principle in their heart which stands opposed to sin. 3. In unregenerate minds there is always a love to some particular sin; but in the regenerate there is no one sin but he desires the death of it. 4. How different are the feelings of the regenerate and unregenerate, after having committed the same sin, both alike in the sight of men! An unregenerate man may weep bitterly: what is the cause? Shame! Men know it; he is afraid of punishment. But what produces the grief which a believer feels? Because he has given blasphemy among men; because he has offended his God, and has built up a wall between God and his soul. If a child of God has fallen, it will render him watchful and prayerful: if a wicked man gain peace, he will go his way, and sin on. (*John Hyatt.*) *The spot of God's children*:—I. GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE THEIR SPOT, OR DISTINCTIVE SYMBOL. The term spot is here plainly employed in allusion to the distinctive badge which idolaters were wont to receive upon their foreheads, faces or hands, to show what God they worshipped (Rev. xx. 4). Now, the Lord's worshippers have their distinct mark, impressed not upon their persons, but upon their spirit, temper, principles, conversation, and behaviour, which is holiness unto the Lord (Jer. ii. 3). This has been the mark of God's people from the beginning, and is so still (Zech. xiv. 20). II. THE DISHONOUR OF THOSE WHO HAVE "NOT THE SPOT OF HIS CHILDREN." The marginal reading gives a remarkably important turn to the meaning of the text. "They are not His children, this is their blot." That all are not His children who are so accounted, will be readily admitted, seeing the visible Church embraces many who do not exhibit the distinguishing mark. And, if within the pale of the Church are found those who are not God's children, what estimate shall we form of those who are without? And if all who are not God's children might be if they would, what a fearful blot is this upon their character! 1. What a reflection on any man's understanding to think lightly of so great a benefit! 2. Again, what must be his peril who is living in this state? What his misery who is without hope and God in the world? Shall such a blot remain long upon any of us? (*J. Burdsall.*)

Ver. 6. **Do ye thus requite the Lord.**—*Magnitude of the Divine favours*:—I. WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US. Everything. We are indebted to Him for our being, and our well-being; for all our present comforts, and future hopes. The goodness of God is a boundless sea, without either bottom or shore. His favours for multitude, diversity, and splendour, resemble the stars of heaven, which the more attentively they are viewed, appear the more numerous, and, were we not so immensely distant from them, would equally astonish us with their magnitude and order. 1. Creation. 2. Preservation. 3. Redemption. 4. The Gospel. 5. The Holy Spirit. II. HOW WE OUGHT IN REASON, DUTY, AND INTEREST TO REQUITE THE LORD FOR HIS GIFTS. 1. If we ourselves are the creatures of God's power, and have no faculty of soul, no member of body, no endowment of any kind, but what we have received from Him, surely it ill-becomes us to boast of anything that we have, as though we received it not; or to value ourselves on account of what is not our own, but only lent us for a little time, and to be redemanded soon with usury. 2. This leads me to a second inference, that the many mercies of God have laid an indispensable obligation upon us unfeignedly and gratefully to praise Him. 3. But again, may we not infer, from the preceding observations, that it is no less our duty to trust in God than it is humbly to praise Him? The many and wonderful things which He hath done for us leave no room to doubt either of His goodness or power; either of His inclination or ability to help and save us. 4. The loving-kindness of the Lord to us-ward, so wonderfully displayed, so incessantly exercised, notwithstanding our ingratitude, certainly demands returns of love, and lays us under an indispensable obligation to serve and glorify Him. (*J. Benson.*) *An appeal to the conscience*:—No arrow is so sharp as a well-timed and well-directed question, winged with such precision as this. It goes straight to the conscience; and whatever else religion deals with, it must deal primarily with the conscience. The song proceeds to make appeal to the imagination, the memory,

the judgment, the heart, but all with the view of getting, through them, at the conscience. Its grand purpose is to bring the Lord into contact with the people's conscience; and as there are no more effective grappling-hooks with which to seize the conscience and moor it closely alongside of Him than a series of questions, we have them here in a triple array: "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not He thy Father that hath bought thee?" that is, hath paid for thine emancipation out of Egypt, so that you might get away scathless and free? "Hath not He made and established thee?" Made a people and nation of thee, given thee a name and place of unprecedented distinction among surrounding tribes, established law and settled institutions in your midst, advanced you to peculiar privileges, and put you into the condition of an orderly and well-regulated Church and State? It was a fit time to recall the past, to remember their original nothingness, to take a review of what they once were, and what they had even already become. (*A. H. Drysdale, M.A.*) *Man's ungrateful requital to God*:—I have sometimes had the misfortune to sit in concerts where persons would chatter and giggle and laugh during the performance of the profoundest passages of the symphonies of the great artists; and I never fail to think, at such times, "I ask to know neither you, nor your father and mother, nor your name: I know what you are, by the way you conduct yourself here—by the want of sympathy and appreciation which you evince respecting what is passing around you." We could hardly help striking a man who should stand looking upon Niagara Falls without exhibiting emotions of awe and admiration. If we were to see a man walk through galleries of genius, totally unimpressed by what he saw, we should say to ourselves, "Let us be rid of such an unsusceptible creature as that." Now I ask you to pass upon yourselves the same judgment. What do you suppose angels, that have trembled and quivered with ecstatic joy in the presence of God, think when they see how indifferent you are to the Divine love and goodness in which you are perpetually bathed, and by which you are blessed and sustained every moment of your lives? How can they do otherwise than accuse you of monstrous ingratitude and moral insensibility which betokens guilt as well as danger? (*H. W. Beecher.*) **Is not He thy Father that hath bought thee?**—*God's paternal relation and claim*:—I. GOD AS THE FATHER OF HIS PEOPLE. 1. He has redeemed them by Christ (1 Pet. i. 18, 19). 2. He is the Author of their spiritual existence (Eph. ii. 10). 3. He has made paternal provision for them (Phil. iv. 19). 4. He grants parental protection to them (Psa. xci. 4). 5. He imparts paternal instruction (Isa. liv. 13). 6. He takes great delight in them (Isa. lxvi. 13). 7. He administers fatherly correction (Jer. xxx. 11). 8. He has made paternal provision for them (Psa. xxxi. 19). II. THE CLAIMS WHICH HE HAS UPON HIS CHILDREN. 1. He ought to have our highest reverence (Heb. xii. 28). 2. He ought to have our supreme affection (Deut. vi. 5). 3. He should possess our unwavering confidence (Isa. xii. 2). 4. He should have our cheerful obedience (2 Cor. x. 4–6). 5. Our continual gratitude and praise (1 Pet. ii. 9). (*T. B. Baker.*) *The parental character of God*:—The term "father" implies all that is most tender and affectionate. The love of a father is immeasurable. It extends to everything which can affect the welfare of his offspring. Is not God your Father? 1. Did not He create you? Was it not He who, having created you, committed you to the charge of your earthly parents, and disposed their minds to watch with unceasing care over your welfare? Is it not, therefore, in a secondary sense only that we are to ascribe the term of father to our earthly parent, while the primary and full meaning of the word belongs only to our Creator? Let us remember that, in having God for our Father, we possess the highest honour and the noblest privilege which any created beings can enjoy. 2. There is another sense in which the title of Father is justly claimed by God. He is the Father who hath bought us. When I have reflected upon the signal proofs which God has given of His paternal feelings towards us, I have often been surprised that those whose gratitude to their earthly parents is unbounded, should show so little affection to their heavenly Father, and rely so little on His love and mercy. The reasons of this inconsistency appear to me to be the following. 1. The undue attachment which we are apt to place on objects of sense. We see and converse with an earthly parent, but our bodily senses do not inform us of the presence of God. Yet the proofs of His presence are actually more strong and numerous than those which attest the existence of any material object. 2. Through the weakness of the human understanding we continually entertain an undue estimation of second causes. We do not feel the extent of our obligations to our heavenly Father, because many of the blessings

which He bestows are communicated to us by some instrument appointed for that end. It will probably, however, be generally acknowledged, that the character of God is good and gracious. It is in the practical use of such knowledge that we are chiefly apt to fail. This is, therefore, the end to which I now shall direct your attention. 1. You ought to entertain the highest reverence for His laws. Read the Bible constantly as containing the will of your heavenly Father. 2. This view of the character of God as our Father gives a just idea of the true nature of religion. Religion is the homage which you pay to your heavenly Father. It is the regulation of your lives by His holy Word. It is the enjoyment of the innumerable benefits offered to mankind through His beloved Son. Religion must bear the stamp and character of its Author. 3. Is God our Father? Then we ought to maintain an intercourse with Him by frequent prayer, and to praise Him daily for His innumerable mercies. 4. Is God our Father? Let us then place a generous confidence in Him. (*J. Venn, M.A.*) *The paternal character of God*:—I. GOD AS THE FATHER OF HIS PEOPLE. 1. God is the Author of their spiritual existence. 2. He makes paternal provision for His children. 3. He affords parental protection to His children. 4. He imparts paternal instruction. 5. He takes paternal delight in His children. 6. He administers paternal correction to His children. 7. He lays up a paternal provision for His children. II. THE CLAIMS WHICH HE HAS UPON HIS CHILDREN. 1. He ought to receive from us the highest reverence. We should cultivate His fear. 2. He ought to have our supreme affections. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," &c. 3. He should possess our unwavering confidence. Trust in Him at all times. 4. He should have our cheerful obedience. "Be ye followers of God as dear children," &c. 5. He shall receive from us our most exalted praises. (*J. Burns, D.D.*)

Vers. 7, 8. **Remember the days of old.**—*Particular instances of God's kindness*:—1. Some were ancient; and for proof of them he appeals to the records. The authentic histories of ancient times are of singular use, especially the history of the Church in its infancy. 2. Others were more modern; and for proof of them he appeals to their fathers and elders that were now alive and with them. Parents must diligently teach their children not only the Word of God, His laws (Deut. vi. 7), and the meaning of His ordinances (Exod. xii. 26), but His works also, and the methods of His providence (Psa. lxxxvii. 3, 4, 6, 7). And children should desire the knowledge of those things which will be of use to engage them to their duty, and to direct them in it. 3. Three things are here enlarged upon as instances of God's kindness to His people, and strong obligations upon them never to forsake Him. (1) The early designation of the land of Canaan for their inheritance; for herein it was a type and figure of an heavenly inheritance, that it was of old ordained and prepared in the Divine counsels. (*a*) The wisdom of God has appointed the bounds of man's habitation, and determined both the place and time of our living in the world (Acts xvii. 26). (*b*) Infinite wisdom has a vast reach, and designs beforehand what is brought to pass long after (Acts xv. 18). (*c*) The great God, in governing the world and ordering the affairs of states and kingdoms, has a special regard to His Church and people, and consults their good in all (2 Chron. xvi. 9; Isa. xlv. 4). (2) The forming of them into a people, that they might be fit to enter upon this inheritance, like an heir of age, at the time appointed. Herein also Canaan was a figure of the heavenly inheritance; for as it was from eternity proposed and designed for all God's spiritual Israel, so they are in time (and it is a work of time) fitted and made meet for it (Col. i. 12). (3) The settling of them in a good land. (*a*) Glorious victories over their enemies. (*b*) Plenty of good things. (*Matthew Henry, D.D.*) **Ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.**—*Advantages of inquiry*:—There is much truth in the proverb, He that will learn of none but himself is sure to have a fool for his master. The way to advance in knowledge is to be sensible of our own deficiencies, and willing to avail ourselves of assistance. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God," &c. There are others that may be subordinately consulted; they possess, and can impart a little of His judgment: for in His light they see light. The priest's lips should keep knowledge; and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts. And not only ministers, but private Christians may be useful. We were designed to live in a state of connection with, and dependence upon each other: and while the old need the strength and activeness of the young, the young need the prudence and counsel of the old. But what advantage do we derive from writing and printing! The birds and beasts are

no wiser now than when they went to Noah for shelter, and to Adam for names. It is nearly the same with savage life: knowledge is not preserved, transmitted, and increased, for want of books. But in consequence of these helps, the improvements of one age flow into another, and the stream is continually enlarging by the influx of additional discoveries. (*W. Jay.*) **When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance.**—*The nations divided*:—1. God originally divided the nations their inheritance. When, after the deluge, He gave the new earth to the children of men, He did not throw it in among them, so to speak, for a kind of scramble, that each might seize what he could: but He assigned them their several portions, that the discontented might not invade the peaceful, nor the mighty prey upon the weak. God permits what He does not approve: but nothing can be more contrary to His design and pleasure than for powerful states to invade and incorporate little ones. And the crime generally punishes itself. Such unjust and forced accessions become sources of uneasiness, corruption, and revolt. 2. In the arrangement of the limits and conditions of mankind He had an especial reference to the future commonwealth of Israel. For they were by far the most important detachment of the human race. They were the depositaries of revealed religion—the heirs of the righteousness which is by faith, &c. One thing is to be observed. They were not intended to engross the Divine favour, but to be the diffusers of it. They were not only to be blessed, but to be blessings. 3. While we here see that there is nothing like chance in the government of the world, there is what may be called a peculiar providence in particular instances. And we cannot help thinking of our own country. No country on earth bears such a comparison with Judea, in privilege and design. 4. The economies of heaven on earth have always been regulated by one end—the cause of the Messiah: and could we view things as God does, we should perceive how all the revolutions of the world; the changes of empire have affected this cause—immediately or—remotely—in a way—of achievement—or preparation—of purification or—increase—of solidity or—diffusion: and that all things are going on, not only consistently with it, but conducively to it. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 9. **The Lord's portion is His people.**—*A choice portion*:—1. The text teaches us that the Church of God is the Lord's own peculiar and special property. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: the world, and they that dwell therein." By creation, as well as by providence, Jehovah is the Sovereign possessor of the entire universe. Let none venture to dispute His claims, or say that He is not the great owner of all things, for thus saith the Lord, "Behold, all souls are Mine." But He has a special property in His Church. As a king may have ample possessions, to all of which he has undoubted right, but still he has royal crown-lands which are in a very special sense his own; so hath the Lord of all a peculiar interest in His saints. As Osborne, and Balmoral, and Windsor belong to our sovereign by a tenure which differs from his title and claim to the United Kingdom, so the Church is the peculiar heritage of the King of kings. "The Lord's portion is His people." How are they His? (1) We answer, first, by His own sovereign choice. He did so ordain to make His chosen and set His love upon them. (2) They are not only His by choice, but by purchase. (3) They are also His by conquest. Old Jacob, when he lay a-dying, gave to Joseph one portion above his brethren, which he had taken out of the hand of the Amorite with his sword and with his bow. The Lord Jesus can truly say of His people, that He hath taken them out of the hand of the Amorite with His sword and with His bow. Thy conquering hand, O Jesus, when nailed to the Cross, rent away Thy children's chains. We are indeed the conquered captives of His omnipotent love. 2. In the second place, the text shows that the saints are the objects of the Lord's especial care. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth," —with what object?—"to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him." The wheels of providence are full of eyes; but in what direction are they gazing? Why, that all things may "work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." 3. The text includes the idea that the Church is the object of the Lord's special joy, for a man's portion is that in which he takes delight. See what terms He uses; He calls them His dwelling-place. "In Jewry is God known, His name is great in Israel, in Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling-place in Zion." "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation." Where is a man most at ease? Why, at home. We are expressly told that the Church is the Lord's rest. "This is My rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it."

As if all the world beside were His workshop, and His Church His rest. In the boundless universe He is busy marshalling the stars, riding upon the wings of the wind, making the clouds His chariot; but in His Church He is at rest, in Zion the Everlasting One spends His Sabbaths. Yet further, there is an unrivalled picture in the Word where the Lord is even represented as singing with joy over His people. Who could have conceived of the Eternal One as bursting forth into a song? Yet it is written, "He will rejoice over thee with joy, He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing." As He looked upon the world, He spoke and said, "It is very good," but He did not sing. And as He vieweth the works of providence, I hear not that He sings; but when He gazes on you, the purchase of Jesus' blood, His own chosen ones, the great heart of the Infinite restrains itself no longer, but, wonder of wonders, God, the Eternal One, sings out of the joy of His soul. Truly, "the Lord's portion is His people." 4. Our text teaches us that God's people are His everlasting possession. He will never sell His children at a price; nor if He could have better people instead, would He change them. They are His, and they shall be His while time lasts; and when time ends, and eternity rolls on, He never can, He never will cast away His chosen people. Let us in this rejoice and be exceeding glad. "The Lord's portion is His people." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Lord's people*:—I. WHAT IS SAID OF THE LORD'S PEOPLE? 1. They are a chosen people. 2. They are a renewed people. 3. They are a people of faith. 4. They are a justified people. 5. They are a people who perform good works. II. WHERE GOD FINDS HIS PEOPLE WHEN HE CALLS THEM. 1. Alienated from God. 2. Ignorant of God. 3. As wanderers, going astray. 4. Strangers to themselves. 5. Willing slaves to Satan. 6. Dead in sins. III. THE SPECIAL CARE WHICH THE LORD TAKES OF HIS PEOPLE. 1. He leads them—(1) To Christ for salvation. (2) To see further into the plague of their own heart. (3) Into the furnace of spiritual affliction. 2. He instructs them —(1) In the plan of salvation. (2) In the doctrine of the Trinity. (3) In the efficacy of Christ's death. (4) In the endearing relationship which God sustains to His people, as their Father, &c. (5) In all the blessings of the covenant. (*J. J. Eastmead.*) *God's people His portion*:—The word "portion" signifies a possession which a man claims as his own, which he highly prizes, and in which he greatly delights. We cannot say that the English are the people of God, or the French, or the Germans, or the Russians; but we may say that God has a people in England, and in France, and in Germany, and in Russia; and so on. For His real people are no longer known as Jew or Gentile, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free; but those in every nation under heaven are His who worship Him in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. These are His people; He has pleasure in them, and counts them His portion—a possession dear to Him above all others. Of course, we speak of earth. In heaven He may have what is dearer still: but when He looks down on earth, He sees nothing so precious as those whom He has chosen to be His people, the lot of His inheritance. Let us, then, see on what grounds it is that He so highly values them. These are three: they are dear to Him—as bought by so costly a price; as regenerated by His grace on earth; as hereafter to be glorified in heaven. I. NOW, WHEN A MAN PAYS A GREAT PRICE FOR ANYTHING, HE MUST HAVE ESTEEMED IT VERY VALUABLE BEFORE HE COULD BE INDUCED TO GIVE SO MUCH FOR IT; and in like manner, we argue very correctly when we say that the fact of God's giving His Son to save the world was a proof how strongly His bowels yearned over manhood, how precious they were in His sight. But this is not the exact feature of the case before us, which we are proposing to consider. We are not speaking of that love of God to the world which led Him to give His Son to save it; but of His love to those who are so purchased and saved. And here also, if we look at the manner of men, we well know that what a man has laboured hard for, and purchased dear, he prizes accordingly; he surveys the acres which, at the expense of much toil, he has made his own, with very different feelings from those of his heir, into whose hands they fall without any care or expense on his part, and who perhaps dissipates what his predecessor had acquired. It is this latter case which illustrates the love that God bears to His people. He loves them because so much has been paid for them; He would not that the souls should perish for which Christ died; His soul would be grieved at the loss of that which the counsels of His wisdom and the treasures of His love had been expended to procure. II. When a man, at a very high price, has purchased a tract of waste land, which, on account of the scenery, the air, and the capabilities of the soil, HE DESTINES FOR HIS FUTURE RESIDENCE,

HE SURVEYS WHAT HAS NOW BECOME HIS PROPERTY WITH MUCH INTEREST. But in its present state he cannot view it with entire satisfaction; he cannot dwell in the morass, nor take up his abode in the one mean hovel that stands on the premises; but he will not let the large sum which he has paid be lost. He therefore causes the whole to be surveyed, lays down a plan of improvement, and fixes on the site of his intended dwelling. After a while the scene is changed, the bog is reclaimed, furze and brushwood, and all unsightly objects are swept away, trees are planted, the grounds are tastefully laid out, and a beautiful mansion is erected. The proprietor now looks at it with other eyes than before, is delighted with the loveliness which he beholds, and gladly fixes his abode there. It is thus that the Lord at first beholds those whom He has purchased by the death of His Son. The mere fact of Christ's having died for them makes no more change in their character than a man's having paid the purchase of a bleak common converts it into a scene of loveliness. No; much has to be done with the soil of the heart, as well as with the soil of the ground; and He who undertakes the work is a skilful operator, and is sure to succeed. But here the parallel ceases; our illustration leaves us—it can help us no further. How man acts upon the inert soil, we can understand; but cannot understand how God acts upon the mind. The process of education comes the nearest to it; for, as we teach children by books, and stimulate them by rewards and punishments, so God deals with His people in a way of instruction and discipline. III. If, then, the people of God is His portion here below; if such is the excellence of real holiness, that, imperfect as their holiness is, their heavenly Father sees nothing to be compared to it, nothing worthy to be mentioned with it, in the whole compass of our globe—WHAT A PORTION WILL HIS RANSOMED ONES BE TO HIM, WHEN EVERY REMAINDER OF SIN SHALL BE DONE AWAY; when He shall see in them the full resemblance of their elder Brother, His well-beloved Son, and be well pleased with them, even as He is well pleased with Him! And now let me, in conclusion, show you that all the considerations which move God to take us for His portion should be so many arguments to induce us to follow after holiness. 1. In the first place, the price paid for us. Did Christ die to redeem us from this present evil world? and shall we be conformed to the world which crucified Him? 2. Further, consider how excellent true holiness is. If the Lord's people are His portion, it is because they are a holy people. He rejoices over them on account of their holiness. Think, then, what a real dignity and sterling worth there must be in that which God Himself approves. 3. But look beyond the end of your days here below—look to those days which will know no end. Think of the sanctity and blessedness of that state for which God is training you, and be content to be led and disciplined for it in the way that He pleases. (*J. Fawcett, M.A.*) *Good men as the property of God*:—I. They are amongst His MOST VALUABLE PROPERTY. 1. They have souls. One soul is more valuable than the whole world. Souls can think of and love God; the material universe cannot. 2. Redeemed souls. II. They are amongst His MOST GRATIFYING PROPERTY. (*Homilist.*) *The Church the portion of God*:—By this it is not intimated that God needs us, or any creature, to add anything to His blessedness; it is impossible to suppose it. We cannot be necessary to the Lord otherwise than as we supply Him with opportunities of displaying His grace and all-sufficiency. But though it implies not anything so derogatory to God, it means something of the greatest consequence to us. 1. In the first place, it implies tender care. A man's portion is the most valuable part of his substance, which he is solicitous above all things to preserve: and if it be at any time in danger, he is indefatigable till it be secured. In like manner is the Church, and every particular member of it, the charge of the providence of God. 2. A portion is an object of delight. With what pleasure does the worldling survey his possessions! He leaves his intimate friend, and agreeable company, to count his beloved treasure. He walks over his fields each day with fresh pleasure; and every time sees, or thinks he sees, new beauties in the prospect around him. Yet this very imperfectly represents the delight which the Lord is described as taking in His people. Jewels, treasure, heritage, children are the endearing appellations by which they are distinguished. 3. A portion implies expectation. Where much is given, much will be required. Where He has distinguished any with peculiar marks of regard, He expects works of faith and labours of love; fruitfulness in every good work, and increase in the knowledge of God. He expects that His people should be essentially different from the rest of the world; that they shine as lights in the world, and adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things; and that their progress in grace and holiness be

proportionable to their various advantages. 4. I might here particularly show you how we came to be the portion of God. (1) But let us now, from what has been said, consider how lamentable it is that the Lord's portion is so small; that, among all the human race, there should be so few to whom the words of the text may be properly applied. (2) How solicitous should we be to know whether we be the Lord's portion or not! (3) "Let us walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called." (4) Finally, let us rejoice in the prospect of that glorious period, when the Lord will fully possess His portion, and we shall fully possess ours. (*S. Lavington.*)

Ver. 10. **He found him in a desert land.**—*God and His people*:—I. Now, although one of the chief objects of this discourse will be to adapt this portion of Scripture to our own times, it will be well to offer some few remarks in regard to THEIR PRIMARY APPLICATION; and they may be considered as containing a summary of all that had been suffered by the Israelites, of all that had been wrought by God on their behalf, of their departure from the bondage of Egypt, the perils of their journey, and the might of their deliverance. II. I would now speak on THREE STATES AND CONDITIONS OF BELIEVERS WHICH THE TEXT APPEARS TO DEPICT. 1. We behold the believer or spiritual Israelite in his natural state—"A desert land, a waste howling wilderness." We must be humble; for the idea of a "good heart," which is so much prated about, is just like a cankerworm in the soul. Whatever the consolations of faith are, it is not possible that Christ should be all, unless man actually feels himself to be nothing. 2. Our text depicts the believer in a regenerate state. Found of God, led and instructed by God. Here are the several stages of Christian experience. Man is found of God, rather than God is sought of man. The work of redemption is Divine in its commencement, as well as its consummation; and the Holy Spirit, through whose operations alone the soul is prepared for final glory, gives the first impulse, and excites the glorious aspiration. "I was found of them that sought Me not"; and, however these words may especially allude to the calling of the Gentile Church, you observe that they are descriptive of every believer's individual experience. "Found of God." This, then, is the commencement of spiritual life; and although when the arrow of conviction first enters into the conscience the sinner exclaims, as Ahab did to Elijah, "Hast thou found me, O my enemy!" Yet presently the soul rejoices in its deliverance. A sense of the burthen of sin gives way before the manifestation of Christ: and the man that is thus found of God finds his guilty burthen removed, and a full salvation amply provided and ensured. But whilst religion's "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace," yet the course of God's dealings with His people is never one of undeviating serenity; it is, on the contrary, "through much tribulation" that the kingdom of heaven is entered; and the path which a Christian travels is generally so circuitous that it can only be described by saying, God led him about—from gardens smiling with the flowers of hope, to deserts stript of leaves, of foliage, of beauty. 3. He who is in a regenerate state is also in a secured and guarded state, which is the last condition our text depicts; God keeps true believers "as the apple of His eye." (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The journey through the wilderness*:—I. GOD'S DEALINGS WITH HIS ANCIENT PEOPLE. God "found" Israel. Of His own inscrutable love, God chose to take this people to Himself; He found them, and made them into a nation for His praise. And it is said, "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness." I apprehend that this expression may relate as well to the position in which the children of Israel were at first found of God, in slavery in Egypt, as to their position during their forty years' sojourn in the wilderness. Then it is said further, that "He led him about." This is in allusion to the circumstance that God did not lead the people by a straight path through the wilderness, from the margin of the Red Sea towards the promised land; but in place of this, forty years were occupied in a circuitous route. And as He thus led the people about, "He instructed" them. He instructed them by many a type, by many a providential dealing, by many statutes and ordinances such as were given to no other nation besides. He instructed them by mercies, by warnings, by judgments; He instructed them by many a token of loving-kindness, by many an interposition of power, by many a signal manifestation of His determination to bless the obedient and to punish the transgressors. And during the whole period, it is further said, "He kept him as the apple of His eye." He shielded them by His power, made it plain to all their enemies that the broad shield of

Omnipotence was thrown over them, and that He was determined to protect them from peril, and to put them in possession of the land which He had promised to their fathers that He would give them. II. Such is the literal application of the words. Now, let us look at their spiritual accommodation—their ACCOMMODATION TO THE SPIRITUAL ISRAEL OF GOD. 1. First, here is the believer "found" of God. "We love Him because He first loved us." Where does God find him? "In a desert land," &c. There is nothing in creation from which we can obtain the supply of the soul's spiritual wants. And even after a person has been found of God the description still holds. We have no fixed habitation upon earth; and we are in constant danger from enemies. But oh! it is a blessed thing to know, that just as God of old found His people Israel in the waste howling wilderness and in the desert land, so He finds His people still; and the proof of His finding them is that He leads them. And here, too, the description given in the text is very accurate, for it is said, "He led him about." 2. Often manifold trials enter into the dealings of God with His people; He permits them to encounter sharp afflictions, unexpected trials, it may be heartrending bereavements; He takes from them the earthly prop upon which they were wont to lean too fondly. But of this be assured: however God may lead His people about, He leads them by the right way. 3. Then, again; all the while God is thus leading His people about, He is "instructing them." Have you not experienced this? A Christian has to grow in knowledge as well as in grace. As God continues His providential dealings towards us, we come to take a wider survey of the love and faithfulness and goodness of God in all His dealings with us. God instructs us in our own weakness and His all-sufficiency, our corruption and His grace, our own frailty and His constancy, our unbelief, and His unwavering faithfulness to His Word. And thus the believer is instructed; and he comes to take a bolder step, and to feel his stand more secure, as being anchored upon the Rock of Ages, and putting his trust in the sure Word of God. 4. And then we must notice, further, that it is said, "He kept him as the apple of His eye." What a beautiful metaphor this is! Of all the bodily organs that God has given to us, the eye is the most exquisitely tender and sensitive. You know how the tiniest particle of dust will irritate and distress the delicate fibres of this tender and sensitive organ; yet of all the organs of our body it is the most exquisitely provided for; and the very guards that God has placed about it are so sensitive and so quick to the perception of danger, that the very eye itself may be defended. Now, this is the figure that God makes use of in order to present His watchful guardianship over His saints. "He kept him as the apple of His eye," watched him with unceasing vigilance, placed around him unnumbered guards, defended him with the utmost possible precaution for his real welfare, and thus shielded and protected him from approaching danger. God thus guards and defends His people. It is said they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." And is there a man who walks this earth so happy, so truly blessed as the man who is thus under the guardianship of God? (*Bp. R. Bickersteth.*) *The goodness of God to Israel*:—I. THE STATE IN WHICH GOD FINDS HIS SERVANTS. "In a desert land, in the waste howling wilderness." 1. Their condition, therefore, if viewed as a picture of the original condition of man, teaches us that the people of God were by nature at a great distance from Him. The enemies of God by wicked works; the willing slaves of Satan; tied and bound with the chain of a thousand lusts; with all their affections fixed on sin, and all their desires turned from God—how shall they find Him, how approach Him? 2. A desolate condition. Let us look back to the days that are past. We imagined that we had need of nothing, but what was our real condition? We were wretched and miserable, poor and naked, ready to perish. The world appeared fair before us; it promised us much, and we were willing to credit it. Fools that we were, we tried it; but what could it do for us? It gave us, among its briars and thorns, a few flowers to amuse us, but it left us starving for want. It brought us no pardon for our guilt, no peace for an accusing conscience, no deliverance from the grave, no refuge from hell. It left us destitute, forlorn, and wretched. 3. A state of danger. The territory of an enemy. II. IN WHAT MANNER THE LORD ACTS TOWARDS HIS PEOPLE AMID THEIR WRETCHEDNESS AND DANGERS. "As an eagle," &c. This beautiful similitude strikingly illustrates the tenderness with which the Almighty led Israel from Egypt to Canaan, and the loving-kindness which He still manifests towards all who seek Him in the wilderness of this world. It shows us what He does for them, and how He does it. 1. It shows us what God does for His people. It tells us that He afflicts them, guides them, and preserves them. 2. But in what

manner does the Lord thus afflict, guide, and defend His servants? He exercises His mercy towards them constantly, patiently, with delight. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*)

Vers. 11, 12. **As an eagle stirreth up her nest.**—*The spiritual discipline of humanity*:—I. The great end of the spiritual discipline of humanity is TO SECURE THE RIGHT ACTION OF OUR POWERS. What is right action? 1. A constitutionally befitting action. We are made to love, study, and serve God. 2. A self-reliant action. This is the condition of progress, and implies a trust in moral principles and in God. 3. A Divinely prompted action. II. The means of the spiritual discipline of humanity involve A VARIETY OF DIVINE ACTION. 1. A stimulating action. God takes health, property, friends, children away, to stir us up. 2. An exemplary action. In Christ we see how we can, and ought to, act. 3. A protecting action. III. The genius of the spiritual disciple of humanity is ever that of PARENTAL AFFECTION. 1. There should be on our part a cordial acquiescence. Our Father knows what is best, and what we require. 2. There should be on our part an endeavour to realise the end of discipline (Job xxiii. 10; Psa. lxvi. 10–12). (*Homilist.*) *Taught by the eagle*:—We are taken out to the solitudes where some cliff, with ragged, splintered crown uplifts its giant form into the air, and has at base, let us suppose, the wave-washed rock and ever-heaving mass of ocean waters. Far above, perched on a ledge forming its eyrie, sits the monarch of the air, the eagle, representative of all that is graceful and powerful in the bird creation. The nest, built of rudely arranged sticks, is so protected by its inaccessibility that you at once see that nothing but the deep instincts of the bird could have taught it to make so savage a place its home. It is, however, so near the cliff's edge that when their offspring are ready for flight, the parent birds may have the less difficulty in tempting their new-fledged offspring to the skies. Two things are taken for granted here, and we need go no further until we bring them under notice. These are that God is our Father, and the powers by which we serve Him are slumbering within us. I. GOD IS OUR FATHER. Does a hearer say, "There's nothing in this"? So much, my friend, that the day you realise this, salvation has entered your dwelling. I am perfectly aware that this at times is hard to believe, that when a fellow-mortal is laid on a bed of pain and sees wife and helpless children sobbing at his bedside, and death steadily advancing to embrace him, I know it is hard for him to think that behind all this discipline there is a God and Father's affection. But recollect, we only see the beginning of things here. The end lies yonder. Yonder lie the explanations and the true home-bringing. Borrowing an illustration from an art we all know something about, the art of photography, we remind you that if the camera-glass be so small that the photographer can only partially cover a coveted view, say some lofty, wide-stretching mountain range, he photographs part by part until he has completed the whole view, and then, piecing his views together, is able to present a faultless and accurate picture of the whole. So must it be with us in our life and in our judgment of God's Fatherhood. II. The second thing assumed is, THAT THE POWERS BY WHICH GOD'S CHILDREN SERVE HIM ARE WITHIN US. Think of our illustration. The wings by which the eagle's offspring soar into the skies do not require to be created. They simply wait to be exercised; so is it with men. We have reminded you, then, that God is our Father, and that the powers by which we serve Him are within us. III. If we are all the children of God, then WE DARE NOT EXPECT TO LIVE WITHOUT BEING EDUCATED BY HIM. Nor can we, and from the illustration supplied us here we learn how the Great Father trains us for His higher service. His method is twofold, and we are now to have this double method graphically illustrated for us. 1. The first is the educative method. The cliff now rises before us. The rudely constructed nest of sticks is there, the yawning abyss beneath, the eaglets and the parent bird. See! She is now about to begin her course of instruction. Dozing, blinking, shivering, her offspring perch upon the ragged summit of the cliff. Like a thunderbolt the mother plunges into the gulf below. She swoops round and round, backwards and forwards, before her timid children. She desires them to follow her example. She pursues this course; but no! they will not; they are faint-hearted; the experience is new. With one bold sweep she has rounded to and perched beside them. Here let her tarry for a brief space while we ask each other what spiritual meaning can we possibly attach to this? It is the leading the way—the showing others how to do anything by first of all doing it yourself. Every master knows its value, when he bids some bungling servant stand aside and see how it ought to be done. The poorest mother in all the

land knows the value of this imitative method when, at nightfall, she kneels in prayer by the side of her child and teaches the little one how to lisp "Our Father." The officer knows the value of this rule, who plunges his spurs into his charger's sides and leads the way 'mid clash of steel and crack of musketry. This, then, is the imitative method, and we all know its value more or less; but not sufficiently, unless we have imitated the noblest exponent of this simple art—Jesus the Christ. He knew the full value of this plan, and the world has never known a nobler follower of it. But what if the reverential spirit in a person refuse to be quickened? What if the religious faculty remain still unawakened? If the soul of man will not yield to God's peaceable, gentle method of education, then observe what our text tells us. 2. God has recourse to His second rule for educating us, the prohibitive method. Let the text tell us what this is. Again we wander forth to the wilds, and now we shall see the parent bird calling yet a second device to her aid in order to compel her timorous children to take wing and cleave the air. They have refused to be taught by gentle ways, they shall be instructed now by sterner rules. Impatiently she flits backwards and forwards, then swoops up beside them. There they still sit, dozing and shivering beside the old nest. In an instant (and naturalists tell us this is strictly true), literally in the words of Scripture, "She stirreth up the nest." She scatters the sticks. She prohibits their remaining longer in a state of infancy and weakness. The sticks are scattered and again she plunges into the yawning gulf below. Now, see what our God and Father is doing. Our hearts in their folly will fondly cling to the hope that on earth we have all we require; we try to settle down here. We say to our souls, we shall have a long and a merry time of it. But the unseen hand of God is holding us; behold the working of that hand! He has withdrawn the old familiar landmarks, one after another. School days and school companions, where are they? He has scattered our schoolfellows, they are spread over the face of the globe, its length and breadth, and many this day sleep their last sleep, "by mount and stream and sea." The happy band of laughing school lads all scattered. The company is broken. He has disappointed us. He has plunged some of us into the cold, dark waters of bereavement, and taught some of us that this world is one gigantic vanity and the earth a vale of tears. And what does it all mean? What but that we are destined for another world? This is only the school. Are we to remain children all our days? Are our powers of soul never to be developed by prayer and faith? Is the spiritual side of our nature to remain asleep or dead? Nay! Life is like the eaglets' nest; and if we will not learn by the imitative, God will continue to apply to us His prohibitive method. 3. But observe, if we refuse to be trained either by imitation or prohibition, if the life of Christ be nothing to a man, and the waves of affliction washing over his soul but harden him in impenitence, I ask you, has the infinite mercy of God no means of retaliating? There shall be no retaliation, but our text as we have it again speaks to us; the only course left open to the Almighty love is to leave him alone. There is no compulsion. No will is forcibly bent to submission. (*D. D. F. Macdonald, M.A.*) *The eagle; a parable of God:*—I. THE DIVINE AIM. Spiritual education. 1. Its character. Educing the latent energies and powers of the soul. 2. Its importance. Character. Higher attainment. Nobler enjoyment. 3. Its difficulty. We love the nest of ease, and are satisfied with slender attainments, or none. II. THE DIVINE METHOD. 1. Disturbance. The ministry of affliction. 2. Example. 3. Aid. (*J. P. Allen, M.A.*) *The eagle's nest:*—1. God's care in providing beforehand for the wants and destinies of His people. 2. The discipline to which God subjects His people for their good. 3. The instruction God gives His people by precept and example. 4. The protection and support God extends to His people. Lessons—1. A lesson of encouragement to begin a Christian life. Your soul has wings; stretch them. Learn to fly by flying. 2. A lesson of comfort. Fear not (Isa. xl. 31). 3. A lesson of hope for all the future. That which has been shall be. (*H. J. Vandyke, D.D.*) *Unity of providence:*—The text suggests the course of God's dealings with His chosen people—the fact that, throughout the shifting scenes of their pilgrimage, God alone is their Guide and Protector. The whole strain of the passage is on the word "alone," and presents to us, not so much the idea of providence itself, as the *unity* of providence. I. This unity is NOT ALWAYS PERCEIVED IN THIS LIFE. 1. One reason of this is to be found in the nature and extent of man's present capabilities. Man learns bit by bit. 2. Another reason is found in the variety of the circumstances of providence. Life is made up of lights and shades, sweets and bitters, with their endlessly arranged gradations. We cannot see how these crooked, angular chippings

can be so placed as to represent the picture sketched by God of His own glory and our welfare. 3. The apparently trivial nature of some events in life hides this unity from us. But can there be anything trivial in God's dealings with us? Who can say one event of his life is of more importance than another? II. This unity FINDS AN ANALOGY IN MAN'S OWN GENERAL PROCEDURE. God often places a heavenly principle under earthly arrangements. "Like as a father pitieth his children," &c. III. This unity WILL BE PERCEIVED IN A FUTURE PERIOD. In providence there is a twofold unity. 1. The perfection of humanity and restoration to the Divine image. 2. The promotion of the glory of God. These two unite; neither can be without the other. When this is accomplished, Christ's idea of unity will be realised. (*C. Gowand, M.A.*) *God stirs up His people*:—I. SOME OF THE REASONS WHY IT IS NECESSARY THAT GOD SHOULD STIR UP HIS PEOPLE. 1. There is a strong tendency to spiritual indolence in mankind. 2. The danger of "settling down on the lees" is an ever-present one. The air must be kept in constant motion or it will lose its life; the ocean must flow and heave unceasingly or its waters become stagnant. 3. The heart of man is naturally timid, fearful, like the birdling, and must be taught of God in a way similar to that described in the text. 4. It is trial, experience, discipline only that can counteract these tendencies, dispel these fears and doubts, and give exercise, development, and strength to our powers, gifts, advantages, and thereby enable us to soar aloft in the blue empyrean like the mother eagle. II. SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH GOD STIRS UP HIS PEOPLE. 1. The Word and ordinances. 2. Special and extraordinary means. (1) Revivals. (2) National judgments. (3) Personal visitation—sickness, bereavement, losses, trials, temptations, discipline. (*J. M. Sherwood, D.D.*) *The eagle stirring up her nest*:—I. THE DISCIPLINE WHICH GOD USES. He knows our tendency to make this earth our rest, and He disturbs our nest to teach us to rise on the wings of faith towards the enduring realities of heaven. How often does God take away our earthly comforts when He sees that we cling too fondly to them. Perhaps something upon which we placed the utmost reliance, upon which seemed to rest our only stay, is suddenly and mysteriously taken from us, and when we attempt to grasp it we find it is gone. A gale at sea may destroy the hopes of the merchant; depression in trade may bring want to your door; the bankruptcy of some large mercantile firm, or the failure of a bank, may involve numbers in ruin, and plunge many families in misery hitherto unknown. How many have had occasion, from these and similar causes, to mourn over altered circumstances. Marvel not if it be thus with you; it is God stirring up your nest to teach you to wing your flight to heaven. How many of us will have to praise God that ever He stirred up our nest by the dispensations of His providence. Let us notice—II. THE AFFECTION WHICH GOD EXHIBITS. "As an eagle fluttereth over her young," or broodeth over them, that she may communicate vital warmth. God is here represented as manifesting the same affection towards His people as the parent bird exhibits towards her young, nurturing and warming them. III. THE GUARDIAN CARE WHICH GOD EXERCISES. "As an eagle spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings." It would be difficult to picture a more touching representation of God's care over His people. 1. He teaches them the way they should go. 2. He sustains them when weary. The affection of the parent bird referred to in the text is so great that she takes her young ones and bears them on her wings, and so shields them that no arrow can reach them but through the parent's heart. And is not God thus a Father to us? Did He not bear us up from the ruin of the fall, and beyond the reach of threatening vengeance? Did not the Son of God, who is one in essence with the Father, assume our nature and bear our sins in His own body on the tree? (*W. J. Brock, B.A.*) *Divine expulsions*:—I. DIVINE INCITEMENTS. It is wonderful how happy men become sometimes in the worldly nest. A man gets the wife he wants. The children come, and prosperity, and kindliness, and health, and comfort, and reputation—and he says in his heart, "I shall die in my nest after living in it for long happy years." When lo! there comes somehow, and from some quarter, a "stirring up" of the nest—incitements, surprises, changes, losses, controversies, sorrows. The young birds are growing, and the nest is too small, and they crowd against each other, and that makes a stirring up. Or there are griefs and losses that crush the unportioned heart and shake it all trembling out of its security. It were useless to attempt to describe all the ways by which God can shatter what man builds, drive away what man gathers, take what man in vain tries to hold. The thing to be done is to persuade ourselves

that all this is indeed sent for our good. The eagle does not stir up its nest with any ill design. God does not bring His forces of change and trouble upon men with a view to grieve and ruin them. He, too, has only good intent. His voices, His strokes, seem to say to men, "What mean ye, ye sleepers? Awake. You have enough of that. You have in the creature no abiding portion; seek it, and you will find it in Me." II. DIVINE EXAMPLE. "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young"; as showing them the way to fly; so God sets before us the examples of the good, the strivings of the great, the lives of the saints, and chiefly the perfect life of His incarnate Son. He is always showing us the way; always rising into the purer air, that we may follow; always showing new paths, and pointing to high places; and never yet have the poor passing pleasures of earth been made to look so fair as God makes goodness seem, shining in the lives of His holy ones and perfectly in Himself. III. DIVINE PROTECTION. "The eagle spreadeth abroad her wings." This, indeed, may be no more than the full expansion of the meaning of the former phrase, the spreading abroad of the wings being the complete example of the method of flying. But the probability rather seems to be that the spreading of the wings is the promise of protection to the young birds, both while in the nest and while attempting to fly. God protects—whom? Not lazy, selfish creatures whose chief aim is to make the world a nest. God protects—what? Not indolence, cowardice, selfishness, fear, indifference. He protects those who stir themselves when the nest is stirred; those who spread the wing in answer to the outspread wings above them; those who work; those who stay by the task; those who refuse to leave the field of duty; those, in a word, who try, at least, to mount upon wings as eagles, to run without being weary, to walk without fainting. IV. DIVINE COMPULSION. "As an eagle . . . taketh them," if they will, in helpfulness: if they will not, in compulsion; in one way or another, they must be got out of the nest. I have seen, not an eagle indeed, but a bird of some size, give a motherly or fatherly push to a strong young creature sitting on the edge of the nest engaged in a general survey of the world below. "It is time," said the mother, "that you should go down and see life more closely for yourself, and wing your way through the air, and try what you can find in the fields—be a bird, like your ancestors!" "Taketh them!" These "takings" of God at certain periods and epochs of the individual life are very instructive, if you will observe them. I mean His takings of the stronger kind. His expulsions. His banishments. Then He is always ready with suitable and sufficient helps to those who are thus completely launched and started upon the new life. "As an eagle . . . beareth them on her wings." The mother eagle comes beneath her young one in the air when it is about to sink, through fear or weakness, bears it up on her own outspread wings and carries it back to the nest or along through the air, until weakness is recruited and fear is overcome. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *The eagle's nest*:—It is no mere fanciful accommodation of my text, but indeed a fair interpretation of it, which finds in it a description of the calling and training of human souls for the glorious "inheritance of the saints in light." I. There is NEEDFUL DISLODGEMENT. The eagle "stirreth up her nest," making it disagreeable to her young; so the Lord does with those whom He calls to Himself. In the day of our worldly comfort and business affluence we think little of God; we care little for the concerns of our souls; we are not in the very least attracted to the heavenly land. But when a reverse comes upon us, when poverty, or sickness, or bereavement, or affliction of any sort attacks us, then we are compelled to confront the great soul problem, "What must I do to be saved?" and as that anxious cry is crushed out of our heart, we find the Lord near us with His deliverance. It is no true blessing, therefore, for a man to have unbroken prosperity. It fosters a false security; it generates pride; it is apt to make the individual feel that he is independent even of God. Hence the Psalmist has said, "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God." He is the really unfortunate man, therefore, who has never known adversity. II. But I find in this figure, in the second place, PERFECT EXAMPLE. As the eagle fluttereth over her young, so the Lord did with His people. There is a passage in Sir Humphry Davy's *Salmonia* (a book dear to every lover of the angler's craft) which may well illustrate this portion of my text. He says, "I once saw a very fine and interesting sight above one of the crags of Ben Weevis, near Strathgarve. Two parent eagles were teaching their offspring—two young birds—the manœuvres of flight. They began by rising from the top of a mountain in the eye of the sun (it was about midday, and bright for this climate).

They at first made small circles, and the young birds imitated them; they paused on their wings waiting till they had made their first flight, and then they took a second and larger gyration, always rising toward the sun and enlarging their circle of flight, so as to make a gradually ascending spiral. The young ones still slowly followed, apparently flying better as they mounted, and they continued this sublime kind of exercise, always rising, till they became mere points in the air, and the young ones were lost, and afterwards their parents, to my aching sight." Now, could anything be finer than that as an illustration of the method by which, through the example which He sets before us, God teaches us to live? He is not content with laying down the law for us, but in His own dealings with us He shows us the law glorified and brightened by His actions. Does He command us to be merciful? He is Himself "rich in mercy to all that call upon Him." Does He enjoin us to be benevolent? He has Himself "loaded us with His benefits." Does He require us to forgive? He has Himself "multiplied to pardon." Look at that youth with his brush and palette in his hands, standing before the masterpiece of the great Italian. He is studying every minutest feature of the superb original, and at length he becomes possessed, as it were, by the spell of the genius that is looking down upon him from the silent canvas. Then he sets to work for himself, and though his earliest efforts are about as awkward as the first timid flutterings of the eaglet, yet he tries again and again, lessening each time the interval between him and his model, until at last he stands out before the world recognised as one who has caught the fervour and the inspiration of his master. So let it be with us, and the perfect pattern which the great Redeemer has left us. III. IT IS EFFECTUAL HELP. Mr. Philip Henry Gosse, the well-known naturalist, in his interesting work on the birds of Jamaica, speaking of the red-tailed buzzard, which is closely allied to the eagle, tells us that a friend of his, who was not likely ever to have heard of the verses before us, "once witnessed the emergence of two young ones from a nest near the top of an immense cotton-tree, and their first attempt at flight. He distinctly saw the mother bird, after the first young one had flown a little way and was beginning to flutter downward, fly beneath it, and present her back and wings for its support. He could not say, indeed, that the young one actually rested on, or even touched, the parent; perhaps its confidence returned on seeing support so near, so that it managed to reach a high tree, when the other little one, invited by its parent, tried its infant wings in like manner." This, at any rate, is plain: the parent bird is ever near the struggling eaglet, and is ready in a moment with effectual aid, and so God has said to each of His children, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." "My grace is sufficient for thee." 1. In the first place, it is not intended to supersede our own exertions. A man is not carried helplessly into the new life any more than the Israelites were carried over the Red Sea. He lives when he chooses to believe, and that believing, however much Divine agency may be concerned with it, is his own act. Wait not, therefore, for any one to spread for you the faith-wing on which you are to rise, but make the effort to expand it for yourself, and you will find beside you the guiding and sustaining Saviour. 2. This Divine assistance is always near. The parent eagle kept ever hovering near its young one, and in its moment of extremity darted in beneath it with speedy assistance. So God is ever nigh to them that need Him. There is, indeed, no one so near to us as Jehovah is. 3. This Divine help is all sufficient. It meets our every need. There are two practical thoughts—(1) Let us see in this subject the key to the right understanding of God's providential discipline of His people. It seems a paradox to say that afflictions are an indication that God loves us; or, in the figure of my text, they stir the nest and push us over, that we may be urged to use our faith-wings, and soar aloft in the service of our God. (2) Let us learn from this subject how we should proceed wisely and tenderly to train others for God. We should be to those whom we desire to benefit as near as possible what God has been to us. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Divine discipline:*— Without attaching any mystic meaning to this figure of the eagle, we may readily discover the great principles of God's action that it was intended to illustrate. I. THE DIVINE DISCIPLINE OF LIFE IS DESIGNED TO AWAKEN MAN TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIS OWN POWERS. The instinct of the eagle in breaking up her nest is to arouse the native energies of her young. The power of flight is in them, but unknown, because it has never been called into play; it is a slumbering faculty, and must be awakened into action. Man's soul is formed into God's image by the right action of his spiritual powers, and these powers are only awakened by the activity of God. 1. The great purpose of all spiritual discipline is to render men Divine. By the

very constitution of the soul, the Godlike image must be formed by awakening the energies that lie smouldering within. The soul contains in itself the germinal forces of the life it may possess in the future ages. 2. The image of the text suggests two methods of Divine action: the stimulating and the exemplary. The eagle breaks up her nest, and is not the voice of life's experience God's summons to man to rise and live to Him? God sends a shock of change through our circumstances, and rouses us from repose. II. DISCIPLINE ATTAINS ITS END ONLY WHEN REGARDED AS UNDER THE CONTROL OF A FATHER. It is obvious that the instinct of the eagle is that of parental affection. 1. Believe in the Father, and you submissively accept the mysterious in life. 2. Believe in the Father, and you shall strive to realise the purpose of this discipline. We have no impulse to any spiritual aspiration, to any true self-sacrifice, to the exertion of any spiritual energy, which is not awakened by the touch of the Eternal Spirit. Let us, then, awake out of sleep. God is breaking up our material resting-places in order that we may aspire towards the imperishable and the immortal. (*E. L. Hull.*) *Education of bereavement*:—What a startling thought—that the breaking up of the nest is an act of God's benevolence! I always looked upon it as a calamity. We are all familiar with the experience of the breaking-up of home. We remember the glad circle round the old fire, and how it grew thinner and thinner. One went to the colonies; one went out to be a governess; one departed with a stranger to a house of her own; more than one passed into the silent land. I always thought it a subject for tears. But here is an old writer who makes it a subject for praise, blesses God for it, declares it to be the first step of my education! I can understand God's love in many things. I can understand why I should praise Him for His gifts to body and soul. But I lose my breath in surprise when I am asked to make the first stanza of my hymn the adoration of His mercy in loosing the ties of home! Nay, my soul, it is to strengthen these ties that thy Father breaks up the nest. It is not to get rid of home He would teach thee to fly. It is that thou mayest learn by travel that thy home is wider than thy nest. He would have thee learn that in thy Father's house are many mansions, of which thy nest is only one. He would tell thee of a brotherhood in Christ which includes, yet transcends, thy household fires. He would tell thee of a family altar which makes thee brother to the outcast, sister to the friendless, father to the homeless, mother to the sick, son to the feeble, daughter to the aged—in kinship to all. Thy Father has given thee wings in the night, wings in the breaking of thy ties. Thou hast soared by thy sorrow; thou hast loved by thy loss; thou hast widened by thy weeping; thou hast grown by thy grief; thou hast broadened in being broken; thou hast enlarged thy sympathy by emptying out thy treasures. The storm that shook thy nest taught thee to fly. (*G. Matheson, D.D.*) *The eagle stirring up her nest*:—I. GOD CORRECTS HIS PEOPLE. When the young eagles are strong enough to fly, but shew no inclination to do so, the mother bird "stirreth up her nest." Special reference is here made to the "nest" which God provided for the seventy souls who went down into Egypt (Gen. xlvii. 6). "Their cattle throve, they had fine possessions, and a monarch's favour." At length Joseph died, and his services were forgotten. The once favoured people came to be regarded as little better than beasts of burden. They were hemmed in by forts; they were set to hard labour. Their nest became so uncomfortable towards the close of the four hundred and thirty years in Goshen, that they resolved to try their wings, and soar away to the "promised land." 1. Wealth, houses, costly furniture, and pictures make a comfortable nest, and are harmless so long as they do not tempt us to spiritual indolence. Alas, how few know how to use this world without abusing it! Care for his earthly comfort has been cultivated to such an extent as to almost take away all relish for spiritual things. 2. God, in mercy, often stirs up the nests of such people. Business fails, and their resources are cut off. As one said, "God took the man's son from his hearthstone, but that led him to seek comfort in the only begotten Son of God." In the midst of his anguish he learned this lesson, "God is love." He took away little, but He gave him much. If God did not stir up some people's nests, they would sink down into utter worldliness. II. GOD COMPASSIONATES HIS PEOPLE. "She fluttereth over her young." Let us ever remember that God is more compassionate than the tenderest mother. A religion born of terror can never be a healthy, vigorous religion. When you come to God for salvation, and when you look to Him for help to do life's work and to face life's difficulties, don't come to Him as though He were a God who is always looking for faults, and anxious to find them. III. GOD TRAINS HIS PEOPLE. The Israelites spent forty years in the wilderness, and they might have fared worse. That journey

had other advantages besides leading them to Canaan. Its long marches and desert sands developed powers of endurance which had lain dormant amid the fleshpots of Egypt. There are in most people faculties and energies imprisoned, pent up. IV. GOD PROTECTS HIS PEOPLE. The parent bird, while training her young, protects them. If a storm is brewing, or a fowler points at her young ones, does she abandon them without an effort to save them? (*H. Woodcock.*) *God's parental care*:— I. THE LORD "STIRRETH UP OUR NEST" BY SENDING US DISCOMFORTS AND AFFLICTIONS. We are naturally like the slothful eaglets, who would rather doze away their life in their comfortable home than try their unsteady wings in flight towards heaven. But God is kinder to us than we would be to ourselves. He "stirs up our nest": He breaks up those comforts which we love too dearly. Ah! who would fly towards heaven, who would seek a fairer and a better world, if it were not that God from time to time "stirreth up our nest" in one or other of these ways? II. Our text reminds us, by a very lively image, of GOD'S LOVE AND TENDER SOLICITUDE FOR HIS PEOPLE. He is compared to an eagle "fluttering" over her brood, watching and encouraging them in their endeavours to fly. God watches with the most affectionate interest our weakest efforts to rise above the world and worldly things. Your feeblest attempt at prayer, your most awkward endeavour at self-examination, your most unintelligent perusal of the Scriptures, if entered upon sincerely, will be most kindly welcomed and aided by Him. He does not despise the beginnings of sincere piety. He listens with delight to the very first sigh of sincere repentance. III. But, beyond this, we are reminded that GOD HAS GIVEN US ALL INSTRUCTION BY EXAMPLE: even as the eagle by "spreading abroad her wings" teaches her young how to fly, God has taken upon Him our nature, and has lived upon earth, in order to teach us how to live. Jesus Christ was "God manifest in the flesh"; and His whole life was spent in teaching His disciples the ways of holiness and peace. "His whole life is our rule; not indeed His miraculous works; His footsteps walking on the sea, and such like; they are not for us to follow; but His obedience, holiness, and humility are our copy, which we should continually study." IV. THE SPEEDY AND SUFFICIENT HELP WHICH GOD GIVES HIS PEOPLE IN THE HOUR OF NEED OR DIFFICULTY. The eagle is represented as "taking" her offspring, and "bearing them on her wings." When the eagle has prevailed upon her young to fly from the dizzy crag on which her nest is seated, their faltering pinions might give way, and they might drop helplessly to the ground, did she not dart to their help the moment their strength failed, and support them with her own wings in time to save them. Thus God acts to the believer. Though you tremble you shall not fall; though you faint you shall not be lost. It is said by some writers that, when the young eagles are attacked by the fowler, the mother-bird will fly under them, and place herself between them and their enemy, so that his arrows cannot hurt them unless they first pierce through her. Whether this be true or not, it may serve as an affecting emblem of Christ's love to His people. He has gone between us and our enemy. He has received in His own bosom the arrows which were meant for us: our wounds have been endured by Him: He has shed His life's blood for us, to save us from destruction. V. THAT THE LORD IS OUR ONLY HELP. "The Lord alone did lead him; and there was no strange god with Him." (*John Tagg, M.A.*) *Divine education*:—The nest of the eagle is commonly constructed on the verge of a precipice (Job xxxix. 28, 29). Hence Jeremiah, foretelling the downfall of Edom, says (Jer. xlix. 16). The Old Testament contains many beautiful similitudes drawn from the natural history of the eagle. The days of man are compared to an eagle hastening to the prey. Riches are said to take unto themselves wings, and to fly away as an eagle towards heaven. The righteous are said to mount up with wings as eagles; and the rage of persecution is, because of its hastening to destroy, compared to the rapidity of the eagle's flight. But perhaps the most beautiful allusion to the habits of the eagle is this in the text. It is a well authenticated fact in natural history that, when the mother sees her brood capable of flight, she urges them to exercise in the way referred to. I. SHE STIRRETH UP THE NEST. She either entirely demolishes it, or by reversing its well adjusted materials, makes it so uncomfortable that the young ones are glad to escape from it. The natural instinct which she possesses leads her to urge them on the wing; and for this purpose she finds it needful to make their first habitation inconvenient and troublesome. And thus, the text tells, did the Almighty with the Israelites. They had had their nest in Egypt; and He desired them to leave it for Canaan. If they had suffered no inconvenience there, they would have shown no inclination to emigrate to a better country. Adversity is the grand instrument by which men are awakened to higher

purposes and aims. They are taught the inconveniences of the tents of Kedar, in order that they may seek for the peaceful habitations of the just. In every blighted prospect of ambition—in every disappointed hope of success—in every visitation of sickness—in every stroke of bereavement, our God is doing for us what the parent eagle does for her young when she stirreth up the nest. Thus does He remind us that we were born for higher enjoyments, and fitted for higher destinies. Thus does He teach us that it is high time to forsake the amusements of a childhood state, and pursue objects worthy of our powers. II. This similitude may be applied also to THE GRACIOUS DISCIPLINE WHICH GOD EXERCISES IN AWAKENING THE CONSCIENCE. We naturally love the nest of carnal security and self-righteousness. We are unwilling to be disturbed out of it. We esteem him our enemy who tells us the truth, that we are miserable and blind and naked. We are pleased with the flatterer who cries "Peace, peace" to us when there is no peace. This self-complacency would be most ruinous to our best interests. So long as it is indulged, the strong man keeps his palace and his goods in peace. Now, this false peace must be broken before the peace of God can rule the heart. And therefore it is that, by sharp application of the word of truth, the Holy Spirit of God convinces the mind of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. You will never get a man to see his need of a Saviour until he is made aware of the purity, strictness, and extensiveness of the law which he has broken. You must convince him of sin before you can hope to persuade him of the excellence of salvation. III. This similitude may be applied to the case of THE GOOD MAN ABOUT TO LEAVE THE WORLD. There is lodged in the human bosom an inborn horror of death. Even good men, who have strong reason to believe and hope that it will be well with them in a future state, have attachments and sympathies which bind them to the earth. They cannot, without a strong effort, reconcile themselves to the thought of closing their eyes to all beneath the sun—of being shut out from the joys of friendship, and of being confined in the narrow house, where neither business is transacted nor work done. But, to conquer this natural reluctancy, the Almighty is graciously pleased to make them feel the inconveniences of this mortal life, and so to beget in them a longing desire for that in which there is no sorrow nor crying. The pains of sickness are thus instrumental in quickening their desires for that healthier state of being where the inhabitant never says "I am sick." The disquietudes and decrepitudes of age are so many arguments for resigning themselves to that severe but transient stroke which is to introduce them to a region of immortal youth. Lover and friend they see put far from them, and their acquaintance into darkness; and the thought arises, Why should we wish to linger? let us go to them, for they will not return to us. (*J. L. Adamson.*) *The eagle and its brood*:—The sentence should read thus: "As an eagle stirreth up his nest, fluttereth over his young, He spreads abroad His wings," &c., the person spoken of in the last clauses being God Himself. I. A GRAND THOUGHT ABOUT GOD. What he brings into view are the characteristics common to the eagle and the vulture: superb strength in beak and claw, keenness of vision almost incredible, magnificent sweep of pinion, and power of rapid, unwearied flight. And these characteristics have their analogues in the Divine nature, and the emblem not unfitly shadows forth one aspect of the God of Israel, who is strong to destroy as well as to save, whose all-seeing eye marks every foul thing, and who often pounces on it swiftly to rend it to pieces. But the action described in the text is not destructive, terrible, or fierce. The monarch of the sky busies itself with tender cares for its brood. Then there is gentleness along with the terribleness. The strong beak and claw, the eye that can see so far, and the mighty spread of wings that can lift it till it is an invisible speck in the blue vault, go along with the instinct of paternity; and the fledglings in the nest look up at the fierce beak and bright eyes, and know no terror. The impression of this blending of power and gentleness is greatly deepened if we notice that it is the male bird that is spoken about. Modern tendencies, legitimately recoiling from the one-sidedness of a past generation, are now turning away far too much from the Old Testament conceptions of Jehovah, which are concentrated in this metaphor. And thereby we destroy the love in the name of which we scout the wrath. "Infinite mercy, but I wish as infinite a justice too." "As the vulture stirreth up her nest"—that is the Old Testament revelation of the terribleness and gentleness of Jehovah. "How often would I have gathered thy children together," &c. That is the New Testament modification of the image. But you never could have had the New unless you first had the Old. And you are foolish if, in the name of the sanctity of the New, you cast away the teaching

of the Old. Keep both the metaphors, and they will explain and confirm each other. II. AN ILLUMINATING THOUGHT OF THE MEANING OF LIFE. What is it all for? To teach us to fly, to exercise the half-fledged wings in short flights, that may prepare us for and make it possible to take longer ones. Every event that befalls us has a meaning beyond itself; and every task that we have to do reacts upon us, the doers, and either fits or hinders us for larger work. Life as a whole, and in its minutest detail, is worthy of God to give, and worthy of us to possess, only if we recognise the teaching that is put into picturesque form in this text—that the meaning of all which God does to us is to train us for something greater yonder. Life, as a whole, is full of sound and fury, and signifies nothing unless it is an apprenticeship training. What are we here for? To make character; to get experience; to learn the use of our tools. Character may be manifested in the great moments, but it is made in the small ones. So life is meant for discipline, and unless we use it for that, however much enjoyment we get out of it, we misuse it. III. A CALMING THOUGHT AS TO THE VARIETY OF GOD'S METHODS WITH US. To "stir up the nest" means to make a man uncomfortable where he is;—sometimes by the prickings of his conscience, which are the voices of God's Spirit often; sometimes by changes of circumstances, either for the better or for the worse; and oftentimes by sorrows. The straw is pulled out of the nest, and it is not so comfortable to lie in; or a bit of it develops a sharp point that runs into the half-feathered skin, and makes the fledgeling glad to come out into the air. We all shrink from change. What should we do if we had it not? We should stiffen into habits that would dwarf and weaken us. We all recoil from storms. What should we do if we had not them? Sea and air would stagnate, and become heavy and putrid and pestilential, if it was not for the wild west wind and the hurling storms. So all our changes, instead of being whimpered over; and all our sorrows, instead of being taken reluctantly, should be recognised as being what they are, a loving summons to effort. Then their pressure would be modified, and their blessing would be secured when their purpose was served. But the training of the father-eagle is not confined to stirring up the nest. What is to become of the young ones when they get out of it, and have never been accustomed to bear themselves up in the invisible ether about them? So "he fluttereth over his young." It is a very beautiful word that is employed here; the same word that is used in Genesis about the Spirit of God "brooding on the face of the waters." And it suggests how near, how all-protecting, with expanded wings, the Divine Father comes close to the child whose restfulness He has disturbed. A vile piece of Greek mythology tells how Jove once, in the guise of an eagle, bore away a boy between his great wings. It is foul where it stands, but it is blessedly true about Christian experience. If only we lay ourselves on God's wings—and that not in idleness, but having ourselves tried our poor little flight—He will see that no harm comes to us. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *On God's wing, and under it* (with Psa. lvii. 1):—Here we have two experiences strikingly different and yet closely related to each other. I. We have God's assurance that in His dealings with His people during their sojourn through the wilderness HE HAD ACTED TOWARDS THEM AS AN EAGLE TOWARDS HER YOUNG WHEN SHE WOULD TEACH THEM HOW TO FLY. This illustration enforces an important truth, namely, the training of the Jews by God to the healthful exercise of the growing powers within them, and the supplementing of such by His own great might, so that those who were "no people" should become "a people among the nations of the world." That was a marvellous training by which Israel was taught how to fly, a degraded people how to become a mighty nation. This represents God's method of dealing with His people—the process of training through which you and I are called to pass if we are His. God in each case begins with a pitiable object, a poor sinner broken down in heart and purpose, one who has no spirit left in him, and who withal may have fallen into the lowest depths of sin. Even though he be degraded to the greatest possibilities of human degradation, God will take up that poor man shattered in hope and expectation, and he will yet be borne up as on the wings of eagles. II. We have another aspect of God's dealings with His people, namely, THAT OF SHELTERING THEM UNDER HIS WINGS, AS THE MOTHER-BIRD DOES HER BROOD IN THE HOUR OF STORM AND DANGER. "Yea, in the shadow of Thy wings," &c. There are some of us who know what it is to be on God's wings when He takes us in flight, when He inspires us with courage and teaches us to use our wings. There are others of us who have come to that experience when after all the flying, after all the doing, all the enduring, we are weary at heart, and we seek shelter under His wings, just as the eagle after her flight with her little ones takes them back into

her shelter, and in effect says, "You are tired now, I will put the wings which have borne you when wearied in flight all round you to protect you alike against the storm and the foe." Thus the little ones will not even hear the storm without. They have felt the hard side of the wing: they feel the soft feathery side of it now, and the mother's love, like her warmth, goes through every young bird that gathers under her wings. The Psalmist knows what it is to have been on the wing of God, borne upon the storm so that he might learn how to fly; but now he thanks God that when he has become weary of the storm, because it is too much for his strength, he is taken back into the nest, under the warmth and shelter of that wing which formerly sustained him. There are some of you who are almost always in the shadow of God's wings. The day is drawing to a close, all the activities of life are almost over, and God, ere He takes you to His heaven, bids you come and shelter yourselves beneath His feathers. (*D. Davies.*) *God's dealings with men*:—I. THE WAYS OF GOD CANNOT FAIL TO APPEAR STRANGE AND UNACCOUNTABLE TO THE EYES OF MEN. A grateful recognition of this is the secret of a strong and a contented mind. That my life and destiny are not in my own hands; that the glorious dream of a "Divinity shaping our ends, rough-hew them how we may," is something more than a dream; that there is an intelligence and a wisdom greater than our own, presiding over the eyrie of every human life,—is there anything but dumb despair staring us in the face in the abandonment of a faith such as that? II. UNINTERRUPTED PROSPERITY AND EASE IS GOOD FOR NO MAN. It engenders a false security. It blinds a man to the slenderness of that thread on which all things human hang. It creates a boldness that is not of God, that leads away from God, and sometimes lower things still follow in its train. How proud, how intolerant, how unsympathetic a protracted run of success can make a man! Is unalloyed prosperity good for a nation? This wonderful history of Israel, the true image and picture of all histories, answers "No." The records of that people almost resolve themselves into this: a succession of prosperities, and a succession of lapses into idolatry and sin. Visitation after visitation is necessary to stir up their idle nest. Is unalloyed prosperity good for a family? Do you invariably find the moral and religious tone high? Are the children thoughtful and unselfish? Is life an earnest thing? Or is not this too often the characteristic of the home: family self-absorption, family selfishness? which may be just as real, and is just as heinous, as class or personal selfishness. No, the mere nest-life of changeless comfort, or of unbroken happiness, is good for nobody. So the Almighty has ways of stirring it up lest any of His children—who should be like eagles, cleaving the air and facing the storm, and looking into the very eye of the sun—should be lying snug and comfortable, decrepit and useless, in their nest at home. 1. Remark on the method of the Divine operations. It is characteristic of this king of birds that it rises before its little ones, and bids them follow. At first the parent-bird performs small circles, widening and making them larger, however, as they rise; but always keeping ahead and in sight, save when compelled to descend and carry an exhausted fledgeling to a place of safety. Is that God's method too? Is it not? 2. In the greatest sorrow into which you may be thrown, God is near and in sight. Take care that no murmuring or rebellious spirit hides Him from your view when you need Him most. (*J. Thew.*) *Aroused from nestling*:—We have seen something like this, in the first place, in the domestic and secular life round about us. Parents rear up their children by the hearthstone of the family. And I pity the home which has no family altar. The fireside is pleasant in the family home, the society of brothers and sisters exceedingly delightful; but the nest is full—it will not hold them. They cannot always be boys and girls, earning nothing and consuming much; that would bring idleness and want. So prudent fathers stir up the nest. The eldest fly out and try to shift for themselves. At first it is hard work and sad. For a boy to push out from some sweet rural home into such a vast world as this has terrors in it. The lad is about to fly for himself. At first he sinks and is torn by the briars; but at length, by the blessing of God, he rises. He has strong arms to work, and a healthy brain to think. He has some failures, perhaps, but failures are rather blessings, for they discipline one to skill and trust in God. But with the aid of the strong arm of Him who helps those who help themselves he rises. By and by he builds his nest among the cliffs with the true eagle spirit. He becomes a thrifty merchant, a useful citizen. Best of all, it is when parental prayers are remembered, and by God's grace he reaches that highest style of man—a fervent Christian. Now, in the next place, let us look at the spiritual aspect of the conditions. God deals with Christians as an eagle deals with her young. He sees we are all trying to nestle.

We fill these earthly nests for ourselves—fill them with all manner of comforts—and then settle down and fix our affections on them. Wealth increases, ambition grows. The old residence is given up, and a new one is built. Earnest, benevolent work for Christ—prayer-meetings, and all that style of godliness—come to be as much tabooed in that luxurious home as a leper would be tabooed in London. If bankruptcy is allowed to bring that splendid estate to the hammer, do you wonder? And if death comes in, and writes paleness on some cheek of roses, do you wonder? God saw His children were beginning to nestle, and determined, for their souls' good, to stir them up. And so He stirred up the nest—not in revenge, not in cruelty; He did it in love—love to the sinner and love to the immortal souls of those who were flinging away their life in self-indulgence. The third part of this prolific text is this: when an immortal soul nestles down in sinful joy or worldly possessions, awakened, unconverted, is not that a terrible calamity? Can a worse curse come upon any such soul than to be let alone? If it is true that a young eagle, left alone, would become a mere weakling, starved, and never able to fly, how much more true is it that every soul, if left to itself, will come to ruin! It is Divine love that first awakens the sinner, even if it be at the cost of making the heart bleed. Nobody likes to be wakened up from a comfortable sleep at midnight. But if you hear the fire alarm, and see the smoke belching out from the opposite neighbour's house, and somebody rushes out through the suffocating smoke into your hall and cries "Fire! fire!" you do not strike him; you drop on your knees and tremblingly thank him with all your heart. He roused you, but saved you. When one of our Arctic companies of explorers went to search years ago for Sir John Franklin among snow and icebergs—alcohol froze in a bottle by their side, and the thermometer went to seventy degrees below freezing-point—the poor fellows, overcome with cold, lay down to sleep. Warm homes and delightful firesides mingled with their visions. But the leader knew that half an hour more of that delusive sleep would leave every one of them corpses on the ice. He roused them up. They said, "We are not cold; we only want a little rest." Half an hour more would have left them stiff. So their leader struck them, boxed them, bruised them—anything to drive them off the slumber. Poor fellows! they staggered down into the cabin, but they were saved. The arm that roused them was the arm that saved them. (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*) *God's training of Israel:*—Here we see the explanation of that strange and round-about chapter of Israel's history; the dislodging and disquieting touches in Egypt are followed by the leading of them round and round in their desert wanderings for forty years. They were a carnal, earthly, and self-pleasing people among the flesh-pots of Egypt, and under oppression were sinking into all the vices, weaknesses, and superstitions of their slavish condition. God will not settle His land with such; and no mere sudden stroke will drive the evils out of them. It must be done by a lengthened educative progress of mingled tenderness and severity—

> "Even as a bird each fond endearment tries,
> To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies."

By rudimentary instructions, by type and symbol, by the elements of law and prophecy, by passing them through sifting ordeals, by marching them about and about, so as to ventilate their low proclivities, and get rid of their baser qualities, He sought to winnow them of their chaff, letting multitudes of them die, and others be born into a new state of things, until at last they became quite a different people, with other aims and capacities. The eaglets' wings are grown. Their first feeble flight and earthly flutterings have changed into a bolder and higher swoop. The Lord had stirred them and weaned them from their nest; often, too, He left them to themselves, then came timeously to their rescue, bare them on His pinions, and carried them all the days of old—a process still familiar in the experience of His graciously taught people, weak and slow in their heavenward flight. (*A. H. Drysdale, M.A.*) *Eagle nurture:*—The power of aerial flight, of leaving the earth and traversing the fields of circumambient air by the use of wings, is the most perfect mode of locomotion we know of, and one of the most wonderful of physical prerogatives. It is the one that man most desires and covets, and yet that has most defied attainment or imitation. It is doubtless this longing for a life of ampler freedom and wider scope that has given birth to the idea that the power of volantation will be a human attribute in another stage of existence. But, though denied to man as a physical attribute, the power of aerial flight seems more fitly than any other to illustrate the activities and movements of the soul. We speak of the flight of

thought, scarcely conscious of the use of metaphor. The eagle possesses this physical power in the highest degree. But the eagle's power of flight needs strenuous nurture. The position of the eyrie where the young are reared enhances the difficulty of this training. It is usually on a ledge of some precipitous rock, or shelving escarpment beneath the beetling brow of a craggy cliff. The eagle's young cannot, therefore, be lured or driven forth from the nest and allowed to flutter to the ground as the young birds of lower nest and habitat. They must be led forth with judicious care, lest their first flight prove their last. I. The first truth with which this inspired object-lesson impresses us is—THE ESSENTIAL GREATNESS AND STUPENDOUS POSSIBILITIES OF OUR NATURE. Man is not a low creature, with no potencies to be developed, no noble aptitudes to be brought into play, no faculties in which the prophecy of high achievement lies. He is an object of Divine regard and care; and he is that because, far above every other terrestrial creature, he is a sharer of the Divine nature, and capable of a life that, in all save infinity of scope, reflects the life of God. He is infantile—a mere fledgeling as yet; but it is the infancy of a glorious being, with a possibility of growth of which an immortal existence is the only adequate term. He is a fledgeling, but a fledgeling of an eagle's nest. II. Another truth which this striking object-lesson illustrates is—THE STRENUOUSNESS OF THE DIVINE NURTURE. The eagle stirreth up her nest, and fluttereth over her young, not that she may delight her young in the nest, make them content therewith, and detain them there, but that she may lead them forth, induct them into a life of grander scope, and make them actually the great, free, competent creatures they were meant to be. There is an appearance of harshness and severity in this until we realise what it all means. How can the parent eagle take the young ones forth on such perilous adventure, and even stir up the nest and lure them forth to do it? So is it with the Divine training of our souls. God loves us with a love so deep and true that it can afford to be severe; yea, that must and will be severe, as the unfolding of our nature and the shaping of our life may require. The love that only indulges and does not nurture is rebuked even by the instinctive care of lower creatures. But God's love transcends all the love of finite beings, and the finest effects of either instinctive or intelligent love only dimly reflect its surpassing and perfecting grandeur. To a merely sentimental view God's nurture of His children does seem severe. We deem our safety and weal to consist in remaining in the nest, but God knows otherwise; and He acts on His sure knowledge, not upon our misapprehending ignorance. He will not allow us to remain callow and crude. The nesting life may be beautiful, but it must be brief, for it is inceptive. He breaks up the nest of authoritative instruction and easy and implicit faith. We build for ourselves nests of faith, but neither can these abide; and we build and build again, but always with the same merely temporary result. In hours of spiritual exaltation and vigour wondrous vision is accorded, and wonderful disclosures are made. We see the centring Christ. And straightway we propose to build our tabernacles and there abide till faith is changed to sight. Yea, we say that we can never doubt again. The nest is stirred as soon as we begin to live supinely therein, and faith must encounter new trials that it may exult in new triumphs. So is it, too, with our nests of experience. How sweet these are! How deep the peace, how rich the joy, how intense the delight which they afford! What clear and permanent gain they seem to denote! And how confidently we assert that life can never more be the same, can never more move on the old levels, or know the old ungladdened struggle, and sterility of joy. But these experiences are to gird us for the struggles that are to be, as well as to crown the struggles through which we have passed. Their best result is attained when this is realised, but, whether it be realised or not, the nest is stirred. And so it is also with our nests of achievement and of satisfaction therewith. What gladness comes to us sometimes in our work, what sense of achievement, what evidence of acceptance and success! But even these nests, substantial as they seem, abide not. Sometimes they last for a very little while, not even from morning to evening service on the Sabbath Day. So God stirs up the nest in which His children would live a supine or circumscribed life. Men are not for nests, but for flight. God does indeed give us nests, but He gives us also wings; and the wings are the richer gift. But God does not leave us alone when He leads us forth from the nest. He is with us in all the adventurous essays to which He constrains us. These times of nest-stirring are the epochs of spiritual advancement. The past is annulled and a grander future opens. Life becomes more real, acquires grander range, wider scope, and sublimer pitch. III. THE AGENCIES WHICH GOD EMPLOYS

IN THIS NEST-STIRRING. They are sorrow, disappointment, vicissitude, opportunity, voice, vision, inward rest, and other things which cannot be tabulated. IV. ONE DAY GOD WILL BREAK UP OUR LAST EARTHLY NEST. Death is a mounting upward. It is a necessary fulfilment of the present life. Here we never reach the sun toward which we soar. We cannot even steadily gaze upon it; it burns and blinds us; but we shall. The eagle's fabled flight to the sun is a pagan prophecy of our destiny. And God will be with us in that last long flight. (*J. W. Earnshaw.*) *God's care illustrated by the eagle*:—In describing His dealings with His people, the Lord often makes use, in Scripture, of similitudes taken from the natural world. A more vivid impression is thus made upon our minds of what He intends us to know, than if He had just employed mere didactic precepts; and besides, we are taught to associate thoughts of spiritual wisdom with the circumstances and events which pass before our natural eyes. I. THE ORIGIN OF GOD'S CARE IS EXHIBITED IN THE FORMER PART OF THE TEXT: "The Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in a waste howling wilderness." It was unmerited kindness, not earned by any deservings, which influenced the Lord in His choice of Israel as His own peculiar inheritance. It was not for their goodness that God revealed Himself to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob as their God; but it was in consequence of that revelation, it was a result of His sovereign love as the cause. Now, this is admirably descriptive of the first cause of every believer's salvation, which the apostle expresses in plain unmetaphorical language, when he says, "Not that we loved God, but that He loved us." II. THE MODE IN WHICH GOD EXERCISES HIS CARE. God does not treat men as mere machines. It is true He works in us both to will and to do, and without His aid we can do nothing; but then He would have us fellow-workers with Him, yea, to work out our own salvation. His object is to draw out our faculties and powers, so that they may be consecrated to His service, and show forth all His praise. "The eagle stirreth up her young." And so God rouses and stirs up His people. There is a work to be done, there are talents to be employed, there is labour to be undergone. They must not, therefore, lie like children in the lap of quiet indulgence. The eagle "fluttereth over her young." And so God allures His people onwards. The eagle "spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them upon her wings." When actually taken out of the nest, she supports them that they may not fall, and flies underneath them to keep them from falling. And so God interposes betwixt His people and destruction: He bears their burdens; yea, He carries them with sustaining and encouraging love. Such is the mode, as indicated by the text, in which God exercises His care over His people: how much at heart He has their welfare in this may be seen from the expression, "He kept him as the apple of His eye." So jealously did He watch over Israel of old, that He would suffer no weapon formed against them to prosper. III. THE PRACTICAL LESSONS WE MAY DEDUCE FROM THE SUBJECT. 1. The first is a lesson of humility: we stand by faith: we must not be high-minded, but fear. I have already shown you that the first beginnings of godliness are the gift and operation of God. I may add that we every day need His watchful care to keep us whereto we have already attained. No creatures can be more helpless or destitute, if deprived of a parent's care, than the young of any bird. And therefore the similitude of the text gives us a lively idea of our continued dependence on the Lord for all the strength and blessing we require. Were He to leave us we could not take a single step aright: our safety, therefore, and our comfort, depend upon our close and humble waiting upon Him. This is a lesson hard to learn: it is indeed, in general, acquired only by painful experience. Men will not practically keep in view the humbling truth that without Christ they can do nothing. 2. We may also learn a lesson of caution. They were not all Israel which were of Israel; for there were many disobedient and estranged from God, even in the nation particularly called by His name. And therefore we are not to take for granted that the privileges of which I have been speaking belong to us, or that the care I have described is exercised over us, unless we can discover the genuine marks in ourselves of reconciliation with God. 3. I observe, again, we learn hence a lesson of childlike and implicit faith. It is not wise, it is not grateful in God's people to be continually questioning, as they are very apt to do, His power or His love. Such conduct is a walking not by faith but by sight. 4. Lastly, I would say, we here have a lesson of a more devoted love. What cold and slothful hearts must we have, if they are not moved by a recital of such tenderness as the text unfolds! (*J. Ayre, M.A.*) *The inauguration of Christian experience*:—The inauguration of a Christian experience is the inauguration of a new life. A man

moves out into a new element. Walking by faith instead of by sight is a good deal what trying to fly is to the young eaglet. He shrinks from it. He looks longingly back at the nest. And hence the complete change of sphere, this detachment of old formulas of thought, old habits of life, old desires, old principles of action, old aims, is a literal stirring up of the nest. God wants him where He *alone* can lead him. (*M. Vincent, D.D.*)

Vers. 13, 14. **He made him ride on the high places of the earth.**—*God's dealings with His people*:—Everything about the Jewish people was significant and emphatically prophetic. Canaan itself was a type of the condition both here and hereafter of the disciples of Christ. Whatsoever, therefore, the terms in which the richness of the literal Canaan is described, we may justly suppose that these terms, metaphorically taken, are expressive of the provision made "in Christ" for His Church, and of the privileges appertaining to those living and trusting in Him, "with all the heart, and all the soul, and all the strength." It would seem rather indicated by the text that a great struggle should precede the possession of the rich produce of Canaan. And this we wish you particularly to observe—that "riding on the high places of the earth" is in order to,—is preparatory to the "eating of the increase of the fields"; as though that "eating" were in recompense for the mastery won over the strongholds of the enemy. I. Christianity, as it was not set up at once in the world, but was left to make its way by slow and painful struggle towards the dominion which it has not yet attained, so is it progressive, and not instantaneous in acquiring empire in individual cases. There may be no inconsiderable analogy between the history of Christianity in the world and its history in the individual. Christianity when first published made rapid way, as though but few years could elapse ere every false system would vanish before it. But there came interruptions—backsliding, degeneracy, and afterwards repentance and partial reformation. But the consummation is still a thing only of hope, and Christ must "re-appear in power and great majesty" ere His religion shall prevail in every household and every heart. In like manner, the converted individual devotes himself at first with the greatest ardency to the duties of religion; but after a while, too commonly, the ardency declines, and duties are partially neglected, or languidly performed. Then the man is roused afresh, and labours in bitterness of spirit to recover the ground so unhappily lost. Though on the whole he advances, there remains much languor, and it will not be before the day of the Lord that he will be sanctified, holy in body, soul, and spirit. Nevertheless, the true characteristic of religion in both cases is that of progressiveness, or rather, perhaps we should say, of an inability to be stationary. There is such a thing, according to the apostle, as continuing in infancy, and being "fed with milk." There is also such a thing as advancing to manhood, and being fed with meat. This is but another typical representation of what seems suggested in our text, that some merely eat of what the field yields of itself, whilst the richer increase is reserved for such as toil earnestly at cultivating the land. Not, indeed, that the richer truths are wholly different from the others; for Christ must be the staple in all truths to the soul; they are rather the same truths in a more refined and exquisite state prepared for those who have toiled here to secure a portion in the world to come. II. We now proceed to consider the second part of the prophecy, or promise of our text—for it is either; that which has to do with the obtaining "honey from the rock, and oil from the flinty rock." This part, perhaps, goes even further than the first in connecting the blessing with the diligence of those on whom it is conferred. If "honey" be obtained from the "rock," the "rock" must be climbed; and since it will not lie on the surface, the clefts or fissures must be carefully explored; so that the promise appears to pre-suppose labour, and therefore bears out what we have all along argued, that the text belongs peculiarly to those who are working out their salvation with more than ordinary earnestness. But, however it may be supposed that bees might swarm in the clefts of the rock, and thus there might be literally the obtaining "honey from the rock," there would seem to be a sort of opposition intended between the thing produced and the place that produces it. The little apparent likelihood of the "rock" yielding "honey" is paralleled by the certainty of the fact that Christ conquered by yielding, and subdued death by dying. And if you take the "rock" as meaning that typical rock which was smitten by Moses at Horeb, then the promise of honey from the rock may be as much a promise of peculiar privileges to such as are diligent in righteousness, as that of the "eating of the increase of the fields." Every believer draws water from the rock, but the honey may be reserved

for those "who by patient continuance in well doing show forth eminently the praise of Him who bore our sins in His own body on the tree." And there is, indeed, a hidden preciousness in the Saviour, in that "Rock of Ages cleft for us," which is appreciated more and more as the believer goes on to acquaintance with Christ, striving to magnify Him in all the actions of his life. It is not merely a general sense of the sufficiency of the atonement which such men obtain—the persuasion that there is provision made by the Mediator for the wants of sinners, even the very chief: they go deeper than this; they find in Christ such stores of consolation, such treasures of wisdom and knowledge, that they are never weary of searching as they are never able to exhaust. Every necessity as it arises is supplied from these stores of Christ; every cloud scattered by His brightness; every desire either satisfied, or satisfaction guaranteed by the unsearchable riches of His work of mediation. And this "honey" is from the "rock"—from the clefts of the rock. I must go, as it were, to the wounds of the Saviour if I would obtain this precious and ever multiplying provision. I must be much with Him in the garden and at the cross. Surely we may confidently say, that if there be a fulness and preciousness in the Redeemer, that is ascertained though left unexhausted as His mighty sacrifice is contemplated, and the lessons which it furnishes wrought into practice; if there be this reward to meet constant persevering piety,—that it finds deeper and deeper abundance in the Saviour—a sweetness and a richness in His office which give indescribable emphasis to the Scriptural expression—"Chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely"; and if, moreover, it be Christ as bruised and broken, pierced and riven like a vast mass of stone on which the thunderbolt has fallen, who yields these rich treasures, then it must be true that "the soul which hungers and thirsts after righteousness" shall not only "eat of the increase of the fields," but be permitted to "draw honey from the rock, and oil from the flinty rock." III. This idea is put yet more strongly, you see, in the concluding words of our text—"and oil out of the flinty rock"; the addition of the word "flinty" giving a stronger image of rockiness, and therefore making the place less promising for such rich and delicate productions. What is denoted by the metaphor thus interpreted, if not that affliction is made by God to comfort His people; so that when they are brought by His providence into wild and rough places, they are enabled to find there even richer provisions than in verdant and cultivated spots? We need not adduce any lengthened proof that the promise thus interpreted is verified to the very letter in the experience of the Church. The testimony of believers, in every age of the world, has been, that the season of affliction has proved a season of rich communications from above—a season when God's faithfulness and love have been more realised than they ever were before—a season in which texts of Scripture have assumed new and deeper meaning, and truths hitherto dwelt on only in the head have made their way to the heart, and diffused there a "peace passing all understanding." IV. And perhaps, even yet, our text may not have been fully expounded, for if in its primary application to the Jews it denoted the sustenance to be afforded them in Canaan, as applied to ourselves it may relate to provision laid up for us in heaven, of which Canaan was the type, when God shall have made us "ride on the high places of the earth," and exalted us to His kingdom, where the promise before us may be always receiving accomplishment. God shall be always communicating supplies from His own fulness, as age after age of expansion or enlargement passes over the redeemed; and these supplies may still be supplies of honey from the rock. There will be no exhausting of Christ and redemption. Never shall glorified spirits be weary of searching into the mysteries of grace, or consider those mysteries as thoroughly explored. Keep up, if you will, the metaphor of our text. Eternity shall be spent in contemplating and examining the "Rock of Ages"; every moment shall discover a fresh depth; the clefts in this rock, most strange, but most true, fitting it to bear up the universe, and every fresh cleft yielding fresh stores of honey, satisfying desires which shall but grow with their supply. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

The joy of Israel in the wilderness:—The ordinary view of the lot of Israel in the wilderness is that it was one of hardship and of unbroken tribulation. In contesting this view we do not maintain that their lot was one of unmixed happiness. Such is not the state of mankind under any conditions. 1. A large part of their happiness came from the sense of the grandeur of the movement of the Divine providence of which they were the immediate subjects. 2. Another source of their joy came from their liberated condition. 3. Another was the sensible evidence of God's goodness. 4. Another was from the new phases of natural scenery by which they were constantly saluted. 5. Another was from the abundance and richness of their

temporal supplies. 6. Another was their faith in the promises of the covenant. 7. Their social and domestic enjoyments. They had homes; and they knew their children had glorious prospects. Conclusion—1. God wants us all to be happy, and always happy. Take stock of your joys. 2. Some of the greatest promises of God's Word are for the Jew. (*B. F. Rawlins, D.D.*)

Ver. 15. **Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked.**—*Worldly prosperity*:—I. A COMMUNITY REALISING WORLDLY PROSPERITY. Worldly prosperity sometimes comes to a man—1. Irrespective of his efforts. 2. By his honest efforts. 3. By his dishonest efforts. II. A COMMUNITY ABUSING WORLDLY PROSPERITY. 1. In sympathy they withdrew from God. 2. In life they disregarded God. (1) A great wrong. (2) A common wrong. (*Homilist.*) *On the dangers of prosperity*:—Two main themes run through this song, strongly contrasted, like a cord of bright gold and a black cord twined together. The one which takes the lead is the gracious kindness of the Lord to Israel in the wonderful works wrought for their deliverance and exaltation, and the benefits of all kinds bestowed upon them. Then over against this stands Israel's gross misimprovement of these blessings, Israel's ingratitude and apostasy, with the judgments which naturally followed their unfaithfulness. The text is the turning-point of this wonderful composition. Up to this verse the strain has been (in the main) exultant and cheering, celebrating the lofty distinction to which Israel had been raised; now it becomes sad, threatening, and bewailing an unparalleled declension. How did this come about? It is all contained in these few words, which have a solemn warning for ourselves: "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked." Jeshurun, "the upright one," the people who had been called and set apart to be "a holy nation," aiming at righteousness, and who hitherto had been distinguished by a measure of integrity, became corrupted through prosperity. I. Let us regard men in their social capacity, and with respect to their general worldly interests, and OBSERVE HOW THEY ARE COMMONLY AFFECTED BY ABUNDANT PROSPERITY. History is full of instances to show how national character has deteriorated as the wealth and power of a nation have increased. A people, while struggling for existence and contending for liberty, have displayed all the virtues of industry and frugality, of energy and courage, of public spirit and self-denying regard for the common good. Thus they establish their commonwealth and grow strong and powerful. Then riches flow in; luxury follows in their train; the sons soon forget the virtues of their fathers, or despise them; then parties are formed; each class, each individual, is ambitious to cope with or outshine the other. All the petty passions of our nature soon spring up into rank activity. Selfishness reigns, the general good is forgotten, and principles which once were held in honour are derided and spurned. II. Turn from those aspects of the subject which are national and social TO THOSE THAT CONCERN OUR CHURCHES. Here it is that such an evil is most perilous, and most to be condemned. Nations, societies, even classes of men, undoubtedly have relations to God; they stand indebted to Him for the rich benefits of His providence; and they are verily guilty when they abuse these by self-indulgence and forgetfulness of Him. But their guilt is far less than that of Churches, societies of professing Christians, who decline from the love and allegiance they owe to their Lord. Now, that is the aggravation that is here insisted on by the very use of the title "Jeshurun"—the Upright. What a base part for those who should be distinguished by this excellence to turn the abundance of the ministries of grace into the occasion of pride, self-confidence, and carelessness! Yet this has happened again and again. In various forms this wanton temper, this self-satisfied, self-indulgent spirit shows itself. Sixty or seventy years ago it came out in Antinomianism, which made the Gospel all privilege and no duty, under the pretence of zeal for the freeness of Divine grace. This delusion, which ruined many souls and grievously weakened the energies of the Churches, has vanished to a large extent; but the spirit of it—the spirit of carnal indolence and complacency—lingers still. Self-flattery can assume many shapes, slipping its neck out of the gentle yoke of Christ. But the besetting temptation now is the pride of enlightenment, the conceited notion that we have attained to larger and more liberal views of Christianity; and so the great doctrines of grace are explained away, or so diluted as to be robbed of their strength. III. Having thus shown the injurious influence of continued prosperity, let me now INDICATE HOW THIS INJURIOUS TENDENCY MAY BE CORRECTED. 1. By a constant and grateful recollection of the Source and Giver of our prosperity. This will keep us in our proper place as lowly recipients

and debtors, dependents on His bounty. 2. Let us use our resources and advantages as God intends they should be used, and as He Himself sets us an example. God is constantly bestowing. He keeps nothing to Himself. 3. Let us not desire prosperity for itself. (*A. Thompson, M.A.*) *The danger of being worse by mercies:*—First, prove it to you, that even the best men are in danger to become the worse for mercies: for outward mercies, even for spiritual mercies. Secondly, give some grounds and reasons to demonstrate the truth thereof, how it comes to pass that there should be so much danger that a people should become the worse for mercies. I. For the proof, that you may understand the more distinctly, let me lay it down in a double distinction of mercy. Mercies are either privative or positive: privative, that is deliverances, preservations from varieties of evils and dangers, which otherwise we were liable unto; our privative mercies are greater and more than our positive mercies are, though we perceive them not: the dangers that we are delivered from are more than the present mercies we do enjoy. Now let us see whether privative mercies make men the worse; when men are delivered, do they grow the worse for their deliverance? Look to this (Deut. xxxii. 26), the Lord speaks of a great privative mercy. What good, now, did this deliverance do this people? In the thirty-second verse, Their vine is the vine of Sodom, and their grapes are the grapes of Gomorrah. Here is the fruit now that these men brought forth of their privative mercies, that the Lord did not give them into their enemies' hands, for all that the people grew more wicked under these, and their grapes were, &c. In this manner they improved their corruptions. In Psalm lxxviii. 38, Many a time he turned His wrath away, and would not suffer His whole displeasure to arise. Were the people the better for it afterwards? No, they grew so much the more rebellious. Thus privative mercies may make men grow the worse. And men may be delivered, and a nation delivered, and they growing worse for it, the Lord may reserve them to further plagues. Secondly, there are positive mercies, and they are of two sorts, and men are in danger of growing worse by both of them. Either temporal or spiritual mercies, as if the Lord give men the Scriptures, they are in danger to wrest them to their own destruction (2 Pet. iii. 6); if God give them His Gospel, they are in danger to turn His grace into wantonness (Jude, ver. 4). Not the word of grace, but the privileges of grace; if God give men the ordinances, they say, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord. And we are delivered to commit all this abomination (Jer. vii. 8, 9), and so in Hebrews vi. 7, 8, There is the ground that drinks in the rain of ordinances and influences, and yet brings forth briars and thorns. So if men receive spiritual privileges, they may be the worse for them (Matt. iii. 9). Nay, spiritual divination, and be in danger to be the worse for it: Paul was so (2 Cor. iii. 7). Nay, spiritual motions and operations (Heb. vi. 5, 6). II. But you will say, What is the reason? are the mercies of God of such a malignant nature that they make men grow the worse? A man would think, if anything would make men the better, mercies would; it is true, had men ingenuous natures as grace brings. But there are four great reasons why it is a dangerous thing for a person or people to enjoy mercy, and not be the worse for mercy. 1. First, is from the corruption that is in the heart of man; it is true, the mercy of God is not a cause why men grow the worse: for it infuses no malignant disposition into the soul of man. But the mercy of God is an occasion, though it be not the cause; as it is said of the law of God (Rom. vii. 11). 2. Secondly, from the general curse that by reason of sin is come upon all the creatures, and all God's providential dispensations. 3. Thirdly, from the especial malice of the devil against mercy. It is true, he is an enemy to all the creatures, and he would destroy them all as creatures out of his enmity to God. But in a more especial manner the devil is an enemy to the mercy of God more than to any other creature of God. Why? because the devil's sin is direct enmity, and malice and revenge. God looks for most glory from His mercy, and therefore of all other things the devil hath the greatest envy to that, that God may be dishonoured by them. 4. Fourthly, there are some mercies that God hath given to persons and people out of a particular displeasure; you heard of the general curse that came upon all the creatures before. But now I say, there are some mercies that God gives out of peculiar displeasure, and they prove a more peculiar curse. I conceive that will appear plain to you in Zech. v. 3. No wonder these men grow the worse for mercies, because it is out of a peculiar displeasure that the Lord gives them, as Austin saith of God's hearing prayers, He hears wicked men's prayers and gives them things they ask, though not properly as an answer to prayer. God hears prayers with revenge. Gives the things prayed for, but out of a peculiar displeasure. God doth as much rain snares

on men in mercy, as in any other of His dispensations whatsoever, and therefore look to it; it is a dangerous thing for a people to receive mercy if they do not improve it. III. I shall now speak a few words of application; there are two uses that I would make of it. First, of examination. Look back upon all the mercies that you have received from God—temporal and spiritual mercies; privative, positive mercies. Indeed, it is your duty (Psa. lxviii. 26). Not only for late mercies received, but look to the Fountain from whence all mercies did first flow (Mic. vi. 5), it is from the first beginning of mercy to the latter end of them, ask but the question now of your own hearts, look to your own personal mercies every one in private family mercies, and the public mercies that God hath afforded the nation, and tell me, are you the better or the worse for them, have you brought forth fruit answerable to the mercy? There are six things that are the ordinary ways by which men do appear to be the worse for mercy. And pray let us see whether all these be not to be found amongst us; this is a day wherein you should lay yourselves naked before God. First, the ordinary abuse of mercy is forgetfulness of God (Deut. vi. 14). Secondly, when they are settled upon them, and satisfied with them. Let them but keep this mercy, and it will be well with them. Let us enjoy this, and all is well. Thirdly, when men grow refractory unto duty, and oppose the things of godliness with a higher hand. Fourthly, when a people do begin to dote upon their own beauty, God sets them in a good condition, and they begin to rest in it, that evil was the fruit of their mercy (Ezek. xvi. 15). Fifthly, when men ascribe mercy to themselves, and would take the glory from God (Hab. i. 16). Lastly, when men employ all to their own use, when all men's mercies do but serve their lusts; one man saith, we have obtained this mercy, therefore I will be rich; now I must sit at the stern, saith another; the management of all the negotiations of the State is in my hands; as much as to say, God hath given all these mercies to serve me: remember that place in Isaiah xxix. 1. There is a second use of caution and admonition; do you take heed seeing it is so dangerous a thing, that the same thing be not justly said of you, and charged on you as was here upon Jeshurun: that they were the worse for their mercies; the mercies they received did but ripen their sins and hasten their ruin; take heed you bring forth fruits worthy of the mercy you receive. First, the proper fruit of mercy is an humble acknowledgment of our own unworthiness. Secondly, the proper fruit of mercy by which a man may be said to be the better for it is when they ascribe all mercy to God. Thirdly, when mercies do bring a man's sins to remembrance, the soul stoops under the apprehension of mercy: what, will God show mercy to me! one so rebellious and disobedient as I! and then the soul reads over the guilt of his sin with new remorse. Fourthly, when mercies lay upon the man the stronger obligations, and a man makes this use of it; looks upon himself as more firmly bound to God; that is the use they make of mercy in Ezra ix. 13. Fifthly, when the soul studies what he shall return to God for all His mercies: you know that God not only expects returns, but proportionable returns. And I desire you would take notice of it (2 Chron. xxxii. 26). Lastly, that soul is the better for mercy when it loves God the more for it (Psa. xviii. 1). But how shall I know that I am the better for mercies? Pray observe these four rules. First, thy mercies will never make thee the better, unless they be mercies that proceed from a covenant right and interest. Secondly, when a man, as he receives all from God, doth direct all to God. Thirdly, consider, this is the mercy that doth you good, when it makes thy soul prosperous. Lastly, wherein your prayers to God are drawn forth more for a sanctified use of the mercy than for the mercy itself. (*Wm. Strong.*) *Unsanctified prosperity:*—I. THAT EVERY ONE IS UNDER THE MOST SOLEMN OBLIGATIONS TO LOVE AND OBEY GOD. 1. He is our Creator and absolute Proprietor. 2. He is the Author of our salvation. II. THAT, NOTWITHSTANDING THESE OBLIGATIONS, MANY PERSONS FORSAKE GOD. 1. By mere forgetfulness. 2. By neglecting the ordinances of religion. 3. By inattention to relative duties. III. THAT UNSANCTIFIED PROSPERITY IS VERY OFTEN THE CAUSE OF THESE EVILS. It is quite possible to be very prosperous, and very religious too—but, though possible, it is very difficult (Jer. xx. 21). CONCLUSION—1. One way of preventing these evils is to remember the uncertainty of earthly things. 2. Another way is to be earnest in prayer to God for His upholding grace. (*W. G. Barrett.*) *Enervated by prosperity:*—Amid the luxurious ease of the valley men degenerate, but among the mountains we find a brave and hard race, for there the dangers of the crags and the cold of winter brace nerve and muscle till each becomes vigorous, and men are fit for acts of valour and

deeds of heroism. It is in battle and service that veteran soldiers are bred. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 17. **They sacrificed unto devils.**—*Devil worship*:—I. The devil of SENSUALITY. This includes intemperance, debauchery, and the gratification of all the lower animal appetites. Do not men everywhere sacrifice intellect, genius, time, money, health, and even life itself at its infernal shrine? II. The devil of AVARICE. Greed of gain, desire for wealth, is the inspiration of millions in this mercenary age. Truth, honesty, conscience, self-respect, moral freedom, peace, and honour are all sacrificed to this grim-deity. III. The devil of VANITY. Love of show, desire for popular applause. Fortunes are sacrificed to this devil. IV. The devil of SECTARIANISM. A greater devil than this can scarcely be found. To it men sacrifice truth, charity, moral nobleness. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 18. **Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful.**—*Forgetful of the Rock*:—How is it that men soon forget the solid, the real, the substantial? What is it that delights men in spluttering rockets, in coloured fountains, in lamps swinging upon trees that are offended by their presence? See the great seething crowd waiting for the coloured fountains to spring up, and for all the little electric lamps confined in tinted globes to shine among swaying branches! What exclamations of idiotic delight! How stunned is modern intelligence at the marvellous display of colour! Who heeds the quiet moon that looks on with unutterable amazement, and that in her motherly heart is saying, Oh, that they were wise, that they were less given to toy-worship and playfulness of that kind! Here I have been shining ages upon ages—who heeds me? Which of all the sweltering, overfed throng turns a bleared eye to my course to watch me in my gentle sovereignty? And the stars, too, look down upon the coloured fountains without being moved to envy by their momentary blush and by their unheard splash! We forget the Rock so soon; we prefer the toy; we want something light, something that can be spoken trippingly on the tongue—an easy fluent nothing. We do not care to bow down the head to study, to criticism, to the examination and estimation of evidence, and commit ourselves to the acceptance of sound conclusions. Can we go anywhere to see a coloured fountain? Men who do not travel half a mile to the greatest pulpit in the world, or the greatest altar ever built to the God of heaven, would put themselves and their families to any amount of inconvenience and expense to gaze with the admiration of idiocy upon a coloured fountain! Blessed are they who love the permanent stars, the lamps of heaven, and who set their feet broadly and squarely on God's everlasting Rock. Let us turn to the real, to the substantial, to the very revelation of God's truth, and abide there; the coloured fountain can only come now and again, but the eternal heavens are always full of light or rich with beauty. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 20. **A very froward generation.**—*The frowardness of unbelief*:—1. Unbelief is a very froward thing, because, in the first place, it gives God the lie. Can anything be worse than this? God saith, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," and the unbeliever replies, "I cannot believe that Jesus will save me." Oh, soul, can you dare to look up to the Cross of Jesus and say, "There is no life in a look at the Crucified One for me"? Can you even think of the Holy Spirit, and then say that He has no power to change a heart so black and hard as yours? 2. Again, unbelief is great frowardness, because it refuses God's way of salvation. No man can read the Scriptures without seeing that God's way of salvation is not by work nor by feelings, but by trusting in the Son of God, who has offered a full atonement for sin. Now the sinner says, "Lord, I would do or suffer anything if I might thereby be saved." 3. Unbelief is a very froward thing, again, because it very often makes unreasonable demands of God. When Thomas said, "Except I put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe," he was speaking very frowardly. I have heard the sinner say, "Oh, sir, if I could have a dream, if I could be broken down with anguish, or if I could enjoy some remarkable revelation, then I would believe God"; this also is frowardness. 4. Unbelief is very froward, next, because it indulges hard thoughts of God. Do you say that "Salvation by faith is too good to be true"? Is anything too good to come from God, who is infinitely good? 5. And yet again, unbelief is a very froward thing because it disparages the Lord Jesus. Oh, soul, dost thou doubt the infinite virtue of the Divine sacrifice? Dost thou question

the power of the intercession of the risen Lord? 6. And do you not think it is another instance of great frowardness that unbelief casts reflections upon the Holy Spirit? Not save thee? Who art thou that thou shouldst stand out against the witness of the Spirit of truth? Wilt thou refuse the threefold witness of the Spirit, the water, and the blood? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **Children in whom is no faith.**—*Faith in its higher sense*:—Do not misunderstand that word "faith." It is a Christian word; here it does not occur in its spiritual or Christian sense. "Faith" is a word which belongs to Christ, not to Moses. The word "faith" here means covenant-keeping, reality, honesty to vows. They have signed a paper, but they will break the bond: they are children in whom is no faith, no reliance, no trust. This is not the "sixth sense," this is not reason on wings; this is simple truthfulness and covenant-keeping honour. Faith is not born yet in the Bible, as to name and definite influence—though many a man in the old book was moved by faith who could not account for his own motives and impulse. We are called to faith in its highest sense; and in being called to faith in its highest sense, we are not called upon to renounce reason. Should I say to a child, Dear little one, your two hands are not strong enough to take up that weight, even of gold, but I could find you a third one, and with that you could lift it easily, and with that it would be no weight; you could carry it always without weariness and without fatigue—do I dishonour the other hands? Do I put the child to some humiliation? Do I ignore what little power it has? Certainly not: I increase it, I magnify it, I honour it; so does the great and loving One, who wishes us to pray without ceasing, magnify reason by saying, It wants faith; faith magnifies the senses by saying, They are five in number, and I can make them six; do not dispense with any one of them, keep them all in their integrity, but you want the sixth sense that lays hold upon the invisible and the eternal. We cannot, therefore, keep covenants and honour vows in the sense in which the word "faith" is used here, with any completeness, until we are inspired by the higher faith—that all-encompassing trust in God, that marvellous sixth sense which sees God. Lord, increase our faith! May our prosperity never interfere with our prayer! Give us what Thou wilt—poverty, riches, health, disease, strength, or weakness, but take not Thy Holy Spirit from us. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The faithless generation*:—"Without faith it is impossible to please God,"—impossible to do that which is the proper end of our being; in which, if we should fail, it were far better for us that we had never been born. The like is not said of charity, or any other Christian grace, but faith only. Not that we can expect to please God, if any of the ornaments of a meek, gentle, and Christian spirit be wanting in our character; but because there is a peculiar necessity for the addition of faith, which entitles it to this mark of distinction. There is not a single link in the chain of evangelical virtues and graces which can be said to be unnecessary; but that link is necessary above all which is the end of the chain, and which connects it with God Himself. In the text, God complains of the provoking of His sons and daughters, the rebellious seed of Abraham; and He lays all the faults of their character to this capital defect, that they are "children in whom is no faith." I. THE WANT OF FAITH IN THE PRESENT STATE OF THE CHRISTIAN WORLD. 1. The excessive attention bestowed upon mere earthly and sensible objects. The common phrase "Seeing is believing" is a plain confession that we walk by sight, not by faith. The sum of our creed is this: that the good things of this world are solid and substantial; those of the next world, visionary and chimerical. 2. The prevailing and increasing neglect of ordinances. This springs out of the faithless and infidel notion that they are not material, that they are mere ceremonies, that there is no virtue in them. Here is a direct denial of faith. 3. The general shyness and reserve which prevails among religious persons. If it cannot be said of us, as of the ungodly and profane, that God is not in all our thoughts, it cannot surely be denied that He is not in all our talk. The want of faith is at the bottom of this. We are not fully persuaded in our own minds, and therefore we feel an awkwardness and reserve in communicating our thoughts to each other. 4. The carelessness and indifference which generally prevails in regard to the sacraments of the Church. II. WHAT IS THE NATURAL CONCLUSION OF ALL THIS? If the want of faith be the cause of all our disorders, the plain remedy is to go where we may get more faith; to take what little we have, and to throw ourselves at the feet of Christ, saying, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." And your minister, as in all your prayers, will go before you in this likewise. "Lord, increase my faith; that I may, both by my life and doctrine, set forth Thy true and lively Word, and rightly

and duly administer Thy holy sacraments. Increase the faith of this congregation; that with meek heart and due reverence they may hear and receive Thy holy Word, truly serving Thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life. Increase, once more, the faith of this people and nation, that we may put away from us our national sins, and avert Thy national judgments; and that, along with the increase of faith, the natural fruits of it—peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety—may be established among us for all generations." (*Frederick Field, LL.D.*)

Vers. 21–28. **A fire is kindled in Mine anger.**—*Divine love for Israel like the fire of spousal jealousy*:—I. NOTE THE NATURE AND CAUSE OF THE DIVINE JEALOUSY. It means that burning holy zeal for the sacred betrothment by which He claims an exclusive right to the affection of His people, brooking no rival and admitting of no competitor in His presence. With poor, ignorant, envious humanity, jealousy involves suspicion, and is the mark often of a weak, warped, and narrow nature. But, on the other hand, there is a noble jealousy which, eliminating these evil elements, shows itself in an earnest concern for others' fidelity, joined with some degree of fear for them, or of indignation at their giving to any a just ground for suspecting their faithfulness in the least degree. II. NOTE HOW THE DIVINE LOVE IN ITS DEALING WITH ISRAEL IS LIKE THE FIRE OF SPOUSAL JEALOUSY. With their "no gods"—their worship of material images and their profaning the Divine name by associating it with horrible rites and unnatural orgies—they have provoked Me to jealousy, that is, to the exercise and manifestation of a holy indignation and zeal for Mine own honour and the vindication of Mine own name; so will I rouse them to a jealousy about themselves by favouring others that they deem a "no-nation," and by bestowing My regards on what they contemptuously look down on and despise as no people at all. Is not this one of the great wheels by which God moves forward the affairs of His providential government; rousing one nation to vie with another which it has hitherto despised, but which is now seen to be outstripping it; or one community to become emulous of another, or one Church to bestir itself, so as not to be outdone by a little-esteemed rival? Thus energies are brought into play which had otherwise lain dormant; and weapons of the spiritual warfare are sharpened and utilised that had previously been lying rusty and unused. III. NOTE THAT GOD'S JEALOUSY FOR HIS NAME AND HONOUR IS THE ULTIMATE SALVATION OF HIS PEOPLE. This is the real secret of Israel not being utterly swept away and destroyed. Their final extinction as a people would have been their proper fate had they been left to reap of their own way and been filled with the fruit of their own devices. That the Lord did not make a complete end of them, as He did of other tribes and peoples, was owing entirely to the regard He had for His own gracious purposes which they had been raised up and qualified to subserve. What else could account for His forbearance and long-suffering, patient striving with them? "I said, I would scatter them afar, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men; were it not that I feared the provocation of the enemy" (that is, anticipated the bad results of their sarcasms and reproaches): lest their adversaries should mistakenly explain the terrible dispersion, and allege it was all owing to their own prowess, and there was no Divine meaning or judgment in it at all. He was resolved so to manage the final catastrophe of Israel, that the world at large would be constrained to say, "The finger of God is there; the whole matter is a just retribution, bearing the seal and stamp of a Divine ordering. 'For they are a nation void of counsel, and there is no understanding in them.'" The lesson would therefore be forced on them from without; and so they would at last acquiesce in what the whole world would be found saying about them. For by terrible things in righteousness would this experience be conveyed. (*A. H. Drysdale, M.A.*)

Ver. 29. **That they would consider their latter end.**—*Religious thoughtfulness*:—I. A SUBJECT OF SUPREME IMPORTANCE. The power of thought distinguishes man from the brute, and it is that faculty by which he either makes or ruins himself. According to the subjects and modes of his thought, his character is formed. If he wishes to become a true man he must think on religious subjects, he must meditate on God, man, duty, destiny. 1. In order to realise these subjects. While we muse the fire burns. 2. In order to appropriate these subjects. "As I thought of my ways, I turned my steps to Thy statutes." II. A SUBJECT LAMENTABLY NEGLECTED. 1. Men's minds are preoccupied with other subjects. 2. Men have an inner dread

of these solemn things. (*Homilist.*) *Considering the latter end*:—I. AN IMPLIED LAMENTATION. II. A DESCRIPTION OF TRUE FOLLY. III. AN ALL-IMPORTANT DUTY. Considering our latter end—1. Reminds us of its certainty. 2. Urges preparation. 3. Will prevent us from being taken by surprise. (*Ibid.*) *On the remembrance of death*:—I. In the first place, DEATH, WERE IT SERIOUSLY ATTENDED TO, WOULD DIRECT OUR JUDGMENT AND CORRECT THOSE FALSE THINGS WHICH ARE THE GREAT SOURCES OF ALL OUR MISTAKES IN LIFE. Would it not lower our opinion of temporal enjoyments if this sentiment were familiar to our minds that we must shortly be torn from them? How would it raise our esteem of Christian dispositions! In what lively colours would we see the evil of sin, and the danger of practising it, did we live in the remembrance of that awful event which will fix our eternal condition! Would we not see the great importance of time, and the absolute necessity of improving it, if we thought that it is short and uncertain, and that eternity depends upon it? II. The serious contemplation of death, besides correcting our mistaken notions, WOULD HELP TO MODERATE OUR UNRULY PASSIONS, WHICH ARE SO DIFFICULT TO BE RESTRAINED. At the lively idea of death all the passions subside and leave the soul in a state of serious tranquillity. Pride falls; vanity is extinguished; envy dies; resentment cools; and the fond admiration of worldly things decays and vanishes. III. An habitual attention to our latter end, as it would wean our affections from the things of time and sense, WOULD FIX THEM UPON OBJECTS OF A SPIRITUAL AND ETERNAL NATURE. The great virtues of the Christian life, such as love to God and love to man, are not, like worldly possessions, of a perishing kind. They continue after this life; they are the qualifications for admission into the kingdom of glory; nay, they constitute the very temper of heaven itself, and are the essential ingredients of future and eternal happiness. Death guides the imagination forward into futurity; it gives the rewards and punishments of the world to come their full weight and impression upon us. Thus, by suggesting the most powerful motives to a godly life, it will naturally deter men from sin and enforce the practice of holiness and virtue. It will engage them to avoid that course of life which would expose them to the future punishment. And it will excite them, by a patient continuance in well doing, to seek for glory, honour, and immortality in the kingdom of heaven. As death, from the consideration of its awful consequences, enforces a holy life; so by representing the shortness and uncertainty of time, it would lead us instantly to set about the great business of human life, and to pursue it with unremitting attention. Why do men allow themselves the continued practice of vice? It is because they flatter themselves with the hopes of living still longer, and with designs of future repentance: and thus the great business of eternity is frequently put off, from day to day, till sickness or death overtakes them. Now there is not a surer, there is not a more effectual, way of avoiding this fatal mistake, than by remembering our latter end. IV. IT WOULD CAUSE US TO TAKE HEED LEST AT ANY TIME WE SHOULD BE OVERCHARGED WITH SURFEITING AND DRUNKENNESS AND CARES OF THIS WORLD, AND THUS THE DART OF DEATH COME UPON US UNAWARES. It is one of the great advantages of considering death that it would help to keep our temper even and composed in every condition of life. As in prosperity, it would preserve us from insolence, so under adversity, from dejection of mind. V. In the last place, by frequently meditating on our latter end, WE MIGHT MAKE THE IDEA OF DEATH FAMILIAR TO OUR MINDS, AND OVERCOME THE FEAR OF IT. The awe which it naturally strikes upon the mind wears off in proportion as we increase our acquaintance with it. But instead of cultivating this acquaintance, we industriously avoid it; and the surprise must add to the horror of its appearance whenever it constrains, as sometimes it will constrain, our attention. There are certain occasions on which it is impossible for us to shun the remembrance of death. (*Andrew Donnan.*) *The consideration of death*:—I. WHAT IT IS FOR A MAN TO CONSIDER HIS LATTER END. By the latter end of a particular person I understand the same that Balaam does in his wish (Numb. xxiii. 10), where it is plain by his last end he means the time of his death, which Solomon, in Eccles. vii. 2, calls "the end of all men." And so indeed it is, as to all the concerns of this life and opportunities of providing for another. It puts an end to all the projects, the labours, the cares of the men of this world for the obtaining of the good things of it, and to the satisfaction they take in the enjoying those they have gotten. It puts an end to the work of good men, to all the hardships and their conflicts with their spiritual enemies. Finally, it puts an end to all that good or bad can do or suffer, which shall come into their future account. But though a man's latter end be the dissolution of the present

union of soul and body, and puts a final period to all the actions of this life, yet is it the opening of a new scene, the entrance upon another state. Before I proceed to show what is implied in the word "consider," it may not be amiss to form some propositions of our "latter end," which may be the objects of your consideration. As—1. That it is very certain that such a time as this will once happen to every one of us. 2. That, though it be certain that such a time will once come, it is not certain when it will come. 3. That as it is certain that such a time will once happen to every one of us, but uncertain when, so it is sure that it cannot be long first; for what is our life—the longest life that any one arrives to? This is to be the object of our consideration, which implies three things. (1) An undoubting assent to the truth of it, for propositions, however true in themselves, if they are not so to me, can make no great impression upon me. (2) A frequent reflecting upon and revolving in my mind; for propositions which I have assented to, if I think not of them, are not like to have much more influence upon me than those which I deny or question. (3) And chiefly, a diligent application of it to the government of my life, and the conducting it by such measures as that belief will suggest; for only such a practical consideration of this latter end will make a man wise. II. HOW WISE IT WILL MAKE HIM; WHAT WISE PRACTICES WILL BE THE EFFECTS OF SUCH CONSIDERATION. And surely it will be allowed that it will make him very wise if it makes him wise for this world and the next too. 1. As to this world, that is certainly true wisdom which will carry a man most quietly through it with the least vexation. Now, most of the disturbances and uneasiness we meet with here arise either from our own false notions and imprudent pursuit of the good things of this world, or from those evils which befall us by the permission of providence; and the consideration of our latter end will go a great way towards the preventing or removing the former, and the alleviating and supporting us under the latter. 2. But the greatest advantage of the consideration of our latter end is that it makes us wise for the other world. (1) To be frugal of our time, and husband it to the best advantage. This short day is all the season of working; when the night comes no one can work. Have I a great work to do in that short time? Does my eternal bliss or woe depend upon my finishing that work? And can I be so foolish as to squander away this time in idleness or riot, in vain recreations and loose conversation? Shall I suffer sleep and pleasure and sin to share it among them? (2) Not to defer our repentance. (3) To make use of all the means of grace that are offered us, and not neglect one opportunity that is put into our hands of waiting upon God in His holy ordinances, or of doing good to our neighbour according to our power. (4) To go on with the work and service of God, and persevere to the end with alacrity; for it shows me these two things—(*a*) That my service can be but short. And—(*b*) That I shall quickly receive my wages. (*Bp. Wm. Talbot.*)

Memento mori:—Some years ago a celebrated author—Drelincourt—wrote a work on Death, a valuable work in itself, but it commanded no sale whatever. Anything men will think of rather than death—any fiction, any lie. But this stern reality, this master truth, he puts away, and will not suffer it to enter his thoughts. The older Egyptians were wiser than we are. We are told that at every feast there was always one extraordinary guest that sat at the head of the table. He ate not, he drank not, he spake not, he was closely veiled. It was a skeleton which they had placed there to warn them that even in their feastings they should remember there would be an end of life. Yet our text tells us that we should be wise if we would consider our latter end. And certainly we should be, for the practical effect of a true meditation of death would be exceedingly healthful to our spirits. It would cool that ardour of covetousness, that fever of avarice, if we did but remember that we should have to leave our stores. It would certainly help us to sit loose by the things which we here possess. Perhaps it might lead us to set our affections upon things above, and not upon the mouldering things below. At any rate, thoughts of death might often check us when we are about to sin. I. CONSIDER DEATH. 1. Its origin. Man is a suicide. Our sin, the sin of the human race, slays the race. We die because we have sinned. How this should make us hate sin! 2. Its certainty. Die I must. There is a black camel upon which Death rides, say the Arabs, and that must kneel at every man's door. I must cross that river Jordan. I may use a thousand stratagems, but I cannot escape. Even now I am to-day like the deer surrounded by the hunters in a circle, a circle which is narrowing every day; and soon must I fall and pour out my life upon the ground. Let me never forget, then, that while other things are uncertain, death is sure. 3. Then, looking a little further into this shade, let me remember the time of my death. To God it

is fixed and certain. He has ordained the hour in which I must expire. But to me it is quite uncertain. I know not when, nor where, nor how I shall breathe out my life. Oh, let us bethink, then, how uncertain life is. Talk we of a hair; it is something massive when compared with the thread of life. Speak we of a spider's web; it is ponderous compared with the web of life. We are but as a bubble; nay, less substantial. As a moment's foam upon the breaker, such are we. Oh, let us, then, prepare to meet our God, because when and how we shall appear before Him is quite unknown to us. 4. The terrors which surround death. To the best men in the world, dying is a solemn thing—a launching on an unknown sea. Farewell! to that house which I have so fondly called my home. Farewell! to her who has shared my life and been the beloved one of my bosom. Farewell all things—the estate, the gold, the silver. Farewell! earth. The fairest beauties melt away, thy most melodious strains die in the dim distance. I hear no more and see no more. No church bell now shall summon me to the house of God. If I have neglected Christ I shall hear of Christ no more. No grace presented now; no strivings of the Spirit. 5. The results of death. For, verily, its results and terrors to the wicked are the same. Oh, that ye were wise to consider them! Let me, however, remind the Christian that death to him should never be a subject upon which he should be loath to meditate. To die!—to shake off my weakness and to be girded with omnipotence. Say unto them your warfare is accomplished, your sin is pardoned, and you shall see your Lord's face without a veil between. II. I desire you now to CONSIDER THE WARNING WHICH DEATH HATH ALREADY GIVEN TO EACH ONE OF US. Death hath been very near to many of us; he has crossed the ecliptic of our life many and many a time. That baleful planet has often been in close conjunction with us. Let us just observe how frequently he has been in our house. Think, again, what solemn and repeated warnings we have had of late, not in our families, but in the wide, wide world. Here, there, everywhere, O Death! I see thy doings. At home, abroad, on the sea, and across the sea, thou art doing marvels. Death has given home-strokes to all of us. Put thy finger in thy own mouth, for thou hast Death's mark there. What mean those decaying teeth, those twitching pains in the gums?—an agony despised by those alone who feel it not. Why do some parts of the house tremble and hurry to decay? Because the rottenness that is in the teeth is in the whole body. You talk of a decayed tooth: remember it is but part of a decayed man. What mean those lungs that are so soon exhausted of their breathing if you travel up a flight of stairs to your bed? Why is it you need your optic glasses to your eyes, but that they that look out of the windows are darkened? Why that affected hearing? III. And now will you, in the last place, PICTURE YOURSELF AS DYING NOW. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *True wisdom desirable:*—I. LACK OF WISDOM. "Wisdom" is sometimes used for religion, and the connection between them is very close. Sin is—(1) Ignorance of self. (2) Ignorance of God. (3) Ignorance of future consequences. And ignorance is folly—inasmuch as it is the cause of folly, the spirit of folly, and the seed of folly. II. A NEGLECTED DUTY. The "latter end" is the great crisis of existence. Why do men neglect its consideration? (1) Because the prospect is not pleasant. (2) Because of the natural buoyancy of human life. (3) To look at our latter end will give us a true estimate of our own worth. (4) To look at our latter end will cause us to use the time that remains for the highest ends. (*Homilist.*) *The habitual consideration of death:*—I. THE EVENT THAT IS TO BE CONTEMPLATED. This is his last end: no other changes shall happen to him on earth; no more shall he be visible among the children of men; no more shall he be occupied in its business, encumbered by its cares, entangled by its temptations, and fettered by its engagements. It is all gone and past. II. THE CONSIDERATION WHICH IT DEMANDS. 1. We are to consider that this change must happen to us all. 2. We are to consider that this may happen at any time. It may happen to you in manhood, amidst all the cares and duties of life. It may happen to you in youth. It may appear to you in childhood. Death waits not for confirmed age and trembling years to realise his triumphs, but smites when and where he will. 3. We are to consider our latter end so as to ascertain whether we are prepared to meet it. Are you ready to renounce the things of the present life? 4. Then consider not only whether you are prepared to renounce the things of this life, but whether you are prepared for the events which will immediately follow. Scripture teaches us that two great events will follow immediately upon this latter end of our life; we must meet God, and we must stand in judgment. 5. We are not only to consider whether we are prepared for the great change, but we are deeply to ponder the consequences of being

unprepared to meet it. 6. Then consider the method by which alone we can be prepared to meet this last end. Happily we are blessed with a revelation from God; happily that revelation contains within itself the grand preparation of redeeming and recovering mercy; and happily this is the only sovereign remedy, whilst all others are excluded from our confidence and our hope. The method, therefore, by which we can expect to meet God in peace is the method of His own device; devised by His infinite wisdom, and accomplished by a power also infinite, becoming the proof of a love also infinite. Consider that your hope and security lie in not devising your own method of happiness, but in accepting God's method of happiness, in bowing to God's proposition, and believing in God's dear Son. (*A. Reed.*) *On death*:—I. IN WHAT MANNER SHOULD WE CONSIDER OUR LATTER END? 1. Thoroughly; I mean with judgment and understanding, so as to form just and regular apprehensions concerning its causes and consequences. 2. Seasonably. It must be thought of and provided for beforehand. II. THE WISDOM AND ADVANTAGE OF CONSIDERING OUR LATTER END. 1. It would help us to form a truer estimate of life. 2. It would dispose us to reason and to act. (*S. Lavington.*) *The latter end*:—I. Reflect upon this consideration AS A COURSE OF WISDOM. Man's comparative wisdom in the affairs of this life is wholly estimated by his disposition to anticipate the results of his own actions, and his ability to calculate upon those results with success. II. Reflect upon THE CIRCUMSTANCES CONNECTED WITH THIS LATTER END, WHICH ARE ESPECIALLY TO BE CONSIDERED. Consider the trials which will be involved in it, the peculiar wants which it will manifest, the results which must flow from it, the provisions which it will require. III. Upon the authority of the truths which have been thus presented to you, I TRUST I MAY NOW URGE YOU TO A PRACTICAL FULFILMENT OF THIS DUTY. When you consider the latter end of others, and contrast together the various issues of their lives; when you behold the piety of youth and active life rising into the joy and peace of a Christian's departure, and mark the final triumph of a soul which has wisely considered and provided for its whole responsibility, you cannot fail to see how much has been gained by adopting the Gospel as the powerful and practical principle of conduct in the morning of man's day of grace. (*S. H. Tyng, D.D.*) *The consideration of death*:—That there is very generally a strange want of reflection and concern respecting our condition as mortal is most apparent in many plain familiar truths. Perhaps nothing in the world that appears so out of consistency is so obvious. The fact of a whole race dead, from the beginning of time to the present generation, comes with but little impression on us, except at occasional moments. In surveying history it is with the men of past ages as living that our thoughts are busy. But there is no need of illustrations of such wide reference. The insensibility may be shown in more familiar exemplifications. Persons inhabiting a house of considerable age—how often are they reminded that persons formerly occupying its apartments, treading its avenues, are dead, with a pointed application of this thought to themselves? And so of places of worship, and of other resort. But there is still more immediate evidence. How little effect, in the way of reflection on ourselves, appears to be produced by the instances and spectacles of actual mortality; the termination of a life in our near neighbourhood, or among those whom we well knew! Persons frequently and officially conversant with circumstances of death are often very remarkably estranged from reflection upon it, as applied to themselves. Consider, again, how little and seldom we are struck with the reflection, how many things we are exposed to that might cause death! what little things might be fatal! But we go forward just as if none of these smaller poisoned arrows of death were flying, or of the greater darts either. Observe, too, how soon a recovery from danger sets aside the serious thought of death. Observe, again, how schemes are formed for a long future time, with as much interest and as much anticipating confidence as if there were no such thing in the world as death. And when it is asked, "And how comes this to be?" the general explanation is that which accounts for everything that is wrong—namely, the fearful radical depravity of our nature. But to assign this general cause does not suffice to the inquiry. There doubtless are special causes, through which that great general one operates, availing itself of them. 1. One of these may be the perfect distinctness of life and death. They do not partially co-exist in the individual like imperfect health with a degree of illness. We have life absolutely, and death not at all; so that we can make no experimental comparison between them; we cannot know by means of the one what the other is. 2. Again, we think that even the certainty and the universality of death may be numbered among the

causes tending to withdraw men's thoughts from it. 3. We might specify another thing as one of the causes sought for; that is, the utter inability to form any defined idea of the manner of existence after death. The thoughts sent onward to that boundary of life cannot stop there; the mere termination itself is nothing; they look beyond; but beyond is thickest darkness, as often as they go there; so that there is, as it were, nothing shown to draw the mind thither to look over the limit. But, after all, the chief causes that there is so little thought and concern on this great subject are of a much more obvious kind, and involving guilt. 4. One is a general presumption of having long to live. In each stage of life still this beguiled confidence is indulged. 5. Another great cause of the thoughtlessness and insensibility (indeed, it is both cause and effect) is that men occupy their whole soul and life with things to preclude the thought of its end. 6. We may add to these causes an inadequate, contracted notion of what is necessary as a preparation for the event. 7. And to give full force to all these causes, there is, in a large proportion of men, a formal, systematic endeavour to keep off the thought of death. A strong action to turn the thoughts in another direction—an amusing book seized, or a hasty recourse to occupation, or an excursion, or a going into a gay circle, possibly a plunge into intemperance. And all the unfortunate things that may have befallen have not been a measure of calamity equal to that involved in the success of this endeavour! We have hardly a moment left for the topics of admonition and remonstrance against indulging such a habit of the soul. But let it be impressed upon us that to end our life is the mightiest event that awaits us in this world. And it is that which we are living but to come to. It holds out a grand protest against being absorbed and lost in this world. It is the termination of a period confessedly introductory and probationary. Without thinking of it, often and with deep interest, there is no possibility that our scheme and course of life should be directed to the supreme purpose of life. To have been thoughtless of it, then, will ultimately be an immense calamity; it will be to be in a state unprepared for it. (*J. Foster.*) *Of the consideration of our latter end, and the benefits of it*:—1. Men are not willing to entertain this unwelcome thought of their own latter end; the thought whereof is so troublesome a guest, that it seems to disparage all those present enjoyments of sense that this life affords. 2. A vain foolish conceit that the consideration of our latter end is a kind of presage and invitation of it. 3. A great difficulty that ordinarily attends our human condition, to think otherwise concerning our condition than what at present we feel and find. 4. It is true, this is the way of mankind to put from us the evil day, and the thoughts of it; but this our way is our folly, and one of the greatest occasions of those other follies that commonly attend our lives; and therefore the great means to cure this folly, and to make us wise, is wisely to consider our latter end. I. THE CONSIDERATION OF OUR LATTER END DOTH IN NO SORT MAKE OUR LIVES THE SHORTER, BUT IT IS A GREAT MEANS TO MAKE OUR LIVES THE BETTER. 1. It is a great monition and warning of us to avoid sin, and a great means to prevent it. When I shall consider that certainly I must die, and I know not how soon, why should I commit those things, that if they hasten not my latter end, yet they will make it more uneasy and troublesome by the reflection upon what I have done amiss? I may die to-morrow; why should I then commit that evil that will then be gall and bitterness unto me? Would I do it if I were to die to-morrow? why should I then do it to-day? Perchance it may be the last act of my life, and however let me not conclude so ill; for, for aught I know, it may be my concluding act in this scene of my life. 2. It is a great motive and means to put us upon the best and most profitable improvement of our time. 3. Most certainly the wise consideration of our latter end, and the employing of ourselves, upon that account, upon that one thing necessary, renders the life the most contenting and comfortable life in the world: for as a man, that is aforehand in the world, hath a much more quiet life in order to externals, than he that is behindhand; so such a man that takes his opportunity to gain a stock of grace and favour with God, that hath made his peace with his Maker through Christ Jesus, hath done a great part of the chief business of his life, and is ready upon all occasions, for all conditions, whereunto the Divine Providence shall assign him, whether of life or death, or health or sickness, or poverty or riches; he is, as it were, aforehand in the business and concern of his everlasting, and of his present state also. II. AS THUS THIS CONSIDERATION MAKES LIFE BETTER, SO IT MAKES DEATH EASY. 1. By frequent consideration of death and dissolution, he is taught not to fear it; he is, as it were, acquainted with it aforehand, by often preparation for it. 2. By frequent consideration of our latter end, death comes to

be no surprise unto us. 3. The greatest sting and terror of death are the unrepented sins of the past life; the reflection upon these is that which is the strength, the venom of death itself. He, therefore, that wisely considers his latter end, takes care to make his peace with God in his lifetime; and by true faith and repentance to get his pardon sealed; to husband his time in the fear of God; to observe His will, and keep His laws; to have his conscience clean and clear. And being thus prepared, the malignity of death is cured, and the bitterness of it healed, and the fear of it removed. 4. But that which, above all, makes death easy to such a considering man is this: that by the help of this consideration, and the due improvement of it, as is before shown, death to such a man becomes nothing else but a gate unto a better life. Not so much a dissolution of his present life, as a change of it for a far more glorious, happy, and immortal life. So that though the body dies, the man dies not; for the soul, which is indeed the man, makes but a transition from her life in the body to a life in heaven. I shall now add some cautions that are necessary to be annexed to this consideration. We are to know, that although death be thus subdued, and rendered rather a benefit than a terror to good men; yet—1. Death is not to be wished or desired, though it be not an object to be feared, it is a thing not to be coveted; for certainly life is the greatest temporal blessing in this world. 2. As the business and employments of our life must not estrange us from the thought of death, so again we must be careful that the overmuch thought of death do not so possess our minds as to make us forget the concerns of our life, nor neglect the business which that portion of time is allowed us for. As the business of fitting our souls for heaven; the sober businesses of our callings, relations, places, stations? Nay, the comfortable, thankful, sober enjoyments of those honest lawful comforts of our life that God lends us; so as it be done with great sobriety and moderation, as in the presence of God, and with much thankfulness to Him; for this is part of that very duty we owe to God for those very external comforts and blessings we enjoy. (*Sir M. Hale.*) *The wisdom of considering our latter end:*—I. THE DUTY HERE MENTIONED. To consider our latter end is—1. To familiarise our minds to the thought of death, and of that eternal state on which death is the entrance. 2. To consider how we may provide for our welfare in our latter end. 3. To devote ourselves mainly to the great work of providing for our welfare in our latter end. II. THE WISDOM OF ATTENDING TO IT. 1. Because such attention is pleasing to the Most High. 2. Because the neglect of it will infallibly expose us to the tremendous effects of God's righteous indignation. 3. Because it serves to facilitate our victory over the delusions of the world. 4. Because it tends to administer support under every affliction which assails us. 5. Because it will be the means of giving us a good hope in death. (*J. Natt, B.D.*) *The close of the year:*—The wish which Moses here utters for the congregation of Israel is a wish to which a minister of the Gospel may also give utterance in behalf of his congregation, more especially at the present season. For surely it behoves us also—who have been brought to the knowledge of Christ, and of the power of His resurrection—to consider our latter end: and so much the more as we have received a fuller and clearer assurance of what that end is to be, both of the glory to which we are called, and of the misery which we may draw down on our souls. The advance of time itself is unseen, unfelt. Its footsteps fall so lightly that they do not strike on any of our senses. Drop after drop bubbles up from the sightless fountain of eternity; and yet their bubbling is not heard. Wave rolls on after wave in never-resting, never-ending flow; and yet there are no sounds of their breaking against the shore. Time never halts so that we should catch hold of it, has no voice that we should hear it, no outward form or body that we should see it. But man for his own purposes has gathered it up into hours and days and weeks and months and years; inasmuch as without such measures of time none of the business of this world could be carried on. Hardly without them could we hold any intercourse with our neighbours, or have any orderly knowledge whatsoever. This division of time, it is true, is little heeded by most persons, except with reference to the concerns of their worldly life. Yet none who have a right notion of the importance of good housekeeping for the management of our heavenly, no less than of our earthly concerns, will fail to do that with regard to their spiritual life, without which there can be no good housekeeping anywhere. At the end of every day they who are anxious to do well and to prosper in this world will cast their thoughts over what they have done, and will consider what they have left undone that they ought to have done; they will calculate what they have spent, what they have sold, what they have gained, what they have lost, and will strike a balance. At the end of a week they take in a wider

field; they cast up the accounts of the whole week, and estimate its profit and its loss. But at the close of the year the range is a great deal wider still; then the accounts of the whole year are to be got in, and put in order and cast up and settled. No one who has any portion of the riches of this world, and who desires to keep out of difficulties will neglect this; no one who is engaged in the traffic of this world can neglect it without bringing on certain ruin. This, too, is the very work which you ought now to be engaged in. The old year is on its last legs, and will soon be laid with the multitude of those that have passed away before it. That we have all of us been far too forgetful of God during the past year, no one will deny. The very best and godliest amongst us will be the first to acknowledge this. Others may make the acknowledgment carelessly; but the pious will be stricken with grief and shame. Yet surely there is something very strange in this forgetfulness. For would it not be strange if a servant were to forget his master, in whose house he was living and who fed and clothed him? Would it not be strange if a son were to forget his father, to whom he owed his life, his nurture and support, his education, all that he has and all that he knows? Now, God is in a far higher sense our Master and Father, and has done far more for us than any earthly master ever did for his servants, or any earthly father for his children. What I wish to urge upon you is the pressing importance of undertaking a strict and solemn examination of the whole frame and fashion of your life during the last year of your actions, of your feelings, of your thoughts. Take care that the account be a true one; it is a matter of life and death. Try your heart at the bar of your conscience, as though before a judge; and do not exercise your subtilty in trying to diminish or excuse or conceal your offences, but rather in drawing them forth to the light, in uncovering their nakedness and exposing their enormity. Endeavour to look into your hearts with the same eye with which God looks into them; and then to confess all your sins to God. Throw yourself on the mercy of your Saviour; beseech Him to forgive you; beseech Him to heal you; beseech Him to grant you His Spirit, that you may be purified from these your sins. Reckon up the list of them, and write it on your hearts, that it may ever be before you to put you on your guard in the hour of temptation. Weigh your actions with reference, not to the fruit they are to bear in this world, but to the fruit they are to bear in the next world; and in all your plans and purposes, in all your hopes and wishes, whatever their immediate purposes may be, consider your latter end. (*J. C. Hare, M.A.*) *The usefulness of consideration, in order to repentance*:—I. THAT GOD DOTH REALLY AND HEARTILY DESIRE THE HAPPINESS OF MEN, AND TO PREVENT THEIR MISERY AND RUIN. For the very design of these words is to express this to us, and it is done in a very vehement and, as I may say, passionate manner. II. THAT IT IS A GREAT POINT OF WISDOM TO CONSIDER SERIOUSLY THE LAST ISSUE AND CONSEQUENCE OF OUR ACTIONS, whither they tend, and what will follow upon them. And therefore wisdom is here described by the consideration of our latter end. III. THAT THIS IS AN EXCELLENT MEANS TO PREVENT THAT MISERY WHICH WILL OTHERWISE BEFALL US. And this is necessarily implied in this wish, that if they would but consider these things they might be prevented. IV. THAT THE WANT OF THIS CONSIDERATION IS THE GREAT CAUSE OF MEN'S RUIN. And this is likewise implied in the words, that one great reason of men's ruin is because they are not so wise as to consider the fatal consequences of a sinful course. This is the desperate folly of mankind, that they seldom think seriously of the consequence of their actions, and least of all such as are of greatest concernment to them, and have the chief influence upon their eternal condition. They do not consider what mischief and inconveniency a wicked life may plunge them into in this world, what trouble and disturbance it may give them when they come to die. 1. That consideration is the proper act of reasonable creatures, and that whereby we show ourselves men. So the prophet intimates (Isa. xlvi. 8). 2. Whether we consider it or not, our latter end will come; and all those dismal consequences of a sinful course, which God hath so plainly threatened, and our own consciences do so much dread, will certainly overtake us at last; and we cannot by not thinking of these things ever prevent or avoid them. (*Archbishop Tillotson.*) *The wise man for futurity*:—I. SOME CIRCUMSTANCES OF OUR LATTER END WHICH IT BECOMES US TO CONSIDER. 1. Death will part asunder the body and the soul. 2. Death will dissolve all our earthly ties. 3. Death will strip us of all our titles, and of that office, power, and influence which they imply. 4. Death will level all distinctions. 5. Death will strip us of our earthly possessions. 6. Death must bring all our schemes to a close. 7. Death will finish our period of usefulness. 8. Death will finish our character, and close our accounts for the

judgment. II. THE WISDOM OF PROPERLY CONSIDERING THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF OUR LATTER END. 1. God has pronounced it wise to consider our latter end, and act with constant and careful reference to the life to come. 2. The wisdom of such a course is inferred from the fact that in all other things we consider it indispensable. 3. To make death a matter of previous calculation is necessary to the promotion of our temporal interest and that of our heirs. 4. To well consider our latter end will tend to forward our preparation for the scenes of death. (*D. A. Clark.*) *The inevitable beyond*:—Most impractical must every man appear who genuinely believes in the things that are unseen. The man called practical by the men of this world is he who busies himself building his house in the sand, while he does not even bespeak a lodging in the inevitable beyond. (*George Macdonald.*) *Living without thought of death*:—In a good pasture where many good oxen are, the butcher comes and fetcheth away one and kills it; next day he fetcheth away another, and kills that too. Now, those which he leaves behind feed and fat themselves till they are driven to the slaughter, not considering what is become of their fellows or what shall become of themselves. So when death coming amongst a multitude of men, here taking one, and there another, we pamper up ourselves till he overtakes us also; we live as though, like Adam and Abel, we never saw a man die before us, whereas every churchyard, every age, every sickness should be a preacher of mortality unto us. (*J. Spencer.*)

Ver. 31. **For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.**—*The testimony of infidels to the truth of Christianity*:—We profess to believe that the system of doctrine and ethics set forth in Scripture is true. It is our business to prove it. 1. We may use *à priori* method; that is, we may take an antecedent probability and proceed to verify it. If there is a God, He would probably reveal Himself. 2. The *à posteriori* method; that is, reasoning from facts to conclusions. There are certain facts for which it is impossible to account otherwise than by attributing a supernatural power to religion. 3. Our case may be substantiated by external evidence. 4. Internal evidence or personal experience. 5. In demonstrating the truth of Christianity we may use the testimony of its friends. An army of such witnesses is ever marching past. 6. There is still another view-point, however, to wit, the testimony of the enemy. It is our purpose to pursue a brief argument from the concessions made by unbelievers as to the divineness of Jesus and the power of the religion which has its living centre in Him. I. Our first witnesses shall be A GROUP OF THREE WHO WERE ABLE TO TESTIFY FROM MORE OR LESS INTIMATE ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE LIVING CHRIST. 1. Pilate. "I am innocent of the blood of this just person." The word rendered "just person" is used by Plato in characterising the ideal man. 2. The Centurion who had charge of the crucifixion of Jesus. "Truly this was the Son of God!" He knew the hopes of Israel respecting the coming of Messiah, one of whose distinctive titles was "the Son of God," and he was persuaded that those hopes were realised in this Jesus whom they had sentenced to the accursed tree. 3. Judas. "I have betrayed innocent blood!" II. We now come to THE POST-APOSTOLIC PERIOD, AND SUMMON A COTERIE OF STALWART ENEMIES OF CHRIST. 1. Josephus, the Jewish historian, who wrote in the first century of the Christian era. In his *Antiquities* he says, "About this time lived Jesus, a wise man—if it be proper to call Him a man, for He was a doer of wonderful works. He was a teacher of such men as receive the truth. He was called the Christ. And when Pilate, at the instigation of our principal men, had condemned Him to the Cross, those who had loved Him did not forsake Him. And He appeared to them alive again on the third day, the prophets of old having foretold these and many other wonderful things concerning Him. And the sect of Christians, so named after Him, is not extinct unto this day." 2. Celsus, a Greek philosopher of the second century, who wrote vigorously against the sect of Galileans. He quotes liberally from the New Testament, and concedes the genuineness of the miracles of Christ. 3. Porphyry, of the second century, a Neo-Platonist, who wrote fifteen volumes against Christianity. He says, in speaking of the oracles, "The goddess Hecate hath declared Jesus to be a most pious man, His soul, like the souls of other pious men, favoured with immortality after death. The Christians do mistakingly worship Him. And when we asked at the oracle, 'Why then was He condemned?' she answered, 'The body is liable to suffering, but the soul of the pious dwells in heavenly mansions.' He hath indeed been the occasion of error in leading others away from the acknowledgment of the immortal Jove; but, being Himself pious, He is gone to the dwelling of the gods."

4. Julian, the apostate emperor of the fourth century. He was a bitter enemy of Christianity. In a campaign against the Persians he fell, pierced with a spear. Clutching the dust in his agony, he cried, "Galilean, Thou hast conquered!" He says, "Jesus, having persuaded a few of the baser sort of Galileans to attach themselves to Him, has now been celebrated about three hundred years. He did nothing in His lifetime worthy of fame, unless it be counted a great work to heal lame and blind people and exorcise demoniacs." A splendid tribute, this, to the beneficent work of Christ! III. WE LEAP A THOUSAND YEARS, AND COME TO ANOTHER GROUP OF UNBELIEVERS. We are now in the midst of influences which are ultimately to provoke a social and political upheaval throughout the civilised earth. 1. Spinoza. He is referred to as the father of modern pantheism. He did not believe in the personality of God, but regarded Him as an all-pervading something with the attributes of extension and thought. As to this God, however, he says that "Jesus Christ was the temple. In Him God has most fully revealed Himself." 2. Thomas Chubb, a leader of the modern deists. He was a tallow-chandler in his early life, and his sympathies were with the common people. Though he rejected the divineness of the Gospel, yet he was pleased to compliment it as a religion for the poor. He says, "In Christ we have an example of a quiet and peaceable spirit, of a becoming modesty and sobriety—just, honest, upright, and sincere, and above all, of a most gracious and benevolent temper and behaviour—one who did no wrong, no injury to any man, in whose mouth was no guile; who went about doing good, not only by His ministry, but also in curing all manner of diseases among the people. His life was a beautiful picture of human nature in its own purity and simplicity, and showed at once what excellent creatures men might be under the influence of His Gospel." IV. And now we present three malignant spirits, than whom no others in history have probably exercised a more disastrous influence on human thought, THE MASTER-SPIRITS OF THE PERIOD OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION. 1. Diderot, father of the Encyclopedie, which was the dragon's egg of the Reign of Terror In a conversation with the Baron de Holbach he is represented as saying, "For a wonder, gentlemen, I know nobody, either in France or elsewhere, who could write as these Scriptures are written. This is a Satan of a book. I defy any one to prepare a tale so simple, so sublime and touching, as that of the passion of Jesus Christ." 2. Jean Jacques Rousseau, brilliant, erratic, inconsistent. Here is a remarkable saying of his: "I will confess to you that the majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the Gospel has its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers, with all their pomp of diction—how mean, how contemptible are they compared with the Scriptures! Is it possible that a book so simple and at once so sublime should be merely the work of man? Is it possible that the sacred personage whose history it contains should be Himself a mere man? What sweetness, what purity in His manner! What an affecting gracefulness in His instructions! What sublimity in His maxims! What profound wisdom in His discourses! What presence of mind, what subtlety, what fitness in His replies! Where is the man, where the philosopher, who could so live and so die without weakness and without ostentation? When Plato describes his imaginary just man, loaded with all the punishments of guilt, yet meriting the highest rewards of virtue, he describes exactly the character of Jesus Christ, and the resemblance is so striking that all the Church Fathers perceived it. The death of Socrates, peacefully philosophising among his friends, appears the most agreeable that one could wish: while that of Jesus expiring in agonies, abused, insulted, and accused by a whole nation, is the most horrible that one could fear. Socrates, indeed, in receiving the cup of poison, blessed the weeping executioner who administered it: but Jesus, amid excruciating tortures, prayed for His merciless tormentors. Yes, verily, if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God." 3. Voltaire. No man ever lived who wrote more bitterly of the Christian religion than he; yet hear this letter, the last he ever wrote, expressed in an honest hour, and worthy of consideration as the utterance of a dying man: "I, the underwritten, do declare that for these four days past, having been afflicted with vomiting of blood—at the age of eighty-four—and not being able to drag myself to church, the reverend Rector of Sulpice having been pleased to add to his many favours that of sending me the Abbé Gautier, I did confess to him, that if it please God to dispose of me, I would die in the Church in which I was born. Hoping that the Divine mercy will pardon my faults, I sign myself in the presence of Abbé Mignon, my nephew, and Marquis de Villeville, my friend, VOLTAIRE. March 2, 1778." V. We here introduce A WITNESS WHO STANDS ALONE, THE MOST COLOSSAL

FIGURE IN HISTORY. Napoleon. If not an unbeliever in the radical sense, he was certainly a fatalist. His star of destiny was his only providence. On one occasion, during his exile, Gen. Bertrand said to him, "I cannot conceive, sire, how a great man like you could believe that a Supreme Being could exhibit Himself to man in human guise." Napoleon answered, "I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ was not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and His will confounds me. Between Him and whoever else in the world there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by Himself. His ideas and His sentiments, the truth which He announces, and His manner of convincing are not explained either by human organisation or by the nature of things. His birth and the history of His life; the profundity of His doctrine,' which grapples the mightiest difficulties, and which is of those difficulties the most admirable solution; His Gospel, His apparition, His empire, His march across the ages and the realms —everything is for me a prodigy, a mystery insoluble, which plunges me into reveries which I cannot escape; a mystery which is there before my eyes, a mystery which I can neither deny nor explain. Here I see nothing human. . . . And what a mysterious symbol, the instrument of punishment of the Man-God! His disciples were armed with it. 'The Christ,' they said, 'God has died for the salvation of men.' What a strife, what a tempest, these simple words have raised around the humble standard of the punishment of the Man-God! On the one side we see rage and all the furies of hatred and violence: on the other there are gentleness, moral courage, infinite resignation. Everywhere Christians fell, and everywhere they triumphed. You speak of Cæsar, of Alexander, of their conquests, and of the enthusiasm which they enkindled in the hearts of their soldiers; but can you conceive of a dead man making conquests, with an army faithful and entirely devoted to his memory? . . . Now that I am at St. Helena, now that I am alone, chained upon this rock, who fights and wins empires for me? who are the courtiers of my misery and misfortunes? who thinks of me? who makes effort for me in Europe? Where are my friends? What an abyss between my deep misery and the eternal reign of Christ, which is proclaimed, loved, adored, and which is extending over all the earth! Is this to die? is it not rather to live? The death of Christ—it is the death of God." VI. We summon now TWO WITNESSES FROM AMONG THE POETS, both of whom, gifted with extraordinary genius, rejected the Gospel of Christ. 1. Goethe. "I consider the Gospels to be thoroughly genuine, for in them is the effective reflection of the sublimity which emanates from Jesus, and this is as Divine as ever the Divine appeared on earth." 2. Jean Paul Richter, worshipper of the beautiful. "Jesus of Nazareth is the purest among the mighty, the mightiest among the pure, who with His pierced hand has raised empires from their foundations, turned the stream of history from its old channel, and still continues to rule and guide the ages." VII. The two who are now to appear and bear testimony ARE REPRESENTATIVE LEADERS OF THE RIGHT AND LEFT WINGS OF MODERN UNITARIANISM. 1. Dr. Channing, leader of the conservatives, says, "I maintain that this is a character wholly remote from human conception. To imagine it to be the production of imposture or enthusiasm shows a strange unsoundness of mind. I contemplate it with a veneration second only to the profound awe with which I look upward to God. It bears no mark of human invention. It belongs to and manifested the beloved Son of God. I feel as if I could not be deceived. The Gospels must be true. They were drawn from a living original. The character of Jesus is not a fiction. He was what He claimed to be, and what His followers attested. Nor is this all. Jesus not only was, He is still, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. He has entered the heaven to which He always looked forward on earth. There He lives and reigns. Let us, then, by imitation of His virtues and obedience to His Word, prepare ourselves to join Him in those pure mansions where He is surrounding Himself with the good and the pure, and will communicate to them for ever His own spirit and power and joy." 2. Theodore Parker, leader of the radicals, says, "Jesus combines in Himself the sublimest precepts and divinest practices, thus more than realising the dream of prophets and sages. He puts away the doctors of the law, subtle, learned, irrefragable, and pours out a doctrine beautiful as the light, sublime as heaven, and true as God. Shall we be told that such a man never lived? Suppose that Newton never lived. But who did his works? and thought his thoughts? It takes a Newton to forge a

Newton. What man could have fabricated a Jesus? None but Jesus." VIII. THE TWO WITNESSES WHO REMAIN HAVE BEEN FOREMOST LEADERS OF MODERN UNBELIEF. 1. David Strauss, the author of the mythical theory of the story of Jesus—perhaps the most conspicuous figure in recent German thought. A few years ago he was buried without a prayer or word of Christian song. He says, "If in Jesus the union of self-consciousness with the consciousness of God has been real, and expressed not only in words but actually revealed in all the conditions of His life, He represents within the religious sphere the highest point, beyond which humanity cannot go—yea, whom it cannot equal, inasmuch as every one who hereafter should climb to the same height could only do so with the help of Jesus who first attained it. He remains the highest model of religion within our thought, and no perfect piety is possible without His presence in the heart." 2. Ernest Renan, author of the legendary theory. He rejected the supernatural from the Gospel record. His romantic biography of Jesus concludes in these words, "Repose now in Thy glory, noble Founder! Henceforth, beyond the reach of frailty, Thou shalt witness, from the heights of Divine peace, the infinite results of Thy work. For thousands of years the world will defend Thee! Thou shalt be the banner about which the hottest battle will be given. . . . Whatever may be the surprises of the future, Jesus will never be surpassed. His worship will grow young without ceasing; His legend will call forth tears without end; His sufferings will melt the noblest hearts; all ages will proclaim that among the sons of men there is none born greater than Jesus." CONCLUSION—In view of these concessions made by the leading representatives of unbelief all along the centuries, it is submitted that thoughtful people cannot pause in a partial or qualified rejection of Jesus Christ. 1. As to His person. Was He man? Ay, grandly so. But He was either less than a true man or more. His enemies themselves being witnesses, He was either an impostor or the Divine Man, as He claimed to be. 2. As to His character. He was the one bright particular star in a firmament of imperfect lights. He alone is worthy to be the exemplar of character, for He alone meets the conditions of the ideal manhood. 3. As to His teaching. There have been other sacred teachers—Seneca, Confucius, Zoroaster, Sakya-Muni—but these were in comparison with Him as glow-worms to the noon-day sun. Never man spake like this Man. 4. As to His work. "He went about doing good." And since His crucifixion He has continued the building up of a kingdom of truth and righteousness on earth. Its outward form is the Church, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." 5. As to the manner of His death. Ah, here the mystery thickens! Under His Cross we learn the truth, justice, holiness, and mercy of the living God. And here Christ comes into vital relation with our souls. Our God is the God of salvation. What, therefore, shall we say? As for me, I do believe this Jesus is destined to reign even unto the ends of the earth. The story of His Church is an unbroken record of triumph. The government is upon His shoulders. He is King over all and blessed for ever. What more? As for me, this Christ shall be my Saviour. Shall He be yours? (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *Subpœnaed witness to the worth of Christianity*:—When Moses speaks of a rock he intends that in which men seek for security, repose, refreshment. By "our rock," he means the living God in whom the saints trust—He is the impregnable strength of His people; amid the weariness of life He is the rest of their soul, in Him they find sweet delight. By "their rock" Moses meant the idols, the religious systems, the worldly things, the lying vanities in which the natural man places his hope. The outside world often concedes the superiority of Christian hope. It is true, that the verdict given in our favour by worldly and unbelieving men is not always verbal and direct; it is often unintentional, implied, and indirect, but such concessions have a great value—in some respects they are more significant than are direct and verbal testimonies. And there is another objection we may anticipate. It may be said that the testimony of worldly and sceptical men to the superiority of the Christian faith can have little sincerity in it if they do not follow up their admission by accepting that faith. But a creed may have the sanction of a man's understanding and conscience, and yet he may refuse to adopt it. There is the power of prejudice, of worldly interest, there is the tyranny of passion and appetite, there is the pride of life, there is the want of inclination to believe and obey, there is the unwillingness of men to pay the price for a great ideal. I. THE ACKNOWLEDGMENTS OF WORLDLINESS. The million trust in gold, pleasure, position, and in certain hours they are very confident and scornful. The flowery rock of pleasure is the true rock; the design of life is the gratification of the senses; sunshine, roses, and song are the

desirable things. To others the golden rock is the true rock. Safety, leisure, honour, greatness, and the fulness of joy are guaranteed by the golden reef; laying up treasure in heaven is a silly illusion of the saints. Others declare the proud rock of position is the true rock. He who builds a palace has reached life's hope and glory; there is no religion but the religion of success, and the children of advantage and renown look with pity on men whose only distinction is goodness and faith. Flushed with pleasure, intoxicated with health and wealth, blinded by the pride of life, they cry frantically: "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." But the days come when they think very little of Diana. Having served fame, pleasure, appetite, pride, mammon, they declare that they have been betrayed and mocked, and they look sympathetically and longingly to the religious life they have neglected. They do not find under their rock the sweetness they expected; in the days of health, of opulence, of pleasure, they are disappointed; the honey out of their rock is poisoned and its waters are bitter. They extol the apple of Sodom, and make a face whilst they eat it. They do not find the rest for which they hoped. Life is a weariness, the burden and heat of the day is too great to be borne. They do not find the security and peace they desire. They quarrel with their rock whilst they live; they mistrust it at the grave, for in their lips is the cry of Balaam: "Let me die the death of the righteous," &c. II. THE ACKNOWLEDGMENTS OF UNBELIEF. 1. The sceptical world makes intellectual concessions to our creed. In our day we have witnessed a remarkable sight in the sceptical world. We have seen a great sceptic make a new rock, and we have seen how slavishly he has copied our rock. No one can study that most wonderful modern system of secularism known as positivism without being struck with its close resemblance to the Christian doctrine, worship, and hope. A story is told of one of our painters that, having painted a picture with a fine rock in it, he went to see another picture painted by a brother artist in which also a rock was a prominent feature; immediately he saw it, the original artist broke out, "He has stolen my rock, he has stolen my rock!" When I read the French sceptic's multitudinous pages I find the same cry again and again coming to my lips. Of course, I soon see that it is not my rock, not the granite foundation, not the Rock of Ages, but only plaster of Paris, on which can be built no house of salvation. Nevertheless it is a great concession to Christianity that unbelief should thus follow its lines, imitate its dogmas, worship, fellowship, and hope. In nature there is a phenomenon known as "mimicry," it is a curious fact on which our modern scientists have written largely, namely, that one class of insects or birds acquire characteristics which belong to another class, they come closely to resemble creatures with which they have no real affinity. But mind this, it is always the weak and inferior creature that apes the stronger and higher, never the superior that imitates the inferior. 2. Unbelief makes many practical concessions to our creed. (1) Such an acknowledgment of the preciousness of our faith comes from the domestic circle in the indisposition of the unbeliever to make sceptics of his family. Men wish to do their best for their families. (2) Such an acknowledgment comes from the business world. Scepticism may be considered a virtue in literary circles, but it is hardly accepted as such in the practical world even by irreligious men. I saw once an advertisement for a clerk: "Freethinker preferred." I do not know what kind of business was transacted in that office, or what came of that advertisement, but how strangely it sounded! I have seen it only once—significant fact. (3) Such an acknowledgment comes from the political sphere. The validity of religion is denied in theory, but the men who deny its truth and authority confess that politically it is useful, nay, indispensable—they agree to regard it as a useful superstition. Gibbon, infidel as he was, attacking the Christian religion with learning, eloquence, and satire, yet went to church, because he confessed that he felt that government and order would be impossible unless the common people were awed by the supernatural. When later a rationalist like Edmond About said, "What France needs is ten millions of Protestants," he gave utterance to the same thought—that a spiritual faith is essential to order, to civilisation, to progress. And many able unbelievers of late years have looked with the deepest misgiving on the spread of infidel opinion—they believed that the opinion was correct, yet that socially and politically it was perilous. To discredit religious faith was to loosen the bands of order and government. III. THE ACKNOWLEDGMENTS OF HEATHENISM. 1. The heathen are deeply impressed with our superior civilisation, which has its roots in our faith. We do not go to them with an abstract faith, but with a creed attested by many powerful and conspicuous demonstrations. We possess a marvellous science, a vast commerce, a splendid literature—power, wealth,

culture, liberty almost unexampled. Christianity can say with its author: "Believe me for the very works' sake." This spectacle of a supreme civilisation in many ways affects the thought of the pagan when he considers the merit of our faith. He looks round on the backwardness, the weakness, the ignorance, the poverty, the subordination of his own land, and feels there is something seriously amiss with his gods, temples, and scriptures. "Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." The heathen is deeply impressed by our philanthropy, which is also a fruit of our faith. In a recent article on "The Amelioration of the Condition of Hindu Women," which appeared in a native newspaper in India, called *The Hindu*, occur these words: "We by no means approve of the attempts of the evangelists to Christianise India. We believe in the Hindu religion, and in the suitability of its doctrines to the people of this land, . . . but it is impossible not to admire and feel thankful for the good work the missionaries are doing. It is a matter of standing reproach to us that we are not able to do for our countrymen and women half as much as the Christian missionaries are doing for us." (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *The pathetic side of infidelity*:—Modern infidelity has many tones and many voices. Some of these are insolent and arrogant,—they drive us at once to a distance. There is just one which is deeply pathetic. It is that which confesses that its rock is not as our Rock; that its reasonings and its discoveries have not enriched but impoverished. "Our Rock" is the God of the Christian revelation. Our enemy's rock is a divinity of man's construction, however many or however few it may admit of the characteristics of the other. Let me name one or two of the attributes of our Rock. 1. THE DIVINE PERSONALITY. Man wants, and must have, some one above himself to worship, trust, love. II. THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS. It is very well to say that sin is not sinful; or to say, on the other hand, that sin must be left as it is, to bear its fruit in consequence, and to know no other cure but forgetfulness: this does not meet the case, does not heal the remorse, does not repair the mischief, does not set the sinner free to work, because it sets him not free to hope. Forgiveness is a name not yet named: till it is named, I am helpless still. But forgiveness of sins is named in revelation. It is the keystone of the Gospel. III. THE LAWFULNESS, REALITY, AND EFFICACY OF PRAYER. How ready to hand are the old cavils! How shall man stay or guide the hand of God? IV. LIFE AND IMMORTALITY BROUGHT TO LIGHT BY THE GOSPEL. What has "their rock" to tell of a world beyond death? A guess, a peradventure—at best, a recognition of angel faces loved and lost—at best, a resumption, in some spoilt and damaged form, of relationships formed here and broken—at best, an absorption into the great ocean or fountain of being, impassive, impersonal, unconscious, irresponsive. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Hostile homage to the supremacy of the Christian faith*:—The enemies with whom we are familiar in these times, the enemies with whose rock we come into contact, are not worshippers of idols nor votaries of any of the grosser forms of superstition. On these they admit Christianity to be a great advance. They would scorn the notion of resorting to superstition and idolatry as the true solution of man's spiritual need. In comparison with these they admit the Christian faith to be both purer and loftier, still it is not their rock. They claim to have advanced beyond Christianity. Now I propose, in the spirit of these words of Moses, to compare the Christian faith with the principles of those who differ from it, and to show how its superiority must be and is acknowledged even by its enemies. I. THE FORMATION OF CHARACTER. It is commonly allowed that the Christian faith produces the very highest type of character. There has never appeared upon earth a being whose character could be placed alongside that of Jesus Christ. No doubt it is possible to find outside of the ranks of Christians not a few who are not only inoffensive in their manner of life, and have characters unstained by any decided vice, but also men of conspicuous honour and adorned with virtue in a degree which puts many a professed Christian to shame. But in reference to such it is to be noticed, first, that the qualities by which such men are distinguished are precisely those which Christianity teaches men to value and to practise, and that it is just in the degree in which they have developed the virtues of Christianity that they are held in honour; and secondly, it is to be remembered that it is hard to say how far these virtues, when manifested within the pale of Christendom, are not attributable to Christian influences. II. THE INWARD SATISFACTION AND PEACE WHICH THEY YIELD TO THE SOUL. There is a craving in the human heart which seeks something it cannot itself provide, a thirst which does not find in the heart which feels it any well at which it may be quenched. There are outside of the Christian faith endless

methods of ministering to that thirst—the delights of love, the fellowship of kindred minds, the pursuit of knowledge, the gratifying of the desires of the mind and heart, the excitement of pleasure, and many others besides, but is there any one of them all which meets this inward craving of the human heart so directly or so completely as it is met in the gift of a new and everlasting life in God through Jesus Christ our Lord? Dig what wells you will in this wilderness world; hew out what cisterns you choose to gather up in them your little stores of earth-drawn pleasure—do they yield you anything to be compared to the streams of living water flowing from the smitten rock? Have they ever furnished you a heart satisfaction to be compared as to quality and permanency with the heart satisfaction felt by the Christian in realising the love of God towards him, and his own entrance into the Divine life in Christ? Again, there are dark and difficult problems which present themselves to the soul when pondering its present position and future destiny; and although there are some who preach that it is the highest duty of man to go forward in his appointed path with only an awful sense of the darkness surrounding him, and the mystery before him, is it not a better position far to feel that the most important questions have been answered, that the proper goal of man has been revealed, and that the path which leads to it has been made clear? III. THE SUPPORT AFFORDED IN THE EMERGENCIES OF LIFE. 1. In seasons of danger, in the hour when shipwreck seems inevitable, or sudden illness seizes on the trembling body, or pestilence is perilously near, who manifests the greatest sense of safety? 2. Or again, in times of deep distress, when earthly disappointment has impoverished you, or affliction has weakened and wasted you, or bereavement has left you mourning and lonely, do you know of any stay which you would then so much desire, as that possessed by the Christian? 3. Lastly, who, think you, is so well prepared to die as he who has committed his soul to the care and keeping of Christ? Is he as likely to be troubled with dying regrets as you who have not done so? Do you think that he will lament in that hour the time spent in prayer and in study of God's Word, his days of humiliation and repentance, his strivings, self-denials, and sacrifices for Christ, and the labour put forth to win conformity to the mind of Christ? (*G. Robson, D.D.*) *The true rock of life:*—I. A MAN'S GOD IS THE ROCK OF HIS BEING. 1. Because He is the most settled object to him. Souls cling to their religion as limpets to the rocks; the more furious the billows the faster their hold. 2. Because He is the object most relied upon by him. In Him the soul's affections centre, on Him its highest hopes are based. II. THE GOD OF THE BIBLE IS THE BEST ROCK OF SOULS. 1. He is the grandest Rock. All others are vanities and lies. 2. He is the most durable. All others decay. 3. He is the most accessible. Always within reach even of those most distant from Him. III. THE SUPERIORITY OF THIS ROCK IS WELL ATTESTED—1. By those who have tried it. 2. By those who reject it. What says Rousseau? "The majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the Gospel hath its influence on my heart. Review the works of our philosophers, and with all their pomp of diction, how mean, how contemptible are they compared with Scripture!" (*Homilist.*) *Testimony to Christianity wrung from its enemies:*—The great lawgiver, forbidden to enter the promised land, takes a leave the most affectionate of those whom he had led through the wilderness; and bequeaths them, as his best legacy, exhortations to steadfastness in obeying the true Jehovah. There were gathered within the range of his vision the future fortunes of Israel; and he alternately rejoiced and lamented, as with prophetic gaze he marked the advancement and depression of God's chosen people. Nothing but their own waywardness and rebellion could interfere with their prosperity and happiness; and therefore, when he observed how the imagery of disaster crowded the yet distant scene, he brake into the exclamation: "How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them and the Lord had shut them up?" He saw that in place of carrying themselves successfully in the battle, the Israelites would yield to an inconsiderable force, but why was this, unless because wickedness had provoked God to withdraw His protection and His strength? Was it because the false deities of the heathens were mightier than the Jehovah of Israel? Indeed, the very adversaries themselves did not advance such an assertion. They knew, and they confessed, that their sources of strength were inferior to those to which the Israelites might apply, and would not therefore themselves refer their success to the greater prowess of the power they adored. "Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." And well then might the lawgiver, whilst just on the point of being gathered to his fathers, expostulate indignantly with Israel on the madness of that

idolatry into which he foresaw they would run. We regard as emphatically the enemies of Christianity those who absolutely reject revelation, and those who (professedly receiving it) explain away its chief mysteries. The first is the Deist, who will have nothing but what he is pleased to call natural religion, and who denies that God has made any disclosure to His creatures but what is given in the universe or on the tablet of conscience; the second is the philosophising Christian, whether he style himself the Arian or the Socinian or the Unitarian, who in some way or other impugns the doctrine of a Trinity, and therefore removes from the Bible the great article of an atonement for sin. We say these are the chief enemies of Christianity, and it is from these we are to seek a testimony to the excellence of that creed which we ourselves profess to have adopted. And therefore through the remainder of our discourse there will be two great truths at whose illustration we must labour—the first, that the rock of the Deist "is not as our Rock," the Deist "himself being judge"; and the second, that the rock of the Unitarian "is not as our Rock," the Unitarian "himself being judge." 1. Now, we shall begin with an argument which is applicable to every species of infidelity, whether it take the form of a total or only of a partial rejection of Scripture. We should have no Deism, if the contents of revelation were not designed to humble us and produce self-denial; we should have no Socinianism, if the doctrine of a Trinity in unity demanded not the unqualified submission of our reason. But then it ought to be evident, that no religious system would be adapted to our nature and condition which did not set itself vigorously against our pride and our passions; it ought to be evident, that without some great moral renovation, a thorough change in the dispositions and tendencies with which we are born, we cannot be fitted for intercourse with such a Being as God must necessarily be, nor for the enjoyment of such happiness as can alone be looked for as His gift to His creatures. It ought therefore to commend itself to us as an incontrovertible truth, that Christianity is worthy our credence and our veneration, in exact proportion as it tends to the production of humility and of holiness; and if in any way, whether direct or indirect, there be put forth a confession that Christianity is more adapted than some other system to the subduing the haughtiness and corruption of our nature, we may affirm of such confession that it amounts to a direct testimony of the superiority of our religion. And we maintain that this very confession is furnished by the rejection of Christianity. We find the causes of rejection in the humiliating and sanctifying tendencies of the religion. We trace Deism and Socinianism, and under these every form of infidelity, to a cherished dislike to truth, which demands the subjugation of self and the prostration of reason. What, then, does the rejection prove, but that the embraced system is more complacent to pride and more indulgent to passion? And if it prove this, it is itself nothing less than a testimony on the side of Christianity. We can challenge the very adversaries to bear testimony; we can wring a witness for the superiority of Christianity as an engine adapted for the exigencies of a disorganised creation, from the secret, yet discernible, reasons which cause a land to be deformed by so many shapes of infidelity. Oh! knowing that those reasons have to do with the humbling, the sanctifying tendencies of the religion of Jesus, and that consequently what is substituted for this religion must less tend to humble and less tend to sanctify, and therefore be less fitted for such beings as ourselves, we can triumphantly look our opponents in the face, and unflinchingly declare that "their rock is not as our Rock, our enemies themselves being judges." We draw, then, a contrast between what was effected towards the amelioration of human condition while heathenism had the world to itself, and what has been done since Christianity gained partial sway. We are not afraid to refer it to the decision of the most inveterate opponent of Christianity, whether civilisation has not advanced with a most rapid march wheresoever the Gospel has gained a footing, and whether the institutions of a country professedly Christian could be exchanged for those of the most renowned in heathen times, without the loss of what we hold dearest in our charter and the surrender of what sheds its best beauty around our homes. We have never heard of so thorough and consistent an advocate of the sufficiency of reason, that he would contend for the superior civilisation, the finer jurisprudence, the greater civil liberty, the purer domestic happiness, attained to whilst reason was not interfered with by communications which avouched themselves from God. And this is enough to warrant our claiming him as a witness to the superiority of our Rock. We contend that in the possession of Christianity alone lies the difference between ourselves and the nations whom we have vastly outstripped. We do not excel them in the fire of genius and the vigour of intellect. The agency of reason

alone is in no degree comparable to that of revelation, when the ends proposed are those eagerly sought by every foe of evil and every friend of man. And oh! then, is it not a confession which warrants us in affirming when opposing such as reject the Gospel of Christ—"Their rock is not as our Rock, our enemies themselves being judges"? 2. But we are aware that in this last argument we have not taken the highest ground which we are entitled to occupy. We have striven to show you that an acknowledgment may be wrung from the Deist to the worth of Christianity, considered in regard to its power to promote the well-being of society; but this is not the most important point of view under which we have to consider Christianity. The excellence of a religion should be tried by its power of preparing man for death; it is in directing us how to provide for the future that a religious system is valuable; and though it may confer collateral benefits and improve the temporal condition of a people, we can form no estimate of its worth as a religion till we have examined it as a guide for immortality. And if Deism and Christianity are to be compared on a deathbed, we shall readily gain the testimony which is asserted in our text. It will not then be denied, that persons of every age and of every rank in life are continually meeting death with calmness and even with joy, the principles of Christianity being those by which they are sustained, and its hopes those by which they are animated. There are few histories more thrilling or fuller of horror than those of the last hours of Paine or Voltaire. And where there has been neither affected indifference nor excruciating dread, there has been an utter want of tranquillity and gladness. Oh! we shall wait in vain to have these produced from the deathbed of the Deist. We are willing that the records of Deism should be searched; but we are confident that not an instance can be found in which the dying unbeliever could exclaim with rapture or even with serenity—"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" And therefore is the Deist a witness to the worth of Christianity; therefore do we appeal to him, in evidence that the religion of reason is not to be compared with the religion of revelation. 3. Now, we consider that most, if not all, of this latter reasoning is as applicable to the case of the Unitarian as that of the Deist. We believe that, where there has been rejection of the fundamental doctrine of Christianity, the doctrine of an atonement for sin, there is never any of that calmness and confidence in dying which may continually be seen where the trust rests on the great Propitiation. "The rock" of the Unitarian "is not as our Rock," the Unitarian "himself being judge"; for the man who thinks to be his own peacemaker with God can exhibit none of that assurance when passing into eternity which the very weakest possess who know that their sins have been laid on a Surety. The Unitarian looks to be saved by his repentance and obedience, no respect being had to the merits of a Mediator. Now, repentance and obedience are an important part of our system, as well as that of the Unitarian; we hold, as well as he, that no man can be saved unless he repent and do "works meet for repentance"; and it were absurd to say that the motive to good living is not at the least as strong to those who trust in Christ, as to those who trust in themselves; so that our system embraces all which that of the Unitarian embraces, whilst it adds doctrines which, if true, cannot be omitted without ruin, and which, if false, serve only to strengthen us in that system on which our acceptance is to rest. If then the Unitarian be right, he has no advantage over us—repentance and obedience being presented at least equally under both systems; but if the Unitarian be wrong, we have unspeakably the advantage over him; we have a Surety, in whose perfect satisfaction to find refuge when the worthlessness of all that man can effect for himself is being proved before the Judge of quick and dead. What then has the Unitarian to say of our Rock, except that it is stronger than his own? We have been engaged in showing you how arguments in favour of Christianity may be wrested from our adversaries; it behoves us to take heed that arguments against it be not derivable from ourselves. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The superiority of the real Christian*:—I. There is a difference between the people of God and others, which the latter discover; a difference of CHARACTER and condition of which they are aware, and which they are sometimes forced to acknowledge. I do not say that this distinction is visible in all professors of religion. How should it be? It is not real in all. There are those who differ from others only in professing to be different from them. Nor do I say that this distinction is as manifest in all real Christians as it is in some; nor in these equally manifest at all times; but there exists, and sinners see that there exists, a class of persons in the world who, in their spirit, and principles, and consistent acting in accordance with their principles, in their desires, aversions and aims, and in all that goes to constitute

character, are different from them and from the generality of mankind; as also in their hopes, consolations, supports, and sources of enjoyment. An intelligent and accomplished young man, on his deathbed, told a clergyman who visited him that he had been an infidel and a profligate, and that in the whole course of his infidelity there was but one thing that disturbed him, and he could answer every argument for Christianity but one, and that was the pious example and prayers of a believing mother. The perception of this difference exerts this power, because sinners discern that in so far as Christians are different from them, they are superior to them, have the decided advantage over them. I. In point of CHARACTER, sinners see and admit the superiority of the real Christian. Compare John the Baptist with Herod, or Mary, the sister of Lazarus, with Herodias or her daughter Salome, the dancing girl. Look first at Paul, and then at Festus or even Agrippa. You see what the difference is, and where the superiority lies. Or look at some living Christian and then at yourself, and make a comparison. Look at his spirit and then at your own; his spirit of meekness and yours of resentment; his humility and your pride; his disinterestedness and your selfishness. His aim is to do good, yours to get good. To enrich, gratify, or aggrandise yourself is your object. His is to glorify God and bless mankind. The love of Christ constrains him; but it is not so with you. Now, whose spirit is the more excellent? whose principles of action the more worthy? which character the superior? Do you not feel your own inferiority? Yes, and sinners do often secretly despise themselves for it. Here they see one denying and labouring to subdue his appetites, while they to all theirs are giving the rein; and the time that they spend in vanity, they see others occupying in visits of charity and offices of kindness to the poor and neglected; and they know that they are wrong, and that the others are right. Look at the devotional part of the Christian's character. He consecrates a portion of each day to secret communion with God, to prayer, confession of sin and contrition for it, to the grateful recollections of God's goodness to him, to the serious reading of the Word of God, to meditation and self-examination, and to intercession for you and others. Now, you have no such habits of devotion. You live without God in the world. Here is a difference between you and the Christian. On which side is the superiority? Do you not decide that the conduct of the Christian is the more filial, the more affectionate, grateful, reasonable, and worthy? Look now at the Christian in his family; and recollect then what you are in yours. Hear the expression of thanksgiving and the invocation of blessing, accompanying the reception of the bounties of Divine providence. See night and morning the household assembled to hear the Word of God, and to unite in the offering of prayer and praise. Is not this manner of conducting the affairs of a family preferable to yours? II. I pass on to THE CONDITION of the Christian. If he is better than his neighbour, so it is better with him. (1) In regard to safety, is not the condition of the Christian superior? Have not you something to apprehend, but has he any cause for fear, to whom God says, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee, be not dismayed for I am thy God"? He who has God for him is safer from natural evil than any other; and safer from sin surely is he to whom it is promised, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, My grace is sufficient for you." (2) In regard to peace, I would ask if the Christian has not the advantage of you? If the testimony of God is to be relied on, he has all the advantage implied in the difference between great peace and no peace, for "great peace have they who love Thy law," it is said in one place; and in another, "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked"; he being justified by faith has peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; and the peace of God that passes understanding keeps his heart and mind through Jesus Christ. Do you know anything of such tranquillity? Is not this far before the philosophic calm? How is it that in seasons of danger, in the hour of apprehended shipwreck, in the sudden invasion of sickness, or in the time of impending pestilence, men fall upon their knees, betake themselves to the Bible, and ask an interest in the prayers of Christians? Do they not thereby testify that the rock of their reliance is not as our Rock? (3) In point of consolation in affliction, and support under the trials of life, has not the Christian an acknowledged advantage over every other? Underneath him are the everlasting arms. What equal support have you? Have you any, any refuge to run into for shelter when the storms of sorrow beat furiously upon you? Any voice like that of the Son of Man, to say to you in your desponding moments, "be of good cheer"? Do you think that you are as well prepared to die as he who has committed his soul to the care and keeping of Christ? Do you think that he is as likely to be troubled with dying regrets as you? (4) Shall we go on one step

further? That brings us to the bar of God. In what character, think you, will it be most desirable for you to appear there? (*W. Nairns, D.D.*) *The believer's Rock*:—Who Israel's Rock was, we know—Christ. And He is our Rock too,—for strength, for protection, for spiritual supplies, for a refuge to hide in,—we have no other. And He will be ours upon the terms upon which He was willing to be a Rock unto Israel; namely, upon a preserved covenant, a separation, a keeping ourselves wholly unto Him, a forsaking of all forbidden alliances, a renouncing of all other trusts. The words will suggest to be considered, not only the sufficiency of the believer's Rock in itself, but also its confessed superiority over all other dependencies. And first, as to the image itself. The comparison of God to a rock is of frequent occurrence in Scripture. The reason for the selection of this image no doubt is to be found in the natural scenery of Palestine, which is often a key to the right understanding of much Scripture poetry. The Israelites both loved and were justly proud of their rocks. They stood, as it were, the guardians of their rich and fertile valleys, they were the source of their rivers whose water refreshed their fields, and amidst the strong munitions of these rocks they found a refuge from invading foes. The walls and fortresses of their cities, and in later days the glorious temple itself, rested on the strength of those deep foundations. The moral associations, therefore, which would be called up in the mind of a pious Jew by the image of a rock, would be those of stability, permanence, protection, blessing. He could not look on the hills as they stood round about Jerusalem, or upon the rocks as they frowned ruggedly on his native shore, without seeing in them types of that invisible presence which compassed him on every side, without remembering that God was his Rock, and that the Most High God was his Redeemer. And like happy associations are called up in the Christian mind when we think of Christ as our Rock. Thus the image suggests the security, strength, and firm foundation for our religious trust and hope. These announcements are very welcome to the first feelings of our religious nature. In matters relating to our salvation we all feel the need of a sure footing. We like not to build our house for heaven on the sand; on a yielding, treacherous, shifting basis of rational conjecture, or not very improbable hypothesis. We must have our goings set upon a Rock, and this Rock we have in Christ. He must have lain in the bosom of the Father, who could reveal such things, and yet He must be no intangible thing, no irrational thing, no mere phantom from the spirit world; He must be God manifest in the flesh. Again, in having Christ for their Rock, believers feel they have a sure defence against all their enemies. Against their temptations, lest they should prevail; or their fears, lest they should enslave; or their trials, lest they should oppress and cast down. The rocks of Palestine abounded in deep hollows or caverns, in which the people often betook themselves for shelter against the invading foe. And the same idea is employed in Scripture to describe a spiritual refuge. Thus David exclaims,—"But the Lord is my defence, and my God is the Rock of my refuge." Whilst Isaiah in a passage strikingly expressive of the good man's safety under all outward temptations says,—"He dwelleth on high, his place of defence is the munitions of rocks." The Rock of our salvation, then, in things spiritual, is also the Rock of our defence in things temporal. Godliness hath the promise of both worlds, and though it be true that the storms of time and adversity may come upon us, and breach upon breach may shake the strong foundations of our spiritual trust; yet even against these outward ills God condescends to be our Rock. He knows that our souls would faint if some merciful limit were not placed to the power of our enemies to hurt us, or to the strength of our temptations to overcome us, or to the grievousness of the chastening which tries our spirit, or to the greatness of the fears which affright our souls; and therefore in all our trials and adversities, whensoever they oppress us, He bids us to our refuge, leads us to the Rock that is higher than we are, and higher than our dangers too. And there we dwell safely; we feel as those who are drawn up into God's secret place, covered with His feathers, screened under His shadow, hidden in the hollow of His hand. "And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; a river of water in a dry place, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Once more, we contemplate the text as showing that there is in Christ our Rock a rich provision for all spiritual comforts and necessities. Three kinds of produce are mentioned in Scripture as coming from the rocks of Judea, which it can be no strain to regard as strikingly emblematical of what we have in Christ. The first is water. "He brought streams out of the rocks," it is said in the seventy-eighth Psalm, "and caused water to run down like rivers." Then another produce of the rock was

honey and oil. "He made him suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock." There is not much in the present physical geography of Palestine to say much upon this allusion; however, it may suffice for general accuracy of illustration to observe, that olive-trees were wont to thrive most on rocky soils, and the aromatic plants and shrubs to which bees are naturally attracted, abounded in the mountainous parts of Judea, and it has been suggested that nothing is more possible than that deposits of honey should sometimes be found in the cavities of the rocks. Who sees not the aptness of the emblem to represent Christ? "How sweet are Thy words unto my mouth; yea, sweeter than honey unto my taste." Gold, and silver, and precious stones were among the produce of these rocks. "Surely," says Job, "there is a vein for the silver, and a place for the gold, where they find it"; but how deep must men dig into the heart of the natural rock before they will find such treasures as David found. "I love Thy commandments; more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold." "The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver." Yes, wisdom may be found of us, but it must be searched for as for hid treasure; "and this treasure is hid in Christ." Whatever connects man with God, or the sinner with his hope, everything comes to us from the rock of Christ. And yet the half of its affluent and hidden stores has not been laid open to us. But we must not pass over without noticing the compared view with the believer's Rock here suggested, or rather its confessed superiority over all other dependencies. "For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." Of course, the primary allusion here is to the gods of idolatry, the blocks of wood and stone worshipped of heathen nations. But the principle of comparison will manifestly admit of being applied much further, and so made to embrace the trusts of all who know not God, or who reject the merciful overture of His Gospel. The comparison to be instituted, therefore, may be said to be generally between Christ as the revealed medium and method of a sinner's justification on the one hand, and any of the unauthorised methods of acceptance which men may have invented for themselves on the other. (*D. Moore, M.A.*)

Testimony to Christianity wrung from its enemies:—I. THE "ROCK" OF A MAN IS THAT ON WHICH HE BUILDS HIS HOPE; THAT IN WHICH HE SEEKS HIS SAFETY; that in which he finds his rest; that from which he looks for his satisfaction and his pleasure. The world has many "rocks," but they are all distinguished by this one characteristic—they are "of the earth, earthy." They are in the world, and of the world; and with the world they terminate. Men set up for themselves various rocks. The rich man's stronghold is his wealth; the great man's confidence is his power; the self-righteous man's vain trust is his own fancied goodness. But all agree in this, that it is something other than God, something short of God, on which they repose. God is not Himself the Rock of their confidence. They look not to Him for the portion of their souls, the joy of their hearts. If in trouble, they turn to the creature; God, their Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, is left out in all their schemes of happiness, and in all their anticipations of future good. But it is not so with those whom God hath taught. He hath taught them as the first fundamental lesson in the school of true wisdom, that their souls need an infinite portion, in order that they may be filled with good. He has taught them, that that infinite portion was originally Himself, but that they lost that portion when they fell from their God. He has taught them, that in themselves and of themselves they are "poor, and blind, and miserable, and wretched, and naked." They have no righteousness in which to appear before His pure eyes; they have no means in themselves to provide either against life's vicissitudes or eternity's disclosures. II. Having thus the Rock of the believer, and the rocks of the unbeliever, side by side, suffer us to challenge the whole world to the controversy; AND UPON THEIR OWN SHOWING WE WILL PROVE THE TRANSCENDENCY OF OUR ROCK AS COMPARED WITH THEIRS. Were we indeed to take the testimony of those who have tried and proved the Rock of salvation—and those who have tried and proved it can surely best estimate its worth; were we to take the testimony of the ransomed spirits of the just, that now surround the Rock of their salvation in heaven, they would with one voice and with one spirit declare, "There is none in heaven in comparison with Him; none is worthy of a thought, or a hope, or an affection, in comparison with Him." 1. We bring forward, then, the indirect and undesigned testimony of the world in favour of the Rock of our salvation, in the first instance, in that the world gives to that Rock a measure of respect and reverence wholly inconsistent with the manner in which, in their heart and life, they treat that Rock. Why is it that you find that for the most part the men who never give their hearts to Christ, nor their lives to His

service, yet render to Him an indirect and reluctant homage? They pay certain reverence to His day, certain regard to His sanctuary, certain homage to His ordinances and His laws. They will "do many things" on behalf of the religion of Jesus Christ; and yet, in the face of all these concessions, they withhold from Him their heart, and they "will not have Him to reign over them." They themselves, then, "being the judges," they admit to the religion of Christ, that there is in it a power and a truth and a majesty that they cannot wholly overcome or repudiate. 2. This, too, is the more strikingly shown when we further bring forward that respect and homage which they often pay to the worth and to the excellency of the true servants of Christ. Where, too, is the bold, daring scoffer that has not oftentimes felt an inward conviction of the worth and excellency of the servants of Christ, even though he has been able to stifle the expression of his inward feeling? "Themselves being judges," the man of God had an elevation, a purity, a dignity that they knew not, and yet the worth and the power of which they could not but feel. 3. And much more is this indirect tribute of the enemies of "our Rock" to the Rock of our salvation often rendered when the servants of God have passed to their rest, and their obnoxious proximity and their rebuking example no more disturb the false peace of the men of this world. Over the grave of the true and undissembled servant of God, how seldom, even from the lips of the bad, you hear anything but respect and love! "The memory of the just is blessed." 4. But we have another testimony rendered by the worldly and the wicked to the Rock of the Christian that is more striking; and that is, the high standard that they set up for the righteous to observe. What is more common than to find men of the world seeing with an eagle eye any little defection or deviation from high principle in the soldier of the cross?—saying—"It would not have mattered if he had not professed to be religious; but for one who calls himself a Christian thus to behave, it is intolerable." 5. But further than this: you find the world again and again bringing forward against Christians charges, that if they had been incurred by any of their own company, they would never have thought of doing so much as adduce. What they would regard in the world as almost evidence of spirit and of high-mindedness, they cannot tolerate in the Christian. 6. But there is a further testimony, that the world cannot withhold in spite of itself—which it is, thank God, daily giving; and that is, the multitudes who are brought out of the world, and brought to the Rock of our hope. The Redeemer draws one and another to Himself; and that, not by holding out to them earthly bribes and temporal inducements, but in the face of the world's scoff and frown, and often of the loss of reputation and of every earthly advantage. How many a time has the messenger of Christ been summoned to the bed of sickness! how many a time has the trembling and dying man then begun to cry—"Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I!" Happy for him if he hath not begun too late, and if the house of his confidence is not falling in ruins around him, when it is too late to "fly for refuge to the hope set before him." (*H. Stowell, M.A.*) *Our Rock*:—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THESE RESPECTIVE "ROCKS"? Of course, it is clear to you that one refers to the rock of the world, and the other to the Rock of the Christian. 1. What is the rock of the world? What is it that the world seems to depend upon? There are a great many people in the world who are very indifferent to God; that is, they "do not have God in all their thoughts," and do not seek to please God in all their works. And there are a great many people who seem to think that God is altogether indifferent to them; and therefore they live and they die, careless and regardless of God their Saviour. "Tush, how shall God know it?" Now, this is one of the rocks of unconverted men. But there are others who take a different view of the matter. These persons do not deny that God sees everything, that He knows the heart, that "from Him no secrets are hid"; and therefore they seek for another rock, and begin at once to magnify God's mercy: "God is merciful; He never meant to condemn the world." That is true; but not as they say it. A third class will not venture to deny this, but declare—"No man is infallible; every man is liable to mistake; why should it be supposed that you who are advocating such strictness of living, such holiness of life, should be right when there are such multitudes that hold a contrary opinion?" In other words, these persons say: "What so many people think cannot be wrong." Now, does not the Scripture most plainly tell us, that the way to heaven is the way in which very few people go—that it is a "narrow" road, and that the great bulk of men go in the wide road which leads to hell? And therefore what is the use of talking of what numbers do? If you had five thousand of your acquaintance in hell with yourselves, it would only add to your misery and not help your happi-

ness; and if you stood with only one in heaven, whom you never saw before, your happiness would not be the less. Then again, there are many who acknowledge that it must be an individual question after all; and therefore, instead of considering what other people do, they dwell entirely upon what they do themselves. Hence we find a great body of people declaring that they have done no harm,—thus building upon their morality, and thinking to raise upon it such a temple as the Lord will dwell in. How very moral were the Scribes and Pharisees! There is something more necessary than mere outward moral conduct. 1. Instead of dwelling longer upon the rocks of the world, let me turn at once to that which is intended by the "Rock" of the believer. Christ is that Rock. But it may be well to examine into the special benefits of this Rock. In the first place, it is in Christ that we really learn the nature of sin. So great is sin that God could only pardon it by the death of His dear Son; in Christ, therefore, I see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, engraved as on a rock, even in the side whence flowed the water and the blood. Further: I read also God's mercy—not man's mercy, but the tender mercy of our God, tempered with His justice. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other," in Christ. What claims, then, has this Rock upon our attention? II. WHEREIN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THESE TWO ROCKS MAY BE SAID TO CONSIST. I might mention that all other rocks end in doubt, but this in certainty. None of the rocks to which I have referred can give us security in the last day; but the Saviour has told us, that "whosoever trusteth in Him shall never be ashamed." There is no disappointment for those who are really in Christ. And we will not stay to consider what it shall be hereafter, but we may consider what it is now. Under any other circumstances than that of seeing clearly our interest in Christ, our present life must be a life of constant anxiety, if it be accompanied with any thought concerning the future. But as regards the believer, he has peace, and it is an abiding peace. "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee." Once more, I may say, there will be none of that disappointment which we so constantly find happening among men of the world, who have chosen as their rock some of the pleasures, or outward circumstances of life; for we know that in Christ we have all that we can require. "All things are ours; for we are Christ's, and Christ is God's." But just observe that there are others who are called upon to testify of these facts. "For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." Our enemies are constrained to acknowledge that they wish they believed as we believe, for then they would be happy. (*H. M. Villiers, M.A.*) *The excellency of Israel's Rock*:—I. JEHOVAH IS SUPREMELY WORTHY OF OUR CONFIDENCE AND DEVOTION. 1. He is the source of our being (Psa. c. 3; Acts xvii. 29). The supporting as well as the producing cause of created existence. 2. The source of blessing. (1) Redemption. (2) Sustenance. (3) Instruction. (4) Safety. 3. He deserves our most humble and hearty respect and confidence. II. JEHOVAH'S GRACIOUS DEALINGS FURNISH A PROPER THEME FOR HIS SERVANTS' PRAISE. 1. Their benefit only is intended, not God's, in His dispensations towards them. 2. They only are benefited, not God, who needs nothing, and can receive no favour from them. 3. They deserve not such benefits, either in whole or in part. 4. They can make no adequate return to cancel even the smallest part of their obligations. 5. Gratitude is their proper feeling, and praise the proper expression of it. III. JEHOVAH'S EXCELLENCE EXTORTS, AND SHALL EXTORT, THE HOMAGE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF EVEN HIS ENEMIES. Hear what is recorded in the case of the Egyptian magicians (Exod. viii. 18, 19, and ix. 11); of Pharaoh (Exod. ix. 27, 28, and x. 16, 17); of Pharaoh's host (Exod. xiv. 25); of Balaam (Numb. xxiii. 7, 8, 18–24); of the Philistines (1 Sam. iv. 8); of Baal's worshippers (1 Kings xviii. 39); of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iii. 29, and iv. 28–37); of Darius (Dan. vi. 26, 27). Conclusion—1. The subject suggests serious inquiry. Is the Rock of Ages our Rock? Do we esteem Him, trust Him, devote ourselves to Him, &c.? 2. The subject offers serious admonition (ver. 4). 3. The subject gives us a solemn warning—(1) Against rebellion (vers. 32–35). (2) Against indifference (vers. 46, 47). (3) Against apostasy (vers. 15–25). 4. The subject encourages humble confidence and invigorating hope (ver. 43; see Deut. xxxiii. 25–29). (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *No Rock like the God of Israel*:—I. ILLUSTRATE THE METAPHOR. 1. When we speak of God as a Rock in reference to Himself, the ideas are such as these—(1) Strength. (2) Stability. (3) Perpetuity. 2. Consider the metaphor in reference to what God is to His believing children. (1) The Rock of their defence. (2) The Rock of their foundation. They rely on and trust in Him. (3) Their Rock

of shelter and shade. (4) The Rock of their supplies. II. THE TRIUMPHANT COMPARISON WHICH IS INSTITUTED. To the pagan, infidel, sensualist, &c., your rock is not as our Rock. You have not the security, the sensible enjoyments, the supplies—in one word, the happiness which the people of God possess. 1. We appeal to your experience. What changes do you profess to have experienced? What evils removed? What principles implanted? 2. We appeal to your enjoyments. What peace—what comfort—what hope—what real bliss? 3. We appeal to your practice. From what follies and sins have you been delivered? Are your principles more pure? Spirit, conversation, temper, &c. 4. We appeal to our advantages in sickness and death. What security—what ecstasies—what clear enrapturing prospects! You know that your Rock is not, &c. Application—1. Invite the sinner to choose the Lord for the Rock of his salvation. Flee to Him by repentance. Build on Him by faith in Christ Jesus. 2. Let the Christian be satisfied with his choice. The everlasting God is his refuge. (*Sketches of Sermons.*) *Testimony of unbelievers to Christianity*:—1. We find sceptics and unbelievers generally very loud in praise of the progress of our modern world. They talk largely of the mighty strides science, knowledge, and practical wisdom have made in these last times. What is this but the concession that their rock is not as our Rock? 2. Again, how striking is the testimony which they give in their behaviour in trial and when brought face to face with death! Who has ever known a sound and faithful Christian to change his religion in the last extremities of life? But it is quite otherwise with those who build on some other than the Christian Rock. Then the gay Lord Chesterfield sympathises with the words of Solomon, that all this world is vanity and vexation of spirit. Then Byron acknowledges that whatever he had been, "'Twere something better not to be." Then Talleyrand confesses that he has nothing left "except great fatigue of body and mind, a profound sentiment of discouragement for the future and disgust for the past." Then Hobbes declares, "Were I master of the world, I would give it all to live one day longer." Then Volney kneels in despair to invoke the help of the God whose existence he denied. Then Paine in his dreadful loneliness lifts his wild cry to that Jesus whom he blasphemed. Then Voltaire sends for a priest, curses his brethren in unbelief as contributors to his wretchedness, and dies in dread complaint of abandonment by God and man. Then Hume cannot bear to be alone, because of the terrors that torment him in the absence of his jesting friends. 3. In like manner I might refer to the myriads of conversions from the sceptical and unbelieving world to the reverent acceptance of our Christian faith and hope. The bloody Saul of Tarsus; the wayward, sensual Augustine, &c. We think of Lord Littleton and Gilbert West sitting down to write essays in confutation of certain great events recorded in the New Testament, and becoming so thoroughly convinced by their examinations that they surrendered all their scepticism and turned their essays into noble treatises in vindication of the Christian cause. 5. Christians, you have made no mistake in giving your hearts' confidence to the religion of Jesus. You have planted your foundations on the solid Rock. Only maintain your hold and dependence on it; and when the revilers of Newton's faith are hopelessly crying, "God of Sir Isaac Newton, have mercy upon me!" you shall be saying with the dying Payson: "I swim—I swim—in a flood of glory!" (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*)

Ver. 35. **Their foot shall slide in due time.**—*The awakening of sinners*:—This is the culmination of the most dreadful denunciation of sinners to be found in the Bible. I. THE INSECURITY OF THE SINNER. A sense of sin and impending punishment is ever present in man's heart. Heathen nations of the old and of the new world recognised it, and established forms of religious worship in order to avoid it. But the Bible makes assurance doubly sure, and issues solemn warnings of the fact. II. THE CERTAINTY OF THE RESULT. Human life knows no such thing as remaining in one place. Man is ever going forward or backward—which depends upon himself. Men shut their eyes and fancy themselves secure. None plunge headlong into the extremities of sin at once. Nearly every one can recollect the first falsehood, the first profane word, the first dishonest act, after they have reached depths of depravity of which they never dreamed. They took the devil for their master, and he presses them hard at every turn. The down-slide is governed by an inexorable law. III. CONSIDER WHERE THEY ARE SLIDING. Away from virtue, away from peace, away from good company, away from God! Men watch the downward progress of the drunkard with pity and disgust. The wilful wrecking of all that is noble in man seems incomprehensible. (*J. O. Peck, D.D.*)

Ver. 36. **For the Lord shall judge His people.**—*Power for the powerless:*—I. THE PEOPLE WHOM JEHOVAH OWNS AND CLAIMS AS "HIS PEOPLE" AND "HIS SERVANTS." God has a people peculiarly His own. You must be blind, indeed, when looking into your Bible, not to see that this fact is one of the most prominent things set forth in the Book of God. Moreover, this people, whom Jehovah calls "His people" and "His servants," are held by Him as His especial property, as His own inheritance. "The Lord's portion is His people." What a portion! One might easily understand the Psalmist, and the prophet too, when they said, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul"; and a blessed portion it is for a poor ruined sinner to have the covenant God as his portion. But reverse it, and see how God claims His people, and calls them "His portion," as if they were worth something—as if they were of some value. I must not, however, overlook the second term employed in our text—"servants." "His servants ye are to whom ye obey." If, then, your life, your heart, your soul, and all your powers are wholly at the service of God; if that service is your delight, and you meet Him in it, surely you may come to the conclusion that you belong to His servants. But there is another point: that His people and His servants essentially differ from all people beside. They were separated from among the nations. God's people and God's servants differ from the world in their life, in their language, and in their laws. II. THE EXIGENCIES TO WHICH THEY WERE REDUCED. They are said, in my text, to be seen by their own God as having lost all their power, and "none shut up or left"—a most affecting description of God's chosen people under the ruined condition into which sin has brought them; and also of the extremity to which they are reduced in personal experience, before God's deliverance appears on their behalf. What a marked description of man's ruin under the fall, and by actual sin!—so utterly undone as to have no power! God saw that their power was gone. When the poor sinner is first awakened by the grace of God, and begins to feel the importance of obtaining salvation, he does not believe that he has no power, but sets to immediately to put forth his power, determines upon reading much, hearing much, praying much, avoiding much that is evil, and doing much that is good. Moreover, in the language of my text, the people and servants of God are to be expelled from all false refuges, "None shut up or left." There are exigencies in the believer's experience with regard to things spiritual and to things providential that answer exactly to this description—"none shut up or left"—as regards experience, not a hope left; not a vestige of supposed strength—not a false refuge but will be swept away as a refuge of lies; not a helper left. Moreover, it may imply, in spiritual experience, no comfort shut up or left, no reserve, nothing to fall back upon, not a promise to cling to, not a sermon which he is supposed to have heard to profit, but rises up in judgment against him! What! none of his holier feelings? No, none of them. What, none of his earnest prayers and his believing confidence? No, none of them—"none shut up or left." Now, whether as to the spiritual experience, or the providential experience of His people, He frequently, to show His wisdom, His grace, His power, His love and condescension, strips man of his all, that He Himself may become his all, and that Christ may be found to be all in all to him. III. BY THE LORD'S JUDGING HIS PEOPLE I understand His judging for them; judging His enemies on account of their cruelty; judging for them so as to decide that they are His own—that the chastisement has been carried on long enough, and that their enemies shall then be punished, as in the preceding verse, "To Me belongeth vengeance." This is what I understand by His judging His people. The other phrase, "repent Himself for His servants," means an alteration, of course, in the events of Providence, and in His manner of dealing with His people; that He changes the order of things. From this we derive the spiritual truth, that however the Lord chastises His people, and however long the chastisement may continue, there will come a moment when the Lord will "repent Himself," or change His course, and say, "Their affliction is at an end, and I will not afflict or grieve My people any more." Then shall the froward Ephraim be spoken to as by the prophet, "I have seen his ways, and I will heal him." God is a never-failing Deliverer to His people; and we will glance at a few things in which this is manifested. The first is, that His covenant faithfulness is called forth when His people's faithlessness has arisen to its utmost height and been chastised. If you ask me what pertains to a Christian in himself, I should, for one, confess, after all the years I have known of the Lord, that one word, "faithlessness," would mark all. If I am asked what constitutes the character and conduct of the Deity towards His Church and people in every age, amidst all their afflictions, and when they are

reduced to the lowest ebb, I should say, "Righteousness is the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins." One word more; entire deliverance is certain when God interferes. He who has delivered will deliver; and be assured, poor tried soul, whoever thou art, and in whichever of those exigencies thou art placed—be assured of this one thing, that if the Lord has begun to judge for you, has changed the course and order of His proceedings for you, has created a ray of hope and given you spiritual desires which you did not before possess, has communicated the ability to pour out your soul in pleading with Him, and to hang upon Him though it appears as it were by a thread, He will perfect your deliverance in due time. Every enemy shall be vanquished. Every difficulty shall disappear. (*J. Irons.*) *Man's extremity, God's opportunity:*—To ungodly men the time of their fall is fatal; there is no rising again for them. They mount higher and higher upon the ladder of riches; but at last they can climb no higher, their feet slide, and all is over. This calamity hasteneth on (ver. 35). It is not so with three characters of whom we will now consider: they are judged in this world that they may not be condemned hereafter (1 Cor. xi. 32; Psa. xxxvii. 24). I. THE LORD'S OWN CHURCH. 1. A Church may be sorely tried—"power gone, none left." (1) By persecution. (2) By removals, death, poverty. (3) By the lack of a faithful ministry. (4) By general falling off of members. Various circumstances may scatter a people—internal dissension, pestilent heresy, lack of spiritual life. 2. But it may then cry to God. (1) If indeed His people, the covenant stands, and He will judge them. (2) If still His servants, the bond holds on His side, and He will repent Himself for them. (3) His eye is ever upon them, and their eye should be up to Him. 3. He will return and revive His own Church (ver. 39). 4. Meanwhile the trial is permitted—(1) To find out His servants and drive out hypocrites (Isa. xxxiii. 14). (2) To test the faith of sincere saints, and to strengthen it. (3) To manifest His own grace by supporting them under the trying times, and by visiting them with future blessing. (4) To secure to Himself the glory when the happier days are granted. II. THE TRIED BELIEVER. 1. His power may be gone. Bodily health fails, prudence is baffled, skill is taken away, courage sinks, even spiritual force departs (Sam. iii. 17, 18). 2. His earthly help may fail. A man without a friend moves the compassion of God. 3. He may be assailed by doubts and fears, and hardly know what to do with himself (Job iii. 23–26). 4. His hope lies in the compassion of God: He has no pleasure in putting His people to grief (Micah vii. 19). 5. Such sharp trials may be sent because—(1) Nothing less would cure the evil hidden within. (2) Nothing less might suffice to bring the whole heart to God alone. (3) Nothing less might affect the believer's future life. (4) Nothing less might complete his experience, enlarge his acquaintance with the Word, and perfect his testimony for God. III. THE CONVINCED SINNER. He is cleaned out of all that wherein he prided himself. 1. His self-righteousness is gone. 2. His ability to perform acceptable works is gone. 3. His secret hopes which were shut up are now all dead and buried. 4. His proud romantic dreams are gone. 5. His worldly delights, his bold defiance, his unbelief, his big talk, his carelessness, his vain confidence, are all gone. 6. Nothing is left but the pity of God. When the tide has ebbed out to the very uttermost, it turns. The prodigal had spent all before he returned. Empty-handed sinners are welcome to the fulness of Christ. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 39–41. **See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no God with Me.**—*The royal prerogative:*—I. NONE BUT THE LORD CAN WOUND OR HEAL. 1. The Lord alone can spiritually wound. It is the Holy Spirit's work to convince of sin, and until He puts forth His power the preacher may preach himself dumb with weariness and blind with weeping, but no result can possibly follow. 2. None but the Lord can heal. Gospel truth is sufficient in itself to comfort all that mourn, but it will comfort nobody so long as the natural unbelief of the heart remains. Get a hold of a lacerated spirit, torn with unbelief, and try what you can do. Say, "Trust in the Lord, my friend," and he replies, "I cannot trust." Tell him Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; and he says he knows that, but he cannot get hold of it. Do your duty with him, for whether you can heal him or not you are bound to set the Gospel before him: but you shall find that you have worked in vain if you have gone in your own strength. God can use you to heal a broken heart, but you cannot do it yourself. II. THE LORD CAN WOUND AND HE CAN HEAL. I. The Lord can wound. He can pierce the most unlikely heart. Therefore, despair of none. The wretch who is the nearest approach to an incarnate devil may yet become as an angel of God. 2. What a very sweet side of the truth

is the second part of it—namely, that He can heal. There are some awful cases of bleeding wounds! I have known the heart bleed as though it would bleed to death beneath the sword of conviction. Some are driven to despair, and have been ready to lay violent hands upon themselves in the bitterness of their souls. Let it ring out like a trumpet, that these poor despairing ones may hear it,—the Lord can heal. There is no case so desperate but what Jehovah-Jesus can recover it. Despair! thou must let thy captive go. Despondency! thou must open thy prison-house when Jesus comes. III. THE LORD DOES WOUND AND DOES HEAL. 1. I have a bundle of arrows which I have seen shot at different times from the bow of God so as to wound men. (1) The arrow of continual gentleness. Augustine tells of one to whom God was so wonderfully kind, and the man was so wonderfully bad, that at last he grew astonished at God's goodness, and since the Lord continued to load him with benefits, he turned round and cried, "Most benignant God, I am ashamed of being Thine enemy any longer. I confess my sin and repent of it." (2) "God is angry with the wicked every day." Surely this should cut you to the quick. (3) "He that believeth not is condemned already." (4) "The wicked shall be turned into hell," &c. (5) "Thou hast destroyed thyself." (6) "You are dead in sin. You have destroyed yourself, but you cannot save yourself." 2. Now, I will hold up before you the bottle of balm. When a soul is wounded, the Lord applies His sacred surgery to the heart. He has healed some of us. (1) The particular bottle of balm which He used in healing me is one which I know well, and shall never forget. This was the label, "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God, and beside Me there is none else." Why, do you know? I was afraid of God until I heard that God was in Christ, and that I was to look to God in Christ, and that the very God whom I dreaded would save me. That revelation came home with Divine power to my soul! The preacher said, "Look. This is all that is wanted." "There," he said, "a fool can look; a little child can look; a half idiot can look; a dying man can look." "Look," said he, "and it is done." Did I really understand him—that I was only to look to Christ dying on the Cross for me, and see God making an atonement for my sin in the person of His Son—that I was only to look, and I should live at once? It was even so, and I did look. My burden passed away. (2) Here is another drop of balm,—When a man is wounded he feels that he cannot help himself; but then there comes in this precious truth—that the Spirit of God can do it. O you wounded ones, may the great Spirit show you at this time the person of the dear Son of God—God and man. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **Neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand.**—*The undeliverableness of man from the hand of God:*—1. The continuance of every man's existence rests entirely upon the Divine will. 2. The preservation of every sinner's existence must be ascribed to Divine forbearance. 3. The well-being of a moral intelligence is impossible apart from supreme sympathy with God. All moral hells and heavens are in the loathing or the loving. What then is our duty and interest? To cherish supreme love for the Absolute. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 46, 47. **Command your children to observe to do all the words of this law.**—*The advantage of a right education:*—I. THE ADVANTAGES, AND INDEED NECESSITY, OF RIGHT EDUCATION. Other creatures arrive, without their own care, at the small perfection of which they are capable, and there stop; but the whole of man's existence, it appears, is a state of discipline and progression. Youth is his preparation for maturer years; this whole life for another to come. Nature gives the abilities to improve; but the actual improvement we are to have the pleasure and the reward of giving ourselves and one another. Some minds, indeed, as some soils, may be fruitful without cultivation; others barren with it; but the general necessity is the same in both cases; and in both, the richest, and most capable of producing good fruit, will be overrun, if neglected, with the rankest and worst weeds. Regular cultivation of the understanding, then, is what good education begins with. The earliest branch of this, acquaintance with useful languages, unlocks the treasures of ancient learning, and makes the improvements of every age and climate our own. Then the politer parts of literature most agreeably open the faculties, and form the taste of young persons; adorn our discourse, and endear our company, in riper years; give a grace to wisdom and virtue; relieve the fatigue of our busy hours, and elegantly fill up the leisure of our vacant ones. At the same time, the art of just reasoning opportunely comes in, to curb the licence of imagination, and directs its force; to fix the foundations of science; ascertain the degrees of probability, and unveil specious error. With this guide we proceed surely. Know-

ledge of nature opens the universe to our view; enables us to judge worthily of the constitution of things; secures us from the weakness of vulgar superstitions; and contributes, in many ways, to the health and security, the convenience and pleasure of human life. If from hence we go on to survey mankind: a contemplation of their different states in different ages, and especially of their ancient regulations and laws, the public wisdom of brave and great nations will furnish variety of useful reflections to the mind; often teaching us to improve our own conditions, often to be happy in it. But if education stop here, it hath only given abilities and powers, the direction of which to right or wrong purposes is greatly uncertain still. He that knows not the proper use of his own being; what is man, and whereto serveth he; what is his good, and what is his evil (Ecclus. xviii. 8), may easily employ his other knowledge so as to be much the worse for it. This inquiry, then, is the important one. And when should the science of life be taught, but in the beginning of life, before evil habits are added to original depravity; whilst the natural regard to truth and right, the only inward restraint of incautious youth, remains comparatively uncorrupt, and the seeds of sin lie yet somewhat loose on the surface of the mind; much harder to be cleared away when once they have taken root, and twisted themselves strongly about the heart. This, therefore, is the favourable opportunity, in which authority and reason must exert at once their joint force. For discipline without instruction is mere tyranny; and instruction without discipline, little better than useless talk. But the most serious part of education is wanting still: the part which leads us, by the esteem of moral excellence, to honour and love that Being in whom the perfection of it dwells; and extends our inward sense of duty, suggested first by the low and short-lived relations between us and our fellow-creatures, to the highest possible and eternal object of it, the Creator and Ruler of this universe. II. ALL PERSONS CONCERNED SHOULD ENDEAVOUR, WITH UNITED CARE, IN THEIR STATIONS, THAT THESE ADVANTAGES MAY BE EFFECTUALLY OBTAINED. To you who are parents, nature itself hath given a tender concern for your children's welfare as your own; and reminds you justly, that as you have brought them into the dangers of life, your business it is to provide that they get well through them. You may be negligent of your son's instruction; but it is on you, as well as himself, that his ignorance and contemptibleness will bring both reproach and inconvenience. You may be regardless of his morals; but you may be the person who will at last the most severely feel his want of them. You may be indifferent about his religion; but remember, dutifulness to you is one great precept of religion; and all the rest promote such habits, as you may bitterly repent, when it is too late, your omission to cultivate in him; and live and die miserable on his account, whom timely care would have made your joy and honour. (*Archbishop Secker.*)

Ver. 47. **For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life.**—*Religion a necessity:*—Religion is not a luxury, but a necessity of our being. It is not a vain service, because it is our life. Immersed as men are in the world, and conversant with material interests, it is difficult for them to feel this reality and absolute necessity of religion for their best life. There has been too much colour given to the presumption that religion was not deeply grounded and inlaid in our nature, but was a gift from without, a factitious culture and experience superinduced upon it, not the true working of the utmost being with all its powers. For religion has been offered to man too much as a strange, unnatural, and special thing, not as the real light of life. It has been enveloped in mystery, surrounded by a formidable array of pains and penalties, inculcated as supernatural, not only in the sanction and revelation of its truths, but in their incorporation and assimilation to the soul. The first thing to be done, therefore, is to create in men a belief that religion is not a manufactured want, but a natural necessity of our being; that, instead of its being an innate grace of temperament and constitution which, like genius, some have and others have not, and many do without, it is the bread of life for all. I. THE NATURE OF MAN BEARS UNEQUIVOCAL TESTIMONY TO THE NECESSITY OF RELIGION. "In scepticism," said Goethe, "is no good thing." Religion is a later development, as wisdom in general is, but just as normal as any other manifestation of our nature, art, or invention, or calling of life. All the elements are in man. Thus he naturally believes. He may not always believe alike,—sometimes in Moses, in Mahomet, or in Christ,—but uniformly he has faith in something. Thus, too, he naturally makes distinctions of right and wrong; his decisions on these points may not always be coincident in every nature, and under different systems of culture. In Sparta one set of things, in England another, is wrong or right. But that does

not militate against the fact of a moral sense, for no people has yet been found sunk so low that they do not make the distinction somewhere. So in regard to the future, hope, aspiration, anticipation, work in all human bosoms in different degrees of intensity, and towards varying ends and objects in the boundless future, but always, everywhere, towards some ends, towards some high ideals, throned and veiled by the cloud-curtain of the future. II. THE CONDITION OF MAN CORROBORATES THE VIEW DRAWN FROM HIS NATURE; for his condition is his nature in progression, in continuity. If we go over the catalogue of items of this condition, from the time he lies helpless in the cradle till he lies helpless again in the coffin, we trace an unbroken line of religious wants. It is a great and continual hunger. For at every point, at every time, under every combination of surrounding circumstances, we detect the demand for that peculiar quantity and unknown value without which we cannot work the equation of life aright, or solve with certainty its great problem. Human life, for instance, is a condition of formation, growth, education, and yet we see at once that, if this process is not carried on according to the primal principles which are involved in the plan of the Chief Husbandman, we shall have crude windfalls and stunted growths, not the golden fruit. Human life is a state of exposure to great and trying temptations, plucking at our virtue, and dragging down our aims and acts, until we go the way of all the earth. The commanding truths and the vivid sentiments and the impressive promises of religion can alone disperse this unhallowed brood, and exorcise the evil spirits from possessing mind and heart. III. THE DESTINY OF MAN STRENGTHENS ALL THE PREVIOUS ARGUMENTS FOR THE REALITY AND NECESSITY OF RELIGION. If man is created in the image of the Everlasting God, and called to the inheritance of a conscious being through all the unending ages of the future,—if, even in this morning of his days, he is filled with aspirations, dim it may be, but vast, grand, and exalting, for sweeter joys, for purer delights, a serener happiness, a more thrilling, inward, and abiding bliss, than the rarest moments of this life have given; if such is the realm of being to which man is on his way, and to whose celestial city he is already lifting up his eyes, what, we ask, shall best fit him for such a sublime career? What is adequate to prepare him to live for ever? Only what is of the same kind with itself can meet the wants of an immortal spirit, namely, an immortal religion, an immortal Saviour, an eternal God. Power, and fame, and learning even, and some of the lower of man's attainments, even in the moral and intellectual sphere, are but freezing comforters to the bereaved, sick, and dying. But in these critical seasons of our being, when man is driven in from the outworks to the centre and substance of his nature, religion utters her grand tones of courage, promise, and eternity, and vindicates herself as the soul's supreme necessity, the one thing needful which, once possessed, can never be taken away, but will grow dearer and brighter and diviner for ever. (*A. A. Livermore.*)

Religion—a reality:—The Christian dispensation is one which requires much faith to receive it. We walk not by sight, but by faith alone; and it is little marvel that when ungodly men see the righteous afflicted, and discover that their comfort lies in matters which only faith can apprehend, they should cry out, "It is a vain thing," and should turn aside from the ordinances of God. Besides, to confess the truth, there have been so many counterfeits of true religion, that it is not remarkable that unconverted men should consider even the genuine article to be but a vain thing. I. The true religion of Christ, which consists in a vital faith in His person, His blood, and His righteousness, and which produces obedience to His commands and a love to God, IS NOT A FICTION. 1. The objects of true religion are, to those who believe in Jesus, no fiction. (1) God the Father. (2) Christ Jesus. (3) The Holy Spirit. 2. The experience which true religion brings is no fiction. (1) Repentance. (2) Joy and peace in believing. 3. There is a reality in the privileges of religion. (1) Prayer. (2) Communion with Christ. (3) Christian love towards one another. 4. The religion of Christ is evidently not a vain thing if you look at its effects. 5. To the man who really possesses it, it is his life. His religion is not like a man's regimentals, which he can take off and go in undress; it is inside of him; it is woven right through and through him. II. IT IS NO TRIFLE. 1. It deals with your souls. 2. It connects you with God. 3. Those who have ever known anything of it tell you it is no child's play. 4. Sinners, when they are in their senses, find it no trifle. 5. True ministers of God feel it to be no trifle. III. IT IS NO FOLLY. If you would accomplish the proudest feat of human intellect, it is to attain to the knowledge of Christ crucified. Here the man whose mind makes him elephantine may find depth in which he may swim. Here the most recondite learning shall find itself exhausted. Here the most brilliant imagination shall find

its highest flights exceeded. Here the man who understands history may crown his knowledge by the history of God in the world; here men who would know the secret, the greatest secret which heaven and earth and hell can tell, may find it out, for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant. All the learning of man is doubtless folly to the angels, but the foolishness of God in the Gospel is wisdom to cherubim and seraphim, and by the Church shall be made known to them in ages to come the manifold wisdom of God. IV. IT IS NO SPECULATION. People sometimes ask us what we think about the heathen, whether they will be saved or not. Well, sirs, there is room for difference of opinion there; but I should like to know what you think about yourselves—will you be saved or not?—for after all, that is a question of a deal more importance to you. Now, the religion of Christ is not a thing that puts a man into a salvable state, but it saves him. It is not a religion which offers him something which perhaps may save him; no, it saves him out and out, on the spot. It is not a thing which says to a man, "Now, I have set you a-going, you must keep on yourself." No, it goes the whole way through, and saves him from beginning to end. He that says "Alpha" never stops till He can say "Omega" over every soul. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Religion not a vain thing:*—I. THE OBJECT TO WHICH MOSES REFERS. 1. Personal religion. (1) Imperative in its nature. (2) Comprehensive in its requirements. (3) Universal in its extent. (4) Perpetual and eternal in its obligation. Set your hearts to consider the nature of this law. Set your hearts to pray for that grace which will enable you to love the law of the Lord. Set your hearts to expect the accomplishment of that promise (Deut. xxx. 6). 2. Family religion. (1) Parental duty must be regulated by the law of God. (2) Parental duty is authorised by the command of God. II. THE AFFIRMATION WHICH HE MAKES CONCERNING IT. 1. It is not (1) an empty, airy, unsubstantial thing; (2) not a vain, deceitful thing; (3) not a foolish, senseless thing; (4) not a fruitless, unproductive thing. 2. It is "your life." To the Jews especially it—(1) was the means of prolonging their life; (2) added to the happiness of their life; (3) promoted the utility of their life; (4) prepared them for eternal life. Concluding inferences—1. Religion consists in setting your heart to know and to keep the commandments of God. 2. Religion is not a vain thing. Thousands deceive themselves. Some treat it with sovereign contempt. Others profess to know it, but their conduct belies their profession. 3. Religion is your life. Then seek to know, love, and serve God. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*)

Vers. 49–52. **Get thee up into this mountain . . . and die in the mount.**—*Moses commanded to ascend the mount and die:*—I. THE APPARENTLY HARD PROVIDENCE WHICH BEFELL MOSES ON THIS OCCASION. 1. It was death in the presence of unaccomplished work—a work to which Moses had consecrated his life, for which he had sacrificed much, and to which he had proved pre-eminently faithful. 2. It was a death amid shattered plans and unfulfilled hopes. 3. It came to Moses when, although old, he was yet vigorous. II. BUT IT WAS ALSO A WISE AND LOVING PROVIDENCE. 1. It was the assertion of Divine impartiality. 2. It was a striking illustration of a man's sin following him in its results even when the sin itself has been forgiven. 3. It supplied a proof of the Divine adaptation of means towards the desired end. 4. It taught men that God was not dependent even upon the greatest and most honoured of His servants for the final triumph of His cause. (*D. Davies.*) *The scene and circumstances of Moses' death:*—I. THE LONELINESS OF THE DEATH ON NEBO. Moses was strong in faith, and its strength was tested here. It had often been tried before, and had stood the trial. In battles, in contentions with his people, it had been tested, and had stood the test. But what is death, when the blood is heated and the passions up, compared with death alone, apart from friends and friendly sympathy, with no kindly eyes and no sounds of loving words! There was great courage here. You have read of men who, in the excitement of battle, when death was strewing the red plain with human clay, rejoiced with a joy that knew no fear, and through the hell of carnage hewed their way to victory. In such cases death was met with great courage; but it was met with greater in the case of him who, with "eye undimmed and natural force unabated," quitted a high post of command, abandoned an enterprise when on the eve of accomplishment, without understanding the why or wherefore, and with life vigorous and strong within him, alone, unaccompanied, and by human eye unseen, calmly awaited death. II. THE NEBO MYSTERY—one sows and another reaps. Have you never known a man whose youth and early manhood have been industriously spent in preparation for the

serious work of life, in whose breast noble aspirations burned, of whom it was evident that the world would be the better for him, and who, with extensive acquirements, mature culture, confirmed principles, and thorough training, was about to step thus equipped into the arena of life, resolved to leave his mark for good on his age and time, when the command came, "Get thee up into the mountain, and die there," &c.? And the magnificent prospect of his life passed; the tree that many a sun had ripened and many influences of earth and sky had cherished, fell as its mass of blossom was passing into fruit. Have you never known a mother who, after a long and faithful training of her children, after patient watch and ward for many a year, during which she has considered no labour too great, no struggle too hard, no suffering and pinch too severe to equip them for the competition of life—as she is about to enter into the reward of her long and patient work, and to see in the success and gratitude of her children the recompense of many an anxious day and sleepless night, hears the command, sharp and sudden, from the Master of life, "Get thee up," &c.? Have you never known a merchant who, after many a year of ceaseless toil, during which, by shrewdness and patience, he had amassed fortune enough to give him ease and comfort for the remainder of his life, when about to enter his Canaan of rest, is suddenly struck down, the command having come, "Get thee up," &c.? III. THE INGREDIENT OF JOY THAT WAS MINGLED IN THE CUP. "Be gathered unto thy people." These words imply a social heaven—not heaven as a dim, vague, ethereal scene,—but as a communion, a fellowship. Were it not so, our whole nature and instincts would require to be changed on entering it. "As Aaron thy brother died." Why this allusion, if not to give comfort to the old man? if not to intimate that his death would be meeting with his brother? This prospect must have taken at least one pang from death, and infused at least one drop of joy into the bitter cup he was called to drink. IV. THE SCENE AND PROSPECT WHICH MOSES WAS PERMITTED TO ENJOY. (*John Stuart, D.D.*) *The sin and punishment of Moses*:—It is a remarkable circumstance, not without an obvious moral, that the greatest favourites of the Almighty have been among the persons most severely dealt with by His providence. Not to mention our Saviour Himself—the only sinless, yet the most grievously afflicted of men—Abraham, "the friend of God," was put to a trial; the afflictions of Jacob were also great; Job's are proverbial; the painful vicissitudes of David's life outnumber its successes; and St. Paul, the most heroic servant of God in New Testament times, was subject to a long course of calamities. The real cause of the affliction is always sin. If it be asked—How can this be consistent with the fact that the sufferings of the most distinguished instruments of God's glory have been severe beyond the common lot of mortals? the answer is—that either we may observe in such persons great crimes set against signal virtues; or, at least, sin against peculiar light, and in spite of unusual grace: moreover, such are to be raised to remarkable heights of perfection; and this is not to be done but by means of chastisement and the stern discipline of affliction. Pass we, however, from general considerations to the individual instance before us. I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH GAVE OCCASION TO THE DIVINE DECREE AGAINST MOSES—that he should not live to enter the promised land (see Numb. xx.). The ground of the whole transgression seems to have been a hasty yielding to carnal passions; which in this case, as it ever does, shut out faith and reliance on God, and substituted distrust and self-confidence. And the criminality of this conduct was doubtless increased by the eminent dignity and great endowments of the offenders. It was for the head and legislator, and for the anointed High Priest, to set an example to the people of meekness and patient confidence. II. THE DOCTRINAL AND SPIRITUAL MEANING, AND RESULTS, OF THIS EVENT. 1. The inclination of the Israelites to idolatrous worship, imbibed chiefly in that nursery of superstitions, Egypt, was strong at all early periods of their history. Profound, also, must have been their veneration for that man of wonderful gifts, who had brought them with the arm of God out of the house of bondage, and for forty years had led them in the wilderness. Hence if Moses had finished his great work in his own person, and, together with the Israelites of this generation, the children and grand-children of his early contemporaries, had taken possession of Canaan as the design and completion of the enterprise, it is most probable that he would, in spite of himself, have been deified by his superstitious countrymen; and either substituted for, or confounded with, the Divine Liberator, whose vicegerent he was. 2. That the commission to lead into Canaan the children of the people whom Moses by the Divine power had freed from Egypt, now devolved upon Joshua—or, as he

is called in the New Testament, Jesus—is an instance which I cannot wholly pass by in silence, of the typical character of all Bible history. Moses was a type of Christ, in his office and character, as the deliverer, leader, and pastor of God's flock, through the mingled trials and mercies of the wilderness; but Joshua was more remarkably so, in prefiguring our Lord's going before His people into heaven, at His ascension, to take possession for and with them of the celestial inheritance. 3. There is an obvious and sublime sense, in the fact of Moses, the giver of the Law—the administrator of that imperfect and temporary dispensation, not going over into the Promised Land. His work was now done—his function was at an end. The conducting of the people was now handed over to another—to Joshua, the type of Christ as ascending up on high and entering into His rest; "the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." III. THIS SEVERITY OF GOD TOWARDS HIS SERVANT MOSES, SO FAVOURED AND "FAITHFUL IN ALL HIS HOUSE," PRESENTS A VERY AFFECTING CIRCUMSTANCE. It admonishes us, how much of the good consequences of a life may be defeated by one act of prevarication and disobedience. It admonishes us to be careful how we "finish our course," lest we "lose these things which we have wrought," even within sight of "the prize of our high calling." (*R. Cattermole, B.D.*) *What dying is*:—I am standing upon the seashore. A ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and strength, and I stand and watch her until at length she hangs like a speck of white cloud just where the sea and sky come down to meet and mingle with each other. Then some one at my side says: "There! she's gone!" Gone where? Gone from my sight, that is all. She is just as large in the mast and hull and spar as she was when she left my side, and just as able to bear her load of living freight to the place of her destination. Her diminished size is in me, and not in her. And just at that moment, when some one at my side says, "There! she's gone!" there are other eyes that are watching for her coming and other voices ready to take up the glad shout, "There she comes!" And that is—dying. (*Episcopal Recorder.*) **Yet thou shalt see the land before thee.**—*Good cheer from God*:—I. A MESSAGE FOR CHRISTIAN WORKERS. Seed we have sown shall bear fruit when the hand that scattered it is at rest. Behind every Christian worker is God. Much of the work is hidden as yet, as Moses could not see the homesteads of the land, the divisions of the tribes, &c., but he could see the land. So can we by faith see in broad outlines the goal to which the Christian Church is travelling year by year. The evening of life shall be better than the morning. II. A MESSAGE TO THE CHRISTIAN IN HIS PILGRIMAGE. The Jews could not think without regret of their life. Nor can we. What sublime mercy on God's part! Gratitude itself grows dumb in silent wonder. We can only say, "Forgive." But look forward now—what do you see? Many a failure, &c., yet the steady growth of the will of God in you—therefore the future shall be better than the past. Life ripening like harvest under the summer sun. "At evening tide it shall be light"—and lighter still when the veil of flesh is torn from the spirit. III. A MESSAGE TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT CHRISTIANS. "The people sitting in darkness have seen a great light,"—it is turned upon you that you may see the land before you. (*R. Betts.*) *The happy people: who and why?*—We are wont to note the sayings of dying men. The testimony both of the godly and the ungodly is more valuable and reliable at such a time. Moses was specially fitted to give an estimate of Israel's past experience and future prospects. He had been intimately connected with them for a lengthened period. I. WHO IS ISRAEL? 1. A perverse people. They are often rebellious, they murmur often, they bring upon themselves punishment because of their obstinacy. They are slow to learn and obey. The type and the antitype correspond. The people of God are often so; and the world often sees it. Their leader and they do not always agree. 2. A peculiar people. They are different from the nations around them. 3. A pilgrim people. They were yet in the wilderness when Moses spoke of them. 4. A protesting people. They were raised up for this very purpose. "Ye are My witnesses." 5. A persecuted people. They were met by the Amalekites almost as soon as they had crossed the Red Sea. They had to encounter enmity and opposition all the way. II. WHEREIN, THEN, CONSISTS ISRAEL'S HAPPINESS? Not certainly in their worldly, external, visible circumstances. There is nothing in these to draw forth the rapturous enthusiasm of Moses. No; but his vision and his voice extend beyond things seen and temporal. Their happiness arises out of their relation to God, the only true God. 1. They are chosen by His grace. Underneath them are the everlasting arms. 2. They are redeemed by His arm. 3. They are guided by

His eye. He goes before them; He is their rereward. 4. They are kept by His power. He is their refuge and their strength. Jehovah-nissi: the Lord is my banner. 5. They are cheered by His presence, His promise, and His purpose. III. THERE IS NO HAPPINESS LIKE ISRAEL'S. 1. Because none comes from so good a source. With Thee is the Fountain of Life. From this fountain flows the river of the water of life. Other sources fail; they are broken cisterns. 2. Because none can be enjoyed with so much security. The promise of God is the best security which we can possibly possess. 3. Because none is so satisfactory in its own character. Out of Christ there is no happiness to be enjoyed worthy of the nature with which we are endowed. 4. Because none is so beneficial in its effects. The world, with its pleasures and pursuits, degrades and hardens the heart that is engrossed with them. 5. Because none is so permanent in its duration. "That knave, Death," as John Knox said, will take it all away—will mar the beauty, spoil the treasure, and bring the tenure to an end. (*J. Smith, M.A.*) *The happy people*:—I. HAPPY IN THEIR NAME. "Israel" signifies—]. That God has chosen and prepared them to be His people. 2. That He has privileged them with communion with Himself. II. HAPPY IN THEIR SALVATION. Delivered from Satan's yoke and dominion, &c. III. HAPPY IN THEIR DIVINE HELP. 1. Protection. 2. Security. 3. Strength. IV. HAPPY IN THE PROSPECT OF A COMPLETE CONQUEST OVER ALL THEIR ENEMIES. V. HAPPY IN THEIR ULTIMATE ARRIVAL IN THE LAND OF CANAAN. (*Homilist.*) **Thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee.**—*The devil a liar*:—That arch-enemy, the devil, is a liar from the beginning; but he is so very plausible that, like mother Eve, we are led to believe him. Yet in our experience we shall prove him a liar. 1. He says that we shall fall from grace, dishonour our profession, and perish with the doom of apostates; but trusting in the Lord Jesus, we shall hold on our way and prove that Jesus loses none whom His Father gave Him. 2. He tells us that our bread will fail, and we shall starve with our children; yet the Feeder of the ravens has not forgotten us yet, and He will never do so, but will prepare us a table in the presence of our enemies. 3. He whispers that the Lord will not deliver us out of the trial which is looming in the distance, and he threatens that the last ounce will break the camel's back. What a liar he is! For the Lord will never leave us, nor forsake us. "Let Him deliver him now!" cries the false fiend; but the Lord will silence him by coming to our rescue. He takes great delight in telling us that death will prove too much for us. "How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" But there also he shall prove a liar unto us, and we shall pass through the river singing psalms of glory. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

CHAPTER XXXIII.

VERS. 1–5. **This is the blessing wherewith Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death.**—*The blessing of the tribes*:—The many successive "blessings" of Israel were a necessary consequence of his Divine election. In that seed all families of the earth were to be blessed. Therefore it was fitting that formal and repeated blessings should be pronounced upon the bearer of such high destinies, that none of the issues of his history might seem to be by chance, and that he and all men might know what was "the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance among the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of God's power towards us who believe." The notion of a distinct continuity in calling and in privilege between Israel and the Christian Church is no fancy of an antiquated theology. It springs out of the very root idea of the Bible, the principle which rightly leads us to speak of so many Scriptures, written at sundry times and in divers manners, as one book and one revelation. The first utterance of blessing upon the chosen people proceeded from the lips of God Himself, and was renewed in nearly the same form of language to each of the three great patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It can hardly be by an accident that the record in Genesis of this initial benediction is sevenfold. Seven times exactly did God declare His purpose to bless the seed of Abraham in the line of Isaac and of Jacob; and having thus established His covenant as by an oath, He spake no more by a like direct communication, but He used the lips of inspired men to enlarge the scope of His blessing, and to give definiteness to its first and necessarily somewhat vague

generalities. The blessing of Moses was evidently founded upon the earlier utterance of the dying Jacob concerning the future of his twelve sons. But the differences between the two blessings are far more suggestive than their resemblances. There are parts of Jacob's discourse to which the notion of "blessing" is altogether foreign. Simeon and Levi are stricken in it with an absolute curse; the prediction concerning Issachar is at least equivocal in its reference to willing servitude; and for Reuben there is nothing but a mournful foreclosure of his natural birthright (Gen. xlix. 3-7, 14, 15). But the prophecy of Moses is really a benediction upon every tribe that is named therein. It is couched throughout in the language of unfeigned affection, intercession, and giving of thanks for what is or for what may be unequivocally good. Careful readers will observe that the tribes of Israel are arranged in different order in the two blessings by Jacob and by Moses. The natural order of age and of maternal parentage is followed by Jacob; but Moses at first sight seems to adopt an altogether arbitrary arrangement, three times putting a younger before an elder son, separating children of the same mother, and omitting one name altogether. This fact, however, is itself one of our clues to the right understanding of the blessing as a whole, for its only possible explanation depends upon the typical character of Israel's national history. The place which Divine Providence assigned to each tribe in the temporal commonwealth of Israel at different stages of its development was meant to illustrate some permanent principle of God's spiritual kingdom which Moses foresaw in its continuance to our own day. The thirty-third chapter of Deuteronomy has a prologue and an epilogue, which may not be passed over in silence. The blessings of the children of Israel are embraced between them intentionally, for the inspired author wished to set forth the unalterable conditions of blessing in God's kingdom, and the inseparable connection which subsists between obedience, happiness, and faith towards God. No grander description of the Divine covenant with Israel was ever given than is contained in the opening verses of this chapter, nor has the law from Sinai been anywhere else depicted so awfully and yet so attractively in its character of "the inheritance" of Jehovah's "congregation." That law, in its outward form, has no doubt passed away for Christians, but the obligation of its spirit is perpetual, and the blessing of each citizen of God's new covenant kingdom depends upon a loving acceptance of that obligation. Not Moses, but Christ, has "commanded us a law." He is our "king," and we are "not without law to God, but under the law to Christ." (*T. G. Rooke, B.A.*) *The end in sight; or last works and dying songs:*— There is not a more illustrative example of the benefits of early training and religious culture than Moses. Whether we think of the depth of his religious convictions, the purity of his personal character, the clearness of his spiritual insight, the sagacity of his legislation, or the rectitude of his administration, we cannot but wonder at the manifold perfection of his human greatness and the closeness of his walk with God. But in one respect he stands pre-eminent. He was transcendent in moral glory when age had wrinkled his brow and whitened his head, when the sun began to go down in the golden west, and the shadows were casting their long lengths of darkness round him. "His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated." Neither was his mind obscured, nor were his sympathies narrowed, nor his heart soured. The shadow of a great disappointment was trailing over his path and clouding his future; yet, to his fellows, the radiance of his spirit was undimmed, and the clear shining of his intellect was as sparkling as the morning dew. I. THE END IN SIGHT AND THE LAST WORKS OF THE MAN OF GOD. 1. He knew his death was certainly near. God hardly ever allows men to wear the crown of completed undertakings in this world—"that no flesh should glory in His presence." 2. Faithful in his house, he set everything in order, under the influence of this certainty. 3. The characteristics of the last work of his pen are worthy of special study. There is a rich and glowing beauty about these last words. There are in them some of the most marvellous predictions of the Old Testament. "The Prophet like unto himself" finds its fulfilment in Him who was both Prophet and Redeemer. There is also a forecast of the Hebrew history and the Hebrew doom, which cannot be read without wonder at its truth, and awe in presence of certain Divine judgments disclosed. His burdened heart looks down the vista of ages, and sees, with but too clear a vision, the sad departures from the true line of spiritual duty and obedience, which were only too possible. Side by side with ritual and ceremonial requirements, he lays down the principle that spiritual consecration, that loving devotion to God, is the only safety. He is not a Jew, even to Moses, who is one outwardly. Even here "love is the fulfilling of the law." But he uses, especially,

"the terrors of the Lord" to fortify them against the unfaithfulness and unbelief which were their danger. As Dean Milman says, "The sublimity of these denunciations surpasses anything which has ever been known in the oratory or poetry of the whole world. Nature is exhausted in furnishing terrific images; nothing except the real horrors of Jewish history, the miseries of their sieges, the cruelty, the contempt, the oppressions, the persecutions, which for ages this scattered and despised nation have endured, can approach the tremendous maledictions which warned them against the violation of their law." II. HIS DYING SONGS; OR THE THOUGHTS WHICH ANIMATED THE GREAT LAWGIVER IN THE NEAR PROSPECT OF DEATH. 1. Here is his faith in Divine relations to those who were to come after him. Nothing is more difficult to an old man than the graceful resignation of the power and authority which have come to him through his origination of office or business, and through the long experience of active, ruling life. Abdication is the most difficult act of sovereign authority. But Moses has supreme confidence in God. 2. Not only was there this confidence in God for those who were to succeed him, there was a supreme consciousness of the Divine glory. There is here a singular absence of self-glorying; a marvellous prominence given to the Divine ideas which underlie true life. Jehovah appears in almost every line of his dying song; Moses never. The song of the dying believer is always one which celebrates distinguishing, elective, and redeeming grace. When the spirit gets close to the realities of things, it is the Divine that is felt to be uppermost, the human which sinks and fades away. When John Owen, greatest of the Puritan theologians, the Nonconformist Vice-Chancellor of Oxford, was dying, he said to Charles Fleetwood, "I am going to Him whom my soul has loved, or rather, who has loved me with an everlasting love, which is the whole ground of all my consolation. I am leaving the ship of the Church in a storm; but while the Great Pilot is in it, the loss of a poor under-rower will be inconsiderable. Live, and pray, and hope, and wait patiently, and do not despond; the promise stands invincible, and He will never leave us nor forsake us." 3. There was calm trust in a faithful God and in His faithful promises. These were the most powerful of his inspirations, and they poured themselves out in his glowing song. There is not one of the blessings but has this basis; and they have also a deep, inner, spiritual, religious, redemptive sense. Dr. Watts, after the scholarly labours of a long and devoted life, said: "I find it is the plain promises of the Gospel that are my support. And I bless God, they are plain promises that do not require much labour and pains to understand them, for I can do nothing now but look into my Bible for some simple promise to support me, and I live upon that. I bless God, I can lie down with comfort at night, not being solicitous whether I awake in this world or another." "Underneath are the Everlasting Arms!" So Guthrie felt that it was the simpler, fundamental truths and facts which inspired dying trust and hope, and said: "Sing me a bairn's hymn," and fell asleep on the bosom of the Eternal. So Benjamin Parsons said: "My head is resting very sweetly on three pillows: infinite power, infinite love, and infinite wisdom." Horace Bushnell, one of the great teachers of our age, but recently departed, woke up in the night and said, "Oh, God is a wonderful Being!" And when his daughter replied, "Yes; is He with you?" the old man replied, "Yes, in a certain sense He is with me; and I have no doubt He is with me in a sense I do not imagine." So He is. It is "above all we ask or think"! Then the old man eloquent said: "Well, now we are all going home together; and I say, the Lord be with you—and in grace—and peace—and love—and that is the way I have come along home!" (*W. H. Davison.*)

Vers. 2–5. **From His right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, He loved the people.**—*The law of antagonism*:—At first sight the text might seem to involve a contradiction, but closer consideration will show that it expresses a great truth, namely, that the severity of human life is an expression of the Divine goodness. I. IN NATURE. The fiery law published at Sinai is proclaimed from every mountain-top; it burns and blazes through all the earth; the sea also is crystal mingled with fire. Nature knows nothing of indulgence; she makes no concessions to ignorance, folly, or weakness. Nature is imperative, uncompromising, terrible. In our day the severity of nature has been recognised as "the struggle for existence," and students have shown with great clearness and power how full the world is of antagonism and suffering; yet these same students distinctly perceive that the struggle for existence is at bottom merciful, and that whenever nature chooses an evil it is a lesser evil to prevent a greater. 1. They see the advantage of severity so far as all sound and healthy things are concerned. If the conditions of life are in any degree

softened, it is to the detriment of the noble organisms concerned. 2. They see also the advantage of severity so far as defective things are concerned. It is better for the world at large that weak organisms should be eliminated, otherwise the earth would be filled with imperfection and wretchedness; it is better for the creatures concerned that they should perish, for why should a miserable existence be indefinately prolonged? II. IN CIVILISATION. It is not by gentle yielding restrictions, by pliant understandings, by soft phrases, by light penalties easily remitted, by facility and complaisance, by the coddling of the individual, and the pampering of the nations, but by laws most exacting and rigorous, that God governs the race and conducts it to ultimate perfection. And yet once more we may see that the fiery law is only a definition of love. 1. Take the struggle of man with nature. The tropical sun burns us; the Arctic cold freezes us; in temperate regions the changeability of the weather troubles us; everywhere we experience the fury of the elements. All climates and countries have their special inconveniences, inhospitalities, and scourges. But is not this conflict with nature part of the inspiration and programme of civilisation? Contending with the globe, we are like Jacob wrestling with the angel. The fight is long and hard amid the mystery and the darkness, and the great Power seems reluctant to bless us; but the breaking of the day comes, and we find ourselves blest with corn, wine, oil, purple, feasts, flowers. Ah! and with gifts far beyond those of basket and store—ripened intelligence, self-reliance, courage, skill, manliness, virtue. 2. Take the struggle of man with man. Society is a great system of antitheses. There are international rivalries—a relentless competition between the several races and nations for power and supremacy. The various peoples watch each other across the seas; the earth is full of feuds, stratagems, competitions. And within the separate communities what complex and unceasing emulations and antagonisms exist! But this social rivalry brings its rich compensations. Solicitude, fatigue, difficulty, danger, hunger, these are the true king-makers; and the misfortune with many rich families to-day is, that they are being gradually let down because they are losing sight of the wolf. The wolf not merely suckled Romulus; it suckles all kings of men. The wolf is not a wolf at all; it is an angel in wolves' clothing, saving us from rust, sloth, effeminacy, cowardice, baseness, from a miserable superficiality of thought, life, and character. III. IN CHARACTER. When we are called upon to perform duties utterly repugnant to flesh and blood, to suffer grievous losses, to experience bitterest disappointments, to bleed under social humiliations, to be tortured by pain, to lose those whose love was our life, to endure the great fight of afflictions which sooner or later comes upon us all, we may rationally and consolingly murmur to ourselves, "This is a lesser evil to prevent a greater." For as the catastrophes of nature are, after all, but partial and temporary, preventing immeasurably greater calamities, so our physical pain, impoverishment, social suffering, severe toil, bereavement, and all our terrestrial woes are the lesser evils, saving us from the infinitely greater one of the superficiality, corruption, misery, and ruin of the soul. And not only is the fiery law a wall of fire securing our salvation from the abyss; it is also a call unto a high and splendid perfection. It shows the way to the dignities, freedoms, treasures, felicities, perfections, of the highest universe and the unending life. 1. Let us not reject the law of Sinai because of its severity. The musician with the harp believes in strait-lacing, and it is only when the strings are stretched nigh to the breaking that he brings out the finest music. So in human life, caprice, licence, abandonment mean dissonance and misery; only through obligation, duty, discipline do all the chords of our nature become tuned to the music of a sweet perfection. 2. Let us not reject the Lord Jesus because He comes to us with a cross. To attain the highest, we must be crucified with Christ. 3. Let us not shrink from the tribulations of life. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice," &c. The whole case is here. We must not consider the fiery trial "a strange thing." It is the universal order. We witness it in all nature; we discern it in all the history of civilisation; it is the common experience. The fiery trial is not some ordeal peculiar to the Christian saints; it is appointed to the whole of humanity. We must not consider the fiery trial an uncompensated thing. The cross we carry is no longer a pitiless and crushing burden; we look to its ultimate design, and know it as the rough but precious instrument of our purification and perfecting. (*W. L. Watkinson.*)

All His saints are in Thy hand.—*Saints in the Lord's hand*:—These holy ones are distinguished by many things from each other. Some of them are in public life and some in private. Some are rich and some poor. Some are young and some old.

But all are equally dear to God; and partakers of the common salvation; in which there is neither Jew nor Greek, for we are all one in Christ Jesus. This honour have all His saints—"All His saints are in His hand." 1. In His fashioning hand. They are the clay, He is the potter; and He makes them vessels of honour, prepared unto every good work. 2. In His preserving hand. For now they are precious, they are the more exposed. They are called a crown and a diadem; and the powers of darkness would gladly seize it. 3. In His guiding hand. Though God, says Bishop Hall, has a large family, none of His children are able to go alone: they are too weak, as well as too ignorant. But fear not, says God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness. 4. In His chastening hand. (*W. Jay.*) *God and His saints*:—I. THE DIVINE LOVE WHICH IS THE FOUNDATION OF ALL. "He loved the people." The word used here is probably connected with words in an allied language, which mean "the bosom," and "a tender embrace"; so the picture we have is of the great Divine Lover folding "the people" to His heart, as a mother her child, and cherishing them in His bosom. 2. The word is in a form which implies that the act is continuous and perpetual. Timeless, eternal love—always the same. 3. Mark the place in the song where this comes in. It is the beginning of everything. This old singer, with the mists of antiquity round him, who knew nothing about the Cross or the historic Christ, who had only that which modern thinkers tell us is a revelation of a wrathful God, somehow or other rose to the height of the evangelical conception of God's love as the foundation of the very existence of a people who are His. 4. If the question is asked, Why does God thus love? the only answer is, Because He is God. The love of God is inseparable from His being, and flows forth before, and independent of, anything in the creature which could draw it out. It is like an artesian well, or a fountain springing up from unknown depths in obedience to its own impulse. II. THE GUARDIAN CARE EXTENDED TO ALL THOSE THAT ANSWER LOVE BY LOVE. "All His saints are in Thy hand." 1. A saint is a man that answers God's love by his love. The root idea of sanctity or holiness is not moral character, goodness of disposition and action, but separation from the world and consecration to God. As surely as a magnet applied to a heap of miscellaneous filings will pick out every little bit of iron there, so surely will that love which God bears to the people, when it is responded to, draw to itself, and therefore draw out of the heap, the men that feel its impulse and its preciousness. 2. The saints lie in God's hand. (1) Absolute security; for, will He not close His fingers over His palm to keep the soul that has laid itself there? (2) Submission. Do not try to get out of God's hand. Be content to be guided, as the steersman's hand turns the spokes of the wheel and directs the ship. III. THE DOCILE OBEDIENCE OF THOSE THAT ARE THUS GUARDED. "They sat down at Thy feet; every one shall receive of Thy words." These two clauses make up one picture, and one easily understands what it is. It presents a group of docile scholars, sitting at the Master's feet. He is teaching them, and they listen open-mouthed and open-eared to what He says, and will take His words into their lives, like Mary sitting at Christ's feet, whilst Martha was bustling about His meal. But perhaps, instead of "sitting down at Thy feet," we should read "followed at Thy feet." That suggests the familiar metaphor of a guide and those led by him who without him knew not their road. As a dog follows his master, as the sheep their shepherd, so, this singer felt, will saints follow the God whom they love. Religion is imitation of God. They "follow at His foot." That is the blessedness and the power of Christian morality, that it is keeping close at Christ's heels, and that, instead of its being said to us, "Go," He says, "Come"; and instead of us being bade to hew out for ourselves a path of duty, He says to us, "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." They "receive His words." Yes, if you will keep close to Him, He will turn round and speak to you. If you are near enough to Him to catch His whisper He will not leave you without guidance. That is one side of the thought, that following we receive what He says, whereas the people that are away far behind Him scarcely know what His will is, and never can catch the low whisper which will come to us by providences, by movements in our own spirits, through the exercise of our faculties of judgment and common sense, if only we will keep near to Him. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 6. **Let Reuben live, and not die.**—*Reuben*:—The name of Reuben stands first in the blessing of Moses, but this recognition of his natural place among the tribes is almost sadder in its suggestiveness than would have been the putting of his name

further down. When the substance of a high and ancient dignity has been withdrawn, the continuance of its hollow outward semblance becomes a pitiable spectacle. Reuben had outraged the most sacred principles of patriarchal law and primitive morality. Moses could not disregard the curse which behaviour so flagrant had provoked. Nay, in Reuben and his tribe Moses recognised an inherent vice which forbade them ever to "excel." He could therefore only pray that Reuben *might* "live and not die"—not become extinct and cast out from Jehovah's inheritance, as it seemed only too likely he might become. The fatal flaw which Moses thus discerned in the fortunes of Jacob's firstborn arose from the instability of his character; a fault which seems by no means to have been corrected, but rather to have been perpetuated and confirmed in the character of his descendants. A practical lesson of warning for ourselves is surely not far to seek. The impulsive yet irresolute disposition of Reuben is painfully common amongst ourselves. Too many a young man, the excellency of his father's dignity, and the centre of highest hopes, both for this world and the next, is at this moment the subject of sorely anxious prayers, such as this which Moses uttered. And too many a Christian convert, who has been baptized like Reuben unto God's high calling, in the cloud and in the sea, is seeming at this moment to his pastor to be coming short of the promised reward, because of his unstable will, and his fickle yielding to influences that lie outside the boundaries of Jehovah's covenant. Not even the loving intercessions of a Moses can deliver such souls from death, if they make not an end of their wavering and indecision, and engage not themselves to seek the life of God with all their hearts. God Himself can only mourn over them, saying, "What shall I do unto thee? for thy goodness is like the morning cloud, and like the dew which early goeth away." (*T. G. Rooke, B.A.*) *The omission of Simeon*:—The Alexandrian manuscript of the Greek Old Testament contains a remarkable interpolation in the clause of Reuben's blessing. It introduces the name of Simeon, and refers to that tribe the prayer of Moses that "his men may not be few." The suggestion cannot possibly be entertained; although, if it be rejected, the very singular fact stares us in the face that the tribe of Simeon is passed over in absolute silence. This omission has been used to support the theory of a later origin of the Book of Deuteronomy. It has been said that the Simeonites had disappeared from the soil of Canaan in the reign of Josiah, and that therefore the writer thought it needless to make allusion to them. But the same reason would have caused him to pass over all the tribes comprised in the northern kingdom of Israel; for they had been recently rooted out of their possessions in the land of promise, and carried away captive into Assyria. Moreover, as a matter of historical fact, there were flourishing settlements of the Simeonites within the territory of Judah so near to Josiah's time as the reign of Hezekiah (1 Chron. iv. 34–43), and the heroine of the apocryphal book of Judith was a daughter of Simeon: a fact which, even with all allowance for the license of historic fiction, obliges us to recognise the continuance of Simeon as a tribe in the very latest period of Jewish national existence. The true reason why Simeon's name is passed over in this blessing was the deep and righteous indignation which the inspired prophet felt in regard to the recent sin of Israel at Shittim. Simeon had headed the foul apostasy which cast the glory of Jehovah's chosen people at the feet of Moab's vilest idol; and the bulk of the twenty-four thousand victims of God's avenging plague were men of this guilty tribe. With such recollections fresh in his mind, it was impossible for Moses to utter words of blessing upon Simeon, or to mitigate in any sense the curse which Jacob had already pronounced upon his posterity (Gen. xlix. 5–7). (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 7. **And thus is the blessing of Judah.**—*Judah*:—The name "Judah" was given to Jacob's fourth son in memory of his mother's grateful utterance of praise to God when this child was vouchsafed to her. It is the Hebrew word meaning "praised," and had reference originally to Jehovah, upon whom Leah in her joy conferred that title, saying, "Now will I praise the Lord" (Gen. xxix. 35). But, by a very natural change, the praise which this name implied came to be attributed to the individual who bore it; and Jacob's dying blessing embodies that new application of the idea: "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise." The blessing of Jacob goes on to disclose the great reasons for Judah's exaltation in the esteem of men. He was to be the royal tribe in Israel; from him was to spring the Prince of Peace, the promised Messiah, "unto whom shall be the obedience of the peoples" (Gen. xlix. 8, 10). A third part of his eldest brother Reuben's birthright was conferred upon him,—and this, not by his father's caprice, but by God's

deliberate appointment; so that the refusal of his brethren to acknowledge Judah as their leader would have been nothing less than rebellion against Jehovah. The sons of Jacob, however, seem to have acknowledged this leadership very willingly from the first. Reuben, Simeon, and Levi yielded the place of honour to Judah without a murmur, so far as the sacred record suffers us to judge. Only one tribe submitted with ill-concealed impatience and reluctance to the divinely appointed leadership of Judah. This was Ephraim, which had come to represent Joseph, the favourite of Jacob and the inheritor of another third part of Reuben's forfeited birthright. The first settlement of Canaan after its conquest by Joshua shows us the secret rivalry between these two tribes, and also allows us to see how completely these two had cast all the others into the shade. For Judah and Joseph divided the whole conquered territory between themselves; so that the central mountain ridge of Palestine received a permanent name from the one tribe in its southern portion, and from the other tribe in its northern continuation. It was not until some few years had elapsed that the murmurs of seven other tribes, for which no landed possessions had been allotted, shamed Judah and Ephraim into a more equitable division of their spoils, and led to the well-known partition of Canaan into nine lots, instead of the original two (Joshua xv., xvi., xvii., xviii. 2–7). But about one hundred years later the old dual division reappeared in more pronounced and permanent form. The seceding kingdom of Israel was established through the union of eight tribes or fragments of tribes under Ephraim, who now for the second time ruled over the whole northern half of the Promised Land; whilst Judah retained dominion over the south, in which part of the country Benjamin, Simeon, and Dan had found settlements under the wing of their stronger brother. From that time forth the name of "Jew" (that is, "man of Judah") was given to every subject of the kingdom of David's house, whether he belonged to the tribe of Judah or not. The second clause of this blessing may seem at first sight a little obscure; but the traditional Jewish interpretation will probably commend itself to every one who bears in mind that peculiar position of Judah among his brethren which has been already described. The royal tribe was also the "champion" tribe, bound to go before all the rest in the path of warfare and of danger. The third and fourth clauses of the blessing bring out, on the one hand, Judah's valiant and unselfish discharge of the honourable task assigned him; and, on the other hand, they contemplate the serious hindrances which would oppose his work. He would have many adversaries, not only from among the surrounding Gentile nations, but also from amongst his own brethren, some of whom would envy him, and set up a rival kingdom and championship to his. But if God would be his helper, these rivalries and oppositions would only serve to make his glorious destiny more manifest. The Lord would set His anointed One king upon His holy hill of Zion; there He should rule in the midst of His enemies. The opening words of Judah's blessing are, however, the most suggestive in regard to the actual history of the tribe and to the typical application of that history to our own circumstances. Judah's triumph and rest and help were to come from God in answer to the uplifting of Judah's voice. Distinct as was God's purpose to bless him and to make him a blessing, He would yet be inquired of for this: prayer and supplication on the part of His chosen people were to be the condition of their effectual blessing. The Apostle Paul has taught us that "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving" our "requests" should "be made known unto God" (Phil. iv. 6). This oft-forgotten but important truth is forcibly suggested in the wording of Judah's blessing: "Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah"; for, as already explained, that name was given by Leah in token of the debt of praise which was owing on Judah's account to God. The history of the reign of Jehoshaphat furnishes a notable commentary upon the point which is thus suggested. Moab, and Ammon, and Edom had become confederate against that prince; and in his fear "he set himself to seek the Lord; and all Judah gathered together to seek help from the Lord" (2 Chron. xx. 1–4). The answer which was given to this cry for help required from the king and from the people no ordinary display of faith, and no easy sacrifice of praise. But Judah was strengthened to stand the test (2 Chron. xx. 21–28). Perhaps this hint from the meaning of Judah's name may be the most needed and the most profitable teaching of the blessing of Judah for some one who now reads it. It is no unfrequent experience when a Christian's prayer fails to be answered from God, simply because it was conceived in a querulous, ungrateful, and complaining spirit. No element of praise mingled with its petitions. It was wholly occupied with requests for something that seemed lacking; whilst God was expecting a thankful acknowledgment

of countless mercies which His selfish servant had received in silence, or even with discontented depreciation. Let not the offerer of such defective prayers expect any share in the blessings which Moses invoked on Judah. The voice of rejoicing and of thanksgiving was in his tabernacles; therefore the right hand of the Lord did valiantly for him. For thus saith the Hope of Israel, the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Psa. l. 23). (*T. G. Rooke, B.A.*)

Vers. 8–11. **And of Levi he said.**—*Levi*:—Levi was the third son of Jacob and Leah, and his name commemorated the desire and hope of his mother, that her husband's heart would be "closely joined" to her now that she had borne him three sons (Gen. xxix. 34). The Hebrew word from which "Levi" is derived means "to adhere," or "to be closely joined." An undesigned prediction lay hid in the name thus given; for Levi was ordained by God to be the official link of union betwixt the whole nation of Israel and its spiritual Head. Through the Levitical priesthood the descendants of Jacob were to be joined unto God in a peculiar covenant; and this fact is distinctly connected with the meaning of Levi's name by an inspired utterance recorded in Numbers xviii. 2. Yet, during the lifetime of Levi himself, this high spiritual destiny of his tribe could scarcely have been guessed; for this third son of Jacob was joined to his elder brother Simeon in deeds of violence and cruelty that drew upon them a common curse, which in Simeon's case, as we have seen, made every "blessing" of the tribe impossible. The dying patriarch Israel, speaking by the spirit of prophecy, formally disinherited both these men from their natural share in the promised land of Canaan. They were to be "divided" and "scattered" (Gen. xlix. 7). And this curse was never recalled in its terms, nor abolished in the case of Levi any more than it was in the case of Simeon; only the wonder-working providence of God converted it into an occasion of blessing and honour for the one tribe, whilst leaving it in its original force of a punishment for the other tribe. The exclusion of the Levites from a landed inheritance, and their dispersion amongst the other tribes of Israel, became the highest tokens of the Divine favour towards them, and the means by which they were recognised as the channels of heavenly grace to all the nation. This remarkable change of a curse into a blessing deserves to be studied and remembered by those who are conscious of having brought themselves under the inevitable penalties of past wrong-doing. Those penalties cannot perhaps be recalled, but they can be converted into marvellous opportunities of good in a circle far wider than has been affected by the former evil. And for such a miracle of grace to be accomplished, it is only needful that human repentance and self-consecration should work together with the providence of heaven. (*T. G. Rooke, B.A.*) *Urim and Thummim*:—In the blessing of Levi by Moses, the usual order of these two mysterious words is reversed, and Thummim is put before Urim. There is probably a reason for this, namely, to suggest that Levi's zeal for the "right and perfect way" of God, amid the general defection at Horeb, was his real title to the honourable office of interpreting God's "light" and God's "truth" from His holy oracles. This supreme devotion of himself to "right" was indeed the sole condition of his blessing and of the Divine election which it declared. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 12. **Of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him.**—*The safety of the Lord's beloved*:—I. HE WAS THE SPECIAL OBJECT OF THE DIVINE AFFECTION. God especially loves His spiritual children with a love of—1. Approbation. 2. Manifestation. 3. Distinction. II. HE WAS TO DWELL NEAR TO THE LORD. 1. By grace. 2. In providence. 3. In reference to His ordinances. 4. With regard to the prevailing impressions of the mind. III. HE WAS TO ABIDE IN PERFECT SECURITY. God's chosen dwell in safety from—1. The curses of the Divine law. 2. The powers of darkness. 3. The perils of life. 4. The terrors of death and the judgment day. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *Benjamin*:—The blessing of the tribes by Moses consisted largely in a prophetic foreshadowing of the lots which these tribes were severally to occupy in the conquered territory of Canaan. The first distinct example of this fact meets us in the case of Benjamin, who, although he was the youngest of all the sons of Jacob, stands fourth in this significant enumeration which the man of God was inspired to make before his death. It has been suggested that the spirit of prophecy caused Moses to look far beyond the merely temporal aspect of the history of Israel, and to recognise its typical relations with the spiritual kingdom of Messiah; and that the peculiar arrangement of the names was partly meant to indicate certain of these hidden mysteries. Such an

opinion would be fully confirmed by a review of the order in which the tribes have been marshalled thus far. Reuben is mentioned first, not so much by courtesy and in remembrance of his birthright, as to mark with emphasis the mournful lessons of his fall. The real leader and head of Israel is Judah, and the blessing makes haste to rest on him with the first of its utterances in which no ambiguity lies. But the royal destinies of Judah are incomplete if separated from the priestly destinies of Levi. Messiah, that seed for whose sake Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had received their divine election, was to be a "priest upon his throne"; and therefore the blessing of the third son is made by Moses to follow immediately upon the blessing of his sceptred brother. So the keynote of the entire prediction is struck in a spiritual rather than in a temporal sense; remembering which fact, we cease to wonder at finding the name of Benjamin next in the enumeration to that of Levi. For the local centre of Jehovah's spiritual kingdom in Israel was fixed in the lot of Benjamin. The famous temple of Solomon was built upon the hill between the city of David and the Mount of Olives; and was wholly in the territory of Benjamin, though, according to the Rabbins, a part of its outer courts fell within the lot of Judah. This fact furnishes the most exact and beautiful explanation of all the peculiar expressions which meet us in Benjamin's blessing. For the God and King of Israel may be said literally to have thus dwelt between the two mountain ridges which formed the extremity of the lot of this tribe, and Benjamin dwelt "alongside" the holy spot; not "around" it, but stretching out from it as from the point where his safety and honour had their origin; all which is implied in the preposition which Moses uses when he says, "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him." Further, the phrase, "He will cover him all the day long," may very fairly be taken as referring to the cloud of glory which was inseparably associated with the earthly dwelling-place of Jehovah, and which in the wilderness had been spread for a covering over all the tribes. That sign of the Divine protection was now to rest specially over Benjamin; and beneath the shadow of the Almighty he was to abide securely day and night. The history of the tribe of Benjamin from the time when the Temple was built upon his frontier hill of Moriah yields a very complete commentary upon the splendid promise of his blessing. This member of the Hebrew commonwealth did dwell in safety that was all the more noteworthy by contrast with the calamities which befell not only the tribes which cast in their lot with Ephraim, but also the outlying portions of the kingdom of Judah. A kind of charmed circle of peace and security was drawn around the towers of Salem, and all the land of Benjamin seemed to be within that happy region. Egypt might come up against Israel from the south, and Syria might invade his territory from the north; the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagarenes, might be confederate to assault it from the east; and these hostile floods more than once filled all the breadth of Immanuel's land; but the tableland of Benjamin was ever the last to be overflowed, and often escaped even the spray of the angry tide. The spiritual application of this blessing must be self-evident to every one who has received the assurance of God's love toward himself in Jesus Christ. The Christian has joined himself to the Lord's anointed King, even as Benjamin chose to unite his lot with Judah, and to acknowledge the right of David's house to rule over him. He has accepted Christ to be his head, and has prepared Him a dwelling-place in a nobler house than that of Moriah, even in his own renewed and adoring heart. Therefore does the Spirit of Christ bear witness to him of his adoption as God's well-beloved child. He has found a dwelling-place under the shadow of the Almighty; Jehovah's truth has become his shield and buckler. (*T. G. Rooke, B.A.*) *Benjamin as a figure of the true Church*:—1. In his birth—hard travail, sorrow, pain, and death, preceded and accompanied his birth. So in the spiritual birth, in the regeneration of the soul, there is great pain, sorrow, and anguish of mind, and even the death of all self-righteousness and legal hope in bringing the soul to spiritual birth. 2. In his name. The believer, in his moments of conviction, humiliation, and sorrow for sin, calls himself Benoni, the son of sorrow, but the Lord calls him Benjamin, the son of my right hand; witness Ephraim bemoaning himself, and the Lord's declaration concerning him (Jer. xxxi. 18, 20). 3. In the description given of him, "the beloved of the Lord"; loved from eternity, freely, indissolubly, everlastingly. 4. In his security. He shall dwell in safety by Him, or through His protecting hand and power; in battle the Lord shall cover him, as a hen covereth her chickens—as with a shield, and he shall dwell, his resting place shall be, between the shoulders, in the heart of his covenant God. (*A. Hewlett, M.A.*) *Safety near God*:—1. There is no safety like that which comes of dwelling

near to God. For His best beloved the Lord can find no surer or safer place. O Lord, let me always abide under Thy shadow, close to Thy wounded side. Nearer and nearer would I come to Thee; and when once specially near Thee, I would abide there for ever. 2. What a covering is that which the Lord gives to His chosen! Not a fair roof shall cover him, nor a bomb-proof casement, nor even an angel's wing, but Jehovah Himself. Nothing can come at us when we are thus covered. This covering the Lord will grant us all the day long, however long the day. Lord, let me abide this day consciously beneath this canopy of love, this pavilion of sovereign power. 3. Does the third clause mean that the Lord in His temple would dwell among the mountains of Benjamin, or that the Lord would be where Benjamin's burden should be placed, or that we are borne upon the shoulders of the Eternal? In any case, the Lord is the support and strength of His saints. Lord, let me ever enjoy Thy help, and then my arms will be sufficient for me. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 13–17. **Of Joseph he said, Blessed of the Lord be his land.**—*Joseph*:—The character of Joseph is not often correctly apprehended, although it comes out very distinctly in the picture which Scripture has given us of the boy, the youth, and the man. Its most conspicuous quality was firm resolution and indomitable strength of will. There was nothing weak or undecided in him; and from this sterling root of character, sanctified as it was by true piety, sprang the virtues which all can recognise in Joseph's behaviour throughout his chequered experiences; a master sense of duty, cheerful courage, and perseverance under misfortune, rigid justice, and indefatigable diligence in all to which he set his hand. Ephraim was evidently the true son of Joseph in all his natural force of character; and, in the history of the Hebrew nation, we find him practically absorbing the individuality of his elder brother Manasseh. But, unlike his father, Ephraim seems to have been proud and selfish and overbearing, asserting his claim to supremacy without regard to the feelings or the rights of others, and angrily resenting every sign of resistance to, or questioning of, his right to the chief place among his brethren. Such a character is sure to secure its ambitious ends, at least, for a time, if only it is backed by the ability to rule; and in this way alone we might account for the tacit submission of all Israel to Ephraimitish dictation from the days of Joshua, the greatest hero of the tribe, and a man who reproduced all the spotless virtues of Joseph himself, until the disastrous "day of battle," when "the glory departed from Israel," and when Shiloh, the former centre of Joseph's dominion and of the religious worship of all his brethren, ceased to be God's chosen dwelling-place, and was turned even into "a curse to all the nations of the earth." But something more than the mere ancestral force of the Ephraimitish character explains this long-continued supremacy of the tribe in Israel. The distinction which Joseph claimed among his brethren seemed to be invested with an almost sacred authority by the traditions of his father's express appointment, which, moreover, Moses appears to acknowledge in the blessing which is now before us. His richly coloured phraseology is reproduced in part by Moses in Deuteronomy, whilst the thought which underlay the words of the older prophecy is manifestly present to the mind of the later seer. Now what that thought really was is revealed in a brief incidental passage of 1 Chronicles. We are told by the author of these annals that Jacob transferred from Reuben to Joseph the birthright of the first-born son; that birthright consisting of a double portion of the patrimonial estate, as well as of titular headship in the family, such as the father himself exercised until his death. Jacob assumed the liberty to take away this high distinction from his eldest son, who had justly forfeited it by gross misconduct, and to confer it upon the latest-born but one, whom he had already singled out for other peculiar privileges when the lads were young and living together at home. And further, as if to emphasise the liberty of preference which he thus assumed, the dying patriarch singled out the younger of Joseph's two children as the special inheritor of this transferred birthright. But some will very naturally doubt whether he did not go beyond other limits which his recognition of the Divine decrees ought most distinctly to have set before his mind. For God had assigned the headship of His chosen people to Judah, and Jacob was not ignorant of this arrangement, but had given utterance to it in his prediction concerning the royal sceptre which his fourth son was to stretch forth over his enemies and his father's sons alike. Perhaps he may have drawn some subtle distinction in his thoughts between this regal honour, which also had a certain spiritual aspect, and the temporal substance of the birthright which he desired to transmit to

Joseph. And this theory was very likely present to the mind of Moses when he adopted so much of Jacob's former blessing, and seemingly confirmed it absolutely to Joseph. But this was a judgment after the flesh, and not after the spirit; and in Jacob's case the assumption of a right to judge at all in such a matter was specially unwarrantable, and is all the more surprising because he had been so often punished for former acts of similar self-willed interference with the course and directions of God's providence. Could the patriarch have foreseen all the evil consequences of what he did, he would surely never have attempted to advance the tribe of Joseph into the place of pre-eminence which God had reserved for Judah. It was in the death-chamber of Jacob in Egypt that birth was first given to that disastrous rivalry which for more than a thousand years weakened the house of Israel, and which still points a mournful proverb for the Church of the living God. One is tempted to linger over the very serious lessons which are suggested by this striking instance of the conflict which may arise between Divine election and human self-will, and of the well-marked differences in the fortunes and character of those whose inheritance is chosen of God, and of those whose inheritance is derived from men. How often do we think to do good to our friends or to our children by setting apart for them special gifts or asking specific requests for them from God, when, in truth, we are only procuring them evil and a curse; whereas, if we had left them in faith to God, and taught them to submit cheerfully in all things to His sovereign will, they would indeed have been blest more richly than we could have desired or conceived! And how often do we congratulate ourselves upon the proud advantages which human affection or policy has conferred, forgetting that there is only one inheritance which avails eternally and truly—that which pertains to the children of Divine election, "who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 13). (*T. G. Rooke, B.A.*) *By the fountain* (with Gen. xlix. 22):—I. THIS FIGURE DESCRIBES JOSEPH'S CHARACTER. 1. He was in clear and constant fellowship with God, and therefore God blessed him greatly. How can we fail to be fruitful if we draw our life and all its vigour from the Lord Jesus? 2. Because Joseph lived near to God, he received and retained gracious principles. We need an instructed people if we are to have a fruitful people. 3. Joseph showed his character throughout the whole of his life. Always the Lord his God is the star of Joseph. 4. This abiding near to God made Joseph independent of externals. If you are not living in God on your own account, your religion may as well fail you at once; for it will ultimately do so. 5. Joseph was very conscious of his entire dependence upon God. Take the well away, and where was the fruitful bough? II. THIS IS OF ITSELF A GREAT BLESSING. It is a high favour to know the deep things of God, and to enjoy the far-down securities, enjoyments, and privileges of the children of heaven. 1. In deep union with God are to be found the very truth and life of godliness. A man may possess the catalogue of a library, and yet be without a book; and so may you know a list of doctrines, and yet be a stranger to truth. 2. When a man like Joseph can be compared to a fruitful tree by a well, because he is rooted in fellowship with God, he has the blessedness of drawing his supplies from secret, but real, sources. His life is hid, and the support of his life is hidden too. The world knoweth him not; but the secret of the Lord is with him. There is the tree, and there is the fruit, these can be seen by all; but none can see the roots which are the cause of the clusters, nor the deep that lieth under, from which those roots derive their supply. 3. The supplies of such a man are inexhaustible. Infinite mercy is a storehouse for a starving world. 4. The man who dwells near to God has supplies which can never be cut off. We have heard of cities which have been surrounded by armies, and were never captured by assault, but were compelled to surrender because the besiegers cut off the water-courses, broke down the aqueducts, and so subdued them by thirst. Jerusalem was never thus captured, for there were deep wells within the city itself which never ceased to flow. Ah, he that hath a well of living water within him is beyond the enemy's power. 5. Supplies gained by nearness to God Himself are constant. Grace is not a landspring, but a well. I do not say that your root can always take in the same measure of water from the well of life; but I do say that it will always be there for you to take; and I think, also, that to a large extent you will be able to partake of it with constancy. 6. The supplies of the believer who dwells deep are pure as well as full. Draw your supplies at first hand. III. THIS BRINGS WITH IT OTHER BLESSINGS. 1. If you are by the well, sending your roots into waters, you will obtain fruitfulness. 2. Unselfishness. 3. Fixedness. 4. Safety. 5. Enrichment. Notice how Moses puts

it: he mentions quite a treasury of jewels. The best pearls come out of deep seas. He mentions the precious things of heaven, the precious fruit brought forth by the sun, the precious things put forth by the moon, the chief things of the ancient mountains, the precious things of the earth, and the fulness thereof, and the good-will of Him that dwelt in the bush. All these blessings came upon the top of the head of him who was a fruitful bough by a well. The best wines in God's house are in the cellar. Those who never go downstairs have no idea of the secret sweetness. A deep experience is a precious experience. The Lord fills certain of His people with pain and grief, that they may know His choicer consolations. We are too apt to let our roots run along just under the surface, and so we get no firm rootage; but trouble comes, and then we grow downward, rooted in humility; then we pierce the treasures of darkness, and know the deep things of God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **The precious things of heaven.**—*Things that are precious:*—Happy is the man who aspires to possess precious things. We need not be poor, blind, miserable, naked. There is available for us a hoard of precious things—things earthly and heavenly, present and future, temporal and eternal. I. THE GIFT OF LIFE. Are you using it well? Is yours a sanctified life, fruitful of wise thoughts and worthy deeds? Do not say that if you were somewhere else, or in some other employment, or in an entirely different condition of life, you would then live a truer and more splendid life. "The trivial round," &c. II. THE PROMISES OF GOD AND OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST. There are more than three thousand of these. Promises of guidance, food, raiment, defence, consolation, mercy, peace, health, prosperity, honour, glory, immortality, eternal life, endless joy in heaven, &c. Rest, then, in the Lord. Be quiet, be patient. He is faithful that promised. The Scripture cannot be broken. All the promises of the heavenly Father are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. III. REAL, PERSONAL, BLESSED COMMUNION WITH GOD, OUR FATHER, THROUGH THE MEDIATION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. Remember the Divine method of prayer. There is the way, and it is written plainly in the Scriptures. Listen, and be glad: "For thus saith the high and lofty One," &c. Listen and learn: "If any man sin," &c. Listen and obey: "If I regard iniquity," &c. Listen and trust: "The Spirit itself helpeth," &c. Listen and rejoice: "Be careful for nothing," &c. IV. A GOOD NAME. "Rather to be chosen than great riches." They flourish like the palm-tree. Think of the names of Martin Luther, George Washington, David Livingstone, Richard Cobden, and the Prince Consort. They are like pillars of white marble, to remind us that we may be great and good. Yes, the names of the saints are immortal. V. THE BEAUTY OF EARTH AND HEAVEN. Make this use of eternal beauty and grandeur. Look at the mountains, and think of God's strength; the flowers, and think of His love; and the sun, and think of His glory. Go into the fields to find God, to the sea to worship Him. In the rich emblazonment and embroidery of nature, see the vesture of the Almighty, and know Him as thy Father in heaven, and thou shalt feel a sense of dignity and blessedness unknown before. (*G. W. McCree.*) **The precious things of the earth.**—*The precious things of the earth:*—It is the poetic sense which perceives beauty in the things of the natural world, where the purely prosaic mind would see nothing to attract or impress. What we call the "poetry of nature" is, in fact, that view of nature which is in the eye of the poet-observer. Dr. Shairp has, indeed, claimed that poetry itself is as true a form of thinking as is science in its estimate of external nature; and that the place of poetry in the present order of things in our universe was not made by the conceit of man, but was intended by the Maker of this order. He is sure that, as Wordsworth claims, poetry is "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge," and "immortal as the mind of man." The poetic spirit invests the things of nature with the emotions of the human heart; looking down through that which is seen, into that which is thought and felt. There are associations of scenery which grow out of the lessons of history; and just in proportion as the man of poetic soul is informed in these lessons is the scenery about him transfused with their glory and imbued with their inspirations. The arid wastes of desolated Egypt have fullest meaning to him who reads in the mighty monuments which tower above these wastes the story of the Pharaohs and the shepherd kings; of the priests of Isis and Osiris; of all the legendary rulers of the land of Mizraim from Menes to the Ptolemies. The fields of Marathon and of Marston Moor and of Waterloo have a meaning in the light of their history which makes the scenery about them vocal with the praise of noble deeds. And who could look upon the scenery of Palestine but in the glow of its sacred history? But history is never so dear to us as memory. No associations with those of whom we know only in story can so vocalise the

poetry of our surroundings as do the recollections of our own former days of joy or sadness in that locality, and of our fellowship there with those whom we loved, and from whom we are now separated. But, after all, the best associations of natural scenery are the associations of truth; the associations, not of history or of memory merely, but of truth—of immutable truth that takes hold of the past, the present, and the future. There is truth pictured in all nature, even in the commonest phases of nature; and poetry is the heart's view of truth. There are associations of God's presence with every phase of natural scenery; and he who looks at mountain, or forest, or ocean, or plain, without recognising and rejoicing over these associations, lacks the true poet's soul and the true poet's eye. On the contrary, he who notes and heeds them finds comfort, as well as poetry, in them everywhere. (*H. C. Trumbull.*) **The goodwill of Him that dwelt in the bush.**—*The goodwill of Christ the best of blessings:*—I. WHAT THIS GOODWILL IS, AND WHOSE IT IS. It is the love and free favour of Christ to all His covenant people: that grace of His, in which there is continuance, which He ever bears towards them that are His. 1. Christ ever bears a goodwill towards His people. They are precious and honourable in His sight, they are highly favoured; His thoughts towards them are thoughts of peace, and so they were from eternity (Micah v. 2). The Church is His spouse, His body, His fair one. Every dispensation of Providence is for our good; the sorest strokes that befall us come in love; when persecuted, forsaken, made a shame of before men, His heart stands towards us the same as ever; underneath are His everlasting arms: we endure the fire, and come purged and refined out of it. 2 This favour and goodwill Christ is pleased to discover to His people for their edification and comfort (Cant. ii. 4). II. WHY THIS GOODWILL IS THUS PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED AS "THE GOODWILL OF HIM THAT DWELT IN THE BUSH" (Exod. iii. 12). 1. Because the fire in the midst of the bush was a type of the incarnation and sufferings of Christ. For man's nature is a poor, despicable thing, like a dry bramble-bush that would be soon fired, as it were, and utterly consumed by the approach of God; but the Son of God dwells in this bush, and though the flame is seen, the bush is not burnt. 2. Because God revealed His covenant to Moses at the time of His glorious appearance. God is a fire to consume, not to enlighten, warm, and refresh ungodly sinners, such as have not made a covenant with Him by sacrifice. 3. This appearance of the angel in the bush sets forth the love and care of Christ to His Church, even in their greatest troubles and dangers. All Christ's mercy, wisdom, power, love, and grace are for us; yea, His very life is on our behalf (John xiv. 19). It is good to remember former deliverances even in the want of present mercies. 4. Because Moses had at this season the most special experience of the love and goodwill of Christ; it is one of the top manifestations of the Redeemer's fulness and grace to his own soul. There is a great deal of emphasis in my text, "And for the favourable acceptation of my dweller in the bush." As if Moses had said, "Then He revealed Himself to be mine, I saw His glory as my Surety, my Redeemer, my God manifest in the flesh, and to my soul He sealed all the love and grace of the everlasting covenant." Our first views of God and Christ are often exceeding precious ones. This was Christ's first visible appearance to Moses that we read of; now the visions of God began; and what so sweet an introduction to his after-communion with Him as a sight of the second person in the Godhead united to flesh, and in our nature transacting all the concerns of salvation? III. HOW OR IN WHAT MANNER THIS GOODWILL IS TO BE SOUGHT. 1. Seek this goodwill of Christ, His free grace and favour, as a blessing distinct from and over and above what God the Father hath promised on His own part in the everlasting covenant. 2. This goodwill of God-man mediator is to be sought, as what alone can give life and liberty to the believer in all acts of Gospel-worship. Take away the person of Christ as God-man, and the object of worship is as it were lost, for there is no going to the Father but by Him. What can sinners do with an absolute God? Take away Christ's sufferings, merit, righteousness, and intercession, what plea can there be for faith? And believers, when they go in Christ's name, yet if their spirits are not taken up in the exercise of faith on His goodwill, grace, and acceptation, there is no nearness to God. Christ's presence is our life, we have none in ourselves; Gospel-liberty is Christ's purchase and gift. 3. This goodwill is to be sought with great expectation and hope. Jesus loves a fear which produces watchfulness in the soul, but He hates those fears which breed torment. The goodwill of my dweller in the bush, says Moses; the goodwill of my Lord and God, say thou. Keep in view the sense thou hast had of past grace and favour under thy burden,

and grieve for want of present tokens of it. 4. This goodwill is to be sought in its higher manifestations, and a sweeter experience of it from day to day. Moses leaves the decree wherein this goodwill should be shown to Joseph, to the sovereignty of Him in whom it dwells; but withal, the manner of expression he uses shows that it was no small portion he asks of it for him, the goodwill of my dweller in the bush. IV. WHEREIN CONSISTS THE GREATNESS OF THE BLESSING, WHICH RENDERS IT SO WELL WORTHY OF ALL OUR SEEKING. 1. The goodwill of Christ, who of old dwelt in the bush, lies at the foundation of every other blessing. The day is coming when none but Christ, an whole Christ, will be deemed a portion sufficient for an immortal soul. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness: this is the one thing needful. 2. Every other blessing is comprehended in this. If Christ be thine, all is thine. 3. This is needful to make our other blessings blessings indeed. The whole world cannot satisfy a soul without this: men may be in straits in the abundance of their possessions; have, and never enjoy; be crying, Who will show me any good? They see nothing worth calling so in what they have already. Now, whence is this? It arises from a want of God, and Christ, and covenant love, and goodwill, to put a sweetness and relish into creature-comforts, and to make up all creature deficiencies. 4. This is a blessing infinitely better than all outward blessings, and makes up the loss of all. (*John Hill.*) *At the bush:*—I think this is the only reference in the Old Testament to that great vision which underlay Moses' call and Israel's deliverance. There seems a peculiar appropriateness in this reference being put into the mouth of the ancient lawgiver, for to him even Sinai, with all its glories, cannot have been so impressive and so formative of his character as was the vision granted to him solitary in the wilderness. It is to be noticed that the characteristic by which God is designated here never occurs elsewhere than in this one place. It is intended to intensify the conception of the greatness, and preciousness, and all-sufficiency of that "goodwill." If it is that "of Him that dwelt in the bush," it is sure to be all that a man can need. So then here, first, is a great thought as to what for us all is the blessing of blessings—God's goodwill. "Goodwill"—the word, perhaps, might bear a little stronger rendering. "Goodwill" is somewhat tepid. A man may have a good enough will, and yet no very strong emotion of favour or delight, and certainly may do nothing to carry his goodwill into action. It is more than "goodwill"; it is more than "favour"; perhaps "delight" would be nearer the meaning. It implies, too, not only the inward sentiment of complacency, but also the active purpose of action in conformity with it on God's part. If I might dwell for a moment upon scriptural passages, I would just recall to you, as bringing up very strongly and beautifully the all-sufficiency and the blessed effects of having this delight and loving purpose directed toward us like a sunbeam, the various great things that a chorus of psalmists say it will do for a man. Here is one of their triumphant utterances: "Thou wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt Thou compass him as with a shield." That crystal battlement, if I may so vary the figure, is round a man, keeping far away from him all manner of real evil, and filling his quiet heart as he stands erect behind the rampart, with the sense of absolute security. That is one of the blessings that "the favour," or goodwill, will secure for us. Again, we read: "By Thy favour Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong." He that knows himself to be the object of the Divine delight, and who by faith knows himself to be the object of the Divine activity in protection, stands firm, and his purposes will be carried through, because they will be purposes in accordance with the Divine mind, and nothing needs to shake him. So he that grasps the hand of God, not because of his grasp, but because of the hand that he holds, can say, "the Lord is at my right hand; I shall not be greatly moved." And again, in another analogous but yet diversified representation, we read: "In Thee shall we rejoice all the day, and in Thy favour shall our horn be exalted." That is the emblem, not only of victory, but of joyful confidence, and so he that knows himself to have God for his friend and his helper can go through the world keeping a sunny face, whatever the clouds may be. So the goodwill of God is the chiefest good. Now, if we turn to the remarkable designation of the Divine nature which is here, look what rivers of strength and of blessedness flow out of the thought that for each of us "the goodwill of Him that dwelt in the bush" may be ours. What does that pregnant designation of God say? That was a strange shrine for a God. That poor, ragged, dry desert bush, with apparently no sap in its grey stem, prickly with thorns, with no beauty that we should desire it, fragile and insignificant—yet that is God's house. Not in the cedars of Lebanon, not in the great monarchs of the forest, but in the forlorn child of the desert did He

abide. "The goodwill of Him that dwelt in the bush" may dwell in you and me. Never mind how small, never mind how sapless, never mind how lightly esteemed among men, never mind though we make a very poor show by the side of the oaks of Bashan or the cedars of Lebanon. It is all right; the fire does not dwell in them. "Unto this man will I come, and with him will I dwell who is of a humble and a contrite heart, and who trembleth at My word." Let no sense of poverty, weakness, unworthiness ever draw the faintest film of fear across our confidence, for even with us He will sojourn. Again, what more does that name say? He that "dwelt in the bush" filled it with fire, and it burned "and was not consumed." Our brethren of the Presbyterian Churches have taken the Latin form of the words in the incident for their motto—*Nec Tamen Consumebatur*. But I venture to think that is a mistake; and that what is meant by the symbol is just what is expressed by the verbal revelation which accompanied it, and it is this: "I AM THAT I AM." The fire that did not burn out is the emblem of the Divine nature which does not tend to death because it lives, nor to exhaustion because it energises, nor to emptiness because it bestows, but after all times is the same; lives by its own energy and is independent. "I am that I have become," that is what men have to say. "I am that I once was not, and again once shall not be," that is what men have to say. "I am that I am" is God's name. And this eternal, ever-living, self-sufficing, absolute, independent, unwearied, inexhaustible God is the God whose favour is as inexhaustible as Himself, and eternal as His own being. "Therefore the sons of men shall put their trust beneath the shadow of Thy wings." What more does the name say? He "that dwelt in the bush" dwelt there in order to deliver; and, dwelling there, declared "I have seen the affliction of My people, and am come down to deliver them." So, then, if the goodwill of that eternal, delivering God is with us, we too may feel that our trivial troubles and our heavy burdens, all the needs of our prisoned wills and captive souls, are beknown to Him, and that we shall have deliverance from them by Him. The goodwill, the delight of God, and the active help of God, may be ours, and if it be ours we shall be blessed and strong. Do not let us forget the place in this blessing on the head of Joseph which my text holds. It is preceded by an invoking of the precious things of heaven, and "the precious fruits brought forth by the sun . . . of the chief things of the ancient mountains, and the precious things of the lasting hills, and the precious things of the earth and the fulness thereof." They are all heaped together in one great mass for the beloved Joseph. And then, like the golden spire that tops some of those campaniles in Italian cities, and completes their beauty, above them all there is set, as the shining apex of all, "the goodwill of Him that dwelt in the bush." That is more precious than all the precious things; set last because it is to be sought first; set last as in building some great structure the top stone is put on last of all; set last because it gathers all others into itself. So the upshot of my homily is just this—Men may strive and scheme, and wear their finger-nails down to the quick, to get lesser good, and fail after all. You never can be sure of getting the little good. You can be quite sure of getting the highest. You never can be certain that the precious things of the earth and the fulness thereof will be yours, or that if they were, they would be so very precious; but you can be quite sure that the "goodwill of Him that dwelt in the bush" may be like light upon your hearts, and be strength to your limbs. And so I commend to you the words of the apostle: "Wherefore we labour that, whether present or absent, we may be well-pleasing to Him." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Vers. 18, 19. **Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out.**—*The blessing of Zebulun and Issachar considered:*—I. THE DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES AND OCCUPATIONS IN WHICH MEN ARE PLACED. It is owing to God's directing the inclinations of men that some are fond of the country and some of the town; that some love the noise and bustle of cities and sea-ports, the fatigue and hazard of navigation and travelling; while others prefer the retiredness and silence of the country. Some choose to dwell with Zebulun at the haven for ships; others with Issachar in the tents of the country, among the bleatings of the flocks. Nor is this different choice entirely owing to education and habit, since it is frequently seen that young people choose a different occupation from their fathers; and some are uneasy till they have changed that to which they were brought up. This diversity of inclination is by appointment and influence of God, the supreme sovereign of every community. Further, His hand is to be owned and adored in giving men ability and skill to pursue their several occupations, in giving them the use of their limbs and senses, health of body, and capacities of mind. II. THE DUTIES INCUMBENT UPON MEN, HOWEVER

DIFFERENT THEIR OCCUPATIONS BE. 1. To be content and cheerful with their lot and calling. Every calling hath its conveniences and inconveniences. A dislike to the business to which a man hath been brought up generally ariseth from pride, ignorance, or an inordinate love of wealth or ease; and if the discontented person were to have his wish, and change with the person he envies, in all probability he would repent it speedily, and wish he had continued as he was. But prudence, diligence, and good economy will gradually lessen the difficulties of any employment, and piety and humility reconcile the mind to them. We are to guard against that excessive application, hurry, and fatigue, on the one hand, which men of ambitious and covetous spirits impose upon themselves, so that they can have no real pleasure in the enjoyment of life. On the other hand, we are to guard against a trifling, indolent, extravagant disposition, by which men first lose their trade, and then complain of the deadness or unprofitableness of it. 2. To make religion their chief business and greatest concern. Those who pretend that they cannot find time for religion can find time for pleasure, and spend more in unnecessary sleep, idle chat with their neighbours, or other amusements than would be necessary for the acts of religious worship, secret and social. Where a person's disposition is serious and spiritual, and when his great aim is to please God and save his soul, there will be no difficulty at all to find time for religion. 3. To endeavour to promote religion in others. Thus it is said in the text, "They," that is both Zebulun and Issachar, "shall call the people to the mountain"; to the house of God, which Moses foresaw, by a spirit of prophecy, would be built upon a mountain. The tribes spoken of in the text, though their employments were so different, were to unite in promoting the interests of religion. Thus, though Christ hath appointed pastors and teachers in His Church, yet it is the duty of every one of His disciples to "do good to all men" as they "have opportunity," to "seek the things of Jesus Christ," and to "exhort one another daily." Let merchants and tradesmen, then, improve their commerce to spread the knowledge of God and religion, and to promote piety, justice, and charity. Let farmers improve their business and connections with others to the same good purpose. Let those of you whose labours God hath prospered "honour the Lord with your substance," and cheerfully concur in any good design for promoting the happiness of all around you, supplying the needy, and relieving the afflicted; and thus, according to that expression of the prophet, "consecrate your gain unto the Lord and your substance unto the Lord of the whole earth" (Micah iv. 13). But the great thing you are to be solicitous about is to promote the salvation of one another's souls. (*Job Orton, D.D.*) *Joy in going out*:—The blessings of the tribes are ours, for we are the true Israel who worship God in the spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh. Zebulun is to rejoice because Jehovah will bless his "going out"; we also see a promise for ourselves lying latent in this benediction. When we go out we will look out for occasions of joy. We go out to travel, and the providence of God is our convoy. We go out to emigrate, and the Lord is with us both on land and sea. We go out as missionaries, and Jesus saith, "Lo, I am with you unto the end of the world." We go out day by day to our labour, and we may do so with pleasure, for God will be with us from morn till eve. A fear sometimes creeps over us when starting, for we know not what we may meet with; but this blessing may serve us right well as a word of good cheer. As we pack up for moving, let us put this verse into our travelling trunk; let us drop it into our hearts, and keep it there; yea, let us lay it on our tongue to make us sing. Let us weigh anchor with a song, and jump into the carriage with a psalm. Let us belong to the rejoicing tribe, and in our every movement praise the Lord with joyful hearts. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Zebulun and Issachar*:—Two tribes are joined together in this common blessing and prediction; and there was a long-established reason for close community of interest between them. Their ancestors were sons of the same mother, Leah, and were born, in close succession of time, under circumstances which made it almost inevitable that, as they grew up, they should form a little group by themselves. Yet the two brothers were far from being alike. Both in character and in personal appearance they presented contrasts that were strongly marked. The Rabbinical traditions on these points simply confirm the hints which we gather from Scripture, and which lead us to picture Issachar as a large made, heavy, and sluggish man, not over bright in intellect, but honest, good-natured, and full of plodding industry; whilst Zebulun is distinctly mentioned as one of the five "men of activity" whom Joseph selected from among his brethren and brought before Pharaoh, to give the best possible idea of their intelligence and cleverness. Issachar was the elder, yet Zebulun is almost invariably named before him: a clear

sign that the younger had taken precedence of the elder by virtue of his natural superiority in energy. The characters of Zebulun and of Issachar seem in many respects to have been complementary, and, with the wisdom which springs from true affection, they seem to have made all their possessions and resources complementary also, holding their lots in Canaan as a sort of partnership estate, by which each should be benefited alike. Zebulun gave himself mainly to the exciting tasks for which his adventurous nature fitted him, and sought to win the harvests of that capricious field, the broad salt sea. Issachar, more stolid by his tastes, held contentedly by the tamer toils of one who tills the bosom of mother earth; but both brothers rejoiced in common over the gains of each, and each grew richer because his labour and his chosen employment nourished the other s store. This idea is concealed in the "parallelism" of verse 18, which, in its poetic way, describes the united life of the two linked tribes in the mutually helpful aspects of work and rest; and, lest any superficial reader should imagine that one tribe was to monopolise active toils and the other the comforts procured thereby, the next verse significantly mingles both sides of the common picture, saying, "they," *i.e.* both of them and all of them, without distinction of private property or of original right to the gains—"they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hidden in the sand." Thus also it ought to be with Christian brethren in their handling of the diverse opportunities and gifts which God may have severally bestowed. True Christians count it a holy duty to combine their talents; and when gain accrues from their united efforts they rejoice together, and no one member grudges another his praise or his honour in the result, even though he himself has no share therein. (*T. G. Rooke, B.A.*)

Ver. 19. **They shall call the people unto the mountain, there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness.**—*The seaman's return*:—I. THEIR PRIVILEGE. To "suck the abundance of the sea" is a metonymical expression, signifying as much as to be enriched with the wares and merchandise imported by sea to them. The sea, like an indulgent mother, embraces those that live upon it in her bosom, and with full flowing breasts nourisheth them, and feeds them as a mother doth the infant that sucks and depends for its livelihood upon her breasts. And these breasts do not only afford those that hang upon them the necessaries of life, bread, raiment, &c., but the riches, ornaments, and delights of life also. This was the blessing of the tribe of Zebulun, whose cities and villages were commodiously situated upon the seashore for merchandise (Josh. xix. 11). II. THEIR DUTY to which these mercies and privileges obliged them: "They shall call the people to the mountain," &c. By the "mountain," we are here to understand the temple, which Moses, by the spirit of prophecy, foresaw to be upon Mount Sion and Mount Moriah; which two were as the shoulders that supported it (ver. 12). Here was the worship of God; the sacrifices were here offered up to Him. And hither Zebulun, in the sense of God's mercies to them, should call the people, *i.e.* say some, their own people, their families, and neighbours; or as others, the strangers that were among them for traffic; saying, as Isa. ii. 3. And here they shall "offer the sacrifices of righteousness." By which we are to understand their thank-offerings for the mercies they had received of the Lord. 1. The nature of the duty needs opening; for few understand what it is. Alas! it is another manner of thing than a customary, formal, cold God be thanked. Now, if we search into the nature of this duty, we shall find that whoever undertakes this angelic work, must—(1) Be a heedful observer of the mercies he receives. This is fundamental to the duty. Where no observations of mercies have been made, no praises for them can be returned. (2) Particularly consider them in their natures, degrees, seasons, and manner of conveyance; there is much of God's glory and our comfort lost for want of this (Psa. cxi. 2). And indeed, there is no employment in all the world that yields more pleasure to a gracious soul than the anatomising of providence doth. (3) Duly estimate and value his mercies. It is impossible that man can be thankful for mercies he little esteems. (4) Faithfully record His mercies, else God cannot have His due praise for them (Psa. ciii. 2). Forgotten mercies bear no fruit: a bad memory in this case makes a barren heart and life. (5) Be suitably affected with the mercies he receives. It is not a speculative, but an affectionate remembrance that becomes us: then God hath His glory, when the sense of His mercies melts our hearts into holy joy, love, and admiration. (6) Order his conversation suitably to the engagements that his mercies have put him under. When we have said all, it is the life of the thankful that is the very life of thankfulness. Obedience and service are the only real manifestations of gratitude. 2. The grounds and reasons of

this duty; why you are obliged after the reception of mercies to such a thankful return of praises. (1) God requires and expects it. As great landlords oblige their tenants to a homage and service, when they make over their estates to them, and reserve a quit-rent to themselves, which they value at a high rate; so God, when He bestows deliverances of mercies upon us, still reserves an acknowledgement to Himself: and this is dear to Him, He will not endure to be defrauded of it; much less that it be given to another. (2) You are under manifold engagements to render it to the Lord. Common ingenuity obliges to a due acknowledgment of favours freely received; and unthankfulness on that score is the odium of mankind. The examples of the very heathens will condemn you. They praised their gods, which yet were no gods, when they received any deliverance (Judg. xvi. 24). Many of you have formally and expressly obliged your souls to it, by solemn vows and promises in the day of your distress: and yet will you deal perfidiously with God? (3) Your ingratitude is the ready way to deprive you of the mercies you have, and to withhold from you the mercies you might have in your future distresses and wants. Use 1. Is it your unquestionable duty to return praises upon every receipt of mercies? Then, in the first place, bear your shame and just reproof for your manifest unthankfulness. Mourn heartily for thy unkindness to thy best friend, "The God that hath done thee good all thy life long, and deserves other returns from thee than these." 2. It calls upon you all to be thankful for your mercies. Chrysostom once wished for a voice like thunder, that all men might hear him. O that I could so call you to this duty, that some of you might effectually hear God's call in this exhortation! Argument 1. How freely have all your mercies streamed to you from the Fountain of grace! There was nothing in you to engage it. 2. How seasonably your mercies have been bestowed upon you in the very point of extremity and danger! 3. How special and distinguishing have some of your mercies been! God hath not dealt with every one as He hath with you. 4. Did not your mercies find you under great guilt? Surely such mercies have a constraining power in them, upon all sensible souls. 5. To conclude; if all the goodness of God which hath passed before your eyes does indeed prevail upon you to love the Lord, and fear to offend Him; if it really constrains you to give up yourselves, and all you have, to be His; then all this is but the beginning of mercies, and you shall see yet greater things than these. God hath more mercies yet behind, and those of a higher kind and more excellent nature than these temporal mercies are. Happy souls, if these deliverances do in any measure prove introductive to the great salvation. (*John Flavel.*)

Vers. 20, 21. **Blessed be He that enlargeth Gad.**—*Gad:*—We are able to form a more than usually distinct idea of the personal character which pertained to Gad, and which he transmitted to his descendants. Scripture hints and Jewish traditions bear one another out in suggesting that this man was wild and turbulent and headstrong above his brethren; and that, being by no means content with the peaceful occupations of pastoral life which belonged to his family, he threw himself with ardour into the fierce forays which then, as now, kept the land of Canaan in a state of chronic warfare and unsettlement. It was to this feature that Jacob probably referred in his dying prophecy, in which he introduces a characteristic play upon the name which Leah had bestowed—

> "Gad, a plundering troop is plundering him,
> But he is plundering at their heels."—Gen. xlix. 19.

When the children of Israel went out of Egypt, Gad marched and encamped, not as we might have expected with his whole brother Asher, but with Reuben and with Simeon, two tribes which closely resembled his own in character and occupation. All these three retained the nomad habits of their father's earlier life in a marked degree, and had not, like some other Hebrew tribes, settled down in Egypt into the ways of an organised and civilised nation. They still preferred to live in tents as did the unreclaimed Ishmaelites of the desert. All their wealth consisted in huge flocks and herds of cattle. All their sympathies were with the freebooting mode of life which lies on the border line between civilisation and barbarism. Thus, when Canaan was settled, although Simeon parted from his former companions and sought his fortunes alone in the dry south land of Judah, Gad and Reuben kept their alliance fast, and took possession of the country east of Jordan, where alone there was room for their immense flocks, and opportunity for predatory raids. In

this alliance Reuben seems to have willingly yielded the first place to his younger brother, whose character was evidently stronger than his own; and it is curious to notice how invariably Gad speaks and acts as the leader in all the transactions that attended this settlement. We recognise the same masterful character in all the men who rise up before us in the after history of the Bible as members of the tribe of Gad; namely, Jephthah, the eleven heroes who joined David at the most critical period of his fortunes, and Elijah the Tishbite, in whose rude strength and fearlessness we seem to behold the Gadite type in its best development, and to recognise the noblest aspect of the comparison which Moses had instituted in his blessing between this tribe and the shaggy forest-lord "which is mightiest among beasts, and turneth not away for any." (*T. G. Rooke, B.A.*)

Ver. 22. **Dan is a lion's whelp.**—*Dan; or activity in conflict*:—1. The section in Moses' blessing devoted to Dan offers three significant points of contrast with all the other sections of the poem. (1) It is the shortest of all. This sudden economy of his utterances is all the more noticeable because of the lavish scattering of his choicest flowers of eloquence upon the three preceding blessings. (2) There is no indication in the case of Dan as to the local inheritance which he should occupy in Canaan. In the case of the other tribes, from Benjamin onwards, Moses paints for us a kind of bird's-eye view of the portions which God was about to assign to them in the promised land; but although the lot of Dan invited this pictorial treatment as well as did any other, we have no description of any of its well-known features, its fertile cornlands, its sandy seaboard, or its gently swelling hills towards the east, where Sorek and Zorah gave their names to the choicest vintages of southern Palestine. (3) There is no mention of, or allusion to, the Divine name in what Moses says concerning Dan. No word is used that could suggest any special relation as subsisting between this tribe and Israel's covenant God. In this respect Dan stands absolutely alone amongst all his brethren. 2. Nor does the history of the tribe do ought but confirm the unhappy suggestion which flows from all these features of brevity and of omission in Moses' words. That history is exceedingly meagre, and records very little to the credit of the Danites. The character of their ancestor, which seems also to have been transmitted to the tribe, was crafty, deceitful, and cruel. In the Book of Judges this tribe has no small space appropriated to its doings, but the narrative is one of shame and of inexcusable sin against both universal laws of justice, humanity, and truth, and the special obligations of the Hebrew nation. Moreover, two incidental notices which we find in the later historical books suggest that the Danites disregarded the law of Moses, which forbade intermarriages with heathens, and that they fell very early into the idolatrous practices of their Phœnician and Philistine neighbours (2 Chron. ii. 14; 1 Kings xii. 28–31; Judg. xviii., xiv. 1–5). 3. When we have noted the uniform tenor of these glimpses into the character and conduct of the tribe of Dan, we can hardly be surprised to find that no members of that tribe cared to return with Judah into the land of promise when the captivity in Babylon ended. No Danite name occurs in the lists which Ezra and Nehemiah compiled in reference to the returned exiles of Israel; and the only conclusion which can be drawn from that omission is, that all the tribe of Dan despised or neglected the opportunity of temporal redemption which God had given to His people as the earnest of a better spiritual blessing when Messiah should appear. How sad in its inferences is this single fact! But the sadness of the omen is increased when we read the list of the sealed in the Book of Revelation and find no mention in it of the tribe of Dan. The only interpretation which can be put upon it is, that Dan had somehow forfeited his right to the blessings of Israel's covenant, and that, for his special unfaithfulness and sin, his very name had been blotted out of the Lamb's book of life (Exod. xxxii. 33). (*T. G. Rooke, B.A.*)

Ver. 23. **And of Naphtali he said.**—*Naphtali*:—It may seem to any one who looks upon a map of Canaan as divided amongst the tribes, that this definition of locality is far enough from corresponding with the facts. Simeon's lot would better answer to the description here, for he did occupy the south-west corner of the Promised Land; whilst Naphtali's territory was in the extreme north, and had another tribe, Asher, on its western border. Hence it is probable that the Hebrew word translated "west" should have here another meaning which very frequently belongs to it, and should be rendered "sea," referring to the well-known sea of Chinnereth, or Gennesaret. This interpretation would agree very happily with the

actual boundaries of Naphtali upon the map; for by far the greater portion of this famous lake belonged to the tribe, and its southern border stretched in a right line westward from the sea until it met the frontier of Asher's lot. The most ancient Jewish interpreters adopt this explanation of the blessing, and point out how well the appearance and resources of Naphtali's portion justify the enthusiastic language of congratulation which Moses has employed. In the days when they wrote, the plain of Gennesaret and the great inland district of Galilee which stretched northward to the roots of Lebanon, were the most populous and flourishing parts of Palestine. The firstfruits were brought to the temple at Jerusalem from Mount Naphtali before they were ripe for gathering anywhere else; so that the men of this tribe were always the first to receive the benediction of Jehovah's priests upon each new harvest. Solomon drew from this same region the largest supplies of food for the expensive entertainment of his court; and in David's time, Naphtali, with Zebulun's aid, was able to feast all Israel abundantly for three days with stores which they brought up to Hebron "on asses, and on camels, and on mules, and on oxen." This was an ample fulfilment in temporal things of the blessing which Moses pronounced upon the tribe. But there is a passage in Isaiah (Isa. ix. 1, 2; comp. Matt. iv. 1) which seems to intimate that there was a hidden spiritual reference in the lavish outpouring of "favour" from the Lord of which Naphtali is here assured. The firstfruits of Messiah's ministry were to be vouchsafed to this same highly-favoured region, a city of which, Capernaum, was indeed chosen by the Lord Jesus as His dwelling-place for one whole "acceptable year." Too little, indeed, did the men of Galilee understand their high privilege; and though they might have been satiated with the spiritual blessings which were thus brought to their door, they suffered the day of visitation to pass by them unused. Therefore the failure of their blessing in its highest sense serves now as a warning to the men who have received still better promises from God through Christ. Many of these are ready to boast that they are "full," and that they "reign as kings," being "rich, and increased with goods, and in need of nothing"; yet is there only one substantial ground on which to build these confident professions. In Christ are hid all treasures of spiritual blessing. He who has Christ is more than satisfied, but he who rejects Christ, or who lets Christ dwell near him unrecognised and unappropriated in His great salvation, is empty and beggared, though all riches of corn and wine may be increased to him (1 Cor. iii. 21-23, iv. 8; Rev. iii. 17-20). (*T. G. Rooke, B.A.*)

Ver. 24, 25. **Let Asher be blessed.**—*Asher*:—"Asher" signifies "happiness," or "prosperity," and was given by Leah to the son of her handmaid Zilpah, in token of the joy which this new gift of God had brought to her wounded heart (Gen. xxx. 13). In this blessing of Moses there is manifestly a play upon the name thus given. It is treated as a good and true omen concerning Asher's temporal lot. The next line, "Let him dip his feet in oil," is a prediction of the exceeding richness and fertility of Asher's territory in the promised land. Jacob had already foretold the same thing in his dying prophecy (Gen. xlix. 20). Fatness is to an Oriental the quality which chiefly recommends any viand. Olive oil, "butter of kine," and the animal fat which is lodged in the curiously overgrown tail of a Syrian sheep, are to this day the peculiar dainties of Eastern cookery, and all of these were produced in abundance on the land which fell by lot to this favoured tribe (Deut. viii. 7-9). The figure by which Asher is here said to "dip his foot in oil" is a familiar Eastern idiom to describe the overflowing abundance of all these natural productions of the soil. Job uses it in precisely the same way (Job xxix. 6). The fourth line of the blessing is certainly meant to be parallel with the third line in its reference to some natural feature of the territory reserved for Asher in Canaan; but the exact force of the reference is still a matter of dispute amongst the learned. Some would read the line as it stands in the margin: "Under thy shoes shall be iron and brass (*i.e.* copper)"; and this would be a perfectly true description of the mineral wealth of a part of the mountain range which Asher ought to have occupied, but which he abandoned to the Zidonians, who very diligently dug out the metals above named from their subterranean veins. Moses had noted this feature of the soil of Canaan (Deut. viii. 9). But in all likelihood the notion of "shoes" is quite foreign to the true interpretation of this part of the blessing; and the Hebrew word which suggested it alike to the Septuagint and English translators should properly be rendered "thy bars," or, "thy bolts." Here, again, we find a very graphic poetical description of Asher's lot in the promised land. His boundary is traced on its

landward side by strongly-marked mountain ridges; and on the west these barriers run out into the sea in successive capes, that resemble the traverses of some titanic fortification, and which are as rugged and ironbound in aspect as the inland region which they protect is smiling and soft. If this allusion be recognised in Moses' blessing, the intention will plainly be to suggest the security of Asher in the portion which God was about to bestow upon him. There he should be fenced in, as it were, by bolts of iron and bars of brass, which no envious foe should be able to break through with hostile or thievish intent. This interpretation of the fourth line in the blessing would almost lead us to prefer the following amongst the many renderings that have been given of the fifth line: "According to thy life shall be thy rest"; that is, Asher's repose from warlike labours and alarms should continue as long as his tribal existence. But the associations which long attached to the rendering as given in the English Bible will probably make most readers reluctant to give up the thought which many a sermon and hymn will have endeared and familiarised: "As thy days shall be thy strength"—that is, the strength of him whom God favours shall always be in proportion to his need (1 Cor. x. 13; 2 Cor. xii. 9). One could wish that the actual history of Asher furnished a happy comment upon, and illustration of, his blessing as thus interpreted; but in truth the comparison of prophetic poetry and prosaic fact in this particular instance is full of suggestive disappointment. Asher did dwell securely for a certain period within his mountain barriers, and his sons seem to have enjoyed a long season of material prosperity; but this was not through their trust in Divine protection, but through their own subtle worldly policy, which involved, alas, the faithless surrender of their highest duty to God. The men of Asher deemed it too hard a task to drive out the Phœnicians and Canaanites whom they found in possession of the strong cities and fat valleys of their portion. God would indeed have helped them utterly to exterminate their heathen rivals; but they preferred to make a cowardly truce and compromise, by virtue of which they dwelt peaceably "among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land" (Judg. i. 31, 32). Nor did Asher from that time forward ever redeem the shame of his dishonourable compact with foes whom he ought to have destroyed. The very name of the tribe almost vanishes from the page of Hebrew history, and it had better have been absent altogether than conspicuous as it is in the bitterly scornful allusion of Deborah (Judg. v. 17, 18). Yet the name of Asher is not, like that of Dan, blotted with hopeless ignominy from the list of God's redeemed. A woman of this tribe, Anna, the centenarian prophetess of Jerusalem, was among the first to hail the infant Saviour, and to give thanks for His salvation unto the Lord (Luke ii. 36–38). Though the majority of the tribe perished through worldly conformity and ease-loving apostasy from the covenant of God, yet the blessing of Moses upon Asher was not wholly forfeited nor unfulfilled. Let the lesson of this story be for our instruction in the dangers of temporal prosperity, even for the Lord's elect, and no less in the meaning of those reverses of earthly fortune by which the backslidings of the chosen people are continually chastised. When Asher forgets the covenant of his Redeemer, "the Lord, the Lord of hosts, will send among his fat ones leanness, and under his glory He will kindle a burning like the burning of a fire"; but even in those experiences of well-deserved correction and adversity, the soul that God has favoured and pronounced "blessed" shall not be abandoned to utter ruin. As his days, so his strength shall be (Isa. x. 16–21). (*T. G. Rooke, B.A.*)

Ver. 25. **Thy shoes shall be iron and brass.**—*Shoes of iron, and strength sufficient: a new year's promise:*—I. THY SHOES SHALL BE IRON AND BRASS. The passage has several translations, which may serve as divisions in opening up the meaning. The Lord's promises are true in every sense they will fairly bear. A generous man will allow the widest interpretation of his words, and so will the infinitely gracious God. 1. That Asher should have treasures under his feet—mines of iron and copper. (1) The Word of God has mines in it. There are treasures upon the surface of the Word which we may pick up very readily: even the casual reader will find himself able to understand the simplicities and elements of the Gospel; but the Word of God yields most to the digger. We waste too much time upon the pretentious, poverty-stricken literature of the age; and some, even Christians, are more taken up with works of fiction than they are with this great Book of everlasting fact. Remember that God has given to us to have treasures under our feet; but do not so despise His gifts as to leave the mines of revelation unexplored. (2) You will find these treasures not only in the Word of God, but everywhere in the providence of God, if

you will consider the ways of the Lord, and believe that God is everywhere at work. 2. R.V.: "Thy bars shall be iron and brass"—there shall be protection around him. Peace from all assaults, safety under all alarms, shutting in from all attacks—this is a priceless boon. 3. He shall have protection for his feet. It is no objection that shoes of iron and brass would be unusual, for the protection which God gives His people *is* unusual. Theirs are no common equipments, for they are no common people. You have peculiar difficulties, you are a peculiar people, you traverse a peculiar road, you have a peculiar God to trust in, and you may therefore find a peculiar consolation in a peculiar promise. We want to have shoes of iron and brass—(1) To travel with. We are pilgrims, journeying along a road which has not been smoothed by a steam-roller, but remains rough and rugged as the path to an Alpine summit. (2) To fight with. These shoes are meant for trampling upon enemies. (3) For climbing. We ought not to be satisfied till we reach the highest places of knowledge, experience, and practice. (4) For perseverance. Since the Lord has shod you in this fashion, it is a warning to you that the way is long and weary, and the end not by-and-by. II. AS THY DAY, SO SHALL THY STRENGTH BE. The words carry a tacit hint, that we have no strength of our own, but have need of strength from above. Come down from your self-esteem: stoop from the notion of your own natural ability: divest yourself of the foolish idea that you can do anything in and of yourself, and come now to the Strong for strength, and ask your Lord to fulfil this promise in your experience. 1. Strength to abide through days. Not for to-day only, but for to-morrow, and for every day as every day shall come. 2. Strength to be given daily. A day's burden and a day's help, a day's sorrow and a day's comfort. A storage of grace would turn into self-sufficiency. 3. It will be given to us proportionately. A day of little service, little strength; a day of little suffering, little strength; but in a tremendous day—a day that needs thee to play the Samson—thou shalt have Samson's strength. 4. Our strength continuing as our days continue. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Iron shoes for rough roads:*—Turning this old-time word into a promise for ourselves as we set out on a new year's journey, it suggests to us that we may have some rugged pieces of road before we get to the end. If not, what need would there be for iron shoes? If the way is to be flower-strewn, velvet slippers would do. No one can live nobly and worthily without struggle, battle, self-denial. Then we may have special trials or sorrows this year. We shall need our iron shoes. It is said there was a compensation in Asher's rough portion; his rugged hills had iron in them. This law of compensation runs through all God's distribution of gifts. One man's farm is hilly and hard to till, but deep down beneath its ruggedness, buried away in its rocks, are rich minerals. One person's lot in life is hard, with peculiar obstacles, difficulties, and trials, but hidden in it there are compensations of some kind. One young man is reared in affluence and luxury. He never experiences want or self-denial, never has to struggle with obstacles or adverse circumstances. Another is reared in poverty, and has to toil and suffer privation. The latter seems to have scarcely an equal chance in life. But we all know where the compensation lies in this case. It is in such circumstances that grand manhood is grown, while, too often, the petted, pampered sons of luxury come to nothing. In the rugged hills of toil and hardship life's finest gold is found. Shoes of iron are promised only to those who are to have rugged roads. There is a comforting suggestion here for all who find peculiar hardness in their life. God will provide for the ruggedness. There is a most delicate connection between earth and heaven's grace. There is yet another suggestion in this old-time promise. The Divine blessing for every experience is folded up in the experience itself, and will not be received in advance. The iron shoes would not be given until the rough roads were reached. There was no need for them until then, and besides, the iron to make them was in the rugged hills themselves, and could not be gotten until the hills were reached. Some people are for ever unwisely testing themselves by questions like these: "Could I endure sore bereavement? Have I grace enough to bow in submission to God if He were to take away my dearest treasure? Or could I meet death without fear?" Such questions are unwise, because there is no promise of grace to meet trial when there is no trial to be met. Grace for dying is nowhere promised while death is yet far off and while one's duty is to live. There is a story of a shipwreck which yields an illustration that comes in just here. Crew and passengers had to leave the broken vessel and take to the boats. The sea was rough, and great care in rowing and steering was necessary, in order to guard the heavy-laden boats, not from the ordinary waves, which they rode over easily, but from the great cross-seas. Night was approaching, and the hearts of all sank as

they asked what they should do in the darkness when they would no longer be able to see these terrible waves. To their great joy, however, when it grew dark, they discovered that they were in phosphorescent waters, and that each dangerous wave rolled up crested with light which made it as clearly visible as if it were midday. So it is that life's dreaded experiences when we meet them carry in themselves the light which takes away the peril and the terror. The night of sorrow comes with its own lamp of comfort. The hour of weakness brings its secret of strength. When we come to the hard, rough, steep path we find iron for shoes. "How can I get shoes, and where?" one asks. Do you remember about Christ's feet, that they were pierced with nails? Why was it? That we might have shoes to wear on our feet, and that they might not be cut and torn on the way. Dropping all figure, we cannot get along on this year's pilgrimage without Christ; but having Christ, we shall be ready for anything that the year may bring to us. (*J. R. Miller, D.D.*)

And as thy days, so shall thy strength be.—*Strength according to the days*:—1. It is not the design of these words to suppress forelooking and foreplanning in secular things. 2. It is not designed to teach men that God will maintain a providence of miracles in their behalf. 3. We cannot know beforehand what help will spring up from our circumstances. 4. Anxiety for the future is labour lost. 5. Application—(1) To those who follow conscience against their worldly interests. (2) To those who wish to reform from evil habits, but fear they will not be able to hold out. (3) To those who look wistfully on a Christian life, but doubt if they would be able to maintain it. (4) To those who are troubled exceedingly in regard to expected events. (5) To those who are troubled about relative afflictions. (6) To those who are troubled about their own death. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Thy strength as thy days*:—What a picture of boundless variety is called up by "thy days"—even the days of a single life! Who shall delineate the manifold, chequered, ever-changing lights and shadows of the days of man? Yet amidst all the varieties, there is a general unity. There are great interests that are common to all lives, and which bind up in unity all the days of each individual life, weaving all its parts into one texture. This opens to us a plain distinction among the days. "Thy days" may be viewed collectively, as the sum of thy life—all the days of thy life, —or they may be viewed distributively, as special days, distinctive days. I. THY DAYS ARE ALL THE DAYS OF THY LIFE, HAVING GREAT RELATIONS, PURPOSES, OR INTERESTS, TO WHICH THE STRENGTH IS ADJUSTED. 1. Thy days are for salvation, and thy strength shall be proportioned to thy days' task. The days of life are the steps of the ladder by which we are to ascend the skies. 2. Thy days are for spiritual progress, and thy strength shall be proportioned to the task. Days are given to us on earth to educate us for heaven, for the acquisition of suitable excellence. Let us therefore go on to larger acquisitions. We shall never have cause, like the world's conqueror, to sit down and weep that there are no more worlds to conquer. 3. Thy days are for service and duty, and thy strength shall be proportioned to thy service. II. THY DAYS ARE SPECIAL, DISTINCTIVE DAYS, DEMANDING SPECIAL STRENGTH. Thy days may be special, as affected by events which can only be met by strength from the Fountain of strength, and the strength shall be proportioned to the emergency. That is not an assurance which man of himself could give. For life is so full of startling events, that we dare not, from all we see and experience, promise ourselves strength to cope with all possible events. No doubt some lives, in comparison of others, are tranquil to outward appearance, without almost any change, like some mountain tarn, now bright, now clouded, but showing the same features through all the seasons; and others are like the ocean, never resting, often tossed by terrible tempests; but to all the promise applies—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." 1. There are days dark with care, not merely selfish, but generous care. "Cast thy burden on the Lord," &c. 2. Then there are days dark with sorrow, when a man must sit alone under God's hand. And the strength is not mere endurance. There is a kind of dogged endurance of all the trials and ills of life, to which a man can accustom himself. He may not die under them, but he comes out of them with no increased capacity for action, for comfort, for hope. But we cannot suppose the Divine promise fulfilled in such a case. The strength promised will not only turn off the edge of calamities, but will make us more than conquerors over them, and turn their power into a tributary to our own enlargement. 3. Last of all, there is the day of our death. Not only in stormy seas or devouring fires does it need strength to master one's self, but on the most ordinary commonplace deathbed. Ah! it needs God-given strength to enable the father or mother dying to leave their little helpless

children in a cold and wicked world. (*J. Riddell.*) *Strength proportioned to the day*:—I. TO WHOM IS THIS PROMISE MADE? Some of the promises in God's Word are of universal application (Gen. iii. 15, viii. 21, 22, xxii. 17, 18). But there are promises which are special, and have regard to separate and distinct classes of persons: *e.g.*, to the wicked (Isa. lv. 7); to the poor (Isa. xli. 17); to the penitent (Psa. li. 17); to the young (Prov. viii. 17); to the aged (Isa. xlvi. 4). In the text, Asher is the person to whom the promise is made; and if your character is similar to that of Asher, the promise is to you. 1. Asher received Christ, and believed the oracles of God. Do you answer to this description? 2. Asher attended the Divine ordinances. God will strengthen us in His sanctuary. It is in the Lord's house, on the Lord's day, that we receive light, instruction, and vigour. 3. Asher must have been diligent in his proper vocation; else he would not have dipped his foot in oil. We are to be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, actively serving our generation, according to the will of God. 4. Asher desired the lot of the inheritance. He looked for his place in the promised Canaan. So we are to look for our place in the inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. There is eternal life in the promise. II. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS PROMISE? There are ordinary days, which have in them no signal event, no remarkable calamity or disaster, no striking prosperity or success. They roll round in the even tenor of their course. Perhaps the great majority of our days are of this character. But in all the ordinary days, have we not found corresponding resources of help, and strength, and mercy, and supplies according to our need? There are days of prosperity, and seasons when everything goes well with us. Then, too often, our goodness is like the morning cloud and the early dew. But if even then a man is kept humble and conscious of his responsibility; if he wishes to do good, and is concerned to be a blessing; where all this is accomplished, moral and spiritual resources are supplied according to our day. You may think the difficulty to be deeper in adversity; when the tide ebbs; when there are changes, overturnings, bereavements, desolation, &c. To pass through the rivers, and say, I am not overflown; to pass through the furnace, and say, I am not burned; this is by the secret sustaining hand of the Almighty. If we are humble and patient when He seems severe, it is by the grace of God. There may be days of personal temptation, when the adversary cometh in like a flood. The dark and evil day may arrive, when we have to stand in the firmness of opposition. If we triumph, it is by the grace of God. There are days of duty, which seem to be beyond our strength; as when the scholar has to pass through his examination; or when the minister ascends the pulpit and asks, "Who is sufficient for these things?" III. WHERE IS OUR SECURITY? 1. It is in the power and faithfulness of God. Remember that one of His titles is, "The Strength of Israel"; then it follows, "He will not lie";—here is power and faithfulness in its loftiest form. God is able to keep us from falling; and He has sworn by two immutable things, that we might have strong consolation. No conjuncture shall arise, in which the strength of heaven shall not make us victorious. 2. We are also assured by the word and sympathy of Jesus. "The promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus"; that is, they are ratified in His blood, and established in His mediation; and He is a High Priest touched with the feeling of our infirmities. 3. There is our own experience in the past. Hitherto the Lord hath helped us. IV. IF WE RECEIVE THE PROMISE OF OUR TEXT, WHAT SHOULD BE THE EFFECT UPON OUR LIVES? We answer, Dismiss all anxieties and fears. (*J. Stratten.*) *Strength as the days*:—I. WHAT THIS PROMISE IS NOT. 1. It has no direct relation to the past—no power of retrieval and recovery. Negligence *is* negligence, and no spiritual alchemy can change it into diligence. This only may be done: precious lessons may be drawn out of that which has been; and thus the moral continuity of the results of what was evil may be in a measure interrupted, and good drawn out of the evil. 2. It does not bring us into any immediate connection with the future. No doubt there is what may be called grace in stock; in capital if you will, in the existence and operation of gracious principles and dispositions. You may reckon with certainty on getting large interest from these. But even that is on condition of continued faithfulness, and in order to secure that God gives by the day. It is only in the day itself—in the dispensation—in the duty—in the melting of the heart-grief; in the bitterness of the disappointment, or in the fierceness of the temptation, that you can fully know what strength you will require—and only then, in the nature of things, can you receive it. II. WHAT THIS PROMISE IS. You are going some distance to a banquet. It will, of course, be pleasant if the sun shines by the way,

and all the world looks fair. But if the clouds hang heavy, and the air is cold, you will go to the banquet just the same. You are going across the sea to claim a property, and you are to sail in a ship that cannot sink. It will be pleasant if there is only the ripple of quiet waters from the prow of the ship, and the flashing of the sunlight from the scarcely-crested waves. But if even there should come the roar and burly of the storm, and the dash of the angry waves against the sides of the vessel, until the very masts are white with spray, you will none the less, and probably even none the later, see and claim your good estate. If a man lives well each day—die well he must, whatever his feeling be. Death will be to him a very chariot of fire to take him to the banquet of heaven; or a ship that turns back for no weather, nor ever strikes sail till she enters the harbour. Lessons—1. Do not be managing and masterful over circumstances and providence; hammering and hewing at the "days" to compel them into a certain shape. Take them as they come; for they come as they are sent, arrayed darkly or brightly by the hand of God, and filled with such elements as His wisdom and goodness have put into them. 2. Do not be timorous and fearful and full of anxious care; you see how little need there is for it, how well you are provided for! 3. Such a subject, and such a promise is surely a call to diligence. For here you see is an unlimited promise of strength—strength to match the "days"—that is God's side of it. Our part is to try to raise the "days" to match the strength. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *As thy days, so shall thy strength be:*—When we have seen the hills clad with verdure to their summit, and the seas laving their base with a silver glory; when we have stretched our eye far away, and have seen the widening prospect full of loveliness and beauty, we have felt sad that the sunlight should ever set upon such a scene, and that so much beauty should be shrouded in the oblivion of darkness. But how much reason have we to bless God for nights! for if it were not for nights how much of beauty never would be discovered. Night seems to be the great friend of the stars: they must be all unseen by eyes of men, were they not set in the foil of darkness. It is even so with winter. Much of God's marvellous miracles of hoar frost must have been hidden from us, if it had not been for the cold chill of winter, which, when it robs us of one beauty, gives us another,—when it takes away the emerald of verdure, it gives us the diamond of ice—when it casts from us the bright rubies of the flowers, it gives us the fair, white ermine of snow. Well now, translate those two ideas, and you will see why it is that even our sin, our lost and ruined estate, has been made the means, in the hand of God, of manifesting to us the excellencies of His character. If you and I had been without trouble, we never could have had such a promise as this given to us—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." I. THE SELF-WEAKNESS HINTED AT IN THE TEXT. To keep to my figure, if this promise be like a star, you know there is no seeing the stars in the daytime when we stand here upon the upper land; we must go down a deep well, and then we shall be able to discover them. Now, as this is daytime with our hearts, it will be necessary for us to go down the deep well of old recollections of our past trials. We must first get a good fair idea of the great depth of our own weakness, before we shall be able to behold the brightness of this rich and exceeding precious promise. 1. Ye children of God, have ye not proved your own weakness in the day of duty? The Lord has spoken to you, and He has said, "Son of man, run, and do such and such a thing which I bid thee"; and you have gone to do it, but as you have been upon your way, a sense of great responsibility has bowed you down, and you have been ready to turn back even at the outset, and to cry, "Send by whomsoever Thou wilt send, but not by me." Reinforced by strength, you have gone to the duty, but while performing it, you have at times felt your hands hanging exceeding heavy, and you have had to look up many a time and cry, "O Lord, give me more strength, for without Thy strength this work must be unaccomplished; I cannot perform it myself." And when the work has been done, and you have looked back upon it, you have either been filled with amazement that it should have been done at all by so poor and weak a worm as yourself, or else you have been overcome with horror because you have been afraid the work was marred, like the vessel on the potter's wheel, by reason of your own want of skilfulness. 2. We prove our weakness, perhaps more visibly, when we come into the day of suffering. There it is that we are weak indeed. Ah! people of God, it is one thing to talk about the furnace; it is another thing to be in it. It is one thing to look at the doctor's knife, but quite another thing to feel it. That man has never been sick who does not know his weakness, his want of patience, and of endurance. 3. Again, there is another thing which will very soon prove our weakness, if

neither duty nor suffering will do it—namely, progress. Let any of you try to grow in grace, and seek to run the heavenly race, and make a little progress, and you will soon find, in such a slippery road as that which we have to travel, that it is very hard to go one step forward, though remarkably easy to go a great many steps backward. 4. See what thou art in temptation. I have seen a tree in the forest that seemed to stand fast like a rock; I have stood beneath its wide-spreading branches, and have sought to shake its trunk, to see if I could, but it stood immovable. The sun shone upon it, and the rain descended, and many a winter's frost sprinkled its boughs with snow, but it still stood fast and firm. But one night there came a howling wind which swept through the forest, and the tree that seemed to stand so fast lay stretched along the ground, its gaunt arms which once were lifted up to heaven lying hopelessly broken, and the trunk snapped in twain. And so have I seen many a professor strong and mighty, and nothing seemed to move him; but I have seen the wind of persecution and temptation come against him, and I have heard him creak with murmuring, and at last have seen him break in apostasy, and he has lain along the ground a mournful specimen of what every man must become who maketh not the Lord his strength, and who relieth not upon the Most High. We have all our tender points. When Thetis dipped Achilles in the Styx, you remember she held him by the heel; he was made invulnerable wherever the water touched him, but his heel not being covered with the water, was vulnerable, and there Paris shot his arrow, and he died. It is even so with us. We may think that we are covered with virtue till we are totally invulnerable, but we have a heel somewhere; there is a place where the arrow of the devil can make way: hence the absolute necessity of taking to ourselves "the whole armour of God," so that there may not be a solitary joint in the harness that shall be unprotected against the arrows of the devil. II. THE GREAT PROMISE—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." 1. This is a well-guaranteed promise. There is enough bullion in the vaults of Omnipotence to pay off every bill that ever shall be drawn by the faith of man or the promises of God. Now look at this one—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." God has a strong reserve with which to pay off this promise; for is He not Himself omnipotent, able to do all things? Remember what He did in the days of old, in the former generations. Remember how He spake, and it was done; how He commanded, and it stood fast. He hangeth the world upon nothing; He fixed the pillars of heaven in silver sockets of light, and thereon He hung the golden lamps, the sun and the moon; and shall He that did all this be unable to support His children? Shall He be unfaithful to His word for want of power in His arm or strength in His will? Remember again, thy God, who has promised to be thy strength, is the God who upholdeth all things by the word of His hand. Who feedeth the ravens? Who supplies the lions? Doth not He do it? And how? He openeth His hand and supplieth the want of every living thing. He has to do nothing more than simply to open His hand. Who is it that restrains the tempest? Doth not He say that He rides upon the wings of the wind, that He maketh the clouds His chariots, and holds the water in the hollow of His hand? Shall He fail thee? 2. It is a limited promise. "What!" says one, "limited! Why it says, 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.'" Ay, it is limited. I know it is unlimited in our troubles, but still it is limited. First, it says our strength is to be as our days are; it does not say our strength is to be as our desires are. Oh! how often have we thought, "How I wish I were as strong as So-and-so"—one who had a great deal of faith. Ah! but then you would have rather more faith than you wanted; and what would be the good of that? "Still," says one, "if I had faith like So-and-so, I think I should do wonders." Yes, but you would get the glory of them. God does not want you to do wonders. That is reserved for God, not for you,—"He only doeth wondrous things." Once more, it does not say, our strength shall be as our fears. God often leaves us to shift alone with our fears,—never with our troubles. The promise is "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "When your vessel gets empty then will I fill it; I will not give you any extra, over and above. When you are weak then I will make you strong; but I will not give you any extra strength to lay by: strength enough to bear your sufferings, and to do your duty; but no strength to play at matches with your brethren and sisters in order to get the glory to yourselves." Then, again, there is another limit. It says, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." It does not say, "as thy weeks," or "months," but "as thy days." You are not going to have Monday's grace given you on a Sunday, nor Tuesday's grace on a Monday. No; "as thy days, so shall thy strength be." 3. What an extensive promise this

is! "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Some days are very little things; in our pocket-book we have very little to put down, for there was nothing done of any importance. But some days are very big days. Ah! I have known a big day—a day of great duties, when great things had to be done for God—too great, it seemed, for one man to do; and when great duty was but half done there came great trouble, such as my poor heart had never felt before. Oh! what a great day it was! there was a night of lamentation in this place, and the cry of weeping, and of mourning, and of death. Ah! but blessed be God's name, though the day was big with tempest, and though it swelled with horror, yet as that day was, so was God's strength. 4. What a varying promise it is! I do not mean that the promise varies, but adapts itself to all our changes. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Here is a fine sunshiny morning; all the world is laughing; everything looks glad; the birds are singing, the trees seem to be all alive with music. "My strength shall be as my day is," says the pilgrim. Ah! pilgrim, there is a little black cloud gathering. Soon it increases; the flash of lightning wounds the heaven, and it begins to bleed in showers. Pilgrim, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." The birds have done singing, and the world has done laughing; but "as thy days, so shall thy strength be." Now the dark night comes on, and another day approaches—a day of tempest, and whirlwind, and storm. Dost thou tremble, pilgrim?—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." 5. What a long promise this is! You may live till you are never so old, but this promise will outlive you. When thou comest into the depths of the river Jordan, "as thy days, so shall thy strength be"; thou shalt have confidence to face the last grim tyrant, and grace to smile even in the jaws of the grave. And when thou shalt rise again in the terrible morning of the resurrection, "as thy days, so shall thy strength be"; though the earth be reeling with dismay thou shalt know no fear; though the heavens are tottering with confusion thou shalt know no trouble. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." And when thou shalt see God face to face, though thy weakness were enough to make thee die, thou shalt have strength to bear the beatific vision: thou shalt see Him face to face, and thou shalt live; thou shalt lie in the bosom of thy God; immortalised and made full of strength, thou shalt be able to bear even the brightness of the Most High. III. What INFERENCE shall I draw except this? Children of the living God, be rid of your doubts, be rid of your trouble and your fear. Young Christians, do not be afraid to set forward on the heavenly race. You bashful Christians, that, like Nicodemus, are ashamed to come out and make an open profession, don't be afraid: "As your day is, so shall your strength be." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Kept of God*:—1. If God prosper His people He will still keep them humble. He ever plants some thorn in the flesh, sends some messenger of Satan to buffet them, that thus they may be kept mindful that the present life is not their home, nor the present enjoyments their heaven. An unpolished partner, or a vicious son, or a sickly constitution, or some other unpropitious circumstance, has ever preyed upon the spirits of the prosperous believer. And these mixtures of bitter ingredients in his cup of blessings, have kept him from selling his birthright for the perishing and contemptible objects of sense. 2. If God afflict His people, He will bestow those comforts which will keep them happy, and make them thankful. Hope is a grace which God is as much resolved to cherish in His people as humility. Hence, if He pain them, He is sure to preserve them from despair. While there is the deep conviction that His strokes are fewer than their crimes, and lighter than their guilt, there, too, is clear discovery of a parental hand which wields the rod, and a parental eye which smiles through every cloud that covers them. Remarks—1. How safe and happy are the Lord's people. They are not exempt from trials, but are permitted to know that their strength shall be proportioned to their burdens. 2. Their present strength and courage do not decide how they shall appear in the hour of conflict, or what shall be their future condition. It is absurd that the believer should yield his hope because he does not find himself prepared for trials which have not yet come. He expects, in this case, a mercy never promised. God will prepare him when He tries him, will give him strength when He calls him to the onset. Our strength is not to be greater than our day, but equal. Should it be greater, we should become proud; should it be less, we should be discouraged. If, then, we find our strength equal to our present conflicts, we have nothing to fear. Our courage will kindle as the battle thickens, and our strength increase as we march on to the more desperate onset. If our present strength is sufficient for our present purpose, this is all that God has promised, and is enough. Here is the test by which we are to try our

character. Do we submit cheerfully to present disappointments, and exhibit a right temper under all the present little corroding incidents of this conflicting world? (*D. A. Clark.*) *Seasonable strength*:—Dr. Doddridge was one day walking, much depressed, his very heart desolate within him. But, says he, passing a cottage door open, I happened at that moment to hear a child reading, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." The effect on my mind was indescribable. It was like life from the dead. And what does this word say to us? "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." There is strength bodily. The continuance of this is a mercy. How easily can it be crushed, so that we may be made to possess months of vanity; and endure wearisome nights; and feel every exertion a difficulty, and every duty a burden! But there is strength spiritual. This is very distinguishable from the former, and often found separate from it. The Lord does not always give His people a giant's arm, or an iron sinew; but His strength is made perfect in weakness. This is the strength here spoken of. For two purposes His people will find it necessary: service and suffering. Every Christian has a course of duty common to him as a man; which is, to provide for his outward wants, and the support of his family. And this is done by labour, in which he is required not to be slothful. But there is a series of duties pertaining more immediately to him in his religious character; to believe, to pray, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present evil world. Suffering is commonly connected with service in the Divine life. It was so invariably in the beginning of the Gospel. Then it was deemed impossible for any one to live godly in Christ Jesus and not suffer persecution. Therefore, no sooner was Paul converted, than he was told how great things he had to suffer. As real religion is always the same, some degree of the same opposition may be always looked for; and the hatred of the world will be shown as far as they have liberty to express it, and are not restrained by law, or the usages of civilised life. But when the Christian has rest from such trials as these, God can subserve their purpose, by personal and relative afflictions, which are often severer than even the endurings of a martyr. They are called chastenings and rebukes, which he is neither to despise, nor faint under. Now the prospect of all this, when he looks forward into life, is enough to awaken the Christian's anxiety; and nothing can effectually encourage him but the discovery of strength equal to his exigencies. And this he finds not in himself. The natural man has no sensibility of his weakness, because he is not earnestly engaged in those applications which require spiritual strength. The Christian is. He knows that he is as destitute of strength as he is of righteousness. He feels himself entirely insufficient for all the duties and trials of the Divine life. And the consciousness, instead of diminishing, grows with the experience of every day. And he need not be afraid of this. Rather, let him cherish it; for when he is weak, then is he strong. What he wants is provided and ensured by the promise of a God who cannot lie. (*W. Jay.*) *Strength growing with days*:—We generally hear these words misquoted, and put into the shape, "As thy day, so shall thy strength be," as if the substance of the promise was strength proportioned to the special exigencies of each movement. That is very beautiful, and may well be deduced from the words, but it fails to take into account that little "s" at the end of the word "day," which obliges us to understand the promise as meaning: "As thy days" (increase) "thy strength shall" (increase). The older a Christian is, the stronger Christian he ought to be. Then there is another thing to be noted, and that is that in their original connection the words are a promise, not to an individual, but to a community. It is the last of the series of promises to the various tribes of Israel which occupy this chapter of Deuteronomy. I. INCREASE OF STRENGTH WITH INCREASE OF AGE. In its application to the individual life. Here is a promise dead in the teeth of nature, because all living things that belong to the material universe come under the law of growth, which ultimately passes into decay. The same sea of Time that flings up its spoils on some shores, and increases the land, when you get round the promontory is eating away the coast. And so, the years, which at first bring us strength, very soon begin to reverse their action. Nor is it only the physical life which dwindles as the days increase, but also much of the inner life is modified by the external, so that the old man's memory becomes less retentive, and the old man's impulses less strong. But "as thy days, so shall thy strength be," and when the eyes become dim, it is possible that they may be longer-sighted, and see the things that are, just in proportion as they begin to fail to see "the things that do appear." They may be able to discern more clearly what is above them, as they see less clearly the things on their own level. It is possible

that as the days increase, and the strength drawn from externals decreases, the power of the Spirit, the maturity of the soul, the insight into the Eternal, the Christ-likeness and assimilation to that which we more clearly behold, as the clouds thin themselves away, may all increase. And so, in all that makes the Christian life, it is possible that there shall be increase with the increase of our days. Why so? Just because the Christian life is a supernatural life that has nothing to do with dependence on physical conditions. If it were not so, if my Christian vitality stood exactly on the same plane as my vigour of intellect, my retentiveness of memory, my energy of purpose, or other capacities, which make up the non-material part of my being—the "soul," as people call it—then it, too, would share in the decrepitude and decay. We sometimes see people, in the measure in which their physical strength decays, drawing into themselves more and more of that supernatural and Divine strength which has nothing to do with the material or the external. Is that not a reason for believing that that life which thus obeys a law, as I said, dead in the teeth of nature, is a life altogether independent of this bodily existence, and our connection with this material universe? There is no better proof of immortality, if you except the fact of the resurrection, than the way in which, right up to the edge of the grave, and even when a man's foot is on its threshold, there burns in his soul, brighter and brightening as the darkness falls, all that makes the Christian life. But if this contradiction of nature by a supernatural life is to be ours, as it may be, let us not forget that this promise, like all God's promises, is a promise with conditions. They are not stated here, but we know them. "The youths shall faint and be weary; the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength"—they, and only they. God does not give gifts to men who He sees are wasting them, and the gift of growing strength that is promised to us is strength that is to be used for His service. Has my strength grown with years? Let me say one word, and it shall be but a word, about the other application of this great thought. As I said, it is a tribal benediction, and all the benedictions of all the tribes have passed over to the great community of New Testament believers. The Church is heir to the Divine promise that as its days increase its strength increases. And though, of course, there have been fearful instances to the contrary, and churches, like other institutions, are apt to stiffen and decay in their old age, yet the only institution in the world that has lasted so long, and kept up so much vitality through centuries, is the Christian Church. Why? If there were not a supernatural life in it, it would have been dead long ago. "As the Church's days increase, so will her strength grow." But the promise of our text is susceptible of another application, though that is not its true signification, and may be taken as meaning the necessities of the days shall determine the nature of the strength given. And that adaptation of supply to need will be true in many directions. It will be true if we consider the tasks imposed by each succeeding day. For God never sets His servants to work or warfare beyond the limits of the strength which they have or may have, if they will. Again, this adaptation will shape the day's strength according to the day's wants. The "matter of a day in its day" will be given. There will be daily bread for daily hunger. God makes no mistakes, sending furs for June or muslin for December. His gifts are never belated, nor arrive after the need for them is past. That adaptation takes effect for us on the same condition as the increase does, of which we have been speaking, namely, on condition of our waiting on God. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Equipped:—I. MAN'S EMERGENCY. 1. Man's journey is along a rough and thorny road. 2. Conscious experience of wear and tear: "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Fresh obligations of unfolding life, and hence increasing pressure. At first we only dream of bliss and peace from religion; at length we realise in it fidelity, obligations, responsibilities, sacrifices, conflicts. How real to every true man is the "wear and tear" of a religious life, the necessary exhaustion from duty. When the business and the bustle of life come in conflict with religion and pious reflection. When the conflict for principle leaves us consciously weaker, even if making us truer at heart. No conflict, however its success and triumph, without reaction. Such man's emergency. II. GOD'S PROVISION. 1. For the rough journey, the shoes of iron and brass. Equipment proportionate to need. Thus in illustrations of the Christian life: "Conflict"—armour (Eph. vi. 12–17). "Duty"—conviction (2 Cor. i. 12). "Journey"—"shoes of iron and brass" (Deut. viii. 2–4). With the same and yet higher provision men make against emergency does God provide for His people: The Arctic whaler is built for her voyage, no pleasure yacht for a summer's day. The soldier is equipped for service, not decorated for a

holiday parade. Thus with God for us. Against every rough pebble there is a nail in the shoes of grace. 2. For the "wear and tear"—the supply: "As thy day, so," &c. Note—God's communications of grace never anticipative but always sufficient. Men paralyse their energies in the anticipation of possible emergencies. "What shall I do," says a man, "if so-and-so should happen?" and he forgets how he does now—the once future of anticipated forebodings. God gives not to the heart, unembarrassed by worldly cares and anxieties, and rejoicing in its gladsomeness, the strength for the hour of care and worry that may or may never come to it. God's provisions are economic. Waste has no part in the laws of God's moral government. "As thy days, so," &c. But God's provision is in the presence of man's emergency. God gives us our desires as fully in giving us strength for the rough journey, as in smoothing the way for us and strewing the path with flowers. And more. For the effort of manhood, assisted by grace, results in a bettering of manhood for ourselves; while the interpositions of grace merely—kindly, gracious though they be—leave us as we were before, "afraid of that which is high," and faltering in the presence of difficulties. How a man that has overcome gains confidence. "I have met a trouble before," says he, when trouble lies ahead, "and by God's grace I can meet this one." Results are more from efforts than helps. It is from "the swing of the heavy sledge, week in, week out, from morn to night, that the muscles of the brawny arm are strong as iron bands." And God assures us that the effort of our manhood will have His support. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." (*W. Henderson.*) *Help for the hard places*:—1. Consider the width of the promise—thy days, that is, all thy days. 2. Consider the specificalness of the promise—each one of thy days. 3. Consider the adaptedness of the promise—for every sort of day. For the day of dull routine. For the day of weariness. For the day of disappointment. For the day of sorrow. For the day of difficult duty. For the day of death. 4. Consider the maker of the promise. He makes the promise who knows all our days (Psa. cxxxix. 1–6). He makes the promise who measures our days (Psa. xxxi. 15). He makes the promise who is with us through all the days (Matt. xxviii. 20). Therefore 1. Be sure of a specific and caring Providence. 2. Do not fear. 3. Make alliance with God. (*Homiletic Review.*)

Vers. 26–29. **There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun.**—*The God of Jeshurun*:—Are we to understand this passage as revoking all the threatened judgments previously denounced against Israel? No. But Moses saw, amidst all the rebellion with which Israel as a nation was to be chargeable, and amidst all the reverses which they were consequently to experience, that the true Israel would be preserved, defended, and cared for. That in these words Moses addresses the true Israel, the spiritual seed of Abraham, is evident from the name he gives them—Jeshurun, "upright," or "righteous." He begins by exalting the God of Jeshurun above all other gods; and he does so in language fitted to impress them with a conviction of the utter impotency of the gods of the nations. 1. The description conveys the idea of glorious majesty, absolute sovereignty, power infinitely beyond comprehension or resistance. But while thus reminding them of this view of the Divine character, he introduces it in a connection fitted to awaken confidence. He does not merely tell them that the God of Jeshurun rideth on the heaven, but that He does so as Jeshurun's help; and that if He revealed His own excellence and glory, it was in working out their deliverance, and making bare His holy arm for their protection. "There is none like," &c. What peace should this truth inspire! What patience should it inspire! What confidence should it awaken and keep alive, even in circumstances the most gloomy and perplexing! If it does not produce this effect, must it not be because they are remaining contentedly in doubt whether they have really been justified and accepted with God, or are culpably insensible to the value of their privileges in having all their best interests bound up with the manifestation of His own glory? 2. The security of God's justified people is still further set forth. God is declared to be their refuge, or rather dwelling-place—not a temporary, but a perpetual refuge; and they are reminded that He is the eternal God, unchangeable in His being, and equally unchangeable in His purpose. They might feel at times as if they were altogether unequal to any new conquest over the adversaries which still remained to be subdued; but God Himself was to thrust out the enemy from before them, and to say, "Destroy them." So it is, and has always been, in regard to the spiritual conflict of believers. The Scripture saints, in relating their experience—their fears and hopes, dangers and deliverances,

seasons of depression and times of triumph, painful struggles with temptation and the strength by which they successfully resisted it—employ the very language which might have been appropriately used to describe the conflicts and conquests of Israel in Canaan (Psa. xxvii. 3, 5, xci. 1–4). To all who know anything experimentally of the spiritual warfare of the believer, such language will be not only intelligible, but faithfully descriptive of what they have experienced, and in so far as they have been enabled to contend successfully with the risings of a corrupt nature within, the temptations of a sinful world without, the suggestions of Satan—with everything that would have brought their spiritual interests into jeopardy, everything that would have marred their peace and robbed them of their comfort—and in so far as they can now cherish the good hope of ultimately gaining the victory over all these, their spiritual enemies, it is because they have experienced the faithfulness of this declaration. 3. From this description of the conflict of God's people, Moses proceeds to foretell their final and glorious triumph. "Israel then shall dwell," &c. Viewing this prediction merely as referring to the settlement of Israel in Canaan, it was, in the first instance at least, only partially fulfilled. Israel did not so conquer the land as to dwell either in safety or alone. Through their unbelief, the command, "Destroy," which otherwise would have been accompanied by a Divine power, was not fully carried into effect. But even had Israel literally dwelt alone and in safety, yet it would have been but a type of the still more glorious state of things to which Moses was instructed to direct the faith and hope of the Church. Nothing short of the glory of the latter day can exhaust the meaning of this passage. Many generations, indeed, have passed away, and we, too, may follow them, and still the prediction remain unfulfilled. But we have in Moses an example of the satisfaction and delight with which the saints of old contemplated the future prosperity of the Church, even when they should be gathered to their fathers; for though he was not to enter on the promised land, or participate in the rich blessings which awaited Israel there, yet could any one of them, even the man who had the prospect of sharing the longest and the most largely in these blessings, have expressed himself more joyously and with warmer gratitude in that prospect than Moses did in his last words to Israel? (*R. Gordon, D.D.*) *Israel's God and God's Israel*:—I. ISRAEL'S GOD. Truly, when Moses looked upon the gods of Egypt—a country so superstitious that the satirist wrote of them, "O happy nation, whose gods grow in their own gardens"—when he heard the wild mythology of their idolatry, he might well say, "There is none among them that is like unto the God of Jeshurun." Perhaps Moses had seen those vast catacombs of idolised animals which Egyptian discoverers have lately opened, where the crocodiles, cats, and birds, which had been worshipped in life, were afterwards carefully consigned. Wise as Egypt professed to be, she preserved her dead gods in myriads. Truly, the fancies of the most civilised nations have invented no deity comparable for a moment to the living God who made the heavens and the earth. Moses, in the particular words here used, seems to intimate that there is none like the God of Jeshurun as the ground of our confidence. Now, ye who have trusted in God, remember there is room for you to trust Him still more; and the more you shall confide in Him, the more emphatically will you declare, "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun." If we rely upon men, we put trust in fickleness itself. Fall back upon yourselves, lean upon your fellow-creatures, trust upon earth-born confidences, and ye fall upon a rotten foundation that shall give way beneath you; but rest upon your God alone, and the stars in heaven shall fight for you, and things present and things to come, and heights, and depths, and all the creatures subservient to the will of the omnipotent Creator, shall work together for good to you, seeing that you love God and are depending upon His power. II. ISRAEL'S SAFETY. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Two sentences, with a little variation of expression, containing essentially the same sense. God is first said to be the refuge of His people, that is, when they have strength enough to fly to Him He protects them; but it is delightfully added, "underneath are the everlasting arms," that is, when they have not strength enough to flee to Him, but faint where they stand, there are His arms ready to bear them up in their utmost extremity. I will mention some times when a Christian needs these arms peculiarly. These are when he is in a state of great elevation of mind. Sometimes God takes His servants and puts them on the pinnacle of the temple. Satan does it sometimes; God does it too—puts His servants up on the very pinnacle, where they are so full of joy that they scarce know how to contain themselves, "whether in the body or out of the body they cannot tell." Well, now, suppose they should fall! for it is so

easy for a man, when full of ecstasy and ravishment, to make a false step and slip. Ah! but, in such moments, "underneath are the everlasting arms." They are safe enough, as safe as though they were in the valley of humiliation, for underneath are the arms of God. Sometimes He puts a man in such a position in service—there must be leaders in the Lord's Church, captains and mighty men of war—and the Lord sometimes calls a man and says to him, "Now, be Moses to this people." Such positions are fraught with temptation; but is God's servant in greater danger than an ordinary Christian? Yes, he is, if left to himself; but he will not be left to himself, for God does not treat His captains as David treated Uriah, and put them in the forefront of the battle, to leave them, that they may be slain by the enemy. No, if our God calls a man to tread the high places of the field, that man shall say with Habakkuk, "He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon mine high places." "Underneath are the everlasting arms." Another period of great need is after extraordinary exaltations and enjoyments, when it often happens that God's servants are greatly depressed. In the wilderness, all alone, you hear Elijah cry, "Let me die, I am no better than my fathers." Yes, the man who never was to die at all, prayed that he might die. Just so, high exaltations involve deep depressions. But what was under Elijah when he fell down in that fainting fit under the juniper tree? Why, underneath were the everlasting arms. So shall it be with you who are called thus to fall into the depths of depression; the eternal arms shall be lower than you are. III. ISRAEL'S FUTURE. You have seen a man in our streets with a telescope, through which you may see Venus, or Saturn, or Jupiter. Now, if that gentleman, instead of revealing the stars, could fix up a telescope, and undertake that everybody who looked through it could see his future life, I will be bound to say he would make his fortune very speedily, for there is a great desire amongst us all to know something of the future. Yet we need not be so anxious, for the great outlines of the future are very well known already. We have it on the best authority, that in the future as in the past, we shall meet with difficulties, and contend with enemies. My text, like the telescope, reveals to those who trust in God what will become of their difficulties, and we see that they are to be overcome. God will work, and you will work. He shall thrust out your enemies, and He shall say to you, "Destroy them." It is a grand thing to go straight on in the path of duty, believing that God will clear the road. Like the priests, when they came to the edge of Jordan, and saw the billows rolling up, yet on they went, and not so much as one of them was touched by the waves, for as they put down their feet the waters receded. Oh, it must have been grand to be the first man in that march—to see the waters flow away before your feet! So shall it be with you: the water shall come up to where you are, yet it shall not touch you; you shall find it disappear as you by faith advance. IV. ISRAEL'S BLESSEDNESS. 1. "Israel then shall dwell alone." Dwelling with God in communion, having with Him one object, one affection, one desire, we dwell apart from the rest of mankind, coming out daily more and more from them, and desiring to be nearer and nearer to Christ, and farther and farther from men. Here we dwell safely; nowhere safe except when alone with God, but always safe then. 2. Abundant provision. "The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine." God's people are to be supplied from a fountain, and around that fountain there shall always be a super-abundance of corn for their necessities, and of wine for their comfort and their luxury. Those who come to God receive no stinted allowance, they are gentlemen commoners upon the bounty of God. There is a daily portion allotted to them, and it is measured on a princely scale, equal to the dignity of the new birth. We drink from an ever overflowing fountain. 3. Celestial unction. "Also His heavens shall drop down dew." How we want this! How dry we get, how dull, how dead, unless the Lord visit us! The Oriental knew the value of dew. When he saw the green pastures turn brown and at last dry up, till they were nothing but dust and powder, how he sought for the shower, and the dew; and when it came, how thankful was he! When that dew of the Holy Spirit is gone from us, what dead prayers, what miserable songs, what wearisome preaching, what wretched hearing! Oh, there is death everywhere when the Holy Spirit is denied us; but we need not be without Him, for He is in the promise—"His heaven shall drop down dew." The words read as if there were much dew, superabundance of moisture. So, indeed, we may have the Holy Spirit most copiously if we have but faith enough. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The God of Jeshurun*:—I. THE APPELLATION GIVEN TO JEHOVAH. The term Jeshurun is a collective term used, just as Israel, Jacob, &c., to designate the covenant people—the people who, like Israel of old, have received

a Divine call to come out from the world and be separate; who, in obedience to this Divine call, have separated themselves unto the Lord, and have entered into a solemn and public covenant with Him in which they have engaged to be His, and in which He has been graciously pleased to receive them, so that they now constitute His peculium. Jeshurun is, in other words, a symbolical designation of the Church. The text, therefore, represents God as sustaining to those who are members of the Church a relation that He does not and cannot sustain to one who is outside its fold. But there must be special reason for using this particular term to designate the Church. Viewed etymologically we find Jeshurun seems to be the plural diminutive of the word upright. It may, therefore, probably be best translated the children of uprightness. This is God's designation of the Church, indicative of its true character and mission in the world. Its mission is through the power of Divine grace to set upright that which has fallen. Its first work is to lift truth out of the dust; to free it from the incubus of error and superstition under which it has been borne down; to vindicate it, to defend it against all assaults of error, and to preserve it pure from all the inventions and sophistries of men. Broader, even yet, is the mission of the Church in establishing and maintaining uprightness in the earth. It is designed of God to be the great conservator of virtue, the great bulwark of morality, the efficient safeguard of the rights and liberties, of the intelligence and virtue, of the beneficence and charity that now beautify and gladden the world. II. THE ACTION ASCRIBED TO JEHOVAH. "Who rideth upon the heaven." It is the same bold figure, so often used by the inspired Psalmist, as when he represents Jehovah as "making the clouds His chariot," or as "riding upon the wings of the wind." It is the glory of natural law that it is the power which God wields, the chariot upon which God rides. The more majestic modern science shows it to be, the more do our hearts rejoice in it as a fitting vehicle for the triumphant progress of our King. Let the agnostic blindly worship the material chariot if he will, his eye dazzled with the effulgence of its glittering wheels, and his ear fascinated with its music as it glides over the celestial pavement; be it ours to pay our homage to Him who rides upon it, whose eye of intelligence looks down into ours, whose heart of love beats in sympathy with ours, and whose firm hand upon the rein assures us that all things are working together for our eternal good. III. THE OBJECT OF JEHOVAH IN THUS DOING. This riding of the God of Jeshurun upon the heaven is "in His people's help." The chariot was the most formidable of all the implements of ancient warfare. The celerity with which it swept across the field of action; the momentum with which it crushed its way over the prostrate forms of opposing hosts; the vantage it afforded to the warrior by its elevated platform and protecting rail, and the carnage wrought by the sharp blades upon its axles as they hewed their way through the masses like scythes through the ripened grain: these made it of all engines of war the most effective and the most terrible. The children of Israel fled in dismay as they heard the rumble of Pharaoh's chariot wheels. When intercepted by the waters of the Red Sea they stood cowering with affright as they saw the gleam of the chariots in the sunlight. Moses, therefore, introduces an element of encouragement peculiarly appropriate to the circumstances and experiences of the people when he represents Jehovah as an infinite charioteer riding majestically forth upon the heaven, keeping ever near His people in their wilderness journey, and ready in the hour of their conflict and peril to appear for their relief and for the discomfiture of their foes. It was just the assurance needed by a host who felt the inferiority of their equipment and resources to those of the enemies with whom they would have to contend. But without discarding from our view the special symbolism of the text, what can be more inspiring to the Church in this age, and in the midst of her present conflicts, than this thought of her Jehovah-Jesus, sitting upon the circle of the heavens, holding in His hands the reins of God's providential government; keeping pace in the march of His providence with the progress of the Church; then always nearest when she is in her times of greatest peril; holding all the powers of heaven, earth, and hell in subjection to Himself, and plucking His grandest victories over the powers of darkness out of the very jaws of apparent defeat? (*T. D. Witherspoon, D.D.*) *God and the true*:—1. The last words of a truly great man. 2. Referring to subjects of the highest moment. I. THE INCOMPARABLE GOD OF THE GOOD. 1. His activity. Never slumbers or sleeps. The universe moves because He moves. 2. His grandeur. 3. His eternity. II. THE INCOMPARABLE BLESSEDNESS OF THE GOOD. 1. None are so well protected from the perils of life. 2. None are so well supported under the trials of life. 3. None are so certain of conquering the enemies of life. 4. None are

so enriched with the enjoyments of life. These they shall possess—(1) in safety; (2) in rich variety; (3) under the guardianship of God. (*Homilist.*) *The last words of Moses*:—Moses the man of God (who had as much reason as ever any mere man had to know both) with his last breath magnifies both the God of Israel and the Israel of God. They are both incomparable in his eye; and we are sure, in this his judgment of both, his eye did not wax dim. I. NO GOD LIKE THE GOD OF ISRAEL. 1. This was the honour of Israel. Every nation boasted of its God, but none had such a God to boast of as Israel had. 2. It was their happiness that they were taken into covenant with such a God. Two things he notes as proofs of the incontestable pre-eminence of the God of Jeshurun—(1) His sovereign power and authority (ver. 26). (2) His boundless eternity (ver. 27). II. NO PEOPLE LIKE THE ISRAEL OF GOD. 1. Never was people so well seated and sheltered (ver. 27). 2. Never was people so well supported and borne up. The "everlasting arms" shall support—(1) The interests of the Church in general, that they should not sink or be run down. (2) The spirits of particular believers; so that, though they may be oppressed, they shall not be overwhelmed by any trouble. 3. Never was people so well commanded and led on to battle. 4. Never was people so well secured and protected (ver. 28). "Israel then shall dwell in safety alone." (1) Though alone; though they contract no alliances with their neighbours, nor have any reason to expect help or succour from any of them, yet they shall dwell in safety, they shall really be safe, and they shall think themselves so. (2) Because alone; they shall dwell in safety as long as they continue pure and unmixed with the heathen, a singular and peculiar people. Their distinction from other nations, though it made them like a speckled bird (Jer. xii. 9), and exposed them to the ill-will of those about them, yet it was really their preservation from the mischief their neighbours wished them, as it kept them under the Divine protection. All that keep close to God shall be kept safe by Him. It is promised that in the kingdom of Christ Israel shall dwell safely (Jer. xxiii. 6). 5. Never was people so well provided for. The fountain of Jacob, *i.e.* the present generation of that people, which is as the fountain to all the streams that shall hereafter descend and be derived from it, shall now presently be fixed upon a good land. The eye of Jacob (so it might be read, for the same word signifies a fountain and an eye) is upon the land of corn and wine, *i.e.* where they now lay encamped they had Canaan in their eye; it was just before their faces, on the other side the river; and they would have it in their hands and under their feet quickly. 6. Never was people so well helped (ver. 26). They that are added to the Gospel-Israel are such as shall be saved (Acts ii. 47). 7. Never was people so well armed. God Himself was the shield of their help, by whom they were armed defensively, and sufficiently guarded against all assailants; and He was the sword of their excellency, by whom they were armed offensively, and made both formidable and successful in all their wars. God is called the sword of their excellency, because, in fighting for them, He made them to excel other people; or, because in all He did for them He had an eye to His sanctuary among them, which is called the excellency of Jacob (Psa. xlvii. 4; Ezek. xxiv. 21; Amos vi. 8). Those in whose hearts is the excellency of holiness, have God Himself for their shield and sword, are defended by the whole armour of God; His word is their sword, and faith in it is their shield (Eph. vi. 16, 17). 8. Never was people so well assured of victory over their enemies. They shall be found liars unto thee, *i.e.* shall be forced to submit to thee sore against their will, so that it will be but a counterfeit submission. Yet the point shall be gained, for thou shalt tread upon their necks (so the Seventy), which we find done (Josh. x. 24). (*Matthew Henry, D.D.*)

Ver. 27. **The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.** —*Man's refuge and support*:—I. MAN NEEDS A REFUGE AND A SUPPORT. We make mistakes, and men misunderstand and misinterpret them, and a word or a look fans the flame and makes a foe, and our heart craves for some one to fly to who knows our sincerity and will look kindly on our error. We feel the din and bustle, the agitation, and anxiety, and restlessness of active life; our spirits often are fretted by it, our hands hang down and are weary, and we want One by our sides, ever present, ever powerful, and ever loving, to cheer, uphold, and encourage us. We realise daily our own weakness. Resolutions are made and broken. Where shall I find a refuge from self, a refuge from sin, a refuge from an accusing conscience, a refuge from coming wrath, in the hour of death, in the day of judgment, and through the ages of eternity? II. JUST SUCH A REFUGE AS MAN NEEDS IS PROVIDED FOR HIM BY GOD. III. WHAT SUCH A NEED, AND SUCH AN OFFER, DEMAND

OF US. 1. Your first step is to fly to Jesus as your refuge. Do you ask how? Have you not read or heard of the homeless poor in London, and the refuges prepared for them? Numbers who have no home to cover their heads and no morsel of food to sustain their fainting bodies, hasten all shivering amidst the storm, night after night, and wait hours at the door of some rooms prepared by Christian charity to receive them for a night's lodging and a night's food. They have no recommendation but their poverty. Go thus to Jesus, realising your spiritual poverty, and pleading your spiritual need. 2. Your next step is to rest in Him, as an everlasting support. (*Canon Morse.*) *The everlasting arms:*—In one of the old classic fables of our schooldays, we used to read of the giant Sisyphus, condemned to go on for ever and ever, rolling a mighty stone up a mountain, whose summit was for ever becoming more distant and out of reach. Can such a fable be in any wise emblematic of the task of human life? Can it be that life is, after all, one long and meaningless rolling of an eternal stone up an eternal hill? Let the venerable lawgiver make answer to our questionings; let him teach us faith; let him show us the true meaning and dignity of our life on earth. I. THE ETERNAL GOD IS THY REFUGE. It is an impressive figure; one, moreover, we well can understand, in the mouth of Moses. The idea is borrowed, doubtless, from that wild and awful mountain scenery of which the aged lawgiver had seen so much in his experience of the Sinai peninsula. There, amid those lonely and tremendous heights, with here and there some majestic rock standing isolated from the rest, like a solitary watch-tower and frontier fortress of the desert; amid such scenes as this, as all travellers can tell, the mind of man is over-mastered with a sense of human insignificance. What more natural than that Moses should draw from these Titanic battlements and buttresses a picture, however inadequate, of the omnipotence of the Creator; a parable of the Rock of Ages; an emblem of the Divine Power Himself; a similitude of that Tremendous and Ineffable Being, who is indeed the only abiding Refuge and Stronghold of the soul of man; the Rock, the Fortress, the Castle, the Tower of Strength, the House of Defence, to which it may always resort? II. "AND UNDERNEATH ARE THE EVERLASTING ARMS." The idea suggested here goes much further than the bare notion of protection from storms and troubles without; it suggests also that God offers to the soul of man the comfort of His love, the welcome to a Father's heart; it reminds us, irresistibly, of the unwearying pity of the Good Shepherd, rescuing the sheep that was lost, bearing it in the strong arms of His everlasting love, receiving the little ones into His enfolding embrace, gathering the lambs with His arm, carrying them in His bosom. (*H. B. Ottley, M.A.*) *The only refuge:*—"The Eternal God is thy refuge"—from what? The word itself implies the existence of peril and distress; and God, if we seek Him, will be our refuge from every form of peril and distress—the only sure refuge from every one of the many ills of which our life would otherwise be the helpless prey. I. FROM THE ILLUSIONS, THE DISAPPOINTMENTS, THE INEXORABLE WEARINESS OF LIFE. "Vanity of vanities," saith the Preacher, "all is vanity." "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my pilgrimage." Each man soon finds for himself that these are not common-places, but sad realities. God has two ways of leading men to Him through the narrow gate of disappointment—one by refusing our desires, to show us that they are not according to righteousness; the other, by granting them, and sending leanness withal into our souls. I hardly know which of the two experiences causes the most bitter disappointment. And yet to be led by these facts into gloom or pessimism is entirely to misunderstand their nature, and would be the most fatal of all errors. For why does God deal thus with us? It is simply His way of convincing us that this earth is not our home, that here we have no abiding city, that if we are in any way to fulfil the true law of our life we must set our affections on things above, and not on things on the earth. II. FROM THE INSOLUBLE MYSTERIES OF LIFE. We cry aloud for surer knowledge, and while to the froward and presumptuous there comes back no answer except the echo of their own voice, even for humbler and faithful questioners there is only the whisper, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." There is silence and there is darkness. Our vaunted science cannot break that silence and cannot dissipate that gloom. Yes; but faith can speak to us even though there be neither voice nor language, and can shed upon our path a light which is not of earth. We see not, nevertheless we believe. The mystery ceases to be so oppressive when humility accepts it and hope enlightens it, for then we soon realise that, after all, we know all that it imports us to know. Though the walls of an impenetrable darkness are around us, the lamp of conscience is in our hand, and it shines on the

clear though narrow path of duty. III. FROM SIN, FROM OUR EVIL SELVES, FROM THE GUILT OF THE PAST, FROM THE WEAKNESS OF THE PRESENT, FROM THE DREAD OF THE FUTURE. For each true penitent the handwriting of ordinances that was against us is torn asunder and nailed to Christ's Cross, and there will be granted to us, not only pardon for the past, but also strength and grace to help in time of need. And when, at last, each of us is laid on the bed of death, and the moment has come when we must enter into the presence of God and see our souls, with every mask of hypocrisy, conscious or unconscious, torn away—what can help us then? "The Eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." (*Dean Farrar.*) *Present privilege and future favour*:—I. THE PRESENT BLESSING. 1. God is His people's shelter. (1) Even when they are under the yoke. Even some of those who are never converted, have sense enough to feel at times that the service of Satan is a hard one, yielding but little pleasure, and involving awful risks. Some men cannot long go on making bricks without straw, without being more or less conscious that they are in the house of bondage. (2) When captivity is led captive, God becomes the refuge of His people from their sins. (3) He is also their refuge in times of want. (4) When their enemies rage. (5) When their falls into sin had cursed the people of God, and provoked the Most High, so that He sent fiery serpents among them, even then the Eternal God was their refuge. When we are conscious that sin has brought us into any mischief or sorrow, we are apt to feel—"I must not go to God with this, because it is clearly the natural and inevitable result of my sin, it is a rod of my own making." Yes, but we may go even with that, for if the Lord should send the fiery serpents, still, you must fly into the arms of that very God who has sent the serpents to bite you; for it is He, and He alone, who can lift up the brazen serpent before your tearful eye, and give you life through looking thereon. 2. God is our mansion, our dwelling, our abiding-place. (1) At home one feels safe. So, when we get to our God, not bolts of brass nor gates of iron could guard God's people so well as that wall of fire which Jehovah is to all His chosen. (2) At home we take our rest. When I get to my God, no servile work have I to do, no hewing of wood and drawing of water, like a Gibeonite, in God's house; but here I am, His servant, happy in His service, and finding sweet rest in what I do for Him. (3) At home we let our hearts loose. We feel at ease. So is it when we are with our God. I dare tell Him what I dare not tell any one else; there is no secret of my heart which I would not pour into His ear; there is no wish that might be deemed foolish or ambitious by others, which I would not communicate to Him; for surely if "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him," the secrets of them that fear Him ought to be, and must be, with their Lord. (4) It is at home, if anywhere, that a man is thoroughly happy and delighted. He takes his soul's best solace there; his eyes sparkle most at his own fireside; whatever the man may be abroad, with all his cares and his troubles, he looks to getting home, as going to the place of his delight. So I trust it is with us and our God. (5) It is for home that a man works and labours. 3. God is our support, and our support just when we begin to sink. (1) At certain seasons the Christian sinks very low in humiliation. But the great atonement is still under all. (2) The Christian sometimes sinks very deep in sore trial from without. Loss of property. Bereavement. You cannot sink so low in distress and affliction, but what the covenant grace of an ever-faithful God will be still lower. (3) Possibly you are sinking very deep down, under trouble from within. You have felt such vexations of spirit as you never thought you could have known; you have waged such a conflict as you never dreamed of; the fountains of the great deep have been broken up; and, as a deluge, sin threatens to cover your spirit, and drown all the life in your heart. You cannot even there be brought so low as Christ was, for what did He say—"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (4) This also I may give you by way of comfort, in any weary labours in which you may be engaged. (5) At last, when death comes, the promise shall still hold good. II. THE FUTURE. 1. Here is a Divine work. Before you get to your difficulties, your God will have removed them. 2. A Divine word. Whatever sins we have, there is only one thing to be done with them, and that is, to "destroy them." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Underneath*:—The words are placed at the end of Moses' song, and they are its crown and climax. He had wound himself up to the highest pitch of poetic excitement and spiritual fervour, and this passage is the result. He had spoken grandly before concerning the separate tribes, and the words which fell from his lips are unspeakably rich; but now he is about to close, and therefore he pours forth his loftiest strains and utters full and deep meanings, the ripest and choicest fruit of a lifetime of com-

munion with God. As our Lord ascended to heaven blessing His disciples, so did His servant Moses, before climbing to Pisgah, pour out a torrent of benedictions full and deep, inspired by the Divine Spirit. I. WHERE? "Underneath" is a region into which we cannot see. We associate the subterranean with all that is dark and hidden, and because of this it is often regarded as terrible. Life will soon end: what is death? What is the immediate result of death? What shall we feel when we are traversing those tracks unknown, and finding our way to the judgment seat of God? Not knowing, except that little which has been revealed to us, we are all too apt to conjecture terrors and invent horrors, and so to begin trembling concerning that which we do not understand. What a comfort it is to be told by the voice of inspiration that "Underneath are the everlasting arms"! "Underneath"—the word arouses thought and inquiry. Everything ought to be sound, solid, and substantial there. "Underneath" must be firm, for if that fails we fail indeed. We have been building, and our eyes have been gladdened with the rising walls, and with the towering pinnacles; but what if something should be rotten "underneath"? Great will be the fall thereof, if we have built as high as heaven, if the sand lie underneath, yielding and shifting in the day of flood. Let us look more closely into this most important matter. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." 1. That is, first, as the foundation of everything. If you go down, down, to discover the basement upon which all things rest you come ere long to "the everlasting arms." The things which are seen are stayed up by the invisible God. He is the foundation of creation, the fountain and source of being, the root and basement of existence. "Underneath" everything "are the everlasting arms." Most true is this with regard to His Church. He chose her and redeemed her to Himself: the very idea of a church is from the Lord alone. 2. "Underneath are the everlasting arms," in the sense of being the bottom and end and object of everything. Underneath the best events are the arms of love to make them good, and underneath the worst that can happen are the selfsame everlasting arms to moderate and overrule them. As the design, and object of all, "underneath are the everlasting arms." 3. I take the text, "Underneath are the everlasting arms," to mean next that the arms of God are there as the preservation of His people. Holiness, strength of faith, and ultimate perfection are the things which we must daily aim at, but it is a blessed consolation that when through infirmity or carelessness we do not fully maintain our consecrated walk we are not therefore cast away for ever, for it is written, "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand." "Underneath are the everlasting arms." 4. The everlasting arms are the rest of His people. If these everlasting arms are always outstretched to preserve me lest I totter in weakness and fall into destruction, then on those arms let me lean my whole weight for time and for eternity. That is the practical lesson of this choice word. 5. The text gives a promise of exaltation. The merciful God is great at a deadlift. II. WHAT IS IT WHICH IS BENEATH US? The everlasting arms. 1. The arms of everlasting purpose. We have to deal with one whose gifts and calling are without repentance. 2. The arms of everlasting love. Love has hands and arms with which it draws us, and these are at this moment underlying all the dealings of God with us. 3. The arms of power. Strength is needed to uphold the people of God lest they fall to their confusion, and that strength is always ready, nay, it is always in exercise. He is able to keep thee from falling and to present thee faultless, and He will do it. 4. The arms of immutability. 5. The arms of everlasting blessing. III. WHEN? The only answer is now and for evermore. 1. Now; at this moment, the everlasting arms are underneath us. The life of a Christian is described as walking by faith, and to my mind walking by faith is the most extraordinary miracle ever beheld beneath the sun. Walking on the waves, as Peter did, is a type of the life of every Christian. I have sometimes likened it to ascending an invisible staircase far up into the clouds. You cannot see a step before you, but you wind up towards the light. When you look downward all is dark, and before you lies nothing visible but cloud, while beneath you yawns a fathomless abyss. Yet we have climbed, some of us, now for years up this perpetually ascending stair, never seeing an inch before us. We have often paused almost in horror, and asked in wonder, "What next, and what next?" Yet what we thought was cloud has proved to be solid rock; darkness has been light before us, and slippery places have been safe. 2. So it shall be for ever and for ever, for the arms are everlasting in their position as well as their power. Now thou hast come to die; thou hast gathered up thy feet in the bed; the death sweat stands upon thy brow: thou art sinking so far as this life is

concerned among the sons of men, but underneath thee shall then be the everlasting arms. Beautifully has Bunyan described confidence in death, when he pictures the pilgrims passing the river. Christian cried out to young Hopeful, "I sink in deep waters, the billows go over my head, all his waves go over me." Then said Hopeful, "Be of good cheer, my brother, I feel the bottom, and it is good." Thus shall it be with you. You shall feel the bottom of death's chill river, but you shall say "it is good"; for underneath are the everlasting arms. Then comes the last plunge, and we shall be as when a man stands on the edge of a precipice and leaps over into the clouds below him. You need not fear to take your last farewell and drop into your Father's arms, for underneath you shall be the everlasting arms; and oh, how sweetly shall you be caught up together with the Lord in the air, pressed to the bosom of the great Father, and borne upward into the heaven of heavens. IV. WHAT THEN? 1. Let us look underneath. It is well to look underneath an outward providence when it frowns darkly upon you, for it conceals the eternal purpose of love. 2. Let us lean heavily. God loves His children to treat Him with entire confidence. Your load is no burden to Him. 3. Let us rise confidently. Be not afraid of high doctrines, or high enjoyments, or high attainments in holiness. Go as high as you like, for underneath you are the everlasting arms. It would be dangerous to speculate, but it is safe to believe. 4. Let us dare unhesitatingly, and be very courageous for our God. Are you called upon to lose everything for Christ? Go on and leap like Curtius into the gulf for your Lord Jesus, for underneath you are the everlasting arms. Does your Master call you to an enterprise which seems impossible? Nevertheless, if God has called you to it, attempt it, for He rendereth to every man according to his work. Remember what the negro said: "If Massa Jesus say to me, 'Sam, you jump through that brick wall,' I juiup. It is Sam's business to jump: it is Massa's work to make me go through the wall." So it is with you. It is yours to leap forward when the captain gives the watchword, and in confidence to attempt what mere nature cannot achieve, for the supernatural is still with us. Underneath us are the everlasting arms. (*Ibid.*) *The everlasting arms:*—This short passage is found in the midst of a mass of gold, sentences containing the richest treasures of truth. All this spiritual wealth is the heritage of the people of God. Notice, in vers. 26–29, how near God is said to be to His people. Above, before, around, and in the text beneath us. I. THE QUARTER THAT IS THUS HONOURABLY SECURED. "Underneath." 1. The point of mysterious assault. You may be tempted by Satan, but it shall only be in a measure; God will not let him put forth all his diabolical strength. 2. The place of our daily pilgrimage. Some of you go forth to your daily labours, and you find the place of your service to be a real wilderness, full of trial and everything that is unpleasant to you. Yet look again, with eyes touched with heaven's eye-salve, and instead of seeing the bitter poverty, and the grinding toil, and the daily trial, you will begin to see that God is in it all, and "underneath are the everlasting arms." 3. The place of perilous descent. You cannot go so low but that God's arms of love are lower still. 4. A matter of intense concern. Examine your foundations. 5. The secret of singular discoveries that will yet be made. Perhaps some of us are in sore perplexity; we cannot understand the Lord's providential dealings with us. He does not always tell us the reason for His actions; we might not understand if He did, but we may rest assured that He is working out purposes of infinite love. He ceases not to care for us even when things appear to be at their very worst. I bear my willing witness to the faithfulness of God; I am not so old as some, but I am old enough to have gone through fire, and through water, and I am here to testify that I have not been burned by the one, nor drowned by the other. Cannot many of you say the same? In your sorest trials, and in your hottest furnaces, has He not been specially present with you, and bestowed great blessings upon you? II. THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS QUARTER IS SECURED. 1. God Himself is closo to us, guarantceing the eternal safety of all who trust in Him. Even the false prophet, Mahomet, had a strong faith in God,—in Allah,—and when he fled for the first time, and hid in a cave with only one friend, his companion said to him, "Our pursuers are after us, and there are only two of us." "Stop," exclaimed Mahomet, "there are three, for Allah is here!" It was the utterance of a brave and grand faith; would that his whole career had been in harmony with it! Wherever there are two of God's people, there is Another with them, for God is there. Mr. Wesley said, as he died, "The best of all is, God is with us"; and that is the best of all, is it not? 2. The Lord's immutable purpose is being fulfilled. Where God's arms are, He is at work, and He is at work accomplishing His purposes of grace. 3. His inexhaustible

patience is waiting its time. "Underneath are the everlasting arms," bearing up thy load, sustaining it with long endurance, while He keeps on working for thee—invisible, yet active on thy behalf. III. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN THIS TEXT IS VERY PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS. 1. When we are very sick and very feeble. It is delightful to feel that our feebleness impinges on Omnipotence; that, just when there is nothing left to us, then God comes in with His fulness, and bears us up. 2. When burdened with sore trouble, or oppressed with heavy labours. The most wonderful joys that ever were felt by mortal hearts, have been felt by men who, on the morrow, were to be burned at the stake; but whose very souls have danced within them because of the unspeakable delight which the presence of God has given to them. I think it was Socrates who said that "Philosophers could be merry without music." I take the statement from his mouth, and alter it, and say, Christians can be happy without happy circumstances; they can sometimes, like nightingales, sing best in dark nights. Their joy is not mere outward mirth. Sorrows fall upon them; yet, from the deep that lieth underneath, wells up yet more exceeding joy. 3. When trembling and shaking. Your wing-feathers will grow by your very attempt to fly; the possibilities of grace are boundless; leave yourself to them. Be not always weak and trembling; God help you to become as a David, and you who are as David to become as an angel of the Lord! 4. The hour will come when everything will begin to melt away beneath your feet. Earthly comforts will fail you, friends will be unable to help you; they can wipe the clammy sweat from your brow, and moisten your lips with a drop of water, but they cannot go with you on the great voyage upon which you are about to be launched. When heart and flesh fail, then may the Lord speak to you the sweet words before us, "Underneath are the everlasting arms"! It will be a sinking to the flesh, but a rising to the spirit. (*Ibid.*) *In the everlasting arms:*—There are two sides to a religious life. One is the active side. We are urged to faithfulness in all duty, to activity in all service, to victoriousness in all struggle, to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. But there is another side. We are to trust, to have quietness and confidence, to repose on God. The picture suggested is that of a little child, lying in the strong arms of a father who is able to withstand all storms and dangers. God comes to us first in our infancy, in our mothers, who bear us in their arms. Yet they are only dim revealings of God for a time. They leave us after teaching us a little of God's tenderness, but God Himself remains when they are gone, and His arms never unclasp. The thought of the embracing arms is very suggestive. The figure is to be interpreted by what it would mean in human friendship. 1. One meaning is protection. A father puts his arm about his child when it is in danger. God protects His children. "Thou hast with Thine arm redeemed Thy people." "Be Thou their arm every morning." "His arm brought salvation." 2. Another meaning is affection. The father's arm drawn about a child is a token of love. The child is held in the father's bosom, near his heart. The shepherd carries the lambs in his bosom. John lay on Jesus' breast. The mother holds the child in her bosom because she loves it. This picture of God embracing His children in His arms tells of His love for them. His love is tender, close, intimate. He holds them in the place of affection. 3. Another thought suggested by an arm is strength. A mother's arm may be frail physically, but love makes it strong. When it is folded about a feeble child, all the power of the universe cannot tear the child away. We know what it is in human friendship to have one upon whose arm we can lean with confidence. There are some people whose mere presence seems to give us a sense of security. We believe in them. In their quiet peace there is a strength which imparts itself to all who lean upon them. Every true human friend is more or less a strength to us. Yet the surest, strongest human strength is but a fragment of the Divine strength. This is Omnipotence. "In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." 4. Another suggestion is endurance. The arms of God are "everlasting." Human arms grow weary even in love's embrace; they cannot long press the child to the bosom. Soon they lie folded in death. So pathetic is human life with its broken affections, its little moments of love, its embraces that are torn away in one hour. But these are everlasting arms—these arms of God. They shall never unclasp. 5. There is another important suggestion in the word "underneath." Not only do the arms of God embrace the child, but they are underneath—ever underneath. That means that we can never sink, for these arms will ever be beneath us, wherever we may be cast. We cannot sink below them or out of their clasp. And when death comes, and every earthly thing is gone from beneath us, and we sink away into what seems darkness and the shadow of death—out of all

human love, out of warmth and gladness and sweet life, into the gloom and strange mystery of death, still it will be only into the everlasting arms. (*J. R. Miller, D.D.*) *The everlasting arms—a thought for the new year*:—"Underneath are the everlasting arms,"—that was the repeated burden of the great men of Israel. They lived in the midst of national calamities and distresses. They were defeated, puzzled, baffled. The way looked dark. Then they fall back on the one great re-establishing thought: after all, it is God's world. It is not going to ruin. Changes which seemed tremendous are not fatal or final. Israel dwells in safety, for God holds us in His arms. We need some such broad, deep confidence as we enter a new year. We get involved in small issues and engrossed in personal problems, and people sometimes seem so malicious, and things seem to be going so wrong that it is as if we heard the noise of some approaching Niagara. Then we fall back on the truth that after all it is not our world. We can blight it or help it, but we do not decide its issues. In the midst of such a time of social distress, Mr. Lowell, in one of his lectures, wrote: "I take great comfort in God. I think He is considerably amused sometimes, but on the whole loves us and would not let us go at the matchbox if He did not know that the frame of the universe was fireproof." That is the modern statement of the underlying faith and self-control and patience which come of confessing that in this world it is not we alone who do it all. "Why so hot, little man?" says Mr. Emerson. "I take great comfort in God," says Mr. Lowell; and the Old Testament, with a much tenderer note, repeats, "Underneath are the everlasting arms." (*Prof. F. G. Peabody.*)

Ver. 29. **Happy art thou, O Israel.**—*The peerless nation*:—The word "Israel" never grows old. It is a name that, though it figures on the page of history as a name of long, long ago, still lives, and lives to represent a living people at this day. When Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he said (Dan. ii. 44). That kingdom is the kingdom of Immanuel. It is composed of those who love and trust and serve the once despised Jesus. These are the true "Israel." The true Israel, like the Israel of old, have been saved out of Egypt. Egypt represents darkness, bondage, misery, idolatry, the whip of the task-master, the toilsome mockery of vain labour—bricks without straw. Again Israel to-day, like the Israel of old, is a separate and distinctive people. Those ancient people were altogether different from the various nations who dwelt around them, and through whose territories they passed. They were subjected to singular laws, such as none other people would acknowledge or obey. They had a religion, had customs unlike those of any other race or tribe. Their fashion of dress, their mode of speech, their manner of worship, their acknowledgment of a King unseen, a sceptre superhuman—all these proclaimed them to be peculiar, separate, distinct, alone. All the world besides were Gentiles; they alone were Jews. That is the unchanging characteristic of the real, spiritual Israel of God to-day. This distinction does not now refer to any special external sign. It is not a matter of dress, of language, or of manners. It is a difference in moral allegiance, a difference in heart, a difference in motives, a difference in aims and ends; a difference made evident by a godly and a consecrated life. "Come ye out from among them!" says the Book, prompt and peremptory. Where it is so, then, "happiest is Israel, saved of the Lord." Our Israel, like Israel of old, is a pilgrim people. From the Egypt of bondage the former marched, without long-abiding resting-place, to the land of promise that lay beyond. So the Saviour's Israel goes forward, forward towards holiness, forward towards heaven. "This is not their rest," and they know it; and so they will not set their affections on things of the earth; will not clog and trammel themselves with aught that will hinder their march, or risk their ultimate inheritance. Each one grips his staff, and girds his loins and goes on his pilgrim way, "Westward ho," and often sees the distant hills of Canaan tinged with the glow of the setting sun. Happy thus, I tell you, is Israel, for he is the saved of the Lord, and the crowning glory of that salvation shines brightly on before. Again, Israel, like the Israel of old, is a tried and tempted people. They had hardships and sufferings, they had perils and pains. The more they were loyal to God and their leader, the more they were plagued by the hostilities of men. It is so with Israel still. They can buy a little transient ease, by cringing to custom, toying with expediency, shirking duty and coquetting with the world; but it is dearly bought; and as with the former Israel, such alliances bring a harvest of thorns. "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in Me shall ye have peace," and with that compensation, the very trials of the way become triumphs, and the crosses are transformed to crowns. "Behold, we count

them happy that endure." "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." O yes, Moses speaks the simple truth, Israel, Immanuel's Israel is happy! He is chosen of God. "I have loved thee," He says, "with an everlasting love." "With loving kindness have I chosen thee, my jewel, my portion, my delight!" He is redeemed! Out of what bondage, what darkness, what slavish toil his God hath brought him! Out of what deadly peril He hath snatched him! Out of what dread and doubt and fear and sad distress He hath uplifted him! "His own right hand and holy arm hath gotten Him the victory!" Besides, Israel is led by His hand, guarded by His arm, cheered by His presence. He appoints Israel's every place and circumstance. He marks out all their way. He keeps their foot from perilous bye-ways, and like Greatheart with the pilgrims, goeth with drawn sword before them all the way. (*J. J. Wray.*) *The happiness of God's chosen people:*—I. THE GUIDANCE OF A DIVINE LEADER. Two elements here meet in the special knowledge which is supplied for the guidance of the Christian Israel; elements which in knowledge are of supreme value. There is the element of importance and the element of certainty. Christ has not come into the world to lead His Israel, without the need and the capacity to make the most important of all questions known. The pardon of sin and the way in which it is to be secured; the standard of duty and the means of being raised up to it; the existence of a life beyond the grave and the possibility of reaching it; these, and all that is included in these, are the points on which the God of Israel through His Son has showed His people light; and therefore the glad strain is everywhere heard, "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound!" But the certainty of this knowledge is equal to its importance. It is often said, How can a professed revelation which deals with matters of history, and history too, now hundreds of years old, bring with it certainty, original and soul-satisfying certainty? Now I am prepared to take up this challenge, and to show that Christians have an original and soul-satisfying certainty in regard to Christ and His salvation, such as men have not in regard to many of the operations of their daily life. How much of your most needful knowledge in ordinary life is second-hand! But in regard to salvation, the highest and saving knowledge must be repeated by everyone in direct contact with the living God, who carries the testimony of His Word home to the soul by the voice of conscience and of the Holy Spirit. Surely, then, those are blessed to whom a fountain of certainty is thus opened, which flows with ever-increasing stream. II. THE MEMORY OF A GREAT DELIVERANCE. The Christian, awakened to the ruin of his state through sin, has stood as on the brink of a Red Sea of guilt, formed by the swelling of his own trespasses, with the avenger behind, and no possible escape before. But behold, the Cross of Christ, stretched out with a mightier power than the rod of Moses, has opened a way through the depths, and he has passed safely over into the land where the ransomed and pardoned dwell, and shall never come into condemnation. He sees his grand enemy and all his host defeated and destroyed, while the prey is taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered. It is a rescue not for time only, but for eternity; and, with unutterable joy mingled with trembling, he sings, not the song of Moses, but of the Lamb: "O Lord, I will praise Thee with all my heart, and I will glorify Thy name for ever, for great is Thy mercy towards me, and Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell!" The rescue is once for all; but as Israel by disobedience entailed repeated enslavement, so do Christians, alas! by renewed sin, incur once and again the painful sense of loss and danger; and as deliverance again comes, with the assurance of pardon: "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins; return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee!" the voice of penitent Israel renews the grateful strain: "Sing, O ye heavens," &c. (Isa. xliv. 23). III. THE PROSPECT OF CERTAIN VICTORY. Our warfare is on God's side with rebellion against God, with the temples of idolatry, superstition, and false religion, with the dark embattled hosts of pride and lust, of avarice and cruelty from one end of the world to the other. Wherever "the Canaanite is still in the land"; wherever there is that within us or without us, that exalts itself against God, there must our deadly strife be to bring it down; and every high thought must be brought "into captivity to the obedience of Christ." The range of our spiritual geography is very limited. There "remains much land to be possessed." But this is our great, our arduous, our world-wide mission, impossible to ourselves, but possible with God, and made by Him at once our duty and our happiness. IV. A GLORIOUS INHERITANCE. The conquests of Israel became their own possessions. The warrior was turned into the colonist. The army of invasion was turned into a peaceful army of occupation, dispersed amidst the scenes of their exploits over hill and valley,

sitting each under his vine and fig-tree with none to make him afraid. In the centre was the tabernacle of Jehovah; and the pillar which had led them to battle, and sent out its guiding light on their path, now diffused its mild and gracious beams over the abodes of rest and worship to the extremities of the land. Here was an emblem of the Christian Church translated to heaven. But how feeble and defective a figure after all are these "sweet fields beyond the swelling flood," of the heavenly Canaan! With the outward victory of Israel, redemption was still incomplete and waited for a higher stage; God was still distant, dwelling in one selected spot, and leaving the rest in comparative shadow; Canaan itself, the joy of all lands, might be deteriorated, as it has been, to sterility and barrenness; and the people, thus divinely settled, might for their sins be rooted up and scattered among the nations! What a contrast have we here to that inheritance, yet future, on which the hope of the Christian rests, and by which all the toils and conflicts of earth are to be crowned! Redemption has now reached its limit. The great Captain has come, and has led all faithful souls to the sky! Heaven is itself the "end," so long waited for, the glory no longer "to be revealed." No more does God withdraw to any local centre, to any inner sanctuary even in the one chosen place. All heaven is His temple. In conclusion, let me urge, that the blessedness of Israel, though guarded and defined, is not exclusive. The question "Who is like unto thee?" does not indicate anything restricted and unattainable. Even in ancient days, the sons of the stranger might come bending to take hold on Israel's God, and claim the blessings of His covenant; and how much more in Gospel times, when every wall of partition is broken down, and all, who see Christ with Abraham's faith, "are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Yes! however far off you may have been, you may now be made nigh by the blood of Christ! (*John Cairns, D.D.*)

Happiness: the privilege and duty of Christians:—When you praise a man's position, it is the next thing to flattering the man himself, for most men do not divide between themselves and their condition, but read a commendation of their condition as a commendation of themselves, though it be not so. Hence one has sometimes to be very chary of calling men happy; and all the more so because we cannot generally be sure that they are happy; external circumstances being but a poor means of judgment. Yet Moses speaks thus openly to Israel without a word of qualification. We are sure he did not speak ignorantly or rashly. Israel was happy. The people were favoured, and it was right for them to be told so. I think that Moses eulogised the nation to console them for his departure. "I climb the mount to go away to God, but happy art thou, O Israel: whether Moses be with thee or not, God is with thee." I think also that he had in his mind's eye the fact that they were now about to face new difficulties. "Happy art thou, O Israel: thou art about to throw thyself into the midst of ferocious tribes who will all conspire to cut thee off; but thou art a people saved of the Lord; thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places." So, then, it is right to commend a man's condition, if you have a wise motive for it, and can either console him under trouble or inspire him for future service. I. THE HAPPY CONDITION OF GOD'S PEOPLE. If you have been born again and saved, you are the pick and choice of all God's creatures, and He has indulged you with a measure of love and kindness such as He has shown to none else. Would you barter grace for gain? Gold cannot lighten the heavy heart or cool the burning brow; far oftener it cankers the soul, and lies like a weight upon the spirit. Turn you, if you will, to those famous for knowledge, men of skill, and wit, and research; yet among these there are none to be found comparable in happiness to Christians. Wealth, rank, learning, fame, pleasure, and all else that man holds dear, we would gladly renounce for the joy of our Lord. Israel knew what it was to be saved in many ways, and so do we. We have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, fed with the bread of heaven, and made to drink of water from the Rock of Ages; and as for our adversaries, they have not been able to harm us, for the Lord has saved us unto this day. II. THE RESULT OF REALISING OUR BLESSED ESTATE. Upon this subject there ought to be no need to dilate, for each heir of heaven should live in the hourly enjoyment of his divine inheritance; but, alas, few are doing so. Surely spiritual blessings are the only ones men decline to enjoy. You should enjoy your privileges and be happy, because—1. It tends to keep our allegiance to God unshaken. It is because you lose the sweet flavour of the waters of the flowing fountain that you dabble in those muddy, stagnant gatherings which linger in the broken cisterns. 2. It will create enthusiasm and a grateful love within your bosom. 3. It will give you confidence to expect other blessings. Gratitude for the past inspires with

courage for the future. 4. It will give you strength for bearing all your burdens and courage for facing all your enemies. 5. For Christians to be happy is one of the surest ways to set them seeking the salvation of others. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

CHAPTER XXXIV.

VERS. 1–4. **The Lord shewed him all the land.**—*Unrealised visions*:—The great parable of Israel's wanderings has one of its profoundest applications in the death of its two great leaders: men above all others entitled to enter the land of promise; neither falling in battle nor dying a natural death; both doomed to die by the sentence of Jehovah whom they served, and under whom they were leading the people. I. THE UNREALISED HOPE OF HUMAN LIFE. Every life is a pilgrimage seeking its goal in some Canaan of rest. We picture it, struggle for it, and sometimes seem on the verge of realising it. We "see it with our eyes"; but, in the mysterious providence of life, are "forbidden to go over." Our purposes are broken off, we are disappointed, and resent if faith prevent not. Learn—1. Success is not the chief nobility of life. 2. The chief blessedness of life is capability of service. 3. It is a blessed thing to die when the work has been so far done that it justifies the worker, demonstrates his character, vindicates his nobleness; so that he is not ashamed to leave it for completion; so that his friends are proud of its unfinished fragments. 4. The formal denial of our hopes may be the means of perfecting our character. 5. If in our service we have sinned against right methods and tempers of service, sinned against Him whom we serve, it is well that His disapproval of our sin should be manifested. 6. The prohibition comes with manifest mitigations. (1) What greater grace wrought in a man than acquiescence in such a mandate? (2) Moses is permitted to prepare for departure. (3) He is permitted to see his successor. 7. God honours His faithful servant by Himself preparing his sepulchre. 8. God fulfilled His promises and the hopes of His servant in a deeper and higher way than he anticipated. II. THE VISIONS WHICH MAY INSPIRE HUMAN LIFE, its unrealised hopes notwithstanding. To men who live greatly, God gives visions through this very idealism of life, which are glorious inspirations and strength; visions of a great faith and a bright hope; of rest through the toil, of triumph while they fight, of heavenly perfection and blessedness. Many glorious visions had been given to Moses. Who knows, but to his lofty soul Canaan would have been a disenchantment. Many of our realised hopes are. In the better country, no shortcoming, no disappointment. Canaan may suffice for a suggestive prophecy; only God's heaven can be a satisfactory fulfilment. A great thing for faith to climb on heights to survey the heritage of God. And the nearer Jordan, the more glorious the prospect. The goodly land is revealed. All earthly lights pale before the great glory, all things here seem little and unimportant in that great blessedness. (*H. Allon, D.D.*) *Pisgah; or, a picture of a life*:—I. LIFE ENDING IN THE MIDST OF LABOUR. The farmer leaves his field half ploughed; the artist dies with unformed figures on the canvas; the tradesman is cut down in the midst of his merchandise; the statesman is arrested with great political measures on his hand; and ministers depart with many schemes of instructive thought and plans of spiritual usefulness undeveloped. 1. There should be cautiousness as to the work pursued. A sad thing to die in the midst of unholy labour. 2. Earnestness in the prosecution of our calling. Time short. 3. Attention to the moral influence of our labour, both on ourselves and others. We should make our daily labour a means of grace; every secular act should express and strengthen those moral principles over which death has no power. All labour should have but one spirit—the spirit of goodness. II. LIFE ENDING IN THE MIDST OF EARTHLY PROSPECTS. If men die amidst prospects of good they never realise, then—1. Human aspirations after the earthly should be moderated. 2. Human aspirations after the spiritual should be supreme. III. LIFE ENDING IN THE MIDST OF PHYSICAL STRENGTH. 1. Death at any time is painful—painful when the physical machinery has worn itself out; when the senses are deadened, the limbs palsied, and the current of life flows coldly and tardily in the veins. But far more so, when it comes in the midst of manly vigour and a strong zest for a prolonged existence. 2. Does not this view of life—ending in the midst of important labour, bright earthly prospects, and manly

strength—predict a higher state of being for humanity beyond the grave? (*H. P. Bowen.*) *The top of Pisgah:*—Moses, the servant of the Lord, now takes his last journey. He has been more or less a pilgrim all his life, and his last journey is in perfect harmony with all his previous ones, for it is taken "at the commandment of the Lord." Throughout his life the society of his God had been his delight. To dwell with God had been the refreshment of his life; and God seems to say to him, "That which has been your joy and refreshment in life, shall be your peculiar privilege in death. I have known you face to face in life; and now you shall die alone with Me, face to face with your God." This thought holds good in another respect. Everything in the career of Moses had been done in absolute obedience to God. The whole life of Moses was a carrying out of the Divine commands. So is it now. God says to him, "Go up and die"; so, characteristically, he went up and died. His act of dying was one of intentional obedience. But before he died God granted him a marvellous sight. "The Lord showed him." His eye had not become dim, but, may be, God gave extra power to the old eye that had been looking for one hundred and twenty years, and such power that he could look north, south, east, and west, and view the whole land. And what a panorama stretched out before him. "He saw the smiling green meadows at his feet, between which the Jordan swiftly flowed, and to the right his eye glanced along the valleys and woods, and the bright waving cornfields, that stretched away into the dim distance where rose the purple snow-crowned hills of Lebanon. To his left he saw the mountains swelling like mighty billows of the sea all struck into stillness. And perhaps, as he looked upon them, some angel-voice whispered in his ear, 'There will stand Jerusalem the city of peace. There shall be the temple where, for ages and ages, Jehovah shall be worshipped: And see, yonder among the hills on that little speck in the landscape, a Cross shall one day stand, and the Son of God shall die to save the world.' And across the beautiful land he might perhaps catch some dim sight of the blue Mediterranean, or at least have discovered where the white mists hung above its waters." And then, sweetly emblematical as it seems to me, beneath were the sullen waters of the Dead Sea. Oh, when God takes a man to the top of Pisgah he looks down upon the waters of death. This was the vision that greeted the eyes that had not yet become dim. Then, having had this view of the land, Moses the servant of the Lord "died according to the word of the Lord," or, as the Rabbis say, "at His mouth." God took the old man, wrinkled with age but simple in spirit as a child, and sang his lullaby and kissed him to sleep. What followed has never yet been fully revealed. A veil hangs thickly over the scene of the burial of Moses, but there is the fact recorded that God buried him. "Oh," you say, "what a quiet funeral." Yes, the more the honour of it. I believe that, as the vision of Canaan melted away, the vision of God's face appeared, and he who had known his Lord face to face now knows what it is to behold His glory without a veil between. There you have the setting of our little text. Pisgah was at once the climax and the close of a character and a career. In one sense it is terribly sad, and concerning Pisgah's top it may be said, "Behold the severity of God." He who has high honour put on him by God shall find that there is something in the other scale. Just because of the perilous position of honour to which God had raised Moses, that sin of his, when, in a moment of impatience, he struck the rock twice, is visited with the severe sentence, "Thou Moses, shalt not pass over the Jordan into the land." Pisgah's top has also, I believe, dispensational teaching in it. It was absolutely necessary that Moses should not cross over Jordan. Had he done so the whole allegory of Scripture would have broken down. I. PISGAH'S TOP MAKES A BEAUTIFUL ILLUSTRATION OF SPIRITUAL LIFE. What was Pisgah? It was an eminence in the wilderness from which might be seen the full extent of the salvation of God. When God brought His people out of Egypt, He did so in order to bring them into Canaan; and I believe that Canaan is intended to represent the life of the believer on earth, with all its privileges and all its joys and all its combats too. It is for the child of God to get a full view of the good land into which God brings him, a bird's-eye view of the whole of God's grand salvation. But how is this to be done? This is a most important question. I believe that there are two absolute essentials, and the first is this: if you would see the whole of the land you must get up on to the heights of Scripture. If your Bible is a neglected book you cannot see the whole length and breadth of the land. It is God's Pisgah, and you must get up to the top. One half-hour with God and His Book, and the power of the Holy Ghost will give you a grander view of God's salvation than all the experience that you can

hear. And the second absolute necessity is solitude with God. Moses did not get the vision when he was in a mob. He got it when he was alone. It is not enough for us to have a critical knowledge of Scripture. "Spiritual wisdom" is needed. I would sooner accept the interpretation of some pauper woman in the workhouse, if she is full of the Holy Ghost, than the interpretation of the ablest critic who has not the "spiritual" wisdom. We need revelation as well as elevation. It is not enough for us simply to be on Pisgah's top. God must do for us what He did for Moses. "And the Lord showed him." II. Do you not also think that Pisgah may serve as A PROPHECY OF THE DYING HOUR? Moses was lost to the camp. I hear them say one to another, "He is going; he is going. He has got beyond our reach now." They cannot see him. He is high up there. Have you known what it is to stand by the side of a dying one who has got so far that he cannot speak to you? He has become unconscious of all surroundings. As far as you are concerned, he has gone. Yes, and perhaps Israel was saying, "Poor Moses! We pity him in having thus to die"; and whilst they were pitying him he was seeing visions of God. I dare not speak dogmatically, but I do say that there is a consensus of evidence that cannot be put on one side that the dying very often do see far more than the living. We often say of a departing one, "Oh, he is practically dead now, for he is unconscious." Yes, he may be unconscious to those standing round the bedside, but oh, how conscious of God! Oh, how conscious of a spiritual environment! I do not know whether Moses had a thought about the camp which he had left. I do not suppose that he had. He was looking at that which God showed him. The spiritual world is not a mere unsubstantial dream. No, it is real, and round about us all are the hosts of heaven. After all, Pisgah's top was only the starting-point for the upward flight. It seems high up to us because we are dwelling down in the plain of Moab. But when Moses was on the top of Pisgah he was only just on the "departure" platform, not the "arrival." From Pisgah's top I view my home, then take my flight. The sight of Canaan did not long linger on his eyes. Lebanon melts away. The Dead Sea becomes a mist. The rolling fields of golden corn become indistinct. Canaan vanishes. Another vision comes; and the man of God is face to face with his Lord. O child of God, so shall it be with thee. If thou diest in the Lord's embrace, thy head on His breast, thou mayest see much in that dying hour. But thou shalt see more afterwards. (*A. G. Brown.*) *The frontier of the promised land*:—Each of us is a Moses, not as regards mission, glory, or virtue, but as regards this last feature of his career. We are all standing on the frontier of a promised land which we shall not enter. I. Yes; we are on the frontier, on the threshold, at the very door of a land of promise, and we shall die before entering it. REASON is made for truth, and seeks it; but who is there that knows all he would know? Ignorance has reached this point: in its instinctive regrets it stands still, gazing mournfully upon mysteries which it cannot penetrate, upon depths of knowledge of which it has an instinctive perception, but which it cannot fathom. Science has reached this point: all science ends in a final effort which it fails to accomplish, in a final secret which it is inefficient to discover, in a final word which it is unable to utter. Unbelief has reached this point. Remember the sceptical astronomer who endeavoured daily to explain the first movement of the planets without admitting that they had been set in motion by a Divine hand, and who dismissed his pupils day after day, bidding them "come again to-morrow"! Faith, too, has reached this point. Faith which knows that it cannot be changed into sight, and that "no man hath seen God," that "none knoweth the Father but the Son," that "great is the mystery of godliness," that even the angels tremble as they look into it. Yes; reason and faith behold a promised land stretching out before their eyes, but ever do they hear the stern and mighty voice saying, "Thou shalt not go over thither." II. AND WHAT OF HAPPINESS? Is it not true that we are always on its limits? The desire for happiness is natural; more than this, it is lawful, it is religious. Every individual entertains it, notwithstanding his experience of life. We see it sometimes near, oftener at a distance; but this world is so fashioned that we are unable to cross the border and enter it. III. WITHOUT PEACE THERE CAN BE NO TRUE HAPPINESS. Who is there that has not dreamed of a life of peace, harmony, and love? But no; the machinery of life seizes upon us; competition lays a barrier across our path; we have rights which we must defend, for the sake of those we love, if not for our own; we must adopt as ours the maxim of Paul: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." In the very domain of religion, we are called to defend our faith, to stand out against the calumnies of intolerance; we would gladly pray

and communicate with all, but we are repulsed; we long for an asylum of peace and rest, and the terrible voice is heard, "Thou shalt not enter into it!" IV. THIS STATE OF THINGS INFLUENCES THE WHOLE OF OUR EXISTENCE, the progress of our soul, the entire labour of our life. Where is the man who brings all his enterprises to a successful issue, or realises all his plans? Where is the man who attains a perfect equilibrium in his desires, faculties, sentiments, and duties? Where is the man who, in a moral and Christian sense, realises his ideal? How many unfinished tasks! The world is full of them. Death comes and prevents their completion. When we examine ourselves, how far we are from sanctification! Alas! the perfect fulfilment of the plans of life, and of the progress of the soul, is a promised land, concerning which each of us is told, "Thou shalt not go over thither!" Who is He that, of all the human race, alone has entered His promised land? Who? Jesus. In Jesus Christ we are enabled to march towards the goal, to increase in knowledge and faith, in happiness and peace, to achieve greater works, and to progress on our way until the last stage of the journey be reached—eternity. (*A. Coquerel.*)

I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.—*Comfort amid failure of hopes:*—There must have been in Moses' mind, when he thought over his life, a strong consciousness of the opportunities of inward and spiritual culture which God had opened to him even in and through the failure of his plan of life. In his repentance and confession of personal sin he had come nearer to Jehovah than ever before, and now, as the result of all, a patient, loving confidence in God; a deep distrust of himself; a craving for inner purity more than for any outward glory; a pure, deep love overrunning with gratitude for forgiveness, which had deepened with every deepening appreciation of the sin,—all this was filling his heart as he went forth with God, pondering the failure of his life. And this same richness of comfort has come to many a man out of the failure of his hopes. You come up to the certainty that you are not going to accomplish that which you once meant to do, that you might have done if you had not wilfully sinned. You take your last fond look on the Canaan of accomplishment which you are not to enter. You say, "I shall never do what I dreamed of doing," but at the same time there rises up in you another strong assurance,—"God has done in me what I do not see how He could have done except out of my broken hopes and foiled endeavours." You are not glad that you have sinned; you are sure all the time that, if you could have stood sinless, some nobler character would have been trained in you, but you never can think of your sin without feeling alongside of it all that God has done for you through it. The culture of penitence is there, the dearer, nearer sense of God, which has come from so often going to Him with a broken heart, the yearning for an hourly dependence on Him, the craving, almost agonising knowledge of the goodness of holiness, which only came to you when you lost it, the value of spiritual life above all visible and physical delight or comfort, and a gratitude for forgiveness which has turned the whole life into a psalm of praise or a labour of consecration,—these are the cultures by which God bears witness of Himself to numberless lives that have failed of their full achievement. But take another thought. The whole question of how much Moses knew of immortality is very indistinct, but it is impossible to think that in this supreme moment his great soul did not attain to the great universal human hope. It must have come to him that this which seemed like an end was not an end; that while the current of the Jewish history swept on without him, for him, too, there was a future, a life to live, a work to do somewhere, with the God who took him by the hand and led him away. And here must always be the final explanation, the complete and satisfying explanation of human failures. Without this truth of another life there can be no clearness; all is dreary darkness. A man has failed in all the purposes of his life. What is there left for him? He dwells upon the culture which has come to him in and from his failure; but what of *him*,—this precious human being, this single personal existence, the soul, with all its life and loves? Is that, indeed, just thrown aside like a dead cinder, out of which all the power has been burnt? Then comes Christ's truth of immortality. Not so! This failure is not final. The life that has so fallen short is not yet done. It has been tried and found wanting. But by its own consciousness of weakness it is made ready for a new trial in a higher strength. (*Bp. Phillips Brooks.*) *Moses and the promised land:*—There are in history few characters whose grandeur equals that of Moses, and I know not whether the Old Testament contains an account more sublime or more touching than that of his death. Nearly a century had passed since, in the palace of Pharaoh, where he had grown up in the midst of the delights of Egypt and

of royal splendour, the thought of the oppression of his people had seized upon his soul to give him no more repose. At last he reached the goal, so long desired, of all his thoughts. The promised land was there before him, and the waves of Jordan alone separated him from it. The promised land! Oh, how often he called for and contemplated it beforehand in his solitary dreams during the long nights of the desert, when, under the starry heaven, he conversed with Jehovah! From the silent summit of Mount Nebo the overworked old man directs his eager looks before him and in every direction: he sees all the country from Gilead to Dan; there stretches out Jericho, the city of palm trees; there the rich palms of Naphtali, of Ephraim, and of Manasseh; there Judah; there, beyond, towards the distant horizon, the Mediterranean Sea. Yes, it is certainly the Promised Land; but—he is forbidden to enter it! For a moment his heart bends under its load of anguish; but, losing sight of himself, he thinks of the future of Israel; he contemplates with emotion those places in which God will establish His sanctuary, those valleys from whence there will issue one day the salvation of the world; on the north the distant mountains of Galilee; on the south, Bethlehem, Moriah, and the hill where the Cross in which we glory was to be erected. Then, having embraced with one last look that land, so long desired, Moses bows his head and dies. From this grand scene there flows for us a grand lesson. Whoever you may be, have you not dreamed here below of a promised land; have you not desired it, have you not thought to reach it, and has not a voice been heard telling you also: "Thou shalt not enter it at all!" I want to inquire to-day why God refuses us what we ask on earth; I want to plead His cause, and justify His ways. Yes, we all dream here below of a promised land. There is not one of us who has not expected much of life, and not one whom life has satisfied. Do not trust appearance, do not depend on the outward joy, the absence of care painted on so many countenances. All that is the mask—underneath is the real being, who, if he is sincere, will tell you what he seeks and what he suffers. Is the promised land which you seek that renewed earth where righteousness will dwell? Is it the reign of the Lord realised among men? Is it God loved, adored, holding the first place in hearts and minds? Is it the Gospel accepted, the Church raised up again, souls converted, the Cross victorious? Well! need I say it to you? You will not possess that promised land here below, although in the ardour of your faith you had thought to enter it. You had thought by some certain signs to discover in our epoch a time of renovation; you had seen the shaken nations throw off their sleep of death, the Church rise up at the voice of God, and awake to the feeling of its magnificent destinies; you had seen the Holy Spirit descending, as on the day of Pentecost, and inflaming hearts. Thus, in the primitive Church, believers expected on the ruins of the heathen world the triumphant return of Christ. Yes, it was there that the promised land was. Alas! the world has continued its progress, the kingdom of God does not come with show, the work of the Spirit proceeds mysteriously and in secret, and, whilst that brilliant vision of a renewed earth moves before your troubled eyes, a voice murmurs in your ear: "Thou shalt not enter it!" Yes, let us not flatter ourselves. Those are seldom met with in our days who, devoured by hungering for truth and righteousness, long ardently after the reign of God. You had dreamed of a grand and beautiful existence on earth, for it was not towards vile pleasures that your nature carried you. God had given you talents, brilliant faculties, the knowledge of everything that is noble and fair. With what joy you bounded forth on your career! How all good causes appealed to you! Every day was to render you both better and stronger. To know, to love, to act, was your aim. All those enchanted ways opened before you, covered with that haze of the morning through which one predicts in spring the serene clearness and the heat of a fine day. The promised land was there in your eyes; you contemplated it with eager looks, you were going to enter it. All at once misfortune came, disease broke your strength, your property vanished from you, you were obliged to begin to gain by the sweat of your brow your daily bread; crushing cares have come to overwhelm your heart and blight your hopes; selfishness and the harshness of men have given you bitter and cruel surprises, and whilst others got before you in the race and ran towards the prospects of happiness which remained closed to you, the austere voice of trial murmured in your ear: "Thou shalt not enter it!" You had, my sister, dreamed on earth of the happiness of shared affections; the course of life appeared to you pleasant to follow, supported on a manly arm and a loyal heart. What joy to be able every day to pour your thoughts and your affections into a soul which would comprehend yours! The promised land was there to you; and now, you are widowed, and you go, a solitary one, in that path, the asperities of which no one

smooths in your case. Or, what is much worse still, you have seen infidelity, falseness, and, perhaps, a cold indifference penetrate between you and the heart of him whose name you bear. To others God has spared that trial. You have seen a joyous family circle form around you—you have prepared for life the children whom God gave you. With what happiness have you followed the first intimations of intelligence in them, with what anxiety their temptations and their sufferings, with what gratitude their victories and their progress! At last you had almost attained your object. They were ready for the struggles of life; all that a vigilant love could sow in their hearts you had shed abroad. It was to you the promised land. Alas! how lately was it true. But a day came—a day of anxiety and fearful forebodings, ending in a reality still more frightful. From your desolated abode a funeral procession has passed, and to-day it is in Heaven that your wavering faith has to seek an image which floats before your troubled eyes. Shall I remind you of those works—long pursued with self-denial, with love—at the end of which you gathered unsuccess and ingratitude, and have seen your best intentions misunderstood and calumniated? Vain desires! barren illusions! the world cries to us, and in the name of its selfish philosophy it preaches to us forgetfulness and dissipation. But do you desire that forgetfulness? No, it is better still to suffer and to have known these desires, these affections, these hopes; it is better to bear about with one these holy images and sacred recollections; the torment of a soul which believes, and of a heart which loves, is better than the stupid and base frivolity of the world. It is better, O Moses! after forty years of fatigue and of suffering, to die in view of the coasts of Canaan than to lead in the palaces of Egypt the stupid and shameful servitude of pleasure and of sin! And yet before that rigorous law, which closes to us here below the promised land, our troubled heart turns trembling to God; we ask Him, that God of love, the secret of His ways which astonish us and now and then confound us. "Why?" we say to Him, "why?" We shall never here below fully know the cause of the ways of God. There are, particularly in suffering, mysteries which go beyond all our explanations. Nevertheless it is written that the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. Let us try then to explain something of it. If Moses does not enter into the promised land, it is certainly, in the first place, because Moses sinned. What! you will tell me, could God not forget the faults of His servant? So long as Moses remains on earth he will undergo the visible consequences of his transgression in former times. As he sinned in presence of the people, it is in presence also of the people that he will be smitten. Now, that is what we have a difficulty in comprehending to-day. To-day the sentiment of God's holiness is effaced. God is love, we say with the Gospel, and forget that the Gospel never separates His love and His holiness! We forget it in face of Gethsemane, in face of Calvary, in face of those sorrows, without name, which remind us that pardon does not annihilate justice, and that Divine righteousness demands an expiation. Yes, God is love; but have you reflected on this, that what God loves before everything else is that which is good? Can God love His creatures more than He loves goodness? That is the question. Our age resolves it in the sense which pleases its feebleness. God, it tells us, loves before everything His creatures; and saying that, the whole Gospel is reversed; for it is evident that if God loves His creatures more than He loves what is good, He will save them, be their corruption and their incredulity what they may. Then heaven is assured to all—to the impenitent, to the proud, to the rebellious, as well as to penitent and broken hearts. This is not all. If God can thus place what is good in the second rank, can He not put it there always? What becomes, then, of holiness? What are we told of His law, since that law gives way when He chooses? I go further. What are we told of redemption, and what does the Cross of Calvary say to us, if you efface the idea of a sacrifice demanded by Divine justice? But admit, on the contrary, with Scripture, that God loves what is good before everything; that holiness is His very essence; and you will see that, if face to face with sinners, His name is love, face to face with sin, His name is justice; that suffering willed by Him is inseparably united with evil. You asked why life did not keep its promises to you—why your dreams, your plans of happiness were pitilessly destroyed—why, in presence of the promised land, an inexorable voice came to you: "Thou shalt not enter it!" Scripture answers you—because you are sinners; because this earth, which evil has defiled, cannot be for you the land of repose and of happiness; because God would warn you and prepare you to meet Him. You asked, O ye redeemed by the Gospel, why, after having believed the pardon of God, His love, and His promises, you were treated by Him with rigour which confounds you? Ah! it is because God,

who made you His children, would further make you partakers of His holiness; it is because He would that the suffering attached to your earthly life should remind you every day of what you formerly were, and of what you would be without Him. Thus, at all times, God acts towards those very ones who have most loved Him. Ask Moses why he does not enter Canaan. Does he murmur? does he complain? does he accuse Divine justice? No; he bows his head and adores. Ask Jacob why his hoary hairs go down with sorrow to the grave. Does he accuse God? No; he remembers his deceits of a former time, his conduct towards Isaac, his perfidy towards Esau. Thus He accomplishes the word, that judgment commences at His own house. Thus God reminds those whom He has pardoned and saved, that if they are the children of a God of love, they ought to become the children of a holy God. But in refusing us, as Moses, admission here to the promised land, God has yet another aim—that of strengthening our faith. Let us suppose that it had been given us to realise our desires on earth, to see our designs accomplished, our sacrifices recompensed, to gather here, in a word, all that we have sowed. What would soon happen? That we should walk by sight and no longer by faith—pleasant and easy course, where every effort would be followed with its result, every sacrifice with its recompense. Who would not like to be a Christian at that price? Who would not seek that near and visible blessing? Ah! do you not see that the selfish spirit of the mercenary would come, like a cold poison, to mingle with our obedience? Do you not see that our hearts, drawn to earth by all the weight of our happiness, would soon forget the invisible world and their true, their eternal destiny? What would the life of faith then become; that heroic struggle of the soul which tears itself from the world of sight in order to attach itself to God? What would that noble heritage become, which all believers of the past have transmitted to us? Now, God expects from us better things. That is why He refuses you here below the repose, and the peace, and the sweet security of heart, and those joys in which you would like to rest; and why, when the world has caused to pass before you that promised land of happiness which enchants and attracts you, His inexorable voice says to you: "Thou shalt not enter it." But, know well, He does not deceive you, for true repose and true happiness still await you. Ah! better to die on Mount Nebo, for God has reserved for thee a better heritage, a promised land into which thou shalt enter in peace. There, sin is no more; there, pure voices proclaim the glory of the Lord; there, His sanctuary is reared in light ineffable and in an ideal beauty; there, repose on the bosom of Infinite Love all those who, like thyself, have combated for righteousness; there, God reigns, surrounded with the multitude without number of His worshippers. Close thine eyes, O wearied pilgrim, thou wilt open them again in light, in the celestial Canaan, on the holy Sion, in the heavenly Jerusalem! Lastly, if God refuse us, as He did Moses, what we should have liked to possess on earth, it is that our heart may belong to Him, and be given to Him for ever. I think I hear your protestations. You answer me: "Yes, faith and holiness can be taught in that rude school; but is it right that God should obtain love in this way?" And you add: "Should we have loved Him less if He had left us those treasures which His jealous hand so soon carried off from us? Should we have loved less if our heart, instead of falling back sadly upon itself, had been able to bloom and breathe freely in all the confidence of happiness?" Less! ah, we are witnesses to it. *To-day*, if what we have lost could be returned to us; if our youth, our life, our hopes could be born again *to-day*, there would not be words in the language of men to testify to Him our gratitude and our love. I understand you; but take care, you have said, "*to-day*," and you are right; for yesterday, alas!—for formerly—when you possessed those treasures, when your life was happy, where was that gratitude, that love, which should have overflowed? On that earth, blessed and decked with all your joys, did you think God Himself was misunderstood and treated as a stranger? Did you reflect that His cause was forgotten, His Gospel attacked, His Church feeble and divided? Did you think of those thousands of souls groaning under the burden of ignorance, of misery, and of sin? Did you ask for the earth where righteousness dwells? No; in order to reveal all that to you there was need of sorrow. We have seen how God educates us; we have seen how He prepares us for the promised land, which is not here below but in heaven. Happy the one who does not wait for the blows of trial in order to steer his course to it; but, happy, also, the one whose bonds trial has broken, and who has entered upon the journey home. (*E. Bersier, D.D.*)

Ver. 5. **So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died.**—*The death of Moses*:—I. THE

GREATEST OF MEN ARE BUT INSTRUMENTS IN GOD'S HANDS, and He can afford to lay them aside when He chooses. Let this thought—1. Dispel fears for future of Church of God. 2. Abate personal pride. 3. Calm fears for loved ones. II. THE TIME AND MANNER OF EACH MAN'S REMOVAL FROM EARTH ARE FIXED BY GOD. III. WHEN GOD REMOVES HIS SERVANTS FROM EARTH IT IS THAT HE MAY TAKE THEM TO HEAVEN. IV. UNTIL GOD CALLS US AWAY, LET US BE DILIGENT IN DOING GOOD. V. GOD FREQUENTLY GIVES INTIMATION TO MEN THAT HE IS ABOUT TO CALL THEM TO HIMSELF. VI. GOD WILL REMOVE ALL DIFFICULTIES IN OUR HEAVENWARD JOURNEY. (*Preacher's Monthly.*) *The death of Moses*:—1. THE BEST MUST DIE. II. The best may die IN THE ZENITH OF THEIR GREATNESS. III. The best may die WHEN APPARENTLY INDISPENSABLE. IV. The best may die WHERE THEY LITTLE EXPECT. V. BUT ALL DIE WHEN AND WHERE GOD DECREES. (*R. A. Griffin.*) *The death of Moses*:—There is nothing more sublime in the history of Moses than the story of his death. Tried by a worldly standard, it seems a poor and shameful ending of such a life. Who so fit, we might ask, to lead the children of Israel into the promised land as he who had, for their sakes, defied the wrath of Pharaoh, who led them out of Egypt, and shared with them the wanderings of the wilderness? Who is the nobler man? he who rejoices in the fulfilment of his hopes, or he who knows how to endure, and see the fruit of, disappointment? I. THE PERILS OF A CALL TO SERVICE. 1. There are perils in its graces. Godly men will transgress just where they seem most secure, will yield to the temptations against which they seem to be best armed. In a moment the old nature flashes up; the sin of a moment startles out of the self-complacency of many years. 2. There are perils belonging to the gifts of a high calling. Those are not to be envied who are most richly endowed, and can do most for men. They have to be constantly warned against pride and self-sufficiency; to be often chastened and humiliated for relying on their gifts instead of on the Giver. 3. There are perils incident to the fulfilment of a high calling. II. GOD'S EARNESTNESS IN THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF HIS WILL. Was Moses startled after he had spoken his rash words to the people, and smitten the rock in his anger? shocked to think that he had been so easily led into sin, and that his sin was great in that he had not sanctified God in the eyes of the children of Israel? If so, the words in which the Lord rebuked him must have fallen blessedly upon his ears. Our first foolish thought is the wish to hide our sin from God; our second wiser thought is to rejoice that He has seen and marked it, for He alone can put our sins away. Our first foolish impulse is to offer our excuses and plead that we be not chastised; our second wiser impulse is that of the spiritual man within us, which welcomes all the fatherly discipline by which we may be purged. Our first foolish thought is to blame the responsibilities of our position, and even to desire to be relieved of them; our second wiser persuasion is that responsibilities are the honours of heaven, and that it is cause of gratitude when God will make us worthy to fulfil them. (*A. Mackennal, D.D.*) *The death of Moses: what do we think about it?*—"We must needs die." So spake the widow of Tekoah. But why must we needs die? Why is it that after so many years of healthy, vigorous life the signs of feebleness, decay, and coming dissolution show themselves? There is, so far as we know, only one satisfactory answer: it is God's will. "It is appointed unto men once to die." "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." But the death of Moses was not the result of decayed powers and the infirmities of old age. He was equal to his work, and if spared, would soon have completed it, for the people, whose leader the Lord had appointed him, were now on the borders of the promised land. There was only the Jordan to cross. Why, then, should God, just at this point, have taken him away? I. IN THE DEATH OF MOSES WE HAVE WITNESS TO THE SEVERITY OF GOD. "God is love." That is His nature, but it is qualified by justice, righteousness, and faithfulness. "Behold," says Paul, "the goodness and severity of God." He is Father, and in all His ways most fatherly. But He is also King, and is most kingly too. God is not to be trifled with. His laws cannot be disregarded with impunity. Sin ever is, and must be, punished. Bless His name, there is forgiveness with Him. Our sins may not shut us out of heaven. They may not prevent us from enjoying the life to be, with its unsullied glory. But they do hinder the enjoyment of the present. They haunt us like an ugly dream. The scars they have left are ever painful. You cannot sin with impunity. Sin is what clings to a man and curses him. It is not like a coat you can put on and take off at your pleasure. It is poison which, if it don't kill, will pain you for years. Or it will act in the same way in which it acted in relation to Moses. It prevented him from entering Canaan, and so there is many a sweet land, many a happy experience we might enter

upon, but our sin—in imprudent act or speech—prevents. II. IN THE DEATH OF MOSES THERE IS WITNESS TO GOD'S DESIRE THAT MEN SHOULD PUT THEIR TRUST, NOT IN MAN, BUT IN HIM. The book from which our text is taken ends as no other does, either in the Old Testament or in the New. It closes with a high eulogium upon Moses. We do not know whose hand wrote the eulogium; but we doubt not it expressed the universal feeling of Israel after his death. If he had been spared to bring them into the land, there might have been the temptation to enthrone the creature in place of the Creator, and to their great peril they might have placed in the man that trust which ought to be put in God and in Him alone. This they could not do without inflicting great self-injury. Let them do it, and they would be sure to reap vexation, disappointment, and misery. But by the removal of Moses just at the very time when they probably felt they could so ill spare him, they were taught the salutary lesson that their trust should not be put in man, but in God. It is only the confidence that clings to God which is, without fail, rewarded. The mind of God is set upon men finding this out for themselves, and as it is for their eternal interest so to do, by many a painful providence He works out His will. III. IN THE DEATH OF MOSES THERE IS WITNESS TO THE KINDNESS OF GOD. The Lord declared that Moses should not enter the land, and He strictly kept His word. But He tempered His severity with kindness. He would not tread the land, but he would be permitted to see it. How very fatherly this was. Your child forfeits a certain privilege. You won't break your word and give it him. But in your fatherly relentings you substitute some other privilege for it. Thus in His kindness dealt the Lord with Moses. And if we project our minds into the future, his removal seems to be all of kindness. He was now an old man, and his life had been hard, disappointing, and sad. Surely it was kind to call him home, to rest and to blessedness beyond his utmost hopes, and to joys unspeakable and full of glory. Death was to him not the call to destruction, but to a higher and better life. As his Lord the Most High declared, he must die; as his Father, He "gathered" him unto his people. There was another thing in connection with his death that expressed the kindness, or the kindliness, of the Lord. We know we must die, and, knowing this, we have the wish to die among our own; to be tended in our last moments by our dearest ones on earth; and when all is over to be laid beside our kindred.

> "As if the quiet bones were blest
> Among familiar names to rest."

And whilst this is true, it is also as true we have a wish that, should any of our household be "sick unto death," they should die with us. If you should hear of your absent child being dangerously ill, your first thought would be to get him home, and if too ill to be removed, you would then arrange to go to him and nurse him, wherever he might be, until death relieved you of your sad but loved charge. I heard a daughter say, not long since, speaking of her mother's long and fatal illness, "I am so thankful I was able to nurse her, and do everything for her with my own hands all the way through to the end." And when she spoke the words it was quite evident the facts she stated gave her the deepest satisfaction and joy. So Moses was well cared for in his death, for God, as a comforting mother, took him into His own care, and laid him down to rest. IV. IN THE DEATH OF MOSES WE HAVE WITNESS TO THE GLORY OF THE GRACE OF GOD. Shakespeare says of one of his characters:—

> "Nothing in his life
> Became him like the leaving it";

and with truth we might say the same of Moses. At the last he was at his best. The forty years in Midian were doubtless all needed to prepare him for his work on earth; the forty years of hard service and discipline in the wilderness were as surely necessary to meeten him for the higher life and service of heaven. But now, when they had come and gone, he was quite ready, through God's grace, and thus his death, so beautiful in its spirit of entire self-abnegation, was a witness to the glory of that wonder-working grace. This morning I went into my garden. The seeds sown a few weeks ago were showing themselves in new life and form above the ground. "This," said I, "is the sun's doing. How wonderful is the power of the sun!" But I looked forward. There should come a day when the plants around me should be ripe and ready for the use of my family. The sun should thus do greater things—by augmented heat and power it should perfect the life it had quickened. So is it

with the grace of God. It diminishes not, but increases as it shines upon the heart it has quickened until perfection is reached; and so the end is better than the beginning. (*Adam Scott.*) *The death of good men*:—The honourable character here given to Moses is equal to that of angels, the highest order of creatures. As a servant he was faithful in all the house of God (Heb. iii. 5). Having been faithful to the death, he went to receive the crown of life. The memory of the just is blessed. I. HOW THE WILL OF GOD IS CONCERNED IN OUR DEATH. 1. The general sentence of mortality is fixed by God (Gen. iii. 19; Eccles. xii. 7; Heb. ix. 27). It is the common lot of all men. 2. Death receives its peculiar commission from God. It cannot strike but by His order or permission. Life and death are in His hand. 3. The time is fixed by His will. All the care and skill of man cannot prolong life for a moment. 4. The place where is fixed by His will. Some die by sea, others on land; every one in his place according to the will of God. 5. The means of death, natural, violent, or casual, are all under His direction. What appears chance or accident to us is all certain and determined with Him. 6. The manner and circumstances of our death are all determined by the will of God. Some are taken away suddenly, and by surprise, others slowly and by degrees; some with strong pain, others with great ease. II. WHAT SORT OF OBEDIENCE WE OUGHT TO YIELD TO THE WILL OF GOD IN DYING. 1. There are many things not inconsistent with this obedience to the will of God. (1) Every one's life is a charge committed by God to him, and he must account for his care in preserving it. Therefore he is bound by all lawful means to cherish and support it. (2) Conditional requests for sparing mercy are not inconsistent with obedience to the will of God (Luke xxii. 42; Psa. xxxix. 13). (3) A due care in settling our worldly affairs before we die is consistent with our obedience to the will of God in taking us away. It was the command of God Himself to Hezekiah (Isa. xxxviii. 1). (4) A zealous pursuit of religious concerns to the last well consists with our obedience to the will of God in dying. (5) The strugglings of nature against the bitterness of death may consist with our obedience in dying. 2. Having seen what is not inconsistent with the obedience here exemplified, let us next consider what it implies—(1) A quiet expecting and waiting for God's call. The circumstances of a person's life may be so tormenting that he would be glad to find the grave and seek refuge in death. Here God cuts out work for patience, and this being the last trial patience may here find its perfect work. (2) An humble bearing of God's fatherly displeasure, if there should be any tokens of it upon us in our death. (3) A final farewell to the world, and particularly to those things that render a stay in it most desirable. (4) A quitting this mortal flesh in hopes of a happy resurrection. (5) A willing surrender of our soul into His hands from whom it originally came. (6) An awful and serious preparation to give an account of ourselves unto God. (7) A thankful entertainment of our dismission from the body as a real privilege. (8) A vigorous exercise of faith with respect to an unseen state, when God is leading us on to it (Heb. xi. 8). III. WHY WE OUGHT TO YIELD THE OBEDIENCE THAT HAS BEEN EXPLAINED. 1. God is our supreme and absolute Lord, who hath an indisputable right to our obedience, and we hold our life by no other tenure but His will. 2. Consider we are His servants, and contradict our own profession if we die not according to His will. 3. Consider the example that our Lord hath given us in this. Should a believer in Christ be backward to follow Him, or seek another road to heaven than that which He hath taken? 4. Another reason why we should yield obedience to the will of God in dying is, that God's time is the fittest and best. 5. This is the finishing act of our obedience to God in this world; it is but holding out a little longer, and then our work goes with us, and our reward is before us (Rev. xiv. 13). 6. Dying with resignation to the good will of God will have the greatest influence on those we leave behind us. 7. This is an act of obedience from which the chiefest favourites of heaven are not exempted. Abraham is dead. Moses and the prophets are dead. We are not better than our fathers who are dead. APPLICATION—1. If it be our duty to be obedient even unto death, how much more to submit to all those evils that precede it! 2. If dying according to the will of God is so necessary an act of obedience, it is an act of great goodness in God to spare us; to allow time to prepare those who are not ready. 3. Here we may see that they finish a good life with an honourable death who die in obedience to the will of God, and leave a grateful remembrance behind them. Let us then be exhorted—(1) To make death familiar to our minds by frequent forethought. (2) To look upon all the enjoyments of life with a holy indifference, and respect them no further than as mere conveniences appointed by God to help us on in our work and way to a better

world. (3) To live upon the death of Christ as the only foundation of our hope. (*W. Beat.*) *The death of Moses*:—I. THE SOVEREIGN OF THE WORLD CAN CARRY ON HIS PURPOSES IN IT WITHOUT THE HELP OF MAN. Moses was taken away from Israel just at the time when he seemed most necessary to them. How mysterious was this dispensation! And yet the occurrences of every day are involved in almost equal mystery. Do we ask why He acts thus? To teach us our nothingness and His greatness; to show the world that although He is pleased to employ human instruments, He does not need them; to let His creatures see that, even if the hosts of heaven should cease to obey His word, He could form other hands to do His work, or accomplish His purposes without any instrument at all. II. SIN IS EXCEEDINGLY HATEFUL IN THE SIGHT OF GOD, AND HE WILL MARK IT WITH HIS DISPLEASURE EVEN IN HIS MOST BELOVED SERVANTS. Remember that one transgression excluded the faithful Moses from Canaan; what then will be your doom, laden as you are with so many sins, and so hardened in guilt? III. THE AFFLICTED SERVANT OF GOD IS GENERALLY ENABLED TO SUBMIT WITH RESIGNATION TO THE CHASTISEMENTS OF HIS HEAVENLY FATHER. It is not indeed wrong to feel the smart of afflictions. Insensibility under them is not only unnatural, but sinful, for it subverts the purposes for which they were sent to us. Moses felt sorrow and pain when he was forbidden to enter Canaan; and a greater than Moses had His soul troubled at the thought of approaching suffering. Neither is it wrong to beseech the Almighty to withdraw from us the chastisements with which He has visited us. Moses besought the Lord that he might be allowed to go over Jordan; and what was the language of the suffering Jesus? (Matt. xxvi. 39.) We see no insensibility here, no despising of the chastening of the Lord. We see, on the contrary, the liveliest, the deepest feeling. But then this feeling is attended with a spirit of entire submission. IV. THE DEATH OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD, WITH ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES CONNECTED WITH IT, IS ORDERED BY THE LORD. Our Bibles tell us that He disposes of the meanest and smallest concerns of our life; how much more then of life itself! V. THE PEOPLE OF GOD MAY CONFIDENTLY EXPECT FROM HIM SUPPORT AND COMFORT IN THE HOUR OF DEATH. In such an hour, flesh and heart must fail; the soul must need support; and they who fear the Lord shall find all the grace and help they need. He who was with Moses will be with them, as "the strength of their heart and their portion for ever." (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *The death of Moses*:—A cloud of mystery and awe envelops the death of this great prophet and lawgiver. No other death recorded in Scripture approaches it or is parallel to it. Through the mystery we feel that no other death would have been so fitting; and why? 1. All his life Moses had been a solitary man, alone in the world, with no one to share his great thought and responsibilities. He had lived alone with God; it was fitting that he should die alone with God. 2. His had been an utterly humble, unselfish life; he had always sacrificed himself for the good of the people; he left his greatness to join his countrymen in their degrading servitude; he forgot himself to avenge their wrongs. 3. Of every other great leader of Israel we read that "he was buried with his fathers"—with loving, reverent hands laid in the sepulchre of his fathers—and that a tomb was raised over him which recalled the memory of his greatness through long generations. Moses, the greatest of them all—warrior, statesman, poet—was buried far away from his brethren. No loving human hands laid him in his last abode; the very place of it was unknown. 4. Moses is the noblest example of unselfish religion—of unselfish love to God and man—to be found in the Bible, nay, I believe, in the whole history of man. Such self-forgetfulness and unselfishness is never sad and disappointed. Such a soul does not seek happiness; it finds happiness. It is morbidness, it is self-introspection, which makes men melancholy and disappointed. God and love are heaven. (*E. J. Rose, M.A.*) *The death of Moses*:—His thoughts would naturally be of two kinds. One class of them would make him reluctant to die; the other would tend to reconcile him to death. I. HE WOULD BE UNWILLING TO DIE because—1. He had nearly, but not quite, accomplished a great work. Many a patriot, many a philanthropist, many a leader of thought, has felt that life was of value to him only as it enabled him to carry to completion, or to place on a secure footing, the one work of his life. 2. He was still in the possession of health and vigour. The work he had in hand was of the noblest order. He seemed to be the only man capable of doing it. And he felt himself still adequate to its demands. 3. Think, too, of the prospect that lay stretched out before him, and judge what death must have seemed to him at such a moment. Never had he seen this earth so fair or so glorious. After all the toils and perils of the wilderness, is he not to grasp the prize, the hope of which had so

much strengthened him to bear them? 4. Still more unwelcome would the summons be to quit the world thus early, because it was a sign of God's displeasure with him (Numb. xx. 10–12; Deut. xxxii. 48–52). "The sting of death is sin." Moses knew that but for the displeasure of God he might have continued to live, and might have died long hence under happier auspices. 5. He had to die alone. II. THINGS THAT WOULD GO FAR TO RECONCILE HIM TO DEATH. 1. He had the favour and presence of God. His fault was forgiven. Moreover, the presence of God was granted him. 2. His work, unfinished as it seemed, was really done. His successor was already named and consecrated. 3. He is leaving all sorrow, especially all sin, behind him. To die was, to him, gain. 4. He is about to enter a brighter world than that which he is leaving. (*B. P. Pratten, B.A.*) *The death of Moses:*—I. A LONELY DEATH. All death to a great extent must necessarily be so. There is only one Friend who can go through the death valley, and if He is with us we may make it ring with the voice of triumph. II. A PEACEFUL DEATH. Death always may be encountered without dread when heaven can be anticipated without fear. III. PROBABLY A SUDDEN DEATH. To the worldly man there is something peculiarly shocking in a sudden death; to the Christian it is often the reverse. How much is he spared! Korniloff, the Russian general, who fell at the capture of Sebastopol, said it was a pleasant thing to die when the conscience was quiet. But that can alone be through the blood of Jesus. IV. A DEATH PRECEDED BY PISGAH GLANCES. This is often the case with the truly good man. Says Dr. Payson, when approaching the end of life: "The celestial city is full in view. Its glories beam upon me; its breezes fan me; its odours are wafted to me; its sounds strike upon my ears; and its spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the river of death, which now appears as an insignificant rill that may be crossed at a single step when God gives permission. The Sun of Righteousness is gradually drawing nearer, appearing larger and brighter as He approaches; and now He fills the whole hemisphere, pouring forth a flood of glory in which I seem to float like an insect in His beams; exulting, yet almost trembling whilst I gaze on this excessive brightness, and wonder with unutterable wonder why God should thus deign to shine on a sinful worm." (*G. Short, B.A.*) *The death of Moses:*—I. ACCORDING TO THE WARNING OF THE LORD. 1. His death was long foreseen. Have not we also had many warnings? 2. It was exceedingly disappointing. Are we ready to say as to our most cherished hope, "Thy will be done"? Are we holding our life's dearest purpose with a loose hand? It will be our wisdom so to do. 3. Apparently it was a severe chastisement. God will be sanctified in them that come near to Him. 4. It seemed a great calamity. He had been tutored by a long experience, chastened by a marvellous discipline, and elevated by a sublime intercourse with God; and yet must he die. 5. It was a sentence not to be averted by prayer. II. ACCORDING TO THE DIVINE APPOINTMENT. 1. All the details of the death of Moses had been ordered by the Lord. 2. According to an appointment which is very general amongst God's people. Most men have to sow that others may reap. Let us be content to do our part in laying the foundation. 3. For a deep dispensational reason. The law may bring us to the borders of the promise, but only Joshua or Jesus can bring us into grace and truth. We also shall in life and death answer some gracious purpose of the Lord. Are we not glad to have it so? III. ACCORDING TO THE LOVING WISDOM OF THE LORD. 1. By so doing he preserved his identity with the people for whom he had cared. For their sakes he had forsaken a princedom in Egypt, and now for their sakes he loses a home in Palestine. Are not we satisfied to take our lot with the holy men and women who already sleep in Jesus? 2. He was thus released from all further trial. Do you grieve that the battle is fought, and the victory is won for ever? We also in our deaths shall find the end of toil and labour, and the rest will be glorious. 3. He was relieved from a fresh strain upon him, which would have been involved in the conquest of Canaan. He would have crossed the Jordan not to enjoy the country but to fight for it: was he not well out of so severe a struggle? You think of the clusters of Eshcol, but I am thinking of the sieges and the battles. Was it so very desirable to be there? Would Moses really have desired that dreadful fray? IV. The way in which he died abundantly displays THE GRACE OF GOD. 1. After Moses had been well assured that he must die, you never hear a complaint of it, nor even a prayer against it. 2. Most fitly the old man called forth all his energies to finish his work. Is not this a fine fruit of grace? Oh, that we may bear it! 3. He did all that remained to be done, and then went willingly to his end. As flowers before they shed their leaves pour out all their perfumes, so let us pour out our

souls unto the Lord. V. ACCORDING TO THE DIVINE FAVOUR. His death leaves nothing to regret; neither is any desirable thing lacking. Failing to pass over Jordan seems a mere pin's prick, in presence of the honours which surrounded his departing hours. He now saw that he had fulfilled his destiny, and was not as a pillar broken short. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The death of Moses*:—I. ENTIRE RESIGNATION TO THE WILL OF GOD. We are making the voyage of life like passengers in a ship. Sleeping or waking, they are proceeding towards their destined port; and will soon reach it, whether they shall have crossed a calm or a stormy ocean. The zealous servant of his God and Saviour will be occupied in his post of duty, committing the period of his removal to the appointment of that providence which allows not a hair of his head to fall unnoticed to the ground. II. THE FULL EXERCISE OF FAITH AND HOPE. Sinking nature, indeed, will tremble at the prospect of dissolution, although faith may feel the support of the everlasting arms: as he who stands upon a lofty tower may shudder at the depths below him, although the battlements effectually prevent his fall. But if that God and Saviour, whom by a deliberate act of faith he has chosen as his heritage, be with him, he will feel no evil, though he walk through the valley of the shadow of death. The higher the sun rises above the earth the more perfectly does it scatter the clouds and darkness which have usurped the sky. And the more firmly the hope of the Gospel is established within the soul, the more surely will it be submissive to that decree which comes to remove it into the awful realities of the invisible world—the more effectually will it triumph over the last assault, in that confidence of hope which the grace of faith can alone bestow. III. A resignation thus arising from faith and hope ENABLED MOSES TO ASCEND MOUNT NEBO, AND TO DIE IN PEACE AND COMFORT. He who passes a life of faith, and usefulness, and holiness, like Hooker, will usually be permitted to adopt his language at the approach of death. "I have long been preparing to leave this world, and gathering comfort for the dreadful hour of making my account with God, which I now apprehend to be near, and though I have by His grace loved Him in my youth, and feared Him in my age, and laboured to have a conscience void of offence to Him and to all men, yet, if Thou, O Lord, be extreme to mark what I have done amiss, who can abide it? And therefore where I have failed, Lord show mercy unto me; for I plead not my righteousness, but the forgiveness of my unrighteousness, for His merits who died to purchase a pardon for penitent sinners. I am at peace with all men, and God is at peace with me; from which blessed assurance I feel an inward joy which this world can neither give nor take away." IV. The dying moments of Moses were distinguished by EARNEST ZEAL FOR THE WELFARE OF ISRAEL AND THE GLORY OF GOD. (*R. P. Buddicorn, M.A.*) *Loneliness in death*:—Moses had often been above before, and alone with God; so was prepared for this loneliness in facing eternity. A mountain is at once a natural scene and fit emblem of solitude. I. HIS ABSOLUTE SOLITUDE IN DEATH. He dies in the very midst of robustness and vigour, and so consciously feels the ties of life all breaking; and, with the sense of separation from all that was seen and familiar, steps consciously into the unseen and the unknown. II. THE REAL SOLITARINESS IN EVERY DEATH. In death men are, and ever must be, alone; because of—1. The senses that are lost. Dim eye, dull ear, numbed touch, inarticulate tongue, distance the dying from all around, however faithful and loving. 2. The faculties gained keenness of intuition. There is an elevation in the death of many a Christly one that as much separates them from the living, as does the dimming of the senses by which they were wont to commune with them. Lessons—1. Learn in life by occasional solitude to be independent of men. Then, when in dying, human help is gone, there will be no sudden terrible surprise. 2. Seek in life companionship with God in solitude. Then, having often been alone with God before, loneliness with Him in death will be no terrifying experience, but the repetition and consummation of some of the best experiences of life. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *Saintset on Nebo*:—We have here a picture of how good men die. 1. They go to death. Not driven or dragged. Feel it to be a call from God to go and meet Him, and, being prepared, go forth willingly and with joy. 2. They go up to death. Not a leap in the dark. They spring up into life and light, holiness and heaven. 3. They go up alone to death. Have to leave nearest and dearest earthly friends behind. I. WHAT WOULD THE CLOSING SCENE IN THE LIFE OF MOSES TEACH HIM? 1. That his life, though faulty, had not been a failure. God accepted it, and admitted him to the rest and recompense of the skies. 2. That though he had incurred the Divine displeasure, yet he had not forfeited the Divine favour. We may suffer disadvantage all through life, and loss at close of it by wrong-doing;

but if we repent of the wrong, and are restored to God's favour, and retained in His service, He will still lead us on, and take us by the hand at last, and give us an abundant entrance into His everlasting joy. 3. That amid all his fears and anxieties he need not dread entering upon the solemn and nearing future. II. WHAT DOES THE CLOSING SCENE IN THE LIFE OF MOSES TEACH US? 1. The incompleteness of human life. 2. The illusiveness of human life. We go in quest of rest and reward, and we know we shall secure them if we are firm and faithful; but how the goal we are seeking seems frequently to recede from us, and the prize we would secure seems to elude our grasp! 3. The inscrutableness of human life. The unexpected and apparently untimely departure of good and useful men fills us with wonder and dismay. We looked for continuation and completion of service; but lo, we have seen, instead, the deserted post and the vacant chair. (*F. W. Brown.*) *The last stage of a long journey*:—I. CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN. Slowly he ascends the mountain, climbing alone, while the tear-dimmed eyes of Israel watch his ascent. Up! up! up! he goes. Every step takes him from those he loves. Every step carries him into a region of divinest mysteries. But what thoughts surge and rush in his mind as he upward toils? He is leaving Israel, the nation whose cradle he has tended, whose ill-humours and impetuosities he has borne. Only God knows what he has suffered for those people through these forty long years. If I ask any mother or father here about the children they have lost, I shall be told that the child for whom they lost most rest—the child for whom they sacrificed the most—was the one that got most about their heart-strings. So Moses finds, it is awful to tear himself away at that Divine behest and leave them there, while he goes up yonder to die. He is leaving his life-work. It is an awful thing to feel that your life-work is done! How does Moses feel as he climbs those slopes? Some one else is stepping into his place that now is his no more. God has superannuated him! Of course, there are people who are not concerned about all this. They belong to the regiment of the lazies! and a tremendously strong regiment it is. They know nothing about these troubles. They know not the agony of leaving a Sunday school class, or of being compelled to abandon preaching. Such people cannot enter into the feelings of Moses at this time. II. VIEWING THE LAND. III. THE OPENED EYES. Instead of dusky Arabs, he sees a company of white-robed angels, and his ear begins to catch the music of their song. And old Jericho, which had seemed common-place enough, now seems larger, brighter than before. Its walls are sparkling with jewels; its gates gleam pearly white; and the amethystine glory comes streaming over its turrets. The land seems full of light, and joy, and bliss. The angel-band is swelling in numbers. The distant hills are radiant with eternal light. The glory heightens. God is opening his eyes, and the transient things of earth are giving way to the things which are eternal. There stands the "city whose Builder and Maker is God." His soul flutters as a caged bird that struggles to get free. And God is releasing that noble soul. The physical senses are being supported by the spiritual. Insensibly God carries him over the border. He knows not the moment when he ceases to be mortal, and becomes like the angels of God. All the horror of the thing, which makes the heart sick, he misses. He enters, at God's bidding, a larger and more satisfying life, by a path that is glorious with the Divine presence. With Him conversing, he forgets that this is death. IV. IN MEMORIAM. Moses has gone, but in every generation God keeps up the succession of His saints, who minister to Him here awhile in our sight, and then pass to the higher ministries of Jerusalem above. (*F. Denton.*) *The death of Moses*:—Moses had endured to the full the loneliness which is the penalty of greatness. His lofty spirit, austere and firm, like the granite peak of Sinai, rose solitary, like it, above the lower heights, and was often swathed, like it, in the separating cloud, the symbol of a present God. Now Miriam was gone, and Aaron slept on Hor, and all the old familiar faces were memories. The summons to come up to Pisgah and die would not be unwelcome. He had lived alone; alone he climbed the mountain, with natural force unabated, the people watching him as he went up; alone he is to die,—a fitting close to such a life. He had lived on the heights, he shall not die on the plain. He had lived leaning on God only; God only shall be with him at last. 1. Note, then, the vision to the dying leader of the unattained country, which had been his goal in all his work. How wistful and long would be the gaze! The sublime and rigid self-repression of his life would not desert him at the last; and we may well believe that regret at his own exclusion would be swallowed up in thankfulness that the prize was so near and so rich. "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salva-

tion," would be the voice of his heart. God did not show him the land to tantalise him with the vision of what he had missed for himself, but to cheer him with the assurance of what he had won for his people. Moses had his portion when he saw the land, and was satisfied. That Pisgah sight has become the type of the large visions of the future which God often gives to solace His faithful servants at last. "There must be wisdom with great death," and when the dust of conflict is laid the prospect widens, and the cleared eye sees the goodly land to which the devious marches have been leading more hopefully and truly than while yet busied in looking to the dangers of the present, and picking firm ground for the next step. All epoch-making men have the fate of Moses. They spend their lives in leading rebellious and reluctant feet towards some fair ideal, and die when apparently on the verge of realising it. In our own little lives the same law holds good. "One soweth, and another reapeth." Rarely does any man complete his life's purpose. 2. Note the solitary death and hidden grave. The lawgiver, whose message was "The wages of sin are death," does himself, in the very manner of his own death, exemplify its two characteristics which smite most upon the heart,—its mystery and its solitude. And the same lessons are taught by that hidden grave. As Thomas Fuller says somewhere, "God first buried him, and then buried his grave." Some say that the intention was to prevent idolatrous reverence by the Israelites; but there is no sign that, amid all their aberrations, they ever had any tendency that way. The graves of the patriarchs at Hebron and of the kings at Jerusalem were left undistinguished, and apparently little regarded. Some have thought that the mystery of his sepulchre points to his resurrection, or translation, and have found confirmation in the story of his appearance with Elijah at the transfiguration. But that is pure imagination. Was the hiding of the grave a purpose of God's, or simply a result of his being laid to rest outside the promised land, which had no further intention? He was not to enter it, not even in death. The bones of Joseph were carried up thither, but Moses was to lie where he died, amid foreigners, of course; then, years passed before Israel could again venture into Moab; and even if any had ever known the spot, the knowledge would not be transmitted. That lonely and forgotten grave among the savage cliffs was in keeping with the whole character and work of him who lay there. Contrast that grave with the sepulchre in the garden where Jesus lay, close by a city wall, guarded by foes, haunted by troops of weeping friends, visited by a great light of angel faces. The one was hidden and solitary, as teaching the loneliness of death; the other revealed light in the darkness, and companionship in the loneliness. The one faded from men's memory because it was nothing to any man; no impulses, nor hopes, nor gifts could come from it. The other for ever draws hearts and memories, because in it was wrought out the victory in which all our hopes are rooted. 3. Note how soon the place of the leader is filled. A month finishes the mourning. The new generation could not be expected to feel to him as to men of their own time. To them his death would seem natural, and not difficult to bear. He had lingered long, like some harder peak which survives the weathering that crumbles softer rock around. But, none the less, the young life round him would feel that he belonged to the past. It is the fate of all who outlast their generation. New work called for new men. We cannot fancy the lawgiver wielding the commander's sword, any more than Joshua grasping Moses' rod. Smaller, rougher instruments were best for the fresh phase of service. A plain soldier, true and keen as his own sword, but incapable of the large revelations which the spirit of the legislator had been capacious enough to receive, was the man wanted now. So Moses goes home and takes his wages, and Joshua steps into his place. The smaller man completes the mighty torso which the greater man left half hewn. God has all sorts of tools in His great tool-chest. Each is good for one bit of the work, and is put away when that is done, and all are wanted before it is finished. The greatest has his limitations and his period of service. There is but one name which endures forever. Moses dies on Pisgah, and Aaron on Hor; but Christ lives for ever, and is able to lead all generations, and finish God's work. 4. Note that, after all, the place of the great leader remains empty. We do not know when the last words of Deuteronomy were written; but the lower down they are brought, the more significant is their witness to the unapproachable superiority of Moses. After-ages looked back to him as the high-water mark of God's communications to men, and found none in all the long series of kings, priests, psalmists, or even prophets who had stood so close to God, or heard such messages from Him, or wrought such deeds by Him. Others had but developed his teachings or restored his law. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Vers. 6–12. **He buried him, . . . but no man knoweth of his sepulchre.**—*The burial of Moses*:—I. God will have no one, living or dead, to stand between His creatures and Himself. II. God wishes men to see something more left of His servants than the outward shrine. III. God takes the honour of His servants into His own keeping. IV. God would teach men that He has a relation to His servants which extends beyond their death. V. God would teach men from the very first that His regard is not confined to any chosen soil. VI. The seeming failure in a true life may have at last a complete compensation. (*John Ker, D.D.*) *Divine burial*:—The same God that, by the hands of His angels, carried up the soul of Moses to his glory, doth also, by the hand of His angels, carry his body down into the valley of Moab to his sepulchre. Those hands which had taken the law from Him, those eyes that had seen His presence, those lips that had conferred so oft with Him, that face that did so shine with the beams of His glory, may not be neglected when the soul is gone. He that took charge of his birth, and preservation in the reeds, takes charge of his carriage out of the world. The care of God ceaseth not over His own, either in death, or after it. How justly do we take care of the comely burials of our friends, when God Himself gives us this example! (*Bp. Joseph Hall.*) *The burial of Moses*:—Never had any man a more wonderful burial. No human hands assisted at it. It was not left for the winds to cover with the dust of the mountain the stalwart form of the eagle-eyed leader; nor for the dew and the rain to moisten it; nor for the sunshine to waste and bleach it. It was not left unburied. Moses died, according to the word of the Lord, and He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab. (*Alexander R. Thompson, D.D.*) **So the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.**—*The worker removed—the work continued*:—And when these days were ended, straightway the career of Joshua opens, the tide of things rolls forward, and the march of events sweeps on. And is this the end of it all so far as Moses is concerned? We cannot think it. In some churchyards we see the broken column, and that we always understand as the emblem of a broken life. Where are the lives which are not broken? And over what graves shall the broken column not be raised? "Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there," &c. That life falls; but the thread of its conjunction with the eternal purpose is not broken; that does not fall with the life. The streamlet fails, but the mighty river rolls on. Moses dies, and is buried, but Joshua takes up the staff and stretches forth the hand. What is the life of Moses, or any other life? It is safe with God, if in purpose, at least, and intention and drift it be lived in Him and for Him—safe with God while its mortal courses are running, and safe with Him when they are stayed. But while they are running He works by them, and when they are stayed He works without them, and by other lives. And it is when the soul of the man is in harmony with this fact, and governs itself by it, as the soul of Moses was in harmony with it—it is then that the true life will be lived, and no shadow of fear will rest upon the future. But indeed it is a great thing of which we speak, this harmony of mind with the purpose of God. It is the highest life of man. It is the fruit of long patience and much strife, and the triumph of the grace of the Almighty Spirit within the human soul. (*D. Wright, M.A.*) **Joshua . . . was full of the spirit of wisdom.**—*Joshua and Moses*:—We have here a very honourable encomium both of Moses and Joshua; each has his praise, and should have. It is ungrateful so to magnify our living friends as to forget the merits of those that are gone, to whose memories there is a debt of honour due. All the respects must not be paid to the rising sun; and on the other hand, it is unjust so to cry up the merits of those that are gone, as to despise the benefit we have in those that survive and succeed them. Let God be glorified in both as here. 1. Joshua is praised as a man admirably well qualified for the work to which he was called. (1) God fitted him for it. Herein he was a type of Christ, in whom are hid the treasures of wisdom. (2) Moses by the Divine appointment had ordained him to it; he had laid his hands upon him, so substituting him to be his successor, and praying to God to qualify him for the service to which He had called him. And this comes in as a reason why God gave him a more than ordinary spirit of wisdom, because his designation to the government was God's own act; and those whom God employs, He will in some measure make fit for the employment. When the bodily presence of Christ withdrew from His Church, He prayed the Father to send another Comforter; and obtained what He prayed for. (3) The people cheerfully owned him, and submitted to him. An interest in the affections of the people is a great advantage, and a great encouragement to those that are called to public trusts of what kind soever. It was also a great mercy to

the people, that when Moses was dead they were not as sheep having no shepherd. Moses is praised (vers. 10, 11, 12), and with good reason. (1) He was indeed a very great man upon two accounts: among others—(*a*) His intimacy with the God of nature; God knew him face to face, and so he knew God (Numb. xii. 8). He saw more of the glory of God than any (at least) of the Old Testament saints ever did; he had more free and frequent access to God; and was spoken to, not in dreams and visions and slumberings on the bed, but when he was awake, and standing before the cherubims. (*b*) His interest and power in the kingdom of nature. He was greater than any other of the prophets of the Old Testament; though they were men of great interest in heaven, and great influence upon earth, yet they were none of them to be compared with this great man; none of them either evidenced or executed a commission from heaven so as Moses did. (*Matthew Henry, D.D.*)

Printed by MORRISON & GIBB LIMITED, *Edinburgh.*