

THE
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE
VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.,
DEAN OF GLOUCESTER;

AND BY THE
REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

WITH
INTRODUCTIONS

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EXODUS.

Exposition and Homiletics

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THE BOOK OF EXODUS.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XV

Vers. 1—21.—THE SONG OF MOSES. Full of gratitude, joy, and happiness—burning with a desire to vent in devotional utterance of the most fitting kind, his intense and almost ecstatic feelings, Moses, who to his other extraordinary powers, added the sublime gift of poesy, composed, shortly after the passage, a hymn of praise, and sang it with a chorus of the people as a thanksgiving to the Almighty. The hymn itself is generally allowed to be one of transcendent beauty. Deriving probably the general outline of its form and character of its rhythm from the Egyptian poetry of the time, with which Moses had been familiar from his youth, it embodies ideas purely Hebrew, and remarkable for grandeur, simplicity, and depth. Naturally, as being the first outburst of the poetical genius of the nation, and also connected with the very commencement of the national life, it exerted the most important formative influence upon the later Hebrew poetic style, furnishing a pattern to the later lyric poets, from which they but rarely

deviated. The “parallelism of the members,” which from the middle of the last century has been acknowledged to be the only real rhythmical law of Hebrew poetry, with its three forms of “synonymous, antithetic, and synthetic (or verbal) parallelism” is here found almost as distinctly marked as in any of the later compositions. At the same time, a greater lyrical freedom is observable than was afterwards practised. The song divides itself primarily into two parts:—the first (vers. 1—12) *retrospective*, celebrating the recent deliverance; the second (vers. 13—18) *prospective*, describing the effects that would flow from the deliverance in future time. The verbs indeed of the second part are at first grammatical preterites; but (as Kalisch observes) they are “according to the sense, futures”—their past form denoting only that the prophet sees the events revealed to him as though they were already accomplished. Hence, after a time, he slides into the future (ver. 16). The second part is continuous, and has no marked break: the first sub-divides into three unequal portions, each commencing with an address to Jehovah, and each termi-

nating with a statement of the great fact, that the Egyptians were swallowed up. These three portions are: 1. vers. 2—5, "The Lord is my strength," to "They sank into the bottom as a stone." 2. vers. 6—10, "Thy right hand, O Lord," to "They sank like lead in the mighty waters." 3. vers. 11—12, "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord," to "The earth swallowed them." The first verse stands separate from the whole, as an introduction, and at the same time as the refrain. Moses and a chorus of men commenced their chant with it, and probably proceeded to the end of ver. 5, when Miriam, with the Hebrew women, interposed with a repetition of the refrain (see ver. 21). The chant of the males was resumed and carried to the close of ver. 10, when again the refrain came in. It was further repeated after ver. 12; and once more at the close of the whole "song." Similar refrains, or burdens, are found in Egyptian melodies.

PART I.

Ver. 1.—*Then sang Moses and the children of Israel.* It is in accordance with the general modesty of Moses, that he says nothing of the composition of the "song." No serious doubt of his authorship has ever been entertained; but the general belief rests on the improbability of there having been among the Israelites a second literary genius of the highest order, without any mention being made of him. The joint-singing by Moses and "the children of Israel" implies the previous training of a choir, and would seem to show that the Israelites remained for some days encamped at the point which they had occupied on quitting the bed of the sea. *He hath triumphed gloriously.* Literally, "He is gloriously glorious." (*ἐνδόξως δεδόξαται*, LXX.) *The horse and his rider.* Chariots, not cavalry, are in the mind of the writer.

Ver. 2.—*The Lord is my strength and song.* Literally, "My strength and song is Jah." The name *Jah* had not previously been used. It is commonly regarded as an abbreviated form of Jehovah, and was the form generally used in the termination of names, as Abijah, Ahaziah, Hezekiah, Zedekiah, Mount Moriah, etc. It takes the place of "Jehovah" here, probably on account of the rhythm. *He is become my salvation.* Literally, "He has been to me for salvation," *i.e.*, "He has delivered me out of the hand of Pharaoh and his host, and so saved me from destruction." *I will prepare him a habitation.* This translation seems to have come originally from the Targum of Onkelos, who paraphrases the

single word of the text by the phrase "I will build him a sanctuary." The meaning is a possible one: but most modern commentators prefer to connect the verb used with a root meaning "beautiful," and translate "I will glorify him." (So Gesenius, Rosenmüller, Knobel, Kalisch, Cook. The LXX have *δοξάσω*. The Vulgate has *glorificabo*. The Syrian and Coptic versions agree, as do also the Targums of Jonathan and of Jerusalem.) *The God of my father.* See the comment on ch. iii. 6.

Ver. 3.—*A man of war.* A strong anthropomorphism, but one that could scarcely be misunderstood—"a man of war," meaning commonly "a warrior," or "one mighty in battle" (Ps. xxiv. 8). God's might had just been proved, in that he alone had discomfited and destroyed the most potent armed force in the whole world. *The Lord is his name.* Jehovah—the alone-existing One "truly describes him," before whom all other existence fades and falls into nothingness. On the full meaning of the name, see the comment on ch. iii. 14.

Ver. 4.—*Pharaoh's chariots and his host.* The "host" of this passage is not the "army" of ch. xiv. 9, though in the original the same word is used, but the whole multitude of those who rode in the chariots, and were drowned in the sea. *Hath he cast.* Or "hurled." The verb commonly expresses the hurling of a javelin or the shooting of an arrow. *His chosen captains.* Compare ch. xiv. 7. *Are drowned.* Literally, "were submerged." The word describes the act of drowning, not the state of lying drowned in the depths of the sea.

Ver. 5.—*The depths have covered them.* Rather "covered them." Into the bottom. Literally, "into the abyss." Like a stone. The warriors who fought in chariots commonly wore coats of mail, composed of bronze plates sewn on to a linen base, and overlapping one another. The coats covered the arms to the elbow, and descended nearly to the knee. They must have been exceedingly heavy: and the warrior who wore one must have sunk at once, without a struggle, like a stone or a lump of lead (verse 10).

Vers. 6—18.—Between verses 5 and 6, Miriam's chorus was probably interposed—"Sing ye unto the Lord," etc. Then began the second strophe or stanza of the ode. It is, in the main, expansive and exegetical of the preceding stanza, going into greater detail, and drawing a contrast between the antecedent pride and arrogance of the Egyptians and their subsequent miserable fall.

Ver. 6.—*Thy right hand, O Lord.* Another anthropomorphism, here used for the first time. Compare ver. 12; Deut. xxxiii. 2; and the

Paulina, pamm. Is become glorious. Or "is glorious." Kalisch rightly regards verses 6 and 7 as containing "a general description of God's omnipotence and justice," and notes that the poet only returns to the subject of the Egyptians in verse 8. So also Knobel. **Hath dashed in pieces.** Rather, "Will dash in pieces," or "dashes in pieces"—a general statement.

Ver. 7.—**Thou hast overthrown**, etc. Here again the verbs are future. Translate—"thou wilt overthrow," or "thou overthrowest them that rise up against thee; thou (wilt send) sendest forth thy wrath, which consumes them as stubble." The metaphor in the last clause was one known to the Egyptians.

Ver. 8.—**With the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together.** Poetically, Moses describes the east wind which God set in motion as "the blast" or "breath of his nostrils." By means of it, he says, the waters were "gathered together," or "piled up;" then, growing bolder in his imagery, he represents the floods as "standing in a heap" on either side, and the depths as "congealed." No doubt, if these terms are meant to be taken literally, the miracle must have been one in which "the sea" (as Kalisch says) "giving up its nature, formed with its waves a firm wall, and instead of streaming like a fluid, congealed into a hard substance." But the question is, are we justified in taking literally the strong expressions of a highly wrought poetical description?

Ver. 9.—**The enemy said.** This verse is important as giving the *animus* of the pursuit, showing what was in the thoughts of the soldiers who flocked to Pharaoh's standard at his call—a point which had not been previously touched. It is remarkable as a departure from the general stately order of Hebrew poesy, and for what has been called its "abrupt, gasping" style. The broken speech imitates the utterance of one at once eager and out of breath. **I will divide the spoil.** The Israelites, it must be remembered, had gone out of Egypt laden with ornaments of silver and of gold, and accompanied by flocks and herds of great value. Pharaoh's soldiers regarded this wealth as legitimate plunder, and intended to appropriate it. **My lust.** Literally, "my soul." Rage and hate were the passions to be satiated, rather than lust. **My hand shall destroy them.** So the Vulgate, Onkelos, Rosenmüller, Knobel, Kalisch, and others. The LXX. have *καταλάβω*, "acquire the lordship over them" (whence our marginal rendering) But the drawn sword points to death rather than recapture.

Ver. 10.—**Thou didst blow with thy wind.** Here we have another fact not mentioned in the direct narrative, but entirely harmonising with it. The immediate cause of the return of the waters, as of their retirement, was a

wind. This wind must have come from a new quarter, or its effects would not have been to bring the water back. We may reasonably suppose a wind to have arisen contrary to the former one, blowing from the north-west or the north, which would have driven the water of the Bitter Lakes southward, and thus produced the effect spoken of. The effect may or may not, have been increased by the flow of the tide in the Red Sea. **They sank as lead** See the comment on verse 5.

Ver. 11, 12 contain the third stanza of the first division of the ode. It is short compared to the other two, containing merely a fresh ascription of praise to God, cast in a new form; and a repetition of the great fact which the poem commemorates—the Egyptian overthrow. We conceive that Miriam's chorus (ver. 21) was again interposed between verses 10 and 11.

Ver. 11.—**Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods?** It was one great object of the whole series of miraculous visitations whereof Egypt had been the scene, that the true God, Jehovah, should be exalted far above all the gods of the heathen. (See ch. vii. 5; xiv. 4, 18.) Moses therefore makes this one of his topics of praise; and at the same time notes three points in which God has no rival—1. Holiness; 2. Awfulness; and 3. Miraculous power. Compare Ps. lxxxvi. 8; "Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like thy works." **Fearful in praises**—i.e., "to be viewed with awe even when we praise Him."

Ver. 12.—**Thou stretchedst out thy right hand.** Thou hadst only to stretch out an arm, and at once thy enemies perished. **The earth swallowed them up**—i.e., the sea, which is a part of the earth.

PART II

Ver. 13.—**Thou in thy mercy hast led forth.** Or "ledest forth." See the Introduction to the chapter. **Which thou hast redeemed.** See the comment on ch. vi. 6. **Thou hast guided.** Or "thou guidest." **Thy holy habitation.** By "God's holy habitation" some understand Mount Sinai, others Canaan, others Mount Moriah, or even the temple there to be built ultimately. That Sinai is not intended seems clear from verses 14, 15, where the nations mentioned are such as were untouched by the occupation of that mountain. Canaan might sufficiently answer the requirements of the present verse, but scarcely comes up to those of verse 17. Altogether, it is clear that Moses knew there would be a place in the land of Canaan where God would "put his name" (Deut. xii. 5,

11. 14; xiv. 23. 24; xvi. 6. 11; xxvi. 2; etc.); and it would seem to be not unlikely that he may have known where the place would be by special revelation.

Ver. 14.—**The people shall hear.**—Rather, “the peoples”—i.e., the tribes, or nations, of these parts—Philistines, Amalekites, Edomites, Moabites, etc.—will hear of the wonders done in Egypt, especially of the crowning wonder of all—Israel’s passage through the Red Sea and Egypt’s destruction in it—and will in consequence tremble with fear when the Israelites approach them, and offer them no effectual opposition. **Palestina.** This is a Greek form. The Hebrew is *Philistia*, which would perhaps be best translated “Philistia.” (Compare Ps. lx. 8; lxxxvii. 4; cviii. 9.) The Philistine country was a strip of territory extending along the coast of the Mediterranean from a little below Gaza on the south, nearly to Mount Carmel on the north. It is curious that the Philistines are not mentioned under that name on any of the early Egyptian monuments. They may perhaps be the *Purusata* of the time of *Rameses III.*, whom some however identify with the *Pelasgi*.

Ver. 15.—**The Dukes of Edom.** Compare Gen. xxxvi. 15. By the time that the Israelites approached the borders of Edom, the dukes had given place to kings (Num. xx. 14), and everything like abject fear of Israel had passed away. The Edomites “came out against Moses with much people and with a strong hand,” and refused to allow the Israelites passage through their borders (ib. vers. 20, 21). **The mighty men of Moab.** The alarm of the Moabites was indicated by Balak’s efforts to induce Balaam to curse the Israelites (Num. xxii.—xxiv.). By their “mighty men” some understood men of unusual strength and stature (Cook); but the expression, which is very frequent both in the prophetic and the historical books, seems to be a mere periphrasis for “warriors.” **All the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.** This prophecy received a remarkable accomplishment when “it came to pass that all the kings of the Canaanites heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, and *their heart melted*, neither was their spirit in them any more” (Josh. v. 1).

Ver. 16.—**Fear and dread shall fall upon them.** Compare Deut. ii. 25; xi. 25. The Edomites of Mount Seir and the Moabites gave Israel a free passage through their borders (Deut. ii. 4–8, 18, 29), being afraid to oppose them. **Till thy people pass over, O Lord.** Some see in this an anticipation of the crossing of Jordan; but perhaps Moses meant no more than the crossing of the Canaanite frontier, in some place or other, which must take place if the land was to be

occupied. The event made the expression used peculiarly appropriate. **When thou hast purchased.** By bringing his people out of Egypt, their ownership had passed to him from the Egyptians, just as if he had bought them. (See ch. vi. 6, 7; xix. 5.)

Ver. 17. **Thou shalt bring them in**—i.e., give them possession of the land. **And plant them**—i.e., fix them firmly in it—enable them to take root there. **The mountain of thine inheritance.** The land of Canaan, which is almost wholly mountainous, and which God had given as an inheritance to his people (Gen. xv. 7; Heb. xi. 8). **The sanctuary.** See the comment on verse 13. **Which thy hands have established.** Moses sees in idea the sanctuary already set up, and God dwelling in it; and emphasises his conviction by using the past tense.

Ver. 18.—In terms most simple yet most grand, often imitated (Ps. x. 16; xxix. 10; cxlvi. 10, etc.), but never surpassed, the poet gives the final result of all God’s providential and temporary arrangements, to wit, the eternal establishment of his most glorious kingdom. And here reaching the final consummation of all things (1 Cor. xv. 28), he will not weaken the impression made by adding another word, but ends his ode.

Vers. 19—21.—*Sequel to the Song.* The “sequel” treats of two quite separate matters. 1. It asserts, in verse 19, the historic groundwork of the song, reiterating in a condensed form the three principal facts of the passage—already recorded in ch. xiv.—(a) Israel’s safe transit across the sea-bed; (b) the pursuit attempted by the Egyptian chariot-force; and (c) the return of the waters upon the pursuers by God’s providential action. 2. It relates, in verses 20 and 21, the part taken by Miriam in the recitation of the ode, which has been noticed in the “introduction” to the chapter.

Ver. 19.—**The horse of Pharaoh, with his chariots, and with his horsemen.** Rather, “with his chariots, and with his chariot men.” Compare ch. xiv. 23. **The Lord brought again the waters of the sea upon them.** See ch. xiv. 26, 27, and xv. 10. The waters did not merely return to their natural place when the east wind ceased to blow, but were “brought back” by miraculous power, and with abnormal rapidity.

Ver. 20.—**Miriam, the prophetess.** Miriam is regarded by the prophet Micah (vi. 4), as having had a share in the deliverance of Israel, and claims the prophetic gift in Num. xii. 2. Her claim appears to be allowed both in the present passage, and in Num. xii. 6–8, where the degree of her inspiration is placed below that of Moses. She is the first woman

whom the Bible honours with the title of "prophetesses." Prophetesses were common in Egypt at a much earlier date; and thus, that a woman should have the gift would have seemed no strange thing to the Hebrews. For examples of other prophetesses, see Judg. iv. 4; 2 Kings xxii. 14; Is. viii. 3; Luke ii. 36. **The sister of Aaron.** Compare Num. xxvi. 59. Miriam is generally regarded as the sister of Moses mentioned in Ex. ii. 4-8, whose name is not there given. If so, she was considerably older than either Moses or Aaron. Took a timbrel. By "a timbrel" our translators meant what is now called "a tambourine." Such instruments were common in Egypt (Wilkinson, *Ancient Egyptians*, vol. i. p. 93), and in the representations are generally played by women. The separation of the men and women into distinct bands was an Egyptian custom; as likewise was the execution of dances by performers who accompanied their steps with music (*ibid.* vol. ii. pp. 235, 301).

Ver. 21.—**Miriam answered them.** Miriam, with her chorus of women, answered the chorus of men, responding at the termination of each stanza or separate part of the ode with

the refrain, "Sing ye to the Lord," etc. (See the "Introduction" to this chapter.) While responding, the female chorus both danced and struck their tambourines. This use of dancing in a religious ceremonial, so contrary to Western ideas of decorum, is quite consonant with Oriental practice, both ancient and modern. Other examples of it in Scripture are David's dancing before the ark (2 Sam. vi. 16), the dancing of Jephthah's daughter (Judg. xi. 34), and that of the virgins of Shiloh (*ib.* xxi. 21). It is also mentioned with approval in the Psalms (cxlix. 3; cl. 4). Dancing was practised as a religious ceremony in Egypt, in Phrygia, in Thrace, by the Phœnicians, by the Syrians, by the Romans, and others. In the nature of things there is clearly nothing unfitting or indecorous in a dedication, to religion of what has been called "the poetry of gesture." But human infirmity has connected such terrible abuses with the practice that the purer religions have either discarded it or else denied it admission into their ceremonial. It still however lingers in Mohammedanism among those who are called "dancing dervishes," whose extraordinary performances are regarded as acts of devotion.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—18.—*The song of Moses a pattern thanksgiving.* There is nothing in the whole range of sacred or profane literature more fresh, more vigorous, more teeming with devotional thought than this wonderful poem. In rhythm it is grand and sonorous, in construction skilful and varied, in the quality of the thoughts lofty, in the mode of expression at once simple and sublime. Partly historic, partly prophetic, it describes the past with marvellous power, and gives with a few touches a glorious picture of the future. Throughout it breathes the warmest love of God, the deepest thankfulness to him, the strongest regard for his honour. We may well take it for our model when we have to thank God:—

I. FOR A TEMPORAL DELIVERANCE; and observe (1) its matter; (2) its manner; (3) its form. (1) *Its matter* comprises (a) distinct and repeated enunciation of the deliverance itself, with expatiation on its circumstances; (b) anticipation of further advantages to flow from the deliverance in the future; (c) transition from the particular mercy to the consideration of God's power, greatness and goodness in the abstract; and (d) glorification of God on all three accounts. (2) Its manner comprises, among other points, (a) beginning and ending with praise; (b) intermixture of the praise with the grounds of praise; (c) persistence and repetition, but with the introduction of new touches. (3) Its form is (a) poetic; (b) discontinuous, or broken into stanzas; (c) irregular. Our thanksgivings for great national or even great personal deliverances may well, if our powers suffice, take a poetic shape. Poetry is more expressive than prose, more heart-stirring, more enthusiastic. It is also better remembered, and it is less diffuse.

II. FOR SPIRITUAL DELIVERANCE FROM THE EGYPT OF SIN. Each man's deliverance will have its own peculiar features, which he will do well to note and make special subjects of thankfulness, not sparing repetition, that he may present the matter to himself in various lights, and see *all* God's goodness in respect of it. Each deliverance will also lead naturally to prospective thoughts, extending beyond the wilderness of this life to the Canaan which is our inheritance. Each will profitably lead us to go beyond ourselves, and dwell for a while on the general attributes of God, whence proceed the mercies that we individually experience; and we shall do well to praise God on all these accounts. Manner and form are of less importance than matter, and admit of more

variety without sensible loss; but even here "the song" furnishes a pattern on which it would be hard to improve. The grounds for preferring poetry to prose for such an outpouring of the heart as a thanksgiving have been already stated. The propriety of beginning and ending with praise is unquestionable. Repetition has a value as deepening impressions, and affording opportunity for remedying accidental coldness or inattention. In private devotion the actual repetition of the very same words has an occasional place, as we see by our Lord's example in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt. xxvi. 44); but in a composition, phrases should be varied. Moses's song may well guide us as to the extent and character of such variation (*e.g.*, vers. 5, 10, and 12).

Vers. 20, 21.—*The aid which devout women can render to the Church.* There are religions which exclude women from consideration altogether, express a doubt whether they have souls, and assign them no special Church work. But Judaism did not make this mistake. It utilised the services of women—

I. AS PROPHETESSES. Miriam was a prophetess. So was Deborah, whose song is one of the most beautiful compositions in the Bible (Judges v. 2—31). So was Huldah, who delivered God's message to Hezekiah (2 Kings xxii. 14—20). So was Anna (Luke ii. 36), whom the tradition makes the virgin's mother. God did not disdain to hold spiritual converse with women and enlighten them supernaturally; nor did the Israelites omit to take cognizance of the fact and give such persons their due honour.

II. AS NATIONAL DELIVERERS. Deborah "judged Israel" (Judges iv. 4), and it was she, rather than Barak, who delivered the Israelites from Jabin (*ib.* vers. 8, 14). Esther saved her people from the malice of Haman. Judith is said to have delivered them from Holofernes. Sex was no disqualification for high place among the Jews, any more than among their neighbours, the Arabs. The queens of Judah obtain constant mention in Kings and Chronicles.

III. AS PARTICIPATORS IN RELIGIOUS CEREMONIALS. In the instance of Miriam we see how an important part of the thanksgiving service which Moses celebrated on the passage of the Red Sea was assigned to females. Apparently, on this occasion, half the chanting, and the whole of the instrumental music, was placed in their hands. Miriam acted as Choragus, or conductor, of the female chorus. Music is one of woman's commonest gifts; and, though not eminent as composers, as renderers of the music of others, they have a fame exceeding that of men. They can do much for the glory of God in contributing to, and even sometimes superintending, the musical services of the sanctuary. In the Christian Church, there has been, equally from the first, a recognition of the services that may be rendered to religion by women. The apostles, after the ascension of our Lord, "continued with one accord in prayer and supplication *with the women, and Mary, the mother of Jesus*" (Acts i. 14). Phœbe, who conveyed to Rome St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, was "a deaconess of the church that was at Cenchrea" (Rom. xvi. 1); and an Order of deaconesses was generally recognised in the primitive Church, and believed to have been instituted by the apostles (*Apost. Const.* vi. 17). In all periods some church work, in many very important church work, has been assigned to women, with great advantage both to themselves and to the community. Though St. Paul forbade their speaking in the Church (1 Cor. xiv. 35), and they thus cannot be ministers, subordinate employments of various kinds, suited to the nature of women, are everywhere open to them. The work of Sisters of Charity in various parts of the world is above all praise. That of district visitors, teachers in Sunday schools, Scripture readers, *etc.*, though less attracting the praise of men, is most valuable. Devout women, working under their ministers, can be the instruments of incalculable good, and do as much for the promotion of true religion as if they were men.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—19. *Moses' Song.* The sublimity of this noble ode is universally admitted. It brings Moses before us in the new character of "poet." Moses does not seem to have devoted himself largely to this species of composition; but the three specimens of his work which remain to us—this ode, his "Song" and "Blessing" in Deuteronomy, and Ps. xc.—show him to have possessed a poetical genius of the very highest order; to

have been as great as poet, as we know him to have been as warrior, leader, statesman, legislator, historian, patriot, and saint. The grandest features of poetry belong to the thrilling piece before us. It is the magnificent outburst of the feeling of uncontrollable triumph, awakened by the sight of the overthrow of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, and by the sense of deliverance and safety thence resulting. The language quakes and thunders in keeping with the grandeur of the theme. The presentation of the ideas is in the highest degree picturesque. The strokes of imagery are masterpieces—the whole scene of defeat and disaster being repeatedly revealed, as by lurid lightning-flashes, in single sentences, and even single words. The movement is rapid, rhythmical, inspiring. The art displayed in the minutæ of literary construction is very great, while in all, and through all, pervading, as its energising soul, every syllable and stanza of the composition, is the spirit of adoring awe and wonder, blending with gratitude, which ascribes all the greatness, and honour, and renown, of the victory to Jehovah. We have to touch at present, however, less on the literary beauties than on the religious teaching of the ode; and the nature of this, after what has been said on ch. xiv., admits of being briefly indicated.

I. THE TRIUMPH CELEBRATED (vers. 1, 2). This celebration of the deliverance at the Red Sea was—1. *Natural*. Adoring and exultant feeling naturally passes into song. It seeks expression. It tends to become rhythmical. It unites itself with music. Like mountain torrents, tearing down to the plain, and cutting their channels as they flow, pent-up emotion of this kind will not be denied utterance, and if suitable channels of rhythmical expression are not provided for it, will cut out channels for itself. 2. *Appropriate*. It was *right* that, having experienced this great deliverance, the children of Israel should give utterance, in strains of praise, to the feelings of wonder, gratitude, and adoration with which it inspired them. It was due to God, and it would be beneficial in its reactive effects upon themselves. The duty of praise for benefits received is one to which no religious mind can be indifferent. If God has gifted us with the faculty of song, it is right that the first use we make of it should be to extol his goodness. See the Psalms (Ps. xcii. 1; xcvi. 1; cv. 1, 2; cxi. 1; etc.). 3. *Elevating*. The faculty of song is not merely *one* of the faculties of our nature. It is connected with that which is deepest in us. When the Psalmist bids his faculty of song awake, he speaks of it as his “glory.”—“Awake up, my glory” (Ps. lvii. 8; cf. Ps. xvi. 9; xxx. 12). It is Carlyle who says—“All *deep* things are musical.” Song, in its higher reaches, unites all the faculties of the soul in consentaneous exercise—heart, intellect, conscience, the religious nature, imagination, the artistic and tuneful sentiments, the social feelings. It arouses, elevates, fructifies, enkindles. It awakens the spirit to the sense of its own infinitude; fills it with scorn of what is base; attunes and harmonises it to what is noble. We do well, therefore, to cultivate the faculty of song; to exercise it in public and in private worship; to make it the daily vehicle of the expression of our religious feelings. “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns,” etc. (Eph. v. 19). See that the melody is from the heart, yet with the understanding also (1 Cor. xiv. 15).

II. THE TRIUMPH DESCRIBED (vers. 3—13). The quick, abrupt, vivid language of the ode brings the whole scene of Pharaoh's pursuit and destruction before us, almost as if it were transacting in our sight. The hot, breathless, intensely eager *pursuit* is depicted in ver. 9, but it is chiefly the *destruction* that is dwelt on, and dwelt on in such terms, with the use of such similes, and in such relations of contrast to the proud monarch's insolence and boasting, as limns it with photographic distinctness on the mental vision. The design in the description being to exalt and glorify God's power in the overthrow, the points chiefly exhibited are these—1. The *ease* of this destruction. It is done in an instant, and without effort. In striking contrast with Pharaoh's paraphernalia of war, with his savage exertions in pursuit, and with his elaborate drawing out of his purposes in ver. 9—“I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil,” etc.—God simply blows with his wind, and the enemy is annihilated. “Thou didst blow with thy wind; the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters” (ver. 10). A movement of his hand, a blast of his nostrils, a solitary waft from the heat of his anger, suffices to destroy them. 2. The *swiftness* of it. This, which was a most impressive feature of the overthrow, is brought out in various images. “The depths have covered them; they sank to the bottom as a stone . . . they sank as lead in

the mighty waters" (vers. 5—10). 3. The *fatality* of it. The destruction was complete. There was no recovery from it. Horse and chariot and charioteer; the chosen captains; the whole array of Pharaoh's military strength—all went down in one swift, fell swoop, to the sea-bottom. "Thy right hand, O Lord, hath *dashed in pieces* the enemy" (ver. 6). Pondering these images, we cannot but be impressed by the folly, the insanity, as well as the futility, of all attempts at contending with the Almighty.

III. THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD AS REVEALED IN THE TRIUMPH. These, naturally, are made conspicuous in the ode. It was Jehovah, not Israel, who had achieved the triumph; and to Jehovah, accordingly, was all the praise due. Further, the design in the transaction had been precisely this: to display the character of God as Jehovah, and give a new demonstration of his possession of the attributes denoted by the name Jah (vers. 2, 3). The attributes of Jehovah specially extolled are—1. *Power*. "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power" (ver. 6). The greatness of this power is seen by its being measured against the military might of Pharaoh, which thereby becomes a foil to it: another measure being found in the might and fury of the elements which it controls—winds, mighty waters, etc. Its resistlessness is seen in the suddenness and decisiveness of the overthrow. 2. *Supremacy* (vers. 11—18). This attribute, which is of the very essence of the Jehovah conception, was signally illustrated in the Red Sea catastrophe (Ps. cxxxv. 6). Not only was God therein revealed as absolute Ruler in the domain of nature, but it was shown how Pharaoh himself, pursuing his own end, was yet *bent* to be an instrument in accomplishing God's; how, when he thought he was freest, and most certain of victory, God had the hook in his jaws, and was leading all his host straight into the grave prepared for him; how, accordingly, God is Supreme Ruler in the moral as well as in the natural world, in the region of human wills as well as in that of natural causation. 3. *Holiness*. The holiness of God, burning like fire among stubble, and utterly consuming the hosts of the enemy, is justly celebrated in these verses (ver. 7). God was revealed as "glorious in holiness" (ver. 13); and because he was so, Israel was filled with awe in his presence (ver. 13), and his habitation is spoken of as an "holy habitation" (ver. 13), a sanctuary (ver. 17). 4. *Mercy*. This is the other side of the transaction of the Red Sea—the side of deliverance, as the former was of judgment, and mention is made of it in vers. 2, 13. Here, then, is a wonderful constellation of Divine attributes—exhibited, too, not in word, but in suitable action, in deeds which gave them embodiment, and impressive manifestation. They are the same attributes which have been at work all down history, operating for the good of the Church, and for the overthrow of evil.

IV. THE EFFECTS OF THE TRIUMPH (vers. 13—18). It is viewed—1. As inspiring fear in the surrounding nations, in Edom, in Moab, among the Philistines, and other inhabitants of Canaan. Every powerful manifestation of God's attributes is fitted to awaken terror among his enemies, and actually does so. Results similar to those here described will follow the great predicted judgments on the last representatives of Antichristianism (Rev. xi. 13). The nations who heard of Israel's deliverance would have *reason* to fear, for their position exposed them to risk of attack, and Canaan was actually the destination of the tribes. This may suggest to us that if Israel had gone up to conquer these tribes, at the time when God wished them, they would not have found the conquest so hard as their fears represented. The Philistines and Canaanites were "melted" with terror: they were paralysed by their fears, and "still as a stone" (vers. 15, 16). Yet, through the unbelief and cowardice of the attacking force, this great opportunity was missed. 2. As a pledge that God would complete the work he had begun, and would ultimately "plant them in the mountain of his inheritance" (vers. 13—17). In several of the expressions, the tenses are past, as though the thing prophesied were already as good as done. This also is an apostle's mode of arguing—God who has done the greater, will not now fail to do the less, and perfect the work he has begun (Rom. v. 9, 10; viii. 32; Phil i. 6). Mark in this ode the designation of Israel as a redeemed, a purchased people (ver. 13)—the Red Sea deliverance being viewed as a second purchasing of Israel by God to himself.—J. O.

Vers. 1—20, 21.—*The song of Moses and of the Lamb*. We cannot fail to connect in our thoughts the circumstances of this magnificent triumph-celebration with that other scene, described in the Apocalypse, where they who have "gotten the victory over the

beast, and over his image, and over the number of his name, stand on—i.e., on the margin of—the sea of glass, having the harps of God,” and “sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb” (Rev. xv. 2). We do not enter into any elaborate explication of the Apocalyptic symbols. The beast and his followers obviously represent the Antichristian foes of the Church—the worldly secular powers that resist, oppose, and persecute the true servants of Christ. God’s judgment on these hostile world-powers, already summarily depicted in ch. xiv. 19, 20, is to be afterwards more fully described under the imagery of the seven last plagues. This vision of the multitudes on the sea of glass is anticipative, and represents the celebration by the Church of her own deliverance, and of the completion of judgment upon her enemies. The “sea of glass” has obvious reference to the Red Sea, made to roll back, and stand up like a sea of crystal (ver. 8), yet illuminated and filled with lurid radiance, by the fiery glow of the pillar which shone on Israel. The “sea” is the symbol (in this instance) of deliverance achieved, of victory won, of enemies judged and overwhelmed—the fire in the crystal pointing to the burning wrath which consumed them. But what we have immediately to do with is the fact that the saved multitudes sing the “song of Moses, and of the Lamb.” This plainly does not mean that they sing *two* songs; nor yet that the song which they sing is the song recorded here; for the terms of what they sing are subsequently given (Rev. xv. 3, 4). The meaning is that the Church, having experienced a deliverance similar to that experienced by Israel at the Red Sea, but as much *greater* than that old deliverance, as Christ is greater than Moses, and his salvation greater than the salvation from Egypt,—the old song is re-cast, and its terms re-adapted, to express both victories at once, the lower and the higher. The old is taken up into the new and is celebrated along with it. No victory of God for his Church will ever pass out of remembrance. Each will be the theme of grateful celebration to all eternity. But type must merge in antitype, and be celebrated with it in a single strain. The song of the redeemed over the defeat of the Antichristian powers at the end—over the defeat of *all* their enemies—is the true counterpart of this song of Moses, and the one (the latter) remains for ever the background of the other (the former), and is blended with it in the united celebration. Glancing at the two songs, this in Exodus, and that in the Revelation, we note—1. That the *scope* of both is the same—the defeat of hostile, pursuing, persecuting powers. And as the defeat of Pharaoh was the natural sequel to the exodus, and confirmed to Israel that redemption then achieved, so will the defeat of Christ’s enemies in the end appear as the appropriate sequel to his work upon the Cross, and will complete the deliverance of his Church from those that trouble her (2 Thess. i. 6). 2. That the *attributes of God* extolled in both are the same. This of necessity, for the work being similar, so must be the attributes revealed in it—holiness, power, unchallengeable supremacy, justice and truth, which here include mercy. “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty,” etc. (Rev. xv. 3). The effects produced on the nations by this display of God’s attributes are also similar—“who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name . . . for all nations shall come and worship before thee.” A higher result this, however, than in the case of the type. 3. The *singers* in both cases are the same—those viz. who have experienced the deliverance which they celebrate. Would we join them? We, too, must be in Christ, and partakers with those who, in the strength which he gives, are overcoming the world (1 John iv. 4).—J. O.

Vers. 1—19.—*The song of triumph—God exalted in the lips of the people.* This song we may take as being in some measure the result and expression of the state of feeling mentioned in ch. xiv. 31. People who feared Jehovah and believed in him were very likely, in such a rush of feeling, to sing as did the Israelites here: at the same time we must be careful not to rest content with attributing this song *merely to natural causes*. There is no need to deny the presence of genius; if only we bear in mind at the same time, that it is genius elevated and sanctified by the inspiration which Jehovah alone can give. Who else than God himself can lead into a true acquaintance with him? and if they who thus know him would speak of him and sing of him, it must be with such an arrangement of thoughts and choice of expressions as he alone can supply. The history of hymnology makes it very evident that genius is not enough for distinction in this sacred service. Poems full of genius, and almost faultless in form, are yet worthless

for praise. For in this as other matters God has taken the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty. He puts the holy and eternal fire on lips that the world despises. They who have made the praises of the Church have not been the writers of epics; they are not found among the poets-laureate; and so here we must look for the power of God as much in the construction of this song, as in the production of the events it celebrates. We are called on to observe him who somehow makes men to utter even more than they know. It may be needful at the proper time to consider this as a contribution to Hebrew poetry; it is better still ever to remember it as a contribution to the worthy praise of God, that praise which while it celebrates him, instructs and ennobles the man who renders it. The question of authorship here, bear in mind, is not to be settled right off by saying that Moses composed it. He and the people sang it, but who composed it is quite another question. And that this point is left undetermined only throws us back more on the thought of God as the great agent in bringing this song into existence. *As to the topics treated of in the song*, the very fact that there have been so many different ways of dividing it, makes one more disposed to consider it in its unity, without any attempt to divide it into sections at all. Thus then let us notice in succession the dominant truths and convictions which run through the song. The first point is the exaltation of God amongst his people. This is the word with which the song begins. "I will sing unto Jehovah, for he is highly exalted."

I. NOTICE THE FACT THAT THERE IS EXALTATION OF GOD. God, in ruling the composition of this song, takes care of this most important point. It was the very point that needed to be brought out in all its prominence, so that no man should be exalted instead of God. Men exalt one another. They are constituted so as to admire that which is great and powerful, and when they are not men of faith, able to comprehend the greatness of the invisible God, their admiration must needs expend itself on the visible man. All temptation of this kind is here kept out of the way. The feeling that Jehovah is exalted runs all through the song. Everything is ascribed to him. Moses himself makes no claim, expects no praise. The people do not gather round him and hail him as deliverer. The tone of the praise is thus in perfect harmony with the deed that has been done. God becomes practically everything and man nothing. *For what had Israel done here?* They had indeed walked down to the Red Sea, through it, and on to the other side, but no one who regards the proprieties of language would speak of this as contributing to their salvation. We do not praise a man for availing himself of the conditions of safety. Thus we have a type of the way in which God is exalted and glorified in spiritual salvation. When we consider what has to be done in saving a man from his sins; and when we consider also the manifestations, so abundant, so transcendent, of God's power in doing so, then how plainly incongruous it is to begin praising man for that simple act of faith by which he avails himself of God's goodness in Christ. The more we consider, the more we shall feel that whatever praise man may deserve is better left to God to express. By all means let us have brotherly appreciation for brotherly kindness; brotherly gratitude encouraging brotherly love. But God only can praise rightly. Though nothing is said of Moses in this song, God took ample care of the fame and reward of his faithful servant. We had better keep to that which God requires from us, namely, praise to himself. As he requires it, so we may be sure he will fit us to render it.

II. THE EXALTATION OF JEHOVAH IS AN EXALTATION TO SUPREMACY. He is supreme over physical force in one of its most imposing forms. "The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." Perhaps those who have had to meet a charge of cavalry in the battle-field can best appreciate this expression. Jehovah is a man of war, and he goes out with strange weapons against great kings and their chosen captains; weapons which they cannot understand and cannot meet. He does not meet sword with sword, and chariot with chariot; the elements of nature are at his instant and entire command. In his hand *the mightiest* are as nothing. What is the excellency of Pharaoh, even though he be king of Egypt, before the greatness of the excellency of Jehovah? The answer is that as stubble before the fire, so is opposing man before Almighty God. "What a wind that must be, that strong east wind which raises waters, even from the deep, and keeps them when they are raised!" So we imagine *man* speaking in his inevitable submission to the powers of nature when they are roused. But when God

has to speak of the east wind, it is as of something which comes as easily as a blast from the nostrils. True, this expression is chiefly used to indicate his wrath; but it also indicates the ease—if ease be a fitting word to use of Jehovah—with which his work is done. In ver. 9, man is represented as resolving and rushing forth in the utmost confidence; anticipating the end from the beginning; certain of his resources and certain of the result, and then as he advances in all his pride and ostentation, God meets him in equal simplicity and sublimity. “*Thou didst blow with thy breath, the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters.*” One breath from God, and the mightiest fabric goes down like a house of cards! Man accumulates his resources, he strains with prodigious efforts, he gathers his forces without mercy and without scruple; and then when all is in array, God calmly lifts his right hand, and the earth swallows the preparation and the pride of years.

III. THERE IS THE EXALTATION OF GOD ABOVE ALL OTHER DEITIES WORSHIPPED BY MEN. “Who is like unto thee, O Jehovah, among the gods?” This, of course, is also an illustration of Jehovah’s exaltation to supremacy. Moses and the Israelites had not attained the feeling that all other deities than Jehovah were but empty and delusive names. That discovery was reserved in the wisdom of God for later and prepared generations. The feeling that the gods of the nations were real beings with terrible power, was very potent in the breasts of the Israelites, as was evidenced by their frequent and facile lapses into idolatry. Therefore this uplifting of Jehovah above the gods was most appropriate praise to put into the lips of Israel at this time. The gods of Egypt represented the strength of Egypt; the gods of Philistia the strength of Philistia; the gods of every country the strength of every country where they were worshipped. When the strength of a land was broken, it was like writing *Ichabod* on the statue of its presiding deity.

IV. THIS WAS AN EXALTATION IN SUPREMACY WHICH EXTENDED TO THE FUTURE. God, shown supreme in the midst of his people and over their enemies, will maintain and manifest that supremacy in all the time to come. The calamities of Egypt travelling, as it had done, in the path of ten humiliations, and now utterly overthrown, are to be made known in Philistia, in Edom, in Moab, and all through Canaan. Here we find some explanation of the apprehension with which the progress of Israel was afterwards viewed, as by the Edomites and Balak. The Israelites came to be looked on to some extent as a peculiar foe. The utter destruction of a whole army in the Red Sea was not an event which could be kept in a corner. God had now done something for Israel which enemies might notice as a measure and an index of what would yet be done. Then from the mention of these typical enemies, Philistia, Moab, etc., we are led to consider *the abiding enemies of God’s abiding people*, those invisible ones who are fully known only to God himself. They have some sense that what has been done by Jesus against them is the measure of what will yet be done. Just as the Philistines felt the sound of Pharaoh’s destruction echoing against their fastnesses, and even in the very echo, shaking them, so we may be sure the principalities and powers of evil felt the greatness of what had been achieved when Christ was raised from the dead. That great act of Jehovah has been far more appreciated in the invisible world, among the powers of evil, than it is among us. They cannot but feel what the end will be. What forgetting fools the Israelites were in after ages, to act in contradiction to this exultant song of praise, trembling and fleeing before the nations that were round about.—Y.

Vers. 1—19.—*The song of triumph. The sense of Israel’s obligation to Jehovah fully expressed.* God, we have noticed, is lifted up in this song. We now proceed to observe how he is lifted up in the midst of his people, whom he encompasses with his protection, whom he cheers and illuminates with his favour. His destruction is not mere destruction; his supremacy is not only over his enemies, but also as the guide, the comforter, and the portion of his own. Hence we discover almost immediately on breaking into the song, how Israel is found expressing complete dependence on Jehovah.

I. THERE IS THE EXPRESSION OF INDEBTEDNESS. God has come to Israel in its suffering, need, and helplessness. Israel is weak, and God gives the strength it needs. Israel is sad-hearted, and God enables it to burst forth in songs of gladness. Israel is in peril, and God has interposed with effectual and abiding salvation. He has not only

supplied some needs, but all needs wherein Israel was able to receive his aid. More needs would have been supplied, if more had been felt; more causes of gratitude given, if more could have been brought into operation. God is now felt to be a guide (ver. 13), and the land that was thought to fasten the people in, now takes its right place in the memory of the devout as an evident part of the highway of God's holy ones. What expressions of indebtedness could be more complete? It was impossible to exaggerate the debt, and God took care that the words of the song should not fall short in acknowledging it. Thus let it ever be our aim to thank God for his goodness to us, in such words as he supplies, and fill his forms full with the devotion of meditative and observant hearts.

II. THIS EXPRESSION IS A PERSONAL ONE. The word "I" stands out prominently. The song was not only for a delivered nation, but for a nation in whose deliverance every individual was blessed. It was emphatically a song for every Israelite. God had done all this for Israel, not that he might have a nation for his own to be looked at in the mass, averaged over the whole, the good along with the bad; it was to be a nation made up of holy, obedient, and grateful individuals. Even already, God is indicating that his true people must be bound to him *by personal attachment and service*. Pharaoh had said in his haste and thoughtlessness, "I and my people are wicked" (ch. ix. 27). Here Jehovah gives something for each one of his own people to say; and if each of them labours to say it with a feeling corresponding to the words, then indeed there will come an outburst from the nation such as could not in any other way be produced.

III. THIS EXPRESSION BEING PERSONAL, IS ALSO AN EXPRESSION AS TO THE SOURCE OF PERSONAL ABILITY. "The Lord is my strength." The strength of a believer just amounts to that which God puts into him according to his need and according to his faith. Bring to God as many vessels as you will, and if it be wise to fill them, then God can fill them all. Learn that the natural strength of man, even at its best, is inadequate for some purposes and uncertain for any. It breaks down, often without warning and without recovery. Therefore it is a great matter for me to feel that "the Lord is my strength." He himself comes in, not to supplement human efforts, nor to fill up human defects, but rather to make his presence felt with men in the *choosing of right purposes*, and the carrying of them out to a full and satisfying attainment. The Israelite had been nothing in himself; nothing as against the tyranny of Pharaoh in Egypt; nothing as against the pursuing chariots by the Red Sea. And now all at once he is able to sing as if he were a portion and a factor of Omnipotence.

IV. THIS EXPRESSION BEING PERSONAL IS ALSO AN EXPRESSION AS TO THE SOURCE OF PERSONAL GLADNESS. "The Lord is my song." From him comes real and abiding gladness, such gladness as becomes man at his best estate. The world has its great singers, and what it reckons imperishable songs. Each nation has its own patriotic effusions, and excited and often half-drunken crowds will roar themselves hoarse over national anthems. There are love songs, drinking songs, war songs, and all that great number besides which elude classification. It would be foolish indeed of the Christian, in his haste, to despise these productions, for many of them are very beautiful, and they have an unquestionable and not astonishing hold on the general heart. But after all, we must escape into higher and holier associations, and dwell in them, if we would have gladness, such as will satisfy. *The Lord must be our song.* He, in his attributes, his actions, and the history of his dealings with the children of men, must be the topic of our praise. The great thing to make each of us glad must be that our minds are kept in perfect peace because they are stayed upon him. All other gladness, sweet as it may be in the beginning, will prove bitter, perhaps very bitter, in the end. Nor was Jehovah any less the song of every true Israelite here, because he was shown acting in such a stern, uncompromising way. The people had to praise God for an actual, present, and overwhelming mercy; and if they had to sing of destruction, that was a necessity not to be escaped. True, there is no word of pity all the way through this song for the destroyed host of Pharaoh, simply because it was not the place for such an expression. The thing to be here expressed and dwelt upon is praise to Jehovah, because of the greatness and completeness of the Divine action. And what an impressive contrast there is between the conduct of these Israelites when delivered and the conduct in the hour of victory, which only too many pages of history record: indeed, such conduct is

not absent from the pages of the Old Testament itself. It was, of course, impossible, that any scene of butchery, pillage, and violation, could be presented to us here; but there is not even any tone of savage, revengeful exultation over the destroyed. Israel stands by the mighty waters, looks on the corpses of the Egyptians, and sends up this volume of undiluted, unqualified praise to Jehovah. Let us, for the moment, forget the personal unworthiness of the singers, their past unbelief, their future lapses into idolatry, rebellion, and self will. The words of praise here were the right words to speak; and at the time, we may be sure, many of them felt them. The words were true, the feeling real; the fault was that the singers did not continue to live so as to root the feeling more deeply in their breasts.

V. THIS EXPRESSION BEING PERSONAL, IS ALSO AN EXPRESSION AS TO THE SOURCE OF PERSONAL SAFETY. "He has become my salvation." There is thus an experience to dwell on that peculiarly inspires grateful acknowledgment. We are grateful to those who provide for us, who instruct us, who supply us with comforts and pleasures; but there is a peculiar tie to him who saves us in any hour of peril. God himself cannot but look with peculiar interest to those whom he has delivered; and the delivered should look with peculiar devotion to him. If it is much to create men and to provide for them in their natural existence, it is more still to save them from death and to give them eternal life in Christ; and thus God must look in a special way on those who believe and are being saved. And so also, if it is much to be created and much to be provided for, it is even more to be saved; to have the sure feeling that beyond this changing, corruptible scene, there is the house of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. There are untold millions who owe existence and all their power of enjoyment to God, yet *not one syllable of real thankfulness* has ever passed their lips. But as to those who are saved, *if they be truly in process of salvation, thankfulness is part of their life.* Of this be perfectly sure, no salvation is going on if thankfulness for it be not in the heart and some sort of praise on the lip and in the life.

VI. In view of all that has thus been considered, it will be seen as a fitting consequence that JEHOVAH SHOULD BE DISTINCTLY SET FORTH AS WORTHY OF ADORATION AND HONOUR. "He is my God and I will glorify him, my father's God and I will exalt him." *My father's God.* Here is the response, more or less appreciative, to all declarations in which Jehovah speaks of himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. True praise of God takes in the great historic past, yes, and also the past which is not historic; a past none the less real, none the less contributory to the present, even though there be no record of it such as we can read. Jehovah was deliverer to Israel that day by the Red Sea, because of what he had been to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob centuries before. What God is to each of us to-day, is possible because of what he was to our fathers long ago. Explore then and discover how present blessings are rooted in the past. This will not only be an interesting study, but will increase gratitude, and fix it more surely in the regions of the understanding.—Y.

Ver. 11.—*Jehovah among the gods.* As long as these deities—the deities, say, o. Egypt, Philistia, Edom, Moab, Canaan—were simply to be compared among themselves, there might be room for rivalries among them; there might be reasons for asserting superiority because of a more splendid worship and a larger host of worshippers. But, when Jehovah steps in upon the scene, all discussions as to the comparative excellences of other deities cease to have interest. The most renowned of them becomes of no more account than the most obscure. Even the temple of the great goddess Diana is then despised, and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth. At Ephesus, under the very shadow of the far famous building, Paul persuades and turns away much people, saying that they be no gods which are made with hands. Whether stars be of the first magnitude or not ceases to be a question of interest when the sun rises; for then they all vanish alike. "Who is like unto thee, Jehovah, among the gods?" Nor is this question left as a mere vague vociferation. It is pursued into instructive detail, and illustrated by the mention of three particular features of pre-eminence. These words are spoken with the signs of Jehovah's glory right before the eyes of those who speak. Not mere symbolic signs, such as the burning bush, the rod changed to a serpent, and the leprous hand; but

signs that were also great benefits and judgments. Fresh from the miraculous passage, and with the destruction of Pharaoh's host scarcely faded from their eyes, these singers of praise very fitly ask, Who is like to Jehovah, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises doing wonders?

I. GLORIOUS IN HOLINESS. Some word is needed to indicate the distinction between deity and all lesser existence, and that word we find in "holiness." Hence holiness and even some sort of glory in their holiness might be attributed to all the gods. All places and symbols associated with them would be approached with scrupulous veneration and only too often with abject terror. But who had such holiness as Jehovah possessed? We may take the question as running—"Whose glory in holiness is like unto thine?" Then, standing in our position as Christians, with the light we thus enjoy, and considering all the conceptions of Deity which our present knowledge of the world, in all lands and through past ages, supplies, we can put this question with a richness of meaning which was not possible to Moses or to his brother Israelites. Consider the deities of the Grecian and Roman mythology—for with that we are perhaps best acquainted—or any deities the wide world over, either among barbarous peoples or civilised; and then consider the Jehovah of the Hebrew Scriptures, the God who revealed himself more fully and in due time by his Son. Look how the worship of an idolater drags him down. Think of the unutterable prostitution and sensualities connected with certain idolatries. Think of those miserable parents in whom idolatry had so destroyed natural affection that they could cause their sons and daughters to pass through the fire to Moloch. Many are rigorous, fanatical and even furious in their religion, who yet show by their lives that they care nothing for great duties; their religion, alas! seems to make them worse instead of better. How great, then, is the privilege of him who has indeed come to perceive that Jehovah is *glorious* in holiness! He is light, and in him is no darkness at all. He is love—such love as is set forth in John iii. 16. His wrath is revealed against *all* unrighteousness of men. The very nation that he chose, sanctified and cherished, he made to be "scattered and peeled," because it would not do righteousness according to his will. What a cheering and inspiring thing to turn from the inspection of our own hearts with its dismal results, and from our observation of the seething selfishness of the world, to think of the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ! For Christ moves before us in the beauty of holiness, a great, attractive, rebuking *reality*; and we know that as is the Son, so is the Father; as is the visible and Incarnate One, so is the invisible and purely spiritual Jehovah above. It is through the Son we know the Father; and it is everything to feel that he is not a mere imagination. He is drawing us to himself; so that as he is glorious in the holiness of the Uncreated and Pure, so we, even though sadly fallen, may become glorious in the holiness of the restored and the perfected. We have yet to sing the new song from those who are glorious in the holiness of matured sonship to him who is glorious in the holiness of our Father in heaven.

II. FEARFUL IN PRAISES. Though this expression is beyond exact definition, yet it is obvious that a certain way of understanding it is appropriate to the present occasion. Jehovah is a God to be praised for his terrible doings. It is part of his very holiness that he makes that holiness to be respected by his treatment of those who presumptuously despise it. If he be not approached with reverence and obeyed with promptitude, and from the heart, he can make the irreverent ones to feel the evil consequences. He is not one to make claims which he cannot authenticate and enforce. *was not* as the priest of some foreign deity, with empty pomp, that *M* *s* came forth before Pharaoh, trusting by a great show to terrify *m* into acquiescence. There is *manifested power*; power so widespread and various in its manifestations, so overwhelming in its concluding operations, that even the most ignorant can appreciate it. If God is not loved, he must be feared; if his good and perfect gifts are not accepted, then his visitations of perfect and holy wrath must take their place. The mercies for which Israel had now to praise Jehovah were such as could not be sung without recounting an awful story. Nor must we ever shrink from dwelling on such scenes when needed. We must praise God for his severity to the wicked, as much as for anything else. We could not truly praise him for his love, unless we were also able to praise him for his wrath.

III. DOING WONDERS. Here is another peculiar Divine prerogative. Jehovah does wonders such as none among the gods can do. One has almost forgotten the magicians, it is so long since they retreated into obscurity and shame. This is praise to Jehovah, which at once pushed aside all magicians and pretenders to the supernatural. The wonders they do would cease to be wonders, if they would only allow us to become a little better acquainted with them; and not only would they cease to be wonders, they would even become despicable, as we consider the lying with which they are supported, and the knavish ends for which they are produced. A conjuror's tricks are only like common things hidden away; show us where they are hidden, and the mystery ceases. *The mystery is in the concealment and nothing else.* But Jehovah's dealings, as in Egypt, are true wonders. They are brought out to the light so that all men can gaze on them and examine them, and the more they are examined the more mysterious they prove. It would not be good for us—it would, indeed, be very bad, as starving a thing as could happen to our imagination and our highest capacities of enjoyment—were we to cease from wondering in the presence of God. Wonder must ever arise within us when we consider his operations, alike in nature and in grace.—Y.

Vers. 20, 21.—*Woman's part in the song of triumph.* In the history of Israel, we are called on to observe woman coming forward, not continuously, but every now and then, to show how real is her share in the lot of Israel. She has had that share in *suffering*, being consumed with anxiety as to the fate of her offspring. (Ch. i.) She has had it in *ministration*,—Jochebed, Miriam and Pharaoh's daughter, being combined in the work—unconscious ministration towards the fitting of Moses for his great work. Whatever may be said of women speaking in the Church, we here behold them joining, *in the most demonstrative way*, in the public praises of Jehovah. The blessing by the Red Sea was one which went down to that common humanity which underlies the great distinction of sex. But it was also a *very special blessing to women*. Trials, such as had come to Jochebed when Moses was born, were to cease. Woman would have her own trials in the time to come—the pangs of childbirth, the cares of offspring, and all a mother's peculiar solicitudes; but it was a great deal to have the special curse of bondage in Egypt removed. Then there would be deep thankfulness for the escape of the first-born; a feeling, too, of self-congratulation that they had been obedient in slaying the lamb and sprinkling the blood, and had thus escaped the blow which had fallen heavily on so many homes in Egypt. All these considerations would lead up to and prepare for the final outburst of praise and triumph. And so, if women consider still, they will be both astonished and profoundly grateful because of all that God in Christ Jesus has done for *them*. They have gained not only according to their simple share in humanity, but according to their peculiar relation towards man. If it be true, that Eve fell first, dreadfully have all her daughters suffered since. As belonging to this fallen world, woman is now in a double subjection. In her creation she was to be subordinate to man, and if she had stood, and he had stood, then what glory and blessedness would have come to both! But when man became the slave of sin, she became doubly slave, as being now linked to one who had himself the servile spirit. What had been *subordination* in Eden became *servitude* outside of it. He who is himself the abject slave of passion and selfishness makes woman his slave, so that in addition to all that comes through her own sin as a human being there is the misery that comes through her having got into a wrong relation to man. Hence the peculiar hideousness of a bad woman, a Jezebel or a Herodias. Hence, too, through the work of redemption we get the peculiar beauty of the good woman. Whence should we have got those types of saintly women which beam from the pages of Scripture and Christian biography, save for that great work one stage of which is celebrated in this song?—Y.

Vers. 1—21.—*Song of Moses and the Lamb.* “And they sing the song of Moses,” etc. (Rev. xv. 3). It is quite impossible to sever in thought the song by the sea, and the reference in the Book of the Revelation. We therefore take for our text the words chosen, and in our homily keep ever in view—the passage of the sea.

I. THE SINGERS. “They that have gotten the victory.” But conquerors must first have been soldiers. Here they are Christians who have become part of the Church militant by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Over what victorious? As a matter of

fact Christians are brought off more than conquerors over "the world, the flesh, and the devil." But in Rev. xv. 2, only "the world" is referred to; and of it only two constituents are mentioned: "the beast" and "the image" or likeness "of the beast." [On these and that "other beast" see Rev. xiii.; and for such exposition as is calculated to place the symbols in a reasonable light, see Porter's "Christian Prophecy," Maclehose, Glasgow; and "The Apocalypse" by Prof. Godwin: Hodder and Stoughton.] The enemies overcome were, and ever are:—1. *Force*: as directed against the Kingdom of God. The "beast" of Rev. xiii. is anti-theistic, or anti-Christian civil despotism, wherever found. Read Rev. xiii. 1—10, with this idea in the mind, and the description is seen to be vividly true. Illustrations of battle and victory may be found in Egypt tyrannising over Israel, in early persecutions of the Christian Church. As soon as ever Christianity became a spiritual power conspicuous enough to attract attention, force set itself against it. So ever since down to martyr history in Madagascar. Note: there are instances now in which force, in varied forms, will set itself against the conscience. [The "mark" and "number" of the image are the signs, open or secret, of being identified with anti-theistic despotism.] 2. *Opinion*. That which resembles godless government, viz. godless opinion, the tone of society, etc. This power of society against the Divine Kingdom, this pressure of opinion must have been terrible in Egypt. Felt to-day, not only at the "club," but in every workshop. One may add to this, not mentioned in Rev. xv., but in Rev. xiii., "another beast," viz.:—3. *Fraud*. Specially as associated with "Priestcraft," whether of false religions, or of corrupted forms of Christianity. [For illustration of the despotism of Egyptian priestcraft, see Ebers' "Uarda."] This power seems mild as a lamb, with the speech of a dragon; rises out of the earth (does not descend from heaven); wields civil power for its own purpose (as in the case of Rome); pretends to miracle; gives power to anti-Christian public opinion; inflicts social wrong. How strong their enemies are, viz., anti-Christian government, anti-Christian public opinion, anti-Christian religion, every Christian comes sooner or later to know.

II. **THEIR POSITION.** "And I saw as it were a sea of glass," etc. Here note:—1. *The sea*. A sea of crystal flaked with fire. Such as we may sometimes see under light of setting sun. The symbol of the experience of life, i.e., of mingled mercy and judgment (Ps. ci. 1). 2. *The shore*, i.e., the position of the victorious—*ἐπὶ τὴν θάλασσαν*—not in the sense of standing on the wave, but of an army encamped "upon the sea," i.e., upon the shore. 3. *The allusion*. To Israel on the eastern shore of the Red Sea. 4. *The reality* in this symbol. The victorious redeemed Church, on the further side of the experience of life, singing the new and everlasting song.

III. **THE SONG.** It is "of Moses . . . and of the Lamb." A song like that of old, springing out of similar circumstances, celebrating a like deliverance. Here observe:—1. *The place of Moses* in relation to Christ. Moses is "the servant," etc. Incidental evidence of Christ's superiority and Deity. Christ is not a servant, save as he voluntarily took that position (Phil. ii. 7). 2. *The central place of the Lamb* throughout the Book of the Revelation. Argument for the transcendent import of the Atonement. The song is—1. *One*. Not two. 2. *Thankful*. Some of the songs of earth are penitential, prayerful, plaintive. 3. *Of the Saved*. From guilt, sin, darkness, sorrow. [Go into detail.] What a song it will be! 4. *Of the Free*. The three despotisms of force, opinion, fraud, were left by Israel behind. So with the redeemed Church of God. 5. *Of the New-born*. A new departure for Israel; the unending life before the Church triumphant. 6. *Of the Seers*, who now see past all subordinate and second causes—past Moses—past even the Mediator Jesus, to the First Origin of all, "great and marvellous . . . Lord God Almighty." 7. *A song of review*. This is the final verdict, "Just and true," etc.

IV. **LESSONS.** 1. *To Christians*. Do not wait for the final song. Sing in the passage of the sea. Poetry and music the natural expression of praise. Some can pour forth their own song, e.g., Keble and Watts, Wesley and Lyte. Others must adopt praise furnished to their lips. But for all there is the poetry and the music—the sweet psalm—of a pure and holy life. 2. *To those not Christians*. To sing the song of the saved, we must be saved.

"No lips untuned can sing that song
Or join the music there."—K.

Vers. 1—21.—One of the first songs in the Bible—the first Jewish song—we may almost call it the tap-root whence springs the main stem of Jewish psalmody. The art of poetry and instruments of music were no doubt brought from Egypt; the land of slavery was yet the land of science. Such “spoils” were made all the more valuable, and appropriated all the more firmly by consecration (cf. Keble, *Christian Year*, 3rd Sunday in Lent). All the wealth of the world is at the disposal of God’s children—for the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof—the problem which they have to solve is how to use it without abusing it (cf. 1 Cor. x. 23—28). Turn to the song itself, and see what lessons it has to teach. Three stanzas (vers. 1—5, 6—10, 11—18)—each begins with ascription of praise to Jehovah; each ends with a reference to Jehovah’s treatment of his foes. Notice:—

I. **PRESENT GRATITUDE.** Vers. 1—5.—In the excitement of the great deliverance, words almost fail to express the praise. The name of the deliverer is repeated four times in eight lines. Yet not once is it a “vain repetition.” All the difference in the world between using God’s name to disguise an empty heart and using it to express the feelings of a full one. Here, “out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh.” God loves such praise, the praise of a heart which cannot help praising. Some try to praise because they think God expects it of them; their hearts are like dry wells whilst yet, out of supposed respect to God, they keep on working the pump-handle! Fill the heart first and all such artificial efforts will be needless; the full heart is a springing well. “How fill?” By letting the thought of God’s great mercies pierce through to the heart’s depths. If the thought of God and of his deeds comes home to us, our praise will soon flow forth freely.

II. **PAST MERCIES THE CAUSE OF PRESENT GRATITUDE.** Vers. 6—10.—This is what called forth the praise. All real, all genuine. Moses is not sending up his song to a “possible” God, but to one whom he believes in utterly as a living, present, powerful ruler. Notice—1. *The reality of the enemy.* No doubt about the tyranny in Egypt. Brickfields and scourges had left their mark upon the memory. No doubt either as to the late danger (ver. 9). The exasperated pursuers determined to repossess their prey. 2. *The reality of the deliverance.* Where were the pursuers now? The wreckage drifting within sight marked the spot where they had sunk for ever! 3. *The reality of the deliverer.* No doubt as to his existence—no doubt as to his goodness—in face of such overwhelming evidence. We also, if we would but realise it, have been as truly delivered from dangers just as real. If we but half believe in God, and offer him only a make-shift praise, it is not because he has done less for us; it is because we think less on the meaning of his mercies.

III. **PAST MERCIES THE PLEDGE OF FUTURE TRIUMPHS.** Vers. 11—18.—Moses was confident about the future because he had no doubt about the past. He was prepared to go “from strength to strength,” because he could start from a strong position. From what God *has* done, we may rightly infer what he *will* do. If he has made a way for his people through the sea of waters, he will also make a way for them through yet stormier and more perilous seas (ver. 16). The first deliverance is a pledge and prophecy of all future deliverances. Thus the song of Moses, strong in a present confidence, firmly based upon past mercies, finds its outcome in a good hope, inspiring men along the path of progress. If we would sing the song as it should be sung, we must learn from memory to praise truly; and true praise will soon quicken hope. To live for the future we must live upon the past. The song of the Lamb, the song which specially expresses the full satisfaction of all our hopes, can only be sung by those who have sung first this other song; the song which still feeds hope at the same time that it expresses gratitude.—G.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The sacrifice of praise.* I. **THE PLACE OF PRAISE.** The first provision for God’s ransomed is a song. God’s hand must be recognised in the mercy, otherwise its blessing is missed. The place bright with God’s goodness is meant to be a meeting-place between the soul and himself.

II. **THE REASONS FOR PRAISE.** 1. The greatness of God’s deed. The chariots and the horses had been the reliance of Egypt and the terror of Israel; and “the horse and his rider” had God cast in the sea. 2. He who had been their strength and their song had become their salvation. Their confidence had not been misplaced: he had not

failed them in their need. 3. The individualising love of God: he is "my God." God had appeared for each: not one had been lost. 4. The glory of God's past deeds—he was their fathers' God. This was but one of many like judgments and deliverances, and their song was only swelling the mighty chorus of God's unending praise.

III. THE RESOLVES OF PRAISE. 1. They will prepare a habitation for God. It is the work of God's people in every age to prepare a dwelling-place for him where his character is made known, his voice heard, and his love and fear shed abroad. 2. To exalt God's fame. He was their fathers' God, and that was a call to make him known. He had given a fuller revelation of himself than even this great mercy contained. There were purposes and promises in that record which outran this mercy and themselves. Our praise must ever add, "these are but part of his ways," and exalt God as the world's refuge and help.—U.

Vers. 3—21.—*The results of deliverance to God's people.* I. THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE MARVELLOUSNESS OF GOD'S POWER (3—12). 1. The might of Egypt, when measured with the strength of God, was utter vanity (4, 5). The Lord's right hand had dashed in pieces the enemy. What can make the heart afraid which knows the power of God? 2. The deadly malice of Egypt was extinguished in a moment like a spark beneath the heel. The picture of the foe's deadly purpose (9) set side by side with God's deed: "Thou didst blow with thy wind—they sank as lead in the mighty waters."

II. CONFIDENCE FOR THE ONWARD WAY. 1. In his mercy and strength God will lead them to the rest he has promised (13). 2. This deliverance will fight for them (14—16). The heart of their foes will die within them. And when led into their land this fear of the Lord will be a wall between them and the nations round about. They shall not only be led in, but planted there in undisturbed security (17). 3. God will, as now, triumph through all the ages, and accomplish, no matter how his people may fear and his enemies may vaunt themselves, all his righteous will (18).—U

EXPOSITION.

VERS. 22—27.—THE JOURNEY FROM THE RED SEA TO ELIM. After a stay, which cannot be exactly measured, but which was probably one of some days, near the point of the Eastern coast of the Gulf of Suez, at which they had emerged from the sea-bed, the Israelites, under the guidance of the pillar of the cloud, resumed their journey, and were conducted southwards, or south-eastwards, through the arid tract, called indifferently "the wilderness of Shur" (verse 22), and "the wilderness of Etham" (Num. xxxiii. 8), to a place called Marah. It is generally supposed that the first halt must have been at Ayun Musa, or "the springs of Moses." This is "the only green spot near the passage over the Red Sea" (Cook). It possesses at present seventeen wells, and is an oasis of grass and tamarisk in the midst of a sandy desert. When Wellsted visited it in 1836, there were abundant palm-trees. It does not lie on the shore, but at the distance of about a mile and a half from the beach, with which it was at one time connected by an aqueduct, built for the convenience of the ships, which here took in their water. The water is regarded as good and wholesome,

though dark-coloured and somewhat brackish. From Ayun Musa the Israelites pursued their way in a direction a little east of south through a barren plain where sand-storms are frequent—part of the wilderness of Shur—for three days without finding water. Here their flocks and herds must have suffered greatly, and many of the animals probably died on the journey. On the last of the three days water was found at a spot called thenceforth "Marah," "bitterness," because the liquid was undrinkable. After the miracle related in ver. 25, and an encampment by the side of the sweetened spring (Num. xxxiii. 8), they proceeded onward without much change of direction to Elim, where was abundance of good water and a grove of seventy palm-trees. Here "they encamped by the waters," and were allowed a rest, which probably exceeded a fortnight (See the comment on ch. xvi. 1.)

Ver. 22.—So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea. There is no such connection between this verse and the preceding narrative as the word "so" expresses. Translate "And Moses brought." The wilderness of Shur, called also that of Etham (Num. xxxiii.

8) appears to have extended from Lake Serbonis on the north, across the isthmus, to the Red Sea, and along its eastern shores as far as the Wady Ghurundel. It is almost wholly waterless; and towards the south, such wells as exist yield a water that is bitter in the extreme. **Three days.** The distance from Ayun Musa to Ain Howarah, the supposed representative of Marah, is not more than about 36 miles; but the day's march of so large a multitude through the desert may not have averaged more than twelve miles. **And found no water.** No doubt the Israelites carried with them upon the backs of their asses water in skins, sufficient for their own wants during such an interval; but they can scarcely have carried enough for their cattle. These must have suffered greatly.

Ver. 23.—**And when they came to Marah.** It is not clear whether the place already bore the name on the arrival of the Israelites, or only received it from them. *Marah* would mean "bitter" in Arabic no less than in Hebrew. The identification of Marah with the present Ain Howarah, in which most modern writers acquiesce, is uncertain from the fact that there are several bitter springs in the vicinity—one of them even bitterer than Howarah. (See Winer, *Realwörterbuch*, ad voc. *MARAH*.) We may, however, feel confident that the bitter waters of which the Israelites "would not drink" were in this neighbourhood, a little north of the Wady Ghurundel.

Ver. 24.—**And the people murmured against Moses.** As they had already done on the western shores of the Red Sea (ch. xiv. 11, 12), and as they were about to do so often before their wanderings were over. (See below, ch. xvi. 2; xvii. 3; Num. xiv. 2; xvi. 41; Deut. i. 27, etc.) "Murmuring" was the common mode in which they vented their spleen, when anything went ill with them; and as Moses had persuaded them to quit Egypt, the murmuring was chiefly against him. The men who serve a nation best are during their lifetime least appreciated. **What shall we drink?** Few disappointments are harder to bear than that of the man, who after long hours of thirst thinks that he has obtained wherewith to quench his intolerable longing, and on raising the cup to his lips, finds the draught so nauseous that he cannot swallow it. Very unpalatable water is swallowed when the thirst is great (*Eothen*, p. 197). But there is a limit beyond which nature will not go. There "may be water, water everywhere, yet not a drop to drink."

Vers. 25, 26.—**The Lord shewed him a tree.**—Several trees or plants belonging to different parts of the world, are said to possess the quality of rendering bitter water sweet and agreeable; as the *nellimaram* of Coromandel, the *sassafras* of Florida, the *yerva Cantani* of Peru, and the *perru nelli* (Phy-

lanthus emblica) of India. But none of them is found in the Sinaitic peninsula. Burckhardt suggested (*Travels in Syria*, p. 474) that the berries of the *ghurkund* (*Peganum retusum*), a low thorny shrub which grows abundantly round the Ain Howarah, may have been used by Moses to sweeten the drink; but there are three objections to this. 1. Moses is not said to have used the berries, but the entire plant; 2. The berries would not have been procurable in April, since they do not ripen till June; and 3. They would not have produced any such effect on the water as Burckhardt imagined. In fact there is no tree or shrub now growing in the Sinaitic peninsula, which would have any sensible effect on such water as that of Ain Howarah; and the Bedouins of the neighbourhood know of no means by which it can be made drinkable. Many of the Fathers believed that the "tree" had no natural effect, and was commanded to be thrown in merely to symbolise the purifying power of the Cross of Christ. But to moderns such a view appears to savour of mysticism. It is perhaps most probable that there was some tree or shrub in the vicinity of the bitter fountain in Moses' time which had a natural purifying and sweetening power, but that it has now become extinct. If this be the case, the miracle consisted in God's pointing out the tree to Moses, who had no previous knowledge of it. **The waters were made sweet.** Compare the miracle of Elisha (2 Kings ii. 19—22) **There he made for them a statute and an ordinance.** See the next verse. God, it appears, after healing the water, and satisfying the physical thirst of his people, gave them an ordinance, which he connected by a promise with the miracle. If they would henceforth render strict obedience to all his commandments, then he would "heal" them as he had healed the water, would keep them free at once from physical and from moral evil, from the diseases of Egypt, and the diseases of their own hearts. **And there he proved them.** From the moment of their quitting Egypt to that of their entering Canaan, God was ever "proving" his people—trying them, that is—exercising their faith, and patience and obedience and power of self-denial, in order to fit them for the position which they were to occupy in Canaan. He had proved them at the Red Sea, when he let them be shut in between the water and the host of the Egyptians—he proved them now at Marah by a bitter disappointment—he proved them again at Meribah (ch. xvii. 1—7); at Sinai (ch. xx. 20); at Taberah (Num. xi. 1—3); at Kibroth-hattaavah (*ib.* verse 34); at Kadesh (*ib.* xiii. 26—33), and elsewhere. For forty years he led them through the wilderness "to prove them, to know what was in their heart" (Deut. viii.), to fit them for their

glorious and conquering career in the land of promise. All those diseases. See Deut. vii. 15; xxvii. 27. Kalisch correctly observes that, though the Egyptians had the character in antiquity of being among the healthiest and most robust of nations (Herod. ii. 77), yet a certain small number of diseases have always raged among them with extreme severity. He understands the present passage of the plagues, which, however, are certainly nowhere else called "diseases." There is no reason why the word should not be taken literally, as all take it in the passages of Deuteronomy above cited.

Ver. 27.—*They came to Elim.* Elim was undoubtedly some spot in the comparatively fertile tract which lies south of the "wilderness of Shur," intervening between it and the "wilderness of Sin"—now El Murkha. This tract contains the three fertile wadys of Ghurundel, Useit, and Tayibeh, each of which is regarded by some writers as the true Elim. It has many springs of water, abundant tamarisks, and a certain number of palm-trees. On the whole, Ghurundel seems to be accepted by the majority of well-informed writers as having the best claim to be considered the Elim of this passage. *Twelve wells.* Rather

"springs." The "twelve springs" have not been identified; but the Arabs are apt to conceal the sources of their water supplies (Niebuhr, *Arabie*, p. 347). A large stream flows down the Wady Ghurundel in the winter-time (*ibid.*), which later becomes a small brook (Burckhardt, *Syria*, p. 778), and dries up altogether in the autumn. The pasture is good at most seasons, sometimes rich and luxuriant; there are abundant tamarisks, a considerable number of acacias, and some palms. *Three score and ten palm trees.* The palm-trees of this part of Arabia are "not like those of Egypt or of pictures, but either dwarf—that is, trunkless—or else with savage hairy trunks, and branches all dishevelled" (Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 68). There are a considerable number in the Wady Ghurundel, and others in the Wady Tayibeh (*ib.* p. 69). *They encamped there.* It has been observed that the vast numbers of the host would more than fill the Wady Ghurundel, and that while the main body encamped there, others, with their cattle, probably occupied the adjacent wadys—Useit, Ethal, and even Tayibeh or Shuweikah—which all offer good pasturage.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 23—27.—*The trials and vicissitudes of life.* Israel in the wilderness is a type of our pilgrimage through life.

I. *MONOTONY.* The long weary sameness of days each exactly resembling the last (ver. 22)—the desert all around us—and no water! No refreshing draughts from that living spring, which becomes in them that drink it "a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John iv. 14). Israel was afflicted by want of earthly water for three days. Many poor pilgrims through the wilderness of life are debarred the spiritual draughts of which Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman for twenty, thirty, forty years! Debarred, it may be, by no fault of their own, born in heathenism, bred up in heathenism, uneducated in what it most concerns a man to know. How sad their condition! How thankful those should be who may draw of the water of life freely (a) from the written word; (b) from the Living and Eternal Word who has said—"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink!"

II. *DISAPPOINTMENT.* Hopes long cherished seem about, at last, to be satisfied. The long sought for treasure—of whatever kind it may be—is announced as found. Now we are about to enjoy ourselves, to take our fill of the delight long denied us. Aias! the dainty morsel as we taste it proves to be—

"As Dead Sea fruit, which, fair to view
Yet turns to ashes on the lips."

The delicious draught, as we expected it to be, is "Marah," "bitterness." Most of life is to most men made up of such disappointments. Men crave happiness, and expect it here, and seek it through some earthly, some temporal means—wealth, or power, or fame, or a peaceful domestic life, or social success, or literary eminence—and no sooner do they obtain their desire, and hold it in their grasp, than they find its savour gone—its taste so bitter that they do not care to drink. Then, how often do they turn to vent the anguish of their heart on some quite innocent person, who, they say, has led them wrong! Their disappointment should take them with humbled spirits to God.

It actually takes them with furious words to the presence of some man, whom it is a relief to them to load with abuse and obloquy. They imitate the Israelites, not Moses—they murmur, instead of crying to the Almighty.

III. UNEXPECTED RELIEF. God can turn bitter to sweet. Often, out of the bitter agony of disappointment God makes gladness to arise. Sometimes, as in the miracle of Marah, he reverses the disappointment itself, turning defeat into victory, giving us the gratification of the desire which had been balked of fruition. But more often he relieves by compensating. He gives something unexpected instead of the expected joy which he has withheld. He makes a temporal evil work for our spiritual good. He takes away the sting from worldly loss, by pouring into our hearts the spirit of contentment. He causes ill-success to wean us from the world and fix our thoughts on him.

IV. A TIME OF REFRESHMENT. Marah led to Elim. If there are times of severe trial in life, there are also "times of refreshing from the Lord" (Acts iii. 19)—times of enjoyment—even times of mirth (Eccles. iii. 4; Ps. cxxvi. 2). But lately toiling wearily through an arid wilderness, only to reach waters of bitterness, on a sudden the Israelites found themselves amid groves of palms, stretched themselves at length on the soft herbage under the shadow of tall trees, and listened to the breeze sighing through the acacias, or to the murmur of the babbling rill which flowed from the "twelve springs" adown the dale. 'Encamped waters by the waters' (ver. 27) they were allowed to rest for a while, secure from foes, screened from the heat, their eyes charmed by the verdure, their ears soothed by gentle sounds, their every sense lapped in soft enjoyment by the charms of a scene which, after the wilderness, must have appeared "altogether lovely." And so it is in our lives. God does give us, even here in this world, seasons of repose, of satisfaction, of calm content. It were ingratitude in us not to accept with thankfulness such occasions when they arise. He knows what is best for us; and if he appoints us an Elim, we were churlish to withdraw ourselves from it. The Church has its festivals. Christ attended more than one banquet. "Times of refreshing" are to be received joyously, gratefully, as "coming from the Lord," and designed by him to support, strengthen, comfort us. They are, as it were, glimpses into the future life.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 22—27.—*Marah and Elim*. "So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur," etc. The main topics here are—

I. THE SWEET FOLLOWED BY THE BITTER. Singing these songs of triumph, and praising God with timbrel and dance, on the further shores of the Red Sea, the Israelites may have felt as if nothing remained to them but to sing and dance the rest of their way to Canaan. They would regard their trials as practically at an end. It would be with regret that they broke up their pleasant encampment at the Red Sea at all. Their thought would be, "It is good for us to be here, let us make here tabernacles" (cf. Matt. xvii. 4). But this was not to be permitted. The old call comes—"Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward" (ch. xiv. 15), and the halcyon days of their first great exuberant joy are over. Their celebration of triumph is soon to be followed by sharp experience of privation. 1. *The Israelites were conducted by the wilderness of Shur*. There they went three days without water. God might, as afterwards at Rephidim (ch. xvii. 6), have given them water; but it was his will that they should taste the painfulness of the way. This is not an uncommon experience. Every life has its arid, waterless stretches, which may be compared to this "wilderness of Shur." "There are moments when the poet, the orator, the thinker, possessed, inspired with lofty and burning thoughts, needs nothing added to the riches of his existence; finds life glorious and sublime. But these are but moments, even in the life of genius; and after them, and around them, stretches the weary waste of uninspired, inglorious, untimeful days and years" (Dr. J. Service). It is the same in the life of religion. Seasons of spiritual enjoyment are frequently followed by sharp experience of trial. We are led by the wilderness of Shur. Spiritual comforts fail us, and our soul, like Israel's at a later period, is "much discouraged because of the way" (Num. xxi. 4). We are brought into "a dry and thirsty land, where no water is" (Ps. lxxiii. 1). A certain sovereignty is to be recognised in the dispensation of Divine comforts. God

leaves us to taste the sharpness of privation, that we may be led to cry after him (Ps. cxix. 81, 82). 2. *They came to Marah, where the waters were bitter.* This was a keen and poignant disappointment to them—"sorrow upon sorrow." As usual, it drove the people to murmuring, and Moses to prayer. Bear gently with their infirmity. Do them the justice of remembering that there is no record of their murmuring during the three past days of their great privation in the wilderness. It was this disappointment at the well of Marah which fairly broke them down. Would many of us have borne the trial better? It is easy to sing when the heart is full of a great fresh joy. But let trial succeed trial, and disappointment follow on disappointment, and how soon do the accents of praise die away, to be replaced by moaning and complaint! The "Song of Moses," which was so natural on the banks of the Red Sea, would have had a strange sound coming from these dust-parched throats, and fainting, discouraged hearts. The note of triumph is not easily sustained when the body is sinking with fatigue, and when the wells to which we had looked for refreshment are discovered to be bitter. Take Marah as an emblem (1) of life's *disappointments*. Our life-journey is studded with disappointments. Hard to bear in any case, these are doubly bitter to us, when they come on the back of other trials, and cheat us of an expected solace. When friends, *e.g.*, turn their backs on us in time of need, or come with cold comfort when we expected ready help, or give chiding instead of sympathy; when trusted projects fail, or fond anticipations are not realised; most of all, when God himself seems to desert us, and grants no answer to our prayers; the waters given us to drink are bitter indeed. (2) Of life's *bitter experiences generally*. "Call me not Naomi," said the mother-in-law of Ruth, "call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me" (Ruth i. 20). The only wells that never become bitter are the "wells of salvation" (Is. xii. 3)—the waters of Divine consolations (cf. John iv. 14). The waters of our creature-comforts admit of being very easily embittered. Relationships, friendships, possessions, business, social position—sweet to-day, any or all of these may be made bitter to us to-morrow. The life of Israel was made "bitter" by bondage (ch. i. 14). God dealt "bitterly" with Naomi in taking husband and sons from her, and reducing her to poverty (Ruth i. 21). Hannah was "in bitterness of soul" because she had no child, and "her adversary provoked her sore, for to make her fret" (1 Sam. i. 6—10). Job was embittered by his afflictions (Job vii. 11; ix. 18; x. 1). The tears of the Psalmist were his meat day and night, while they continually said unto him, where is thy God? (Ps. xlii. 3). Mordecai cried, when the decree went forth against his nation, "with a loud and bitter cry" (Esther iv. 1). Bitter waters there are, too, in our own hearts, and in society, engendered by sin—by the presence of envy, jealousy, strife, hatred, malignity, and revengefulness. No scarcity, then, of Marah experiences, no want of wells that stand in need of the healing tree being cast in to sweeten them. 3. *God's ends in permitting Israel to suffer these severe privations.* We do not ask why God led the Israelites by this particular way, since probably there was no other way open by which they *could* have been led. But we may very well ask why, leading them by this way, God, who had it in his power to supply their wants, permitted them to suffer these extreme hardships? (1) We may glean one hint in reply from Paul's experience in 2 Cor. xii., "Lest," he says, "I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelation, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure" (ver. 7). (2) A second hint is to be drawn from ver. 25—"There he proved them" Cf. Deut. viii. 2—"To humble thee, and prove thee to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no." We do not know what unbelief, what rebellion, what impatience there is in our hearts, till trial comes to draw it out.

II. THE BITTER CHANGED INTO THE SWEET. Moses, we read, "cried unto the Lord, and he showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet" (ver. 25). Observe, 1. *The agency employed.* The tree had probably some peculiar properties which *tended* in the direction of the result which was produced, though, of itself, it was incompetent to produce it. The supernatural does not, as a rule, contravene the natural, but works along the existing lines, utilising the natural so far as it goes. 2. *The spiritual meaning.* That God intended the healing of these bitter waters to be a "sign" to Israel—a proof of his ability and willingness to heal them of *all* their natural and spiritual diseases, is abundantly plain from vers. 25, 26.

The lesson God would have them learn from the incident was—"I am Jehovah that healeth thee." His Jehovah character guaranteed that what he had shown himself to be in this one instance, he would be *always*, viz., a Healer. As Jehovah, God is the Being of exhaustless resource. As Jehovah, he is the Being eternally identical with himself—self-consistent in all his ways of acting; so that from any one of his actions, if the principle of it can but be clearly apprehended, we are safe in inferring what he always will do. God sweetens, or heals, the bitter waters of life—(1) By altering the outward conditions—*e.g.*, by removing sickness, sending aid in poverty, taking away the *cause* of bitterness, whatever that may be. He healed Naomi's bitterness by the happy marriage of Ruth (Ruth iv. 14, 15); Hannah's by giving her a son (1 Sam. i. 20); Job's by restoring his health and prosperity (Job xlvii. 10), etc. The tree here is whatever agency God employs to accomplish his purpose. (2) And this is the diviner art, by infusing sweetness into the trial itself. He makes that which is bitter sweet to us, by adding himself to it. This Divine change in our experiences is accomplished by means of a very simple but potent secret—as simple as the casting of the tree into the waters, as potent in its efficacy. Would we know it? It is simply this—denying our own natural will, and taking God's instead. "Not my will but thine be done" (Luke xxii. 42). This it is which will make even the bitterest of trials sweet. Call it, if you will, the taking up of the cross; it is, at all events, the *spirit* of the cross which is the sweetening, heavenly element in all affliction—the tree that heals. It is invaluable to bear this in mind, that be our trial, our grief, what it may, half its pain has departed the moment we can bring ourselves to embrace God's will in it. Heavenly consolations will sweeten what remains. Mediæval mystics, like Tauler, dwelt much on this thought, and it is the true and all-important element in their teaching. With God at hand to bless, "ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness;" or as another "sweet singer" expresses it—

"Just to let thy Father do
What he will.
Just to know that he is true,
And be still.
Just to let him take the care,
Sorely pressing,
Finding all we let him bear
Changed to blessing.
This is all! and yet the way,
Marked by him who loves thee best!
Secret of a happy day,
Secret of his promised rest."

FRANCES RIDLEY HAVERGAL.

(3) By removing the cause of all evil and bitterness—sin itself. It is as the God of Redemption that Jehovah reveals himself pre-eminently as the Healer. His Gospel goes to the root of the matter, and strikes at the *malum originale* of the bitterness in us, and around us. From this point of view, it is not fanciful to trace an analogy—we need not allege a direct typical relation—between this tree cast in to sweeten the bitter waters, and the Cross of the Redeemer. God through Christ; Christ through what he has accomplished by this Cross; the Cross, by being made the object of faith, and again, by being set up in men's hearts, effects this sweetening of the waters. We have but to compare ancient with modern civilization, to see how much the Cross of Christ, cast into the bitter waters of society, has already done to sweeten them. Trusted in for salvation, it renews the heart in its inmost springs, and so heals the bitter waters there; while, as the power of God unto salvation, it will ultimately heal the world of all its woes, abolishing even death, from which already it extracts the sting and bitterness.

III. THE RIGHT IMPROVEMENT OF MARAH EXPERIENCES (ver. 26). We should accept them, 1. As a *motive to obedience*. If God has healed us that is a new reason for loving, trusting, and obeying him (Ps. cxvi.). Accordingly, consequent on this healing of the bitter waters, God made "a statute and an ordinance" for Israel, taking them bound to serve him, and promising them new blessings, if they should prove obedient

This "statute and ordinance" is the comprehensive germ of the subsequent covenant (ch. xxiv. 3—9). 2. As a *pledge*. The sweetening of the waters, as already seen, was a revelation of Jehovah in his character as Healer. It pledged to Israel that he would, if only they obeyed his statutes, exempt them from such plagues as he had brought upon the Egyptians, and, by implication, that he would heal them of whatever diseases were already upon them. He would be a God of health to them. The healthy condition of body is one which not only throws off existing disease, but which fortifies the body against attacks of disease from without. Natural healing, as we see in the New Testament, and especially in the miracles of Christ, is a symbol of spiritual healing, and also a pledge of it. In the gospels, "to be saved," and "to be made whole," are represented by the same Greek word. We may state the relation thus:—(1) Natural healing is the symbol of spiritual healing. (2) Spiritual healing, in turn, is a pledge of the ultimate removal of all natural evils (Rev. xxi. 4). (3) Each separate experience of healing is a pledge of the whole. It is a fresh testimony to the truth that God is a healer (cf. Ps. ciii. 1—4). Every recovery from sickness is thus, in a way, the preaching of a gospel. It pledges a complete and perfect healing—entire deliverance from natural and spiritual evils—if only we will believe, obey, and use God's method.

IV. ELIM (ver. 27). 1. An illustration of the chequered experiences of life. The alternation of gladness and sorrow; of smiles and tears; followed again by new comforts and seasons of joy. 2. There are Elim spots—places of cool shade, of abundant waters, of rest and refreshment provided for us all along our way through life. In the times of hottest persecution, there were intervals of respite. The Covenanters used to speak of these as "the *blinks*." 3. These Elim-spots should not lead us to forget that we are still in the wilderness. The prevailing aspect of life, especially to one in earnest, is figured by the wilderness, rather than by Elim. Our state here is one of trial, of discipline, of probation—no passing snatches of enjoyment should cause us to forget this.—J. O.

Vers. 22—27.—*The want of water and the want of faith—Marah and Elim.*—It will be noticed at once how the interest of this passage is gathered round that great natural necessity, water. It is a necessity to man in so many ways. He needs it for drinking, for cleansing, for cooking, and for helping to renew the face of the earth. We may note also that Israel was soon to discover the necessity of water in ceremonial duties. A great deal of water had to be used in the tabernacle service. (Ex. xxix. 4; xxx. 18—21; Lev. vi. 27, 28; chaps. xiii.—xvii.) Hence it is no wonder that the very first thing Jehovah does after delivering the Israelites finally from Pharaoh, is to bring them face to face with this great want of water. We see them passing in a short time through a great variety of experiences with regard to it. First, they go three days in the wilderness and find no water; next they come to the waters of Marah and find them undrinkable; then these waters are suddenly made sweet; and lastly, they journey on to the abundant supplies, and therefore inviting neighbourhood of Elim.

I. THE ISRAELITES EXPERIENCE THE WANT OF WATER. There is here a curious contrast between the *fate* of the Egyptians and the *want* of the Israelites. Water proved the ruin of Pharaoh and his host, while the want of water led Israel rapidly into murmuring and unbelief. Thus we have another illustration of how temporal things—even the very necessities of life from a natural point of view—are only blessings as God makes them so. He can turn them very rapidly and easily into curses. We call to mind the grotesque words of Laertes over his drowned sister:—"Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia." So the Egyptians had too much of water, and the Israelites could not get any at all. God was immediately beginning to teach and test his own people according to the explanation of Moses in vers. 25, 26. They were to learn faith in Jehovah for *support* as well as *deliverance*; and the first lesson was to be taught by a three days' deprivation of water. If they had had the believing spirit in them this was an opportunity to say, "Assuredly such an awful deliverance has not been wrought that we may straightway perish of thirst." Notice also how *the reality of the wilderness life is at once brought before us* by these three days of waterless wandering. So short a time had they been out of Egypt, and so little distance had they got away; and yet they are as it were in the very worst of wilderness experiences. Thus even the moment they became effectually clear of the external bondage of Egypt, the truth was impressed

upon them that they were without a home. There was no swift exchange from one storehouse of temporal comforts to another. For remember, Egypt with all its misery was a sort of home; there the Israelites had been born and trained; there they had got into a bondage of habits and traditions which was not to be removed in a day. And now Jehovah would have them understand that to be free and able to serve him meant that they must endure with these privileges the privations of the wilderness. We cannot have everything good all at once. If we would be clear of the bondage of this world's carnal ways, we must be ready for certain consequent and immediate privations. We cannot get away from Egypt and yet take with us the pleasant waters of Egypt. Unless our springs be in God, and heaven begun in the heart, the needful change of external associations may bring little but pain. External circumstances, and to some extent external companionships, may remain the same; the new home feeling must be produced by the change within.

II. WHEN THE ISRAELITES FIND WATER IT IS BITTER. Imagine, when they see the water after three days privation, how they run to it. But taste does not confirm sight. The water is not drinkable. Possibly this was a just complaint; although it may rather be suspected that the water, even if bitter, was not so bitter but that it could have been drunk by thirsty people. The Israelites, however, were thinking of the sweet waters of Egypt. A little longer privation and they might have found sweetness even in bitter waters. Still one cannot but consider how it is there should be this difference between the bitter waters and the sweet, between Marah and Elim. And then we are at once reminded that bitterness is no essential part of water, but comes from foreign and separable matters. So the comforts and resources flowing from God get mixed on the way with human and embittering elements; and these elements are so strong and disturbing that we utterly forget the sweet Divine part because of the discomforts of the bitter human one. We are ready to cast all away as if the nauseous could not be expelled. When Jesus told his disciples certain things which required a changed mind, and the creation of spiritual perceptivity in order to lay them to heart, they called these things hard sayings; not considering that hardness might be made easiness. In our early experiences of religion there is sure to be something of the bitter. The exhortation, "Taste and see that the Lord is good," is a serious and experimental one, yet many on their tasting find bitterness. The water of life has flowed through nauseating channels. Moses had his Marah: he got a taste of it even here, and he had full draughts afterwards. (Ch. xxxii. 19; Num. xi. 10—15; xii. 1; xiv. 5; xvi. 3.) David also had his Marah. (Ps. xlii. 3; lxxx. 5; cii. 9.) One can see a good deal of Marah even in the letters of the Christian Paul to his brethren in Corinth and Galatia. He had expected great things from the gifts of the Spirit, and correspondingly bitter would be his disappointment. We must have our Marah water to drink. Water may fail altogether for a while, and then when it does come it may seem worse than none at all.

III. GOD QUICKLY MAKES THE WATER PALATABLE. *Note the request of the people.* They do not stop to consider even for a moment whether this water, bitter as it is, may be made palatable. They turn from the whole thing in disgust and despair. "What shall we drink?" If Moses had straightway replied, "Ye shall drink of Marah," they would have counted him a mocker; yet his reply would have been correct. In the very things from which we turn as obviously useless, we may be destined to find an ample and satisfying supply. Moses himself knew not at the moment what they were to drink, but he takes the wise course and cries to Jehovah. More and more does his now habitual faith come out in contrast with the unbelief of the people. With regard to the *casting in of the tree*, it may have been that the tree had in itself some salutary effect; but the probability rather is that Moses was asked for another *pure act of faith*. This is more in harmony with the miraculous progression observed hitherto. When we remember the multitude that had to be supplied from these waters, there is something ludicrously inadequate in the supposition that the branches gathered to themselves the saline incrustations. The casting in of the tree was rather a symbolic channel for the sweetening than the actual cause of it.

IV. GOD SEIZES THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW ISRAEL WHEREIN THEIR SAFETY LIES. "He proved them" (ver. 25). He points out, as it were, that they have been subjected to a test and have failed. At Marah they are shown forth as inattentive to past expe-

riences, forgetful as to how God had remembered them and delivered them. Being now free from the bondage of Egypt, they must no longer blame outward constraints, but look earnestly on inward defects, for these are about to prove their greatest hindrance and danger. Yet this was not a time to speak sternly, even though unbelief had put forth its baleful front; they were but at the beginning of the journey, and gentle admonition was more proper than stern reproach. Therefore he counsels them—1. To listen steadily to his voice; 2. To make his will, as expressing most clearly that which is right, the rule of their conduct; 3. To carry out all his commandments and statutes, some of the most important of which had already been laid before them in connection with their departure from Egypt. Let them attend to all this, and they will be free from Egypt's calamities. *Notice the negative aspect of this promise.* God promises exemption from suffering rather than attainment of good. It was well thus to make Israel give a backward look, not only towards the Red Sea, but across it, and into Egypt, where so many troubles had come on their recent oppressors. It would almost seem as if already the hearts of many were filling with the expectation of carnal comforts. They were thinking, eagerly and greedily, of what they were to get. But God speaks out very plainly. He demands obedience; and the most he has to say is that if obedience is given, there will be exemption from suffering. The positive element is left out, and doubtless there is wisdom in the omission. That element will come in due time. Yet of course it is there even now, for the devout and discerning, who can penetrate below the surface. The keeping of Jehovah's commandments is, infallibly, the attaining of the highest and purest blessedness.

V. AFTER MARAH HAS DONE ITS WORK, THE ISRAELITES COME TO ELIM. The pillar of cloud doubtless led them to Marah purposely before Elim, and to Elim purposely after Marah. Thus the people got a rest before coming to another trial of their faith and submissiveness; God did not take them straight from the difficulty with regard to the water to the next difficulty with regard to the bread. It is easy to understand that there were many attractions at Elim which would make them wish to linger there; but at Elim they could not stay. It had water in abundance; but water, great blessing as it is, is not enough. Pleasant it was to rest for awhile at these wells and seventy palm-trees; but before them lay a still better land where they would have, not only brooks of water and fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills, but also wheat and barley and vines and fig-trees and pomegranates; and all the rest of the good things mentioned in Deut. viii. 7—9. The great lesson of Elim is that we must not make a resting-place, however attractive, into a home.—Y.

Vers. 22—27.—*I will hear what God, the Lord, will say.* There is no reason why a powerful sermon should not be preached from a seemingly strange text. All depends on how the text is treated. God himself is the greatest of all preachers. See what sort of a sermon he preached from a text which most would have thought unpromising.

I. THE TEXT (ver. 22—25). 1. *What it was.* Israel three days without water; at length "a large mound, a whitish petrification," from which flowed a fountain. Eagerness followed by disgust. The water bitter, loathsome, undrinkable. "Marah." The people murmured against their leader. A bitter fountain and an embittered murmuring people. Such the text. 2. *How treated.* The text was improved by applying to it the context. Many other texts might be best improved in like manner. "The Lord showed him a tree," etc. (ver. 25). Clearly somewhere close at hand. The bitter waters made sweet. Discontent changed to satisfaction.

II. THE SERMON (vers. 25, 26). Israelites too much like the bitter water. When God looked to refresh himself by their confidence and gratitude, he was met by murmuring and distrust. They, too, must learn not to fix attention wholly on disagreeables, but to take the bitter out of them by considering the never-absent context. God himself is the context to every incident which could befall them, but they must apply his help by obedience and simple trust. Obey him and no bitter, in the heart or out of it, but his presence would sweeten. "I am the Lord that healeth thee," even as I have healed the waters. Notice:—1. The sermon does not dwell upon the text, though it springs out of it quite naturally. Exceedingly plain and simple, so that a child can understand it. 2. The text (the ordinance) illustrates the sermon (the statute). Yet the illustration is not forced; not even strongly emphasized; just allowed to speak for

itself. Some preachers make so much of an illustration, that that which it illustrates is forgotten. [You may drive a brass-headed nail so "home," that while it is fixed nothing will hang upon it.]

III. A RETREAT FOR MEDITATION AFTERWARDS (ver. 27). Some excellent sermons are forgotten directly in the hurry and bustle that succeeds them. To gain by sermons we must recollect them; and to recollect them we must have time and place for recollection. This God gave to the Israelites at Elim; yet, even so, they failed to profit by it. Had they used their time for meditation better, much after trouble, caused by forgetfulness, would have been saved.

Application. "A sermon for preachers!" Yes, but a sermon for people also. If God's sermons can be so soon forgotten, even when he gives time for pondering them, how much sooner those *we* preach! Everything does not rest with the preacher. If the people will not *take pains* to remember—to ponder, meditate, inwardly digest—the best of preachers, even God himself, may preach home to them, and the result be *nil*.—G.

Vers. 22—27.—*Trial and Blessing.* I. THE CLOUD AND SUNSHINE OF THE PILGRIM LIFE. The weariness of the wilderness journey, the disappointment of Marah, and the comforts of Elim, all lie along the appointed way.

II. A HEAVY TRIAL BADLY BORNE. The wilderness thirst had been endured without a murmur; but when in addition they were mocked by the bitter springs of Marah their spirit broke. 1. The end of a prayerless faith is soon reached. If we have not learned to cast burdens upon God and to wait upon him, but expect him to fill our life with ease and pleasure, we shall soon be offended. 2. A spirit with such a faith speedily turns away from God and breaks into complaint against man.

III. FAITH'S TRIUMPH IN DIFFICULTY (25). 1. Moses "cried unto the Lord." The need of the time was rightly read. It was a call to prayer. In times of difficulty and reproach our first recourse should be to God. 2. In answer to believing prayer the bitter waters are sweetened, and the soul finds God in the gift as without the previous disappointment he could not be manifested.

IV. GOD'S COVENANT TIME. 1. In the full experience of his mercy. We must know God's love in Christ before his covenant of service and blessing can be made with us. 2. In the midst of self-knowledge and repentance. At the sweetened waters the faithless ones knew themselves and were ashamed. 3. The nature of the covenant. If they cleave to and serve him, there may be affliction, but there shall be no judgment. 4. How God will be known in Israel. "I am the Lord that healeth thee." Note:—When God's goodness has rebuked our unbelief, he means us to listen to the assurance of his love and to renew our vows.—U.

Vers. 22—26.—*The well of bitterness.* "For I am Jehovah that healeth thee" (Ex. xv. 26). A new chapter of history now opens, that of the wandering; it comprises the following passages. 1. Two months to Sinai. 2. Eleven months at Sinai. 3. Thirty-eight years of virtual settling down in the wilderness of Paran. 4. March upon Canaan in the last year. Introductory to this sermon give description of the journey from the sea to Marah, keeping prominent these points, the first camp probably at "The Wells of Moses," the road thence varying from ten to twenty miles wide, the sea on the right, the wall-looking line of mountain on the left for nearly all the way—this the wilderness of "Shur," i.e., of "the wall." There may indeed have been a city called "Shur," but the wall of mountain may have given name both to city and desert. (On the line of the Roman wall in Northumberland is a village "Wall.") The route here quite unmistakable. More than forty miles. No water. The modern caravan road marked by bleached camel bones. Num. xxxiii. 8, gives the impression of a forced march. At length Marah, to-day a solitary spring of bitter water with stunted palm-tree beside it. Here too is the place to point out, that Israel's wanderings are not so much allegorical, but tautegorical. The phenomena of spiritual life and those of Israel's desert history are not so much two sets of things—one pictorial the other real, but one and the same. This truth lies at the base of all successful practical homiletic treatment.

I. MAN MAY NOT LIVE IN THE PAST. "And Moses brought [forced away] Israel from the Red Sea." Note:—1. Henceforth Moses is supreme leader. Aaron and Miriam sink

to subordinate places. Besides these, the entourage of Moses consists of Hur, Miriam's husband; Jethro for guide; and Joshua, a sort of body servant. All over the desert are names witnessing to this hour to the sole supremacy of Moses. 2. *Divine Guidance did not impair his individuality.* Inspiration and the "Cloud and Fire" did not so lead as to leave no room for the exercise of judgment or the spontaneity of consecrated genius. Lesson:—*God does not crush individuality, but develops it into fulness and power.* 3. *Moses brought Israel quickly from proximity to Egypt, and even from the scene of victory.* [See Heb. verb, to cause the camp to remove.] The last cadences of the song, the last sound of dancing had hardly died away; Miriam's timbrel was scarcely out of her hand, before "Forward!" Out of this, two lessons. Leave behind:—1. *The memory of Egypt*; of old sins, of old sorrows. 2. *The memory of victory.* As in common life, so in spiritual, e.g., the schoolboy. (John Singleton Copley, a painter's son, had for motto "Ultra pergere," and became Lord Lyndhurst.) Graduate at University. Young tradesman. So with things spiritual, each victory the point of a new departure, even with the aged. "Christian progress by oblivion of the past." Phil. iii. 13, 14.

II. FIRST STAGES IN NEW CHAPTERS OF LIFE'S HISTORY ARE TEDIOUS. Look here at:—1. *The experience of Israel.* They had left behind many sights, they, even though slaves, would greatly miss; the Nile and its green line of fertility; cities in all their splendour; life in all its rich variety. Now, the hardship and silence of the desert, only trumpet-broken at morn and eve. And this first stage was terrible. (For accurate idea of this road, see "Forty days in the desert," pp. 30, 31.) Nothing so bad as this further on—further on oases, wells, filmy streams, tamarisk, palm, mountain shadows, and even cultivated regions. Excitement perhaps of the first day, the experience novel, the sea in view; but on the second and third, plodding, fainting, and disgust. 2. *The present reality.* So is it with all new chapters in life; the first steps are tedious, e.g., child going to school; boy to college; first steps in business; so with every serious break-up and change in life's pilgrimage. The first steps are arduous. And so too is spiritual life—to break with sin, to stand ridicule, to keep advancing in spite of comparative ignorance, etc. 3. *The temptation.* Many fail to stand it. Young men yield and go back to the fleshpots of Egypt—loneliness with duty and God does not suit them. If we can march from the sea to Marah, all may be well. 4. *The encouragement.* To say nothing of truths like these, that the way was right, the guidance sufficient, the land of Promise was before them; there was a nearer benediction. "The far horizon in front was bounded, not by a line of level sand, but by sharp mountain summits, tossing their peaks into the sky in wild disorder, and suggesting irresistibly the thought of torrents and glens, the shadow of great rocks, and groves of palms." The view was of the range of Sinai, and there Israel was to have nearly a year of high communion with God.

III. DISAPPOINTMENT WAITS US ON OUR WAY. The high-wrought expectation of the people: and lo! the spring is bitter. So with life. So much is this the case, that men of genius have described life as one long illusion. Things are never what they seemed. Neither school nor college, courtship nor marriage, home nor church, business nor pleasure. So much the worse for those who have ideality large.

IV. INTO DISAPPOINTMENT COMES HEALING. All through nature, it is probable, that every poison has its antidote, every evil its corrective, every disappointment its compensation. "Dr. Johnston, in his 'Chemistry of Common Things,' explains at length how the bark of a certain tree has power to precipitate the mineral particles, which embitter the waters, and to make them sweet and clear." Did God "show" this secret thing to Moses? Let every man examine his own life, and he will find by the side of every disappointment a compensating mercy; and more, that out of every such has come a lesson to sweeten life. It is as when (to take the most striking illustration of all) the Saviour came down into human nature, turned to bitterness by sin, and made the bitter sweet.

V. LIFE IS ONE LONG PROBATION. This is a truth illustrated by the journey to, and by the incidents at Marah. There God laid down a *Fixed Principle* [פֶּה], and one that was absolutely *Righteous*. [צַדִּיק]. 1. Israel was to hear (i.e. believe) and do. 2. And then Jehovah would be to Israel, what the "wood" had been to the water, their Healer.—R.

Ver. 27.—*Elim*. "And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water," &c. (Ex. xv. 27). Describe locality, and point out the great change from Marah, and the miserable preceding three days in the desert. And then note the following suggestions as to the pilgrim path of a human soul.

I. OUR PILGRIMAGE LIES THROUGH EVER-VARIED SCENERY. The changes here are so great that they cannot fail to suggest the corresponding truth, *e.g.*, fear on the west of the Red Sea, deliverance, triumph, three days' march, disappointment and healing at Marah, Elim.

II. THE SCENERY WILL INCLUDE "ELIMS." In dark days we believe no bright will dawn, and *vice versa*. So the sorrowful must be reminded of Elims to come. Many oases for Israel; so to-day even in Sahara. Our Elims.—1. *Lift the mind to their Giver*. 2. *Are earnest of the Better Land*.

III. "ELIMS" ARE THE CREATIONS OF TRUTH. Imagine all the beauty of Elim, and ask, what made it? It was the *water* that made the Paradise. Now, note the place of water in the economy of nature; as a constituent of the human body, in vegetation; as the chief element in all food, medicine, drink; as the universal solvent and purifier; as an agent in all dyes, gorgeous and homely; as "the eye" in every landscape, etc. It is no wonder then that water in Scripture is so often the emblem of truth, for which the soul thirsts, which is given as "water of life" from the throne of God and the Lamb. Doctrine "distils as the dew." God "pours clean water upon us that we may be clean." Note the analogy between truth and water implied in Matt. xxviii. 19. (See illustrations further in Bayley's "Egypt to Canaan," pp. 110—112). And is it not new discovery of truth at crises in our lives, that make our "Elims"? Not at all anything external to the soul; but internal uncoverings of the goodness, grace and glory of our Heavenly Father, etc., etc. [Develop and illustrate.] Will it be considered fanciful to add, that:—

IV. OUR "ELIMS" HAVE AN INDIVIDUAL IMPRESS. "Twelve wells," as many as tribes of Israel. "Seventy palms," for the tent of each elder a palm. There is any way a speciality in our Father's mercies, which marks them as for us, and reveals to us his personal love.

V. THE "ELIMS" OF OUR PILGRIMAGE ARE NOT FAR FROM OUR "MARAHs." Only some eight or ten miles is that journey of Israel. Then:—1. *At Marah let us hope for Elim*. 2. *From Marah push on for Elim*. Never good to lie down and nurse sorrows and disappointments. Push "forward" along the pilgrim path of duty. 3. *Marah prepares for the delight of Elim*.

VI. "ELIM" IS ONLY FOR ENCAMPMENT. "They encamped there by the waters;" did not dwell, or build a city there.

VII. THE CHANGING SCENERY LEADS TO CANAAN. All the succeeding transformations of life are intended to prepare for the heavenly stability and rest.—R.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVI

Vers. 1—3.—THE FIRST MURMURING FOR FOOD. From Elim, or the fertile tract extending from Wady Ghurundel to Wady Tayibeh, the Israelites, after a time, removed, and encamped (as we learn from Num. xxxiii. 10) by the Red Sea, probably along the narrow coast tract extending from the mouth of Tayibeh to the entrance upon the broad plain of El Markha. Hence they entered upon "the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai"—a tract identified by some with the coast plain, El Markha, by others with the inland undulating region known at the present

day as the Debbet-er-Ramleh. It is difficult to decide between these two views. In favour of El Markha are: 1. The fact that the Egyptian settlements in the Sinaitic peninsula would thus be avoided, as they seem to have been, since no contest with Egyptians is recorded; 2. The descent of the quails, who, wearied with a long flight over the Red Sea, would naturally settle as soon as they reached the shore; 3. The greater openness and facility of the El Markha and Wady Feiran route, which is admitted by all; and 4. The suitability of the latter to the particulars of the narrative in ch. xviii. In favour of the route by the Debbet-er-Ramleh are, 1. The fact that

it is better watered at present than the other; 2. Its being somewhat less removed from the direct line between Wady Ghurundel and Sinai than El Markha; and 3. A certain correspondence of sound or meaning between some of the present geographical names along this route and those of the Mosaic narrative. In "the wilderness of Sin" the Israelites for the first time found themselves in want of sufficient nourishment. They had consumed the grain which they had brought with them out of Egypt; and though no doubt they had still considerable flocks and herds, yet they were unaccustomed to a mere milk and flesh diet, having in Egypt lived principally upon bread (ver. 3), fish (Num. xi. 5), and vegetables (*ibid.*). They therefore "murmured," and accused Moses and Aaron of an intention to starve them. It is quite possible that many of the poorer sort, having brought with them no cattle, or lost their cattle by the way, and not being helped by their brethren, were in actual danger of starvation. Hence God was not angry, but "heard their murmurings" (ver. 9) patiently, and relieved them.

Ver. 1.—**They journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation came.** It has been noted (Cook) that the form of expression "seems to imply that the Israelites proceeded in detachments from Elim, and were first assembled as a complete host when they reached the wilderness of Sin." This accords well with their numbers and with the character of the localities. They could only assemble all together when they reached some considerable plain. **Between Elim and Sinai.** This expression must be regarded as vague to some extent. On the direct line, as the crow flies, there is no "wilderness" (*midbar*) between Wady Ghurundel and Sinai. All is mountain and valley. All that the writer means is that "the wilderness of Sin" lay upon the ordinary, or at any rate an ordinary route between Elim and the great mountain. This is equally true of El Markha and the Debbet-er-Ramleh. **On the fifteenth day of the second month—i.e.,** on the 15th of Zif, exactly one month after their departure from Egypt. As only seven camping places are mentioned (Num. xxxiii. 5—11), and one journey of three days through a wilderness (ch. xv. 22), it is evident that there must either have been long stays in several places, or that they must have often

encamped in places which had no name. Viewed as an itinerary, the record is manifestly incomplete.

Ver. 2.—**The whole congregation . . . murmured.** It has been observed above, that only the poorer sort could have been as yet in any peril of actual starvation; but it may well have been that the rest, once launched into the wilderness, and becoming practically acquainted with its unproductiveness, foresaw that ultimately starvation must come upon them too, when all the cattle were eaten up, or had died through insufficient nourishment. Nothing is more clear than that, without the miracle of the manna, it would have been impossible for a population of two millions to have supported themselves for forty years, or even for two years, in such a region as the Sinaitic peninsula, even though it had been in ancient times three or four times as productive as at present. The cattle brought out of Egypt must have rapidly diminished (ch. xvii. 3); and though the Israelites had brought with them also great wealth in the precious metals, yet it must have been some time before they could establish commercial relations with the neighbouring nations so as to obtain such supplies as they needed. Thus we can well understand that at the expiration of a month the people generally should have recognized that their situation was one of great danger, and should have vented their discontent upon their leaders.

Ver. 3.—**Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt—i.e.,** "Would that God had smitten us with a painless death, as he did the first-born of the Egyptians! Then we should have avoided the painful and lingering death from starvation which we now see before us." The cry puts on the garb of piety, and names the name of Jehovah, but indicates a want of faith in him, his power, and his promises (ch. iv. 8, 17; vi. 8; xii. 25; xiii. 5, 11), which was sinful, and, after the miracles that they had seen, barely excusable. **When we sat by the flesh-pots of Egypt.** Compare Num. xi. 5. Both passages make it clear that, whatever the sufferings of the Israelites in Egypt from the cruelty of the taskmasters and the hard tasks set them, at any rate their sustenance was well cared for—they had abundance of agreeable food. **Did eat bread.** It has been said that "bread" here means "food in general" (Kalisch); and no doubt the word has sometimes that sense. But it was probably actual bread, rather than anything else, for which the Israelites were longing. See the Introduction to the chapter

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—3.—*The unreasonableness of discontent.* The people of Israel experience now the second trial that has come upon them since the passage of the Red Sea. First, they had nothing which they could drink (ch. xv. 24); now they are afraid that they will soon have nothing to eat. They have consumed their dough (ch. xii. 39), their grain, their flour; many of them have consumed, or lost, their beasts. The land around them produces little or nothing that is edible; no settled inhabitants show themselves from whom they may purchase food. If there are Egyptian store-houses in the district, they are shut against the enemies of Egypt. So the Israelites, one and all, begin to despair and murmur. How irrational their conduct! The unreasonableness of discontent is shown—

I. IN DISTRUSTING GOD'S POWER OF DELIVERANCE, WHEN WE HAVE SEEN FREQUENT INSTANCES OF IT. The Israelites had been brought out of Egypt "by a mighty hand"—delivered through means of a series of wonderful miracles. They had escaped the pursuit of Pharaoh by having a path made for them through the waters of the Red Sea. They had witnessed the destruction of Pharaoh's choicest warriors by the return of the waves on either side. They had very recently thought themselves on the point of perishing with thirst; and then by the simplest possible means God had made the bitter water sweet and agreeable. Now, they had found themselves fallen into a new difficulty. They had no bread, and foresaw a time when all their food would be exhausted. They were not really, if the rich imparted of their superfluous cattle to the poor, in any immediate danger. Yet, instead of bearing the trial, and doing the best they could under the circumstances, they began to murmur and wish themselves dead. They did not reflect upon the past; they did not use it as a standard by which to estimate the future. They acted exactly as they might naturally have done, had they had no previous evidence of God's power to deliver. And so it is to this day in human life frequently. We do not witness miracles, but we witness signal deliverances of various kinds—an enemy defeated at the moment that he seemed about to carry all before him—the independence of a nation saved when it appeared to be lost—drought succeeded by copious rains—overmuch rain followed by a glorious month for harvest. Yet, each time that a calamity threatens, we despond; we forget all the past; we distrust God's mercy; we murmur; we wish, or say we wish, that we had died before the trial came.

II. IN CONTRASTING ALL THE DISADVANTAGES OF OUR PRESENT POSITION, WITHOUT ITS COMPENSATING ADVANTAGES, WITH ALL THE ADVANTAGES, AND NONE OF THE DISADVANTAGES, OF SOME PREVIOUS ONE. The Israelites, fearing starvation, thought of nothing but the delight of sitting by the flesh-pots of Egypt, and eating bread to the full. They omitted to reflect on their severe toils day after day, on the misery of feeling they were slaves, on the murder of their children by one tyrant, and the requirement of impossible tasks by another, on the rudeness to which they were daily exposed, and the blows which were hourly showered on them. They omitted equally to consider what they had gained by quitting Egypt—the consciousness of freedom, the full liberty of worshipping God after their conscience, the constant society of their families, the bracing air of the Desert, the perpetual evidence of God's presence and providential care in the sight of the pillar of the cloud and of fire, which accompanied them. And men still act much the same. Oh! for the delights of boyhood, they exclaim, forgetting all its drawbacks. Oh! for the time when I occupied *that* position, which I unwisely gave up (because I hated it). The present situation is always the worst conceivable—its ills are magnified, its good points overlooked, thought nothing of. Again, how unreasonable! The allegorical tale which tells of a pilgrim who wished to change his cross, and after trying a hundred others, found that the original one alone fitted him, is applicable to such cases, and should teach us a lesson of content.

III. IN ITS VENTING ITSELF TOO OFTEN ON THE WRONG PERSON. Moses and Aaron were not to blame for the situation in which the Israelites found themselves. They had done nothing but obey God from first to last. God had commanded the exodus—God had led the way—God had forbidden the short route along the shore to the country of the Philistines, and had brought them into the "wilderness of the Red

Sea," and that desolate part of it called "the wilderness of Sin." Moses and Aaron were but his mouthpieces. Yet the Israelites murmured against *them*. Truly did Moses respond—"What are we? Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord." And so are all murmurings. Men are but God's instruments; and, in whatsoever difficulty we find ourselves, it is God who has placed us there. Murmuring against men is altogether foolish and vain. We should take our grief straight to God; we should address him, not with murmuring, but with prayer. We should entreat him to remove our burthen, or to give us strength to bear it. We should place all in his hands.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*Murmurings*. In the "Wilderness of Sin," between Elim and Sinai, on the 15th day of the second month after the departing of Israel out of Egypt (ver. 1). One short month, but how much can be forgotten even in so brief a space of time! (cf. ch. xxxii. 1). Egypt now lay at a little distance. The supplies of the Israelites were failing them. God lets the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil run out (1 Kings xvii. 12), before interposing with his help. Thus he tries what manner of spirit we are of. Our extremity is his opportunity. Consider here—

I. THE PEOPLE'S MURMURINGS (ver. 2). These are brought into strong relief in the course of the narrative. "The whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured" (ver. 2). "He heareth your murmurings against the Lord, and what are we that ye murmur against us?" (ver. 7). "The Lord heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him, and what are we? Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord" (ver. 8). "He hath heard your murmurings" (ver. 9). "I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel" (ver. 12). 1. *They murmured, and did not pray*. They seem to have left that to Moses (cf. ch. xiv. 15). Remembering what Jehovah had already done for them—the proofs he had already given them of his goodness and faithfulness—we might have thought that prayer would have been their first resource. But they do not avail themselves of it. They do not even raise the empty cries of ch. xiv. 10. It is a wholly unsubmitive and distrustful spirit which wreaks its unreasonableness on Moses and Aaron in the words, "Ye have brought us forth into the wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (ver. 3). We who blame them, however, have only to observe our own hearts to see how often we are in the same condemnation. (See Hamilton's "Moses," Lect. xiv.—"Murmurs.") It is ever easier, in times of difficulty, to murmur than to pray. Yet how much better for ourselves, as well as more dutiful to God, could we learn the lesson of coming with every trouble to the throne of grace.

"But with my God I leave my cause;
From Him I seek relief;
To Him in confidence of prayer
Unbosom all my grief"

Had Israel prayed more, relief might have come sooner. 2. Their behaviour affords some interesting illustrations of *what the murmuring spirit is*. Distinguish this spirit from states of mind which bear a superficial resemblance to it. (1) From the cry of natural distress. When distress comes upon us, we cannot but acutely feel the pain of our situation, and with this is connected the tendency to lament and bewail it. The dictates of the highest piety, indeed, would lead us to imitate David in studying to be *still* before God. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because *thou* didst it" (Ps. xxxix. 9). Yet listen to this same David's lamentations over Absalom (2 Sam. xviii. 19). There are few in whom the spirit of resignation is so perfectly formed—in whom religious motives so uniformly and entirely predominate—that a wail of grief *never* escapes their lips. It would, however, be cruel to describe these purely natural expressions of feeling as "murmurings," though it is to be admitted that an element of murmuring frequently mingles with them. (2) From the expostulations of good men with God, caused by the perplexity and mystery of his dealings with them. Such expostulations, e.g., as those of Moses in ch. v. 22, 23; or of Job,

in several of his speeches (Job vii. 11-21; x. 1-22, etc.); or of Jeremiah (Jer. iv. 10; xx. 7). As Augustine says of Moses, "These are not words of contumacy or indignation, but of inquiry and prayer." 3. Even from the desperate speeches of good men, temporarily carried beyond bounds by their sorrow. Job enters this plea for himself—"Do ye imagine to reprove words, and the speeches of one that is desperate, which are as wind" (Job vi. 26); and we feel at once the justice of it. This was not murmuring. These wild speeches—though not blameless—were but a degree removed from raving. What elements, then, do enter into the murmuring spirit—how is it to be described? (1) At the basis of it there lies *distrust* and *unsubmissiveness*. There is distrust of God's goodness and power, and want of submission to his will in the situation in which he has placed us. The opposite spirit is exemplified in Christ, in his first temptation in the wilderness (Matt. iv. 1-4; cf. Deut. viii. 3). (2) Connected with this, there is *forgetfulness of, and ingratitude for, benefits formerly received*. This is very conspicuous in the case of these Israelites (ver. 3). (3) The characteristic feature of this spirit is the *entertaining of injurious thoughts of God*—the attempt to put God in the wrong by fastening on him the imputation of dealing harshly and injuriously with us. The murmuring spirit keeps the eye bent on self, and on self's fancied wrongs, and labours hard to make out a case of ill treatment. Its tone is complaining. It would arraign the Eternal at its puny bar, and convict him of injustice. It is narrow, self-pitying, egoistic. (4) It expresses itself in *accusations* and *reproaches*. The mental point of view already indicated prepares the way for these, and leads to them being passed off as righteous charges. God is charged foolishly (Job i. 22). (5) It is prone to *exaggeration*. The Israelites can hardly have been as well off in Egypt as they here pretend, though their words (ver. 3) show that their rations in bondage must have been fairly liberal. But the wish to make their present situation look as dark as possible, leads them to magnify the advantages of their former one. They did not think so much of it when they had it. (6) Murmuring against God *may not venture to express itself directly, and yet may do so indirectly*. The murmuring of the Israelites was of this veiled character. They masked their rebellion against God, and their impeaching of his goodness, by directing their accusations against his servants. It was God against whom they murmured (ver. 7, 8), but they slightly veiled the fact by not mentioning God, but by speaking only of Moses and Aaron. We should remember this, in our contentings with Providence. The persons on whom our murmuring spirit wreaks itself may be secondary agents—the voluntary or involuntary causes of our misfortunes—or even persons in no way directly concerned with our trouble—but be they who they may, if the spirit be bitter and rebellious, it is God, not they, whom we are contending against (cf. Gen. i. 19, 20; 2 Sam. xvii. 10).

II. GOD'S SURPRISING TREATMENT OF THESE MURMURINGS (ver. 4). It is a most astonishing fact that on this occasion there is not, on God's part, a single severe word of reproof of the people's murmurings, far less any punishment of them for it. It could not at this time be said—"Some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer" (1 Cor. x. 10). The appearance of the glory in the cloud warned and abashed, but did not injure them (ver. 10). The reason was not that God did not hear their murmuring, nor yet that he mistook its import, as directed ostensibly, not against him, but against Moses and Aaron. The Searcher of Hearts knows well when our murmurings are against *Him* (vers. 7, 8). But, 1. He *pitied* them. They were really in great need. He looked to their need, more than to their murmurings. In his great compassion, knowing their dire distress, he treated their murmurings almost as if they were prayers—gave them what they should have asked. The Father in this way anticipated the Son (Matt. xv. 32). 2. He was *forbearing with them in the beginning of their way*. God was not weakly indulgent. At a later time, when the people had been longer under training, they were severely punished for similar offences (cf. Num. xxi. 5); but in the preliminary stages of this wilderness education, God made large and merciful allowances for them. Neither here, nor at the Red Sea, nor later, at Rephidim, when they openly "tempted" him (ch. xvii. 1-8), do we read of God so much as chiding them for their wayward doings; he bore with them, like a father bearing with his children. He knew how ignorant they were; how much infirmity there was about them; how novel and trying were the situations in which he was placing them; and

he mercifully gave them *time* to improve by his teaching. Surely a God who acts in this way is not to be called "an hard master." Instead of sternly punishing their murmurings, he took their need as a starting-point, and sought to educate them out of the murmuring disposition. 3. He purposed to *prove them*. He would fully supply their wants, and so give them an opportunity of showing whether their murmuring was a result of mere infirmity—or was connected with a deeply ingrained spirit of disobedience. When perversity began to show itself, he did not spare reproof (ver. 28).—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 4-8.—THE PROMISE OF BREAD FROM HEAVEN. When men who are in real distress make complaint, even though the tone of their complaint be not such as it ought to be, God in his mercy is wont to have compassion upon them, to "hear their murmurings," &c., and grant them some relief. But the relief is seldom of the kind which they expect, or pray for. The Israelites wished for actual bread, made of wheaten or barley flour. God gave them, not such bread, but a substitute for it. And first, before giving it, he promised that it should be given. Thus expectation was aroused; faith was exercised; the supernatural character of the relief was indicated; the power and the goodness of God, were, both of them, shown forth. And with the promise was given a law. They were on each occasion to gather no more than would suffice for the day. Thus they would continually "live by faith," taking no thought for the morrow, but trusting all to God.

Ver. 4.—Bread from heaven. Compare Ps. lxxviii. 24; Neh. ix. 15; John vi. 31-51. The expression is of course not to be understood literally. The substance was not actual bread, neither was it locally transferred from the distant region called "heaven" to the soil of the Sinaitic peninsula. But it was called "bread," because it was intended to serve instead of bread, as the main support of life during the sojourn of Israel in the wilderness; and it was said to be "from heaven," first, as descending on the ground out of the circumambient air; and secondly, as miraculously sent by him, whose seat is in heaven. **The people shall gather a certain rate every day.** Rather "a day's supply every day," such a quantity as shall seem to each man reasonably sufficient for himself and his family. **That I may prove them.** As in Paradise God coupled with his free gift of "every tree of the garden" the positive precept, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat,"—that he might prove our first parents, whether they would obey him or not—so now he

"proved" the obedience of the Israelites by a definite, positive command—they were not to gather on ordinary days more than was sufficient for the day. All life is intended as a probation.

Ver. 5.—On the sixth day. That a period of seven days was known to the Hebrews as a week appears from the story of Jacob and Laban (Gen. xxix. 27). But there is no distinct evidence that the year was as yet divided into weeks, much less that the several days of the week were as yet distinguished as the first, second, third day, &c. "The sixth day," here probably means (as Kalisch says), "the sixth day after the first supply of the manna." They shall prepare. The preparation would be, first, by measurement (ver. 18), and then by pounding and grinding (Num. xi. 8). It shall be double. Some commentators suppose that in these words is implied an order that on the sixth day they should set themselves to gather a double quantity. But the natural meaning of the words is, that, having gathered the usual quantity, they should find, when they measured it, that, by miracle, the supply sufficient for one day was multiplied, so as to suffice for two. (So Kalisch, Knobel, Kurtz, and others.) This view is in harmony with verse 18, which tells of a miraculous expansion and diminution of the manna after it had been gathered, and with verse 22, which shows us "the rulers" surprised by the miracle of the sixth day.

Ver. 6.—At even, then ye shall know. See verses 12 and 13. The first evidence which the Israelites would have, that God had heard and considered their complaints, would be the descent of the quails at even of the day on which Moses and Aaron addressed them. **That the Lord hath brought you out—i.e.,** "that it is not we who, to gratify our own personal ambition, have induced you to quit Egypt under our guidance; but that all which we have done has been to act as God's instruments, and to carry out his design."

Ver. 7.—And in the morning then ye shall see the glory of the Lord. This has been supposed to refer to the manifestation of God's presence recorded in verse 10; but the balance of the two clauses in verses 6 and 7 implies two *similar* manifestations, and their arrangement shows the priority of the evening one

Now the manifestation of verse 10 preceded the coming of the quails. The manifestation which followed it, which was similar, and in the morning, was the fall of the manna. **For that he heareth your murmurings.** The connection of this clause with the preceding furnishes an additional argument in favour of the exposition that "the glory of God," spoken of in this verse is the manna. **Against the Lord.** Professedly and directly against *us*, but indirectly and really against God, whose instruments we have been in the whole matter of the exodus. **What are we?**—i.e., "What power have we of our own? We have no hereditary rank, no fixed definite position. We are simply the leaders whom you have chosen to follow, because you believed us to have a commission from God. Apart from this, we are nobodies. But, if our commission is conceded, we are to you in the place of God ;

and to murmur against us is to murmur against Jehovah."

Ver. 8.—When the Lord shall give you in the evening flesh to eat. Moses must have received a distinct intimation of the coming arrival of the quails, though he has not recorded it, his desire of brevity causing him to retrench all that is not absolutely necessary for the right understanding of the narrative. It is, comparatively, seldom that he records both the Divine message and his delivery of it. In general, he places upon record either the message only, or its delivery only. **Bread to the full.** Compare above, verse 4 ; and *infra*, verses 12 and 18. **The Lord heareth your murmurings.** The latter part of this verse is, in the main, a repetition of verse 7 ; but it emphasises the statements of that verse, and prepares the way for what follows

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 4—8. The mercy of God in hearing and helping even an ungrateful and discontented people.—God is very merciful to those who are in covenant with him, whom he has chosen for his own, and made "the sheep of his pasture." Very often, and very far may they go astray, turn from the right way, rebel against him, refuse to hearken to his voice, murmur, misuse his ministers and slander them, yet not alienate him wholly. Indefectible grace must not indeed be claimed by any man as his own portion ; for none can know that he possesses it ; yet the way of God, on the whole, appears to be to reclaim his wandering sheep ; recall them to a sense of what is their duty ; and restore them to the fold whence they have strayed. All that can be done with this object he does for the Church now, as for the congregation of the children of Israel in the wilderness.

I. HE PARDONS THEIR OFFENCES. Distrust, discontent, ingratitude, even when openly expressed in speech, he forgives in his mercy, not seven times only, but "seventy times seven." How many murmur at their lot ; complain of their worldly condition, or their lack of spiritual gifts, or their unhappy position under ministers of whom they do not approve ; or the coldness and unsympathetic temper of their friends, or the want of any due appreciation by others of their merits ! It is, comparatively speaking, rarely that we meet with a contented person. Yet God is so merciful, that he bears with the murmurers—yea, even "hears their murmurings," and devises means for their relief.

II. HE GIVES THEM BREAD FROM HEAVEN. "Every good gift and every perfect gift" is from him, and "cometh down from the Father of Lights." The material sustenance of daily life is one form of "bread from heaven," wherewith he daily provides the millions who look to him. His holy word is another form, a heavenly gift, the sustenance of many souls. But, as he tells us, he himself is "the true bread from heaven" (John vi. 32—51). In and through the Eucharist, he gives us himself to be our spiritual food and sustenance, the bread of life, the true manna, meat indeed. If we worthily receive the blessed sacrament of his body and blood, then we "spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood ; then we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us ; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us"—"our sinful bodies are made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood." Thus, he gives us, in the highest, most perfect, and most spiritual way, that which is the great need of our souls, "bread from heaven."

III. HE GIVES THEM LAWS TO PROVE THEM. With blessing duty goes ever hand in hand. To every gift God attaches some law of direction for its use. The gift of the manna had its own laws—its law of gathering, and its law of reserving or not reserving. The holy Eucharist has also its one great law—a law fixing the mental attitude—"Do this in remembrance of me." To make it a mere supper, as the Corinthians did (1 Cor.

xi. 20—34), albeit a love-feast, symbolical of Christian fellowship and unity, is to break this law. The Eucharist is “for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ”—for the calling to mind his sufferings for our sins, his atonement for our guilt, his deliverance of us from Satan, death, and hell, by his one oblation of himself once offered upon the Cross. It is by this remembrance that our penitence is made acute, our gratitude called forth, our hearts enabled to “lift themselves up,” our spirits stirred to love, and joy, and thankfulness; and obedience to this law on our part is a necessary condition to our receiving the benefits of the Eucharist. Thus we too, when “bread from heaven” is rained upon us, have a law given to us to prove us, whether we will walk in God’s law or not.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 4—16.—*The gift of Manna.* Quails also were given, on this occasion in mercy, and on a later occasion in wrath (Num. xi. 31—34); but it was the manna which was the principal gift, both as providing Israel with a continuous supply of food, and as having a permanent significance in the history of God’s dealings with his Church (vers. 32—35).

I. THE MANNA PROMISED (vers. 4—9). 1. *God would rain bread from heaven for them* (ver. 4). He would spread a table for them, even in the wilderness, a thing they had deemed impossible (Ps. lxxviii. 19). He would give them to eat of “the corn of heaven” (Ps. lxxviii. 24). He would thus display himself as Jehovah,—the God of exhaustless resources,—able and willing to supply all their need (cf. Phil. iv. 19). He would remove from himself the reproach wherewith they had reproached him, that he had brought them into the wilderness, “to kill this whole assembly with hunger” (ver. 3). He would testify of his loving care for them (cf. Deut. i. 31). 2. *The supply would be continuous*—“Every day” (ver. 4). The regularity of the supply would be a daily proof of God’s faithfulness—another of the Jehovah attributes. We have a similar proof of the Divine faithfulness in the constancy of the laws of nature on which our own supplies of food depend; in particular, in the regular succession of seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, which God has promised to maintain (Gen. viii. 22; cf. Ps. cxix. 89—92). 3. *The gift of quails and manna would be a manifestation of his glory as Jehovah* (vers. 6, 7; also ver. 12—“and ye shall know that I am Jehovah your God”). His Jehovah character would be revealed in it. Note, in addition to what is said above, the following illustrations of this. (1) The gift of manna was an act of free origination. Compare with Christ’s multiplication of the loaves, brought in John vi. into close association with this miracle. (2) So far as natural materials were utilised in the production of the manna (dew, etc.), it was shown how absolutely plastic nature was in the hands of its Creator. (3) The gift of quails was a further testimony to God’s supreme rule in nature. (4) It was a special feature in this transaction that God was seen in it acting solely from himself—finding the law and reason of what he did in himself alone. He interposes with a simple “I will” (ver. 4). It was neither the people’s merits nor the people’s prayers, which moved him to give the manna. Merits they had none; prayers they did not offer. But God, who brought them out of Egypt, and had bound himself by covenant with their fathers, found a reason in himself for helping them, when he could find none in them (cf. Deut. ix. 4, 5). He showed them this kindness for his own name’s sake (cf. Ps. cvi. 8); because he was Jehovah, who changed not (Mal. iii. 6). 4. *The gift of manna would prove a trial of obedience* (ver. 4). God bound himself to send the manna day by day, and this would be a test of his faithfulness. But rules would be prescribed to the people for gathering the manna, and this would be a test of their obedience. God’s design in giving the manna was thus not merely to supply the people’s natural wants. He would also train them to dependence. He would test their characters. He would endeavour to form them to habits of obedience. A like educative and disciplinary purpose is to be recognised as bound up with all God’s leading of us. Gifts are at the same time trusts. They impose duties upon us, and lay us under responsibilities. There are rules to be observed in the use of them which test our inner dispositions. There is a law of temperance in the use of

food. There is a law of modesty in dress. There are the laws relating to the acquisition and expenditure of money—honesty in acquisition, economy in use, liberality in giving (cf. Deut. xv. 7—12), devotion of the first fruits of income to God. There is the supreme law, which includes all others—"Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31). There is no action, no occupation, however seemingly trivial, which has not important relations to the formation of character. "The daily round, the common task," etc.

II. THE PREPARATORY THEOPHANY (vers. 9—13). Moses summoned the people to draw near before the Lord. Then, as they came together, and looked toward the wilderness, lo! "the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud." It is a suggestive circumstance that it is Aaron, who by command of Moses, collects the congregation (ver. 10). Moses, according to his wont, had probably withdrawn to pray (cf. ch. xiv. 15). In this, as in other instances, Moses might be taken as an example of *secrecy* in prayer. His prayers are never paraded. They are even studiously kept in the background—a proof surely of the Mosaic authorship of the book. When they come to light, it is often incidentally (ch. xiv. 15). On one notable occasion an intercessory prayer of his was not made known till near the end of his life (Deut. ix. 25). We know of his prayers mostly by their results. This appearance of the glory of God to Israel may be viewed:—1. *As a rebuke of the people's murmurings*. Unlike the "look" from the pillar of fire with which the Lord discomfited the Egyptians (ch. xiv. 24), it was a look with as much mercy as anger in it. Yet it conveyed reproof. It may be compared with the theophany which terminated the dispute between Job and his friends, and caused the patriarch to abhor himself, and to repent in dust and ashes (Job xxxviii. 1; xlii. 6); or to the look of sorrow and reproof which the Lord cast on Peter, which caused him to go out, and weep bitterly (Matt. xxvi. 75). How abashed, humbled, and full of fear, those murmurers would now be, as with mouths stopped (Rom. iii. 19), they beheld that terrible glory forming itself in the cloud, and looking down full upon them! 2. *As a fitting introduction to the miracle that was to follow*. It gave impressiveness to the announcement—showed indubitably the source of the miraculous supply—roused the minds of the people to a high pitch of expectation—prepared them for something grand and exceptional in the Divine procedure. It thus checked their murmurings, convinced them of their sin in distrusting God, warned them of the danger of further rebellion, and brought them back to their obedience. God's words—"I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel"—at the same time reminded them that he was fully aware of all their "hard speeches" which they had spoken against him. 3. *As an anticipation of the revelation of Sinai*. These chapters are full of anticipations. In ch. xv. 25, 26, we have "statute and an ordinance," anticipatory of the later Sinaitic covenant; in this chapter, we have an anticipation of Sinai glory and also of the sabbath law (ver. 23); in ch. xviii. 16, we have an anticipation of the *civil* code of Sinai; for Moses makes the people "know the statutes of God, and his laws."

III. THE MANNA GIVEN (vers. 13—16). Quails came in the evening, and next morning the manna fell with the dew. We observe concerning it—1. *That it came in a not unfamiliar form*. The "angel's food" (Ps. lxxviii. 25), wore the dress, and had the taste of the ordinary manna of the desert. We miss in the miracles of the Bible the grotesque and bizarre features which mark the supernatural stories of other books. They testify to the existence, as well as respect the laws, of an established natural order. The plagues of Egypt, *e.g.*, were thoroughly true to the natural phenomena of that country, and made the largest possible use of existing agencies. The crossing of the Red Sea was accomplished by the supernatural employment of natural conditions and agencies. There is in all these miracles the constant observance of the two laws: (1) Of economy—utilising the natural so far as it will go; and (2) of congruity—keeping as closely as possible to the type of the natural, even when originating supernatural phenomena. 2. *That it was a direct production of the power of God*. It was in the truest sense bread from heaven, and is thus a type of Christ, the Bread of Life (see below). Yet the power exerted in the creation of the manna—and it is important to remember this—is but the same power, only more visibly put forth, which operates still in nature, giving us our yearly supplies of the good things of the earth. The annual harvest is only not a miracle, because it comes

regularly, season after season, and because numerous secondary agencies are employed in its production. You plough, that is, break up the ground to receive the seed; but whence came the seed? From last year's gift. You sow it in the fields, cover it up again and leave it—to whose care? To God's. It is he who now takes the matter into his own hands, and in what remains you can but wait upon his will. It rests with him to send his rains or to withhold them; to order the sunshine and heat; to bless or blast your harvest. What man does is but to put matters in train for God's working—God himself does the rest; in the swelling and germination of the seed, in all the stages of its growth, in the formation of the blade, in the modelling of the ear, in the filling of it with the rich ripe grain, his power is absolutely, and all throughout, the only power at work. And how great the gift is when it comes! It is literally God opening his hand and putting into ours the food necessary for our sustenance. But for that gift, year by year renewed, man and beast would utterly perish. It is calculated that a year's produce in Great Britain alone amounts in money value to over £160,000,000. The corn crop alone was valued in 1880 at £90,000,000. It is as if God had made a direct gift of that sum of money to our nation in the year named, only it was given in a better than money form—in food. How little we think of it! Men are proud and self-sufficient, and speak sometimes as if they would almost disdain to accept or acknowledge a favour even from the Almighty. While yet, in truth, they are, like others, the veriest pensioners on his bounty, sustained by his power, seeing by his light, warmed by his sun, and fed year by year by the crumbs that fall from his table. Were God for a single year to break the staff of bread over the whole earth, where would either it or they be? 3. *That it was given day by day, and with regularity.* Thus the manna taught a daily lesson of dependence on God, and so played an important part in the spiritual education of Israel. Yet familiarity must have done much then, as it does still, to deaden the impression of God's hand in the daily gift. Because the manna came to them, not by fits and starts, but regularly; because there was a "law" in its coming—they would get to look on it as quite a common occurrence, no more to be wondered at than the rising and setting of the sun, or any other sequence in nature. "Laws of nature" tend, in precisely the same way, to blind us to the agency of God working behind and in them, as well as to hide from us his agency in the origination of the sequences that now flow so uniformly. We have spoken of God's agency in the production of the harvest. But there is good ground for speaking of our cereal crops as in yet another sense—"bread from heaven." These cereal plants, it is affirmed, are never found in a wild state; cannot by any known process be developed from plants in a wild state; and if once allowed to degenerate, can never again be reclaimed for human food. Not inaptly, therefore, have they been represented as even now a kind of *standing miracle*—a proof of direct creative interposition for the good of man. (See "The Cerealia: a Standing Miracle," by Professor Harvey, in "Good Words," vol. ii.) Yet how entirely is this veiled from us by the fact that "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Pet. iii. 4). 4. *That it was a food entirely suitable to the circumstances of the Israelites.* It was light, nutritious, palatable; comprised variety by admitting of being prepared in different ways (baked, seethed, ver. 23; cf. Num. xi. 8); was abundant in quantity, readily distinguishable by the eye, and being of a granulated nature, and strewn thickly throughout all the camp, could be collected with a very moderate expenditure of labour. It was thus, like so much in our own surroundings, and in the provision which God makes for our wants, a constant witness to the care, goodness, wisdom, and forethought of the great Giver.—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 9—21.—THE PROMISE FULFILLED. Moses had made a double promise to the Israelites in God's name "The Lord shall give you," he had said, "in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full" (ver. 8). And now the time for the fulfilment of the

double promise approached. First, however, before they received the blessings, he required them to present themselves before the Lord. As they had rebelled in murmuring, an act of homage was proper; and as they had called in question the conduct of Moses and Aaron.

some token that God approved the action of these his faithful servants, and would support them, was needed. Hence the appearance of the Lord to the congregation in the cloud (ver. 10). After this, when evening approached, the quails fell. A vast flight of this migratory bird, which often arrives in Arabia Petræa from the sea (Diod. Sic. i. 60), fell to the earth about the Hebrew camp, and, being quite exhausted, lay on the ground in a state which allowed of their being taken by the hand. The Israelites had thus abundant "flesh to eat" (ver. 8), for God "sent them meat enough" (Ps. lxxviii. 26). The next morning, the remainder of the promise was fulfilled. When they awoke, they found that the vegetation about the camp was covered with a sort of dew, resembling hoar-frost, which was capable of easy detachment from the leaves, and which proved to be an edible substance. While they were in doubt about the phenomenon, Moses informed them that this was the "bread from heaven" which they had been promised (ver. 15). At the same time he instructed them as to the quantity which they should gather, which he fixed at an omer for each member of their family (ver. 16). In attempting to carry out these instructions, mistakes were not unnaturally made; some exceeded the set quantity, others fell short of it. But the result was found to be the same. Whatever the quantity gathered, when it was brought home and measured, the amount was by miracle made to be exactly an omer for each (ver. 18). Afterwards, Moses gave another order. The whole of the manna was to be consumed (ordinarily) on the day on which it was gathered. When some wilfully disobeyed this command, the reserved manna was found on the next day to have become bad—it had bred worms, and gave out an offensive odour. This circumstance put a stop to the malpractice.

Ver. 12.—**At even.** Literally, "between the two evenings." For the meaning of the phrase, see the comment on ch. xii. 6. **Ye shall eat flesh.** The quails, as appears by the subsequent narrative, were supplied, not regularly, but only on rare occasions; in fact (so far as appears), only here in the wilderness of Sin, and at Kibroth-hattaavah in the wilderness of Paran (Num. xi. 31—34). They were not a necessary, but an indulgence. **Ye shall know that I am the Lord.** The miracle of the manna, and the timely appearance of the

quails at the hour announced, will sufficiently show that it is God himself who has you under his charge and watches over you.

Ver. 13.—**The quails came up.** The word here translated, "quails" has been supposed to designate the flying-fish (*Trigla Israelitarum* of Ehrenberg), or a species of locust (Ludolf). But Ps. lxxviii. 28, makes it clear that "feathered fowls" are intended; and moderns generally, are agreed that the rendering "quails" is right. It has the authority of the Septuagint, of Josephus, and of the Vulgate. Diodorus says that "the inhabitants of Arabia Petræa prepared long nets, spread them near the coast for many stadia, and thus caught a great number of quails which are in the habit of coming in from the sea" (ii. 60). The quail regularly migrates from Syria and Arabia in the autumn, and winters in the interior of Africa, whence it returns northwards in immense masses in the spring (Schubert, *Reise*, vol. ii. p. 361). Kalisch thinks that the particular species of quail intended is the *kata* of the Arabs (*Tetrao Alchata* of Linnaeus); but the common quail (*Tetrao coturnix*) is preferred by most commentators. When these birds approach the coast after a long flight over the Red Sea, they are often so exhausted that they rather fall to the ground than settle, and are then easily taken by the hand or killed with sticks. Their flesh is regarded by the natives as a delicacy. **Covered the camp**—i.e., covered all the ground between the tents in which the Israelites lived in the wilderness. **The dew lay.** Literally, "there was a layer of dew"—something, i.e., lay on the ground outside the camp which looked like dew, and was in part dew, but not wholly so.

Ver. 14.—**When the dew that lay was gone up.** The moisture which lay upon the herbage soon evaporated, drawn up by the sun; and then the miracle revealed itself. There remained upon each leaf and each blade of grass a delicate small substance, compared here to **hoar frost**, and elsewhere (Num. xi. 7) to "coriander seed," which was easily detached and collected in bags or baskets. The thing was altogether a novelty to the Israelites, though analogous in some degree to natural processes still occurring in the country. These processes are of two kinds. At certain times of the year there is a deposit of a glutinous substance from the air upon leaves and even upon stones, which may be scraped off, and which resembles thick honey. There is also an exudation from various trees and shrubs, especially the tamarisk, which is moderately hard, and is found both on the growing plant and on the fallen leaves beneath it, in the shape of small, round, white or greyish grains. It is this last which is the manna of commerce. The Biblical manna cannot be identified with either of these two substances.

In some points it resembled the one, in other points the other; in some, it differed from both. It came out of the air like the "air-honey," and did not exude from shrubs; but it was hard, like the manna of commerce, and could be "ground in mills" and "beaten in mortars," which the "air-honey" cannot. It was not a medicament, like the one, nor a condiment, like the other, but a substance suited to be a substitute for bread, and to become the main sustenance of the Israelitish people. It was produced in quantities far exceeding anything that is recorded of either manna proper, or air honey. It accompanied the Israelites wherever they went during the space of forty years, whereas the natural substances, which in certain points resemble it, are confined to certain districts, and to certain seasons of the year. During the whole space of forty years it fell regularly during six consecutive days, and then ceased on the seventh. It "bred worms" if kept till the morrow on all days of the week except one; on that one—the Sabbath—it bred no worms, but was sweet and good. Thus, it must be regarded as a peculiar substance, miraculously created for a special purpose, but similar in certain respects to certain known substances which are still produced in the Sinaitic region.

Ver. 15.—*They said one to another, this is manna.* Rather, "this is a gift." To suppose that they recognised the substance as one known to them in Egypt under the name of *menu* or *mennu*, is to make this clause contradict the next. To translate "what is this?" gives good sense, but is against grammar, since the Hebrew for "what" is not *man* but *mah*. The Septuagint translators (who render *τί ἐστι τοῦτο*) were probably deceived by their familiarity with the Chaldee, in which *man* corresponds to "what." Not knowing what to call the substance, the Israelites said one to another, "it is a gift"—meaning a gift from heaven, God's gift (compare verse 8); and afterwards, in consequence of this, the word *man* (properly "gift") became the accepted name of the thing.

Ver 16—*An omer for every man.* Ac-

cording to Kalisch, the omer is about two quarts (English): but this estimate is probably in excess. Josephus makes the measure one equal to six cotyles, which would be about a quart and a half, or three pints. In his tents. Rather, "in his tent."

Ver. 17.—*The children of Israel did so.* The Israelites set themselves to obey Moses, and gathered what they supposed to be about an omer; but, as a matter of course, some of them exceeded the amount, while others fell short of it. There was no wilful disobedience thus far.

Ver. 18.—*When they did mete it with an omer.* On returning to their tents, with the manna which they had collected, the Israelites proceeded to measure it with their own, or a neighbour's, omer measure, when the wonderful result appeared, that, whatever the quantity actually gathered by any one, the result of the measurement showed, exactly as many omers as there were persons in the family. Thus, he that had gathered much found that he had nothing over, and he that had gathered little found that he had no lack.

Ver. 19.—*Let no man leave of it till the morning.* Moses, divinely instructed, warned the people that they were not to lay up in store any of their manna to be eaten the next day. God would have them trust their future wants to him, and "take no thought for the morrow." Some of them, however, were disobedient, with the result stated in the next verse.

Ver. 20.—*It bred worms.* This was a supernatural, not a natural result. It served as a sort of punishment of the disobedient, and effectually checked the practice of laying up in store.

Ver. 21.—*When the sun waxed hot it melted.* The manna had to be gathered early. What had not been collected before the sun grew hot, melted away and disappeared from sight. In this respect the miraculous manna resembled both the manna of commerce and the "air-honey."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 9—21.—*God and Nature.* I. GOD IS THE MASTER OF NATURE, NOT NATURE'S SERVANT. A school of modern thought places nature above God, or at any rate on a par with God. It is an absolute impossibility, we are told, that a law of nature should be broken or suspended. Miracles are incredible. But all this, it must be borne in mind, is mere assertion, and assertion without a tittle of proof. All that we can *know* is, that we ourselves have never witnessed a miracle. We may further *believe*, that none of our contemporaries have witnessed any. But that miracles have never taken place, we cannot know. There is abundant testimony in the records of humanity that they have. To say that they are impossible, is to assume that we know the exact relation of God to nature, and that that relation is such as to preclude any infraction or suspension of a natural law. This would only be the case, 1. If nature were

entirely independent of God; or, 2. If God had bound himself never under any circumstances to interfere with the course of nature. But neither of these positions is true. So far from nature being independent of God, nature wholly proceeds from God, is his creation, and momentarily depends on him both for its existence and its laws. Its laws are simply the laws which he imposes on it; the rules which he sees fit under ordinary circumstances to lay down and maintain. And he has nowhere bound himself to maintain all his laws perpetually without change. He will not, we may be sure, capriciously or without grave cause, change or suspend a law, because he is himself immutable, and "without shadow of turning." But, like a wise monarch, or a wise master of a household, he will make exceptions under exceptional circumstances. And thus it was at this time. Israel was brought out of Egypt—was promised Canaan—but required a prolonged course of training to be rendered fit for its promised inheritance. Geographically, Canaan could only be reached through the wilderness; and so the wilderness was the necessary scene of Israel's education. How then was the nation to be supported during the interval? Naturally the wilderness produced only a scanty subsistence for a few thousand nomads. How was it to support two millions of souls? There was no way but by miracle. Here then was a "*dignus vindice nodus*"—a fitting occasion for the exertion of supernatural power—and God gave by miracle the supply of which his people had need.

II. GOD, EVEN WHEN PRODUCING EFFECTS THAT ARE BEYOND NATURE, WORKS TO A LARGE EXTENT THROUGH NATURE. The Israelites needed, or at any rate craved for flesh. God did not create for them new animals, as he might have done (Gen. i. 25), or even give them meat by any strange and unknown phenomenon. He brought a timely flight of quails—a migratory bird, in the habit of visiting Arabia at the time of year—and made them alight exactly where the camp was fixed, in too exhausted a condition to fly further—a phenomenon not at all unusual at the particular season and in the particular country. The Israelites needed bread, or some substitute for it. God gave them manna—not a wholly new and unknown substance, but a modification of a known substance. He made previously existing nature his basis, altering and adding qualities, greatly augmenting the quantity, but not exerting more supernatural power than was necessary, or departing further from the established course of nature than the occasion required. The same "economy" is seen in the sweetening of the waters of Marah by the wood of a particular tree (ch. xv. 21), etc. The method of God's supernatural working is to supplement, not contradict, nature.

Verses 14—18.—*Bread from heaven.* Our Lord tells us that the manna was a type of him, and that he was the "true bread from heaven" (John vi. 32). We may profitably consider, in what respects the type held good.

I. IT WAS THE NOURISHMENT OF THE BODY, AS CHRIST IS OF THE SOUL. The manna constituted almost the sole nourishment of the Israelites from this time forth until they entered Canaan (Josh. v. 12). So Christ is the food of the soul during its entire pilgrimage through the wilderness of this world, until it reaches the true Canaan, heaven. The Israelites were in danger of perishing for lack of food—they murmured—and God gave them the manna. The world was perishing for lack of spiritual nourishment—it made a continual dumb complaint—and God heard, and gave his own Son from heaven. Christ came into the world, not only to teach it, and redeem it, but to be its "spiritual food and sustenance." He feeds us with the bread of life. He gives us his own self for nourishment. Nothing else can truly sustain and support the soul—not creeds, not sacraments, not even his own Word without him.

II. IT WAS GIVEN FREELY FOR ALL THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL, AS CHRIST IS GIVEN TO BE THE SAVIOUR OF THE WHOLE WORLD. The manna fell all around the camp of Israel, close to them, so that they had but to stretch out the hand and take it. None could lack sufficient sustenance except by his own fault. If he refused to gather, he might starve; but not otherwise. So Christ gave himself for all men, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." His was "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the *whole world*." Even they who know him not may be saved by him, "if they will do the works of the law written in their hearts," or, in other words, act up to the light that has been vouchsafed them. Thus, his salvation is free, and open to all. In Christian lands it is close to all, made palpable to all, shown

them openly, daily pressed upon them. He who starves here in England can scarcely starve save by his own fault—because he will not stretch out his hand to gather of the bread of life, will not take it when it is offered to him, rejects it, despises it, “loathes” it.

III. IT WAS WHITE, AND SWEET TO THE TASTE, AS CHRIST IS PURE AND SPOTLESS AND SWEET TO THE SOUL. A master mind of these modern times has made his hero, a well-disposed heathen, see in Christ, even before he could bring himself to believe in him, “the WHITE Christ.” “Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,” he presents himself to all who will read his life, and contemplate his character, as pure, stainless, innocent. The Lamb is his fitting emblem. Driven snow is not purer or more speckless. “Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee” (Cant. iv. 7). And he is sweet also. “Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb; honey and milk are under thy tongue” (ib. 11). “How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth!” (Ps. cxix. 103). His words, his life, his promises, his influence, his presence, are all sweet, especially the last. Let those who know him not, once “taste and see how gracious the Lord is,” and they will desire no other nourishment.

IV. IT DESCENDED NOISELESSLY IN THE NIGHT. So Christ comes to us, not “with observation”—not in the wind, or in the fire, or in the earthquake, but in silence and in quietude, when other voices are hushed within us and about us, when we sit and watch, in patience possessing our souls. His doctrine drops as the rain, and his peace distils as the dew. It comes down “like the rain into a fleece of wool, even as the drops that water the earth.” In the whirl of passion, in the giddy excitement of pleasure, in the active bustle of business, there is no room for Christ, no fit place for his presence. Christ comes to the soul when it is calm and tranquil, when it waits for him, and believing in his promise that he will come, is at rest.

V. IT REQUIRED TO BE GATHERED EARLY, AND IF NOT GATHERED MELTED AWAY. “Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” Unless we will seek Christ *early*, we have no warrant to expect that he will condescend to be found of us. If we slight him, if we dally with the world, if we put off seeking him till a “more convenient season,” we may find, when we wake up from our foolish negligence, that he has withdrawn himself, has (as it were) melted away. If an Israelite put off his gathering of the manna until the sun was hot, he obtained nothing—the manna no longer lay ready to his hand. So with the Christian who is slothful, self-indulgent, careless—when, after long neglect, he at length seeks spiritual food, he may find it too late, the opportunity may be irrevocably gone.

Vers. 19, 20.—*God's curse upon ill-gotten gains.*—In order to try the Israelites, whether they would be obedient to him or no (ver. 4), God gave them, by the mouth of Moses, a positive law—“Let no man leave of the manna till the morning.” By some the law was disobeyed. Disregarding the Divine command—perhaps distrusting the Divine promise (ver. 4), to give them food day by day, a certain number of the Israelites, kept some of the manna till the morning. They wished to have a store laid up, on which they might subsist, should the daily supply fail. But God would not be disobeyed with impunity. His curse was on the ill-gotten gain—it bred worms and stank, becoming a source of annoyance both to themselves and their neighbours. So, God's curse is ever on ill-gotten gains—*e.g.* :—

I. WHEN MEN SET THEIR HEARTS ON HOARDING ALL THEY CAN. Some provision for the future is required of us. “Go to the ant, thou sluggard,” says the wise man, “consider her ways, and be wise.” “He that doth not provide for them of his own household,” St. Paul declares, “is worse than an infidel.” Prudence is a Christian, no less than a heathen virtue. But to hoard everything, to give nothing away, to make the accumulation of wealth our main object, is to fly in the face of a hundred plain precepts, and necessarily brings God's curse upon us. The wealth rots—the concerns wherein it is invested fail—it disappears and is brought to nought—and all our careful saving advantages us nothing. God vindicates his own honour; and disperses or destroys the hoard accumulated contrary to his will.

II. WHEN, TO AUGMENT THEIR HOARDS, MEN BREAK A DIVINE COMMAND. There are some who, in their haste to be rich, disregard the Divine injunction to keep holy one

day in seven, and pursue their secular calling without any intermission. Conveyancers draw out their deeds, barristers study their briefs, business men balance their books, authors ply their pens, as busily on the Sunday as on week days. What blessing can be expected on the gains thus made? Is it not likely that they will breed corruption? Still more wholly under a curse are gains made by unlawful trades or dishonest practices—by the false weight or the scant measure, or the adulterated article—or again by usurious lending, by gaming, by brothel-keeping.

III. WHEN THE MOTIVE FOR THE HOARDING IS DISTRUST OF GOD'S PROMISES. God bids us not to be anxious for the morrow, what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or what we shall put on (Matt. vi. 31)—and promises that, if we will “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all these things shall be added unto us” (ib. 33). He caused holy David to declare—“I have been young and now am old, yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread.” If men hoard in distrust of these gracious words, not believing that God will make them good, and thinking to assure the future of wife or child, or both, by their own accumulations, they provoke God to bring their accumulations to nothing. Riches, however invested, can make themselves wings and disappear, if God's blessing does not rest on their possessor.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Chap. xvi.—*The manna of the body.—A homily on providence.* “They said one to another, what is this? (marg.) for they wist not what it was” (Ex. xvi. 15). Introduction:—Trace the journey from Elim to the sea (Num. xxxiii. 10); and thence to the wilderness of Sin; and give a thoroughly good exegetical exposition of the facts of the manna story. It would be well also to show the supernatural character of the manna; and, at the same time, that the manna supernatural was not unlike (and yet unlike also) the manna natural of the desert of to-day; that God, in a word, did not give the food of either Greenland or Australia in the Arabian wilderness. The spiritual lessons of the miracle move on two levels, one higher than the other. There is a body, and a soul: food for the one, and for the other. There are then in the manna story truths concerning Divine providence, and also touching Divine grace. Hence two homilies on the manna. This on the manna of providence.

I. BODILY NEED IS AN APPEAL TO GOD. Before Israel articulately prayed, its need cried: so now with twelve hundred millions of men. No man “gets his own living,” but God gives it. Imagine one famine round the world, and every living thing would become dumb and dead. The world's need is one majestic monotone of prayer.

II. THE ANSWER IS FULL AND FREE. No stint in that desert—no stint now. A picture of the fulness with which God ever gives bread. There has never been such an event as *universal* famine. Ps. civ. 21—28.

III. THERE IS MYSTERY IN THE ANSWER. Note the question of the text, and the wonder of the people, which was never relieved through all the forty years. So with bread to-day. A great mystery! A common thing to common minds; and perhaps to uncommon minds, that would like, as scientists, to bow all mystery out of the universe. But as there was mystery in the manna, so is there in every grain of corn. No scientist could produce one, were he to try for fifty years. Why? Because the secret of life is a secret of God; and the creation of organization lies in his own power alone.

IV. THE BLAME OF WANT IS NOT WITH GOD. The question arises: if God hears the moaning of the world's need, and gives answer, why is there so much want? Murmuring against Moses and Aaron, Israel murmured against the Lord; so we, grumbling against secondary causes, may be arraigning the First Cause. But the blame lies not there. Political economy might give answer to the question:—Why want? But behind its answers lie deeper causes—all summed up in the one word *sin*—not only the folly and sin (improvidence, drunkenness, etc. etc.) of the individual, but of all the ages, that is to say, self-centredness (the root principle of sin), forming and solidifying customs and institutions, which have for their effect the oppression and privation of millions. The instances are numberless.

V. But if all the heritage of sin were to disappear MAN MUST WORK. Israel must

gather manna. Here enforce, not only the dignity of work, but the Christian duty thereof. The idle, whether in high life or low, are the dangerous classes. If exempted from toil for bread, all the more obligation to labour for the good of man to the glory of God.

VI. YET—THERE MUST BE SABBATH.

VII. A HINT AGAINST MERE HOARDING. Distinguish between extravagance, a due providence, and hoarding after a miserly fashion. The *via media* here, as elsewhere, the right ethical path.

VIII. The manna story gives us THE TRUE THEORY OF LIFE. See the view of Moses as to the purpose of the manna, in the light of experience, after the lapse of forty years, in Deut. viii. 3. (comp. Matt. iv. 4). Man is to live, not for that which is lowest in him, but for that which is highest. Life is to be DEPENDENCE UPON GOD; 1:—*For leading*. 2:—*For support*. This was the object of the giving of the manna.—R.

Ch. xvi.—*Manna for the soul; a homily on grace*. “I am the living bread . . . he shall live for ever.” John vi. 51. Having given the manna story, discussed the miracle, and given the lessons bearing on our providential path, we now go up to the higher level, and listen to the truths taught in relation to the kingdom of God’s grace. These gather round the central truth—that the Lord Jesus Christ is the nutriment of the soul. For that truth we have his own supreme authority. [See the full discourse from his own lips on the manna, in John vi.] Avoid small typologies—small every way—*e.g.*, that the roundness of the manna stands for Christ’s eternity; its whiteness for his purity; its sweetness for the preciousness of Christ. When men would estimate the majesty of a mountain they play not with the pebbles at its feet.

I. THE OBJECT OF GOD IN THE GIFT OF THE HEAVENLY MANNA. Why Christ? Long before Israel cried, the Father saw the coming distress; and resolved to give the manna to meet it. So with Christ. Christ was given for atonement, and to bring from under the cloud of condemnation; but also for other reasons beyond, to give life and strength to the moral and spiritual man. There is a rich provision in the world for the body and for the mind [describe]; but there is something higher in man—the spiritual—not only a *ψυχή*, but a *πνεῦμα*—for which provision must be made.

II. THE FAMINE OF THE SOUL WITHOUT CHRIST. Very difficult to imagine a world without bread; more to suppose a world without Christ. His name, his history, his death, his reign, his presence, power, and love are implied, and involved always, everywhere, in all the phenomena of life. But endeavour to imagine Christ annihilated—no name of Christ to entwine in the lullaby at the cradle, and so on through every stage and circumstance of life, till the dying moment—no Christ for the guilty, sinning, sorrowing, tempted, etc. etc. What a famine of the soul!

III. THE SUPPLY OF THE SOUL WITH CHRIST. Having seen what the world would be without Christ, see positively what Christ is to the world. The understanding cannot live without objective truth (mere opinion will not suffice); Christ is that truth: nor the heart without a supreme object of love; Christ that object: nor the conscience without authority behind its moral imperative; Christ is that authority: nor the will without a living inward abiding power; and Christ is that power. In very real and intelligible sense, Christ is the manna, bread, nutriment, sustenance, vitality, and power of the believing soul.

IV. THE FULNESS OF THE SUPPLY. *All* we need certainly in bread, probably in the manna, assuredly in Christ.

V. ITS FREENESS. Men may confuse themselves, and imagine they “get” their own bread. But manna was manifestly the free gift of heaven. So Christ. This the one truth, which it is so difficult for men to receive. See 1 John v. 11, 12; Rom. vi. 23.

VI. ITS MYSTERY. The name of the desert provision was “Man-Hu?”—“What is it?” Men did not solve the mystery ere they ate. Why should men wait to solve the mystery of Christ’s person, office, etc. etc., ere they eat “the living bread?”

VII. ITS NEARNESS. Both the manna and Christ at every man’s tent-door.

VIII. ITS APPROPRIATION. Vain that manna for the two millions, if no man went out to gather; so vain the all-sufficiency of Christ, if no man “comes,” “believes,” appropriates. John vi. 35, 37, 40, 47, 57.

IX. ITS EVERY-DAYNESS. No man can live upon a past experience of the sufficiency of Christ.

X. ITS ORDER. Full and free as the supply of manna was, its appropriation and use were under Divine direction, were according to a certain order. So are there now channels, means, ordinances of grace, which no man can safely neglect.

XI. THE AIM IN MAN'S APPROPRIATION. Not self-indulgence; not merely his own growth. No man an end unto himself. The final end of food is strength, work, good for others. The danger of middle-class evangelicalism is that of making personal salvation the ultimate aim of God's grace. We are saved, that we may save. The end of bread is labour.

XII. The subject carries our thoughts on to THE HIDDEN MANNA. Rev. ii. 17.—Christ will be the soul's nutriment in heaven. "Hidden," for there will be in heaven as yet undiscovered glories of Christ the Lord. For the final lesson see John vi. 27.—R.

Vers. 1—15.—*The provision of the manna.* This chapter contains an account of the first provision of miraculous bread for Israel in the wilderness. We are told very fully the circumstances in which it was given and the regulations for obtaining and using it. This provision of bread comes very appropriately after the visits to Marah and Elim. The waters had been made sure, and were soon to be made sure again (ch. xvii.); and now the bread is given (Is. xxxiii. 16). Before God takes the people to Sinai, he does everything to show that they may confidently depend on him for necessities, however vainly they look for superfluities. Consider—

I. THE STATE OF MIND AMONG THE ISRAELITES WHICH PRECEDED THIS GIFT. It is important to notice that such an ample, gracious and miraculous gift as Jehovah here bestowed was bestowed on the unthankful and the evil. With many reasons for faith, they were unbelieving; instead of being patient and submissive, considerate towards their leader, and thankful for liberty, they broke out into selfish and unjust complaints. Things were going far otherwise than as they wanted them to go. They have now been a month or more out of Egypt and it is wilderness, wilderness, wilderness still! They have got water, but what is water without bread; and what is bread, unless it be the bread along with the flesh of Egypt? And, letting their minds dwell on these lost delicacies, their discontent breaks out in *the most expressive way*. Discontent is assuredly at a high pitch in a man's mind, when he begins to talk of death as a thing to be desired. It shows that he has got so reckless and peevish as not to care what he says, what others may think, or who may be hurt by his random talk. The low ideal of life on the part of Israel is here revealed. God has delivered a whole nation, and this is their idea of why he has delivered them. They think a life, from which the flesh pots and the fulness of bread are absent, is not worth living; and such is indeed a very excusable conception of life, if hunger and thirst after righteousness have not become vigorous desires within us. If one is to become a freeman simply to die, then it seems as if one might just as well live a little longer as a slave. Note further how the people try to throw *the responsibility of their present position on Moses*. It was a consequence of their carnal-mindedness that they could not think of the Jehovah who was behind and above the visible leader. They are where they are because Moses has brought them. Thus they utter an unconscious but weighty and significant testimony to the fact, that they had not come there of their own accord or wandered there in an aimless fashion. But for the mighty power that held them fast together, they might have straggled back to Egypt with its comforts and delights. Strange that with such a rebellious spirit, there should yet be such a measure of outward obedience. Evidently they had invisible constraints all around them, so that they could not help but follow the cloud.

II. THE MANNER IN WHICH GOD TREATS THIS STATE OF MIND. As he dealt in supplying the water so he deals in supplying the bread. There was a real and pressing want, and though the people made it the occasion for foolish talk, it was also to be the occasion for immediate Divine supply. God does not let the existence of the unthankful and evil fail, for presently, at Sinai, they will have the chance of learning such things as may lead them into a thankful, trustful and noble spirit; and so he hastens to meet Moses with the cheering promise—cheering in the *substance* of it, and

cheering none the less in the expression—"I will rain bread from heaven." 1. *They shall have bread.* He does not yet tell Moses what shape the bread will take; but the people shall have something to sustain them, and that something in sufficient quantity. 2. *The bread shall be rained from heaven.* We do not read that Moses repeated this expression to the Israelites; but it must have been very cheering to himself. The words "rain" and "heaven" were enough to put fresh courage into the man. Then we find too that when the promise came to be fulfilled, these words were not taken in a figurative way. The manna came with the dew, and when the dew disappeared there the manna lay, waiting to be gathered. Hence for the supply of bread the people were to look heavenward; and doubtless Moses himself did so look. In whatsoever part of the wilderness they might be, however sterile and unpromising the earth was below, the same heavens stretched out above them, distilling from their treasuries the daily manna. The contrast is thus very striking between the varying earth and the unchanging, exhaustless heaven; and as to the rain, we may be very sure that when God says, "I will rain," he means a copious and adequate shower. But even in this immediate promise of copious giving *Jehovah combines demands with gifts.* If there is great grace, there are great expectations. He gives and at the same time he asks. He points out to Moses the manner in which the food was to be gathered. Though given copiously, it was not therefore given carelessly; nor was it to be used carelessly. It was given on certain principles and with certain restrictions, so as to be not only the means of staying hunger but of disciplining Israel at the same time. In eating bread, they were to learn habitual faith and habitual and exact obedience. God is ever showing men how he can make one thing to serve more purposes than one.

III. THE EXPOSTULATIONS OF MOSES AND AARON WITH THE PEOPLE (vers. 6—10). Though it is not expressly said that he spoke thus by Jehovah's instructions, yet these remonstrances evidently accorded with his will. For the people to complain as they did was not only an unjust thing to Moses; it was also a perilous thing for themselves. They could not thus vent their spleen on the visible Moses without despising the invisible God. Their insult to their brother man on earth was as nothing compared with their insult to Jehovah on high. And, indeed, we cannot too much consider that *all murmuring, when it is brought to its ultimate ground and effects, is a reproach against God.* For it is either a complaint because we cannot get our own way, or it is an impeachment of God's way as not being a loving and a wise one. What a different scene life would become, how much more equable, serene and joyous, if we could only take the invisible as well as the visible into all our thoughts. The people felt the lack of bread, the loss of Egypt, the hardships of a life unfamiliar and unprepared for; and Moses could sympathise with all these feelings; although of course, after forty years of shepherd life in Midian, the hardships his brethren complained of were as nothing to him. But at the same time, Moses felt very keenly what many of his brethren did not feel at all, the mysterious presence of God. More and more distinctly would the words now be rising to his mind, "Ye shall serve God upon this mountain" (ch. iii. 12); for the cloud was taking the multitude nearer and nearer to Sinai. It is very significant of the feeling in Moses' mind that he dwells on this charge of murmuring, returning to the word again and again. He wanted these people who so felt the pangs of hunger to be equally sensitive to the perils of impiety. Jehovah had heard their reckless speeches as well as Moses; and now, in recognition, he was about to make manifest his glorious presence. The connection of the cloud with himself was to be proved by the appearing of his glory in it. What the people found fault with was that they had been guided wrong: and now the nature of the guidance stands out, distinct, impressive, and full of warning. He who found fault with Moses really found fault with Jehovah. Remember the words of Jesus: "He that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me." (Luke x. 16.) If we presumptuously neglect the apostleship of any one, we have to do with the Being who made him an apostle. Wherefore we should show all diligence to keep murmuring off our lips; and the only effectual way is to keep it out of our hearts by filling them with a continual sense of the presence of God. Instead of murmuring, let there be honest shame because of the selfishness that runs riot in our hearts. God can do everything to make our lives joyous, and banish causes of complaint for ever, if only we will take right and sufficient views of his purposes toward us and his claims upon us.

IV. THE ACTUAL GIVING. Here again we notice the tender and gentle dealings of God. The necessary and permanent supply of bread is preceded by a special and occasional supply of quails. By this gift he, as it were, runs towards Israel to soothe their murmurings. The flesh of Egypt was the thing they missed the most, and it comes first, in the evening; whereas the manna did not come till the next morning. By this supply of the quails God showed an attentiveness to the feelings of the people which should have had the best effect on their minds. They murmured against Moses, forgot Jehovah, and yet Jehovah gave them in reply a delightful feast of quails. So to speak, he was heaping coals of fire on their heads: and we should take special note of this Divine conduct, *just in this particular place*. It is very natural that as we consider Israel in the wilderness, we should think of God's severity rather than any other feature of his character. The whole tenor of the New Testament—the contrast between the law and the gospel—makes this view inevitable. But as we read the whole of this chapter, and ponder it carefully, how shall we do other than confess "Verily, Jehovah is love"? It is love that leads to Sinai. And assuredly there is not less of love in the thunders, lightnings and terrors of Sinai than in the gift of the quails. The expression is different—that is all. The quails were but a slight, passing thing, bestowed upon Israel much as a toy is bestowed on a child. There is love in the gift of a toy; but there is love also in the discipline and chastisement which soon may follow from the same hand. So there was love in the quails; but there was equal love, stretching out to far deeper results, in the demonstrations of Sinai and the commandments which accompanied them.—Y.

Vers. 11—12. *He nurtured them in the wilderness.* Continual mention of murmurings; yet all such murmurings do not meet the same treatment (cf. Num. xi. 31—33). Much alike to outward seeming, but not so in the sight of God. (Illustration—the ruddy hue of health; the hot flush of passion; the hectic of consumption. All much alike in appearance, yet how different to those who know what they betoken!) Comparing the history of one murmuring with that of another, we can see by God's treatment of each how different must have been the states from which they resulted. Here it is the impatience of ill-instructed children; later on, it has become hostility and rebellion. Consider in this case:—

I. THE SYMPTOMS. Cf. vers. 3. The monotony of the wilderness had had time to tell upon the people; so different from the varied routine of Egypt. Slavery, too, had become, from long use, almost a second nature with many; they had chafed under it, yet, in some sort, they had relied upon its restraint as a support. After the first novelty has passed, unaccustomed freedom is felt to be a weariness. (Illustration: The cripple rejoices to be quit of his supporting irons and crutches, but without them, at first, he soon tires.) Present privation, contrasted with past sufficiency, intensified the misgivings which were sure to come when the new life was fairly entered upon. Freedom wedded to starvation seemed to be but a poor exchange for tyranny. "The people murmured." It was the murmuring of the half-weaned child, the yet weak though enfranchised cripple; it expressed itself in strong language; but the language was stronger than the offence. Under the circumstances murmuring was so natural that it did not call for severe censure; it was rather a symptom of imperfect health, suggesting the need of strengthening medicine.

II. THE TREATMENT. God knew what was the matter; His action shows His knowledge. No rebuke, only a promise, which is to be, and is, fulfilled immediately. (Illustration: The doctor does not take offence at the irritability of the convalescent; says, "I will send some strengthening medicine," sends it, and relies on the effect.) A table spread in the wilderness; the love of freedom revived and strengthened, *nurtured* by the longed-for food. What should be the effect of such treatment? It stays murmuring, of course; but, further, it should strengthen against further murmuring. On the other hand, whilst it may, as it ought to do, lead to reliance upon the provider, it may also lead to reliance upon the food provided. (Illustration: One patient, strengthened by medicine, will have more confidence in the doctor. Another, strengthened in like manner, will be always grumbling, whatever the circumstances, if he do not experience like treatment.)

Practical lessons.—1. God treats us all according to our real character and position.

"How unjust," says one, "that that man should have so much easier a time than I. That my comparatively slight offence should be punished so much more heavily than his, which is far more heinous!" Nay! By what standard do you measure the relative enormity of the offences? God's standard is character and experience; the child's open defiance is less heinous than the man's half-veiled impatience. 2. *God's treatment should inspire confidence in Himself.* All God's gifts are index fingers saying, "Look off from us to God." Our tendency is to rest upon them and credit them as the *causes* of the satisfaction they occasion. The same *medicine* may not be appropriate next time, but the same *doctor* may be trusted. If we forget the doctor and think only of the medicine, we shall be as irritable and dissatisfied as ever; only by confidence in the Physician himself can we hope to go on "from strength to strength."—G.

Ver. 15.—*Christ the bread from heaven.* The manna, which is described in ver. 4 as "bread from heaven," was typical of Christ, who is "the true bread from heaven"—"the bread of God which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world" (John vi. 31-34). The connection in John vi. is with the Jews' demand for a sign. The interrogators reminded Christ of how their fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it was written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat! (Ps. cv. 40). The design of Jesus in his reply was, *first*, to wean their hearts away from merely carnal expectations in connection with his appearing, and, *secondly*, to lead them to see in the gift of manna, as well as in the miracle he had just performed—the feeding of the multitudes—something more than the mere supplying of bodily necessities;—to see in them "signs" (John vi. 26—"Ye seek me, not because ye saw signs," etc. Rev. Ver.) *i.e.* types, allegories, suggestive earthly symbols, of spiritual realities—of what he was in himself, of the work he came to do, of the relations in which he stood to perishing men. The manna is thus figured as "spiritual meat" (1 Cor. x. 3), a type of Christ as the living bread for the souls of men. Consider in illustration of this analogy—

I. THE NEED WHICH EXISTED FOR THIS PROVISION. The Israelites were in the desert, where nature, if left to itself, would inevitably perish. Their supplies of food were exhausted. The whole multitude would have died of hunger, had not Divine mercy interposed for their relief. The manna which God gave them literally stood between them and death. In this circumstance we see one feature imaged in which Christ clearly appears as the bread of life. When he uses this language of himself he means to tell us, that just as these Israelites under Moses absolutely hung for any hope of life they had on that food which was miraculously supplied to them; so does the world hang—hang absolutely—for its life, its salvation, its eternal well-being on *him*. It needs eternal life. Its heart craves for it. It is perishing for want of it. But if it is ever to get it, Christ says, it must get it through him, through receiving him, through appropriating what he is, and what he has done for it as Saviour.

II. THE SUPERNATURAL CHARACTER OF THE PROVISION. There could be no question as to the supernatural character of the supply in the case of the manna. The Israelites needed to be saved, and God saved them by a miracle. There was, as it were, a distinct opening of heaven for their benefit. The hand that fed them came from the unseen. In like manner, Christ lays emphasis on the fact that he—the bread of life for men—is "bread from heaven." The salvation that embodies itself in him is no salvation of man's devising, nor one which, even had the thought of it entered his mind, man could ever from his own resources have achieved. If the world is to be saved at all, if it is to be delivered from its woes, if it is to have eternal life, Saviour and salvation must come from heaven. Our hope, as of old, is in God, and in God only. It is not for us to provide, but only thankfully to receive, and earnestly to appropriate the salvation. God *gives* us the bread from heaven; gives it freely; gives it as bread which no efforts of our own, however laborious, could have enabled us to procure; gives it, that is, as a Divine, supernatural bread, the boon of sovereign grace.

III. THE AMPLE ABUNDANCE OF THE PROVISION. The manna was given in abundance. There was neither lack nor stint. The table that was spread in the wilderness was one of royal bounty; as in the later miracle of the loaves, "they did all eat, and were filled" (Matt. xiv. 20). There was, as in the father's house in the parable, "Enough and to spare" (Luke xv. 17), overflowing provision. How significant a fact when the heart is putting to itself the question, Will Christ's death avail for *me*? He calls himself "the

true bread which cometh down from heaven ;" and it cannot be but that this feature in the type will be reflected in the antitype. There is provision in Christ for *all*. He gives his flesh for the life of the *world* (ver. 51). He is come that men "might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John x. 10). No stint, no lack no scarcity in the salvation of Christ.

IV. THE PROVISION NOW, AS THEN, NEEDS TO BE APPROPRIATED. It was nothing to the Israelites that the manna, sparkling like pearls in the morning sunshine, lay *all* around them ; they must gather, they must eat, they must make the "bread from heaven" food for their own life. So with Christ and his salvation. He calls himself "bread," to bring out strongly, not only what he *is* in himself in relation to human wants, but what men must *do* with him, if they would partake in the life he comes to give. He must be received, "eaten," inwardly appropriated, fed upon, made part, so to speak, of our very selves ; only thus will the new life be begotten in us. This "eating" of Christ is parallel with the "believing" of other verses (vers. 29, 40, 47). Some, remembering this, may be disposed to say, it is *only* believing. But the use of such a metaphor should rather teach us how real, and inward, and appropriating a principle, this believing on Jesus is. It is clearly no slight, transitory act of mind or heart which is denoted by it, but a most spiritual, most inward, most vital and personal energy of appropriation ; a process of reception, digestion, and transformation into spiritual substance, and new powers of spiritual life, of what we have in the Saviour. How great Christ must be, who thus declares himself to be the bread of life for the whole world—the support and food (consciously or unconsciously) of all the spiritual life there is in it ! No wonder that the work of works which God requires of us is that we believe on him whom he has sent (John vi. 29).

V. WHAT THERE IS IN CHRIST WHICH CONSTITUTES HIM THE WORLD'S BREAD OF LIFE. We set aside as unsupported the analogies which some have sought between the roundness, sweetness, whiteness, etc., of the manna, and qualities in the person and work of the Redeemer. It is, however, clear that if Christ is the antitype of the manna, and the true bread which cometh down from heaven, it must be in virtue of certain qualities in him which admit of being specified. And what these are, it is not difficult to show. He is the bread of life to men—1. *As incarnate God*. In the humanity of Jesus Christ, the Divine is brought near to us, and made apprehensible, and provision is also made for the communication of the Divine life in its fullest, richest form to our souls. In him dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Col. ii. 9). He is the medium of the communication of that Divine fulness to us (1 John i. 16). In him, the Divine life is embodied in a holy, perfect humanity ; and in that form—a form which brings it within our reach, which makes apprehension and assimilation possible—it is presented to us to be partaken of. 2. *As an atoning Saviour*. Did Christ not bear this character of Atoner, he would not be truly bread of life to the guilty. Our guilt, our sin, our whole moral condition, stands between us and God, an insuperable barrier to the peace and fellowship for which we crave. But Christ has taken away that barrier. He has made a sacrifice of himself for sin (John vi. 51). To appropriate what I have in Christ, is, accordingly, to appropriate to myself the certainty of forgiveness through his death, the assurance of peace with God, the knowledge of reconciliation. And to have done this is already to have begun to live. It is to feel the awakening within me of new-born powers of love, and trust, and service ; to feel the dread and despair that before possessed me vanishing like a dark nightmare from my spirit, to be replaced by the joy of pardon, and the sense of the Divine favour. It is to realise the accomplishment of that spiritual change which the Scriptures describe as a "passing from death unto life" (John v. 24). "Old things have passed away ; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. v. 17). 3. *As a life-giving Spirit*. Jesus is what he is to man, in virtue of his possession of the holy, life-giving Spirit—the personal Holy Ghost—by whom he dwells in the hearts of his people, and through whom he communicates to them all the fulness of his own life. This operation of the Spirit is already implied in what we have said of the results of faith in him. He is the effectual agent in converting, quickening, enlightening, sanctifying, comforting, strengthening, beautifying, and spiritually edifying the souls of such as attain to salvation. The influences of this Spirit in the soul are but another name for eternal life. And Christ is the giver of this Spirit. It is from him the Spirit comes. His work on earth

has opened the way for the free communication of the Spirit's influences. He dwells by this Spirit in each of his members, nourishing, strengthening, and purifying them. To nourish ourselves upon Christ is to take more of this Spirit into our hearts and lives. Thus is Christ the bread of life.—J. O.

Vers. 16—22.—*The law of the manna.* God had said (ver. 4) that rules would be given in connection with the manna by which the people would be proved, whether they would walk in his law, or no. One rule is given in ver. 5, and the rest are given here. Consider—

I. THE LAW AS TO QUANTITY (vers. 16—18). "According to his eating," in this passage, means, according to the quantity allowed to each person for consumption. This was fixed at an omer a head (ver. 16). The simplest way of explaining what follows is to suppose that each individual, when he went out to gather, aimed, as nearly as possible, at bringing in his exact omer; but, necessarily, on measuring what had been gathered, it would be found that some had brought in a little more, some a little less, than the exact quantity; excess was then to go to balance defect, and the result would be that, on the whole, each person would receive his omer. It may be supposed, also, that owing to differences of age, strength, agility, etc., there would be great room left for one helping another, some gathering more, to eke out the deficiencies of the less active. If the work were conscientiously done, the result, even on natural principles, would be pretty much what is here indicated. The law of averages would lead, over a large number of cases, to a mean result, midway between excess and defect, *i.e.*, to the net omer. But a special superintendence of providence—such, *e.g.*, as that which secures in births, amidst all the inequalities of families, a right proportion of the sexes in society as a whole—is evidently pointed to as *securing* the result. We cannot suppose, however, that an intentionally indolent or unconscientious person was permitted to participate in this equal dividend, or to reap, in the way indicated, the benefit of the labours of others. The law here must have been, as with St. Paul, "if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thess. iii. 10). There is nothing said as to the share to be allotted to juveniles: these may be supposed to have received some recognised proportion of an omer. The lessons of all this and its importance as a part of the spiritual education of Israel, are very obvious. It taught—1. *That what is of Divine gift is meant for common benefit.* The individual is entitled to his share in it; but he is not entitled selfishly to enrich himself, while others are in need. He gets that he may give. There was to be a heavenly communism practised in respect of the manna, in the same way as a common property is recognised in light and air, and the other free gifts of nature. This applies to intellectual and spiritual wealth. We are not to rest till all have shared in it according to their God-given capacity. 2. *That in the Church of Christ it is the duty of the stronger to help the weaker, and of the richer to help the poorer.* This is the lesson drawn from the passage by St. Paul in 2 Cor. viii. 12—16. It is presumed in his teaching, *first*, that there is the "willing mind," in which case a gift "is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (ver. 12). Each gatherer of the manna was honestly to do his part, and put what he could into the common stock. The end is not, *secondly*, that other men be eased, and the Corinthians burdened (ver. 13). But, each doing what he can, the design is, *thirdly*, that the abundance of one may be a supply for the deficiency of another, that so there may be equality (ver. 14). This is a principle of wide application in Church finance, and also in the aiding of the poor. Strong congregations should not be slow to aid weak ones, that the work of the latter may go on more smoothly, and their ministers may at least be able to subsist comfortably. The Scottish Free Church has given a praiseworthy illustration of this principle in her noble "Sustentation Fund." 3. *That where a helpful spirit is shown by each towards all, there will be found no lack of what is needful for any.* God will see that all are provided for. The tendency of the rule is to encourage a friendly, helpful, unselfish spirit generally, and in all relations. The gatherer of manna was *forbidden* to act selfishly. A Nemesis would attend an attempt on the part of any to appropriate more than his proper share.

II. THE LAW AS TO TIME. 1. The manna was to be gathered *in early morning*. The people had to be up betimes, and had to bestir themselves diligently, that their

manna might be collected before "the sun waxed hot" (ver. 21). If not collected then, the substance melted away, and could not be had at all. A lesson, surely, in the first instance, of diligence in business; and secondly, of the advantage of improving morning hours. The most successful gatherer of manna, whether in the material, intellectual, or spiritual fields, is he who is up and at his work early. Albert Barnes tells us that all his commentaries were due to this habit of rising early in the morning, the whole of them having been written before nine o'clock in the day, and without encroaching on his proper ministerial duties. 2. On *six days of the week only* (ver. 5). God teaches here the lesson of *putting forward* our work on week days, that we may be able to enjoy a Sabbath free from distraction. He puts honour on the ordinance of the Sabbath itself, by requiring that no work be done upon it.

III. THE LAW AS TO USE (ver. 19). None of the manna was to be left till the morning. We have here again a double lesson. 1. A lesson against *hoarding*. God gave to each person his quantity of manna; and the individual had no right to more. What excess he had in his gathering ought to have gone to supplement some other person's deficiency. But greed led some of the Israelites to disobey. It would save them trouble to lay by what they did not need, and use it again next day. They might make profit out of it by barter. All such attempts God defeated by ordaining that the manna thus hoarded should breed worms, and grow corrupt. A significant emblem of the suicidal effects of hoarding generally. Hoarded treasure is never an ultimate benefit to its possessor. It corrupts alike in his heart and his hands. It breeds worms of care to him, and speedily becomes a nuisance (cf. Matt. vi. 19, 20). 2. A lesson against *distrust*. Another motive for laying up the manna would be to provide for the morrow in case of any failure in the supply. But this was in direct contradiction to God's end in giving the people their manna day by day, viz., to foster trust, and keep alive their sense of dependence on him. Christ warns us against the spirit of distrust, and of anxiety for the morrow, and teaches us to pray for "daily bread" (Matt. vi. 11, 31). We should not even *desire* to be independent of God.

IV. THE FAILURE OF THE PEOPLE TO OBSERVE THESE LAWS. They failed at each point. They tried to hoard (ver. 20). They went out to gather on the Sabbath (ver. 27). This showed both disobedience and unbelief, for it had been distinctly said of the seventh day, "in it there shall be none" (ver. 26). What a lesson!—1. Of the sottish insensibility of human nature to God's great acts of goodness. God had miraculously supplied their wants, yet so little sensible were they of his goodness—so little did it influence them—that they declined to obey even the few simple rules he had laid down for the reception and use of his benefits. 2. Of its ineradicable contumacy and self-will (cf. Deut. ix.; and Psalms lxxviii. and cvi.).—J. O.

Vers. 13—31.—*Divine provision for daily need.* I. THE LORD'S FAITHFULNESS. 1. Their varied need was met. Flesh as well as bread was given. God gives us richly all things to enjoy. 2. They came in the order and at the time God said they would come. The evening brought the quails—the morning the manna. Nothing failed of all that he had promised. 3. They were given in abundance. The quails "covered the camp;" of the manna they "had no lack." There is princely bounty with God for all who trust in him. He gives richly, even where he has made no covenant: he fills "men's hearts with food and gladness." How much more then will he bless those whom he has pledged himself to sustain!

II. THE SPIRIT OF THOSE WHO ARE THUS FED FROM GOD'S TABLE. 1. They wait on him. The supply he sends is only for the day, and he is trusted for the days that are to follow. They do not refuse to pass on further upon the wilderness path, because they do not see at the beginning all the needed provision for the way. 2. They obey God's call to toil. (1) They "gathered" of it every man according to his eating." (2) They did not miss the opportunity God gave them. "When the sun waxed hot it melted;" and they therefore gathered it "in the morning." Be "not slothful in business."

III. ISRAEL'S FAITHLESSNESS. 1. In attempting to save themselves from the toil which God commanded, they kept the manna for next day's use in defiance of the command to preserve none of it till the morning (ver. 27). 2. In refusing to rest on the Sabbath. The contradiction and wilfulness of unbelief: it hoards to be able to abstain

from toil, and refuses to obey God's command to rest. 3. Public indifference to the existence of sin. These things were done by a few only; but they called forth no public condemnation or holy fear of God's anger. The Christian community which does not mourn the sin abounding in its midst has itself no living trust in God.—U.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 22—30.—THE GATHERING OF THE SIXTH DAY. When the Israelites, having collected what seemed to them the usual quantity of manna on the sixth day, brought it home and measured it, they found the yield to be, not an omer a head for each member of the family, but two omers. The result was a surprise and a difficulty. They could not consume more than an omer a-piece. What was to be done with the remainder? Was it to be destroyed, or kept? If kept, would it not "breed worms"? To resolve their doubts, the elders brought the matter before Moses, who replied—"This is that which the Lord hath said." It is to be supposed that, in his original announcement to the elders of God's purposes as to the manna, Moses had informed them that the quantity would be double on the sixth day (ver. 5); but his statement had not made any deep impression at the time, and now they had forgotten it. So he recalls it to their recollection. "This is no strange thing—nothing that should have surprised you—it is only what God said would happen. And the reason of it is, that to-morrow, the seventh day is, by God's ordinance, the rest of the Holy Sabbath,"—or rather "a rest of a holy Sabbath to the Lord." Whether or no the Sabbath was a primal institution, given to our first parents in Paradise (Gen. ii. 3), may be doubted: at any rate, it had not been maintained as an institution by the Hebrews during their sojourn in Egypt; and this was, practically, to them, the first promulgation of it. (See Hessey's *Bampton Lectures*, p. 149.) Hence, in the original, it is not called "the sabbath," as if already known, but "a sabbath,"—i.e., a rest—until verse 29.

Ver. 22.—This is that which the Lord hath said. Rather, "said," i.e., declared to me when he announced the manna. See verse 5. It has been supposed that Moses had not communicated the declaration to the elders; but this seems unlikely. The rest of the holy sabbath. If this translation were correct, the previous institution of the sabbath, and the knowledge of its obligation by the Hebrews, would follow; but the absence of the article

is a strong indication that the whole idea was new, at any rate to those whom Moses was addressing. **Bake that which ye will bake,** etc. "Do," i.e., "as you have done on other days—bake some and seethe some—but also reserve a portion to be your food and sustenance to-morrow."

Ver. 24.—They laid it up. The great bulk of the Israelites obeyed Moses, and laid by a portion (half?) of the manna gathered on the sixth day. On the morning of the seventh, this was found to be perfectly good, and not to have "bred worms" in the night. Either this was a miracle, or the corruption previously noticed (ver. 20) was miraculous.

Vers. 25, 26.—And Moses said. The Sabbath being come, Moses explained fully the reason for the order which he had given, and generalized it. God required the Sabbath to be "a day of holy rest"—no manna would fall on it, and therefore none could be gathered—the produce of the sixth day's gathering would be found to suffice both for the sixth day and the seventh.

Ver. 27.—There went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather. There will always be some persons in a nation, or in a Church, who will refuse to believe God's ministers, and even God himself. They persuade themselves that they "know better"—it will not be as announced—it will be as they wish it to be. More especially is this so where the idea of continuance comes in—where some interruption of the ordinary course of things is announced, which they deem unlikely or impossible. Compare Gen. xix. 14.

Ver. 28.—How long refuse ye to keep my commandments? Though Moses is addressed, it is the people who are blamed. Hence the plural verb, "refuse ye." Already there had been one act of disobedience in connection with the manna (see ver. 20)—now there was another—when would such sinful folly come to an end? When would the people learn that they could gain nothing by disobedience? It was "long" indeed before they were taught the lesson.

Ver. 29.—See, for that, etc. Rather, "See, that." Consider that God has given you the Sabbath, or the holy rest: and therefore it is that he gives you on the sixth day the food for two days—that the rest may not be interfered with. **Abide ye every man in his place.** One Jewish sect, the Masbothei, took this command absolutely literally, and held that in whatsoever position a man was at

the commencement of the Sabbath day, he was bound to retain it to the close. But generally it was held that the "place" intended was the camp, which the Israelites were forbidden to quit; and hence was derived the idea of the "sabbath day's journey," which was reckoned at six stadia—the supposed distance of the furthest bounds of the camp from its centre.

Ver. 30.—**So the people rested.** Having found by experience that nothing was to be gained by seeking manna on the sabbath, and received the severe rebuke of verse 28, the people henceforth obeyed the new commandment, and "rested on the sabbath day." Of the nature of the "rest" intended more will be said in the comment on Ex. xx. 8—11.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 23—30.—*The institution of the Sabbath.* That, in some sense, the Sabbath was instituted in Paradise seems to follow from Gen. ii. 3. It was at any rate then set apart by Divine counsel and decree. And it is quite possible that a revelation of its sanctity was made to Adam. The week of seven days may, however, have arisen simply out of the lunar month, the four weeks corresponding to the moon's four phases. In any case, as the early Egyptians had no such institution as a weekly sabbath, and certainly would not have tolerated abstinence from work on the part of their Hebrew slaves one day in seven, we must suppose that the sabbatical rest, if ever known to the Hebrews, had fallen into desuetude during their Egyptian sojourn. God now formally either instituted or re-instituted it. He seized the occasion of giving the manna, to mark in the strongest way, and impress upon the people, the strict observance of a sabbatical rest, which forty years' experience would engrain into the habits of the nation. The chief practical points of interest connected with Sabbath observance in the present condition of the Christian world are—1. The relation of the Christian Sunday to the Jewish Sabbath; 2. The authority upon which the change of day has been made; and 3. The proper mode of keeping the Lord's day at the present time. A few words will be said on each of these points.

I. **THE RELATION OF THE CHRISTIAN SUNDAY TO THE JEWISH SABBATH.** Both the Christian Sunday and the Jewish Sabbath have for their basis the expediency of assigning to the worship and contemplation of God some definite and regularly recurring portions of human life, instead of leaving individuals free to choose their own times and seasons. Temporal concerns so much occupy men, that, if there were no definite rule, they would be apt to push religious observance into the odd corners of human life, if not even to oust it altogether. This evil is prevented, or at any rate checked, by the appointment of a recurrent day, which is also almost a necessity for the practice of common worship. In both the Christian and the Jewish religion the same proportion of time is fixed upon, the appointment being that of one day out of seven, or one-seventh part of life, which certainly cannot be said to be an undue requirement. Thus far then the two institutions resemble one the other; but in the primary characteristics of the observance there is a remarkable contrast. The Jewish Sabbath was emphatically a day of holy rest—the Christian Sunday is a day of holy activity. The keynote of our Lord's teaching on the subject is to be found in the words—"It is lawful to *do good* on the Sabbath day." The Jews thought they "hallowed the Sabbath" by mere inaction—some, as we have seen, would not move all day from the place and attitude in which their waking moments found them. Christ taught that there was no virtue in idleness. "My Father worketh hitherto" (on the Sabbath), he said, "and I work." On the Sabbath day he did his miracles, he taught the people, he walked through the cornfields, he journeyed to Emmaus. And the Christian Church has, in the main, continued true to her Founder's teaching. The Christian Sunday has been, and is, a day of holy joy and holy activity. Ministers are of necessity more active on it than on any other. Lay people have felt it to be the special day for imitating their Lord in "going about and doing good"—in teaching the ignorant, visiting the poor and the afflicted—reading to them, praying with them, ministering to their necessities. Cessation from worldly business has come to be the rule on the Lord's day, not from any superstitious regard for mere rest, but in order that the active duties peculiarly belonging to the day shall not be neglected.

II. Although exception may be taken to the expression—used in a tract attributed to

Athanasius—that “our Lord changed the Jewish Sabbath into the Lord’s day,” yet, practically speaking, it cannot be denied that such a change has been made; the Christian Sunday has taken the place of the Jewish Sabbath, and occupies in the Christian system the position which the Sabbath occupied in the Jewish. By what authority, then, has the change been made? How are Christians justified in keeping holy the first day instead of the seventh? Not, certainly, by any direct command of our Lord, for none such is recorded. Not even by any formal decision of the Apostolic college, for the question was untouched at the only council which they are known to have held (Acts xv. 6—29). But, as it would seem, by consentient apostolic practice. The apostles appear, both by Scripture and by the records of primitive Christian antiquity, to have practically made the change—i.e., they sanctioned the discontinuance of seventh-day observance (Col. ii. 16; Gal. iv. 9, 10), and they introduced first-day observance in its stead (John xx. 19, 26; Acts ii. 1, xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 2). They regarded the Jewish sabbath as abrogated with the rest of the ceremonial law; and they established by their own authority, and doubtless by the direction of the Holy Ghost, the keeping holy of the “Lord’s Day,” by meetings for Holy Communion, worship, and instruction on that, the first day of the week, instead.

III. With respect to the proper mode of keeping the Lord’s Day at the present time, there would seem to be different degrees of obligation as to different parts of the customary observance. Attendance at Holy Communion, and by analogy at other services, has distinct apostolic sanction (Acts xx. 7; Heb. x. 25), and is obligatory in the highest sense. Cessation from worldly business is a matter of ecclesiastical arrangement, in which individual Christians should follow the regulations or traditions of their own ecclesiastical community. Mere inaction should not be regarded as in any sense a “keeping” of the day—the time abstracted from worldly affairs should be given to prayer, reading of the Scriptures, and works of mercy. Gentle and healthful exercise should not be interrupted, being needful to make the body a useful instrument of the soul. Relaxations, not required by adults or by those who are rich, should be allowed to children and to the poor, every care being taken that Sunday be not made to them a day of gloom, restraint, and discomfort. Sunday was intended to be the Christian’s weekly festival, a day of cheerfulness and holy joy, a foretaste of the joys of Heaven.

“The Sundays of man’s life,
Threaded together on Time’s string,
Make bracelets for the wife
Of the Eternal King.
On Sunday, heaven’s gate stands ope,
Blessings are plentiful and ripe—
More plentiful than hope.”

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 22—30.—*The Manna and the Sabbath.*—I. THE FACT OF MANNA BEING GIVEN ON SIX DAYS, AND NOT ON THE SEVENTH, IS A PROOF OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE SABBATH. It would certainly seem from this passage that the Israelites had not up to this time been very good Sabbath keepers; that if they knew of any special distinction attaching to the seventh day, they had no very strict ideas as to its observance; that its sanctity was but little recognised by them. It could scarcely have been otherwise with a people just escaped from a long and degrading bondage. It does not follow, however, that this was the first institution of the Sabbath. There is every reason for believing the contrary. That God had the Sabbath in view in the arrangements made, and the laws laid down, about the manna, every one admits. The only question which arises is, whether these arrangements were modelled on the basis of a division of time already existing, or whether this was absolutely the first indication to mankind of a weekly day of rest. 1. *Presumptively*—this latter alternative seems improbable. It is incredible that so important an institution as the Sabbath should be introduced in this casual, un-announced way—should be taken for granted in certain outward arrangements relating to a different matter, and then, when curiosity has been excited by these arrangements,

should be first made known by the side-door of an explanation of the novel injunctions. Such a case of the existence of an important institution being assumed before the law which gives it existence has been either promulgated or heard of, is without precedent or parallel in history. It seems plain that whether Israel knew of the existing Sabbath or not, God did, and framed his arrangements in view of it. The inference is that the religious observance of the seventh day had been sanctioned by old tradition, but had fallen largely into desuetude. 2. *On Biblical grounds*—it seems certain that the Sabbath is of older date than the sojourn in the wilderness. We need not review all the evidence which points in the direction of a primeval institution of the Sabbath. It is sufficient to instance the primary text upon the subject (Gen. ii. 1—4), which speaks with a voice as plain as could well be wished to those who are willing to hear. 3. *Historically*—it has been recently proved that the Sabbath was known in ancient Assyria and Babylonia, long before the days of Moses. No Orientalist will any longer question, in face of the evidence furnished by the recently deciphered cuneiform tablets, that a Sabbath was observed in Assyria in the days of Sardanapalus, and for ages previously. But the ancient Accadian records, which go as far back as 2000 B.C., and many of which have been deciphered by the aid of competent Assyrian translators, show that a Sabbath was observed in the very earliest time. The very name “Sabattu,” with the meaning “a day of rest for the heart,” has been found in the old Accadian tongue (see “Records of the Past,” vol. iii. p. 143; “Assyrian Discoveries,” by George Smith; the *Academy*, Nov. 1875). Special points in these researches will need confirmation, but on the whole, the early and wide-spread observance of the Sabbath must be held as established. In the light of Oriental discovery, it will soon be regarded as an anachronism to speak of prolepsis in connection with Gen. ii. 1—4; or to urge the view that the Sabbath is a purely Judaic institution, and originated with Moses.

II. THE RULE FOR GATHERING A DOUBLE SUPPLY OF MANNA ON THE SIXTH DAY, AND LAYING BY FOR THE SEVENTH, TAUGHT THE LESSON OF A PROPER RESPECT FOR THE SABBATH. It taught—1. That the Sabbath was to be kept free from unnecessary work. 2. That in order to leave the Sabbath clear, as a day of rest, work was to be *forwarded* on week days. 3. That God has a respect for his own ordinance.

III. BY GRANTING THIS DOUBLE SUPPLY ON THE SIXTH DAY, AND SECURING ITS PRESERVATION ON THE SEVENTH, GOD TAUGHT THAT HIS BLESSING RESTS UPON THE SABBATH, AND THAT HIS PEOPLE WILL BE NO LOSERS BY KEEPING IT.

IV. GOD'S CARE THUS EARLY TO RE-ESTABLISH THE ORDINANCE OF THE SABBATH IN ISRAEL, SHOWS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INSTITUTION AS BEARING ON HEALTH, MORALS, AND RELIGION. It must be reckoned a noteworthy circumstance that, in arranging the affairs of Israel, with a view to the recovery of his people from the low and demoralised condition, physically, morally, and spiritually, into which they had fallen, and with a view to their elevation to a state of prosperous national existence, God's first step, even before the law was given from Sinai, was to put on a proper foundation, the observance of the Sabbath.

V. GOD'S DISPLEASURE AT THE BREACH OF THIS LAW BY THE PEOPLE WHO WENT OUT TO GATHER ON THE SABBATH, SHOWS HIS ZEAL FOR THE HONOUR OF THE COMMANDMENT (vers. 27—29). The thing chiefly condemned, no doubt, was the *spirit* of disobedience, which showed itself in more ways than one (cf. ver. 20). But is it not plainly reckoned a special aggravation of the offence of these would-be gatherers, that they so defiantly set at naught God's ordinance of a day of rest? Does God show a like zeal for the observance of any purely ceremonial precept?—J. O.

Vers. 16—36.—*The manna—regulations for the gathering and using of it.* I. THE EFFECTIVE DISTRIBUTION OF IT IS PROVIDED FOR. The responsibilities and opportunities of the family relation, which had been touched upon in the institution of the Passover, are here touched upon again. Each head of a household had to see that the daily supply was gathered for his family. Thus God shows that he is not only attentive for that great nation which now, as a whole, is so clearly dependent on his providing, so visibly cut off from secondary grounds of confidence, but also has his eye on the under-providers. What he is to all the children of men, he expects earthly parents to be in their measure and opportunity. Earthly parents, even though evil, are

yet able to give some good gifts; and God will hold them responsible thus to give what they can. The peculiar and transcendent gifts of grace they are not able to bestow; but seeing God has constituted them the channels of certain blessings, woe be to them if they block up the channels, or in any way diminish the flow of blessings through them.

II. A SUFFICIENT SUPPLY IS PROVIDED FOR. Some gathered more and some less; but the gathering amounted to the same thing in the end. There was neither defect nor superfluity. We may take it that *those who gathered more* did it in a spirit of unbelief and worldly wisdom, a spirit of anxious questioning with regard to the morrow. They wanted to make sure, lest the morrow's manna did not come. God disappointed their plans, and doubtless soon altered their conduct, by reducing the quantity gathered to the stipulated omer. Thus unbelief's labour was lost. And *those who gathered less* did so through straitened opportunity. It may be they had less time; it may be they were feeble or aged. But we are sure that, whatever the cause of their deficiency, they must have been those who did their best; and God honoured their honest endeavours by making up the deficiency. If they had been careless, it is pretty certain they would have had to go starving. God has ever taken care of the principle that, if a man will not work, neither shall he eat. All that is required is, that we should do our best according to our opportunities; but so much, at least, assuredly is required. Remember the teaching of the parable (Matt. xx. 1—16). The lord of the vineyard gave the same amount to those coming in at the eleventh hour as to those who began early in the morning. He considered pressing need to be as important a thing as actual exertion. But at the same time he had his eye on what had really been done. Those who entered at the eleventh hour had to do their best even though it was but for a short time. Thus the lord of the vineyard respected need on the one hand and disposition and embraced opportunities on the other. And so with the manna in the wilderness: every Israelite had to do his best, with a believing mind and an industrious hand. Then God took care that he should have enough; and "enough is as good as a feast."

III. GOD MADE PLAIN THAT IT WAS TO BE A DAILY SUPPLY. He did this, first of all, by diminishing the quantity gathered to the stipulated omer. Then, when the omer was secured, he made the daily character of the supply still more evident by commanding that none should be left till morning. This was but carrying the former provision—that of gathering an omer full—out to its logical conclusion. Nor must we take this to mean, of necessity, that *all the manna was to be eaten up*. "Leave it not till the morning" can only mean "leave it not as food." There could hardly have been an obligation on the Israelites to eat more than nature demanded or appetite desired. Let no fond, economising parent quote this regulation to a child by way of enforcing the request to eat up its food. How much harm is done by forcing children to empty the plate, lest anything be wasted! Surely it is more waste to cram a recalcitrant stomach than to throw undemanded food away, if that be the only alternative. Evidently what God meant here is, that Israel should not keep its manna for to-morrow's supply. There is more likelihood of imperilling the spirit of faith than the habit of economy. Note, too, that *the efficacy of this regulation was soon exemplified when the people broke it*. Indeed, it is curious to notice how, all through the passage, the regulations and the exemplification of them are mixed up. They were regulations which came into operation at once; for there was a present need, and the people learnt to meet it by paying at first the penalties of disobedience or imperfect obedience. They could put away the manna; but they could not therefore preserve it. Putting it away was only turning it into one of the treasures which moth and rust corrupt. Even if we could imagine that it had been possible to seal the manna hermetically, and keep it from the germs of corruption in the air, the result would have been the same. Whatever the precautions adopted, it would have bred worms and stunk by morning. God is ever turning our boasted prudence into ridiculous folly; faith and obedience are the only real prudence.

IV. Not only was it a daily supply, but A MORNING SUPPLY. An early morning supply, for when the sun waxed hot the manna was melted. They were to go out and gather the manna the first thing, and then, whatever else might be lacking that day, the great temporal necessity of food was provided for. God demanded of his people that

they should be trustful and satisfied in the reception of a daily supply; but that supply was brought at the very beginning of the day. It was not at their option to gather it at any time of the day they chose. The supply was at the beginning of the day, because day is the time for eating as night is for sleeping. Then, with minds free from anxiety and bodies duly supported, they could each one set about his appointed business.

V. IN HIS METHOD OF SUPPLY GOD MADE SPECIAL PROVISION FOR THE SABBATH. On the sixth day of the week, a double portion was provided, and was to be gathered in correspondence with the provision. Certainly it must be admitted that the regulation here gives no means of judging how far the Sabbath was a recognised institution in Israel, if indeed it was an institution at all. This is a matter on which we are not able to affirm; nor are we able to deny. To whatever extent there may have been a weekly Sabbath among the patriarchs, it could not have been kept up through the hardships of Egypt! Anyway, this remarkable increase of an extra omer on the sixth day—when the reason of it was explained—was the very thing to prepare the people for the exact commandment which so soon followed. Jehovah had thus more ways than one of impressing upon them the sanctity and peculiarity of the Sabbath. In Egypt they had doubtless been required to toil every day, knowing little rest, save the inevitable rest of sleep, and it would be hard to break them away from this expectation of daily drudgery. Early association and training are wanted to make one day different from others; and we may conclude that it was only the generation growing up in the wilderness and becoming habituated to the Sabbath rest that really took to it in a natural and easy way. But this regulation of the manna must have been a great help *even to the elder generation*. As each sixth day came round they were reminded that God himself was remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy, and therefore they should do the same. And as we think of this special provision for the weekly interval of rest, continued through forty years, we may well ask ourselves what feelings God entertains as he looks down on the world and sees the incessant, driving, suicidal toil in which many men engage, *on the plea that it is necessary*. They say they have no choice. Toil all day, and when evening comes utter exhaustion! and thus life is wasted in the struggle to maintain it. When we consider such struggling in the light of this sixth day's double provision, a strong suspicion rises in our minds that this plea of necessity is a delusion. Is it not probable that if men would only throw off, boldly and trustfully, many of what are reckoned social necessities, they would have a healthier piety and a happier life? At present, with only too many, when they are asked for a little more attention to the things of God and a little more interest in them, the plea comes in reply, easily urged and not easily met, that there is no time. See then what God did for his own people. He made time for them, and jealously hedged it about; a time for needed rest, holy rest and holy service. When they went out food-seeking on the morning of his day, he manifestly cursed their disobedience and unbelief. May we not be perfectly sure that if in a spirit of faith, we give all the time and effort that are necessary to cultivate personal religion and diffuse gospel truth, God will see to it that we get the manna? and if we have the manna, we need nothing more. Whatever else be left unsought and unenjoyed, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Seek these, for they bring in their train everything a Christian can lawfully enjoy.—Y.

Vers. 19—36. *The law of the manna*. I. THERE MUST BE INDIVIDUAL EFFORT FOR INDIVIDUAL NEED. 1. The manna lay around their tents, but it had to be gathered. To feed on Christ each must lay hold of him for his own soul by meditation and prayer and trust. 2. If we do not “taste and see that the Lord is gracious,” his nearness to us will only deepen our condemnation. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

II. CHRIST MUST BE LAID HOLD OF DAILY DURING THE WEEK'S TOIL. 1. The sabbath has its provision without labour. This law is sometimes inverted—sabbath day's toil, six days' negligence—but in this way Christ will be fed upon neither in labour nor in rest. They who come from daily walking with Christ, find the sabbath feast spread for them. 2. The life of labour in striving to lay hold of and feed upon him, is followed by the rest that remaineth and the feast which his own hand will spread.

III. GRACE WILL NOT CONSORT WITH DISOBEDIENCE. The manna stored up to save from toiling, when God commands to toil, was unfit for use. We cannot live on the memories of past experiences of Christ's graciousness. He must be daily sought for.

IV. CHRIST THE SOUL'S FOOD DURING THE ENTIRE EARTHLY PILGRIMAGE (ver. 35). During the whole forty years Israel fed upon the manna. We must feed daily upon Christ till we reach the inheritance. They who will be sustained in their journey must determine to know nothing save Christ and him crucified.—U.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 31—36.—THE APPEARANCE OF THE MANNA, ITS CONTINUANCE, AND ITS DEPOSITION IN THE TABERNACLE.—In bringing the subject of the manna to a conclusion, the writer adds a few words. 1. On its appearance; 2. On its deposition by divine command in the Ark of the Covenant; and 3. On its continuance during the forty years of the wanderings. It is evident that verses 32—34 cannot have been written until after the sojourn in Sinai, and the command to make a tabernacle (ch. xxvi.); as also that verse 35 cannot have been written till the arrival of the Israelites at the verge of the land of Canaan. But there is nothing in the passage that militates against the Mosaic authorship of the whole.

Ver. 31.—**The house of Israel.** This expression is unusual, and is not admitted by the Septuagint, the Syriac, or the Arabic versions, which all have “the children of Israel.” Several Hebrew MSS. have *beni*, “sons,” instead of *beyth* “house.” **Manna.** Literally, as in the Septuagint, *man*—the word used when they first beheld the substance (verse 15), and probably meaning “a gift.” The elongated form *manna*, first appears in the Sept. rendering of Num. xi. 6, 7. It was like *ooriander seed*. This is “a small round grain of a whitish or yellowish grey.” The comparison is made again in Num. xi. 7, where it is added that the colour was that of *bdellium*—either the gum so called, or possibly the pearl. **The taste of it was like wafers made with honey.** Such wafers or cakes were constantly used as offerings by the Egyptians, Greeks, and other nations. They were ordinarily compounded of meal, oil, and honey. Hence we can reconcile with the present passage the statement in Num. xi. 8, that “the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil.”

Ver. 32.—**And Moses said.** Not at the moment, but some time subsequently. See the introductory paragraph. **Fill an omer.** In the original it is “the omer,” and so the LXX.; but the reason for the introduction of the article is obscure. **For your generations—**i.e., “for your descendants.”

Ver. 33.—**Take a pot.** The word here translated “pot” does not occur elsewhere in Scripture, and is believed to be of Egyptian origin. Gesenius translates it “basket;” but

the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (ix. 4) follows the LXX. in representing the word used by *σφύριδος*, which certainly means “a jar” or “pot.” **Lay it up before the Lord.** The “pot of manna” was laid up before the Lord with the “tables of the covenant,” and “Aaron’s rod that budded” as symbolical that God’s mercy was as eternal and essential, and as much to be remembered as his justice, and perhaps also as especially symbolising the “true bread of life.”

Ver. 34.—**Aaron laid it up before the testimony.** “The testimony” is not the Ark of the Covenant, which is never so called, but the Covenant itself, or the two tables of stone engraved by the finger of God, which are termed “the testimony” in ch. xxv. 16—21; xl. 20; etc. The pot of manna was laid up inside the ark (Heb. ix. 4) in front of the two tables.

Ver. 35.—**The children of Israel did eat manna forty years.** Kalisch observes that the actual time was not forty full years, but about one month short of that period, since the manna began after the fifteenth day of the second month of the first year (verse 1) and terminated just after Passover of the forty-first year (Josh. v. 10—12). It may be added that Moses cannot have written the present passage later than about the eleventh month of the fortieth year (Deut. i. 3; xxxiv. 10; Josh. iv. 19); when the manna had continued thirty-nine years and nine months. **Until they came to a land inhabited.** Kalisch translates “the land of their habitation,” or “which they were to inhabit,” remarking that they had reached inhabited countries, e.g., those of Sihon and Og, much earlier. But the words will not bear this rendering. What the writer intends to note is, that the manna continued all the time they were in the wilderness, until they reached inhabited territory, and then further (in the next clause), that it lasted after that, until they came to the borders of Canaan. He does not say that it even then left off. He writes exactly as Moses might be expected to have written towards the close of his life. A later writer would, as Canon Cook observes, have been more specific.

Ver. 36.—**An omer.** The “omer” must be distinguished from the “homer” of later times. It was an Egyptian measure, as also was the “ephah.” It is not improbable that the verse is an addition by a later writer, as Joshua, or Ezra.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 32—34.—*Memorials of mercies.* It is indicative of the weakness and imperfection of human nature, that memorials of mercies should be needed. But frail humanity cannot do without them; and God in his goodness, knowing this, sanctions them. As he had the rod of Aaron, which budded (Num. xvii. 10), and the pot of manna, made permanent portions of the furniture of the tabernacle for memorials, so he had memorial days established, Sabbath, and Passover, and Pentecost, and memorial seasons, as the feasts of unleavened bread and tabernacles, that the children of Israel might keep his mercies in perpetual remembrance. We Christians have no such material memorials as the tables of stone, the rod, and the manna; for the "True Cross" is historically untrustworthy, and the "Holy Coat" *could* not have been a Jewish garment. We have, however, memorials of mercies.—

I. IN OUR HOLY DAYS. Our Sunday is a perpetual memorial and reminder of the great mercy of Christ's Resurrection, the earnest, and efficient cause, of our own. Christmas-day, Good Friday, Ascension-day, are memorials of the same kind; not so universally acknowledged, but useful memorials, where they are established and observed. Christianity commands that no man shall judge another in respect of such observances; but it would be an ill day for Christendom, if they were universally given up. Thousands find them great helps to devotion, great stimulants to gratitude and love.

II. IN OUR HOLY EMBLEMS. The Cross, the Lamb, the Eagle, the Crown of Thorns, the Vine, the Rose, the Lily of the Valley, wherever we behold them, are memorials of divine mercies, never sufficiently remembered, most useful in recalling to our minds the acts, events, persons, wherewith they are scripturally connected. Some minds are so constituted as not to require such reminders. But to the mass of men they are of inexpressible value, waking up (as they do) twenty times a day holy thoughts that might otherwise have slumbered, and stirring the heart to devotions that might otherwise have been unthought of.

III. IN OUR HOLY BUILDINGS. What the entire tabernacle was to the Israelites in the wilderness, what the temple, so long as it stood, was to the Israelite nation, such to Christians are their cathedrals, abbeys, churches, chapels, oratories, perpetual reminders of holy things, memorials pointing heavenwards, and bringing to mind all that God has done for us. That they are also intended for practical use as places where we may worship in common, and be taught in common, does not prevent their being at the same time memorials. It is as memorials that they lift themselves up so high, ascending in tier over tier of useless pinnacle, and high-pitched roof, and spire-crowned tower. They aim at catching our attention, forcing us to look at them, and making us think of God's mercies.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 32—34.—*The pot of manna.* Aaron was ordered to take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for future generations. The pot of manna is alluded to in Hebrews, where it is described as "golden," and as laid up in the ark (Heb. ix. 4). It may be questioned how so corruptible a substance admitted of preservation. But it is not so plain that the manna had in itself any tendency to corrupt, so that the miracle is perhaps to be looked for, not in the keeping fresh of the portion laid up in the ark, but in the smiting with corruption of any portions sinfully hoarded by the Israelites (ver. 20). We are taught—

I. THAT THE GREATER MERCIES OF GOD OUGHT SPECIALLY TO BE REMEMBERED BY US. It is fitting, even in the Church, to appoint memorials of them.

II. THAT THE PECULIAR LESSONS OF THE MANNA OUGHT SPECIALLY TO BE KEPT IN REMEMBRANCE. Among these note the following:—1. "Man doth not live by bread alone," etc. (cf. Deut. viii. 4; Matt. iv. 4). 2. The lesson of dependence on God for supply of daily wants (Matt. vi. 2). 3. Typical lessons. The manna reminds us of Christ, our Bread of Life, in heaven. "Your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3). The "hidden manna" in Rev. ii. 17, would seem to indicate the spiritual nourishment

in communion with God and Christ which will maintain soul and body for ever in the possession of an incorruptible life—life undecaying, self-renewing, everlasting.

III. THE INDISSOLUBLE UNION OF LAW AND GRACE IN GOD'S DEALINGS WITH HIS CHURCH. The pot of manna was laid up (after the ark was made) "before the testimony, to be kept" (ver. 34). The law is the stern background, but near it is the golden pot, filled with the manna which told of God's goodness and grace to a people whom mere law would have condemned. God can be thus gracious to his Church, not because his law has been set aside, but because it has been magnified and made honourable by Christ, whose blood pleads at the mercy-seat for the transgressor.—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVII.

Vers. 1—7.—THE SECOND MURMURING FOR WATER. When the Israelites had come to Rephidim, which was probably in the Wady Feiran, near its junction with the Wady Esh-Sheikh, complaint arose, not, as at Marah (ch. xv. 23), that there was no drinkable water, but that there was no water at all. Water had been expected, and consequently no supply had been brought; but none was found. Violent murmurs arose, and the people were ready to stone their leader (ver. 4), who had, they considered, brought them into the difficulty. As usual, Moses took his grief to God, and laid it before him, with the result that God gave miraculous relief. Moses was bidden to take his rod, and go with the elders to a particular rock known as "the rock in Horeb" (ver. 6), and there strike the rock, and water would flow forth. This he did, and a copious stream welled out, which furnished abundant drink to the whole multitude. In remembrance of the murmuring, he called the place Massah (trial) and Meribah (quarrel).

Ver. 1.—From the wilderness of Sin. See the comment on ch. xvi. 1. The sandy coast tract (El Murka) was probably quitted in lat. 28° 42' nearly, and the Wady Feiran entered on at its south-western extremity. Two stations, Dophkah and Alush, lay between the Sin wilderness and Rephidim, as we learn from Num. xxxiii. 12, 13. It is impossible to locate these places with exactness. After their journeys. The three stages—from Sin to Dophkah, from Dophkah to Alush, and from Alush to Rephidim—seem to be alluded to. According to the commandment of the Lord. Literally, "at the mouth of Jehovah," i.e. as God ordered them. The command was signified by the movement of the "pillar of the cloud." And pitched in Rephidim. The word Rephidim signifies "resting places," and "is the natural name for the paradise of the Bedouins in the palm-grove where the church

and palace of the bishops of Paran formerly stood" (Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 41). There was no water. The Wady Feiran is watered ordinarily by a copious stream; but at times the brook is dry (*ibid.* p. 40, note 3).

Ver. 2.—The people did chide. I.e. "quarrelled," made open murmurs and complaint—as before frequently (ch. xiv. 11, 12, xv. 24; xvi. 2, 3). Give us water. As Moses had already given them flesh (the quails) and bread (the manna), so it perhaps seemed to the people easy that he should give them such a common thing as water. Stanley notices (p. 70) that the wadys suggest the idea of water, and make its absence the more intolerable—they are "exactly like rivers," with "torrent bed, and banks, and clefts in the rock for tributary streams, and at times even rushes and shrubs fringing their course"—signs of "water, water everywhere, yet not a drop to drink." Wherefore do ye tempt the Lord? To "tempt the Lord" is to try his patience by want of faith, to arouse his anger, to provoke him to punish us. It was the special sin of the Israelites during the whole period of their sojourn in the wilderness. They "tempted and provoked the most high God" (Ps. lxxviii. 56); "provoked him to anger with their inventions" (*ib.* cvi. 29), "murmured in their tents" (*ib.* 25), "provoked him at the sea" (*ib.* 7), "tempted him in the desert" (*ib.* 14). God's long-suffering, notwithstanding all, is simply amazing!

Ver. 3.—The people thirsted there for water. There is probably no physical affliction comparable to intense thirst. His thirst was the only agony which drew from the Son of Man an acknowledgment of physical suffering, in the words "I thirst." Descriptions of thirst in open boats at sea are among the most painful of the records of afflicted humanity. Thirst in the desert can scarcely be less horrible. The people murmured and said: When the worst comes on men, if they are alone, they bear it silently; but if they can find a scapegoat, they murmur. To lay the blame of the situation on another is a huge satisfaction to the ordinary human mind, which shrinks from responsibility, and would fain shift the burthen on some one else. To kill us. Compare ch. xiv. 11,

xvi. 3. The circumstances of their life in the wilderness were such, that, until accustomed to them, the people thought that, at each step, they must perish. It may be freely admitted, that without continual miraculous aid this would have been the natural *dénouement*. **And our cattle.** It is interesting to see that the "cattle" still survived, and were regarded as of great importance. How far they served as a secondary head of subsistence to the people during the 40 years, is a point not yet sufficiently elaborated.

Ver. 4.—**And Moses cried unto the Lord.** It is one of the most prominent traits of the character of Moses, that, at the occurrence of a difficulty, he always carries it straight to God. (See ch. xv. 25; xxiv. 15; xxxii. 30; xxxiii. 8; Num. xi. 2, 11; xii. 11; xiv. 13—19, etc.) **They be almost ready to stone me.** This is the first which we hear of *stoning* as a punishment. It is *naturally* one of the easiest modes of wreaking popular vengeance on an obnoxious individual, and was known to the Greeks as early as the time of the Persian war (Herod. ix. 5), to the Macedonians (Q. Curt. *Vit. Alex.* vi. 11, 38), and others. There is, however, no trace of it among the Egyptians.

Ver. 5.—**Go on before the people.** "Leave the people," i.e., "where they are, in Rephidim,

and go on in front of them, with some of the elders as witnesses, that the miracle may be sufficiently attested." On the other occasion, when water was brought forth out of the rock (Num. xx. 8—11), it was done in the presence of the people. Perhaps now there was a real danger of their stoning Moses, had he not quitted them. **Thy rod with which thou smotest the river.** See above, ch. vii. 20.

Ver. 6.—**Behold, I will stand before thee there.** A visible Divine appearance seems to be intended, which would guide Moses to the exact place where he should strike. **The rock in Horeb** must have been a remarkable object, already known to Moses during the time that he dwelt in the Sinai-Horeb region; but its exact locality cannot be pointed out. It cannot, however, have been very far distant from Rephidim. (See ver. 8.)

Ver. 7.—**He called the name of the place Massah.** *Massah* is from the root *nasah*, "to try," or "tempt," and means "trial" or "temptation." **Meribah** is from *rûb*, "to chide, quarrel," and means "contention, chiding, strife." Moses gave the same name to the place near Kadesh, where water was once more brought out of the rock, near the end of the wanderings. (See Num. xx. 13; Deut. xxxii. 51; Ps. cvi. 32.)

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1-7.—*Water out of the rock.* "They did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ" (1 Cor. x. 4). When man is at his last gasp, perishing for lack of what he sorely needs, then God lavishes his mercies. All previous trials were as nothing compared with that which befel Israel at Rephidim. Lips parched, throats dry, bodies fevered with heat, hearts expectant and buoyed up with hope till the close of the day, then suddenly despairing—they lay on the arid soil around the ill-named "resting-places," maddened, furious, desperate. Without water, they must perish in the course of a few hours—they, "and their children" (ver. 3)—the little tender innocents, a while ago so gay and sprightly and joyous, now drooping, listless, voiceless. What wonder that some hearts were stirred with fury against Moses, that some hands clutched stones, and were ready to launch them at their leader's head? Men in such straits are often not masters of themselves, and scarcely answerable for the thoughts they think or the acts they do. But the greater the need, the richer the manifestation of God's mercy. At God's word, Moses strikes the rock; and the outcome is an abundant copious stream—aye, "rivers of living water!" All were free to drink at once—men, women, little children, cattle, asses—all could take without stint, satiate themselves, drink of the water of life freely. And the water "followed them." From Rephidim, in the second year, to Kadesh, in the thirty-eighth year of the wanderings, there is no more complaint of want of water at any time, no need apparently of any new and distinct miracle.

And we too have WATER OUT OF THE ROCK, which is—1. *Miraculous*; 2. *Abounding*; 3. *Life-giving*. 1. *Miraculous*. For our Rock is Christ himself—not the type, not the shadow, but the reality. Christ himself, the true and only-begotten Son of God, makes himself to us a perpetual, abiding, exhaustless source of a constant living stream, from which we may drink continually. "If any man thirst," he says, "let him come unto ME and drink" (John vii. 37); and again—"Ho, every man that thirsteth, come ye to the waters" (Is. lv. 1). He "opens rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys"—he "makes the wilderness a pool of water, and

the dry land springs of water" (*ib.* xli. 18). As from his riven side, upon the Cross, blood and water flowed down in a mingled stream, so ever does he give us by a standing miracle his atoning blood to expiate our guilt, and his pure spiritual influences to cleanse our hearts and purify our souls. And the supply is—2. *Abounding*. The water that he gives, is in each man "a well of water, springing up into everlasting life" (*John* iv. 14). It is given without let or stint—freely to "every one that thirsteth." This is his promise—"I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy offspring" (*Is.* xlv. 3). Men have but to thirst for the living stream, to desire it, long for it, and he pours it forth. As in heaven, "a pure water of life, clear as crystal, proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (*Rev.* xxii. 2), so even here there is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, abundant, copious, never-failing—of which all may drink freely. And the draught is—3. *Life-giving*. However weak we are, however drooping, however near to death, once let us drink of the precious water that he gives, and we are saved. Death is foiled, the destroyer forced to release his prey, life springs up again within the heart; every nerve is invigorated; every fibre of our frame recovers its tone. True "water of life" is that stream which wells forth from the riven side of the Lamb. Christ is "our Life;" and in him, and through him we have life. The water that he gives us is "living water"—for it is in truth the Spirit of him who is "the true God and the eternal life" (*1 John* v. 20)—who "hath life in himself." Lord, evermore give us this "life!"

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—*The water from the rock*. The Israelites pursued their journey to the mount of God. It was—1. By stages—"after their journeys." It is well to discipline the mind to look at life as a succession of stages. "Most people can bear one day's evil; the thing that breaks one down is the trying to bear on one day the evil of two days, twenty days, a hundred days." 2. According to God's commandment—following still the guiding cloud. 3. It brought them in due course to Rephidim, the scene of a new trial, and of a new theocratic mercy.

I. THE SITUATION. Its horrors can be better imagined than described. 1. *The want of water*. "There was no water for the people to drink" (*ver.* 1). Even where water was comparatively abundant, it would be a task of no small difficulty to supply the wants of so immense a multitude. Now they are conducted into a region where water absolutely fails them. The last drop in their water-skins is exhausted. There is a famine of the needful element. Scouts bring in the intelligence that the place is one of utter drought, without streams, wells, rivulets, oozing rocks, or any other means of renewing the supplies. Consternation sits on every face. Dismay is in every heart. 2. *The consequent thirst*. "And the people thirsted there for water" (*ver.* 3). The pangs of unallayed thirst constitute an intolerable torture. Hunger is attended by gnawings and tearings in one organ of the body—that concerned in the reception of food. But thirst possesses the whole being. It mounts to the brain. It burns and rages like fever in the blood. Draining the body of its juices, it causes every nerve to throb with acute suffering. "Heart and flesh" cry out for the boon of water. It has been remarked that "I thirst" was the only expression of bodily suffering wrung from our Lord upon the cross. 3. *The spiritual analogue*. God brought the people into a situation in which they not only experienced acute thirst, but were made to feel that in their sore strait, nature could do nothing for them. If left to the resources of nature, they must inevitably perish. They cried for water, but it was not to be had. The depth said, It is not in me. The thirsty sand said, It is not in me. The sky that was as brass above them said, It is not in me. The dry, dead rocks around said, It is not in us. From no quarter could they extract so much as a drop of the precious liquid. The analogue to this is the condition of the spirit which has become awakened to the emptiness and unsatisfyingness of the world around it, of the finite generally; which feels the need of a higher life than the world can give it. In the renewed nature, it becomes definitively the thirst for God, for the living God, for his love, his favour, for knowledge of him, for participation in his life (*Ps.* xlii. 1, 2; lxiii. 1—3). Under con-

viction of sin, it is specially the thirst for pardon and holiness (Ps. li.; cxix. 41, 81, 123, 166, 174). By bestowing on the Israelites supernatural water to quench their thirst, God declared at the same time his ability and willingness to supply these higher wants of the soul; nay, held out in type the promise of this gift. This is not a far-fetched application of the incident. The word spoken to the Israelites at Marah, "I am Jehovah that healeth thee" (ch. xv. 26), gave them a key to the interpretation of this whole series of miraculous facts. We cannot say to what extent they used it; but the key was there. Just as at Marah, the healing of the waters was a symbol of the truth that Jehovah would be their healer in every sphere of their existence; as the gift of manna was the type and pledge of the gift of "that meat which endureth unto everlasting life" (John vi. 27); so, in the case before us, was the water from the rock, this supernatural water, an emblem and token of a supply in God for the satisfaction of spiritual thirst, and a pledge to his people that this supply would actually be made available for their wants.

II. THE CHIDING (vers. 1-5). The behaviour of the people (making all allowance for their sore necessity) showed how little they had profited by past experiences of God's kindness. 1. They *chided with Moses*. This is, they blamed, rebuked, reproved, reproached him for having brought them into this unhappy situation. How unreasonable was this, to chide with Moses, when they knew that in every step by which he had led them, Moses had only done God's bidding. It was God's arrangements they were quarrelling with, not the arrangements of Moses. But it is usually in this indirect way that murmuring against God, and rebellion against his will are carried on. Because of this chiding of the people, the place was called Meribah (ver. 7). 2. They *asked Moses for the impossible*. They said, "Give us water to drink" (ver. 2). Here was further unreasonableness. They knew very well that Moses could not give them water. There was none to give. Probably they meant that he should supply their wants by miracle. If so, the spirit of their demand was wholly unbecoming. (1) They addressed themselves to Moses, not to God. They *ought* to have addressed themselves to God, but they did not. (2) They did not in a becoming manner *ask* for the water, but violently *demand*ed it. (3) The demand was made in a spirit of unbelief. This is evident from verse 7—"they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not?" They did not believe that water could be provided for them. 3. They *taunted Moses with a design to kill them*. This was a further disclosure of their unbelief. Twice, on previous occasions, they had made the same complaint, ostensibly against Moses, but really against God (ch. xiv. 11; xvi. 3), and twice had God shown them how unfounded were their ungenerous suspicions. He had saved them from the Egyptians. He had supplied them with bread. Could they not now trust him to supply them with water? Perhaps, as a writer has remarked, had the combination of circumstances been exactly the same as before, their hearts would not have failed them. "But when are combinations of circumstances exactly the same? and when the new combination arises, the old faith is apt to fail" (Gibson on the miracle at Marah, "the Mosaic Era"). This, however, was part of the design, to reveal the Israelites to themselves, and show them the strength of this "evil heart of unbelief" within them, which was ever prompting them anew to depart from the living God (Heb. iii. 12). We have equal need to beware of its operations in ourselves. 4. They *were like to stone Moses*. Moses speaks, in verse 5, as one driven to his wits' end by the unreasonableness and violence of the mob. He did, however, the right thing—betook himself in his strait to God. There is perhaps no prayer, which in the discharge of public duties, servants of God are more frequently tempted to offer, or do offer with greater heartiness than this, that they "may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for all men have not faith" (2 Thess. iii. 2).

III. THE DELIVERANCE (vers. 5, 6). God, as before, grants a supply for the people's wants. By bringing streams out of the rock for them, and causing waters to run down like rivers (Ps. lxxviii. 15, 16; Is. xlviii. 21), he showed how wanton and ungrateful had been their suspicions of him, and how foolishly they had limited his power. Notice—1. *God's loving-kindness in this gift*. This was very marked, when we remember how soon the people had forgotten previous mighty works. (1) The water was given without chiding and rebuke. Save, indeed, as it was itself the most pointed of all rebukes of the unbelief of the murmurers. They had chided with Moses; but God, in return, does not chide with them. He is merciful to their unrighteousness, and seeks to over-

come it by showering on them his undeserved benefits. He does not return them evil for evil, but seeks to overcome their evil with his good. It is the same loving-kindness which we see in the Gospel. God seeks to conquer us by love. (2) The gift was plentiful. All scripture allusions to the miracle confirm this idea (Ps. lxxviii. 20; cv. 41; Is. xlviii. 21). The tradition was, that the waters continued to flow, and followed the Israelites wherever they went. The Rabbins had a fable that the rock itself, in some way, accompanied the people in their journeys. In a figure, or parabolically even this was true, for the real rock was God himself, whose presence and agency in the miracle is denoted by the words, "Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb" (ver. 6). It was probably in the parabolic sense that the Rabbins used the expression. 2. *The manner of the gift.* This is to be carefully noted. (1) Elders were to be taken as witnesses of the transaction (ver. 5). This denoted that in what he did, God was looking beyond the immediate supply of the people's bodily wants. The design was, of course, to secure for posterity a properly authenticated account of the miracle. The importance attached to evidence in this whole series of transactions is very marked (cf. chs. iv. 1—10; vii. 9). A similar importance is attached to evidence in the law (Deut. xvii. 6, 7; xix. 15—21). This suggests to us how far we are, in believing scripture, from relying on "cunningly-devised fables" (2 Pet. i. 16). God took pains that his mighty works should not lack contemporary authentication. Christ, in like manner, took security for the transmission to posterity of a faithful account of his words and works, by appointing twelve apostles (Luke xxiv. 48; Acts i. 21, 22). What additional confidence all this inspires in the historic ground-work of our religion! The direction for the appointment of formal witnesses had no doubt in view the character of the miracle as a pledge and type of spiritual blessings. As myths, these miracles might still suggest to us certain spiritual ideas; but their value would be gone as Divine acts, positively pledging the Divine fulness for the supply of "all the need" of the children of faith. (2) Moses was to work the miracle by means of the rod (ver. 5). The rod appears here as the symbol of the authority with which Moses was invested, and also as the vehicle of the Divine power. The personal character of Moses sinks in this miracle as nearly out of sight as possible. God stands before him on the rock, and is all in all in the cleaving of it, and giving of the water. God is everything, Moses nothing. (3) The rock was to be smitten (ver. 6). The distinction made between this miracle and that at Kadesh in the 40th year (Num. xx. 7—12), where the rock was only to be *spoken to*, shows conclusively that the act of smiting was meant to be significant. The smiting was, first, a cleaving of the way for the passage of the waters, which otherwise would not have flowed, as contrasted, in the later miracle, with a renewal of what was practically the same supply. God would plainly have the people recognise a *continuity* in the supply of water at different stages of the journey, the outward rock merging in the spiritual and invisible one from which the supply really came, and which was with them at all times and places (cf. 1 Cor. x. 4). But this is not the whole. The singular fact remains that the rock was to be *smitten*, and smitten with the rod wherewith "thou *smotest* the river." In other words, the way was to be opened for the waters by an act of violence, the smiting here, as in the case of the river, almost necessarily suggesting judgment. If there were indeed in this any typical allusion to the actual mode in which living waters were to be given to the world, viz. by the smiting of the rock Christ, it must have remained an enigma till later prophecies, and ultimately the event itself, threw light upon it. There is, however, nothing extravagant in believing that this form was given of design to the transaction, that, when the truth was known, believing minds, reverting to this smitten rock, might find in it all the more apt and suggestive an emblem of the great facts of their redemption. 3. *Its spiritual teaching.* The rock points to Christ (1 Cor. x. 4). The waters which flowed from it, accordingly, are to be taken, not simply as streams of literal refreshment for the Israelites, but spiritually, typically, symbolically—may we not almost say sacramentally?—as representative of spiritual blessings. So, in the above-cited passage, the apostle calls the water "spiritual drink," even as the manna was "spiritual meat" (1 Cor. x. 3, 4). See below. We may extend the figure, and think of Christ, in turn, smiting with his cross the hard rock of the human heart, and causing living waters to flow forth from it (cf. John vii. 38). While this obvious lesson is taught in addition, that in providing and ministering spiritual refreshment to his people,

God can, and will, break through the greatest outward hindrances and impediments (cf. Is. xxxv. 6).

IV. TEMPTING GOD. "They tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us or not?" (ver. 7). The peculiarity of this sin of Rephidim deserves to be carefully noted. Rephidim, it is true, is not the only instance of it; but it is the outstanding and typical one, and, as such, is frequently alluded to in Scripture (cf. Deut. vi. 16; Ps. xcv. 8, 9; Heb. iii. 8, 9). The allusion in Ps. lxxviii. 18, 19—"They tempted God in their heart by *asking meat* for their lust. Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" is to the incident in Num. xi. Comparing the different scripture references to this sin of "tempting," it will be found that both in the Old and New Testaments, it is invariably connected with the idea of *proposing tests* to God, of putting him in some way to the *proof*, of prescribing to him conditions of action, compliance or non-compliance with which is to settle the question of his continued right to our trust and obedience. It is the spirit which *challenges* God, and is even peremptory in its demand that he shall do as it requires, if, forsooth, he is not to fall in its esteem. It is, as in the gospels (Matt. xvi. 1, etc.), the *sign-seeking* spirit, which, not satisfied with the ordinary evidences, demands exceptional ones, and lays down conditions on which belief in the revealed word is to be made to depend. Cf. Renan's demand for "a commission, composed of physiologists, physicists, chemists, and persons accustomed to historical criticism," to sit in judgment on the miracles ("Life of Jesus," Introduction). It is, in short, the spirit which requires from God *proofs* of his faithfulness and love other than those which he has been pleased to give us, and which even presumes to dictate to him what these proofs shall be. It is, therefore, a spirit which carries distrust on the face of it, and is, besides, daringly presumptuous and irreverent. This furnishes the key to Christ's second temptation in the wilderness. It was a temptation to put his father's care and faithfulness to the test by casting himself down from the pinnacle of the temple (Matt. iv. 5—8). And he repelled it by quoting the passage in Deuteronomy which alludes to this sin of Massah, "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God" (Deut. vi. 16). It is forgotten by those who are guilty of this sin, that God brings us into situations of trial, not that we may test *him*, but that he may test *us*. Professor Tyndall's proposal of a prayer-test may be cited as a not irrelevant illustration of the type of transgression referred to.—J. O.

Ver. 6.—"*That rock was Christ.*" In the statement of Paul—"They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. x. 4)—we have a clear assertion of the typical character of this transaction at Rephidim. We may either suppose the term "Rock" in the first clause to be used by metonymy for the water which flowed from the rock, or we may understand the allusion to be to him of whom the rock was but a symbol, and who *did* accompany the Israelites in their wanderings, abundantly supplying their wants. The latter view, which conserves the grain of truth in the Rabbinical traditions above referred to, to which the apostle seems to make allusion, is most in keeping with the further statement, "that Rock was Christ." An interesting comparison is with the words of Christ himself, when, on "the last day, that great day of the feast," he "stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" (John vii. 37). The libation of water from the pool of Siloam, which was a ceremony connected with the feast of tabernacles, and which most commentators take to be the subject of Christ's allusion in these memorable words, was commemorative of this miraculous supply of water in the desert. Dr. Godet goes further, and takes this passage in Exodus to be itself the "scripture" (John vii. 38), and the bringing of the water from the rock the event, which Jesus had in view when he gave his invitation. "Why," he says, "should not Jesus, instead of stopping at the emblem, go back to the Divine fact which this rite commemorated. . . . He had in ch. ii. (of John's Gospel) represented himself as the true temple, in ch. iii. as the true brazen serpent, in ch. vi. as the bread of heaven; in ch. vii. he is the true rock: in ch. viii. he will be the true light-giving cloud, and so on till ch. xix., when he will at length realise the type of the Paschal Lamb" (Godet on John vii. 37). The points to be noted here are these:—

I. HUMAN NATURE IS IN A CONDITION OF THIRST. Its state is figured by that of the Israelites in the desert. It thirsts for a satisfaction which the world cannot give it.

Give man all of the world he asks for, and still his soul is deeply athirst. His increasing cry is, who will show us any good? (Ps. iv. 6). *Learning* does not satisfy this thirst (Ecclesiastes, Goethe's "Faust"). *Pleasures* do not satisfy it (Byron's "Childe Harold"). Colonel Gardiner told Dr. Doddridge how, on one occasion, when his companions were congratulating him on his distinguished felicity, a dog happening to come into the room, he could not help groaning inwardly, and saying to himself, "Oh, that I were that dog." *Riches* do not satisfy it. It is, however, when spiritual awakening comes, and the sinner is brought to realise his true condition as alienated from the life of God, that his thirst enters on the phase which makes satisfaction of it possible. It is now *spiritual* thirst—thirst for pardon, for holiness, for salvation. Note, in passing, how this deep-seated thirst of man testifies to his spiritual dignity. If man is merely a *natural* being—the highest of the animals—why does not nature satisfy him? Why are all things thus full of labour—the eye not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing (Eccles. i. 8)? The mere animal is easily satisfied, and returns into its rest. How different with man! His bodily comforts may be every one attended to; his senses filled with grateful pleasures; his imagination fed with the most gorgeous images of beauty; his intellect stored with the facts and laws of every department of finite science, but all does not slake the thirst of his spirit. His soul still cries, "Give, give; I want not *this*, nor *this*; give me *living water*, of which, if a man drink he will never thirst again."

II. CHRIST IS THE SATISFACTION OF THIS THIRST. He says—"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" (John vii. 37). He understands better than any one else the nature, causes, and intensity of our thirst, yet he promises to gratify it. And who that puts his word to the test is ever sent disappointed away? His salvation is found by every one that tries it, to have really this property of quenching spiritual thirst. He meets the special thirst of the *sinful* soul, by satisfying its desires for pardon and holiness. He meets the more fundamental thirst of our nature—the thirst for blessed *life*—by admitting us to fellowship with himself, the perfect embodiment of truth, purity, and goodness; by giving us a true end in our existence; by furnishing the soul, in the living God (1) with a *spiritual* object, congruous to its own nature; (2) with an *adequate* object, capable of filling and occupying all its powers; (3) with a *living* object, in communion with whom it specially attains to the blessedness of life eternal: finally, by imparting to us, in fullest measure, the influences of the Spirit, source of all light, joy, strength, and powers of holy obedience.

III. CHRIST SATISFIES THIS THIRST IN VIRTUE OF HIS HAVING BEEN SMITTEN. It was only as a rock "smitten" that Jesus could yield waters of salvation to mankind. Atonement must be made for sins. The Christ must be smitten for the transgressions of the world. He came to save. He must appear as the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world (John i. 29). Jesus was thus smitten in the garden and on Calvary. John notes how from his wounded side there came forth the water and the blood (John xix. 34, 35). "Rock of Ages," etc.

IV. THE WATERS OF CHRIST'S SALVATION ARE FREE AND PLENTIFUL. 1. Free. "Ho, every one that thirsteth" etc. (Is. lv. 1), "Whosoever will" (Rev. xxii. 17). 2. Plentiful. "Preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi. 15).—J. O.

Vers. 1—7.—*Christ our Spring*. "They drank of that spiritual rock," etc. (1 Cor. x. 4). Introduction may deal with the following important items, as all leading up to the theme of the homily—the journey from Sin to Rephidim (Num. xxxiii. 12—14), the incidents connected with furnishing water out of the rock—the fact that the water may have followed Israel for at least a few stations—and on that fact (not on the Rabbinical legend) found the New Testament application of the Apostle Paul—which justifies us in speaking here of Christ as *The Eternal Spring of Refreshment to all believers*. Expound the connection of 1 Cor. x. 4; thus:—By passing under the cloud and through the sea "our fathers" were baptised unto Moses, committed to him as to a leader, they being his disciples. Thereupon two necessities—bread and water—both in a spiritual sense found in Christ. Even in the desert the water came not so much from the rock, as from the Lord of the rock: i.e. Christ.

I. THE SOUL NEEDS REFRESHMENT—i.e., not only food for strength, but spiritual

influences for refreshment. Show from Christian experience how many and powerful are the causes of depression, weariness, and fainting.

II. OUT OF THE ROCK—CHRIST—REFRESHMENT SPRINGS. Refreshment does come from time to time to the faint. (See Dr. Raleigh on refreshing influences of "The Dew," in "Quiet Resting Places," p. 34-37.) But the cause is Christ, the living and the ever near. As to the way in which the ministration comes, it does not concern us much to point out; enough to know the fact. Still there are many channels of this grace, e.g., a gleam of morning sunshine, the song of a bird, the pleasant letter of a friend, etc. etc. *Channels* of the grace, mark! But what is the *water* itself? See John vii. 37, 38, 39. "This spake he of the *Spirit*," etc. The water is the consolation of the Spirit; and the rock (from whom proceeds the Spirit) is Christ.

III. THE REFRESHMENT SPRINGS IN UNLIKELY PLACES. As out of the very desolations of Rephidim came the water; so out of our very sorrows come our deepest consolations.

IV. THE ROCK—CHRIST—EVER FOLLOWS US. Here give the fable of the Rabbis; and show that in it there was a deeper truth than the Rabbis knew. Paul saw it. The refreshments of the Spirit are not like angels' visits; for the Dispenser of the grace is never far away.

V. WE ARE REFRESHED THAT WE MAY REFRESH. See John vii. 38. "Out of his belly," etc.—R.

Vers. 1-7. *The giving of water in Rephidim.* I. OBSERVE HOW THE PEOPLE CAME TO REPHIDIM. There is a distinct intimation that it was according to the commandment of Jehovah. He it was who led them where there was no water to drink, and equally he must have given them the intimation to pitch their tents. And we who read the narrative are not at all discomposed on learning that there was no water in this place of encampment. We remember how God has already shown that his ways are not as men's ways, by taking his people where they were entangled in the land, and the wilderness shut them in (ch. xiv. 3). And we are sure that as he then showed what men count folly to be the highest wisdom, so it would prove again. Water is a necessity, and when Jehovah takes his people where there is no water to drink, it must be under the compulsion of a still higher necessity. If water had been one of the chief things to consider, the people would never have gone to Rephidim at all. But at present the great matter for consideration was Sinai, the mountain where the people were to serve God. Everything else was in subordination to the sojourn at Sinai. God could bring Rephidim to Sinai, and he did so when he caused Moses to smite the rock; but it was not possible to bring Sinai to Rephidim.

II. OBSERVE THEIR FIRST REQUEST, AND THE ANSWER OF MOSES. "Give us water that we may drink." The mere words, of course, tell us nothing as to the spirit of the request. In certain circumstances such a request would be innocent and natural enough. Jesus began his conversation with the woman at the well by asking her for a drink of water. The request here, however, was evidently expressed in a complaining, chiding tone; and we can only understand it as we come to study the rejoinder of Moses. That rejoinder shows how he is becoming more and more alarmed at the perils into which the unbelief of the people is taking them. They are still looking towards Moses; they cannot be got to understand that he is as much dependent on the cloudy pillar as are the rest of them. Him who had been given to help and encourage their faith, they treat in such a way that he becomes a stumbling-block. Hence he tries his best to move away their thoughts from himself to Jehovah, with whose long-suffering he warns them that they are making very presumptuous and perilous experiments. They are on dangerous ground, and none the less dangerous because they tread it with such profane unconcern. There had now been several trials of the Divine long-suffering in the short time since they had left Egypt (ch. xiv. 11, xv. 24, xvi. 3, 20, 27); and through all these God had moved gently, providing and protecting, even in the midst of their unbelief. But this gentleness of dealing could not go on for ever; and Moses felt it was quite time to warn them, so that none in Israel might delude themselves with the notion that whatever they said and however they complained Jehovah would not smite them.

III. IN DUE COURSE, THERE IS A SECOND APPEAL TO MOSES. Their first request seems to have come immediately on encamping. They look round with an instinctive

feeling for the water supply; and, missing it, they ask for it. Then they wait awhile; and, of course, the longer they wait the more thirst begins to assert itself. Their children cry; and all the cattle signify, in an equally impressive way, their want of water. (Remember what a terrible calamity the want of water is in eastern countries.) No wonder then that increasing thirst drove the Israelites to the bitter complainings of ver. 3. It was not without a profound reason in the plans of God that waterless Rephidim lay so near Sinai. He will make his people to know the *utter privations* that belong to Rephidim as well as the *bitterness* of Marah and the *abundance* of Elim. Thus they passed in a very remarkable way, and in a very short time, through three great representative experiences with regard to the resources of nature. They found those resources existent but impaired at Marah; well-nigh perfect at Elim; and at Rephidim altogether absent. Then, to add further to the significance of Rephidim, God made the people to wait there till their want of water became little short of agony. Not that he delights in inflicting pain; but pain is often needful to teach great lessons. He seems to have made them wait longer at Rephidim where there was no water, than at Marah where the water was only bitter. Hence the exasperation, defiance, almost despair which find utterance in their second cry. For all they can see, they are on the point of death; they, their children and their cattle. And yet this very reference—excusable as it might be in their half-maddened state—suggested at once its own confutation. God had worked by special interventions to bring those very children and cattle out of Egypt intact. Those first-born especially, for whom the lamb had been slain and the blood sprinkled, was it likely they would perish from a thing so entirely within Divine control as lack of water? The truth seems to be that one more great discovery had to be made by Israel before they came to Sinai. They had known Jehovah appearing to them in bondage and more and more manifesting his power; giving them at last an exceeding abundant deliverance from bondage and overwhelming their great enemy in all his strength. These were all completed experiences. There remained one thing more, namely that they should be made to feel their dependence on Jehovah for bread and water. That dependence must be taught in the most practical way, before he proceeded formally to ask as he did at Sinai, for the unreserved regard and obedience of his people.

IV. THIS OCCASION EVIDENTLY BECAME THE MEANS OF DRAWING MOSES HIMSELF NEARER TO GOD. We feel that he was coming into peril from the exasperated people. They were, indeed, past all argument and expostulation—suffering themselves, and made more frantic still by the cries of their children and the threatened damage to their property. So here again we see how Moses' own path was the path of faith. Jehovah has ever some fresh revelation of power to deepen the impression already made on the mind of his servant with regard to his omnipotence. Moses must be brought to feel by all sorts of illustrations that God can do everything which is not by its very nature impossible and which does not contradict his own character.

V. OBSERVE THE METHOD OF SUPPLY. 1. *God has the elders called out from among the people.* Thus, for his own purposes, he still further extends the period of waiting. Possibly it was through these very elders, chosen and responsible men among the people, that the complaints and threats had come. The Israelites, even in their unbelief and worldliness, did not degenerate into a rabble. They had *their leaders*, whom they chose, recognised from the human point of view, as well as *that leader whom God had sent*, and whom they so often had despised and rejected. The time had come to make these elders feel their responsibility. Many who made light of Moses looked to them; and according to the way they spoke and acted, they would do much either to produce faith throughout the people, or, on the other hand, to produce unbelief. 2. *God brings the rod once more into requisition*, and as he does, makes a special connection of it with one accomplished work in particular. With that rod Moses had been the means of smiting the river and turning it to blood; the import of the reference evidently being that water everywhere is under the Divine control. By this time there must surely have been great virtue in the sight of the rod to call forth faith and expectation. Hitherto it had been used to destroy—it delivered, indeed, at the same time that it destroyed—but now it is called to a work of unmixed beneficence. All that had been done so far was right and necessary; but it is well that there should now be one work of the rod which, in blessing Israel, does not inflict harm on a single human being. 3. *The source whence the water*

comes. From a rock. The smiting, of course, was simply a symbolic action, just as the smiting of the water was. It was not as if some blow had been struck, suddenly opening up a hidden reservoir. What God did here by smiting he commanded, at a later date, to be done by speaking. (Num. xx. 8.) The water came, and was to be understood as coming, from a most unlikely place. Did we know more of the details, more as to the kind of rock that was smitten and the way in which the water gushed forth, we might be even more deeply impressed with the miracle. It may not be going too far to say that no amount of excavating or tunnelling would have got water from that rock. He who turned the water to blood made water to flow from an arid rock in some altogether mysterious way. Doubtless many of the Israelites were beginning to think that it was with a rocky God they had to deal; a hard, unsympathising Deity; that, in short, they had exchanged a human Pharaoh for a Divine one. And so God shows them that even the rock holds unexpected, abundant, and exactly appropriate blessings. The rock at Meribah was a good symbol of Jehovah for the time. He had already presented to the people much that was in aspect stern and unyielding; and he would have to do this still more in the future. And yet in the midst of all necessary hardness, he took care to refresh his people with gracious comforts and promises. He who demands that everything shall be done in righteousness, truth, and profound reverence for his will, is by no means one of those tyrants who seek to reap where they have not sown. Rather does he take his people into circumstances seemingly the most unfavourable, seeking there to teach them how, if they only sow a spirit of faith, obedience, and expectation, they shall reap a sufficient and steady supply for all their daily wants.

VI. OBSERVE THE NAME THAT WAS GIVEN TO THE PLACE. Massah and Meribah. These words did not so much mark the power and providence of God as the unbelieving, self-regarding spirit of the people. This they constantly needed to be reminded of. It might well happen that some of the more sanguine would say, "We shall never be unbelievers again; we shall go with confidence into any place whatever, whither the Lord may lead us." And so these warning names are fixed for them to look back upon. The unbelief of the people was not to be lost in the glory of the Divine action, as if it were a thing of no consequence. We cannot dispense with any recollection of the past, however disagreeable it may be, which keeps before us our own deficiencies, and impresses upon us the need of constant humility.—Y.

Ver. 7.—*They tempted God in the desert.* Illustration. Child cries; parent sends for doctor; pleasant medicine is prescribed. Later the child cries again; cry is apparently addressed to parent, but real aim is to see if the doctor will give more pleasant medicine. Chiding with the parent is a cover for experimenting upon the doctor. Here—previous murmuring against Moses had resulted (xvi. 2—5) in food from God. The people would see whether like conduct might not lead to a like result; they chide with Moses, but, in reality, they were tempting—trying experiments upon—God. Notice:—

I. THE CHIDING (ver. 2). An outward manifestation of displeasure against the visible leader. Why should Moses have brought them, thirsting, to this barren and inhospitable spot? The fact that their journeys were "according to the commandment of Jehovah" (ver. 1) is altogether forgotten or ignored. Not a rare offence: the people, displeased, blame the minister, quite forgetting that he has a master other than themselves. Churches are called Eben-ezers and the like; they might often as truly be called Meribahs. The question which must be put in such cases is one not easy to answer: "Why strive ye with me?" The answer is involved in that other question which few grumblers care to face—"Why do ye tempt Jehovah?" Chiding can only be passed on with the motive which inspires it to its true object; he who tries to answer it otherwise does but stand in God's light, doing that which Joash declined to do for Baal (Judges vi. 31), and which, with yet more reason, God's servants had best abstain from in his cause.

II. THE TEMPTATION. The inner motive for the outward manifestation was to see whether God was really among them, and would indicate his presence by supporting his servant. He had given quails and bread, would he now shield Moses by supplying the demand for water? Observe—1. *The favourable side of the offence.* The people remembered that God had helped, whence they inferred that he might help again.

Memory fed hope. So far it was well. Memory, however, was but half instructed. The remembered gift was more thought of than the giver. Hope was not faith; it could not prompt the prayer of faith. God was not regarded as he should have been, and consequently men could not state their needs with confidence, "nothing doubting." 2. *The unfavourable side of the offence.* Jehovah, they thought, was the friend, if of any one, of Moses. They regarded him as a being apart, quite as likely to be *their* enemy as the enemy of the Egyptians. Perhaps, however, if they put his friend in difficulties, to help his friend he might appease them. Is not the same thought latent still in like cases? "If the minister is a good man, God will help him, and we shall be the gainers. If not, we shall get quit of him, and possibly his successor may remedy his defects." A kind of witches' ordeal from which the accusers hope to profit any way. Trouble should strengthen trust, and when it does, trust will be rewarded. Beware, however, lest imperfect trust take the form of temptation. God will justify his own elect, but experiments made on him are apt to recoil on the experimenters.

III. *THE RESULT* (vers. 5, 6). The people spoke *at* God instead of *to* him. Moses, instead of being the channel for their prayers, was the rock whence might echo their complaints. God, in answer, draws himself yet further off from the complainers. They get their water; but they lose that which they might have had as well, the sense of the presence of their God. The experiment was successful, physical thirst was slaked; it was also a disastrous failure: instead of gaining a strong assurance that God was indeed among them, they gained rather a confirmation of their suspicion that he was not among them, but at a distance.

Conclusion.—Beware how you tempt God. Whether is it better to endure discomfort and have a nearer sense of his presence, or to escape discomfort and endure his absence? Thirst endured trustfully must have brought the Israelites such a realisation of the Divine presence as would have quenched, what was worse than thirst, the irrepresible desire to murmur. Temporary satisfaction then, as ever, thus obtained, led on to yet deeper doubt.—G.

Vers. 1—7.—*Trial and failure.* I. *THE PURPOSE OF RECURRING TRIALS.* Israel, tried before at Marah, is now led from the comforts of Elim to the thirsty land of Rephidim. They might have learned something of their own heart and of God's unfailing goodness, and now they are led hither that he may prove whether they will serve him or no. Trial comes that the teachings of truth may be changed into the convictions of trust.

II. *ISRAEL'S CRIME.* 1. It was not unbelief, but *impious presumption*. They demand water, believing that it can be produced. They regard themselves as having a right to the choicest of God's blessings. This presumptuous claim lies in the heart of all unbelief. 2. Their accusation of Moses and of God (ver. 3). They have belief but no prayer, no trust, only strife and bitterness. (1) Their base ingratitude. All past mercies are blotted out because of a little present suffering. (2) Their blindness. They might have asked themselves whether there was cause for this rebuke. (3) Their stubbornness. They refused to bow themselves in prayer, or even to ask Moses to intercede for them. (4) Their readiness to entertain the grossest suggestions of doubt.

III. *GOD'S LONG-SUFFERING.* 1. Their murmuring is met with help. He might have proved himself to be among them by his judgments; but he gives them water from the flinty rock. Not till mercy has done her utmost is judgment let loose against his people. 2. He labours to establish their faith in himself. The elders are taken as witnesses, and the rock is smitten with the rod of God.

(*Second sketch.*) I. *A PICTURE OF THE SEEKERS AFTER MORAL IMPROVEMENT WHO DO NOT FOLLOW THE PATHWAY OF FAITH.* 1. Their unquenched thirst. 2. Their despair. It had been better for them, they say, that the desire to go forth had never been awakened; that the quest after a better country had never been entered upon. 3. Their cry, "Is the Lord among us or not?" Does God take thought of us? Is there a God? How often has youthful earnestness come to rest at last in the blankest unbelief!

II. *A PICTURE OF CHRIST, THE ANSWER TO THE SEEKER'S NEED.* 1. The living rock, the changeless one, the sure foundation. 2. How he is made to us the fountain

of living waters: he is smitten by the rod of God on behalf of the sinful. 3. The water "followed them." Christ's consolations the one perennial stream for refreshment and strength. 4. How he may be found: by following the guidance of those who testify of him.—U.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 8—16.—**THE WAR WITH AMALEK.** The Amalekites seem to have been descendants of Amalek, the grandson of Esau (Gen. xxxvi. 12). They separated themselves off from the other Edomites at an early date, and became the predominant tribe in the more northern parts of the Sinaitic peninsula, claiming and exercising a sovereignty over the whole of the desert country between the borders of Palestine and Egypt. We do not find the name Amalek in the Egyptian records; but the people are probably represented by the Mentu, with whom so many of the early Egyptian kings contended. The Pharaohs dispossessed them of the north-western portion of the mountain region; but they probably claimed the suzerainty of the central hills and valleys, which the Egyptians never occupied; and on these they no doubt set a high value as affording water and pasture for their flocks during the height of summer. When the Israelites pressed forward into these parts, the Amalekites, in spite of the fact that they were a kindred race, determined on giving them battle. They began by "insidiously attacking the rear of the Hebrew army, when it was exhausted and weary" (Deut. xxv. 18). Having cut off many stragglers, they attacked the main body at Rephidim, in the Wady-Feiran, and fought the long battle which the text describes (vers. 10—13). The result was the complete discomfiture of the assailants, who thenceforth avoided all contact with Israel until attacked in their turn at the southern frontier of Canaan, when, in conjunction with the Canaanites, they were victorious (Num. xiv. 45). A bitter and long continued enmity followed. Amalek, "the first of the nations" to attack Israel (*ib.* xxiv. 20), was pursued with unrelenting hostility (Deut. xxv. 17—19), defeated repeatedly by Saul and David (1 Sam. xiv. 48; xv. 7; xxvii. 8; xxx. 17; 2 Sam. viii. 12); the last remnant of the nation being finally destroyed by the Simeonites in the reign of king Hezekiah, as related by the author of Chronicles (1 Chr. iv. 41—43).

Ver. 8.—Then came Amalek. The bulk o

the Amalekites would have been passing the spring in the lower plains, where herbage is abundant after the early rains, while later in the year it dries up. They would hear of the threatened occupation of their precious summer pastures by the vast host of the Hebrews, and would seek to prevent it by blocking the way. Hence they are said to have "come"—i.e., to have marched into a position where they were not previously, though it was one situated within their country. We must remember that they were nomads. And fought with Israel. For the nature of the fighting on the first day, see Deut. xxv. 18; by which it appears that the original attack was made on the rear of the long column, and was successful. The Amalekites "smote the hindmost" of the Israelites, "even all that were feeble behind them, when they were faint and weary."

Ver. 9.—And Moses said to Joshua. On hearing what had happened, Moses summoned to his presence an Ephraimite in the prime of life—about 45 years old—and devolved on him the military command. The man's name at the time was Hoshea or Oshea (Num. xiii. 8). He was the son of a certain Nun (*ibid.*) or Non (1 Chr. vii. 27), and the tenth in descent from Ephraim, the son of Joseph (*ib.* 23—27). Some forty years later Moses changed his name from Hoshea to Jehoshua which became contracted into Joshua. The occurrence of this form in the present passage may be accounted for. 1. By Moses having written (or reviewed) Exodus late in his life; or 2. By a later authorised reviser (Ezra ?) having altered the text. Choose out for us men—i.e. "Select from the congregation such a number of fit men as appear to thee sufficient, and with them fight Amalek." To-morrow. It was probably evening, when Moses heard of the attack on his rear, and there was consequently no possibility of retrieving the disaster till the next day. He could but make his arrangements for retrieving it. I will stand on the top of the hill. It is implied that there was a conspicuous hill (*gibeah*), not a rock (*tsur*) in the near vicinity of Rephidim, whence Moses could see the fight, and be seen by those engaged in it. Dean Stanley finds all the conditions answered by an eminence on the south side of the Wady Feiran (*Sinai and Palestine*, p. 41). Others suggest the Jebel Tahuneb north of the same wady. With the rod of God in my hand. Moses meant to indicate by this, that he looked for victory to God alone, and did not

trust in an "arm of flesh," while, nevertheless, he sent his soldiers to the combat.

Ver. 10.—**Hur**. Hur has not been mentioned hitherto. According to one Jewish tradition, he was the son, according to another, the husband of Miriam. Scripture only tells us of him, that he was descended from Judah, through Caleb the son of Hezron (1 Chr. ii. 18—20), and that his grandson, Bezaleel, was the artificer of the tabernacle (Ex. xxxi. 2). He is again associated with Aaron in ch. xxiv. 14.

Ver. 11.—**When Moses held up his hand, . . . Israel prevailed**. The elevation of Moses' hand, with the rod held in it, was an appeal to God for aid, and must be supposed to have been accompanied by fervent prayer to God, that he would help his people and give them victory over their enemies. So long as the hand was upraised, the Israelites prevailed; not because they saw it, and took it as directing them to continue the fight (Kalisch), but because God gave them strength, and vigour and courage, while Moses interceded, and left them to themselves when the intercession ceased. It may be said, that Moses might have continued to pray, though his hands were weary; but only those who have tried, know how difficult a thing it is to pray with any intensity for a continuance. Probably Moses' spiritual and physical powers collapsed together; and when he dropped his hand through physical fatigue, he rested also from his mental effort. To impress upon Israel the importance of intercessory prayer, God made success and failure alternate with its continuance and discontinuance, thus teaching his people a lesson of inestimable value.

Ver. 12.—**But Moses' hands were heavy**. Moses, no doubt, held the rod alternately with one hand and the other, until both were so tired that he could hold them up no longer. It is this natural weariness which is expressed by the words—"his hands were heavy." When Aaron and Hur perceived this, they brought a stone for him to sit on, and then, standing one on either side of him, alternately supported his hands until the sun set and the battle was over. To reward the faith and perseverance of the three, God gave Israel in the end a complete victory.

Ver. 13.—**Amalek and his people**—i.e. "the Amalekites proper, and the tribes subject to them, who fought on his side."

Ver. 14.—**Write this in a book**. The original has, "Write this in the book." It is clear that a book already existed, in which Moses entered events of interest, and that now he was divinely commanded to record in it the great victory over Amalek, and the threat uttered against them. The record was to be for a memorial—1. that the victory itself might be held in remembrance through all future ages, as a very signal instance of God's mercy; and 2, that when the fulfilment of the threat came (1 Chr. iv. 43), God might have his due honour, and his name be glorified. **Rehearse it in the ears of Joshua**. "Hand down," i.e., to thy successor, Joshua, the tradition of perpetual hostility with Amalek, and the memory of the promise now made, that the whole nation shall be utterly blotted out from under heaven. (Compare Deut. xxv. 19.) The special sin of Amalek was, 1. That he attacked God's people, not fearing God (ib. verse 18); 2. That he had no compassion on his own kindred; and 3. That he fell on them when they were already suffering affliction, and were "feeble, and faint and weary" (ib.).

Ver. 15.—**Moses built an altar**. An altar naturally implies a sacrifice, and Moses may well have thought that the signal victory obtained required to be acknowledged, and as it were required, by offerings. In giving his altar a name, he followed the example of Jacob, who called an altar which he built, El-Elohe-Israel (Gen. xxxiii. 20). Moses' name for his altar, *Jehovah-nissi*, meant "the Lord is my banner," and was intended to mark his ascription of the entire honour of the victory to Jehovah but had probably no reference to the particular mode in which the victory was gained.

Ver. 16.—**Because the Lord hath sworn**. Rather, as in the margin, "Because the hand of Amalek was against the throne of the Lord"—"because," i.e., "in attacking Israel, Amalek had as it were lifted up his hand against God on his throne," therefore should there be war against Amalek from generation to generation

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 8—13.—*The uselessness of fighting against God*. Amalek was "the first of the nations" in audacity, in venturesomeness, perhaps in military qualities, but scarcely in prudence or longsightedness. Amalek must precipitate its quarrel with Israel, must "come to Rephidim" and offer battle, instead of letting Israel go on its own way unmolested, and shunning a contest. They might have known that they were about to fight against God, and that to do so is useless. None can contend with him successfully. It is curious that sinners do not see this. Some of them seem to hope to escape the notice of God; others appear to doubt his power; a few seem to dis-

believe in his existence. The uselessness of contending against him would be generally recognised, if men would bear in mind, as most sure—

I. THAT THERE IS A GOD, DESERVING OF THE NAME, THE MAKER AND RULER OF THE UNIVERSE. The disbelief in a Personal God underlies much of the resistance which men offer to his will on earth. They admit an impersonal something external to themselves, which they call "Nature," and speak of as having immutable "laws." These they profess to respect. But the law of righteousness, decreed by a God who is a Person, and written by him in the hearts of his human creatures, is not among these "laws of nature," they think, since in many people it is not found to exist. Neither to this law, nor to the God who made it, do they profess any allegiance. They claim the liberty to do that which is right in their own eyes. But, as surely as they are confounded, if they set themselves in opposition to a law of physical nature—walk on the sea, or handle fire, or seek to fly without wings—so surely does a Nemesis attend their efforts, if they transgress a moral law, be it the law of chastity, or of truth, or of general kindness, or of special regard for God's day, God's house, God's ministers, God's people. The Amalekites attacked the last, and were overthrown. Final discomfiture will assuredly overtake all who attack anything that is God's or in any way set themselves in opposition to his will.

II. THAT GOD IS REALLY OMNIPOTENT. It often pleases God to allow for a time the contradiction of sinners against himself, and even to let the ungodly enjoy a long term of worldly prosperity. Some of the worst men have prospered during their whole lives, and have died at the height of earthly greatness, self-satisfied, so far as men could see, happy. Men have questioned whether God, if really omnipotent, could have allowed this, and have doubted his ability to carry on a real moral government of the entire universe. But omnipotence is included in the very idea of God; and it is quite inconceivable that any of his creatures should be really able to thwart or resist him further than he himself permits. Their very existence depends on him, and unless he sustained them in being, they would perish at each moment. He temporarily allows the opposition of other wills to his, not through any defect of power, but for his own wise purposes. Some time or other he will vindicate himself, and show forth his Almighty power, to the utter confusion of his enemies.

III. THAT GOD IS ALSO OMNISCIENT. The Psalmist tells us (Ps. lxxiii. 11) of those who said—"Tush, how should God perceive? Is there knowledge in the Most High?" and, again, "God hath forgotten; he hideth away his face, and he will never see it" (Ps. x. 11). These are bold utterances, such as men scarcely make nowadays; but still there are many who in their inmost heart seem to cherish the Epicurean notion, "*Deos securum agere cœvum*," that the Divinity does not care for what men do, or that, at any rate, words or thoughts are beyond his cognisance. He, however, himself declares the contrary. "For every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account." "Thou knowest the very secrets of the heart." "All things are open and revealed unto him with whom we have to do." We cannot resist him secretly or without his knowledge. He knows all our words, and all our thoughts, as well as all our acts, "long before." We cannot take him by surprise and gain an advantage over him. There is not a word in our mouth, or a thought in our heart, but he "knows it altogether"—has always known it, and has provided accordingly. If we were "wise," if we were even moderately prudent, we should give up the idea of resisting God. Instead of "raging" and "imagining vain things"—instead of "taking counsel together against the Lord and against his Anointed" (Ps. ii. 1—3), we should submit ourselves—we should be content to "serve the Lord with fear and rejoice unto Him with reverence"—we should "kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and so we perish from the right way, if his wrath be kindled, yea, but a little"—we should "take his yoke upon us, and learn of him"—satisfied that in no other way can we prosper, in no other way can we obtain rest, or peace, or happiness.

Vers. 9—13.—*Diversities of gifts, but the same spirit.* DIVERSITIES OF GIFTS. The needs of life are various, and the gifts which God imparts to his saints are correspondingly diversified. In Moses, at the age of eighty (ch. vii. 7), the qualities required for the successful conduct of military matters were not present. It may be doubted whether

ne would at any period of his life have been a good general. But his age, his temperament, and his training made him emphatically a man of prayer. Joshua, on the other hand, in the full vigour of middle life, active, energetic, bold, intrepid, indefatigable, was a born soldier, and a man well suited for military command. To Moses belongs the credit of having recognised the needs of the occasion, and the "diversity of gifts" in himself and his "minister." He took the duties, for which he felt himself fit, upon himself; he delegated those, for which he knew that he was unfit, to the individual who, among the thousands of Israel, appeared to him, and no doubt was, the most perfectly fitted for them. In a minor way, it may be noticed that Aaron and Hur, unsuited for either military command or the leading part in sustained intercessory prayer, had yet gifts which enabled them to play a useful secondary part in support of Moses, and were selected by him for their fitness. The recognition of DIVERSITIES OF GIFTS is required—1. *For the best utilisation of all the powers possessed by God's people at any given time.* Unless diversity be recognised, all aspirants naturally seek the same posts. All are rivals. Jealousies, sure to arise, are intensified. Discontents multiply. Rulers find the difficulty of government augmented. Again, special talents are wasted. The man most suited to one post occupies another. The gifts which he needs he often does not possess; those which he possesses he cannot exercise. 2. *For the satisfaction of individuals.* It is a sore grief to feel unfit for the work which we have to do; but it is a still sorer grief to be conscious of powers which have no field of exercise, while we see others in possession of the field without the powers. Individuals perhaps ought to be content if they can perform satisfactorily the work that is set them. But minds of superior capacity are not, and never will be, thus satisfied. They want a congenial sphere, an occupation which would put their powers to the proof, a task which they would feel that they, and they alone, could perform properly. Hence, it is of great importance, for the contentation of those under their charge, that such as have the rule over men should both recognise the fact of "diversity of gifts," and seek to obtain a full knowledge of the special gifts of those to whose services they have to give employment. 3. *For the general advance of God's kingdom.* It is only by utilising to the utmost all the gifts possessed by members of the Church at any given time, that the Church can be brought into the highest possible state of efficiency. "Diversities of gifts" are a fact (1 Cor. xii. 4). "To one is given the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge; to another, faith; to another, the gifts of healing; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, divers kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of tongues" (*ib.* 8—11). Unless this be recognised, unless each gifted one is put to his proper use, there is a waste of power—an absolute loss to the Church—a stoppage of possibilities which might have occurred, had things been better ordered.

THE SAME SPIRIT. Different as are the duties of life, various as are the calls made upon the individuals who compose the Christian community—now for courage, now for counsel, now for governmental capacity, now for military skill, anon for earnest and prolonged prayer—there is, after all, but one spirit in which all have to act, as there is also but One Spirit from whom the power to act aright in all cases comes. The merchant in his trade, the soldier on the battle field, the minister in his parish, the man of learning in his study, all may and all ought to act in one and the same spirit, diligently, manfully, earnestly, striving to do their duty, under their various circumstances, in singleness of heart, as unto the Lord and not unto man. The true Christian temper is one and the same, whatever a man's occupation may be; and it is not very difficult to recognise in a Havelock or a Lawrence the identical tone and temper which we have admired in a Channing and a Wesley, a Pascal and a Fénelon. From One Spirit flow all the graces that adorn the Christian character; and the unity of the source is traceable in the graces themselves, which, amid all their diversity, have an element of likeness.

Vers. 14—16.—*God's mercies need memorial, and obtain it in several ways.* Deliverance from Amalek was a great and noticeable mercy. It was. 1. UNDESERVED, as the people had just been murmuring against God, and threatening to stone his prophet (vers. 3—4). 2. TIMELY. Defeat, or even an indecisive success, would have brought upon the Israelites a host of enemies under whose combined or continuous attacks they

must have succumbed. The complete discomfiture of the powerful Amalek struck terror into the hearts of the neighbouring peoples, and induced them to leave Israel for nearly forty years unmolested. 3. WONDERFUL. Amalek was warlike, accustomed to contend with the great nation of the Egyptians; Israel had had all warlike aspirations checked and kept down by above 400 years of servitude and peace. Amalek was no doubt well armed; Israel can have possessed few weapons. Amalek knew the country, could seize the passes, and select a fitting moment for attack; to all Israel, except Moses and Aaron (ch. iv. 27), the country was strange, the passes unknown, and perhaps the very idea of their being attacked unforeseen and unexpected. The attack actually came close upon the great suffering from thirst, when Israel was "feeble" and "faint and weary" (Deut. xxv. 18). So signal a mercy deserved special remembrance. Men soon forget the favours they receive at God's hands. That this favour might not be forgotten, God required two things: 1. *That a record of it should be inserted in his book.* There is no other memorial comparable with this, whether we consider the honour of it, since to obtain record there, an event must be indeed an important one; or the enduringness, since God's book will continue to the world's end; or the celebrity since it is read by all nations. And God's special command for the insertion, stamps the event with an extra mark of dignity. 2. *That it should be handed on traditionally to Joshua,* and through him to others. Tradition is one of the modes by which God maintains the knowledge of his truth in the world, and is at no time wholly superseded by the written Word, since there are at all times persons in the world too young or too illiterate to have direct access to the Word, who must receive their religious instruction orally from teachers. Tradition alone would be a very unsafe guide; but tradition, checked by a book, is of no little value in enlarging the sphere of religious knowledge, and amplifying and rendering more intelligible the written record. To the two modes of securing continued remembrance of the defeat of Amalek required by God, Moses added a third—the erection of a material monument, to which he gave a commemorative name. Many victories have been thus commemorated, as those of Marathon, Blenheim, Trafalgar, Waterloo, etc.; but no erector of such a memorial has ever given to his work so noble and heart-stirring a name as Moses gave. "The Lord is my banner"—under no other standard will I serve or fight—no other leader will I acknowledge—no other lord shall have dominion over me. "The Lord is my banner"—under this banner I engaged Amalek—he, and he alone, gave me the victory—through him, and him alone, do I look to discomfit my other enemies. Be the enemies material or spiritual, external or internal, to him only do I trust to sustain me against them. None other name is there under heaven, through whom salvation is to be obtained, the adversary baffled, Amalek put to confusion.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 8—16. *Christ our Banner.*—"Jehovah-Nissi." Ex. xvii. 15. Historical introduction: The Amalekites—their territory—reasons why they barred Israel's way. 1. Fear. 2. Religious animosity—incidents of the engagement—the two memorials, book and altar—judgment pronounced on Amalek, and why—the slow execution through the centuries, ending in the final blotting out of the nation. "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." Show further that the rod of Moses was in reality the *banner* of Israel; the pole of a banner without drapery, affording a rallying-point for Israel's armies, a memorial of past achievement, a force therefore, a guide, an appeal to heaven, an earnest of victory. By that banner Israel conquered. But again, as with the water and the rock we ascended to the First Cause of all refreshments, so here we ascend beyond the rod-banner to the Real Cause and Giver of all victory, *i.e.*, to Jehovah, *i.e.*, to Christ.

I. ALL IN THE WILDERNESS MUST FIGHT.—In the moral wilderness there are only two great hosts (on this division into two only, see most valuable and suggestive paper in Dr. James Martineau's "Hours of Thought" on "The Soul's Forecast of Retribution.") Amalek and Israel, pilgrims going to the heavenly country, and children of the desert that withstand their way. 1. Amalek *cannot* let Israel alone—if of the world we must fight—for there seems a certain constraint that will not permit us to leave the truth,

Christ and God, without antagonism. 2. Israel *will* fight—dutifully—and inspired thereto.

II. PILGRIM WARRIORS MAY BE TAKEN AT A DISADVANTAGE. See Deut. xxv. 18. The attack of Amalek was—1. *Sudden*. 2. On an *undefended rear*. 3. On the *faint*. 4. On the *demoralised by sin*. Trace the analogies in moral conflict.

III. OUR BANNER COMPENSATES FOR ALL DISADVANTAGE. Jehovah-Nissi—Christ our banner. See Is. xi. 10—12; Rom. viii. 37; Rev. xii. 11; Constantine's "In hoc signo." The banner Christ:—1. *Rallies to decision*. Christ lifted up in the realms of thought, domestic life, business, social life, political life, men must take sides; must answer the question, What think ye of Christ? A Christ-side to every moral question. Reason why Christian men not always on the same side in reference to particular questions (e.g., abstinence) may be, because in actual conflict issues get confused. But wilful trimming not permissible. Nothing like the conduct of the Frenchman, who at the outbreak of the revolution wore both cockade and tricolour, one under one coat lappel, the other under the other. Rather should we be like Hedley Vicars, who, the morning after the great decision for God, unfurled his banner by laying an open Bible on his table for all his comrades to see. 2. *Is a memorial of victories achieved*. It was so with the rod of Moses (go over instances). So is it with regimental ensigns, inscribed oft with glorious names, e.g. Salamanca, Vittoria, etc. Picture the shot-rent, tattered banners, hung under vaulted roof, for a memorial. So Christ—he shines before us in the light of ten thousand victories—on "his head many crowns." Recall the history of the Church, public and more private, its confessors and martyrs. 3. *Is a force therefore* (ver. 11). The moral power for a regiment in the possession of its colours; its demoralisation when lost. Christ seen in the host. Illustration: Castor and Pollux at the battle of Lake Regillus. 4. *Is direction in the fray*. No man in a battle can see it, understand it. Leadership necessary by trumpet, by signal, by aide-de-camp, by banner. So was it here. Moses directed the battle by the standard in his hand. So Christ to every soldier-saint. We may not fight for our own hand, nor according to our own whims; but take direction from him. 5. *Is appeal for heavenly help*. That banner-pole of Moses was not only for encouragement and lead to Israel, but also was an appeal to God for that aid which ensures victory. So, wherever Christ is, the intercessor is. 6. *Is earnest of victory*. Christ is a force that cannot fail (Rom. viii. 37).—R.

Vers. 8—16.—*Amalek*. Various circumstances are to be noted in connection with this attack of Amalek on Israel. 1. It was *unprovoked*. "Then came Amalek" (ver. 8). 2. It was *unfriendly*. The Amalekites were descended from a grandson of Esau, and so were related to the Israelites (Gen. xxxvi. 12). 3. It was *bitterly hostile*. This fierce and warlike tribe attacked Israel in the rear, and with great cruelty smote those who had fallen behind, whether from natural infirmity or from weariness and faintness in the march (Deut. xxv. 18). This was a peculiarly malignant and vindictive act, and as perpetrated upon the people with whose well-being God had specially identified himself, was never to be forgotten. It was in truth one of those wrongs which burn themselves into the memory of a nation, and never can be forgotten. A special Nemesis waits on acts of flagrant inhumanity. 4. *It was not without knowledge of the mighty works which God had wrought for Israel*. We may be certain of that from what was said in ch. xv. of the effects produced on the surrounding peoples by the deliverance of the Red Sea. The Amalekites knew that the children of Israel were the people of Jehovah. They knew what great things Jehovah had done for his nation. They probably shared in the fear which these wonders of Jehovah had inspired. Their hostility to Israel, indeed, may partly have sprung from this cause. The opportunity seemed given them of making a successful raid upon a people whom they both dreaded and despised, and they hastened to avail themselves of it. Knowing that the Israelites were inexperienced in war, and being themselves numerous and powerful, they may have counted on an easy victory, especially as the people were fatigued with marching and encumbered with baggage, with women and children, and with the aged and infirm. It was a time well chosen for delivering an attack, and for inflicting a mortal injury on the advancing host. 5. *It was the first attack of its kind*. And this circumstance gives it a very special significance. It makes it typical. In the issue of the conflict with Amalek is to be seen the result of the whole conflict, prolonged down the ages, between

the friends and the enemies of God, between the Church of living believers and the world that hates and seeks to destroy it, waging against it an incessant warfare. Consider—

I. THE BATTLE. 1. How *fought*. Observe (1) Fighting was in this case called for. It was not a case, like that at the Red Sea, where the Israelites could do nothing to help themselves. The command, accordingly, is not, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord" (ch. xiv. 13), but, "Go out, *fight* with Amalek" (ver. 9). When means of help are put within our reach, God expects us to use them. He would have us exercise our own powers, still, however, in the spirit of due dependence upon him. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you," etc. (Phil. ii. 12, 13). (2) The conflict was entered upon with a full appreciation of the gravity of the crisis. The leaders did not commit the error of despising their enemy. They knew how ill-prepared they were for entering upon a contest of the kind. There was no disguising the fact that the men of Israel were raw, undisciplined, wanting in courage, and prone to panic, while those of Amalek were men of the desert, bold, warlike, fierce, able to hold their own with the stoutest foe. This was the first battle of the former; it was but an episode in the life of continual warfare of the latter. Judged by appearances, the chances of war were, therefore, greatly against the Israelites, and it was felt that the most strenuous efforts, aided by earnest intercessions, would be needed to gain a victory. The Church, in like manner, will do well not to take too poor an estimate of her spiritual enemies. They are not to be made light of. They are not to be fought with sham weapons, or in the indolent, half-in-earnest spirit, with which so many are content to attempt the conquest. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood," etc. (Eph. vi. 12). The Church need not count on *cheap* victories. (3) The dispositions for the fight were made with skill and judgment. The men sent into the battle were *picked* men, and over them was appointed a brave general—Joshua (ver. 9). This is the first appearance of Joshua in the history, but he must have been already known to Israel as a man possessed of the strategical and other qualifications needful in a military commander. Another lesson as to the use of means, and as to the adaptation of means to ends in God's service. The battle was God's, but it was to be fought through human instrumentalities. The strongest, bravest, most valorous men in the camp were, accordingly, selected for the service. No measure was omitted which was likely to ensure success. It is the old law of the economy of miracles. What man can do for himself, God will not work miracles to do for him. Doubtless, but for Moses' intercession on the hill, the battle would still have been lost; on the other hand, had the military arrangements been less perfect, even Moses' prayers might not have turned the tide of conflict so decisively in favour of the Israelites. Cf. Cromwell's advice to his men—"Trust in Providence, and *keep your powder dry*." Note, further, how the same God who gave the Israelites a Moses, gave them also a Joshua, when a man of Joshua's gifts was specially required. Cf. with the promise as to Christ, Is. lv. 4. It is for our own benefit that God thus summons our gifts into exercise, and furnishes occasions for their trial and development.

2. How *won*. First, as seen above, by dint of hard fighting, but second, and more specially, by Moses' intercessions. This portion of the narrative (vers. 10—12) is full of richest instruction. Observe—(1) Moses took with him Aaron and Hur, and ascended to the hill summit, to watch the battle, and to pray (ver. 10). Advanced in years, he could not personally take part in the *mêlée*; but he could pray for those who were in it. His prayer was as essential to success as their fighting. It was fighting of its own kind (cf. Col. iv. 12). Real prayer is hard, exhausting *work*. Even had Moses been physically capable of taking part in the conflict, he was better employed where he was, in this work of earnest intercession. Gifts differ. Joshua's right place was on the field; that of Moses, on the hill. Many can pray who are debarred from fighting, *e.g.*, invalids—Moses sitting on the stone (ver. 12), they, perhaps, lying on their couches—and it is well for them to realise the value of their work, how *much* they can still do, how *useful* they are. Note, also, it was *in view* of the battle that this intercession of Moses was carried on. Prayer needs to be fed by knowledge, by watchful interest in events as they shape themselves around us, by study of the special needs of circumstances of the time. Of what essential service would it be in the warfare of the Church were praying men and women to act more on this principle—seeking, as far as possible, to keep themselves informed of the progress and vicissitudes of the Lord's

work at home and abroad, and endeavouring to order their prayers with constant reference to the fluctuations in the battle! Moses praying on the hill may remind us of Christ in heaven, interceding for his Church militant on earth. (2) Moses interceded, while holding up in his hands the rod of God (vers. 9, 11). The rod was the symbol of God's power as pledged for the defence of Israel. Faith holds up the rod in laying hold on God's word and promise, and pleading the same before him. (3) Moses had able coadjutors. Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands when they grew heavy through fatigue (ver. 12). It is a happy circumstance when those who bear the principal burden of responsibility in spiritual work can rely on being aided by the sympathy and co-operation of others, "like-minded" (Phil. ii. 20), with themselves in their desire to see God's kingdom making progress. God's people hold up the hands of ministers by praying for them (1 Thess. v. 25). (4) The intercession of Moses had a decisive influence upon the tide of battle. When Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed; when he let down his hands, Amalek prevailed (ver. 11). His hands being steadily supported till the going down of the sun, Amalek was completely discomfited (ver. 13). The letting down of Moses' hands may have been accompanied by a corresponding flagging in the earnestness of his supplications; or it may have been that the outward act, as indicative of the need of sustained and persevering entreaty of God, was itself made essential to the victory. In either case, we have a testimony to the power of prayer. Would that the Church were more alive to this secret of gaining victories by earnest supplication! The influence of prayer cannot be overrated. It decides battles. It sways the tides of history. It opens and shuts the windows of heaven (Jas. v. 17, 18). It puts to the rout spiritual enemies. Paul made use of this mighty power (Rom. i. 9, 10; Phil. i. 4, 9, etc.). But even Paul did not pray so much as Christ (Matt. xiv. 23; Mark i. 35; Luke vi. 12, etc.). 3. *Connection with previous miracle.* Is it fanciful to trace in the boldness, valour, and spiritual confidence of the Israelites in this battle, some relation to the wonderful deliverance they have just experienced? It was "at Rephidim," the scene of the miraculous supply of water, that the attack of Amalek took place (ver. 8). This water, in the first place, refreshed the Israelites *physically*, and so enabled them to fight; but we may believe that it had also a powerful, if temporary, effect upon their minds. It would banish doubt, restore trust, inspire enthusiasm. They drank of the brook by the way, and now lifted up the head (Ps. cx. 7). Thus does God time *his* mercies to *our* trials, and make the one a preparation for the other.

II. THE RECORD IN THE BOOK (ver. 14). This command to insert in "the book" an account of the battle with Amalek was connected: 1. With *God's design to give his Church a Bible.* A "book" is presupposed, in which, apparently, a journal was kept of the transactions of the march. Such a contemporary record was plainly necessary, if exact accounts of these mighty acts of God in the desert were to be preserved. In no other way could the knowledge of them have been handed down to posterity without distortion, mutilation and adulteration. And God was not giving these mighty revelations of himself, to waste them on the air of the wilderness, or to leave them to the risk of being mixed up with legendary matter of man's adding. This part of Israel's history was being shaped and guided with a view to the instruction of the Church to the end of time (1 Cor. x. 6, 11); and it was requisite that a proper account should be kept of its memorable events. Hence the existence of "the book," out of the contents of which, we may believe, these narratives in the book of Exodus are principally compiled. 2. With a *special significance attaching to this particular event.* Amalek's attack on Israel was, as already observed, the first of its kind. "In Amalek the heathen world commenced that conflict with the people of God, which, while it aims at their destruction, can only be terminated by the complete annihilation of the ungodly powers of the world" (Keil). This explains the severe sentence pronounced upon the tribe, as also the weighty significance attached to this first defeat. It takes many types to set forth completely the many-sided enmity of the world to God and to his Church. Pharaoh was one type, Amalek is another. Pharaoh was more especially the type of the enmity of the world against the church, viewed as having escaped from its power. Amalek, as Edom afterwards, is peculiarly the type of vindictive hostility to the kingdom of God as such—of implacable *hate*. Between Amalek (spiritually) and the church, therefore, there can never be aught but warfare. "Because his hand is against the throne of the Lord" (marg.), *therefore* "the Lord will

have war with Amalek from generation to generation" (ver. 16). In this first defeat we have the type of all.

III. **JEHOVAH-NISSI.** Moses reared an altar in commemoration of the victory, and inscribed upon it the name—"Jehovah-Nissi"—"Jehovah, my banner" (ver. 15). This name inscribed upon the altar is at the same time a name of God. It extracts and generalises the principle involved in the victory over Amalek, as a former name, "Jehovah-jireh" (Gen. xxii. 14) extracted and generalised the principle involved in the interposition on Moriah; and as the words, "I am Jehovah that healeth them" (ch. xv. 26), extracted and generalised the principle involved in the miracle at Marah. The truth taught by the name is precious and consolatory. Jehovah is the Church's banner. His invisible presence goes with her in her conflicts. His help is certain. With him on her side, she is assured of victory. His name is her sure and all-sufficient trust. Learn 1. God's deeds reveal His name. The revelation of the Bible is a fact-revelation. 2. It is the Church's duty gratefully to remember the interpositions of God on her behalf. 3. It is her duty to seek to apprehend the *principle* of God's dealings with her, and to treasure up the knowledge for further use.—J. O.

Vers. 15, 16.—*Jehovah-Nissi.* The use of this name by the Church bespeaks—1. Her militant condition. "The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." 2. The side on which she fights—"My banner." 3. The name round which she rallies—"Jehovah." "One Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. vi. 5). 4. The confidence by which she is inspired. The inscription on a banner frequently sets forth the ground of confidence. "God and my right." 5. The certainty she has of victory.—J. O.

Ver. 9.—"Thou hast given a banner unto them that fear thee." 1. **THE ATTACK BY AMALEK.** It was cowardly, malicious, merciless (cf. Deut. xxv. 17; 1 Sam. xv. 2); not open, straightforward enmity; cutting off the feeble and the stragglers; a vulture-like hostility; a type and sample of *diabolical* hatred. Notice the parallel between Israel's position with regard to Amalek and our position with regard to Satan and his emissaries. 1. Israel was passing through the wilderness. So God's people are passing through this world (Heb. xi. 14). The country through which the route lies is not claimed by those who use it. 2. Amalek considered the wilderness as their own. So Satan claims to be the prince of this world. In either case the authority is usurped. 3. Amalek took Israel at a disadvantage. No cause of enmity assigned, only apparently the right assumed for the stronger to prey upon the weaker. Satan, too, always endeavours to take us at a disadvantage. He did not attack Christ until "he was an hungered;" he attacks us, also, when we are weakest.

II. **THE DEFENCE AND CONFLICT.**—1. *A chosen captain.* Joshua—"Jehovah is help." Perhaps name changed from Hoshea at this time; shows, at any rate, whence the leader derived his ability to lead. Our captain, "manifested to destroy the works of the devil." Had it not been for Satan's enmity, how should we have known the power of Christ? 2. *Selected soldiers.* Not all the people, but chosen from the people. All share the danger, but the defence may best be undertaken by a few, though, no doubt, these few are supported and encouraged by the general sympathy. In the war with Satan the brunt of the battle must fall on the selected soldiers—Christ chose apostles, and in every age the majority has been protected by representative champions. Satan must make more headway than he does, were it not that the weaker and more ignorant are sheltered from direct attack behind the bulwarks raised by the stronger and the wiser. 3. *An uplifted banner.* Usually the colours go before the army; here the banner—God's rod—is upheld upon the mountain—(1) in full sight of all; (2) in a position of comparative security. Notice—1. This banner was a sign of God's helpful presence. 2. It was in full view of the fighters, and the fortune of the battle varied according as it was raised or lowered. Two things were necessary to ensure victory—(1) that the banner should be held up; (2) that the fighters should keep looking at it. In the fight with Satan the same principle applies. God's law, God's righteous purpose, must be upheld by the Prophet, supported on one hand by the priest, on the other by the noble; but, further, the fighters must keep it well in view, nothing less than the assurance of its fixedness can nerve them so as to ensure victory.

III. **THE MEMORIAL.** 1. A book. This victory a pledge of Amalek's final exter-

mination. 2. An altar. "Jehovah our Banner," sign of a continuous war to be ended only with the fulfilment of God's purpose. In the fight with Satan our Lord's victory in the wilderness and on the cross, a pledge of final victory for all. 1. It is written in a book. Who has not read of it? 2. It is commemorated by a memorial, which all may see. "This do as a memorial of me." So long as there is evil in the world, so long there must be war. God's soldiers must fight from generation to generation until the final victory be achieved. What is the secret of their strength? The banner uplifted upon the mountain. The rod of God. "It is written." The prophet uprears it. Priest and noble, in so far as they fulfil their office, unite to support the prophet. The fighters look up to the banner, and, encouraged by its steadfast maintenance, fight on till victory be secured.—G.

Vers. 8—16.—*The discomfiture of Amalek in Rephidim.* I. AMALEK'S IGNORANCE OF THE RESOURCES OF ISRAEL. Amalek attacked Israel in *Rephidim*. Rephidim stands very well as the type of all places and positions where human resources appear utterly wanting. It was a place where no water could be found, and where of course there must also have been little growth. Everything therefore would lead Amalek to say, "We shall easily conquer these people, being but an undisciplined, unmanageable crowd." How should outsiders understand anything of the way in which the Lord had led Israel? To Israel itself, the way had been one which it knew not; and to Amalek, able to judge only by first appearances it would seem the way of folly, rashness, and certain ruin. The Amalekites could very well see that there was no ordinary source of supplies open, and extraordinary sources were beyond their ken, beyond their powers of imagination. We shall do well to consider, before we oppose anything, what its resources are; apparent weakness may not only hide real strength, but may be almost the condition of it. We shall do well also to consider whether under erroneous notions of self-preservation, we may not often be found fighting against God. These Amalekites went out to war against Israel upon motives of self-interest. It seemed to them if they did not destroy Israel, Israel would destroy them. Yet if they had only inquired, if they had only asked the question how this great company had managed to get so far, they might have been spared all anxiety and the great destruction which came upon them. The wisest plan would have been to leave Israel alone and wait; then it would have been seen that Israel was not going to stop in that district.

II. THE WAY IN WHICH ISRAEL MEETS AMALEK.—1. *The spirit and conduct of Moses are to be considered.* Hitherto in his difficulties he has cried to the Lord, not of course despairingly, but feeling deeply his need of Divine direction. Here however he is ready for action at once. No mention is made of recourse to God, from which we assume that the line of action was at once apparent to Moses. The promptitude of his action is indeed remarkable; and yet it is clear from the result that there was nothing presumptuous in it. Everything evidently accorded with the will and purpose of God. This was an occasion when Israel could do something, and they were bound to make the attempt. Moses was a man who appreciated the principle that God helps those who help themselves. When the people were entangled in the land by the Red Sea they could do nothing; when they came into the wilderness with its scarcity of food and drink, they could do nothing; they had simply to wait on God's provisions. But here where fighting men appear against them, and there is space and time for resistance, Moses rightly takes means to bring the strength of his people into operation. 2. *The spirit and conduct of the people are also to be considered.* Their faith, promptitude and composure are also very remarkable, more remarkable even than the like conduct on the part of Moses. Those who had been so long, and only so lately, unbelieving and unmanageable, all at once manifest a surprising readiness to meet the foe. Considering the way in which they had recently behaved, it is a marvellous thing that all was not thrown into panic and confusion, immediately on the appearance of Amalek. To what then can this composure and readiness be attributed? Evidently it was the effect—a temporary effect certainly, yet not insufficient for its purpose—of the gift of the manna and of the water in a dry and thirsty land. God took care that all troubles should not come on them at once. They were strong with a strength Amalek knew nothing of; and it was in the *fresh consciousness* of that strength that they made ready for the battle. We imagine that on this occasion, Joshua found abundance of volunteers, and that those who went out against Amalek were the very pick and pride of Israel's warriors.

III. THE WAY IN WHICH GOD SIGNIFIES HIMSELF TO BE THE CONTROLLER OF VICTORY. Moses knows right well that after all preparations, the victory must come from Jehovah. He sets the discriminating Joshua to lead a chosen and competent army against Amalek, as if everything depended upon them, and yet at the same time he remembers that God must be glorified in the very best of human preparations. God will have us to honour him by our very best, and yet our very best must be considered as no more than the humble channel of his power. We must not suppose, because it pleases God in his wisdom, to put the excellency of his treasure into earthen vessels, that we are at liberty to offer him anything which first comes to hand. And then Moses, having done his best in the choice of means, takes his conspicuous position on the hill, to cheer his fighting friends with the sight of the lifted rod. Through the lifting of that rod the energies of victory were to flow into the bodies of Israel's warriors. To Amalek the sight of Moses told nothing. They knew nothing of the significance of the rod, and may rather have wondered why he should stand so long in this position of constraint. But Israel, we cannot doubt, quickly discerned the significance of their leader's attitude and the close connection between the lifted hand and the progress towards victory. The lesson for us is the oft taught one, that while God would have us to labour strenuously and bear the heat and burden of the day in all the inevitable conflicts of life, we must do it with the remembrance that victory really comes from him. We are only strong, as Paul felt he was, by the strength which Christ puts into us.—Y.

Vers. 8—16.—*Victory through faith.*—I. IN THE WARFARE OF FAITH, PRAYER AND EFFORT MUST BE JOINED TOGETHER. 1. Arrangements are carefully made for both. (1) Men are picked out for a battle, and Joshua descends with them into the valley. (2) Moses, with Aaron and Hur, climbs to the hill-top with the rod of God in his hand. 2. Joshua discomfited Amalek with the edge of the sword; but the battle was for or against Israel, as Moses' hands were lifted up in strong supplication or hung down in weariness. (1) To pray without using means is to mock God. (2) To use means without prayer is to despise God.

II. AIDS TO PREVAILING PRAYER. 1. The remembrance of past deliverances and services. Moses takes the rod of God in his hand. 2. The union of many hearts: he sat on the hill-top in sight of Israel. 3. Friendly help in weakness. Aaron and Hur hold up the wearied hands.

III. IN THE VICTORY OF THE RIGHTEOUS, A YET FURTHER TRIUMPH IS PROMISED. The promise is recorded in the book that that against which they war shall be swept from under heaven.

IV. THE GRATITUDE OF THE REDEEMED IN THE HOUR OF TRIUMPH. The monument of victory is an altar and its name Jehovah-Nissi.—U.

SECTION XII.—CHAPTER XVIII.

JETHRO'S VISIT TO MOSES.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ver. 1—12.—JETHRO'S VISIT TO MOSES. It has been noticed, in the comment on ch. iv., that shortly after the circumcision of Eliezer, Moses' second son, he sent back his wife, Zipporah, to her own kinsfolk, the Midianites, together with her two sons, Eliezer and Gershom. Reuel, Zipporah's father, was then dead (ch. iii. 1), and had been succeeded in his priesthood and headship of the tribe by Jethro, probably his son, and therefore the brother-in-law, and not the father-in-law, of

Moses. (The Hebrew word used, as already observed, has both meanings.) Jethro gave protection to his sister and her children until he heard of the passage of the Red Sea, when he set forth to meet and congratulate his kinsman, and to convey back to him his wife and his sons. The meeting took place "at the mount of God" (verse 5), or in the near vicinity of Sinai, probably in some part of the plain Er-Rahah, which extends for five miles, or more, to the north-west of the Sinaitic mountain-group

Ver. 1.—**Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law.** Rather, "Jethro, priest of Midian, Moses' brother-in-law." See the comment on ch. iii. 1; and note that the Seventy use the ambiguous word *γαμβρός*, while the Vulgate has *cognatus*. And that. Rather "in that." The clause is exegetical of the preceding one.

Ver. 2.—**After he had sent her back.** Literally "after her dismissal." It is curious that the fact of the dismissal had not been previously mentioned, yet is here assumed as known. Some commentators (as Knobel) find, in what is said of Zipporah, the trace of two distinct writers who give two contradictory narratives; but the difficulties and obscurities of the history are sufficiently intelligible, if we bear in mind—1. That Moses was addressing immediately those who knew the facts; and 2. That he was studious of brevity.

Ver. 3.—**And her two sons.** That Zipporah had borne Moses at least two sons before his return to Egypt from Midian, had appeared from ch. iv. 20. **The name of the one, Gershom,** and the ground of it, had been declared in ch. ii. 22. The repetition here may be accounted for by the present chapter having been originally a distinct and separate composition, written on a distinct roll, and subsequently incorporated by Moses into his great work.

Ver. 4.—**Eliezer.** Eliezer had not been previously mentioned by name; but he was probably the son circumcised by Zipporah, as related in ch. iv. 25. We learn from 1 Chr. xxiii. 15—17, that he grew to manhood, and had an only son, Rehabiah, whose descendants were in the time of Solomon very numerous. **For the God of my father, said he, was my help.** Eliezer means literally, "My God (is my) help." It would seem that Zipporah, when she circumcised her infant son, omitted to name him; but Moses, before dismissing her, supplied the omission, calling him Eliezer, because God had been his help against the Pharaoh who had sought his life (ch. ii. 15), and of whose death he had recently had intelligence (ch. iv. 19). Thus the names of the two sons expressed respectively, the despondency natural to an exile, and the exultant gratitude of one who had just learned that by God's goodness, the term of his banishment was over.

Ver. 5.—**The wilderness.** This term, which has the article, seems to be here used in that wide sense with which we are familiar from ch. iii. 18; iv. 27; v. 3; vii. 16; etc. It is not "the wilderness of Sin," or "the wilderness of Sinai," that is intended, but generally the tract between Egypt and Palestine. Jethro, having entered this tract from Midian, had no difficulty in discovering from the inhabitants that Moses was **encamped at the mount of God,—i.e., Sinai,** and there sought

and found him. There is no trace of any previous "engagement" to meet at a particular spot.

Ver. 6.—**And he said.** It is suspected that the true reading here is, "and they said,"—i.e., some one said—"to Moses, behold thy father-in-law" (or "brother-in-law"), "Jethro, is come unto thee." So the LXX., and many moderns, as Kennicott, Geddes, Boothroyd, Canon Cook, and others. But the explanation, that Jethro, on arriving in the vicinity of Moses, sent a messenger to him, who spoke in his name (Rosenmüller, Patrick, Pool, Kalisch, Keil, etc.) is at any rate plausible, and removes all necessity of altering the text.

Ver. 7.—**Moses went out to meet his father-in-law.** Oriental ideas of politeness require such a movement in case of an honoured or even of a welcome visitor (see Gen. xviii. 2; xix. 1; xxxii. 6; xxxiii. 1; Luke xv. 20; etc.). It was evidently the intention of Moses to receive Jethro with all possible marks of honour and respect. He not only went out to meet him, but did obeisance to him, as to a superior. **They asked each other of their welfare.** Rather "exchanged salutations;" addressed each other mutually with the customary phrase "Peace be unto you." **Came into the tent—i.e., went together into the tent of Moses,** which had been already glanced at in the word "encamped" (verse 5).

Ver. 8.—**Moses told his father-in-law.** Jethro had heard in Midian the general outline of what had happened (verse 1). Moses now gave him a full and complete narrative (*misphar*) of the transactions. Compare Gen. xxiv. 66; Josh. ii. 23; where the same verb is used. **All the travail.** Literally, "the weariness." Compare Malachi i. 13, where the same word is used. **The Lord delivered them.** The Septuagint adds "from the hand of Pharaoh and from the hand of the Egyptians."

Ver. 10.—**Blessed be the Lord.** Compare Gen. xiv. 20; xxiv. 27. The heathen blessed God no less than the Israelites; but Jethro's blessing the Lord (*i.e.* Jehovah) is unusual. As, however, Moses had attributed his own deliverance, and that of Israel, entirely to Jehovah (verse 8), Jethro, accepting the facts to be as stated, blessed the Lord. **Who hath delivered you.** Kalisch takes the plural pronoun to refer to Moses and Aaron; but Aaron seems not to have been present, since he afterwards "came" (verse 12). It is better to regard Jethro as addressing all those who were in the tent with Moses. From them he goes on in the last clause to "the people." **And out of the hand of Pharaoh.—i.e., especially out of the hand of Pharaoh,** who had especially sought their destruction (ch. xiv. 6, 8, etc.).

Ver. 11.—**Now know I that the Lord is**

greater than all gods. It would seem that Jethro, like the generality of the heathen, believed in a plurality of gods, and had hitherto regarded the God of the Israelites as merely one among many equals. Now, he renounces this creed, and emphatically declares his belief that Jehovah is above all other gods, greater, higher, more powerful. Compare the confessions of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. ii. 47; iii. 26, 27) and Darius the Mede (*ib.* vi. 26). **For in the thing wherein they dealt wickedly he was above them.** There is no "he was above them" in the original, nor is the clause a distinct sentence from the preceding one. It is merely a prolongation of that clause, without any new verb; and should be translated, "Even in the very matter that they (the Egyptians) dealt proudly against them" (the Israelites). The superiority of Jehovah to other gods was shown forth even in the very matter of the proud dealing of the Egyptians, which was brought to shame and triumphed over by the might of Jehovah. The allusion is especially to the passage of the Red Sea.

Ver 12.—Jethro took a burnt offering.

Or "*brought a burnt offering*;" as the same verb is rendered in ch. xxv. 2. It is not distinctly related that he offered the victim; but as no other offerer is mentioned, and as he was a priest (ch. iii. 1; xviii. 1), we may assume that he did so. Moses, Aaron, and the elders, partook of the sacrificial meal, regarding the whole rite as one legitimately performed by a duly qualified person, and so as one in which they could properly participate. Jethro, like Melchisedek (Gen. xiv. 18), was recognised as a priest of the true God, though it would seem that the Midianites generally were, a generation later, idolaters (Num. xxv. 18; xxxi. 16). **To eat bread . . . before God.** This expression designates the feast upon a sacrifice, which was the universal custom of ancient nations, whether Egyptians, Assyrians, Phenicians, Persians, Greeks, or Romans. Except in the case of the "whole burnt offering" (*δολοκαύτωμα*), parts only of the animals were burnt, the greater portion of the meat being consumed, with bread, at a meal, by the offerer and his friends and relatives

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—12.—*The blessedness of family reunions, when rightly ordered.* The family is God's ordinance, and among the most sacred and blessed of his ordinances. All fatherhood is based upon his (Eph. iii. 15); and human family ties reproduce those of the celestial region. Upon earth partings must and will occur, the family bond being thereby not broken, but strained and impaired. Sometimes necessity breaks up the household. Wife and children may not go whither the husband and father is ordered to proceed, as in the naval and military services. Sometimes prudential considerations assert themselves, and the children must quit the domestic hearth to get their own living, or even the wife and husband must seek separate employments with the same object. Occasionally, the husband, having to go on a difficult or dangerous mission, where wife and children would be encumbrances, has to part from them temporarily, and to provide for their support and sustenance during his absence. This last was the case of Moses. In returning to Egypt, and coming forward as the champion of his nation, he confronted great dangers. The presence of wife and children would have hampered him, and, therefore, he resolved to return alone. Zipporah and his infant sons were left with her nearest male relative. But now the time had come for re-union. We may note as blissful elements in the re-union—

I. **THAT IT WAS COMPLETE, NO DEATHS HAVING OCCURRED SINCE THE PARTING.** The bitterness of parting is especially in the uncertainty whether we shall ever see again in this life the individuals from whom we part. Death comes suddenly, and without warning; infants are especially subject to his attack; and when Moses, having recently parted from Jethro (ch. iv. 8), sent back his wife and two young sons to be under his charge, he must have felt that it was exceedingly doubtful whether there would ever again be a meeting of the five near relations. But God brought it to pass. Jethro, with a promptitude which indicates a warm heart, no sooner heard of his kinsman's safe arrival in the region of the "wilderness," than he put himself to the trouble of a long journey, partly to congratulate him, but mainly to restore to him the wife and children, whom he had received as a sacred trust. He could not be content unless he himself delivered them safe into the hands of Moses, and thus "gave a good account of his stewardship." And he was fortunate in being able to deliver them all safe and sound, and apparently in good health. No insidious disease had nipped the life of either child

in the bud; no unlucky accident had removed either from the land of the living. Moses was able to greet, at one and the same moment, his wife, his two sons, and his brother-in-law. Doubtless, he felt that God had been specially good and gracious to him in restoring to him all his treasures.

II. THAT IT WAS CHARACTERISED BY COURTESY AND GOOD FEELING, AND FREE FROM ANY REPROACH ON EITHER SIDE. Jethro sent a message to announce his arrival, which was a courteous act, not strictly necessary. He relieved at once any anxiety which Moses might naturally feel, by letting him know that he had brought with him his wife and both his sons. That they had been able to make the long journey implied that they were well. Moses, on his part, responded by going out to meet his brother-in-law, thus requiring courtesy with courtesy; when he met him, he "did obeisance," not standing upon his own present dignity; having done obeisance, he rose and "kissed him," thus showing tender affection. Greetings by word of mouth followed, and then friendly conversation. The great leader had much to relate, and gave a full account, both of his perils and hair-breadth escapes, and of his divinely-wrought deliverances. Hereat Jethro "rejoiced." No word of reproach or blame seems to have been uttered on either side. No discord marred the perfect harmony. Over the still tenderer meeting of the husband and father with his wife and children, the sacred historian, with a wise reticence, draws the veil. There are scenes which are at once too private and too sacred for description; and this was one of them.

III. THAT IT WAS CROWNED BY AN ACT OF RELIGIOUS THANKFULNESS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE GOODNESS OF GOD. The sense that God has been good to us should lead in all cases to an act of acknowledgment. Jethro was not content with mere words of joy and gratitude—not even with a solemn ascription of praise and blessing to Jehovah (ver. 10). He must shew his feelings by an act; so, in accordance with the ritual of the time, he "took a burnt-offering and sacrifices." Christians should similarly signalise their own re-unions, and other important events in their lives, by joining together in the highest act of Christian worship—the Holy Communion. Joint participation in the "bread of life" and "cup of the Lord" brings home to us the sense of family oneness, as nothing else has the power to do. Prayers uttered side by side bind men's hearts together in indissoluble union; participation in the same precious gifts gives the sense of unity in him who is the source of unity to all who are his. Aaron and the elders do well to join; their presence does not mar the family concord; it does but enlarge the family circle, and add new links to the chain that binds Heaven to earth. Some day the whole Church will be one family, of which all the members will worship God perpetually in the Father's house. The nearest approach to happiness on earth is that anticipation of the final bliss which Holy Communion furnishes.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1-13.—*The visit of Jethro.* When Jethro "heard of all that God had done for Moses,"—a hint that the news of the great events of the past few weeks had spread far and wide through the Sinaitic peninsula,—and when he learned that the Israelites were encamped at the Mount of God, within reachable distance of the Midianitish settlement (cf. ch. iii. 1), he at once resolved on paying his former friend, who had so suddenly blazed into an unexpected greatness, a personal visit. He came, accordingly, accompanied by Moses' wife and two sons.

I. JETHRO'S COMING (vers. 1-7). This visit of Jethro to Moses may be considered with reference to the following particulars. He came—1. *Cordially recognising the honour which God had put on Moses* (ver. 1). Moses had stood to Jethro for years in a relation of dependence. He had kept the priest's flocks (ch. iii. 1). Yet Jethro was not offended or made envious by this sudden greatness which had fallen to the lot of his old associate. The proverb was for once falsified that "a prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house" (Matt. xiii. 5-7), for Jethro heartily acknowledged and rejoiced in all that the Lord had done for Moses and for Israel. It might have been otherwise. He might, like the Nazarenes in their slighting of Christ, have asked—"Was not this my shepherd? Is not his wife called Zipporah? and his sons, Gershom and Eliezer, are they not with us? Whence then hath this man all

these things?" But a far different spirit possessed him. In this, Jethro showed his freedom from a very common littleness of nature. 2. *As an act of personal friendship.* A large part of the joy of life springs from friendship. We see friendship at its best in the case of those who are thrown much into each other's society, and who cherish for each other, under the conditions which most of all reveal and test character, a cordial respect and esteem. "Friendship," says Cicero, "is nothing else than a perfect concurrence on all subjects Divine and human, accompanied by a feeling of kindness and attachment, and I am not sure that any better boon than this, with the exception of wisdom, could be conferred on man by the immortal Gods." The bond of attachment thus created between good men makes association a pleasure, and, of necessity, causes pain at parting. While separation lasts, longings do not cease to be felt for a renewal of the prized intercourse, and when, after years of severance, an opening for such renewal of intercourse is presented, the opportunity is eagerly and joyfully embraced. Such friendship may be presumed to have existed between Jethro and Moses. The two had lived in close intimacy for the space of forty years. According to the text, Moses was Jethro's son-in-law; according to the more probable view, his brother-in-law. Jethro, with his stores of practical wisdom, his desert courtesy, and his evidently sincere piety, was a man whom Moses would early learn to respect, and with whom he would find it pleasant and profitable to associate; and the Midianitish priest, in turn, would never weary of the companionship of Moses, whose learning was so ripe, whose spirit was so excellent, whose early life had been spent under such different conditions from his own, and who had consequently so much to tell, which he (Jethro) would delight to hear. This intercourse had been suddenly broken up by Moses' determination to return to Egypt (ch. iv. 18); but an opportunity now presented itself of renewing it, and of this Jethro gladly availed himself. 3. *Desirous of hearing more perfectly of the wonderful works of God.* This, as is apparent from the sequel (ver. 8), was another motive of Jethro's visit. He had come to be more fully and exactly instructed in the wonders which God had wrought "for Moses, and for Israel, his people" (ver. 1). Something of these "mighty acts" he had heard from current report, but what he had heard only whetted his appetite to hear more. It is the mark of the good man that he earnestly desires to grow in the knowledge of God and of his ways. 4. *With the intention of restoring to Moses his wife and two sons* (vers. 2—6). In taking this earliest opportunity of bringing Zipporah and her two sons to Moses, Jethro acted rightly. A wife's proper place is with her husband. Sons, again, in view of the special responsibility resting on the father in connection with their proper up-bringing, should be as much as possible under direct paternal influence. The kingdom of God, doubtless, is to be more to us than father, or mother, or wife, or child; and should its interests imperatively demand separation, this must be submitted to (Matt. viii. 21, 22): but relationships are not thereby dissolved, and the active discharge of the duties connected with them should be resumed at the earliest opportunity. For the sake of Moses himself, reunion was desirable. He was not a man who spurned the joys of domestic existence, but, like Peter, led about a wife (cf. Num. xii. 1; 1 Cor. ix. 5). It would contribute to his happiness to have his family beside him. Attention is anew called to the significant names of his sons (vers. 3, 4). These noteworthy names would be perpetual reminders to Moses of the lessons of his stay in Midian. The one spoke of human weakness, the other of Divine aid. If the one embalmed the memory of his heart-loneliness in a strange land, the other told of how God had been his help even there. The one recalled trials, the other mercies. While in both was embodied a memorial of the heart-discipline, of the solitary communion with God, of the lonely days and nights of prayer, watching, and spiritual meditation, which had helped so largely during the forty years of that weary but precious exile, to make him the man he was.

II. JETHRO AND MOSES (vers. 7—13). The visit here described is a model of brotherly and religious intercourse. Christians would do well to study and imitate it. Observe—1. *The courtesy of their greeting* (ver. 7). The two men stood on a very different moral and intellectual level, but, in their exchanges of civility, Jethro is treated as the superior, and is received by Moses with every outward demonstration of respect. As on Jethro's side there is no trace of mortification or jealousy at finding Moses, once the keeper of his sheep, in so exalted a position, so, on the side of Moses now Israel's deliverer and leader,

there is an utter absence of pride and hauteur, and a painstaking desire to put Jethro—a plain wilderness priest—as fully as possible at his ease. Everything is real. The greetings of the friends are unaffectedly cordial—their behaviour towards each other studiously polite. Lesson—the duty of courtesy. Courtesy is an essential part of what has been defined as the outward grace of life. “By the grace of life is meant all that embellishes, softens, and brightens our present existence. It is that which is to human life what the shape and bloom and odour are to the plant. The flower is not simply useful. It is pleasing. There is grace about it. . . . The grace of life has its simplest manifestation in our external behaviour—in our manners. There is a joy to observed and observer in graceful motion and pleasant phrase. . . . Politeness is the science and art of the outward grace of life. It enunciates that strange code of salutations and farewells—those buffers which soften approach, and with a last gentle touch make parting easy. Under the fiction of giving information as to the weather, one spirit expresses to its fellow respect and continued friendship. That spirit, in turn, under the form of confirming the aforesaid meteorological intelligence, reciprocates the kindly feeling. In such queer fashion is human kindness flashed from heart to heart.” (Rev. David Burns.) 2. *Their affectionate interest in each other's welfare.* “They asked each other of their welfare” (ver. 7). Burdened as he was, almost beyond endurance, with “the cumberance, and burden, and strife” (Deut. x. 12) of the congregation, Moses could unbend to show his kindly interest in what was taking place in the quiet tents at Midian. This is a point of greatness. The greatest man is not he who occupies so serene an elevation of spirit, or whose mind is so engrossed with the duties of an exalted station, that he cannot stoop to share in, and, as occasion offers, to testify his sympathy with, the joys and sorrows of humbler people. No deficiency of this kind is seen in Moses—or in Jesus. It is well to cultivate the habit of putting ourselves in the place of others, however remote in station from ourselves, and of trying to feel a kindly interest in all that concerns them. This will prevent us from becoming self-absorbed and egoistic. *Their lives, we should remember, are of as much importance to them as ours are to us, and the interest we show in them will be proportionately valued.* A minister once wrote in his note-book: “Don't *pretend* an interest in the members of your congregation, but try to *feel* it.” “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love” (Rom. xii. 10). 3. *The theme of their converse.* “Moses told his father-in-law (brother-in-law) all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh,” etc. (ver. 8). As under a former head we had a model meeting, so here we have a model conversation. Jethro and Moses conversed on the affairs of God's kingdom. No greater subject could have occupied their thoughts. It is the subject of deepest and most central interest in history—the grandest in its essential nature, the widest in its relations, the most momentous in its issues. All other movements in time are side issues as compared with this one. In considering it *man* passes out of sight, and the only question is, What hath God wrought! (Num. xxiii. 23). We renew this conversation of Jethro and Moses every time we “speak of the glory of (God's) kingdom and talk of (his) power” (Ps. cxlv. 11). Cf. the conversation of Christian with Prudence, Piety, and Charity in the House Beautiful:—“Now the table was furnished with fat things, and wine that was well refined; and all their talk at the table was about the Lord of the Hill; as, namely, about what he had done, and wherefore he did what he did,” etc. (Pilgrim's Progress.) Converse in heaven will turn on the same themes. Note—(1) It is profitable for Christians to exchange experiences as to the manner of the Lord's dealings with them. Few but can tell something of “the travail that has come upon them by the way, and how the Lord delivered them.” (2) It is a mark of grace to feel an interest in what relates to God's work, and to the progress of his kingdom at home and abroad. This will show itself in a desire to read, hear, and converse on such subjects, and in the interest discovered, and zeal shown, in the general work of the Church, in special spiritual movements, in the success of missions, in spiritual operations in our own town and neighbourhood. (3) Some are called to more active service in God's work than others. There are those that fight the battle, and there are those who tarry at home and divide the spoil (Ps. lxxviii. 12). And those who have been personally engaged in God's work—especially those who have returned from the high places of the field (missionaries, etc.)—have always much to tell which it is of interest to hear, and which will enkindle our hearts with new ardour in the cause of the Gospel. We should seek

the society of such, and take the opportunity of hearing them when they are to be heard, that we may be instructed and profited. What a thrilling history, *e.g.*, is that of Christian missions, but what an additional interest it gives to its narrations when we hear the story from the lips of the men who have actually fought the battles! (4) Christian workers cannot converse together on the plans, methods, difficulties, conflicts, and successes of their work without being mutually helped and edified. 4. *Jethro's joy in the relation* (vers. 9—11). We are reminded of Barnabas, who, "when he came" to Antioch, "and had seen the grace of God, was glad. . . . For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith" (Acts xi. 23). The history which Moses gave to Jethro—(1) Filled Jethro with joy; (2) Strengthened his faith in God—"Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods" (ver. 11); (3) Incited him to praise—"And Jethro said, Blessed be the Lord," etc. (ver. 10). It will be observed how distinctly in ver. 11 Jethro seizes the point in the contest between Jehovah and Pharaoh, and draws the proper inference from it. God had chosen as a field for the display of his perfections a case in which all the pride and power of man were arrayed against him in a determined effort to resist, oppose, and make void his will, and he had demonstrated his supremacy by completely annihilating that opposition, and overwhelming the Egyptians, who embodied it, in the Red Sea. The army of Egypt was in some sense the country's pride and boast, so that (though the translation in ver. 11 is apparently incorrect) it was literally true that "in the thing wherein they dealt proudly" Jehovah was "above them." God exalts himself by discomfiting his enemies in what they deem their points of special strength. "Poor perfection which one sees an end of! yet such are all those things in this world which pass for perfections. David, in his time, had seen Goliath, the strongest, overcome; Asahel, the swiftest, overtaken; Ahithophel, the wisest, befooled; Absalom, the fairest, deformed" (M. Henry on Ps. cxix. 96). "It is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent" (1 Cor. i. 19). 5. *The sacrificial feast* (ver. 16). We have here—(1) Friendship cemented by an act of worship; (2) Religious converse culminating in devotion; (3) A feast sanctified by the enjoyment of the Divine presence—"before God;" (4) A foreshadowing of the union of Jews and Gentiles in the fellowship of the church; (5) An instance of catholicity in worship. Moses did not scruple to join in sacrifice or to sit down at the same festival board with the Midianitish Jethro. The lesson is thus enunciated by Peter: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts x. 34, 35).—J. O.

Vers. 1—5.—*The claims of home.* "And Jethro, Moses' kinsman (not father-in-law) came with his sons and his wife unto Moses into the wilderness where he encamped at the mount of God" (Ex. xviii. 5).

I. CIRCUMSTANCES MAY JUSTIFY THE TEMPORARY REMISSION OF HOME RESPONSIBILITIES UPON OTHERS (ver. 2). For example—and the history of Moses will illustrate each point—we may be justified by—1. *The nature of external duty.* We may be providentially called away from home; or the discharge of public responsibilities may for the time be incompatible with our usual attention to the interests of the domestic circle, *e.g.*, Moses going to Egypt (Ex. iv. compare with Ex. xviii. 2). 2. *The probability of danger.* 3. *Defective sympathy.* It is clear that Zipporah was not in sympathy with the religious object of Moses, nor yet with his specific mission. Need, however, to be on our guard against making this a reason for withdrawal permanently from home responsibility. Want of perfect compatibility in domestic life makes marriage to be an occasion for self-discipline, and is thus converted into a means of grace. (Eph. v. 25—27.)

II. CIRCUMSTANCES SCARCELY EVER JUSTIFY THE PERMANENT REMISSION. There are a few cases, perhaps, in which this responsibility may be devolved: *e.g.*, the case of the missionary who must, for various reasons, send home from his station his children to be educated; and not seldom the wife with them. Other cases there are, no doubt. But generally the father may not devolve this obligation. It is one—1. *Of necessity.* No one else can meet the responsibility as the natural head of the family—this is true in all cases—even in that of the missionary named above—for the children suffer. 2. *Of duty:*—(1) *To ourselves.* We owe it to our own convictions of truth, and to

thought, life, and work, to perpetuate them. (2) To *dependents*. Whether wife, children, or servants. [On this point some valuable suggestions in Dr. Taylor's "Moses the Lawgiver," pp. 173—176.] (3) To our *generation*; and (4) to the *Great Father* in heaven.

III. IF TEMPTED TO THIS REMISSION GOD WILL BRING HOME TO US OUR DUTY. Probably by some providence, may be painful or otherwise. At such a *time*, on such an *occasion* (Moses face to face with Sinai and the giving of the law) in such a *place*, Jethro re-introduced to Moses wife and children. Even such duties as his could not exempt him from domestic responsibility.—R.

Vers. 1—12.—*The Consolations of those who suffer loss for the Kingdom of God.*

I. THE REUNION OF THE SEPARATED. To Moses, who had to leave behind him wife and children because God's errand would brook no delay, these are now restored. 1. There is no loss to those who suffer for the kingdom of God's sake. 2. God fills the cup of his servants with consolations. God's care had been exercised not only over him in Egypt, but also over wife and children in Midian.

II. THE THEME OF THOSE WHO FEAR GOD. God's marvellous works (vers. 8, 9). It was not the subject of public discourse or formal greeting, but of private converse within "the tent." This is a mark of the true servant of God; to *him* God and his goodness are the most real and wondrous of all things.

III. THE RESULT OF THE TESTIMONY. 1. Jethro's confession of Jehovah. 2. His sacrifice to him. The stranger makes a feast before Israel's God for the princes of Israel. Those whom we bring to God make a feast, in their faith and love, for our soul before the Lord.—U.

Vers. 6—12.—*Friendship in its loftiest form.* "They asked each other of their welfare." Ex. xviii. 7. The visit of Jethro comes between the agony of Rephidim and the solemnities of "Sinai," like the insertion of a sweet pastoral poem between two tragedies. Something may be learnt from it as to what should characterise friendship in its highest form, that is, between two devout souls, as consecrated and elevated by religion.

I. CONSTANCY. Moses and Jethro met as in the earlier years; no assumption with Moses, no sycophancy with Jethro.

II. COURTESY. Ver. 7. The nearer our relations to each other, the more indispensable this grace.

III. MUTUAL SOLICITUDE. Ver. 7.

IV. INTERCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE. Vers. 8—11. Happy time, when the deeper experiences (religious) can be exchanged to mutual advantage.

V. COMMUNION IN WORSHIP. Ver. 12. It is clear that Jethro and Moses were one as to Monotheism, in their common possession of the great Divine traditions of the race. Jethro spiritually was in the descent of Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Melchisedek. For him but one God, the God of heaven and earth, and *therefore* the God of Israel. Contrast with Amalek! Hence the sacrifice and the sacrificial feast.

VI. FIDELITY IN GIVING COUNCIL. Vers. 14, 17—23. Great courage required.

VII. HUMILITY IN RECEIVING IT. This the moral attitude of Moses.

VIII. AN ULTIMATE REFERENCE IN ALL INTERCOURSE TO THE DIVINE FRIEND. Ver. 23. "And God commanded thee so."

IX. SYMPATHY AS TO GREAT OBJECT. Jethro knew the destiny of Israel, and was concerned for the realisation.

X. PEACEFUL PARTING AT LIFE'S DIVERGING PATHS. Ver. 27. Apply this to moral and intellectual cross-roads; and to that which is so difficult—agreeing to differ—and that with mutual respect and affection. All in view and hope of the perfect and immortal amity that is beyond the sky.—R.

Vers. 1—12.—*Jethro's visit—Moses in his domestic relations.* In this visit of Jethro three persons are brought prominently before us—Moses, Jethro, his father-in-law, and Zipporah, his wife. Let us consider the details of the visit in their bearing on all these three persons.

I. ON MOSES. Moses is usually seen either in the presence of God or in the presence

of the people; but here we get a peep at his private and domestic life, and nothing is revealed but what adds dignity and beauty to his character. A servant of God must have the same character, in all circumstances. It is not every public man that could afford to have his private life laid open; and only too often an earnest plea for pity has to be based on the remembrance of how frail and infirm a thing human nature is. But in the instance of Moses neither veil nor plea are needed. This meeting with Jethro has to take place, and there was no reason to evade it; it had also to be mentioned, and there was no reason to conceal it. Moses had done nothing in his past residence in Midian to make him ashamed or afraid of returning to it. He had been a faithful shepherd to Jethro; a loving husband to Zipporah; an equally loving father to Gershom and Eliezer. It was Zipporah who had forsaken him, and not he Zipporah. He returned as a prophet into what, in a certain sense, was his own country, and, if not exactly honoured neither could he be dishonoured. Again we behold Moses showing, in the most practical way, *his respect for the family relation and the ties of kinship generally*. The importance of the family relation we have seen already brought out in the institution of the Passover and the provision of the manna. Here Moses puts emphasis on the relation by his own example. He showed himself one who regarded domestic obligations as of the first importance. Zipporah has failed him once, and that in circumstances of great perplexity; but he does not make this a plea for getting rid of her. He knows his duties towards her, and by undertaking them in a manful and conscientious way, he may bring her to a full recognition of her duty towards him. A truly great nation, having a strong and beneficial society, is only possible by an aggregation of households where household claims are respected by all. And evidently he who must lead the way in acknowledging the claim is he who stands at the head. *So Moses did here*. Lastly, Moses makes clear by his reception of Jethro and Zipporah that he was the *same kind of man as in the old shepherd days*. Altered circumstances with all their temptations had not made alterations for the worse in character. How many there are who while lifted in one way are lowered in another! They become bigger men; but, alas! not better. Everything that reminds them of former and humbler scenes is as wormwood to the taste. To all such Moses, by his conduct here, teaches a most powerful lesson. His strength among the thousands of Israel was not that of a human ruler who was to be girt about with all the paraphernalia of government, in order to overawe the populace. Moses can step out of his tent, as if he were one of the humblest of Israel, not only in character, but also in position. He can go out and welcome his kindred, show to Jethro the outward signs of filial respect, talk to them all in the old familiar way, and do it without the slightest fear that his authority as leader is in any way affected. And this conduct would be all the more beautiful if, as we may easily imagine, Zipporah came back to him rather lifted up because of her husband's new position, and disposed with feminine vanity to make the most of it for her own satisfaction.

II. ON JETHRO. This chapter, full as it is of Jethro, is another forcible illustration as to how much revelation of character the Scripture record can put into a small space. Jethro, hitherto known only as the near connection of Moses, stands before us here as a noble, pious, and truly affectionate and considerate man. Much, indeed, he has had to try and perplex him. Moses, who had made his first acquaintance with him under prepossessing circumstances, who had become his brother-in-law and faithful shepherd, all at once comes to him, without any previous notice, and asks his permission to return to Egypt. Moses, we know, had been sternly shut up to this course by Jehovah, and to Jethro it must have seemed entirely inexplicable. He had to part with his near relations; and a great void must thus have been left in his heart. Then presently Zipporah returns, with her sons, in a very sore and rebellious frame of mind. All Jethro can yet see is that this departure of Moses has brought nothing but domestic discord. And yet it is impossible for him to say that Moses has not done right. He can only wait for the unfoldings of time, listening meanwhile with what patience he can muster to reproaches from neighbours and daughter and perhaps grandsons, with respect to the unaccountable vagaries of Moses. And at last relief comes, and not only relief, but abundant justification. The information is such as to make Moses stand out in the esteem of his father-in-law more highly than ever. All suspense as to Zipporah's duty is removed; she must rejoin her husband. It was Moses and not Jethro

who was responsible for her; and, besides, Moses and Zipporah had a joint responsibility for their offspring. Jethro is commonly set before us, in contrast to Amalek, as the illustration of heathenism, looking favourably and amicably upon Israel. But even more let us look upon him as the great illustration of those noble souls who strive to unite what sin divides. Jesus in his teaching had occasion to lay emphasis on the dividing effect of discipleship to himself. He intimated that the acceptance of himself would only too often rupture, or at least strain, natural ties. But this of course was not presented as a thing to cause satisfaction. It was only another sad evidence of how sin turns to evil what God meant for good. And yet here we see the other side, reunion as well as separation. The liberation of Israel, glorious in its total result, and lifting Moses to high eminence in respect of personal character, has yet involved at the same time the wreck of his domestic peace. Whatever the comforts of wife and children in this world may be, he has lost them. But now these comforts are coming again, and coming in the most satisfactory of all ways, by the voluntary entrance of his old friend Jethro on the scene. Blessed are the peacemakers; and surely of all peacemaking, that is not the least fruitful of good which reunites and reconstitutes a separated family. Moses acting with a single eye to what is right has to part from his wife, and let her go back to her own family. Jethro acting in the same spirit, brings the wife to her husband again. Often we may have to become agents and helpers in division; but if we only go on, union and harmony will return. What Zipporah's future was we know not; but Jethro had done his utmost to put matters right.

III. ON ZIPPORAH. Her name occurs but little, and her appearance hitherto has not been such as to make us think she would prove a helpful companion to Moses (ch. iv. 25, 26). Still we must not judge too hastily from silence. It is not for Zipporah's sake she happens to be mentioned here. It is sufficient to learn, by the way, that an opportunity for repentance and for devotion to him who had such a burden to bear, was now given her.—Y.

Ver. 5.—“*Ye are come unto Mount Zion.*” The way in which we view facts depends a great deal on the eyes through which we look at them. Here, as regards Moses and the Israelites in the wilderness, we may look on them through the eyes of Jethro, or of Zipporah, or of the children; for a change let us use the children's eyes, and enquire how they transmit the facts to us. Sketch previous history of the children, their stay in Midian, and journey to the camp. Notice:—

I. WHAT THE CHILDREN SAW AND HEARD. As they came they would notice, first, the mountains, then the camp in the plain, then, perhaps, people moving about and cloudy pillar suspended over all. At last, one man comes to meet them; their father is the leader of the host. 1. *A new flock.* In the old days Gershom must often have looked out for his coming home; then (cf. iii. 1) he had sheep to care for, now his flock is of another kind (Ps. lxxvii. 20). No longer Jethro's shepherd, but the shepherd of Jehovah. Not really changed his profession—still the same kind of work—only, having served his apprenticeship with Jethro, he has been called to a higher grade of service. 2. *A memorable spot.* How had he come to change his service? The very place would remind them of the answer. There is the rough hill-side—there, perhaps, the very bush where the angel appeared. The whole scene a fulfilment of God's promise and a pledge of his faithfulness (cf. iii. 12). 3. *New-found relatives.* A new uncle and aunt, never seen before—could tell them about the old life in Egypt, their father's birth and escape—the cruel slavery of their kindred—all the past would seem more real now that they were confronted by these witnesses to its reality. Comparing the past with the present, a suggestive commentary on Eliezer's name; Moses had good reason for saying, “my God is a help.”

II. PARALLEL WITH OURSELVES. (Cf. Heb. xii. 22—24.) We, too, like the sons of Moses, have been brought into new relations with our Father. As we approach him, what may we see and hear? 1. *We find him in a holy place.* Not a camp of wanderers in the wilderness, but a holy city, one which hath foundations, the settled home of its redeemed inhabitants. Pleasant for Gershom and his brother to find their father, but they still had to look on to the day when they should find their home; for us home is our Father's house in the holy city upon the holy mountain. 2. *He introduces us to holy fellowships.* As Moses' children found new relatives, so do we: “an innumerable

company, the general assembly of the angels, and the Church of the first-born, and the spirits of the justified." We may picture the interest with which Gershom and Eliezer must have viewed the camp and listened to the story of deliverance; but the company to which they had come was very different to that to which we have come; the deliverance of which they heard was but a first step to freedom. They, no doubt, learnt to sing, perhaps from Miriam, the song of Moses; from those with whom we have communion we may learn the song of the Lamb.

Conclusion. After all, the children, amid all the new sights, would rejoice most at meeting their father—at seeing *him*, and remaining with him. As Jethro led them towards the mount, their father was, doubtless, the subject of their talk; all else derived its interest only from its relation to him. Just so, too, with us. Heaven is our Father's house; it is our Father's presence that makes it *home* to us. As our Lord leads us thitherward, it is still of the Father whom he speaks. Those whom the Father has given into his care he will bring to their journey's end in safety.—G.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 13—26.—JETHRO'S ADVICE TO MOSES, AND ITS ADOPTION. The office of ruler in ancient times, whether exercised by a king, a prince, or a mere chieftain, was always understood to include within it the office of judge. In the Greek ideal of the origin of kingly government (Herod. i. 96), the able discharge of judicial functions marks the individual out for sovereignty. The successors of Moses, like the chief rulers of Carthage, bore the title of "Judges" (*shophetim, suffetes*). Moses, it appears, had from the time when he was accepted as leader by the people (ch. iv. 29—31), regarded himself as bound to hear and decide all the causes and complaints which arose among the entire Israelite people. He had not delegated his authority to any one. This can scarcely have been because the idea had not occurred to him, for the Egyptian kings ordinarily decided causes by judges nominated *ad hoc*. Perhaps he had distrusted the ability of his countrymen—so recently slaves—to discharge such delicate functions. At any rate, he had reserved the duty wholly to himself (ver. 18). This course appeared to Jethro unwise. No man could, he thought, in the case of so great a nation, singly discharge such an office with satisfaction to himself and others. Moses would "wear himself away" with the fatigue; and he would exhaust the patience of the people through inability to keep pace with the number of cases that necessarily arose. Jethro therefore recommended the appointment of subordinate judges, and the reservation by Moses of nothing but the right to decide such cases as these judges should, on account of their difficulty, refer to him (ver. 22) On

reflection, Moses accepted this course as the best open to him under the circumstances, and established a multiplicity of judges, under a system which will be discussed in the comment on verse 25.

Ver. 13.—On the morrow. The day after Jethro's arrival. **Moses sat to judge the people.** Moses, *i. e.*, took his seat in an accustomed place, probably at the door of his tent, and was understood to be ready to hear and decide causes. **The people stood by Moses.** A crowd of complainants soon collected, and kept Moses employed incessantly from the morning, when he had taken his seat, until the evening, *i. e.*, until nightfall. It is conjectured that many complaints may have arisen out of the division of the spoil of the Amalekites.

Ver. 14.—Why sittest thou thyself alone etc. A perverse ingenuity has discovered that the emphatic words in this passage are "sittest" and "stand," Jethro having blamed Moses for humiliating the people by requiring them to stand up while he himself sat! But the context makes it abundantly clear that what Jethro really blames, is Moses sitting *alone* and judging the whole people single-handed.

Ver. 15.—And Moses said . . . Because the people come unto me, to inquire of God. To inquire of God is certainly not a mere "juridical phrase," meaning to consult a judge (Kallisch), nor, on the other hand, is it necessarily "to consult God through an oracle." It cannot, however, mean less than to seek a decision from some one regarded as entitled to speak for God; and it is certainly assigned by Moses as the reason why he judged all the causes himself, and did not devolve the duty upon others. They could not be supposed to know the mind of God as he knew it. Jethro, however, points out, that it is one thing to lay down principles, and another to apply them. Moses might reserve the legislative function—the inculcation of principles—to himself, and

to still, "be for the people to Godward" (ver. 19); but he might find "able men" among the congregation, quite capable of applying the principles, and delegate to them the judicial function (vers. 21, 22).

Ver. 16.—**I judge . . . and I do make them know the statutes of God.** As the Israelites were, up to this time, without any code of written laws, Moses took the opportunity furnished by such cases as came before him, to lay down principles of law, and enjoin them upon the people; thus making them to know the statutes of God and his eternal unwritten laws. Such a practice would not have been necessary after the giving of the law on Mount Sinai; and its existence at the time of Jethro's visit helps to fix that visit as occurring *before* the giving of the law.

Ver. 18.—**The thing . . . is not good—i.e.,** not expedient, and so not the right thing to do. It is a man's duty to have regard to his health, and not unnecessarily overtask his strength.

Ver. 18.—**Thou wilt surely wear away.** Literally, "Wasting thou wilt waste away," Thy strength, *i.e.*, will not long hold out, if thou continuest this practice. **Both thou, and this people.** The people's strength and patience will also fail, if, owing to the number of the complaints, they have—some of them—to wait all day at the tribunal before they can obtain a decision.

Ver. 19.—**I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee.** Rather—"And may God be with thee!" May God incline thine heart to accept my counsel and act upon it. **Be thou for the people to God-ward, etc.** "Continue," *i.e.*, as at present, to be the intermediary between God and the people—still be the whole and sole source of legislative power (ver. 20), and still be the fount and origin of judicial authority; but commit the actual decision of the lighter causes to others chosen by thyself for the office (vers. 21, 22). The separation of the legislative and judicial functions was well known in Egypt, where the kings alone made new laws (Herod. ii. 109, 136, 177, etc.), but causes were ordinarily determined by a body of judges. **Bring the causes unto God.** In difficult cases, Moses actually laid the cause before God, and obtained directions from God as to the manner in which he was to decide it. See Num. xxvii. 5—11.

Ver. 20.—**Thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws.** Or, "statutes and laws," as in ver. 16. It is not quite clear how these differ. Some regard "statutes" as connected with religion, and laws as regulations with respect to civil and social matters. Others explain the first as "specific" and the second as "general enactments." **The way wherein they must walk.** The general line of conduct which all are bound to pursue. **The work that**

they must do. The special task which each has to perform individually.

Ver. 21.—**Able men.** Literally, "men of might"—*i.e.*, of capacity or ability—men competent for the office of judge; who are further defined to be, such as possess the three qualities of piety, veracity, and strict honesty, or incorruptness. Jethro's conception of the true judicial character leaves little to be desired. If among every ten Israelites there was one such person, the moral condition of the nation cannot have been so much depressed by the Egyptian servitude as is sometimes represented. **Place such over them to be rulers of thousands, etc.** A decimal organisation naturally presents itself to men's minds as the simplest in a simple state of society, and was probably already in use among the Arab tribes with whom Jethro was familiar. The graduated series—rulers of tens, of fifties, of hundreds, and of thousands, implies a power of three-fold appeal, from the "ruler of ten" to the "ruler of fifty"—from him to the "ruler of a hundred"—and from him to the "ruler of a thousand." Whether there was an appeal from the last-named to Moses, is doubtful. Probably there was not; Moses deciding those cases only which the "rulers of thousands" reserved for him as being specially difficult or important.

Ver. 22.—**Let them judge the people at all seasons.** Instead of occasional court-days, on which Moses sat from morning to evening hearing causes, judgments were to be given continually by the rulers of tens, fifties, etc., the accumulation of untried causes being thus avoided, and punishment following promptly on the committal of an offence. The elaborately minute organisation was only suited for the period of the wanderings, and was of a semi-military character, such as might have suited an army on the march. When the Israelites became settled dwellers in Palestine, such a multiplicity of judges was unnecessary, and was discontinued. **So shall it be easier.** Literally, "So make it easier." Compare ver. 18.

Ver. 23.—**And God command thee so.** Jethro does not suppose that Moses will take his advice without further consultation. He assumes that the matter will be laid by Moses before God, and God's will learnt concerning it. The entire narrative supposes that there was some established means by which the Israelite leader could refer a matter to Jehovah and obtain a decision upon it. This can scarcely have been as yet the Urin and Thummim. Probably Moses held frequent communication with Jehovah by means of waking visions. **Thou shalt be able to endure—i.e.,** "the work will not be too much for thee—thou wilt be able to bear it." This people shall also go to their place in peace. The "place" intended would seem to be

Palestine. Keil supposes that the word "peace" is to be taken literally, and concludes from it that breaches of the peace had previously been frequent, the people having "often taken the law into their own hands on account of the delay in the judicial decision;" but this is to extract from the words more than they naturally signify. "In peace" means "cheerfully, contentedly." If the changes which he recommends are carried out, Jethro thinks that the people will make the rest of the journey to Canaan quietly and contentedly, without complaint or dissatisfaction.

Ver. 24.—**So Moses hearkened.** Moses took the advice tendered him, not immediately, but after the law had been given at Sinai, and the journeying was about to be resumed. See Deut. i. 9–15.

Ver. 25.—**Moses chose able men.** It appears

from Deut. i. 13, that instead of selecting the men himself, which would have been an invidious task, Moses directed their nomination by the people, and only reserved to himself the investing them with their authority. **Heads over the people.** From the time of their appointment, the "rulers" were not merely judges, but "heads" of their respective companies, with authority over them on the march, and command in the battle-field (Num. xxxi. 14). Thus the organisation was at once civil and military.

Ver. 26.—**At all seasons.** See the comment on verse 22. **The hard causes they brought unto Moses.** It must have been left to the discretion of the judges to determine whether a cause was hard or easy, a great or a little matter. Probably only those causes which seemed "hard" to the "rulers of thousands" were brought before Moses for decision.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 14—23.—*The unwisdom of a monopoly of power.* The principle of the division of labour, which is essential to progress in the arts, was well known in Egypt, and was applied there, not to the arts only, but also to government and administration. Moses, who had resided forty years at the court of a Pharaoh (Acts vii. 23), must have been thoroughly acquainted with the fact that, in a well-ordered community, judicial functions were separated from legislative and administrative, and entrusted to a large number of persons, not monopolised by a single individual. But it had appeared to him that the condition of his own people was exceptional. Just released from the cruel bondage of a hard and pitiless slavery, without education, without habits of command or self-control, without any knowledge of the principles of law or experience in the practice of courts, they seemed to him unfit for the exercise of the judicial office—especially as he understood it. For his view was, that each particular decision should be made an occasion of educating the people in the principles of law and justice (ver. 16), and upon these it was his habit to descant in connection with each judgment that he delivered. As he felt that he alone among all the Israelites was equal to this task, he had undertaken to discharge singly the office of judge in a community consisting of above two millions of persons. Jethro, on visiting him, was struck with the unwisdom of such an attempt, and honestly gave expression to his feelings. Jethro saw—

I. THAT TO MONOPOLISE THE JUDICIAL FUNCTION IN SO LARGE A COMMUNITY WAS UNWISE, AS AN UNDUE STRAIN UPON THE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL POWERS OF THE MONOPOLISER. So numerous were the causes brought before him that Moses had to sit "from morning to evening"—probably from early dawn until the dusk of the evening twilight—hearing them. At eighty years of age, or more (ch. vii. 7), his physical strength was not equal to this exertion. Our physical powers have to be considered. No one is justified in overtaxing them unnecessarily. The body needs change of attitude and employment, air, gentle exercise, freedom from restraint, confinement, tension. No one could habitually sit at any one task for twelve hours continuously without its telling on his bodily frame and injuring his constitution. Again, the mental strain must have been injurious to him, and if not actually impairing his faculties, must have interfered with their due exercise and rendered him unfit to perform the delicate duties of a judge late in the day. Had necessity been laid upon him, had God appointed him to be the sole judge of the people, or had there actually been no one else among the Israelites competent to the performance of any part of the work, he would have been right in acting as he did, for health is not the first consideration; but this was not so. God had not spoken upon the point; and there was an abundance of men in the congregation, quite competent to perform minor judicial functions, as Jethro clearly perceived, and as

he himself also saw when it was pointed out to him. Thus he was exhausting himself unnecessarily, a proceeding which cannot be justified.

11. THAT IT WAS ALSO UNWISE, AS UNDULY TAXING THE PATIENCE OF THE PEOPLE. One man could not keep pace with the number of constantly arising causes, which must have tended to accumulate, whence would arise a delay of justice. It was inconvenient enough to have to wait from the morning until the evening before obtaining a hearing; but probably the case was not uncommon of a cause being put off to the next court-day, which, if the people were on the march, might be several days distant. The convenience of suitors is an important consideration in the administration of justice, which should be prompt as well as sure, to content men's natural sense of what is fitting.

111. THAT, FURTHER, IT TENDED TO CRAMP THE EXERCISE BY THE PEOPLE OF POWERS WHICH THEY POSSESSED, AND THE EMPLOYMENT OF WHICH WOULD HAVE ELEVATED THEM. There were in Israel and will always be in every community, "able men," well fitted to take part in the decision of causes. Such men will commonly be very numerous; and if they have no part in the administration of justice, a large section of the community will at once be dissatisfied with the slight passed upon them, and debarred from an employment which would have tended to their moral education and elevation. The jury system of modern states is a recognition of the fact, that judicial capacity is widely spread, and that society ought to provide a field for its exercise. It is important to utilise the powers possessed by all members of the community, both for their own contentment and for the general welfare of the community itself. The world is over-full of despots and monopolists, persons who desire to grasp as much power as possible, and are unwilling to share their office with others. We may acquit Moses of such selfishness; but we cannot acquit all those who follow in his footsteps. It would be well if persons in positions of authority nowadays sought generally to associate others in their work—to call out latent talent, exercise it, and so educate its possessors.

Ver. 21.—*The necessary qualifications of such as are to exercise the office of judges.*—Few positions in life are more important than that of the judge. Not only are the lives and liberties of individual citizens at his disposal, but the very existence of the State depends on him, since unless justice is in the main administered states fly to pieces. It has been said that the whole elaborate machinery of the British Constitution has been designed and arranged with the ultimate object of putting twelve honest men together into a jury box. Where the functions to be discharged are so important, it is of the utmost moment that qualifications should be laid down in theory, and strictly adhered to in practice. Jethro saw that judges ought to be—

1. MEN OF ABILITY. Ordinary, common-place powers are not enough. "Non ex quovis ligno Mercurius fit." Something above the average is necessary. Jethro thought one man in ten among the Israelites might possess sufficient intelligence and discrimination to judge the lowest class of causes, those of the least account. This was a somewhat sanguine estimate. In modern communities, which boast of their general enlightenment, considerably less than one-tenth of the citizens have their names inscribed upon the jury lists. The standard of intelligence however varies in different ages and countries, so that no hard-and-fast line can be laid down on the subject. All that can be insisted upon is this—the judge should be a person recognised to possess ability for his office, *i.e.*, sagacity and practical discernment. If he has not these gifts, it is no use his possessing others, as learning, scholarship, artistic or scientific attainments. He will not be respected; no confidence will be felt in him; his decisions will carry no weight, and will injure rather than benefit the community.

2. MEN OF PIETY. "Provide out of all the people such as fear God," said Jethro. It is greatly to be feared that this qualification is in modern times but slightly regarded. How seldom do we hear it asked of any newly-appointed judge—Is he a religious man? And yet unless God is feared, there can be no security that justice will be done even by the judge of the greatest possible intelligence. If a man be not God-fearing, he may allow prejudice, passion, even caprice to sway his judgments. He may gradually become like the "unjust judge," who "feared not God neither regarded man." Or, again, he may have to pronounce judgment in matters concerning religion, for such will often come before courts, and then what weight can he expect his decisions to

have? It is a wise and venerable custom which makes it incumbent on our "judges of assize" to preface the opening of their commission in each assize town by attendance at Divine service and hearing of God's word preached by a minister of the Gospel. It would be still better if those who nominate judges would follow Jethro's counsel, and take care in each instance to select for the office "such as fear God"—*i.e.*, sincerely religious persons. The reality of religion is preferable to the show of it; and the only security for righteous judgments is that the judge be himself a righteous man.

3. MEN OF TRUTH. There can be no real piety without truthfulness, so that this qualification is, in fact, included in the last. But there is a semblance of piety which is not over-scrupulous with regard to truth, or "pious frauds" would not have passed into a bye-word. Truth, the love of it, the honest desire to search it out, and make it manifest, is so essential a quality in a judge, that it deserves separate mention, and can never be dispensed with, whatever other qualifications a man may have. Let there be any suspicion of a man's truthfulness, and then, whatever reputation for piety may attach to him, he is not fitted to be a judge, and ought not to be selected for the judge's office.

4. MEN OF PROBITY, who would scorn to take a bribe. The "corrupt judge" is the opprobrium of debased nations, the disgrace of his calling, the destroyer of the state to which he belongs. In many ancient kingdoms corruption, when detected in a judge, was punished by instant execution. Where it has been regarded as venial and punished inadequately, as at Rome, society has rapidly deteriorated and a revolution has shortly supervened. We may congratulate ourselves that judges in our own country are not only incorrupt, but beyond suspicion, so far above taking a bribe that no one would dare to offer them one. In the East, on the contrary, according to the universal testimony of travellers, it is scarcely possible to find the office of judge exercised by any one who is not notoriously open to corrupt influence, who does not expect, and is not anxious to receive, bribes. Among the Jews, judicial corruption is first noticed among the sons of Samuel, who "turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment" (1 Sam. viii. 3). In the decline of the nation, the evil grew and increased, and is frequently denounced by the prophets (Is. i. 23; Jer. v. 28; Ezek. xxii. 27; Micah iii. 11; *etc.*).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 13—27.—*The appointment of judges.* During the few days that Jethro was with Moses, he did the latter an essential service, and initiated nothing short of a revolution in the manner of conducting judicial business. Besides its immediate lessons (noted below), this incident of the appointment of judges is valuable as illustrating—1. The scope left in the arrangements of Israel for the independent action of the human mind. Various examples of this occur in the history—*e.g.*, the retention of Hobab as a guide in the wanderings (Num. x. 31), and the suggestion of the spies (Deut. i. 22). 2. The truth that in God's ways of dealing with Israel, existing capabilities were utilised to the utmost. We have seen this in regard to the miracles, and again in the conflict with Amalek; it is now to be noted in the formation of a polity. The same principle probably applies to what is said in ver. 16 of Moses making the people to "know the statutes of God and his laws." That Moses, in giving forth these statutes, acted under supernatural direction, and frequently by express instruction of God, is not to be denied; but it is equally certain that existing usages, embodying principles of right, were taken advantage of as far as they went. We cannot err in supposing that it is this same case-made law which, in its completed form, and under special Divine sanction, is embodied in the code of chs. xxi-xxiii. But neither in substance nor in form is this code, so various in its details, a direct Divine product. It grew up under Moses' hand in these decisions in the wilderness. Traditional materials were freely incorporated into it. 3. The assistance which a man of moderate gifts is often capable of rendering to another, greatly his superior. Jethro's was certainly a mind of no ordinary capacity; but we do this excellent man no injustice in speaking of his gifts as moderate in comparison with the splendid abilities of Moses. Yet his natural shrewdness and plain common-sense enabled him to detect a blunder in Moses' system of administration of which the lawgiver himself was

apparently oblivious, and furnished him, moreover, with the suggestion of a remedy. The greatest minds are in this way often dependent on the humblest, and are, by the dependence, taught humility and respect for the gifts of others. There is no one who is not his neighbour's superior in *some* matter—none from whom his neighbour may not learn *something*. The college-bred man may learn from the rustic or mechanic, the merchant from his clerk, the statesman from the humblest official in his department, the doctor of divinity from the country minister, studious men generally, from those engaged in practical callings. Let no man, therefore, despise another. Jethro could teach Moses; and the plainest man, drawing on the stores with which experience has furnished him, need not despair of being of like service to those above him. It is for our own good that God binds us together in these relations of dependence, and we should be thankful that he does so. "The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: nor, again, the head to the feet, I have no need of thee," etc. (1 Cor. xii. 14-31). Observe—

I. MOSES' ERROR (ver. 13). He took upon himself the whole burden of the congregation. He sat from morning till evening to hear their causes. We naturally wonder that the suggestion of appointing judges was left to come from Jethro—that so obvious an expedient for getting rid of the difficulty did not occur to Moses himself. It is astonishing, however, how wise a man may be in *great* things, and yet miss some little bit of sense which is right before his vision, and which is picked up at once by another and possibly a more ordinary mind. It is of Sir Isaac Newton the story is told, that being troubled by the visits of a cat and kitten, he fell on the expedient of making two holes in his study door to admit of their entrance and exit—a large hole for the cat, *and a small hole for the kitten!* Moses' error, we may be sure, did not arise from that which is a snare to so many in responsible positions—an exaggerated idea of his own importance. He would not fancy that everything must be managed by himself, because no one else was able to do it so well. But:—1. The burden which now pressed upon him had probably grown from small beginnings. It is proverbially easier to set a system in operation, than to get rid of it again, when it presses and becomes inconvenient. 2. Moses probably accepted the position of judge and arbiter, as inseparable from the peculiar relation in which he stood to the people. They naturally looked to him, God's delegate, and in some sense their spiritual father, as the proper person to hear their causes, and settle their disputes. He felt the burden, but submitted to it as inevitable. 3. It was a further difficulty in the situation that no code of laws had as yet been formed; he was *making the law* as well as deciding cases. This may have seemed a bar in the way of the appointment of deputies. 4. The method by which the reform could be accomplished was not obvious. Jethro's scheme exactly met the case; but it had not as yet been suggested. Even had it occurred to Moses, he might have shrunk from entertaining it. There is always a hesitancy felt in entering on reforms which necessitate a large recasting of the frame-work of society, which involve new and untried arrangements. Difficulties might have been anticipated in finding the requisite number of men, in imparting to them the requisite amount of instruction, in making the scheme popular among the people, etc. It is useful to observe that when the scheme was actually set on foot, these difficulties did not prove to be insuperable. Nor, when Jethro made his proposal, do the difficulties seem to have been much thought of. Moses saw the wisdom of the plan, and readily adopted it. We are often thus kept back from useful undertakings by the ghosts of our own fears.

II. JETHRO'S EXPOSTULATION (vers. 14—19). If Moses did not see the mistake he was committing, Jethro did. To his clearer vision, the evils of the system in vogue were abundantly apparent. He saw:—1. That Moses was taking upon himself a task to which his strength was quite unequal (ver. 18). 2. That, notwithstanding his exertions, the work was not being done. 3. That the time and energy which Moses was expending in these labours could be bestowed to infinitely better purpose (ver. 20). 4. Above all, that this expenditure of strength on subordinate tasks was unnecessary, seeing that there were men in the camp as capable as Moses himself of doing a large part of the work (ver. 21). On these grounds he based his expostulation. The lessons taught are of great importance. (1) The neglect of division of labour in Christian work leads to serious evils. The work is not overtaken, the strength of those engaged in it is greatly overtaxed, while energy is bestowed on inferior tasks which might be applied to

better purpose. (2) The adoption of division of labour in Christian work secures obvious advantages. It relieves the responsible heads, expedites business and promotes order, secures that the work is better done, and utilises a great variety of talent which would otherwise remain unemployed. These are important considerations, and the application of them to hard wrought clergymen, and to others in responsible positions, is sufficiently obvious (see an essay by Dr. Caird, on "The co-operation of the laity in the government and work of the Church," in *Good Words* for 1863). Not a little work is heaped by congregations on ministers which could be far better done by persons among themselves, and the doing of which by laymen would leave the minister free in mind and heart for the discharge of his higher and proper duties.

III. THE PROPOSAL OF THE APPOINTMENT OF JUDGES (vers. 19—27). Jethro's scheme had every merit which a scheme of the kind could have. It relieved Moses, provided for the overtaking of the work, and secured that, while being overtaken, the work would be done with greater efficiency. It was a bold, comprehensive measure, yet withal perfectly workable. It would also have an important effect in welding the nation together. It is to be noted concerning it:—1. That it reserved to Moses various important duties (vers. 19, 20). He was still to be the teacher of the people in the ordinances and laws of God, and had the duty of trying and of deciding upon causes of special difficulty. This would fully occupy his powers, while his relation to the people, as God's viceroy, would be better preserved by his retaining a position apart, and keeping himself from their petty strifes. 2. That special stress is laid upon the character of the men to be selected as judges (ver. 21). Ability is not overlooked, but peculiar importance is attached to their being men that fear God, love truth, and hate covetousness. Happy the country which has such judges! Jethro's insistence on these particulars shows him to have been a man of true piety, and one who had an eye to the true interests of the people, as well as to the good of Moses. 3. The scheme, before being adopted, was to be submitted for God's approval (ver. 23). This should be done with all our schemes. Jethro, having accomplished this useful bit of work, returned to his home in peace (ver. 27).—J. O.

Vers. 13—16.—*The Christian in Public Paths*. "Moses sat to judge the people: and the people," etc. (Ex. xviii. 13). Explain with accuracy the work of Moses. On such a text might be based a homily on the functions, work and bearing of a civil magistrate or judge. But it is better to give the subject a wider application, and to treat it under Christian lights.

I. THE FUNCTIONS OF A CHRISTIAN. Moses sat as a *prophet*, expounding the Divine will, as revealed to his exalted soul by the Spirit of God; and as a *judge*, deciding controversies. Indeed the two functions were blended; in giving legal decisions, he treated the suitors as intelligent and moral beings, assigning the principles on which they were based. These functions of Moses may suggest what should be those of a Christian in the public paths of life. 1. *To expound the mind and will of God: i.e.*, his truth and his law. 2. *To promote peace: i.e.*, in all the relations of life (Matt. v. 9).

II. THE MANNER OF THEIR DISCHARGE. 1. *With patience*. "From the morning unto the evening." 2. *In the spirit of brotherhood*. "The people stood by Moses." No airs of superiority. 3. *With diligence*. Moses went on with his work, though (1) *He had distinguished visitors*. Jethro might have been an excuse for a vacation or a short session. No! "on the morrow" he went on with duty, and worked as long as it was light. "Necessary business must always take the place of ceremonious attention. It is too great a compliment to our friends to prefer the enjoyment of their company before our duty to God." (2) *He had come to great honour*. Moses did not take his ease and throw the burdens upon others. "Noblesse oblige." It is the honour of angels to minister (Heb. i. 14; Matt. xx. 28). (3) *He had received great provocation*. (4) *Advancing in years*. To life's last hour Moses worked for the public good.—R.

Vers. 17—27.—*The Economy of Force*. "The thing that thou doest is not good," etc. Ex. xviii. 17, 18. In the error of Moses, and the amendment suggested by Jethro, are to be discovered most valuable lessons. This day in the life of Moses was a microcosm of all his days. His whole life was service. So with all true life. But in such a life mis-

takes are possible. We inquire then what are the Divine conditions of a life of true ministry?

I. CHARACTER. The elements were laid down by Jethro as qualifications of the new judges. Certain that Moses possessed them. So must all who aim at usefulness (ver. 21). 1. *Ability*. Strange that ability comes first; but so it must be. Piety without ability can adorn only obscurity. Service and responsibility demand the man of power. Ability may be natural; but is also to be acquired. Hence duty of hard work, especially in morning of life. 2. *Piety*. Ability is the engine of the soul, the fear of God the helm. Richard Cobden was wont to say:—"You have no security for a man who has no religious principle." Said his colonel to Hedley Vicars, offering him in 1852 the adjutancy of his regiment:—"Vicars, you are the man I can best trust with responsibility." 3. *Truth*. 4. *Disinterestedness*.

II. ECONOMY, i.e., of force and of resource (vers. 17, 18). Remark:—1. *That the most earnest are likely to neglect it*. It is not the hack but the thoroughbred that needs to be held in. The energy of Moses led him into error. So earnestness kills itself with excess of work. 2. *That there is necessity for economy*. As with money, one must not spend 25s. a week, if one has only 20s.; so there is a limitation as to *strength* (of every kind), *time*, and *opportunity*. 3. *That the economy is easy*. The Christian worker should not attempt that which is *above*, *beside*, or *beneath* his power or vocation. Nor *all* that is *on the level* of his ability. 4. *That the consequences will be abundant and rich*. The result of division of labour in a factory; so with spiritual enterprise, the effects will be the enrichment of the Church, and the largest service for the world.

III. CONCENTRATION. The more we withdraw effort from that which is not within our own province, the more must we accumulate and concentrate energy upon that which is.—R.

Vers. 13—27.—*Good counsel well taken*. I. ZEAL MAY OUTFRAN DISCRETION. 1. Moses' strength was overtaxed, his spirit needlessly burdened. 2. There was delay for the people with its vexation and loss. The most self-sacrificing love will not of itself make our methods the best and wisest.

II. WHAT IS NEEDFUL FOR THE GIVING OF ADVICE. 1. Affectionate interest and care. The people's need and Moses' burden both weigh upon Jethro's spirit. 2. Wisdom. A better way is clearly conceived, all the requirements of the case are grasped and met. 3. Honest plainness. 4. Piety. He asked Moses to take his advice only so far as God will command him.

III. WHAT IS NEEDFUL FOR PROFITING BY GOOD COUNSEL. 1. Readiness to listen. There is on Moses' part no proud resenting of a stranger's interference. The voice was heard as if it rose up within his own bosom. 2. Obedience to conviction. He not only heard and assented, he went and did it.—U.

Vers. 13—26.—*Jethro's advice*. In considering this passage it is desirable to form some distinct opinion as to the time of Jethro's visit to Moses. *How comes this episode to be mentioned at all*, and what is its point of attachment to the main course of the history? Evidently it would not have been inserted unless as explaining how these rulers of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens, had first been appointed. The origin of this appointment is then seen to be traceable to Jethro's prudent and sagacious suggestions. It has then to be further explained how Jethro happens to be in the camp at all. And so we have another illustration of how things which seem utterly disconnected from one another yet have a very real connection. See Zipporah on the way from Midian to Egypt rebelling against the ordinance of the Lord; and then look on all this orderly and careful provision for the administration of justice through the tribes of Israel. What connection should there be between these? Yet one leads to the other. As to the time of the visit, any exact determination is of course out of the question, but this much at least may be guessed that the visit was after the giving of the law. What if it happened just about the time of Miriam's jealousy against Moses, and was in some measure the cause of it? (Num. xii.) Such a supposition too would better harmonise with the reference in ver. 16, when Moses represents himself as explaining the statutes of God and his laws. May we not almost say that if this chapter were inserted some-

where in the earlier part of the book of Numbers, and from it we looked back on all the mass of legislation in Exodus and Leviticus, it would read with far greater force?

I. WE HAVE GOD'S PEOPLE PRESENTED TO US AS ABOUNTING IN OCCASIONS OF DISPUTE AMONG THEMSELVES. This appears as a certain consequence of that spirit of self-seeking so manifest and strong among them. The law from Sinai of course conflicted with many old and honoured traditions. That law had been given to secure in the first place a nation devoted to the service of God; and in the second place the mutual prosperity of all the members of that nation. If only every Israelite had obeyed these laws from the heart, and entered into the spirit of them, then the prosperity of all would have been ensured. But as a matter of fact most part of the Israelites wanted to conform to the laws just so far as suited their convenience and no further. Laws were to be interpreted very strictly when such interpretations were for their advantage, and very loosely when the contrary. The disputes, misunderstandings, and lawsuits of society are a great reproach, and ought to be a great humiliation. Think of all the machinery which is in daily operation through such a land as England to secure, as far as may be, the doing of right between man and man. And yet this machinery, expensive and elaborate as it is, works in a very unsatisfactory way; indeed that which is meant to work justice very often works injustice, and certainly very seldom ensures the exact attainment of right. Hence, however pleased we are to look on Jethro's suggestions here, and see them carried out with a measure of success, we feel that they must not be suffered to hide an end more desirable still. Law reformers cry out, and with ample cause, for the adoption of such means as will secure a cheap and speedy settlement of all disputes. But how much more would be gained if only there was a universal acceptance of the Gospel, with all its powers and principles! That Gospel puts into man a loving and unselfish heart and a spirit of brotherliness, which, if allowed fair play, would soon do away with litigation and all that leads to it. A world of Christians would be a simple-hearted, plain-living people, ever acting towards one another in truth, kindness, and goodwill. Cheap justice is good; but the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, are much better.

II. WE SEE MOSES DOING HIS BEST, BY INDIVIDUAL EFFORT, TO RECONCILE AND SATISFY THESE DISPUTANTS. We get the impression of a man whose hands are full with his judicial work. When his own dear kinsfolk come in such affecting and pressing circumstances, he can only spare for them a brief interval; and a large part of that interval seems to have been occupied with religious exercises. With the morning light Moses settles down to what he must have found a weary and discouraging work. Many a perjury, many an impudent claim, many a reckless slander, many a pitiful story of oppression and extortion he would have to listen to. It is the daily work of judges and magistrates to deal with the seamy side of human nature, but then this is their business; they look for it, they get used to it, above all they are paid for it. Perhaps they would say, most of them, that it is no affair of theirs to ask too curiously whence all this disputing comes and how it is to be cured. They are there to administer laws and not to make them. But Moses was more than a judge. He had not only to settle these disputes by the way, but also to guide the disputers towards Canaan. We are perfectly certain, too, that the great bulk of those against whom justice compelled him to decide would become his enemies. Yet he struggled on, accepting the responsibility, and trying to get the laws of God for Israel more and more accepted among the people. He indeed sets us, in this matter, a noble example. The pressure which was upon him will never rest upon us, for all men sought him; but we also have our limited opportunity, larger alas! than we seek to use, of advancing the things that make for peace. There is so much to promote discord, so much to excite partisan spirit; there are so many to tear every rent wider, instead of putting in the little stitch in time that saves nine, that we may well ask for grace, gentleness, fidelity, and impartiality, in order to put in our intervening word when such a word may be possible and acceptable. The more we think of all that there is in this world acting, often alas! consciously and deliberately, to spite, separate, and irritate, the more let us determine to form part of a reuniting and cementing force.

III. NOTICE THE TIMELY PRESENCE AND COUNSEL OF JETHRO. Truly there is appearance here of something unaccountable in the dealings of God. Such a seemingly important matter as the judicial system of Israel owes its existence to the suggestion of

an outsider. And yet it might have been thought that this was exactly one of the things which Jehovah would provide for by express enactments. When it is a matter of making the tabernacle, he is very particular as to measurements and materials, but when it is a matter of judging causes, he leaves it to be determined by the advice of an apparently casual visitant to the camp. There is nothing really strange in all this, if we remember that God only instructs us where we cannot make discoveries for ourselves. Revelation does not supersede, it rather assumes and requires the exercise of common sense and natural judgment. We find a somewhat parallel case to this in the New Testament when the deacons were appointed. Common sense told the apostles they were becoming burdened with work which did not properly belong to them, and only hindered them in the doing of work for which they were specially responsible; and so here the common sense of Jethro steps in to suggest to Moses a more excellent way. Why did not Moses think of it himself? The very fact that he did not shed a great deal of light on his character. His strength lay not in personal initiation, but in complete waiting and dependence on God. If God had commanded the institution of these rulers, he would very quickly have had the command in operation; but he never thought of proposing the plan himself. But when another proposes it, he can see at once that it is a wise, practicable, and necessary one. Moses is not to be blamed as wanting in sagacity in that he failed to see this remedy before. Great discoveries are simple enough when once they are made; and then everyone wonders they were not made long before.

IV. OBSERVE THE DETAILS OF JETHRO'S ADVICE. Not only does he suggest the obtaining of help from somewhere, but taking in the whole situation at a glance, he can suggest exactly the best thing to be done. Probably as a priest in Midian he had seen a great many disputings and helped to some extent in the settlement of them. We cannot but feel as we read through the details of the counsel, that whatever may be lacking in Jethro's formal standing, he acquits himself as one who is really and opportunely the messenger of God. He speaks as a good and true man ought to speak both for the relief of his kinsman and for the abiding good of the whole people. He judges that in Israel itself there are resources enough to meet the emergency, if only properly searched out and arranged. Given 600,000 men, surely among them there will be a fair proportion who have the qualities required. Notice that Jethro aims at a high standard (ver. 21); able men are wanted, and wherein does the ability consist? No doubt a certain acuteness and general power of mind was required, but the chief elements of the ability lay in those qualities which Jethro went on to specify. An efficient judge between man and man must be also one who fears God. The fear of man that bringeth a snare must not be allowed to enter his mind. He must measure things by Divine standards, ever asking what God would wish his judgments to be. He must be a man of truth, sparing no effort and avoiding no danger; in order to get at it he must try to keep his mind clear from prejudices. If he has fallen into any error he will promptly confess it, feeling that the interests of truth are more important than a reputation for consistency. And he must be free from covetousness. No suspicion of a bribe will cling to his judgments, nor will he be infected with that worldliness of spirit which looks to the property of men a great deal more than to the interest and comfort of their persons. But now the half-incredulous question cannot be kept out of the mind, "where shall such judges be found?" At all events let them be sought for. We cannot find perfect men; but we know the direction in which to seek. Probably, in the course of a long life, Jethro has discovered that men are both better and worse than he thought at first; and he is perfectly certain that men can be found to do all that is indispensably requisite for the present need. Moses was wearing himself out with duties which many in Israel were quite competent to perform; but who of them all could do the work which had been put specially into his hands?—Y.

Vers. 19.—"*The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee.*" Men may make a channel for the stream, but they cannot make the stream. Water-power is a grand *natural* agency; but it is by means of *human* agency that it may be applied to the best advantage. So also in other matters; *power* comes from God; the way to use and economise power it is left for man to discover and to act upon. Consider here:—

I. THE DIVINE POWER. "God shall be with thee," said Jethro. The history shows how

God had been with him already, how he was with him all through his life. Especially we may notice—1. *His relation to Pharaoh*. The shepherd facing the king. Whence his boldness? He had shrunk beforehand at the mere prospect; when the hour came Pharaoh quailed before him. It was not Moses, it was the power which manifested itself through Moses, that humbled Pharaoh. Moses was but the visible rod in the outstretched hand of the invisible Jehovah. 2. *His relation to the people*. Harder to face a fickle multitude than to face an obstinate and powerful monarch. Here too the Divine power was manifested; the glory of Jehovah was, as it were, reflected from the face of his servant. It was the radiancy of the reflected glory which again and again cowed the rebels to submission. As with Jeremiah (Jer. i. 4—8), Zerubbabel (Zed. iv. 6), St. Paul (2 Cor. xii. 9, 10), so also with Moses; human weakness the more evidently testified to Divine power.

II. THE HUMAN COUNSEL. Notice:—1. *The need of it*. Men are so weak that they are soon unhinged by a great trust reposed in them. Their attention is so fixed upon the one thing, that other things are seen out of perspective. Moses was so filled with the consciousness of a Divine power working through him, that he failed at first to realise the fact that he was unequal to the friction necessitated by such a power. He realised the effect of the power in prospect more accurately than he could do after it possessed him (cf. ch. iv.). As the mediator between God and Israel, had it not been for Jethro's counsel, he must soon have been worn out through forgetting the necessities of his own nature. Lives are still wasted and shortened through a like oversight. The man who feels that he is the channel of Divine power is, for the time, so God-intoxicated, that it does not occur to him to share his responsibilities. He must be both head and hands in everything, and the head in consequence soon grows heavy, and the hands hang down. Under the force of inspiration, common-sense is in abeyance; all the more need for wise counsel from those who occupy a neutral stand-point. 2. *The wisdom of it*. Jethro saw that the great thing was not that Moses should do all the work, but that all the work should be done. The power to do it, was no doubt lodged with Moses (cf. water-power lodged with keeper of sluice gates). The work, however, might be best done by a distribution of the power through selected agents. Moses need not to be head *and* hands; he might choose other hands, making them responsible to himself as head. Moses showed his wisdom by accepting the wise counsels of Jethro; many men would have shown their folly by setting them aside as the suggestions of ignorance.

Concluding considerations. Inspiration is a grand thing; but it may be best utilised by common-sense. God's power enables for action; but that power is best applied when the counsels of Jethro are attended to. All men have not the same gifts; and those who have what seem to be the higher gifts, are apt to set too small a value upon advice given by those less gifted. Even the gift of faith, however, needs the gift of wisdom to direct it. Moses was able to do more than he otherwise could have done because he was wise enough to hearken to the voice of Jethro, his father-in-law.

G.

EXPOSITION.

Ver. 27.—DEPARTURE OF JETHRO. The time of Jethro's departure, and indeed of his entire visit, has been matter of controversy. Kurtz is of opinion that Jethro waited till the news of Israel's victory over Amalek reached him, before setting out from his own country. Hence he concludes, that "a whole month or more may easily have intervened between the victory over Amalek and the arrival of Jethro," whose arrival in that case "would not even fall into the very earliest period of the sojourn at Sinai, but after the promulgation of the first Sinaitic law." Those who identify Hobab

with Jethro find in Num. x. 29—32 a proof that at any rate Jethro prolonged his visit until after the law was given, and did not "depart to his own land" before the removal of the people from the wilderness of Sinai to that of Paran, "in the 20th day of the second month of the second year" (ib. ver. 11). The position, however, of ch. xviii., together with its contents—both what it says and what it omits—are conclusive against this view. Jethro started on his journey when he heard "that the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt" (ver. 1), not when he heard that Israel

had been victorious over Amalek. His conversation with Moses (vers. 7—11) ranged over the entire series of deliverances from the night of the departure out of Egypt to the Amalekite defeat, but contained no allusion to the giving of the law. The occupation of Moses on the day after his arrival (ver. 13) is suitable to the quiet period which followed the Amalekite defeat, but not to the exciting time of the Sinaitic manifestations. It may be added that the practice of inculcating general principles on occasion of his particular judgments, of which Moses speaks (ver. 16), is suitable to the period anterior to the promulgation of the law, but not to that following it.

The argument from Num. x 29—32 fails altogether, so soon as it is seen that Jethro and Hobab are distinct persons, probably brothers, sons of Reuel (or Raguel), and brothers-in-law of Moses.

Ver. 27.—**Moses let his father-in-law depart.** Literally, “dismissed him,” “sent him away.” This single expression is quite enough to prove that the Hobab, whom Moses made strenuous efforts to keep with him after Sinai was left, is not the Jethro whom he was quite content to let go. **He went his way into his own land.** He returned to Midian, probably crossing the Elanitic gulf, which divided Midian from the Sinaitic region. The exact time of the departure is uncertain; but it was probably before the main events related in ch. xix.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 27.—*Jethro the model of a friendly adviser.* A man's friends often hesitate to offer advice, from the fear of its being ill received. Jethro showed himself superior to this weakness, and risked being rebuffed for officiousness, confident in his singleness of purpose and honest intentions. He had all the qualities of a good adviser. He was—1. **SAGACIOUS.** There can be no doubt that he rightly forecast the results, if Moses had continued his unwise monopoly of the judicial office, or that he suggested a prudent course in place of that whereof he disapproved. His reservation of a certain judicial power to Moses (vers. 20—22) was especially wise, since had he not done so, it is highly probable that his counsel would not have been followed;—2. **SYMPATHETIC.** Kindness and warm feeling breathed in his warning words:—“Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou and this people . . . for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.” He feels for Moses; he feels for the people; he has no thought for himself; he is solely anxious, and deeply anxious, to save others from unnecessary suffering;—3. **STRAIGHTFORWARD.** He does not use periphrases, or beat about the bush, but goes straight to his point, making his purpose clearly intelligible, and indeed unmistakable—“The thing that thou doest is not good”—“provide out of the people able men.” 4. **WHOLLY DISINTERESTED.** The advice which he tenders can do him no good. He asks no employment, no place for himself. He will not even participate in the general prosperity of Israel if good results follow the adoption of his counsel; for he is not about to cast in his lot with the Israelites. On the contrary, he is bent on withdrawing at once into his own country. Moses will not find him that keen annoyance, an ever-present friend, who because his advice has been taken once, regards himself as entitled to obtrude it whenever he pleases, and to feel aggrieved if it is not in every case followed. If advisers generally acted in the spirit of Jethro, there would be far less unwillingness than there is to ask advice, and far more gratitude felt towards those who volunteer it.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 27. *Jethro's departure.* I. **JETHRO DEPARTS AFTER A MOST SATISFACTORY VISIT.** That visit was made not perhaps without some anxiety and doubt as to the results, but still under the clear dictation of duty. Therefore, it would have been satisfactory even if less successful. Moses might, conceivably, have looked on Zipporah coldly and received her reluctantly; but there would have remained to Jethro the priceless satisfaction that he had done the right thing. But Jethro, we have seen, had more even than the satisfaction of a good conscience; he had been successful, and successful beyond all that he could have anticipated when he set out. To a man of Jethro's disposition, that would indeed be a joyous visit, which had proved so useful to Moses, to Zipporah, to their children, to Israel, and may we not add, towards the glorifying of Jethro himself? Keep ever in the path that is clearly right, and you have Jethro's experience to

encourage you in the expectation that it may also be the path of noble and joyous opportunities.

II. JETHRO DEPARTS, AND MOSES IS MADE TO FEEL, MORE THAN EVER, THAT JEHOVAH REMAINS. Very helpful are human counsel and sympathy, and especially when they come from old friends. There are no friends like old friends, and Jethro was a very old friend to Moses. But Jethro's abilities and opportunities as adviser extended only a little way. Like Moses we may all have our Jethros whom we may love, cherish and venerate; for God distributes such men everywhere about the world to be, as it were, fellow-workers with him in giving stability and illumination to the perplexed. But we cannot keep them; we may lose them at any moment; and while it is great wisdom to listen to them, it would be great folly to put them in the place of God. Though Jethro was very decided in the counsels he gave, he knew equally when to stop. We may look at him as coming in here to teach us that what we can expect from the most competent and loving of human friends is but a trifle compared with the great tota of our nee s. We are allowed to have but small expectations from the brother sinner, the brother mortal, the brother who is liable to ignorance and error, just as much as we are ourselves. When Jethro went away, Moses would feel himself all the more shut up to Jehovah. When the earthly is dumb, misleading, estranged, or dead, then the heavenly will speak in clear and loving accents to all who have ears to hear.

III. Jethro departs into his own land, for HE HAD DOUBTLESS PRESSING CLAIMS UPON HIM THERE. He was just the kind of man to make his presence, as long as he lived, a kind of necessity to his neighbours. He had come on a matter of urgency, not for his own pleasure or ease; and we may imagine he went back as soon as he conveniently could to finish such affairs at home as had been left unfinished. Note, however, that in going back to his own land, and away from Moses, he did not therefore retire from the service of God and the reach of God's blessings. Jethro and Moses seemed to be going different ways; but they only differed in external circumstances. Moses does not seem even to have asked Jethro to stay with him; whereas we know that he pressed and urged Hobab. Perhaps he felt that he had no sufficient reason for asking Jethro, or that it would be of no use.—Y.

SECTION XIII.

ISRAEL AT SINAI.—PREPARATIONS FOR THE GIVING OF THE LAND.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIX

Vers. 1—2. — THE JOURNEY TO MOUNT SINAI. From Rephidim in the Wady Feiran, where they had discomfited Amalek (ch. xvii 8—13), the Israelites moved towards Sinai, probably by the two passes known as Wady Solaf and Wady-esh-Sheikh, which gradually converge and meet at the entrance to the plain of Er-Rahah. This plain is generally allowed to be "the Desert of Sinai." It is "two miles long, and half-a-mile broad" (*Our Work in Palestine*, p. 268), nearly flat, and dotted with tamarisk bushes. The mountains which enclose it have for the most part sloping sides, and form a sort of natural amphitheatre. The plain abuts at its south-eastern extremity on abrupt cliffs of granite rock rising from it nearly perpendicularly, and known as the Ras Sufsafeh. "That such a plain should exist at

all in front of such a cliff is," as Dean Stanley well remarks, "so remarkable a coincidence with the sacred narrative, as to furnish a strong internal argument, not merely of its identity with the scene, but of the scene itself having been described by an eye-witness" (*Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 42-3). All the surroundings are such as exactly suit the narrative. "The awful and lengthened approach, as to some natural sanctuary, would have been the fittest preparation for the coming scene. The low line of alluvial mounds at the foot of the cliff exactly answers to the 'bounds' which were to keep the people on from 'touching the mount.' The plain itself is not broken and uneven and narrowly shut in, like almost all others in the range, but presents a long retiring sweep, against which the people could 'remove and stand afar off' The cliff, rising like a huge altar, in

front of the whole congregation, and visible against the sky in lonely grandeur from end to end of the whole plain, is the very image of 'the mount that might be touched,' and from which the voice of God might be heard far and wide over the plain below, widened at that point to its utmost extent by the confluence of all the contiguous valleys. Here, beyond all other parts of the peninsula, is the *adytum*, withdrawn as if in the end 'of the world,' from all the stir and confusion of earthly things" (*ib.* p. 43). As an eminent engineer has observed—"No spot in the world can be pointed out which combines in a more remarkable manner the conditions of a commanding height and of a plain in every part of which the sights and sounds described in Exodus would reach an assembled multitude of more than two million souls." Here then, we may well say, in the words used by the most recent of scientific explorers, "was the scene of the giving of the law. From Ras Sufsâfeh the law was proclaimed to the

children of Israel, assembled in the plains of Er Rahah" (*Our Work in Palestine*, p. 268).

Ver. 1.—**In the third month.** The month Sivan, corresponding nearly with our June **When the children of Israel were gone forth.** Rather, "after the children of Israel had gone forth," or "after the departure of the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt." Compare ch. xvi. 1, where the expression used is the same. **The same day.** Literally, "on that day"—which can only mean "on the day that the month began"—on the 1st of Sivan. **The wilderness of Sinai.** The plain Er-Rahah; as is now generally allowed, since the true character of the Wady Sebaiyeh has been shown by Dean Stanley (*Sinai and Palestine* p. 76) and others.

Ver. 2.—**They were departed from Reph idim.** See the comment on ch. xvii. 1, and compare Num. xxxiii. 15. **There Israel encamped before the mountain.** The bulk of the tents were no doubt pitched in the plain, Er-Rahah; but this may not have sufficed, and some may have been located in the Wadyed-Deir, north-east of the Ras Sufsâfeh, and others in the Seil-Leja to the west. The Ras Sufsâfeh is visible from both these valleys.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1—2.—*Localities shaped to suit God's moral purposes.* It is scarcely possible to read the descriptions of the Sinaitic localities by modern travellers, who pointedly note their exact adaptation to the scenes transacted among them, without the feeling stealing upon us, that God, in the countless ages during which he was shaping and ordering the earth to be a fitting habitation for man was also arranging it in such sort as would best conduce to the exhibition upon it of those supernatural occurrences, which in his counsels were to constitute turning-points in the moral history of man. Take for instance Jerusalem: are we to suppose that the valleys were furrowed and the rocky platform upraised by the elements acting mechanically, as chance might direct, or not rather that God lovingly shaped, age after age, the mountain where he was about to set his name, and which was to be "the joy of the whole earth"? (Ps. xlviii. 2.) Rome again, with its seven hills: was not this remarkable formation brought into existence to constitute the site for that capital which was to be, first and last, the pivot of the world's secular history; for five hundred years the seat of an almost universal empire; for a thousand the western ecclesiastical centre; and having in the future possibilities which the wisest forecast can only dimly indicate, but which transcend those of any other existing city. And, if in these cases Providence contrived and shaped the geographic features with a view to the future history, must it not have been the same at Sinai? Must not that vast granite cluster have been upreared in the place it holds by a series of throes which shook all the regions of the east, *in order that* from it the law might be given in such a way as to impress men deeply? Must not the plain Er-Rahah have been washed by floods into its present level surface to furnish a convenient place from which the multitudinous host of Israel might at once see and hear? Must not the entire Sinaitic region have been so modelled, that here should be the *adytum*—here and here alone in the entire district, should be the natural "inmost sanctuary"—*penetrable*—"holy of holies"—the centre of attraction—the fit spot for supernatural events, on which the future of mankind was to hinge for fourteen centuries? To us it seems, that God did not so much select for his supernatural communications with man the fittest of existing localities, as design the localities themselves with a view to the communications, shaping them to suit his moral purposes.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2. *Arrival and encampment at Sinai.*—We come now to the consideration of what, next to the exodus, is the greatest event in Israel's history—the ratification at Sinai of the nation's covenant with God, preceded by the giving of the law. We cannot attach too great importance to these Divine acts. The covenant at Sinai placed Israel in a totally unique relation to Jehovah. It conferred on that people an honour the like of which no nation on earth ever had, or ever has since, enjoyed. It gave rise to an economy, the express design of which was to prepare the way for Christ—to shut men up under a conviction of the hopelessness of attaining righteousness by the law, to the faith that should afterwards be revealed (Gal. iii. 23). This covenant, as befitted the majesty of God, dealing with a sinful people, was to be ordained “in the hand of a mediator” (Gal. iii. 19). Moses, accordingly, is seen in these verses entering on his mediatorial functions. Once, a second, and a third time, in the course of this single chapter, he is seen ascending the mount, to meet with God (vers. 3, 8, 20); and once, a second, and a third time, he is sent back from its awful recesses with a message to the people. Vers. 1, 2 relate the arrival at Sinai.

I. THE NOTE OF TIME.—“In the third month,” etc. (ver. 1). That is, about six weeks—forty or fifty days—after leaving Egypt. This was close on the date of Pentecost, afterwards traditionally observed as the anniversary of the giving of the law. It was probably with allusion to this fact that, in the new economy, the day of Pentecost was chosen for the gift of the Spirit to the Church (Acts ii.). Thus was fulfilled the prophecy—“Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts” (Jer. xxxi. 31—33). “Sinai, then, was the Pentecost of the old dispensation. And, conversely, Pentecost is the Sinai of the new.” (Gibson.)

II. THE PLACE OF ENCAMPMENT.—“The wilderness of Sinai . . . before the mount (vers. 1, 2). A fitter theatre for the awful revelation about to be given could scarcely be imagined. The heart of the desert, it was—1. A place of *absolute solitude*. The people were absolutely alone with God—withdrawn from everything which could distract their thoughts from him and from his message. Owen observes—“When God deals with men by the law, he will let them see nothing but himself and their own consciences . . . For the most part, when the law is preached to sinners, they have innumerable diversions and reliefs at hand to shield them from its terror and efficacy. . . . They have other things to do than to attend to the voice of the law; at least, it is not yet necessary that they should so do. But when God will bring them to the mount, as he will here or hereafter, all these pretexts will vanish and disappear” (on Heb. xii. 18). For the thorough awakening of conscience, we must get a man *alone*—must, in some way or other, sever him from his ordinary surroundings. 2. A place of *great sublimity*. Travellers dwell with awe on its bare, desolate grandeur—on “the lengthened approach” to the mount, “as to some natural sanctuary.” The mind, amidst such grandeur, is irresistibly drawn upwards. It is brought into the condition most fit for the reception of thoughts of the everlasting and sublime. How suitable was such a place for the promulgation of that moral law which Kant said affected him with such indescribable awe every time he thought of it! Every circumstance was present which could lend body, vastness, volume, impressiveness, and reduplicated sublimity to the terrors of the revelation. The “sound of the trumpet and the voice of words” would reverberate with strange power amid those rocky heights, and along the echoing valleys. The sternness of the environment was itself a commentary on the law's sanctities. 3. A place of *barrenness*. “It was a barren and fruitless desert, where there was little water or food, and, answerably thereunto, the law in a state of sin, would bring forth no fruit, nothing acceptable to God, nor useful to the souls of men.” (Owen.) So entirely has the spirit of this scene—of this awful desert solitude—passed into the revelation connected with it, that the two can no longer be dissociated. Sinai, unconsciously to ourselves, acts upon us to this hour, in every contact of our minds with the truths of the law.

III. THE DESIGN OF THE STAY. Israel abode at Sinai for eleven months. During

this period the nation enjoyed a season of rest, received the law, ratified its covenant with God, constructed a sanctuary, and was otherwise equipped and organised. It was a time of repose, of retired communion with God, of receptivity. Such times are very needful in the spiritual life. 1. *Needful for all.* The Christian toiler needs seasons of rest (Mark vi. 31). His truest rest will be found in communion with God and study of his will. By-and-by the call will come, summoning him to renewed activity—"Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount," etc. (Deut. i. 6). 2. *Specially needful in the stage of spiritual history immediately succeeding conversion.* Young converts will do well to ponder the example of Paul, who, after God had revealed his Son in him, and before entering on his work as an apostle, "went into Arabia," perhaps revisiting this very spot (Gal. i. 17). They are all the better for some such season of solitary communion with God as is represented by Israel's stay at Sinai. They need repose of mind. Like the Israelites, they have a covenant to ratify with God. Like the Israelites, they stand greatly in need of instruction. They need time for lengthened study of the Divine will. They need equipment and preparation for the trials they are afterwards to encounter. Their coming, it is true, is rather figured as a coming to Mount Zion, than as a coming to Mount Sinai (Heb. xii. 22); but none the less has Sinai important lessons which it will be for their interest not to overlook. The Christian who does not frequently in spirit visit Sinai will not readily understand his privileges at Zion. The following words of Dr. Candlish express important truth:—"Individually, by a separate process in each mind, a distinct spiritual change in every soul, God effects the rescue of his people. There cannot, therefore, be any general gathering together, in a literal sense, such as there was at Sinai. But practically, in a real though spiritual sense, every converted soul has to pass through an analogous spiritual crisis. It is a momentous crisis, as regards both the exodus and the pilgrimage; the escape he has made and the way he has to go. It is, in fact, the settlement, once for all, of the terms upon which he is henceforth to be with his God as his Sovereign Lord. It is his being confronted and brought face to face with God, in a new state and character, as redeemed by his grace, and ready for his work." ("Fatherhood of God.")—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Ver. 3—9.—**THE FIRST COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND ISRAEL.** As Moses, having reached the foot of Sinai, was proceeding to ascend the mountain, where he looked to have special revelations from God, God called to him out of the mountain, and required a positive engagement on the part of the people, before he would condescend to enter into further direct relations with them. If, through gratitude for what had been done for them in the deliverance from Egypt, and since, they would solemnly engage to obey God and keep the covenant that he should make with them (verse 5), then a fresh revelation should be made, and fresh engagements entered into; but not otherwise. Moses communicated the message to the people through the elders, and received the solemn promise, which he carried back to God. "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do."

Ver. 3.—**Moses went up unto God.** From the time of his call Moses had known that Israel was to serve God upon Sinai (ch. iii. 12), and had regarded either one special peak, or the whole range as "the mount of God"—a

place dedicated and set apart to Jehovah. It was natural, therefore, that, so soon as he reached the near vicinity of the mount, he should ascend it. The Lord called to him out of the Mount. God often accepts the will for the deed, and spares his saints a needless toil. Here, as Moses was on his way, God anticipated him, and calling to him out of the mountain sent him back to the people with a message. **The house of Jacob.** This rare expression, familiar to no sacred writer but Isaiah, recalls the promises made to Jacob of a numerous seed, which should grow from a house to a nation (Gen. xxviii. 14; xxxv 11).

Ver. 4.—**Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians.** God prefaces his appeal to Israel with respect to the future, by reminding them of what he had done for them in the past. In the fewest possible words he recalls to their recollection the whole series of signs and wonders wrought in Egypt, from the turning of the water into blood to the destruction of Pharaoh's host in the Red Sea. These, he implies, ought to have taught them to trust him. **I bare you on eagle's wings** (compare Deut. xxxii. 11), where the metaphor is expanded at considerable length. The strength and might of God's sustaining care

and its loving tenderness, are especially glanced at in the comparison. **Brought you unto myself.** "Brought you," *i.e.*, "to Sinai, the mount of God, where it pleases me especially to reveal myself to you."

Ver. 5.—**Now therefore.** Instead of asking the simple question—"Will ye promise to obey me and keep my covenant?"—God graciously entices the Israelites to their own advantage by a most loving promise. If they will agree to obey his voice, and accept and keep his covenant, then they shall be to him a **peculiar treasure** (*segullah*)—a precious possession to be esteemed highly and carefully guarded from all that might injure it. (Compare Ps. cxxxv. 4; and see also Is. xliii. 1—4.) And this preciousness they shall not share with others on equal terms, but enjoy exclusively—it shall be theirs **above all people**. No other nation on the earth shall hold the position which they shall hold, or be equally precious in God's sight. All the earth is his: and so all nations are his in a certain sense. But this shall not interfere with the special Israelite prerogative—they alone shall be his "peculiar people" (Deut. xiv. 2).

Ver. 6.—**Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests.** Or "a royalty of priests"—at once a royal and a priestly race—all of you at once both priests and kings. (So the LXX. render, βασιλεῖον ἱερέων; the Targums of Onkelos and Jerusalem, "kings and priests;" that of Jonathan, "crowned kings and ministering priests.") They would be "kings," not only as "lords over death, the devil, hell, and all evil" (Luther), but also partly as having no earthly king set over them, but designed to live under a theocracy (1 Sam. xii. 12), and partly as intended to exercise lordship over the heathen. Their unfaithfulness and disobedience soon forfeited both privileges. They would be "priests," as entitled—each one of them—to draw near to God directly in prayer and praise, though not in sacrifice, and also as intermediaries between God and the heathen world, to whom they were to be examples, instructors, prophets. **And an holy nation.** A nation unlike other nations—a nation consecrated to God's service, outwardly marked as his by the symbol of circumcision, his (if they chose) inwardly by the purity and holiness whereto they could attain. **These are the words.** Much speaking was not needed. The question was a very simple one. Would they accept the covenant or no, upon the conditions offered? It was not likely that they would reject such gracious proposals.

Ver. 7.—**And Moses came.** Moses descended from the point of the mountain which he had reached, and summoned a meeting of the elders of the people. When they were come together, he reported to them *totidem verbis* the message which he had received from God. He is said to have laid the words "be-

fore their faces"—a Hebraism, meaning simply "before them."

Ver. 8.—**And all the people answered together.** It would seem that the elders submitted to the whole congregation the question propounded by Moses; or at any rate submitted it to a popular meeting, fairly representing the congregation. No doubt the exact purport of the question was made known by the usual means beforehand, and the assembly was summoned to declare, by acclamation, its assent or dissent. The result was a unanimous shout of approval:—"All that the Lord hath spoken we will do"—*i.e.*, "we will obey his voice indeed, and keep his covenant" (see ver. 5). In this way they accepted the covenant beforehand, not knowing what its exact provisions would be, but assured in their hearts that all would be right, just, and good; and anxious to secure the promised blessings (vers. 5, 6) for themselves and their posterity. **Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord**—*i.e.*, Moses was the mouthpiece both ways. He took the messages of God to the people, and carried back ("returned") their answer.

Ver. 9.—**I came unto thee in a thick cloud.** Literally, "in the thickness of a cloud." God must always veil himself when he speaks with man, for man could not bear "the brightness of his presence." If he takes a human form that form is a veil; if he appears in a burning bush, the very fire is a shroud. On the present occasion it was the more needful that he should cover himself up, as he was about to draw near to the whole congregation, among whom were many who were impure and impenitent. It was necessary, in order that all might be convinced of the Divine mission of Moses, for all to be so near as to hear him speak out of the cloud; but sinners cannot abide the near presence of God, unless he is carefully hidden away from them. Probably, the cloud out of which he now spoke was that which had accompanied the Israelites out of Egypt, and directed their march (ch. xiii. 21, 22), though this is not distinctly stated. **That the people may believe thee for ever.** In "the people" are included their descendants; and they are to "believe Moses for ever, because the law is in some sense of eternal obligation on all men" (Matt. v. 18). **And Moses told the words of the people unto the Lord.** It is not easy to assign a reason for the repetition of this clause from vers. 8, in almost identical terms. There were no fresh "words of the people" to report. We can only say that such seemingly needless repetitions are in the manner of archaic writers, who seem to intend in this way to emphasise a fact. The acceptance of the covenant by the people beforehand, completed by Moses reporting it to God, is the necessary basis of all that follows—the required preliminary to the giving of any covenant at all.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 5, 6.—*God's promises to such as keep his covenant.* Three things are here specially worthy of consideration:—1. The nature of the promises; 2. The grounds on which they may be believed and trusted; and 3. The conditions attached to them.

I. THE NATURE OF THE PROMISES. God's promises to Israel are threefold—they shall be kings; they shall be priests; they shall be his peculiar treasure.—(a) *Kings.* Most men are slaves—servants of Satan, servants of sin, slaves to their evil passions, slaves to opinion, abject slaves to those among their fellow-men on whom they depend for daily bread, or for favour and advancement. The glorious liberty of the children of God shakes off all these yokes. Man, awakened to his true relations with God, at once asserts himself, realises his dignity, feels that he need “call no man, master.” He himself is supreme over himself; his conscience is his law, not the will of another. His life, his acts, his words, are under his own control. Within this sphere he is “king,” directing and ruling his conduct according to his own views of what is right and fitting; and this kingship is mostly followed by another. Let a man once show himself a true, brave, upright, independent person, and he will soon have subjects enough. The weak place themselves under his protection, the timid under his guidance. He will have a *clientèle*, which will continually grow so long as he remains on earth, and in Heaven he will be a “king” too. The “faithful and true servant” has “authority over ten cities.” He “reigns with Christ for ever and ever” (Rev. xx. 6; xxii. 5). (b) *Priests.* A priest is one who is consecrated to God, who has free and ready access to him without an intermediary at all times and seasons, and who acts as an intermediary between God and others. As circumcision consecrated the Israelite, so baptism consecrates the Christian. He receives “an unction from the Holy One” (1 John i. 20), and is thenceforth a “priest to God,” bound to his service, brought near to him, entitled to “go boldly to the throne of grace,” to offer up his own prayers and intercessions, nay—even to “enter into the holiest” (Heb. x. 19). He is further not only entitled, but bound to act as intermediary between God and those who do not know God; to teach them; convert them, if he can; intercede for them; under certain circumstances, to baptise them. (c) *His peculiar treasure.* The world despises God's servants, sets little store by them, regards them as poor weak creatures, whom it may ill-use at its pleasure. But God holds each servant dear, sets a high value on him, regards him as precious. “They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels” (Mal. iii. 17). Each saint is a jewel in the crown of the Lord Christ, and is estimated accordingly. A king would as soon lose one of his crown jewels as Christ one of those for whom he shed his precious blood. He has “bought them at a price;” they are his; and the value which he sets on them no man can know. They are to him “more precious than rubies.”

II. THE GROUNDS ON WHICH THE PROMISES MAY BE BELIEVED AND TRUSTED. As we have found of men in the past, so we look to find of them in the future. God bade the Israelites look back, and consider what he had already done for them—whether in the past he had proved himself faithful and true—whether he had supported and sustained them, “borne them up on eagle's wings,” protected them, delivered them from dangers. If this were so, could they not trust him for the future? Would they not believe the promises which he now held out to them? Would they not regard them as certain of accomplishment? The Israelites appear to have believed; and shall not Christians do the like? Have not above three thousand years tested God's faithfulness, since he thus spoke to Israel? In the whole long course of these millennia has he ever been proved unfaithful? Assuredly not. All that he promises, and more than all he promises, does he perform for the sons of men. Never does he disappoint them; never does he fail to make good his word. Each promise of God therefore may be trusted implicitly. “God is not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent.” He is true, and therefore must will to do as he has said; he is omnipotent, and therefore must be able to do as he wills.

III. THE CONDITIONS ON WHICH THE PROMISES ARE GIVEN. “If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant.” The precious promises of God to man are conditional upon (a) his general obedience; (b) his observance of a certain formal covenant. The

obedience must be "an obedience *indeed*"—i.e., an obedience from the heart, sincere, loving, complete, so far as human frailty permits—not partial, not grudging, not outward only. The covenant must be kept in all its essentials. To the Jew, circumcision was necessary, after which he had to make offerings, to attend certain festivals year by year, to pay tithes, and to observe numerous minute regulations with regard to "cleanness" and "uncleanness." The Christian covenant has but two essential rites, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Even these are only "*generally* necessary to salvation." Still, if we look for covenanted mercies and claim them, we must take care to be within the covenant. We must inquire dispassionately, what the terms are upon which Christ receives us into covenant with him, and not take upon ourselves a dispensing power, absolving us from all such obligations. Christ rejected from the marriage-feast the man who had not on a wedding-garment. No one who neglects either of the two solemn and simple ordinances which alone Christ has ordained in his Church can be sure that he will not in the last day be rejected.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 3—10.—*The covenant proposed.* A characteristic difference is to be observed between the covenant made at Sinai and that formerly established with Abraham. In both, there is a wonderful act of Divine condescension. In both, God as well as man comes under engagements, ratified by outward formalities. But there is a difference in the design. In Abraham's case, the covenant was obviously intended as an aid to faith, an expedient for strengthening confidence in the Divine word. It is God who, in condescension to man's weakness, binds *himself* to be faithful to his word. At Sinai, on the other hand, it is the people who bind themselves to be faithful to God. They take the oath of allegiance to their invisible king. They pledge themselves to be obedient. God, on his side, appears as the promiser. He will make this nation a peculiar treasure unto himself, a kingdom of priests, etc. The present passage deals with preliminaries.

1. THE DIVINE PROPOSALS (vers. 3—7). A covenant, from its nature, is an act of freedom. Prior to the formation of *this* covenant, it was obviously necessary that Jehovah should approach the people, should state his terms to them, and should require them to declare whether they approved of these terms, and were willing to assent to them. This is what is here done. Observe:—1. *The initiative in the covenant was taken by Jehovah.* This was inevitable. "The characteristic thing about such 'covenants' with God lies here, that the engagement must originate on the side of God himself, springing out of his free favour with a view to ratify some spontaneous promise on his part. Man can exact no terms from Heaven. No creature dare stipulate for conditions with his Creator. It is when the Most High, out of his own mere mercy, volunteers to bind himself by a promise for the future, and having done so, stoops still further to give a pledge for the execution of that promise, that what may fairly be deemed a 'covenant' is established" (Dr. Dykes). 2. *The people are reminded of past gracious dealings of God with them* (ver. 4). God reminds them, to begin with, of how he had taken them from Egypt, and had borne them on eagle's wings, and had brought them to this desert place unto himself. "Eagle's wings" signify that his help had been strong, sustaining, protecting. In Egypt, at the Red Sea, in the wilderness, they had experienced this help, and had found it all sufficient. The resources of the infinite had been placed at their disposal. The special point, however, is, that all this which had been done for them was the fruit of free, unmerited favour; of a grace which imposed no conditions, and had as yet asked for no return. This was an important point to be reminded of on the eve of a revelation of law. These past actings of God testified that his relation to Israel was fundamentally a gracious one. Law might veil grace, but it could not cancel or annul it. Like primitive rock, underlying whatever strata might subsequently be reared upon it, this gracious relation must abide. With a relation of this kind to fall back upon, the Israelite need not despair, even when he felt that his law condemned him. It was a pledge to him that, not only amidst daily error and shortcoming, but even after grievous falls—falls like David's—mercy would receive the man of contrite spirit (Ps. li.). Thus far, we are quite in the element of the Gospel. Salvation precedes obedience. Obedience follows, a result of the free acceptance of the

obligations which redemption imposes on us. 3. *The condition of the fulfilment of promise is that the people obey God's voice, and keep his covenant* (ver. 5). On no other terms could God consent to be *their* God, and on no other terms would he consent to have them for *his* people. Grace *precedes* law, grace *accompanies* law, grace *passes beyond* law; nevertheless, grace *must conserve* law (Rom. iii. 31). God can propose to man no terms of favour, which do not include the need for an obedient will. He does not do so under the Gospel any more than he did under the law (cf. Matt. vii. 21; Rom. ii. 6, 7; vi.; 1 Cor. vii. 19; 1 John ii. 4, etc.). "It is exclusively Christ's righteousness which is of grace imputed to us. Yet this has to be *appropriated in an upright heart*" (Martensen). When God took Israel out of Egypt, it was implied and intended that the redeemed people should "obey his voice." The covenant but made explicit an implicit obligation. 4. *The promises themselves are of the grandest possible description* (vers. 5, 6). (1) Israel would be to God "a peculiar treasure." Out of all the nations of the earth—for all the earth was his—Jehovah had chosen this one, to reveal himself to it, to give it laws and judgments, and to dwell in its midst as its king, benefactor, and defender (cf. Deut. iv. 33-37). What an honour was this! And yet how inferior to the spiritual privileges of believers in Christ, who enjoy a nearness to God, an interest in his love, a special place in his regard, of which, not the earth only, but the universe, affords no other example. (2) Israel would be to God "a kingdom of priests." There is implied in this, on the one hand, royalty, dignity, rule; on the other, special consecration to God's service, the privilege of acceptable approach to him, and an intercessory and mediatorial function in relation to other nations. This promise also, has its higher counterpart in the privileges of Christians, who are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (1 Pet. ii. 9). Grace in the soul is a kingly, a dignifying, an ennobling principle. It confers true royalty of character. And in the future form of his kingdom, God, we may be sure, has royal places for all his royal children (Luke xix. 17, 19; Rev. i. 6; ii. 26; iii. 21). And believers are a "priesthood." Not, indeed, in the old sense of having to offer atoning sacrifices, but priests in virtue of special consecration, of right of near approach to God, and of their calling "to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. ii. 5), and to intercede for the world (1 Tim. ii. 1). (3) Israel would be to God "an holy nation." This is involved in their calling to be priests. God being holy, those who are about him—who serve him—who worship him, or who stand in any near relation to him—must be holy also. "Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Pet. i. 16). This requirement of holiness is unchangeable. Believers have in them the *principle* of holiness, and are engaged in "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. vii. 1). Holiness is that essential qualification, "without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. xii. 14). 5. *The promise contains a hint of the catholicity of God's design in the calling of Israel.* "For all the earth is mine" (ver. 5). Israel was called with a view to the ultimate benefit of the world. It was but the "first-born" of many sons whom God would lead to glory.

II. THE PEOPLE'S RESPONSE (vers. 7-10). They willingly took upon themselves the obligations indicated in the words, "Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant," etc. (verse 5). They said at once "all that the Lord hath spoken we will do." There is a certain nobleness in this reply—a temporary rising of these long-enslaved minds to something like the dignity of their high calling as sons of God. Yet—1. It was a reply given *without much knowledge of the law*. They apprehended but little of its breadth, and of the spirituality of its requirements, else they would not have engaged so readily to do all that it enjoined. One design in placing Israel under law was just that they might *grow* in this knowledge of the breadth of the commandment, and so might have developed in them the consciousness of sin (Rom. vii. 7-25). 2. It was a reply given *without much knowledge of themselves*. The people do not seem to have doubted their ability to keep God's word. They thought, like many more, that they had but to *try*, in order to do. Accordingly, a second design in placing them under law was to convince them of their mistake—to discover to them their spiritual inability. There is no way of convincing men of their inability to keep the law of God like setting them to try (Rom. vii.). 3. It was a reply given, as respects the mass of the people, *without heart-conversion*. It was the outcome of a burst of enthusiasm, of an excited state of feeling. There was not the

true "heart" in them to do what God commanded (Deut. v. 29). Hence their speedy apostasy (ch. xxxii.) The test of true conversion is perseverance (Heb. iii. 14; I John ii. 19). Moses, having received the reply of the people, returned it to God, who, on hearing it, declared his purpose of coming in a thick cloud, and of speaking with Moses in the audience of all the people (cf. verse 19). The design was "that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever" (verse 9).—J. O.

Ver. 5.—*"My covenant."* It may be proper at this stage to indicate briefly the nature of the constitution under which Israel was placed at Sinai, directing attention to some of the resemblances and contrasts between it and the new and better covenant which has since superseded it. The nature of the old covenant, though set in a very clear light in the writings of St. Paul, does not seem to be well understood. Sometimes it is too much assimilated to the New Testament covenant: sometimes it is viewed as totally diverse from it. The truth is, the covenant may be looked at from a number of very different points of view, and according as it is thus regarded, it will present itself under very different aspects. It was a covenant of law; yet under it Israel enjoyed many privileges which more properly belong to a state of grace. We should, *e.g.*, greatly misconceive its nature, if, looking only to the tender, almost caressing words of this text, we did not also take into account the manifestations of terror amidst which the law was given from Sinai (verses 16—20), with such other facts as the planting of the stones on Mount Ebal (Deut. xxvii. 1—9; Josh. viii. 30—35), and the recital of the blessings and curses (Deut. xxvii. 11—26). But we should do the covenant equal injustice if we looked only to the *latter* class of facts, and did not observe the *former*. That Israel's standing under the law was modified by grace is shown: 1. From the fact of grace preceding law; 2. From the employment of a mediator; 3. From the "blood of sprinkling" at the ratification of the covenant (ch. xxiv.); 4. From the propitiatory arrangements subsequently introduced; 5. From the revealed scope and design of the economy; 6. From the actual facts of Israel's history. Keeping in view this double aspect of the covenant of Sinai—that on its inner side it was one of grace, on its outer side one of law—we have to consider its relations to the covenant of the Gospel.

I. THE COVENANTS ARE, IN CERTAIN OBVIOUS RESPECTS, STRIKINGLY CONTRASTED. The contrasts in question arise from the particularistic character, the defective spirituality, and the pedagogic design, of the older covenant. That which has succeeded it is more inward and spiritual in its nature; is universal in its scope; and is made primarily with individuals. Special contrasts are these: 1. The older covenant is more *preceptive* in its character than the later one. "Tutors and governors" (Gal. iv. 2). 2. It is more concerned with *outward rites and ceremonies* (Heb. ix. 10). 3. It relies more on *penalty and reward* as motives. 4. The blessings promised are largely *temporal*. In the new covenant, temporal promises hold a very subordinate place. They are overshadowed by spiritual ones.

II. THERE ARE ELEMENTS OF CONTRAST EVEN IN THE RESEMBLANCES BETWEEN THE TWO COVENANTS. The covenants of the law and of the Gospel are alike—1. In *requiring that the people of God shall be "an holy people."* But the holiness of Israel was made to consist largely in the observance of outward distinctions. It was largely ceremonial. The holiness of the new covenant is purely spiritual. 2. In *requiring obedience as the condition of fulfilment of promise.* But (1) under the law, life and blessing were attached to obedience in the way of *legal reward*. The rubric was: "Do this, and thou shalt live" (Rom. x. 5). Under the Gospel, this element is wholly eliminated. The law having done its work in showing that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in (God's) sight" (Rom. iii. 20), the bestowal of reward is taken from this ground, and placed explicitly on that of grace. All we receive is for the sake of Christ—a fruit of *his* righteousness. (2) The law, while requiring obedience, did not raise the point of man's ability to render that obedience. But power to render obedience is itself one of the blessings of the new covenant, which thus goes deeper, and includes vastly more than the older one. (3) In general, the Gospel, while agreeing with the law in aiming at forming a people unto righteousness, takes up the individual at a riper stage in his religious development. It assumes that the law has done its work in him—has convinced him of sin, and of his inability to attain to life through legal efforts. It supposes him to be aware of his guilt and danger as a sinner. In this con-

dition—broken and humbled by the action of the law upon his conscience—it meets him with the tidings of redemption, and of life and blessing (including spiritual renewal) coming to him on the ground of “the righteousness of faith” (cf. Acts xiii. 38, 39); 3. *The privileges of the older covenant foreshadowed those of the new* (1 Pet. ii. 9). But the contrast is great here also. See above.

III. THESE CONTRASTS ALL DEPEND UPON A FUNDAMENTAL CONTRAST. The deepest contrast between the two covenants is to be sought for in the view which each takes of the direction in which the individual (formerly the nation) is to look for acceptance and happiness—for “life.” 1. *The law.* The law appears in the covenant with Sinai in its original, unqualified severity, as, on the one hand, awarding life to the obedient, and on the other, denouncing penalties against the breakers of even the least of its commandments (Gal. iii. 10–13). Doubtless, but for daily pardon of daily offences, the Israelite, under so strict a constitution, would have been totally unable to maintain his footing. These offences, however, appear as so many breaches of the covenant bond, which, in strictness, was the keeping of the whole law. A right apprehension of God’s design in placing Israel under this constitution will do away with any appearance of harshness in the arrangement, as if God were purposely mocking the weakness of the people by setting them to work out a problem—the attainment of righteousness—in that way incapable of solution. The moral task given to Israel among the nations was, indeed, to aim at the realisation of righteousness, of righteousness as prescribed by the law. But God’s design in this was not, certainly, to make the salvation of any Israelite depend on the fulfilment of impossible conditions, but, primarily, to conduct the seeker after righteousness by the path of honest moral endeavour, to a consciousness of his *inability* to keep the law, and so to awaken in him the feeling of the need of a better righteousness than the law could give him—to drive him back, in short, from law to faith, from a state of satisfaction with himself to a feeling of his need of redemption—of redemption at once from the guilt of past transgressions, and from the discord in his own nature. The law had thus an end beyond itself. It was a schoolmaster to lead to Christ. The later Jews totally misconceived its nature when they clung to it with unbending tenacity as the sole instrument of justification (Rom. x. 1–4). 2. *The Gospel.* In this is revealed “the righteousness of faith”—the righteousness which is “unto all and upon all them that believe.” This is the only righteousness which can make the sinner truly just before God” (Rom. iii. 21–27). But the law is not thereby made void. It remains, as before, the standard of duty—the norm of holy practice. The design of the Gospel is not to abolish it, but to establish it more firmly than ever (Rom. iii. 31). Faith includes the obedient will. The end of redemption is holiness.

IV. THE ISRAELITE, WHILE BOUND TO GOD BY A COVENANT OF LAW, YET ENJOYED MANY BENEFITS OF THE STATE OF GRACE. The better part of the Israelites were perfectly aware that had God been strict to mark iniquities, they could not stand before him (Ps. cxxx. 3); that their own law would have condemned them. But they knew, too, that there was forgiveness with God, that he might be feared (ver. 4). Piously availing himself of the expiatory rites provided for the covering of his sin, the godly Jew had confidence towards God. Many in the nation grasped the truth that an obedient will is, in God’s sight, the matter of chief importance, and that, where this is found, much else will be forgiven—that he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him (Acts x. 35), notwithstanding the special imperfections which may mark his daily life. This was practically to rise from the standpoint of the law, to that of the righteousness of faith. It enabled those who had attained to it, though under the law, to cherish a delight in spiritual righteousness, and even to find joy in the law itself, as the outward expression of that righteousness. It was not, however, the complete joy of salvation. The law still hovered above the consciousness of the Israelite with its unfulfilled demand; and he had not the means of perfectly pacifying his conscience in relation to it. While in those in whom the law had wrought its work most effectually, there was a deep feeling of sin, a painful consciousness of frustration in efforts after the highest goodness, which day by day wrung from them such cries as that of St. Paul—“O wretched man,” etc. (Rom. vii. 24). Here, again, the Gospel reveals itself as the termination of the law of Moses (Rom. x. 4).—J. O.

Ver. 3-6.—*God's first message to the people at Sinai.* The cloud going on before the people from Rephidim, brings them at last to what by pre-eminence is called the mount. The mount, not because it was higher, but because there the burning bush appeared, and there the people were to serve God. Moses goes up to the mount, probably to the very spot where a while ago he had seen the burning bush and received his great commission to Pharaoh. From this scene he had been travelling in a circle, and had now come whence he had started, but not as many travellers in a circle do, returning poor and profitless as they went. Here he is, treading once again the hallowed mountain side; the people whom he has brought are below; God, he knows, is near, for he has just had most gracious experience of him in Rephidim; and now he waits for further revelations and commands. A great deal Moses has to listen to in Sinai from Jehovah; and therefore it is very interesting to notice the words with which Jehovah begins. Consider—

I. THE TERMS BY WHICH GOD INDICATES HIS PEOPLE. "The house of Jacob"—"the children of Israel." Thus Jehovah was ever sending the thoughts of his people far back into the past, and making them feel its important and glorious connection with the present. The house of Jacob was the house of him who had known many changes of circumstances, many disappointments and trials. It was the house of one who, born in Canaan, spent some of the best of his time at a distance with Laban, and died at last in Egypt. If he, the great ancestor, had thus been a man of change, what wonder that trying changes came upon the posterity! Then they were also the children of Israel. This was the name Divinely given; and if Israel forgets its purport and the privilege involved, Jehovah himself assuredly did not. Significant names, that would otherwise get hidden in the past, God takes special care to preserve.

II. THE WAY IN WHICH GOD DESCRIBES HIS RECENT DEALINGS. To the Israelites all had been very confused, tedious, and trying, in spite of all the miraculous exemptions, escapes, and provisions they had enjoyed. They had not very well known what was being done with them. But now, in the compass of a sweeping verse, the whole course of affairs is presented as one rapid and decisive action. As a bird might snatch its offspring out of captivity and bear it far on high to some safe shelter, so Jehovah has done with Israel. He puts before them, as in a vision, these three things to be considered—1. The liberation. 2. The consequent journey. 3. The destination. And these three things he describes in a peculiar way. 1. *The liberation* he indicates by this signification, "what I did unto the Egyptians." He wished the people here to ponder the extent and significance of his terrible dealings in Egypt. The Israelites had gazed on a succession of varied and penetrating calamities coming on the Egyptians. But Jehovah wishes the observers to mark that these things were of his doing. Jehovah's actions are not to be buried in oblivion when once they are past, because they are terrible actions. It is just because they are the terrible acts of a holy and just God that they are to be remembered. There was in them nothing of a tyrant's caprice; they were not wild gusts of power to be ashamed of in calmer moments. There had been due prediction and preparation; there was an orderly, gradual, impressive, instructive mounting to a climax: and if any of the people were inclined to forget the doer in the deeds, the liberator in the liberation, here is a warning that things must not be so thought on. God is ever devising to make us look at events in their connection and continuity. The plagues of Egypt were only the preliminary overturning to carry on the greater plan of God. Egypt had fast hold of Israel; wherefore Israel's God smote Egypt so that he might free his own people and bring them to himself. 2. *The journey* Jehovah indicates by a peculiarly beautiful and inspiring figure. "I bare you on eagles' wings." This was an appropriate figure for people dwelling in the wilderness. Moses had, doubtless, seen many eagles in his shepherd experiences; and the Israelites would become familiar with them during their wanderings. Thus the eagle's ways would be known; and after this word of Jehovah Moses would study them more and more, and one result of such observation we find in Deut. xxxii. 11. When men exalt themselves as the eagle, and set their nests among the stars, God can bring them down; but when he puts on the eagle's wings, it is to exalt himself into a place which shall be one of perfect safety for his people. One imagines the eaglet thus lying on the parent's wing. It may wriggle about uneasily, wondering at the speed with which it is taken, the shaking it has to undergo and the

unfamiliar scenes through which it is passing. But these struggles count for little, they are natural enough, but they do not hinder the eagle in its progress. Patiently, calmly, strongly, it rises towards its secure destination. These unfamiliar scenes are by-and-by to be the frequent path of the now struggling, bewildered eaglet; in due time its own wings will appear in them—

Sailing with supreme dominion
Through the azure deep of air

Paul himself, dazed and shaken to the very depths of his being on his first dealings with Jesus, had known what it was to be borne on eagle's wings, and he lived to render a little of the same sort of ministry to the perplexed and desponding Timothy. The Israelites had been struggling and unbelieving, as at the Red Sea, at Marah, at the time when the manna was given, and at Rephidim; but in spite of all these, the strong eagle wings of God had borne them onward. Our struggles are but a trifle, if only God has us really in charge. Let us think ever of the eagle wings rather than the ignorant offspring carried thereon. 3. *The destination.* "I brought you unto myself." Just as the eagle brings its young to a place where without distraction or fear of interruption it can attend to their nourishment and growth. How beautifully God thus turns away the thoughts of his people from the desolation of the visible scene! True it was a wilderness; emphasis is laid upon this in vers. 1, 2; but if we are brought to God, this is more than all that may be barren and cheerless in mere circumstances. The place which men do not care about and where they would not come of their own accord, is the place where God reveals himself gloriously and graciously to his own. Israel will now do well to consider, not what carnal comforts they lack, but what dangers they have escaped, and what Divine possessions they are in the way to acquire. To be brought to God in the fullest sense of the word, and to lie comfortably under his protection and nurture, what a great matter! (Rom. viii. 38, 39).

III. So much, then, for what Jehovah has done in the past, and now he turns to the future, making a LARGE PROMISE DEPENDENT ON THE FULFILLING OF STRICT CONDITIONS. He had to bring the people to himself on eagle's wings, because they themselves were helpless to achieve the deliverance and security they needed. And now the time has come for *response from them*. He has brought them to himself, that being with him they may become his, fully and acceptably. They are put into external conditions such as make it possible for them to obey; therefore Jehovah has a right, and does right, to ask them for obedience. He who speaks about Jacob and Israel, cannot but also speak of the ancient covenant, with respect to which the children of Israel must labour earnestly to fulfil their part. God has already made certain requirements from the people, such as the passover regulations and those concerning the manna. But now his requirements are to flow forth in a great continuing stream. He will go on asking, as if asking were never to be at an end; and therefore it is well to start with a solemn preparatory word. As to *the promise itself*, we notice that it is a promise to a nation—to a whole people. As we see in the next chapter, the conditions are to be achieved by individual obedience: God comes to the individual with his commandments, and says, "Thou." But the promise is for the nation. It is a promise, too, which seems worded for appreciation in the future rather than in the present, or if in the present, only by a few who had been prepared to understand it. Perhaps it may be most fittingly described as a promise to be the stimulus and stay of truly patriotic hearts. Wherever there is a man who glories in the race from which he sprang and the land where he was born, there is one who may be expected to understand the force of an appeal like this. No nation could really be more to God than another nation, unless it were a better one. Israel had been made free from Egypt that it might then rise into all the fullness of what a nation ought to be; and therefore God sets these great possibilities before the people. All the earth, he said, was his. He had proved his complete control over one much esteemed tract of territory by the confusions and calamities he had brought into Pharaoh's domains; and there was no nation among men that he could not treat in the same fashion. But, if only men will submit, he can make to himself a peculiar people, testifying to his power, not from among humiliations consequent on despising him, but from the heights of glory and blessedness to which

ne lifts those who obey him. He mingles in one glorious expression the thought of all those blessings which come from the union of true religion and right government. A kingdom of priests is one where harmony and right dealing will be found running through all relations, because each member is continually serving God with the great, loving, acceptable sacrifice of his own life. God is not really king in any society of men, unless each member of that society is fully a priest towards him.—Y.

Vers. 1—6.—*The Lord and his people.* I. WHO THE PEOPLE OF GOD ARE. 1. The children of the promise, “the house of Jacob,” etc., the household of faith. 2. They who have experienced deliverance and known God’s love: “Ye have seen what I did,” etc. The law the picture of the Gospel: those only can enter into the covenant of obedience who have known that God has chosen and blessed them. “We love him because he first loved us.”

II. WHAT THE LORD ASKS OF THEM. 1. True obedience: not a profession, but a life. 2. To keep his covenant: to understand his will, and make that will their law. The whole end of both law and gospel is missed if the life is not laid hold of, if the man is not brought to wear again the image of him who created him.

III. THE GLORY GOD WILL GIVE THEM IN THE EARTH. 1. They will be God’s best beloved—a peculiar treasure unto him “above all people.” Note the true position of God’s people. It is not that God cares for them only. He cares for all: “all the earth is mine.” They are the choicest of his earthly treasures. 2. They are to be “a kingdom of priests.” They will minister to the nations in the things of God—leading them into his presence, teaching them his will. 3. They will be “a holy nation,” a consecrated people. The Spirit’s anointing will rest upon them. 4. This threefold glory the portion of God’s people to-day: the knowledge that God has chosen us; our priestly service among our brethren; the unction from on high.—U.

Vers. 1—15.—*Covenant before law.* “Now, therefore, if ye will obey,” etc.—Ex. xix. 5, 6. This subject might well be introduced by:—1. Showing how exactly the topography of Sinai (*i.e.*, the plain of Er Rahah, Ras Sufsáfah, and Jebel Musa) agrees with the sacred history. [For material of description see “The Desert of the Exodus.”] 2. How suitable mountains were to constitute the scenery of Divine manifestation. 3. An analysis of this section:—(1) God and Moses; (2) Moses with the people; (3) God and Moses again; (4) Once more Moses with the people. In this preparation for the law, we shall see the Gospel. The Gospel antedated law (see Gal. iii.). Here we have several evangelical principles:—

I. NO COVENANT, NO LIVING OBEDIENCE. Here may be discussed and illustrated the whole question whether God’s grace precedes our obedient living unto him, or *vice versâ*.

II. NO OVERTURE FROM GOD, NO COVENANT. The initiative is ever with God (vers. 3, 4). To illustrate:—Suppose the words had run this way: “Ye know what ye did in Egypt, how ye sought me, if haply ye might find me; how all the way through the desert ye have followed hard after me, if peradventure ye might see my face, and hear my voice in this mountain.” Not one word would have been true. God ever first seeks man, not man God.

III. NO REDEMPTIVE ACTION, NO OVERTURE POSSIBLE. God’s appeal is ever strengthened by his deeds. In the case of Israel, there had been the paschal lamb, the passing over, the passage of the Red Sea, and the constitution of a Church. Thereafter covenant, and anon law! Show the analogies in Christian times—the atonement, pardon, adoption, inclusion in the Church, the establishment of covenantal relations, the coming under the Christian rule of life.

IV. NO CONCURRENCE, NO RESULT (ver. 5). “If,” etc. 1. In all God’s dealing with us *he has respect to our liberty*. 2. The condition here is a *believing obedience*. The Hebrew word for “obey” seems to carry pregnantly within it all these meanings—hearing, listening, heeding, trusting, acting according to what we hear and believe. It might be well to show that practically in Christian life the believing man is the obedient, and *vice versâ*. 3. *And keeping the covenant*. Bring out the sentinel idea in the “keeping,” and then show that we keep the covenant: (1) By complying with the conditions on our side. (2) By jealously guarding the conditions on God’s side against the tamperings of error.

V. WITH CONCURRENCE, THE MOST BLESSED RESULTS. They who believe and keep the covenant become:—1. *The private and peculiar treasure of the King of kings.* Amongst earthly potentates there is a distinction between the treasures which they hold in their public capacity and those which are their own private property. When a king abdicates, he leaves behind him the public treasure, but carries with him his own. In an analogous sense we become the priceless jewels of the King of kings, though "all the earth is his" (same Hebrew word in Mal. iii. 17). 2. *A kingly priesthood* (ver. 6). "A royalty of priests," i.e., every king a priest, and every priest a king. Here we have—(1) The royalty of religion. Religion the most powerful factor in life. Illustrate the monarchy of religion—e.g., St. Paul on board the ship. (2) The priesthood of religion. Priestcraft is vile; priesthood a benediction. The priest receives from God for man; offers for man to God, e.g., the priesthood Aaronic, that of the Lord Jesus, that of Israel for the nations, that of the Christian believer. 3. *Separate.* Negatively, from the world, but also positively unto God. "A holy nation."—R.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 10-15.—THE PREPARATION OF THE PEOPLE AND OF THE MOUNTAIN FOR THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD UPON IT. The people having accepted God's terms, the time had come for the revelation in all its fulness of the covenant which God designed to make with them. This it was essential, they should perceive and know to come from God, and not to be the invention of Moses. God, therefore, was about to manifest himself. But ere he could do this with safety, it was requisite that certain preparations should be made. Before man can be fit to approach God, he needs to be sanctified. The essential sanctification is internal; but, as internal purity and holiness cannot be produced at a given moment, Moses was ordered to require its outward symbol, external bodily cleanliness, by ablution and the washing of clothes, as a preliminary to God's descent upon the mountain (vers. 10, 13). It would be generally understood that this external purity was symbolical only, and needed to be accompanied by internal cleanliness. Further, since even the purest of men is impure in God's sight, and since there would be many in the congregation who had attempted no internal cleansing, it was necessary to provide that they should not draw too near, so as to intrude on the holy ground or on God's presence. Moses was therefore required to have a fence erected round the mountain, between it and the people, and to proclaim the penalty of death against all who should pass it and touch the mount (vers. 12, 13). In executing these orders, Moses gave an additional charge to the heads of families, that they should purify themselves by an act of abstinence which he specified (ver. 15)

Ver. 10.—Go unto the people. Moses had withdrawn himself from the people to report their words to God (vers. 8, 9). He was now commanded to return to them. *Sanctify them.* Or "purify them." Purification in Egypt was partly by washing, partly by shaving the hair, either from the head only, or from the entire body (Hered. ii. 37), partly perhaps by other rites. The Israelites seem ordinarily to have purified themselves by washing only. *To-day and to-morrow.* The fourth and fifth of Sivan, according to the Jewish tradition, the Decalogue having been given upon the sixth. The requirement of a two-days' preparation marked the extreme sanctity of the occasion. *Let them wash their clothes.* Compare Lev. xv. 5. Rich people could "change their garments" on a sacred occasion (Gen. xxxv. 2); the poorer sort, having no change, could only wash them.

Ver. 11.—The Lord will come down. Jehovah is regarded as dwelling in the heaven above, not exclusively (Ps. cxxxix. 7-10), but especially; and therefore, when he appears on earth, he "comes down" (Gen. xi. 5-7; xviii. 21; Ex. iii. 8; etc.). *In the sight of all the people.* That a visible manifestation of the Divine presence is intended appears, unmistakably, from verses 16 and 18.

Ver. 12.—Thou shalt set bounds. The erection of a fence or barrier, between the camp and the mountain—not necessarily all round the mountain—seems to be meant. This barrier may have run along the line of low alluvial mounds at the foot of the cliff of Ras Sufsafeh, mentioned by Dean Stanley (*Sinai and Palestine*, p. 43), but cannot have been identical with them, since it was an artificial fence. *That ye go not up into the mount.* Curiosity might have tempted some to ascend the mount, if it had not been positively forbidden under the penalty of death; carelessness might have brought many into contact with it, since the cliff rises abruptly from the plain. Unless the fence had been made, cattle would, natur-

ally, have grazed along its base. To impress the Israelites with a due sense of the awful majesty of God, and the sacredness of everything material that it brought into close relations with him, the mount itself was declared holy—none but Moses and Aaron might go up into it; none might touch it; even the stray beast that approached it must suffer death for its unwitting offence (ver. 13). **Whosoever toucheth the mount.** The mountain may be "touched" from the plain—it rises so abruptly. **Shall be surely put to death.** A terrible punishment, and one which, to modern ideas, seems excessive. But it was only by terrible threats, and in some cases by terrible punishments (2 Sam. vi. 7), that the Israelites could be taught reverence. A profound reverence lies at the root of all true religious feeling; and for the education of the world, it was requisite, in the early ages, to inculcate the necessity of this frame of mind in some very marked and striking way.

Ver. 13.—**There shall not an hand touch it.** Rather, "there shall not an hand touch *him*." The transgressor shall not be seized and apprehended, for that would involve the repetition of the offence by his arrester, who must overpass the "bounds" set by Moses, in order to make the arrest. Instead of seizing him, they were to kill him with stones or arrows from within the "bounds," and the same was to be done, if any stray beast approached the mountain. **When the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.** By translating the same Hebrew phrase differently here and in verse 12, the A. V. avoids the difficulty which most commentators see in this passage. According to the apparent construction, the people are first told that they may, on no account, ascend the mountain (ver. 12), and

then that they may do so, so soon as the trumpet sounds long (ver. 13). But they do not ascend at that time (ver. 19), nor are they allowed to do so—on the contrary, Moses is charged anew to prevent it (ver. 21–25); nor indeed do the people ever ascend, but only Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders (ch. xxiv. 1, 2). What, then, is the permission here given? When we scrutinise the passage closely, we observe that the pronoun "they" is in the Hebrew, *emphatic*, and, therefore, unlikely to refer to "the people" of ver. 12. To whom then does it refer? Not, certainly, to "the Elders" of ver. 7, which would be too remote an antecedent, but to those chosen persons who are in the writer's mind, whom God was about to allow to ascend. Even these were not allowed to go up until summoned by the prolonged blast of the trumpet.

Ver. 14.—In obedience to the commands which he had received (ver. 10), Moses returned to the camp at the foot of Sinai, and issued the order that the people were to purify themselves and wash their garments during that day and the next, and be ready for a great solemnity on the third day. He must also, at the same time, have given directions for the construction of the fence, which was to hedge in the people (ver. 12), and which he speaks of as constructed in ver. 23.

Ver. 15.—**Come not at your wives.** Compare 1 Sam. xxi. 4, 5; 1 Cor. vii. 5. A similar obligation lay on the Egyptian priests (Porphyr. *De Abstin.* iv. 7); and the idea which underlies it was widespread in the ancient world (See Herod. i. 198; Hesiod. *Op. et Di.* 733–4; Tibul. *Carm.* ii. 1; ll. 11, 12.) The subject is well treated, from a Christian point of view, by Pope Gregory the First, in his answers to S. Augustine's questions (Bede, *Hist. Eccl.* ii.).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 10–15. *The awfulness of God's presence, and the preparation needed ere we approach him.* I. THE AWFULNESS OF GOD'S PRESENCE. The presence of God is awful, even to those holy angels who are without spot or stain of sin, having done the holy will of their Maker from their creation. But to sinful man it is far more awful. No man "can see God's face, and live" (Ex. xxxiii. 20). Jacob was mistaken when he said, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (Gen. xxxii. 30). He had really wrestled with an angel (Hos. xii. 4). When Moses requested to see the Almighty's glory, he was told, "Thou shalt see my back parts; but my face shall not be seen" (Ex. xxxiii. 23). "No man has seen God at any time," says St. John the Evangelist (John i. 18). But, even apart from sight, there is in the very sense of the presence of God an awful terribleness. "I am troubled at his presence," said Job; "when I consider, I am afraid of him" (ch. xxiii. 15). "Truly the Lord is in this place," said Jacob, "and I knew it not. *How dreadful is this place!*" (Gen. xxviii. 16, 17). God is at all times everywhere; but he veils himself, he practically withdraws himself; and, though he is where we are, we do not see him, or perceive him (Job xxiii. 8, 9). But, let him reveal his presence, and at once all tremble before it. "Mine eye seeth him," says Job again, "wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (ch. xlii. 5, 6). "When I heard," says Habakkuk, "my belly trembled my lips quivered at the voice,

rotteness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself" (ch. iii. 16). In part, no doubt, weakness trembles before strength, littleness before greatness, finiteness before infinity; but, mainly, it is sinfulness that quakes and shrinks before perfect holiness, corruption that shivers before incorruption, rotteness before absolute purity.

II. THE PREPARATION NEEDED ERE WE APPROACH HIM. Only the "pure in heart" can "see God." In all our approaches to him, we must seek first to be made fit for propinquity by separation from sin. Moses was bidden to "sanctify the people" (ver. 10), which he could only do outwardly. This true sanctification, the true purification, was heart-felt repentance, deep contrition, and the earnest resolve to forsake sin, and henceforth live righteously. This preparation each man had to make for himself. It was in vain that he should wash himself seven times, or seven times seven, in vain that he should purify his garments, and keep himself free from material pollutions of every sort and kind—something more was needed—he required to be purified in heart and soul. And so it is with Christians—with all men universally. God must be approached with humility—not in the spirit of the Pharisee; with reverence—head bowed down, and voice hushed to a low tone, and heart full of the fear of his holiness; with a pure mind—that is, with a mind averse from sin, and resolved henceforth to do righteously. The publican's approach was better than the pharisee's. Let men "smite upon their breast," let them be deeply convinced of sin, and own themselves sinners; let them implore the blotting out of their sins, and the cleansing of their entire nature; let them heartily resolve to sin no more, but walk in newness of life, and there is no contact which they need dread, no nearness of approach from which they need shrink. We are not, indeed, to hope in this life for that vision of God, or for that degree of communion, which our souls desire. "Now we see through a glass darkly—now we know in part." The full vision of God, full access to him, complete communion, is reserved for the next world, where it will form our perfect bliss and consummation.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 10—25.—"*The mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire*" (Heb. xii. 18). It is interesting to observe that, with the latter part of this chapter, we enter on an entirely new phase in the history of God's revelation of himself to Israel. Terror enough there has been in the previous portions of the book—terror and "a mighty hand"—awful manifestations of God's power and holiness; but towards Israel there has been displayed only benignity and fatherly affection. Their wants have been ungrudgingly supplied; even their murmurings, as we have seen, did not elicit from God more than a passing reproof. But now that Jehovah takes his awful seat on Sinai, and proceeds to give forth his law, he clothes himself, even towards Israel, with a majesty and terror which strike the people with dismay. The fact is obviously one of deep significance, requiring, as it will repay, our close attention. What, meanwhile, we have to note is, that God did not reveal himself in law and terror till he had given the people many practical evidences of his love for them, and so had won their confidence. Without this, the terrors of Sinai could scarcely have been borne by them.

I. THE PREPARATION (vers. 10—16). The revelation at Sinai was distinctively a revelation of the Divine holiness. From this fact, rightly apprehended, we may deduce the necessity for the preparations and precautions referred to in the text. The design of the lawgiving was to bring to light, and impress on men's minds, that holiness and justice which are essential parts of God's character, and which underlie all his dealings with them, even when most veiled by tenderness and grace. The time had come which God judged best for such a revelation being made. Made it *had* to be at some point or other in the history of the Divine dealings with men; and no time was so suitable for it as this of the constitution of the covenant with Israel. The instructions issued to the people accord with this design, and have as their end the impressing of their minds with a deep sense of the holiness of the Being into whose presence they are approaching, and of their own unholiness and unfitness to draw near to him. Holiness is—1. *Absolute moral purity and perfection.* It is sanctity of character. It implies, whether in God or man, the steadfast bent of the will towards all that is good and true and just and pure. In God, it is an inflexible determination to uphold at all costs the interests

of righteousness and truth. It is an intensity of nature, a *fire* of zeal or jealousy, directed to the maintenance of these interests. Hence the requirement that in preparation for their meeting with him at the mount, the people should "sanctify" themselves for two whole days (ver. 10). The sanctification enjoined was mainly external—the washing of clothes, etc.; but this, in itself a symbol of the need of heart purity, was doubtless to be attended with mental and spiritual preparations. Holiness is to be studied by us in all our approaches to God. The unholy will not be spurned by God, if they come to him in penitence, relying on his grace in Christ; but his end in receiving them is that he may make them holy, and holiness is the condition of subsequent fellowship (Rom. vi.; 2 Cor. v. 15; Eph. i. 4; vi. 25—27; 1 Thess. iv. 3; Titus ii. 11—15; Heb. xii. 14; 1 John i. 6, 7).

2. *The principle which guards the Divine honour.* Thus Martensen defines it—"Holiness is the principle that guards the eternal distinction between Creator and creature, between God and man, in the union effected between them: it preserves the Divine dignity and majesty from being infringed upon." Hence the command to Moses to set bounds to the mountain, that the people might be kept back (vers. 12, 13). So stringently was this to be enforced, that if a man, or even a beast, should touch the mountain, the trespasser was to be put to death. The statement—"When the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount" (ver. 13), is probably to be read in the light of ver. 17. The lesson taught is that of reverential awe of God. Even when we have the fullest confidence in approaching God as a Father, we ought not to allow ourselves to forget the infinite distance which still exists between him and us. Our service is to be "with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. xii. 28).

II. GOD'S DESCENT ON SINAI (vers. 16—19). God's descent on Mount Sinai was in fire (ver. 18), and with great terribleness. The scene, as described in these verses, is sufficiently awful. The adjuncts of the descent were—1. A thick cloud upon the mount. 2. Thunders and lightnings. 3. The voice of a trumpet exceeding loud. 4. A fire "burning unto the midst of heaven" (Deut. iv. 11). 5. Smoke as of a furnace—the result of the action of the fire. 6. The mountain quaking. This awfulness and terror are the more remarkable when we remember—(1) That what we have here is not God the Judge, arraigning before him trembling and convicted sinners, to pronounce on them sentence of doom; but a God of grace, summoning to his presence a people whom he loves, and has redeemed, and has just declared to be to him a peculiar treasure, above all people. (2) That the design of this manifestation is to give to Israel a law which shall be the bond of a covenant between him and them, and by which it is intended that they shall order their lives. The facts to be explained are—(1) That the phenomena alluded to are all of an alarming nature, and (2) That most of them have a symbolical significance, which enhances the impression of terror. The fire, *e.g.*, is the symbol of holiness. The thick cloud suggests mystery. It tells also of how God must veil his glory from man, if man is not to be consumed by it. The smoke speaks of wrath (Deut. xxix. 20). To the question thus raised, Why all this awfulness and terror? the following answers may be made:—1. *Law is the revelation of God's holiness.* It is the expression of the demand of holiness. This is the one thing it has to do, to declare what are the requirements of holiness, and to enunciate these requirements in the form of commands to be obeyed. But in order that law may serve its ends, it must be given in its proper character as law with all the adjuncts of authority and majesty which rightfully belong to it, and without dilution or weakening of any kind. Time enough, after the law has been given, and the constitution is firmly settled on its bases, to say how grace is to deal with such as fall short of the standard of its requirements. And, as formerly remarked, a revelation of law, at some period or other in the history of God's dealings with mankind, was plainly necessary—(1) That the full requirements of God's holiness should be made known. Nothing was to be gained by the establishment of a constitution in which the requirements of holiness should be glozed over, veiled, treated as non-existent, kept out of view. Sooner or later they must be brought to light. The relations of God with men could never be placed upon a satisfactory footing, till the fullest recognition had been accorded to them. If the breach between heaven and earth is to be healed—healed thoroughly—it is not to be by ignoring the claims of holiness, but by recognising them to the utmost, and then "devising means" whereby, in consistency with these claims, God's "banished" may still not be "expelled from

him" (2 Sam. xiv. 14). The choice of *this* time for making the revelation was connected with God's whole design in the calling of Israel. (2) That men might have the knowledge of sin. The law must be made known that men may understand the number and extent of their transgressions. The lawgiving at Sinai, therefore, marks a distinct stage in the progress of God's revelations. The design was to give Israel just impressions of what the law really was—this law which they were binding themselves to keep—to force upon them the conviction of its great awfulness and sanctity. Fitly, therefore, was it promulgated with every circumstance which could arouse the torpid conscience, and give impressiveness and force to the revelation. 2. *Most of those to whom the law was given, while outwardly the people of God, and about to take on them the obligations of a solemn covenant, were really unregenerate.* This circumstance, which lay in the truth of their relation to God as distinguished from mere profession, was fitly signified by the manner in which the law was given. The law shows by its form that it was not made for a righteous man (1 Tim. i. 9). 3. *For the sin which the law brought to light, no proper expiation was as yet provided.* Typical atonements might indeed be offered; but not till the great propitiator came could the guilt be actually removed. God's forgivenesses, under this first covenant, were not remission proper, but *proclermission* (Rom. iii. 25). Christ came "for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament" (Heb. ix. 15), which, therefore, were standing over unexpiated. This fact, that the law had claims against the sinner, no proper means of discharging which as yet existed, had also its recognition in the manner in which the law was promulgated. 4. *The law, in the peculiar way in which it entered into the Sinaitic covenant, was not a saving and blessing power, but, on the contrary, could only condemn.* The law, as it entered into the covenant with Israel, could neither justify nor sanctify. It concluded all under sin, and left them there. It proved itself unequal even to the lower task of restraining outward corruptions. Its curb was ineffectual to keep sin in check. It could give commandments written on stone, but had no power to write them on the fleshly tables of the heart (cf. 2 Cor. iii.).

III. THE RENEWED WARNING (vers. 19—25). God, probably by a voice audible to the whole congregation (cf. ver. 6), called Moses to the top of the mount. No sooner, however, had he ascended than he was sent back again to renew the warning to the people to keep strictly within their bounds. The reason given was—"Lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish . . . lest the Lord break forth upon them" (vers. 21, 22). The passage teaches, 1. That the heart is naturally disobedient. Even under these most solemn circumstances the Israelites could hardly be restrained. The very prohibition was a provocative to their self-will to transgress the boundary. To gratify this impulse they were disposed to risk the consequences. Had the danger not been very real, Moses would not have been sent back so promptly as he was. Cf. what Paul says on the law—"I had not known sin but by the law," etc. (Rom. vii. 7—14). 2. That temerity in Divine things exposes the transgressor to severe punishment. Cf. the men of Bethshemesh and the ark (1 Sam. vi. 19), Uzzah, Uzziah, etc. 3. That it is hard even for good men to credit the extent of the rebelliousness of the human heart. Moses thought it extremely unlikely that the people would do what God told him they were just on the point of doing. He relied upon his "bounds," and on the strict charges he had given them to keep them back (ver. 23). Alas! it was soon to be discovered that even stronger bounds than his would not restrain them. One design of the economy of law was to demonstrate the futility of every attempt to restrain wickedness by the system of mere "bounds." What is needed is not "bounds," but renewal. 4. God's near presence is perilous to the sinner.—J. O.

Vers. 9—25.—*The manifestation of God's glory at Sinai.* I. THE PURPOSE OF THIS MANIFESTATION. God made this purpose known beforehand; and it was that the people who saw and heard these dreadful phenomena might believe Moses for ever, might permanently acknowledge his authority as a messenger and representative of God. When Moses was at Sinai before and then entrusted with a Divine message to Israel, he urged it as one of his difficulties that Israel would not believe him. "They will say, the Lord hath not appeared unto thee" (ch. iv. 1). Now without appeal in any way from Moses, Jehovah provides a sublime demonstration of his presence, which he expressly mentions as being intended to establish the position of Moses. Testimony must always be chosen

corresponding with the character and circumstances of those to whom it is presented. There is a time when it will do to change the rod into a serpent; and so there is a time when the same people before whom this was done must be confronted with all the terrors of Sinai. It was a great defect on the part of the people that they had no adequate sense—it may almost be said they had no sense at all—of the holiness of God. Upon the slightest interference with their self-indulgent desires, they broke out into reproach, almost into rebellion. Therefore, in the very midst of gracious and unfailing providences, they must be made to feel that it is a fearful thing as well as a happy thing to fall into the hands of the living God. He is ever loving and desires our good; but he is also supreme in holiness, and in all our thoughts he must be hallowed as one who, when the need appears, can make most terrible manifestations of his power. We must be alive to God's presence in the terrible and destructive phenomena of the natural world as much as in those which are gentle, attractive, and pleasing. By the terrors of Sinai he intimated to his people, once for all, that he was a God not to be trifled with, but one who demanded careful and humble attention at all times when he expressed his will.

II. THE PREPARATION FOR IT WHICH HAD TO BE MADE BY THE PEOPLE. The manifestation was not to come at once; the people had to wait for it; but waiting was not all. The waiting indeed was necessary that they might have sufficient opportunity to prepare. Even already it was being signified to them that in external things, and even in such a slight matter as the washing of the clothes, they were to be a holy people. All the defilements gathered by the way, all the dust of the conflict with Amalek had to be washed off; and short of water as they had lately been, God, we may be sure, provided an abundant supply before giving this command. He required his people through certain symbolic actions to enter into a special state of readiness for himself. Then when they were so far ready by what they did to themselves, they must take further special precautions not to enter on the holy ground. As God took from the dwellers of the earth the house of Jacob to be his holy nation, so he took these steeples of Sinai to be a holy place for himself. Evidently all these preparations being of the character they were, must have produced a state of mind full of expectation and suspense. God fixed the very day of this appearing. This is a thing he can do, sure that the reality will not fall short of the popular notion formed beforehand. But there is another great day of the Lord; and the precise point of this in time no man knoweth. It was in mercy that the date of the visitation on Sinai was made known to Israel; it is in equal mercy that the great day of the Lord yet remaining is veiled, as to its date, from us. Those who live as they ought to live, trusting in Christ and knowing the indwelling of the Spirit, are doing that which secures present profit and blessedness, makes meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and at the same time adequate preparation for the trials of the last great day. There is no way of being ready for them except to live near to God in prayer and faith and faithfulness in little things. Believe in Christ, and show your faith by your works, and then you are ready whatever comes.

III. THE MANIFESTATION ITSELF AND ITS EFFECTS. Precisely how the manifestation was to take place does not seem to have been indicated beforehand; and even as it stands described by all those terrible terms, thunder, lightning, the smoking and the quaking mount, we feel that the reality must far have transcended the power of human speech to describe. It was truly an unspeakable visitation. The word telling us most is that which says that before this visitation all the people trembled. Evidently it had an overwhelming effect upon them. It is made perfectly plain that when God cannot draw men by love, he can hold them fast by fear. If they will not go like invited children in his way, they are shaken *volentes* out of their own. Whatever else men may refuse to God, love, worship, service,—this at all events is ensured, that they shall be terrified before him. They have no choice. The earth cannot but quake when he sets to work the mighty hidden powers underneath. And so the most atheistic life must acknowledge by its disturbed emotions that there is a power it cannot resist. The boasted discipline and sovereignty of human reason count for nothing then. The earthquake without gets its due result from the quaking heart within. Man may set up his will against God's will; but that only means that he refuses obedience; he cannot keep God from shaking him to the very foundations of his being. Though the people in a few months left Sinai, yet Sinai in a very important sense followed them. The fire that went out from the Lord and devoured Nadab and Abihu—the fire that burned at

Taberah among the complaining people (Num. xi. 1)—the opening earth and the devouring fire at the time of the conspiracy of Korah (Num. xvi.)—what are all these but proofs of the God of Sinai travelling in all his terror and glory along with Israel and making sharp visitations in the hour of worldliness, unbelief, and negligence? Those trained in idolatry may well become sceptical and end in utter unbelief, for they never see anything in the way of subduing power save the power of knavish priests over superstitious devotees. There are great pretensions and professions, but never anything done corresponding with them. But here as Jehovah begins to specify his requirements, he first of all shows his power in the most impressive way. As an Israelite looked back on Sinai, whatever other feelings he might have, he could not deny the terrible reality that was there. And one very remarkable thing is, that through all this thunder and lightning, smoking and quaking, there was no actual destruction. If there had been such, it would certainly have been recorded. But so far from this being the case, there were special and very earnest directions in order to avert it (ver. 12, 13, 21, 24.) So long as they kept outside the Divinely appointed barrier and observed the cleansing regulations, neither life nor property was lost. Sinai, with all its undescribed terrors, was not Vesuvius: the people beneath were not gathered in a doomed Herculaneum or Pompeii. The purpose of Jehovah was simply to manifest the reality, extent, and proximity of his destroying power. Men were made to feel what it could do, if they were so presumptuous or negligent as to come within its rightful exercise.—Y.

Vers. 7—25. *The revelation of Jehovah.* I. WHAT IS DEMANDED ERE THE REVELATION CAN BE IMPARTED. 1. The will must be surrendered to God, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (ver. 8). 2. The filthiness of the past must be put away; "Sanctify them" (ver. 10). There must be loathing of, and separation from, sin. 3. There must be a sense of the distance sin has put between the soul and God; "Take heed to yourselves that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it" (vers. 12, 13).

II. HOW THE REVELATION IS IMPARTED. 1. In the awful manifestation of his majesty (vers. 16—19). The first step is the recognition of the livingness and greatness and holiness of God. Hitherto he has been to the soul a name only; now the Creator, the Holy One, against whom and in whose sight all sin has been wrought, the Righteous Judge from whom there is no escape, from whose face death itself affords no covering. 2. In the glorifying of a Mediator, to whom he speaks, and who shall declare him to us. This is reflected in the Christian's experience—(1) Sinai, the knowledge of sin; (2) Calvary, peace through the blood of Jesus, acceptance in the Beloved.—U.

EXPOSITION.

VERB. 16—20.—THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD UPON SINAI. All was ready. The fence had been made (ver. 23); the people had purified themselves—at least so far as externals went. The third day was come—there was a breathless hush of expectation. Then suddenly, in the morning, the presence manifested itself. "There were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud" (ver. 16); "and Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace: and the whole mount quaked greatly" (ver. 18). Or, as the scene is elsewhere (Deut. iv. 11, 12) described by Moses—"Ye came near and stood under the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst

of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness. And the Lord spoke unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice." The phenomena were not a mere "storm of thunder and lightning, whereof Moses took advantage to persuade the people that they had heard God's voice"—not "an earthquake with volcanic eruptions"—not even these two combined—but a real theophany, in which amid the phenomena of storm and tempest, and fire and smoke, and thick darkness, and heavings of the ground as by an earthquake shock, first the loud blast of a trumpet sounded long commanding attention, and then a clear penetrating voice, like that of a man, made itself heard in distinctly articulated words, audible to the whole multitude,

and recognised by them as superhuman—as “the voice of God” (Deut. iv. 33). It is in vain to seek to minimise, and to rationalise the scene, and tone it down into something not supernatural. The only honest course is either to accept it as a plain record of plain (albeit miraculous) facts, or to reject it altogether as the fiction of a romancer.

Ver. 16.—**There were thunders.** Literally, “voices,” as in ch. ix. 23; but there can be no doubt that “thunder” is meant. A thick cloud. Compare above, ver. 9, and the comment *ad loc.* The voice of the trumpet. Literally, “a trumpet’s voice.” The word used for “trumpet” is not the same as in ver. 13; but the variation does not seem to have any importance.

Ver. 17.—**Moses brought forth the people out of the camp.** The camp itself must have been withdrawn to some little distance from the foot of the mount, so that a vacant space intervened between the first tents and the “fence” which Moses had caused to be erected almost close to the mount. Into this vacant space Moses now led “the people”—*i.e.*, the chief of the people—so bringing them as near as they might come to God.

Ver. 18.—**Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke.** Literally, “smoked, all of it.” Kalisch suggests that “the dense clouds from which the thunders broke forth had the appearance of smoke.” But the reason assigned—“because the Lord descended on it *in fire*,” seems to imply real smoke; and the same results from the comparison of it to “the smoke of a furnace.” The whole mount quaked greatly. Scarcely “through the vehemence

of the thunder” (Kalisch), for thunder does not shake the earth, though it shakes the air—but rather by an actual earthquake. Compare Ps. xviii. 7; Matt. xxvii. 51—54; Acts iv. 31; xvi. 26.

Ver. 19.—**When the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder.** This is a somewhat free translation; but it gives well the real meaning of the Hebrew. We may conclude that the trumpet’s blast was not continuous. It sounded when the manifestation began (ver. 16). It sounded again, much louder and with a much more prolonged note, to herald the actual descent of God upon the mount. This time the sound was so piercing, so terrible, so intolerable, that Moses could no longer endure to keep silence, but burst out in speech. Were his words those recorded in Heb. xii. 21—“I exceedingly fear and quake”—words not found now in the Old Testament—or were they others which have been wholly lost to us? It is impossible to say. His speech, however, had the effect of bringing the awful preparations to a close—“Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice, and the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai.”

Ver. 20.—**On the top of the mount.** Not, probably, on the highest point of the Sinaitic group, the Jebel Musa, which is out of sight from the plain Er-Rahah, where the Israelites must have been assembled; but on the highest part of the face of Sinai fronting that plain, the Ras Sufsafeh, which would be to the Israelites at the base “the top of the mount.” The Lord called Moses up. Perhaps with Aaron, who certainly accompanied him when he next ascended (ver. 24), and who seems to be glanced at in the phrase used at the end of ver. 23

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 16—20.—*God’s various modes of manifesting himself.* It has been well said that “when God reveals himself it is in a manner suitable to the occasion.” No revelation that he has made of himself has ever been so terrible in its material accompaniments as that at Sinai; and no occasion can ever be conceived of as more needing the employment of solemn, startling, and impressive circumstances. Here was a people gross of heart, delighting in flesh-pots, debased by slavery, careless of freedom, immoral, inclined to idolatry, which had to be elevated into God’s living witness among the nations, the depositary of his truth, the teacher of the rest of mankind for ages. Given the object of impressing such a nation permanently with the conviction that it had received a Divine revelation, and that very dreadful consequences would follow the neglect of it, and the need of the thunders and other terrors of Sinai becomes manifest. At other times and in other places God has pursued quite different methods. To Elijah he revealed himself in the “still small voice;” to Isaiah and St. John in visions; to the apostles generally in the solemn teaching of his Son; to St. Paul in ecstasies, wherein he heard unspeakable words. The contrast between the day of the giving of the law on Sinai and the day of Pentecost has often been noticed.

“When God of old came down from Heaven,
In power and wrath he came;
Before his feet the clouds were riven,
Half darkness and half flame.”

“But when he came the second time,
He came in power and love :
Softer than gale at morning prime,
Hovered his holy Dove ”

The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost and the coming of Jesus were, both of them, gentle and peaceful Epiphanies, suited to the time when God, having educated the world for four thousand years or more, was about to seek to win men to himself by the preaching of “good tidings”—of the gospel of love. The clouds and terrors of Sinai would here have been out of place—unsuitable anachronisms. In complete harmony with the two occasions were—at Bethlehem, the retired village, the humble stable, the angels singing of peace on earth, the lone shepherds watching their flocks at night—in Jerusalem the voiceless wind, “mighty” yet subdued, the lambent light playing round the heads of holy men, the unseen inward influence shed into their hearts at the same time, impalpable to sense, but with power to revolutionise the world. And as God reveals himself to his Church in manifold ways, each fitting the occasion, so does he reveal himself to individuals. Now he comes clothed in his terrors. He visits with calamity or with sickness, or with that awful dread which from time to time comes over the soul, that it is lost, hopelessly lost, alienated from God for ever. Anon, he shows himself in gentler guise—he whispers hope, he instils faith, he awakens love. In every case he studies the needs of the individual, and adapts his revelation of himself to them. Now he calls by his preachers, now he warns by the “still small voice” of conscience; now he wakes men out of sleep by a sudden danger or a sudden deliverance; anon, he startles them out of a self-complacency worse than sleep by withdrawing himself and allowing them to fall. It is for man to take advantage of every Divine manifestation, to listen when God speaks, to obey when he calls, to make the use of each occasion which it was intended to have, to “receive God’s revelations of himself in his own way.”

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 16—19.—*Sinai and Sion*. In studying these verses we cannot but be reminded of the picture drawn by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews of the contrast in respect of Church state and privilege between believers of the Old and believers of the New Testament dispensations. “Ye are not come,” he says, “unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest. . . . But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,” etc. (Hebrews xii. 18—25). Briefly stated, what is set forth here is the contrast of legal with Gospel privilege. The writer is addressing Jews, who were in danger of apostatising from Christ. He seeks to dissuade them from going back to Judaism by showing them the vast superiority of the privileges which they enjoyed as Christians to those enjoyed under the law. We, who are Christians, and are in no temptation to return to Judaism, approach the subject from a different side. But the verses are still of use as showing us, by contrast, the greatness of our privilege. We have, 1. the *negative* side of Christian privilege—what we are delivered from, “Ye are not come,” etc.; 2. The *positive* side of Christian privilege—what we have come to, “Ye are come unto Mount Sion,” etc. It will better suit our present purpose to view the contrast along different lines.

I. THE CONTRAST IN THE MOUNTAINS. Sinai and Sion. 1. *Sinai*. Sinai, the mountain of law, stands as the proper representative of the old economy. The Israelites, as seen above, were under a peculiar constitution. Bound to God by a covenant of law, they yet enjoyed many of the benefits of a state of grace. Sinai, however, was the proper representation of their economy. Divest that economy of all that it derived from the new and better covenant which has since superseded it, and it would have been a Sinai economy pure and simple. The law said, Do this and thou shalt live; and if the Israelite did not do it, it could award no blessing to him, could only condemn. This was the formal constitution. As placed under law, the people, in their approaches to God, were constantly coming anew to the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire. 2. *Sion*. The first thing which strikes us here is—(1) That there

was this contrast between Sinai and Sion within Israel itself. Sinai and Sion were, so to speak, the two poles round which the whole national and religious life of Israel revolved. As Sinai, the mountain of the law, represents their position *under* law, so the grace element in their economy comes to light in Mount Sion. As on Sinai, God descended in awful smoke and flame, so on Sion he dwelt in peace in the midst of Israel, giving forth his oracles, receiving his people's worship, and dispensing mercy and favour from between the cherubim, above the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat. God came down for a season only on Sinai; on Sion, he was said to dwell (Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14). He appeared in terror on Mount Sinai; but Sion displayed the milder glories of his character. Sion was the place of salvation (Ps. xiv. 7; Is. xli. 13, etc.). In Sion God ruled; from it he sent forth strength and help; from it was to go forth the Gospel law (Ps. xx. 2; cx. 2; Is. ii. 2, 3). Yet Sion, under that economy, was only the type of something better. Grace at that time was only very imperfectly revealed; it was hidden under types and forms of law; it has now been made fully manifest, and the old covenant has been superseded by a better and enduring one. (2) *Sinai and Sion as representing the contrast between the two dispensations.* Sion has not ceased to exist, it has only, so to speak, gone up higher. Its special seat is now in heaven. There is the throne of God; there, the capital or head-quarters of that great spiritual commonwealth, here denominated "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," and elsewhere, "the Jerusalem that is above," "New Jerusalem," in plain terms, the Church or kingdom of God on earth and in heaven. This heavenly Sion alone perfectly realises and fulfils the idea embodied in the earthly one. Do we ask why the Church or kingdom of God, as respects its state of privilege, is in this text figured as on a mountain—as a city set on Mount Sion? The answer is—1. Because the special seat of God's holy abode in the midst of his Church is now literally in heaven, i.e., spiritually removed from, and exalted above the earth. 2. Because the kingdom of God is spiritually the highest thing on earth—founded on the highest order of ideas, on those principles of righteousness and justice which dominate all others. 3. Because it is, in point of fact, the central, commanding, controlling power in history. 4. Because entrance into it, and growth in its spirit and power, involves a spiritual rise—is a true moral ascent. These facts evince the propriety of this figurative representation.

II. THE CONTRAST IN THE ACCESSORIES. Each mountain, in the passage in Hebrews, is made the centre of a scene. We have, accordingly, two groups of attendant circumstances, the details of which are placed studiously in contrast. The series of manifestations at Sinai has already engaged our attention, and we need not dwell upon them further. In contrast to Sinai is placed the picture of the convocation at Mount Sion. The picture is ideal; but the features in it are severally real, and the whole are needed to set forth Christian privilege in its completeness. 1. The mount is represented as crowned by "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem"—the city denoting that great spiritual polity into which believers are admitted, and in which they have rights of citizenship, but which, like every other polity, has an existence of its own, irrespective of the individuals who at any time compose its membership. The *civitas* endures, though the *cives* come and go. The ideas suggested are order, beauty, symmetry. God has founded this city. God defends it. It has salvation for walls and bulwarks. The capital of this great "City of God" is heaven; but believers, even on earth, are enfranchised members of it, and, spiritually, have come to it (Eph. ii. 19; Phil. iii. 20). 2. Crowding the mount, thronging its sides, and hovering above, behind, around, is "an innumerable company of angels." Cf. 2 Kings vi. 17, where the servant of Elisha saw the mountain "full" of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha, or Dan. vii. 10, where thousand thousands minister to the Ancient of Days, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him; or Rev. v. 11, where the number of the angels round about the throne was "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." The truths figured are these two—(1) That the angelic hosts stand in a relation of ministry to the Church and kingdom of God (Heb. i. 14); and (2) That they take a deep interest in its fortunes (Eph. iii. 10; 1 Pet. i. 12). Their bright forms, crowding the mount, add augustness, splendour, and beauty to the scene. 3. The mount is further occupied by "the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven"—this designation including the whole body of Christian believers both those on earth and those in heaven,

the Church catholic, spiritual, invisible. "The whole family in heaven and earth"—"one Church, above, below." But why called "first-born"? "They are partakers with Christ in all the privileges of that right of primogeniture, which properly and essentially belongs to him alone." (Candlish.) The truth figured here is, that in Christ we are admitted to the "communion of saints." "I believe in the holy Catholic Church. . . . I believe in the communion of saints." Yet how little, sometimes, does this great privilege mean to us! 4. Another part of the assembly on the mount is denoted by the words—"the spirits of just men made perfect." These are the holy and good of the former dispensation, now admitted to equality of privilege and blessedness with Christians (cf. Heb. xi. 40). 5. God himself sits enthroned in the midst—"Judge of all." The expression reminds us of the writer's design, which is not consolatory, but admonitory. It is still the holy God with whom we have to do, the Judge (cf. Rom. ii. 6; 1 Pet. i. 17) as well as Father; one who will punish disobedience to his voice now with even greater severity than he did of old (Heb. xii. 25, 29). The God of Sinai and the God of Sion are after all the same God. What, then, makes the difference between Sinai and Sion? The answer is—6. "Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and the blood of sprinkling." It is Christ's presence in the scene which has changed all the surroundings. To all these things, if we are indeed in Christ, we *come*. How? (1) By coming to Jesus himself. To come to Jesus, as has been well said, is to come to all else that is here described. We may or may not realise our privileges; but they are there. We are members of the spiritual commonwealth, enjoy the ministry of angels, are part of the invisible Church, have rights of the first-born, etc. (2) In the realisation of spiritual privilege (cf. 1 Cor. ii. 12). (3) In the use of our rights. (4) We shall "come" more perfectly at death. Hence—

III. THE CONTRAST IN PRIVILEGE. 1. In the *character* of the privilege. In Israel's case, the privilege was of so awful a kind, that the sense of privilege was well-nigh swallowed up in the terror which the scene inspired. How different with believers! Their approach to this spiritual mount is solemnising indeed, yet joyful. They have boldness in drawing nigh by the blood of Christ. 2. In the *degree* of the privilege. The Israelites were not permitted to ascend, or even to come near the mount. Bounds were erected to keep them back. Did they so much as touch it, they would perish. How different the privilege of Christians, who not only ascend this spiritual Mount Sion, but are enrolled as citizens in its heavenly city, and have boldness to enter the holiest of all in their approaches to the throne of grace (Heb. iv. 14—16; x. 19—23).—J. O.

Ver. 17.—*Prepare to meet thy God*. God's revelation of himself to man is gradual, as man can bear it. [Cf. the way in which a parent reveals himself to his child, Is. xxviii. 11, with stammering lips and a feigned tongue.] Israel had learnt to know God as a deliverer; must learn to know him further as a lawgiver and ruler.

I. THE SCENE. A long, broad valley. Rocks on each side widening out into a natural amphitheatre. Facing down the valley is a steep, precipitous mountain; grey, streaked with red. The whole scene, not unlike, on a huge scale, that presented by the avenues leading up to the Egyptian temples. It is a place where those accustomed to Egypt might expect to meet with God. "Now" probably the people may have thought, "we shall see for ourselves this mysterious Jehovah; he has brought us to his temple; he will introduce us to his shrine."

II. THE MEDIATOR AND HIS MESSAGE. Israel is encamped. Moses ascends the mountain (ver. 3). Again God meets with him and sends a message by him to the people. Notice:—1. Reminder of what he has done for them already (ver. 4). 2. Obedience the condition of future favour (ver. 5). Fulfil the condition and the promise is secure. The earth itself is God's temple; if Israel will obey and keep his covenant they shall be "a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." 3. The answer given (ver. 8). No hesitation, no expression of doubt. The promised blessing so attractive that they are ready to promise anything, never doubting their ability to fulfil their promise. It is easy enough to say "I will"—the hard thing is to translate it into "I do."

III. THE PROMISED INTERVIEW. The people shall be conscious of the presence of their God. Jehovah will publicly attest the authority of his servant. Notice:—1. *The preparation*. God requires it. It is easy for familiarity to breed irreverence; and irreverence soon leads on to low views of the Divine character. Love is degraded into mere kindly

ness; an easy-going people believe in an easy-going God. See here:—(1) The people have to prepare *themselves* for the meeting (ver. 10). (2) The *place* has to be prepared. God reveals himself to prepared people in a prepared place. Why do so few have revelations nowadays? Some come to the prepared place, but they omit the personal preparation; others, even after personal preparation, lose much through neglecting the prepared place. We need to remember Eccles. v. 1, and Heb. x. 25. 2. *The revelation.* The third day comes (ver. 16). Storm, sound of trumpet, assembly of people without the camp, trembling, earthquake, intense suspense. "Now surely God will show himself. Can we endure the sight and live?" At length (ver. 19) "a voice"—cf. Deut. iv. 12; "no similitude, only a voice." For the present it is enough; reverence is the first lesson those whom God has delivered have to learn; "Hallowed be thy Name" is the first petition they are taught to offer. For effect (cf. xx. 18—22) which also teaches the object of the revelation. "That his fear may be before your faces that ye sin not."

Conclusion. We have learnt many more lessons about God than the Israelites could then learn. Have we not too often slurred over or half-forgotten that first lesson?

"Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell;
That mind and soul, according well,
May make our music as before,
But vaster. We are fools and slight;
We mock thee when we do not fear;
But help thy foolish ones to bear;
Help thy vain worlds to bear thy light."—G

Ver. 19.—*Only a voice.* The people were expecting a revelation—a vision of the hitherto unseen Jehovah—it came, but not as they expected; no *vision*, only a *voice* (cf. Deut. iv. 12). The fact was the law was not a *final*, only a *preparatory* revelation; it is related to the Gospel as John Baptist was related to Christ. "A voice crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord. Consider in this view:—

I. THE STRENGTH OF THE LAW. 1. *It was a voice—a Divine voice.* In spite of the confusion not unmixed with disappointment, none doubted whence it came. It gave a Divine authority to the commandment even when given through a mediator. 2. *It was adapted to the condition of those who heard it.* A revelation must be fitted for those to whom it is addressed. (*Illust.* a highly-finished picture is of small value to the half-blind; they can better appreciate a rough sketch in coarse, bold outline.) The animal, or natural man, as exemplified in the character of Israel in the wilderness, could not have understood anything more spiritual; its religion is obedience. The natural man can only be reached by such sensual methods as his nature can respond to. Through them the spiritual nature, which is cradled in the natural, may be educated and fostered, prepared to receive in due course that higher revelation which befits it.

II. THE WEAKNESS OF THE LAW. 1. *It was only a voice.* As the spiritual nature grows (cf. infants attaining consciousness) it craves for something more than this. It needs not a voice only, but a *presence*. From the first we find Israel longing after a "similitude." Even Moses (xxxiii. 18) beseeches that God will show him his glory. Later the cry grows ever more distinct through psalmists and prophets, itself a continuous preparation for the fulfilment ultimately reserved for it. 2. *Evidence in the law itself* (cf. second commandment). A fence to guard an empty shrine, but a shrine kept empty only in preparation for some coming inmate. A preparation for the Incarnation. The Pharisee comes to worship the fence; the idolater ignores it; both illustrate the weakness of the merely "vocal" revelation.

III. CONTRAST WITH THE GOSPEL. Christ is "the *Word* made *Flesh*:" the express *image* of God. Not a voice only, but a *person*. The more perfect revelation indicates a fuller development in those to whom it is addressed, but we must remember that a fuller development implies also a greater responsibility. [The offence which we condone in the child, is unpardonable in the man. Mistakes made by the half-blind are no longer excusable when a man can see.] If Israel fell and was rejected, must not our far greater privileges be followed, if profaned, with deeper ruin? (Cf. Heb. xii. 25, 26 1 Cor. x. 1—12.)—G.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 21—25.—*The further warning to the people and the priests.* It is very remarkable that, after all the directions given (vers. 10—13), and all the pains taken by Moses and the Israelites themselves (vers. 14, 15, 23), God should still have thought it necessary to interpose with a fresh warning, and to send Moses back from the top of the mount to the bottom, in order to communicate the renewed warning to the people. We can only suppose that, in spite of the instructions previously given and the precautions taken, there were those among the people who were prepared to “break through” the fence, and invade the mount, and who would have done so, to their own destruction (ver. 21), but for this second warning. The special mention of the “priests” (vers. 22, 24) raises the suspicion, that this proud and rebellious spirit was particularly developed among them. Accustomed to the exercise of sacred functions, they may have been inclined to regard their own purity as equal to that of Moses and Aaron; and they may even have resented their exclusion from a sacred spot to which the two sons of Amram were admitted. Apparently, they had conceived that the injunction to go through the recognised ceremonies of purification (ver. 10) did not apply to them, and had neglected to do so, on which account a special command had to be issued, addressed to them only (ver. 22).

Ver. 21.—*Charge the people lest they break through*—i.e., “lest they force a passage through the barrier made by Moses” in accordance with the command given in ver. 12. *And many of them perish.* Irreverent gazing on holy things was forbidden by the law (Num. iv. 20), and on one occasion (1 Sam. vi. 19) was actually punished with death. It did not, however, require a law to make it an offence, natural reason being quite sufficient to teach the duty of reverence.

Ver. 22.—*Let the priests also.* It has been objected, that no priests had been as yet appointed, and that we have here therefore an

anachronism. But every nation in ancient times had priests, appointed on one principle or another; and the Levitical priesthood must be regarded as having superseded one previously existent, not as the first priesthood known to Israel. We have a second mention of priests, previous to the appointment of Aaron's sons to the office (in ch. xxiv. 5), which confirms the present passage. *Sanctify themselves.* The verb used is identical with that which occurs in ver. 10; and there is no reason to believe that any different sanctification was intended. The natural inference is that the priests had neglected to sanctify themselves. (See the introductory paragraph.) *Lest the Lord break forth.* Compare 2 Sam. vi. 8, where we have an instance of such a “breaking forth” upon Uzzah.

Ver. 23.—*The people cannot come up.* Moses can only have meant, that the people could not approach the mount unwittingly, since the fence commanded (ver. 12) was made. But to scale the fence, or break through it, was of course possible. (See ver. 13.)

Ver. 24.—*And the Lord said . . . Away, get thee down.* God wholly rejected the plea of Moses, that there was no need to give an additional warning. *He knew best,* and would not have issued the order to “go down and charge the people” (ver. 21), unless there had been a need for it. In the abrupt words “Away, get thee down,” we may see a rebuke, addressed to Moses, for his folly in thinking that he could change the purposes of God. *Thou and Aaron with thee.* This is the first express mention of Aaron as called to ascend with Moses. But it is quite possible that he may have accompanied his brother in either or both the previous ascents (vers. 3, 20. Compare ch. x. 1, 3; xii. 21, 28; etc.) *But let not the priests and the people break through.* Both the *priests* and the *people* were to be again solemnly warned that it would be death to break through the fence. This warning seems to have been sufficient.

Ver. 25.—*So Moses went down.* After the sharp rebuke addressed to him in ver. 24, Moses made no further resistance, but returned to the camp, delivered the warning to priests and people, and having so done re-ascended the mount with Aaron.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 22—24.—*The priestly office does not dispense a man from personal purity, but obliges him the more to it.* Holiness of office, of profession, of function is too often regarded as if it secured, by some occult power, the personal holiness of the individual, or even of the class, exercising it. The priest castes of Egypt, India, and other

countries, assumed to stand on a completely different footing from the rest of the community in respect of nearness, and acceptability to God. And both under the Jewish and the Christian dispensation, there has been in different times and countries a vast amount of sacerdotal pretension, a wide-spread disposition to assume that official covers and includes personal holiness. But Holy Scripture abounds in warnings against any such assumption. "Let the priests sanctify themselves." Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, were chosen among the first of the Levitical priests (ch. xxviii. 1); yet their priestly office did not prevent them from sinning grievously by offering "strange fire before the Lord," and perishing for their impiety (Num. x. 1, 2). Eli's sons were "sons of Belial" (1 Sam. ii. 12), whose "sin was very great before the Lord" (ib. verse 17). Even among the apostles there was a "son of perdition." Priests have to remember—

I. THAT THE PRIESTLY OFFICE DOES NOT SECURE THEM AGAINST BEING TEMPTED. Even Christ, our great High Priest—the only true priest that the world has ever seen, was "in all points tempted like as we are" (Heb. iv. 15). Eli's sons were tempted by greed and fleshly lusts (1 Sam. ii. 16, 22); Nadab and Abihu by pride; Judas by covetousness. All men have the same nature, like passions, similar appetites. The priest, after all, is a man. Satan watches for him no less—or rather much more—than for others. It is a greater triumph for him to lead astray the shepherd than the sheep. And the relations of a priest towards his flock are of such a nature—so close, so private sometimes—as to lay him open to special temptations.

II. THAT THE PRIESTLY OFFICE DOES NOT SECURE THEM AGAINST YIELDING TO TEMPTATION. Jesus alone was "in all points tempted, yet without sin" (Heb. iv. 15). "ALL we the rest, although baptised and born again in Christ, yet offend in many things," yield to the temptations which surround us, transgress the Divine law. Nadab, Abihu, Eli's sons, Judas, were not only tempted, but fell. The priests of Judah, towards the close of the independent kingdom, were among those who provoked God the most (Jer. xxxii. 32; Zeph. iii. 4). Christian ministers, even at the present day, too often disgrace their profession, bring shame upon their church, and even upon religion itself, by acts of sin or sometimes by scandalous lives, no better than those of the sons of Eli. These terrible examples should be a warning to all of their danger, and should render the minister distrustful of himself, circumspect, vigilant, and above all prayerful. Only by God's help can he hope to stand upright.

III. THAT SIN IS WORSE IN THE PRIEST THAN IN OTHERS, AND WILL ENTAIL A SORER PUNISHMENT. Ministers of Christ pledge themselves by special vows, over and above their baptismal vows, to lead godly lives. They are bound to be examples to the flock. They have greater opportunities of grace than others. Their offences cause greater scandal than the offences of others, and do greater damage to the cause of religion. There is something shocking, even to the worldly man, in the immorality of one whose business in life is to minister in holy things. The impure minister is a hypocrite; and hypocrisy is hateful to God, and even in the sight of man contemptible.

IV. THAT THE PRIESTLY PROFESSION BINDS TO HOLINESS. Priests are they whose office it is to "come near the Lord" (Ex. xix. 22)—to draw closer to him than others—to lead others on to him, by exhortation, by example, by intercessory prayer. Without holiness they are impotent to perform their work—they are of no service either to God or man—they do but help forward the work of the devil. Ministering in a holy place, in holy things, with holy words continually in their mouths, if they have not holiness in their hearts, their lives must be a perpetual contradiction, a continual profanity. Again, as already observed, they take special vows: they profess before God and the congregation to have an inward call; they spontaneously promise to live as examples to others; they enter on their position in life on these conditions: they bind themselves. Not to live holy lives is to fly in the face of these obligations—to break the promises made to man and the vows offered to God—to violate faith—to destroy, so far as lies in their power, the great bond of human society. And what must not the offence be to God which they commit, by continually drawing near to him with their lips, when their hearts are far from him? He is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." "Without holiness no one shall see him." "Let the priests sanctify themselves."

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XX.

Vers. 1-17.—THE DELIVERY OF THE MORAL LAW. Every necessary preparation had now been made. The priests, as well as the people, had "sanctified themselves." A wholesome dread of "breaking" through the fence, and "touching" the mount, had spread itself among the people. Moses had returned from the camp to the summit of the mount; and both he and the people were attent to hear the words of the "covenant," which had been announced to them (ch. xix. 5). Then, amid the thunders, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the smoke, and the earthquake throbs which shook the ground, a voice like that of a man, distinctly articulate, pronounced the words of that "moral law," which has been from that day to this the guide of life to thousands upon thousands, the only guide to some, a very valuable and helpful guide to all who have known of it. It is well said by Kalisch, that the delivery of the Decalogue on Sinai "formed a decisive epoch in the history of the human race," and was even perhaps "the greatest and most important event in human history," up to the time of its occurrence. Considering the weakness, imperfection, and moral obliquity of man, it was to the last degree important that an authoritative code should be put forth, laying down with unmistakable clearness the chief heads of duty, and denouncing the chief classes of sins. It may be true that the educated moral sense of mankind in civilised communities is sufficient to teach them all, or nearly all, of what the Decalogue forbids and enjoins; but this is the effect produced upon the internal constitution of our nature by long centuries of moral training; and nothing like it existed in primitive times. Then the moral sense was much duller; men's perceptions of right and wrong were confused, uncertain, and not unfrequently perverted and depraved. Even in Egypt, where a priest class, established as the spiritual guides of the nation for a thousand years or more, had elaborated a moral system of considerable merit, such a code as that of the Decalogue would have been a marked improvement upon anything that they had worked out for themselves. And the authoritative sanction by the

"voice" and the "finger of God" was an enormous advantage, being imperatively needed to satisfy doubt, and silence that perverse casuistry which is always ready to question the off-hand decisions of the moral consciousness, and to invent a more refined system, wherein "bitter is put for sweet, and sweet for bitter." Altogether the Decalogue stands on a moral eminence, elevated above and beyond all other moral systems—Egyptian, Indian, Chinese, or Greek, unequalled for simplicity, for comprehensiveness, for solemnity. Its precepts were, according to the Jewish tradition, "the pillars of the law and its roots." They formed to the nation to which they were given "*fons omnis publici privatique juris*." They constitute for all time a condensed summary of human duty which bears divinity upon its face, which is suited for every form of human society, and which, so long as the world endures, cannot become antiquated. The retention of the Decalogue as the best summary of the moral law by Christian communities is justified on these grounds, and itself furnishes emphatic testimony to the excellency of the compendium.

Ver. 1.—God spake all these words. It has been suggested that Moses derived the Decalogue from Egypt, by summarising the chief points of the Egyptian teaching as to the duty of man. But neither the second, nor the fourth, nor the tenth commandment came within the Egyptian ideas of moral duty; nor was any such compendious form as the Decalogue known in Egypt. Moreover, Egyptian morality was minute and complex, rather than grand and simple. *Forty-two* kinds of sin were denied by the departed soul before Osiris and his assessors. The noble utterances of Sinai are wholly unlike anything to be found in the entire range of Egyptian literature.

Ver. 2.—I am the Lord thy God. The ten precepts were prefaced by this distinct announcement of who it was that uttered them. God would have the Israelites clearly understand, that he himself gave them the commandments. It is only possible to reconcile the declarations of the New Testament, that the law was given by the ministration of angels (Acts vii. 53; Gal. iii. 19; Heb. ii. 2) with this and other plain statements, by regarding God the Son as the actual speaker. As sent by his father, he too was, in a certain sense, an angel (*i.e.*, a messenger). Which

brought thee out of the land of Egypt. God does not appeal to his authority as creator, but to his mercy and kindness as protector and deliverer. He would be obeyed by his people from a sentiment of love, not by fear. **Out of the house of bondage.** Compare ch. xiii. 3, 14; and for the ground of the expression, see ch. i. 14; vi. 9.

Ver. 3.—Thou shalt have. The use of the second person *singular* is remarkable when a covenant was being made with the *people* (ch. xix. 5). The form indicated that each individual of the nation was addressed severally, and was required himself to obey the law, a mere general national obedience being insufficient. No one can fail to see how much the commands gain in force, through all time, by being thus addressed to the individual conscience. **No other gods before me.** "Before me"—literally, "before my face," is a Hebrew idiom, and equivalent to "beside me," "in addition to me." The commandment requires the worship of one God alone, Jehovah—the God who had in so many ways manifested himself to the Israelites, and implies that there is, in point of fact, no other God. A belief in the unity of God is said to lie at the root of the esoteric Egyptian religion; but Moses can scarcely have derived his belief from this source, since the Egyptian notions on the subject were tinged with pantheism and materialism, from which the religion of Moses is entirely free. Outwardly the Egyptian religion, like that of the nations of Western Asia generally, was a gross polytheism; and it is against polytheistic notions that the first commandment raises a protest.

Ver. 4. As the first commandment asserts the unity of God, and is a protest against polytheism, so the second asserts his spirituality, and is a protest against idolatry and materialism. Verses 4 and 5 are to be taken together, the prohibition being intended, not to forbid the arts of sculpture and painting, or even to condemn the religious use of them, but to disallow the worship of God under material forms. When the later Jews condemned all representations of natural objects (Philo, *De Orao.* 29; Joseph. *Ant. Jud.* viii. 7, § 5), they not only enslaved themselves to a literalism, which is alien from the spirit of *both* covenants, but departed from the practice of more primitive times—representations of such objects having had their place both in the tabernacle (ch. xxv. 31—34; xxviii. 33, 34) and in the first temple (1 Kings vi. 18, 29, 32, &c.). Indeed, Moses himself, when he erected the "brazen serpent" (Num. xxi. 9) made it clear that representations of natural objects were not disallowed by the law. To moderns in civilized countries it seems almost incredible that there should ever have been anywhere a real worship of images. But acquaint-

ance with ancient history or even with the present condition of man in savage or backward countries, renders it apparent that there is a subtle fascination in such material forms, and that imperfectly developed minds will rest in them not as mere emblems of divinity, but as actually possessed of Divine power. The protest raised by the second commandment is still as necessary as ever, not only in the world, but in the very Christian Church itself, where there exists even at the present day a superstitious regard for images and pictures, which is not only irrational, but which absorbs the religious feelings that should have been directed to higher objects. **Any graven image.** Perhaps it would be better to translate "any image," for the term used (*pesel*) is applied, not only to "graven" but also to "molten images" (Is. xl. 19; xlv. 10; Jer. x. 14; etc.), since these last were in almost every instance *finished* by the graving tool. **Or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above—i.e.,** "any likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air." Compare Deut. iv. 17. **The water under the earth.** See Gen. i. 6, 7. The triple division here and elsewhere made, is intended to embrace the whole material universe. Much of the Egyptian religion consisted in the worship of animals and their images.

Ver. 5.—Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them. Every outward sign of honour was shown to images in the ancient world. They were not regarded as emblems, but as actual embodiments of deity. There was a special rite in Greece (*Theopœa*) by means of which the gods were inducted into their statues, and made to take up their abodes in them. Seneca says of the Romans of his own day—"They pray to these images of the gods, implore them *on bended knee*, sit or stand long days before them, throw them money, and sacrifice beasts to them, so treating them with deep respect, though they despise the man who made them" (Ap. Lact. ii. 2). **I, the Lord thy God am a jealous God.** God "will not give his glory to another" (Is. xlii. 8; xlviii. 11), will not suffer a rival near his throne. He is not "jealous," as the Greeks thought (Herod. vii. 10, § 5), of mere success, or greatness; but he is very jealous of his own honour, and will not have the respect and reverence, which is his due, bestowed on other beings or on inanimate objects. Compare with the present passage ch. xxxiv. 14; Deut. iv. 24; v. 9; vi. 15; Josh. xxiv. 19; etc. **Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children.** Exception has been taken to the plain meaning of this passage by a multitude of writers, who dread the reproach of the sceptic, that the God of the Old Testament is a God careless of justice and bent upon revenge. But neither does society, nor does civil justice itself, regard the visiting of

parents' sins upon their children as in all cases unjust. Society by its scorn punishes for their parents' transgressions the illegitimate, the children of criminals, the children—especially the daughters—of adulteresses. Civil justice condemns to forfeiture of their titles and their estates, the innocent children of those executed for treason. God again manifestly does by the laws which obtain in his moral universe, entail on children many consequences of their parents' ill-doing—as the diseases which arise from profligacy or intemperance, the poverty which is the result of idleness or extravagance, the ignorance and evil habits which are the fruit of a neglected education. It is this sort of visitation which is intended here. The children and grandchildren of idolaters would start in life under disadvantages. The vicious lives of their parents would have sown in them the seeds both of physical and moral evil. They would commonly be brought up in wrong courses, have their moral sense early perverted, and so suffer for their parents' faults. It would be difficult for them to rise out of their unhappy condition. Still, "each would bear his own iniquity." Each would "be judged by that he had, not by that he had not." An all-wise God would, in the final award, make allowance for the disadvantages of birth and inherited disposition, and would assign to each that position to which his own conduct—his struggles, efforts, endeavours after right—entitled him.

To say that the threat "applies only to such children as follow the sins of their fathers" (Kalisch) is to empty the passage of all force. It applies to all; but the visitation intended consists in temporal disadvantages, not in the final award of happiness or misery.

Ver. 6.—**Shewing mercy unto thousands.** Or, "to the thousandth generation." (Compare Deut. vii. 9.) In neither case are the numbers to be taken as exact and definite. The object of them is to contrast the long duration of the Divine love and favour towards the descendants of those who love him, with the comparatively short duration of his chastening wrath in the case of those who are his adversaries. **And keep my commandments.** Thus only is love shown. Compare John xiv. 15-21; 1 John ii. 5; 2 John 6.

Ver. 7.—**Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.** It is disputed whether this is a right rendering. *Shālā* in Hebrew means both "vanity" and "falsehood," so that the Third Commandment may forbid either "vain-swearing" or simply "false-swearing." It is in favour of the latter interpretation, that our Lord seems to contrast his own prohibition of unnecessary oaths with the ancient prohibition of false oaths in the words—"Ye have heard that it hath been said by" (or "to") "them of old time—Thou shalt

not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. *But I say unto you—Swear not at all*" (Matt. v. 33-34). It is also in favour of the command being levelled against false-swearing, that perjury should naturally, as a great sin, have a special prohibition directed against it in the Decalogue, while vain-swearing, as a little sin, would scarcely seem entitled to such notice. Perjury has always been felt to be one of the greatest both of moral and of social offences. It implies an absolute want of any reverence at all for God; and it destroys civil society by rendering the administration of justice impossible. There has been a general horror of it among all civilised nations. The Egyptians punished perjury with death. The Greeks thought that a divine Nemesis pursued the perjured man, and brought destruction both upon himself and upon his offspring (Herod. vi. 86). The Romans regarded the perjurer as infamous, and the object of Divine vengeance in the other world (Cic. *De Leg.* ii. 9). The threat contained in the words—"The Lord will not hold him guiltless"—may be taken as an argument on either side. If viewed as equivalent to "the Lord will punish severely" (Kalisch), it accords best with the view that perjury was intended; if taken literally, it would suit best a lesser sin, of which men ordinarily think little.

Ver. 8.—**Remember the sabbath day.** The institution of the sabbath dates, at any rate, from the giving of the manna (ch. xvi. 23). Its primeval institution, which has been thought to be implied in Gen. ii. 3, is uncertain. The word "remember" here may be simply a reference to what passed in the "wilderness of Sin" as related in ch. xvi. 22-30. On the sabbath itself, both Jewish and Christian, see the comment upon that chapter.

Ver. 9.—**Six days shalt thou labour.** This is not so much a command as a prohibition—"Thou shalt not labour more than six (consecutive) days." In them thou shalt do all thy necessary work, so as to have the Sabbath free for the worship and service of God.

Ver. 10.—**The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God.** Rather—"The seventh day shall be a sabbath to the Lord thy God;" i.e., the seventh day shall be a day of holy rest dedicated to religion. All unnecessary labour shall be suspended and put aside—the law of rest and ease, so far as bodily toil is concerned, which was the law of man's existence before the fall, shall supersede for the time that law of heavy toil and continual unrest, which was laid on man as the penalty of his transgression (Gen. iii. 17-19). Eden shall be, as it were, restored—man shall not "go out to his toil and his labour"—even the very beasts, pressed into man's service since the fall, shall rest. In it thou shalt not do any work. On the exceptions to this rule, which even Judaism, with its extreme formality and literalism, saw to be

necessary, see Matt. xii. 5, 11. Still in many respects, a superstitious adherence to the precept was maintained by religious Jews, who would not even defend themselves on the sabbath, if attacked by an enemy (1 Mac. ii. 32-38; 2 Mac. v. 25, 26; vi. 11; xv. 1). Experience, however, taught them that the law had not been intended to extend so far, and after a time they determined, not to seek battle, but to accept it, and do their best, on the sabbath day (1 Mac. ii. 41). **Thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter.** The rest is to extend to the whole family. Work is not to be merely devolved by the parents upon the children. **Thy manservant, nor thy maid-servant.** It is to extend beyond the family proper, to the domestics of the household, who are to enjoy the respite from toil and to have the advantage of the religious refreshment, no less than their masters. **Nor thy cattle.** God's care for cattle is a remarkable feature of the Old Testament dispensation. God, at the time of the flood, "remembered Noah and the cattle which were with him in the ark" (Gen. viii. 1). Soon after, his covenant, not to drown the earth any more, was established "with the fowl, and with the cattle, and with every beast of the earth," no less than with man (*ib.* ix. 9-11). In the Psalms he declares that "the cattle upon a thousand hills" are his (Ps. l. 10). In Jonah, we find that Nineveh was spared, in part because there was in it "much cattle" (Jon. iv. 11). The precept, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn" is characteristic of the Mosaic dispensation, and had no parallel in the written codes or in the actual customs of other ancient nations. Animal suffering was generally regarded as of small account in the ancient world; and the idea of protecting animals from ill usage was wholly unknown. On the contrary, as Dr. Döllinger well observes (*Jew and Gentile*, vol. ii. pp. 346-7): "The law was specially careful about the welfare of animals; they were to be treated with compassion and kindness. Domestic animals were to be well fed, and to enjoy the rest of the sabbath. The Israelites were to help to lift up the ass which had fallen beneath its burden, and to bring back the beast that had gone astray (Ex. xxiii. 5, 12; Deut. xxv. 4) . . . The young was not to be taken from its mother before the seventh day . . . From these and similar ordinances—such, for instance, as about the least painful method of killing animals—it is plain that the law tried to subdue that coarse turn of mind and unfeeling cruelty, which are engendered by the maltreatment of animals." **Nor the stranger that is within thy gates.** The "strangers within the gates" of Israel are those foreigners who voluntarily sojourned with them in their camps or (afterwards) in their towns. A mixed multitude" had gone up out of Egypt

with them (ch. xii. 38), and accompanied them in their wilderness wanderings. The command that these too should rest, was at once a restriction upon their liberty, requiring them to conform to the habits of those among whom they dwelt, and an admission of them into participation in some portion of the privileges of Israel. The sacred rest of the sabbath prefigured the final peace and happiness of the blest in heaven; and they who were commanded to share in the first, were encouraged to hope that they might also participate in the second.

Ver. 11.—**For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth.** Two reasons are assigned for the sanctification of the seventh day in the Pentateuch:—1. The fact that the work of creation took six days, and that on the seventh God rested; and 2. The further fact, that God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, and gave them a time of rest after a time of labour and toil (Deut. v. 15). It is not expressly said that the deliverance took place on the Sabbath, but such is the Jewish tradition on the subject. The reason here assigned must be regarded as the main reason, man's rest being purposely assimilated to God's rest, in order to show the resemblance between man's nature and God's (Gen. i. 27), and to point towards that eternal rest wherein man, united with God, will find his highest bliss and the true end of his being. "There remaineth a rest for the people of God."

Ver. 12.—**Honour thy father and thy mother.** The obligation of filial respect, love, and reverence is so instinctively felt by all, that the duty has naturally found a place in every moral code. In the maxims of Ptah-hotep, an Egyptian author who lived probably before Abraham, "the duty of filial piety is strictly inculcated" (Birch, *Egypt from the Earliest Times*, p. 49). Confucius, in China, based his moral system wholly upon the principle of parental authority; and in Rome it may be regarded as the main foundation of the political edifice. In the Decalogue, the position of this duty, at the head of our duties towards our neighbour, marks its importance; which is further shown by this being "the first commandment with promise" (Eph. vi. 2). It is curious that the long life here specially attached to the observance of this obligation, was also believed to accompany it by the Egyptians. "The son," says Ptah-hotep, "who accepts the words of his father, will grow old in consequence of so doing;" and again—"The obedient son will be happy by reason of his obedience; he will grow old; he will come to favour." Modern commentators generally assume that the promise was not personal, but national—the nation's days were to be "long upon the land," if the citizens generally were obedient children. But this explanation cannot apply to Eph. vi

1—3. And if obedience to parents is to be rewarded with long life under the new covenant, there can be no reason why it should not have been so rewarded under the old. The objection that good sons are not *always* long-lived is futile. God governs the universe by general, not by universal laws.

Ver. 13.—**Thou shalt not kill.** Here again is a moral precept included in all codes, and placed by all in a prominent position. Our first duty towards our neighbour is to respect his life. When Cain slew Abel, he could scarcely have known what he was doing; yet a terrible punishment was awarded him for his transgression (Gen. iv. 11—14). After the flood, the solemn declaration was made, which thenceforward became a universal law among mankind—"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (*ib.* ix. 6). In the world that followed the flood, all races of men had the tradition that only blood could expiate blood. In the few places where there was an organised government, and a systematic administration of justice, the State acted on the principle, and punished the murderer capitally. Elsewhere, among tribes and races which had not yet coalesced into states, the law of blood-revenge obtained, and the inquisition for blood became a private affair. The next of kin was the recognised "avenger," upon whom it devolved to hunt out the murderer and punish him. Here the sin is simply and emphatically denounced, the brevity of the precept increasing its force. The Israelites are told that to take life is a crime. God forbids it. As usual, no exceptions are made. Exceptions appear later on (Num. xxxv. 22—25; Deut. iv. 42; etc.); but the first thing is to establish the principle. Human life is sacred. Man is not to shed the blood of his fellow-man. If he does, of his hand will the life taken surely be required. The casuistic question whether suicide is forbidden under this precept, probably did not occur to the legislator or to the Hebrews of his time. Neither the Hebrews, nor the Egyptians, among whom they had so long lived, were addicted to suicide; and it is a general rule that laws are not made excepting against tolerably well-known crimes. It has been argued that angry thoughts and insulting words were forbidden by it on the strength of our Lord's comment in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v. 21, 22). But it seems to the present writer that in Matt. v. 21—47 our Lord is not so much explaining the Jewish law as amplifying it on his own authority—note the repetition of the phrase, "*But I say unto you*"—and making it mean to Christians what it had not meant to Jews.

Ver. 14.—**Thou shalt not commit adultery.** Our second duty towards our neighbour is to respect the bond on which the family is based,

and that conjugal honour which to the true man is dearer than life. Marriage, according to the original institution, made the husband and wife "one flesh" (Gen. ii. 24); and to break in upon this sacramental union was at once a crime and a profanity. Adulteresses and their paramours were in most ancient nations liable to be punished with death by the injured party; but the adultery of a married man with an unmarried woman was thought lightly of. The precept of the Decalogue binds both man and woman equally. Our Lord's expansion of this commandment (Matt. v. 27—32) is parallel to his expansion of the preceding one (*ib.* 21—26). He shows that there are adulterous marriages in countries where the law gives a facility of divorce, and that without any overt act adultery may be committed in the heart.

Ver. 15.—**Thou shalt not steal.** By these words the right of property received formal acknowledgment, and a protest was made by anticipation against the maxim of modern socialists—"La propriété, c'est le vol." Instinctively man feels that some things become his, especially by toil expended on them, and that, by parity of reasoning, some things become his neighbour's. Our third duty towards our neighbour is to respect his rights in these. Society, in every community that has hitherto existed, has recognised private property; and social order may be said to be built upon it. Government exists mainly for the security of men's lives and properties; and anarchy would supervene if either could be with impunity attacked. Theft has always been punished in every state; and even the Spartan youth was not acquitted of blame unless he could plead that the State had stopped his supplies of food, and bid him forage for himself.

Ver. 16.—**Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.** False witness is of two kinds, public and private. We may either seek to damage our neighbour by giving false evidence against him in a court of justice, or simply calumniate him to others in our social intercourse with them. The form of the expression here used points especially to false witness of the former kind, but does not exclude the latter, which is expressly forbidden in ch. xxiii. 1. The wrong done to a man by false evidence in a court may be a wrong of the very extremest kind—may be actual murder (1 Kings xxi. 13). More often, however, it results in an injury to his property or his character. As fatal to the administration of justice, false witness in courts has been severely visited by penalties in all well-regulated states. At Athens the false witness was liable to a heavy fine, and if thrice convicted lost all his civil rights. At Rome, by a law of the Twelve Tables, he was hurled headlong from the Tarpeian rock. In Egypt,

false witness was punished by amputation of the nose and ears (*Records of the Past*, vol. viii. p. 65). Private calumny may sometimes involve as serious consequences to individuals as false witness in a court. It may ruin a man; it may madden him; it may drive him to suicide. But it does not disorganise the whole framework of society, like perjured evidence before a tribunal; and states generally are content to leave the injured party to the remedy of an action-at-law. The Mosaic legislation was probably the first wherein it was positively forbidden to circulate reports to the prejudice of another, and where consequently this was a criminal offence.

Ver. 17.—*Thou shalt not covet.* Here the Mosaic law takes a step enormously in advance of any other ancient code. Most codes stopped short at the deed; a few went on to words; not one attempted to control thoughts. "Thou shalt not covet" teaches men that there is One who sees the heart; to whose eyes "all things are naked and open;" and who cares far less for the outward act than the inward thought or motive from

which the act proceeds. "Thou shalt not covet" lays it down again that we are not mere slaves of our natural desires and passions, but have a controlling power implanted within us, by means of which we can keep down passion, check desire, resist impulse. Man is lord of himself, capable, by the exercise of his free-will, of moulding his feelings, weakening or intensifying his passions, shaping his character. God, who "requires truth in the inward parts," looks that we should in all cases go to the root of the matter, and not be content with restraining ourselves from evil acts and evil words, but eradicate the evil feeling from which the acts and words proceed. *Thy neighbour's house*, etc. The "house" is mentioned first as being of primary necessity, and as in some sort containing all the rest. A man does not take a wife until he has a home to bring her to, or engage domestic servants, or buy slaves, except to form part of a household. The other objects mentioned are placed in the order in which they are usually valued. The multiplication of objects is by way of emphasis.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—17.—*The ten commandments collectively.* The ten commandments form a summary of our main duties towards God, and towards man. They stand out from the rest of the Old Testament in a remarkable way. 1. They were uttered audibly by a voice which thousands heard—a voice which is called that of God himself (Deut. v. 26) and which filled those who heard it with a terrible fear (verse 19). 2. They were the only direct utterance ever made by God to man under the Old Covenant. 3. They were not merely uttered by God but written by him, inscribed in some marvellous way *by the finger of God* on the two tables of testimony (ch. xxxi. 18; Deut. iv. 13). 4. They have the additional testimony to their primary importance, that our Lord himself appealed to them as laying down that which men must do to inherit eternal life (Matt. xix. 18, 19). We may observe of them collectively—

I. **THAT THEY ARE ALL-EMBRACING.** They include our obligations to both God and man; they are both prohibitive and directive; they reach to the heart as well as to the outward life; they comprise both moral and positive precepts. According to the division adopted by the English Church, and by the reformed churches generally, the first four lay down our duty to our Maker, the last six our duty to our fellow men. Mostly they are prohibitive; but this is not the case with the fourth and fifth. The generality are concerned with acts, but words form the subject matter of the third; and both the tenth and the fifth deal with thoughts. As the moral is much more important than the positive, they are naturally in the main moral; but, to show that the positive is an essential element in religion, they are also partly positive—no moral ground being assignable for the consecration of one day in seven, rather than one in eight or six, much less for the definite selection of "*the seventh day*" as the one to be kept holy.

II. **THAT THEY ARE SYSTEMATIC, BOTH IN MATTER AND ARRANGEMENT.** The Decalogue takes as its basis the fact that all our duties are owed either to God or man. It regards our duties to God as the more important, and therefore places them first. The duties consist: 1. In acknowledging his existence and unity, and in "having him" for our God and none other (first commandment); 2. In conceiving aright of his incorporeity and spirituality, and worshipping him as a Spirit, in spirit and in truth (second commandment); 3. In reverencing his holy Name, and avoiding the profane use of it (third commandment); and, 4. In setting apart for his worship some stated portion

of our time, since otherwise we shall be sure to neglect it (fourth commandment). Our duties towards our fellow men are more complicated. First, there is a special relation in which we stand towards those who bring us into the world and support us during our early years, involving peculiar duties to them, analogous in part to those which we owe to God, and so rightly following upon the summary of our Divine duties (fifth commandment). Next, with respect to men in general, we owe it them to abstain from injuring them in deed, word, or thought. In deed we may injure their person, their honour, and their property, which we are consequently forbidden to do in the sixth, the seventh, and the eighth commandments. In word, we injure our neighbour especially by false witness, public or private, both of which are forbidden in the ninth commandment. We injure him in thought, finally, when we covet what is his; hence the tenth commandment.

III. THAT THEY ARE THE FIRST GERMS OUT OF WHICH THE WHOLE OF THE MORAL LAW MAY BE EVOLVED. The Decalogue is a collection of *elementary* moral truths. Its predominantly negative form is indicative of this, since abstaining from evil is the first step on the road to virtue. Each command asserts a principle; and the principle is in every case capable of being worked out to a thousand remote consequences. The letter may be narrow; but the spirit of the commandment is in every case "exceeding broad." This will appear, more clearly, in the ensuing section, in which the ten commandments will be considered severally.

Vers. 1—17.—*The ten commandments severally.* THE FIRST COMMANDMENT. To the Christian the First Commandment takes the form which our Lord gave it—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment" (Matt. xxii. 37, 38). Not merely abstract belief, not merely humble acknowledgment of one God is necessary, but heartfelt devotion to the One Object worthy of our devotion, the One Being in all the universe on whom we may rest and stay ourselves without fear of his failing us. He is the Lord *our* God—not an Epicurean deity, infinitely remote from man, who has created the world and left it to its own devices—not a Pantheistic essence spread through all nature, omnipresent, but intangible, impersonal, deaf to our cries, and indifferent to our actions—not an inscrutable "something external to us making for righteousness," in the words of the religious Agnostic—but a Being very near us, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being," who is "about our path and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways," a Being whom we may know, and love, and trust, and feel to be with us, warning us, and cheering us, and consoling us, and pleading with us, and ready to receive us, and most willing to pardon us—a Being who is never absent from us, who continually sustains our life, upholds our faculties, gives us all we enjoy and our power to enjoy it, and who is therefore the natural object of our warmest, tenderest, truest, and most constant love. The first commandment should not be difficult to keep. We have only to open our eyes to the facts, and let them make their natural impression upon our minds, in order to love One who has done and still does so much for us.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT. On its prohibitive side, this Commandment forbids us to have unworthy thoughts of God, to liken him to an idol, or regard him as "even such an one as ourselves." Considered as directive, it requires us to form in our minds a just and true idea of the Divine nature, and especially of its spirituality, its lofty majesty, and its transcendent holiness. All materialistic ideas, and consequently all Pantheistic notions, are degrading to the dignity of God, who "is a Spirit," without body, parts, or passions, not mixed with matter, but wholly separate from it, yet everywhere present after a supersensuous manner. Again, anthropomorphic notions of God are degrading to him, though it is scarcely possible to speak of him without anthropomorphic expressions. When we use such terms—as when we call God just, or merciful, or long-suffering—we should remember that those qualities in him are not identical with the human ones, but only analogous to them; and altogether we should be conscious of a deep mysteriousness lying behind all that we know of God, and rendering him a Being awful, inscrutable—whom we must not suppose that we can fathom or comprehend.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT. Primarily, the Third Commandment forbids perjury or false swearing; secondarily, it forbids all unnecessary oaths, all needless mention of the

holy name of God, and all irreverence towards anything which is God's—his name, house, day, book, laws, ministers. Whatever in any sense belongs to God is sacred, and, if it has to be mentioned, should be mentioned reverently. The true main object of the Third Commandment is to inculcate reverence, to point out to us that the only proper frame of mind in which we can approach God is one of self-abasement and deeply reverential fear. "Keep thy foot, when thou goest to the house of God," says the Preacher, "and be more ready to hear than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few" (Eccles. v. 1, 2).

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT. In the Fourth Commandment we have the basis for all that is external in religion. The dedication of one entire day out of seven to God, and the command to abstain on that day from the ordinary labours of life, led on naturally to the institution of sacred services, holy convocations, meetings for united worship and prayer. Man is an active being, and a social being. If the ordinary business of life is stopped, some other occupation must be found for him: he will not sit still from morning to night with folded hands wrapped in pious contemplation. The institution of the Sabbath stands in close relation to the appointment of a priesthood, the construction of a holy place, and the establishment of a ceremonial. On the Christian's the Fourth Commandment is not binding in respect of the letter—he is not to remember the *Seventh* day to keep it holy, but the *First*; he is not tied to hallow it by an abstinence from all labour, but encouraged to devote it to the performance of good works; but in the spirit of it, the commandment is as binding as any. Men need, under Christianity as much as under Judaism, positive religious institutions, places of worship, hours of prayer, a liturgy, a ritual, ceremonies. The value of the Lord's Day as a Christian institution is incalculable; it witnesses for religion to the world; it constitutes a distinct call on men to take into consideration the aim and intent of the day; and its rightful use is of inestimable benefit to all truly religious persons, deepening in them, as it does, the sense of religion, and giving them time and opportunity for the training of their spiritual nature, and the contemplation of heavenly things, which would otherwise to most men have been unattainable. It has been well called "a bridge thrown across life's troubled waters, over which we may pass to reach the opposite shore—a link between earth and heaven—a type of the eternal day, when the freed spirit, if true to itself and to God, shall put on for ever the robe of immortal holiness and joy."

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT. The honour which this commandment exacts from us is irrespective of our parents' personal merits or demerits. We are to honour them as being our parents. Difficulties may be raised easily enough in theory; but they are readily solvable in practice. Let us defer to our parents' commands in all things lawful—let us do everything for them that we can—let us anticipate their wishes in things indifferent—let us take trouble on their behalf—let us be ever on the watch to spare them vexatious annoyance—let us study their comfort, ease, peace—and without any sacrifice of principle, even if they are bad parents, we may sufficiently show that we feel the obligation of the relationship, and are anxious to discharge the duties which it involves. Comparatively few men are, however, severely tried. We are not often much better than our parents; and it is seldom difficult to honour them. 1. For their age and experience. 2. For the benefits which they have conferred on us. 3. For the disinterested affection which they bear to us, and which they evince in their conduct. As a rule, parents have very much more love for their children than these have for them, and make sacrifices on their children's behalf, which their children neither appreciate nor reciprocate. The honour which, according to this commandment, has to be shown to parents, must of course be extended, with certain modifications, to those who stand to us *in loco parentis*—to guardians, tutors, schoolmasters, and the like. It is not perhaps quite clear that the commandment extends also to those who are set over us in Church and State, though it is usual so to interpret it. There are certain relations of parents to their offspring which are altogether peculiar; and these are absolutely incommunicable. There are others, which are common to parents with rulers; but these, unless in very primitive communities, can scarcely be said to rest upon the domestic relation as their basis. The ordinary relation of the governed to their governors is rather one parallel to

that of children to their parents, than one which grows out of it; and though either may be used to illustrate the other, we must view the two as separate and independent of each other.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT. How wide is the scope of this commandment to Christians. Our Lord has shown. Not only are murder and violence prohibited by it, but even profane words, and angry thoughts (Matt. v. 21—26). The “root of bitterness” whence murder springs, is either some fierce passion, or some inordinate desire. To be secure from murderous impulses, we must be free from such emotions as these,—we must have tender and loving feelings towards all our fellow-men. “Love is the fulfilling of the law;” and unless a man really “love the brethren,” he has no security against being surprised into violence towards them, which may issue in death. Nor is there one species of murder only. The sixth commandment prohibits, not only violence to the body, but—what is of far greater consequence—injury to the soul. Men break it most flagrantly when they lead another into deadly sin, thereby—so far as in them lies—destroying his soul. The corrupter of innocence, the seducer, the persuader to evil, are “murderers” in a far worse sense than the cut-throat, the bandit, or the bravo. Death on the scaffold may expiate the crimes of these latter; eternal punishment alone would seem to be an adequate penalty for the guilt of the former. He that has eternally ruined a soul should surely be himself eternally unhappy.

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT. Here again we have the inestimable advantage of our Lord’s comment on the commandment, to help us to understand what it ought to mean to us. Not only adultery, but fornication—not only fornication, but impurity of any and every kind—in act, in word, in thought—is forbidden to the Christian. He that looketh on a woman with the object of lusting after her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matt. v. 28). He that dallies with temptation, he that knowingly goes into the company of the impure, he that in his solitary chamber defiles himself, he that hears without rebuking them obscene words, transgresses against this law, and, unless he repents, cuts himself off from God. And observe—the law is one both for men and women. We are ready enough to speak with scorn of “fallen women,”—to regard them as ruined for ever, and treat their sin as the one unpardonable offence; but what of “fallen men”? Is not their sin as irreversible? Is it not the same sin? Is it not spoken of in Scripture in the same way? “Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. xiii. 4). “Murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death” (Rev. xxi. 8). And is it not as debasing, as deadening to the soul, as destructive of all true manliness, of all true chivalry, of all self-respect? *Principiis obsta.* Let the young keep that precious gift of purity which is theirs, and not be induced by the ridicule of unclean men to part with it. Once gone it can never return. Let them be pure, as Christ was pure. Blessed are the pure in heart!

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT. Simple direct stealing, being severely punished by the law in most countries, is seldom practised, unless it be by children and slaves. But indirect stealing of various kinds is common. It should be clearly understood that the Christian precept forbids any act by which we fraudulently obtain the property of another. Adulteration, concealment of defects, misrepresentation of quality, employment of false weights or measures, are the acts of a thief, as much as pocket-picking or shop-lifting. Servants steal when they take “commission” from tradesmen unknown to their masters, or appropriate as “perquisites” what their masters have not expressly agreed to allow, or neglect to do the work which they undertook, or do it in a slovenly manner, or damage their master’s property by carelessness or diminish it by waste. Masters steal when they do not permit their servants the indulgences they promised, or allow their wages to fall into arrear, or force them to work overtime without proper remuneration, or deprive them of such “rest” as they had a reasonable right to expect upon the Sunday. Those steal who cheat the revenue by smuggling, or false returns to tax-collectors; or who cheat tradesmen by incurring debts which they can never pay, or who in view of coming bankruptcy pass over their property to a friend, with the understanding that it is to be restored to them, or who have recourse of any of the “tricks of trade,” as they are called. All men are sure to steal in one way or another, who are not possessed by the spirit of honesty, who do not love justice and equity and fair-

dealing, who do not make it the law of their life to be ever doing to others as they would that others should do unto them.

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT. False witness in a court is but rarely given. We most of us pass our lives without having once to appear in a court, either as prosecutor, witness, or accused. The false witness against which the generality have especially to be on their guard, is that evil speaking which is continually taking place in society, whereby men's characters are blackened, their motives misrepresented, their reputations eaten away. It is dull and tame to praise a man. We get a character for wit and shrewdness if we point out flaws in his conduct, show that he may have acted from a selfish motive, "just hint a fault and hesitate dislike." It is not even necessary in all cases to establish our character for shrewd insight that we should say anything. Silence when we hear a friend maligned, a shrug of the shoulders, a movement of the eyebrows, will do. Again, false witness may be given in writing as well as in speech. The reviewer who says of a book worse than he thinks of it, bears false witness. The writer for the Press who abuses in a leading article a public man whom he inwardly respects, bears false witness. The person who vents his spite against a servant by giving him a worse character than he deserves, bears false witness. We can only be secure against daily breaches of this commandment by joining the spirit of love with a deep-seated regard for truth, and aiming always at saying of others, when we have occasion to speak of them, the best that we can conscientiously say.

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT. The tenth commandment is supplementary to the eighth. Rightly understood, the eighth implies it, covetousness being the root from which theft springs. The command seems added to the Decalogue in order to lay down the principle that the thoughts of the heart come under God's law, and that we are as responsible for them as for our actions. Otherwise, it would not be needed, being implied in the eighth and in the seventh. Since, however, it was of the greatest importance for men to know and understand that God regards the heart, and "requires truth in the inward parts," and since covetousness was the cause of the greater portion of the evil that is in the world, the precept, although already implied, was given expressly. Men were forbidden to covet the house, wife, slaves, cattle, property of their neighbour—in fact, "anything that is his." They were not forbidden to desire houses, or wives, or cattle, or property generally—which are all, within limits, objects of desire and things which men may rightfully wish for—but they were forbidden to desire for themselves such as were already appropriated by their fellows, and of which, therefore, they could not become possessed without their fellows suffering loss. A moderate desire for earthly goods is not forbidden to the Christian (Matt. xix. 29; 1 Tim. iv. 8); though his special covetousness should be for "the best gifts"—the virtues and graces which make up the perfect Christian character (1 Cor. xii. 31; xiv. 1).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—The moral law—Preliminary. The law given from Sinai is the moral law by *pre-eminence*. The principles which it embodies are of permanent obligation. It is a brief summary of the whole compass of our duty to God and man. It is a law of supreme excellence—"holy, just, and good" (Rom. vii. 12). God's own character is expressed in it; it bears witness to his unity, spirituality, holiness, sovereignty, mercy, and equity; truth and righteousness are visible in its every precept. Listening to its "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not," we cannot but recognise the same stern voice which speaks to us in our own breasts, addressing to us calls to duty, approving us in what is right, condemning us for what is wrong. These ten precepts, accordingly, are distinguished from the judicial and ceremonial statutes subsequently given—(1) As the moral is distinguished from the merely positive; (2) As the universally obligatory is distinguished from what is local and temporary; (3) As the fundamental is distinguished from the derivative and secondary. The judicial law, *e.g.*, not only draws its spirit, and derives its highest authority, from the law of the ten commandments, but is, in its own nature, simply an application of the maxims of this law to the problems of actual government. Its binding force was confined to Israel. The ceremonial law, again, with its meats and drinks, its sacrifices, etc. bore throughout the character of a

positive institution, and had no independent moral worth. It stood to the moral law in a triple relation of subordination—(1) As inferior to it in its own nature. (2) As designed to aid the mind in rising to the apprehension of the holiness which the law enjoined. (3) As providing (typically) for the removal of guilt contracted by the breaking of the law. This distinctness of the “ten words” from the other parts of the law is evinced—

I. IN THE MANNER OF THEIR PROMULGATION. 1. They alone were spoken by the voice of God from Sinai. 2. They were uttered amidst circumstances of the greatest magnificence and terror. 3. They alone were written on tables of stone. 4. They were written by God’s own finger (ch. xxxi. 18). The rest of the law was communicated *privately* to Moses, and through him delivered to the people.

II. IN THE NAMES GIVEN TO THEM, AND THE USE MADE OF THEM. 1. They are “the words of the Lord,” as distinguished from the “judgments” or “rights” derived from them, and embraced with them in “the book of the covenant,” as forming the statutory law of Israel (ch. xxiv. 3). 2. The tables on which they were written are—to the exclusion of the other parts of the law—called “the testimony” (ch. xxv. 16), “the covenant” (Deut. iv. 13), “the words of the covenant” (ch. xxxiv. 28), “the tables of testimony” (Ex. xxxi. 18; xxxii. 15), “the tables of the covenant” (Deut. ix. 9—11). 3. The tables of stone, and they only, were placed in the ark of the covenant (ch. xxv. 21). They were thus regarded as in a special sense the bond of the covenant. The deposition of the tables in the ark, underneath the mercy seat, throws light on the nature of the covenant with Israel. The law written on the tables is the *substratum* of the covenant—its obligatory document—the bond; yet over the law is the mercy-seat, sprinkled with blood of propitiation—a testimony that there is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared (Ps. cxxx. 4), that God will deal *mercifully* with Israel under this covenant. It is obvious, from these considerations, how fallacious is the statement that the Old Testament makes no distinction between the moral, juristic, and ceremonial parts of the law, but regards all as of equal dignity.—J. O.

Vers. 1—18.—*The moral law—General survey.* View this law of the ten commandments as—

I. AUTHORITATIVELY DELIVERED. “God spake all these words, saying,” etc. (ver. 1). An authoritative revelation of moral law was necessary—1. *That man might be made distinctly aware of the compass of his obligations.* The moral knowledge originally possessed by man had gradually been parted with. What remained was distorted and confused. He had little right knowledge of his duty to God, and very inadequate conceptions even of his duties to his fellow-men. This lost knowledge was recovered to him by positive revelation. Consider, in proof of the need of such a revelation, the ignorance of God which prevails still, men’s imperfect apprehensions of his holiness, their defective views of duty, etc. And this though the revelation has so long been given. 2. That a *basis of certainty* might be obtained for the *inculcation* of moral truth. This also was necessary. Man has ever shown himself ingenious in explaining away the obligations which the law imposes on him. He may deny that they exist. He may make light of holiness. He may take up utilitarian ground, and ride off on disputes as to the nature of conscience, the origin of moral ideas, the diversities of human opinion, etc. The law stops all such cavilling by interposing with its authoritative “Thus saith the Lord.” See on this point a valuable paper on “Secularism,” by R. H. Hutton, in “Expositor,” January, 1881. 3. *That the authority of conscience may be strengthened.* Conscience testifies, in however dim and broken a way, to the existence of a law above us. It speaks with authority. “Had it might as it has right, it would rule the world.” In order, however, that we may be made to feel that it is a living will, and no mere impersonal law, which thus imposes its commands upon us, there is a clear need for the voice within being reinforced by the voice without—for historical revelation. Sinai teaches us to recognise the authority which binds us in our consciences as God’s authority. 4. For *economic* purposes. See previous chapter.

II. GRACIOUSLY PREFACED. “I am the Lord, thy God,” etc. (ver. 2). This preface to the law is of great importance. 1. *It testified to the fact that God’s relation to Israel was fundamentally a gracious one.* “The law was introduced with the words, ‘I am the Lord thy God,’ and speaks with the majestic authority of the Eternal, dispensing

blessings and cursings on the fulfilment and transgression of the law. But although this is given amidst the thunder and lightning of Sinai, whose roll seems to be heard constantly in its mighty imperatives—'Thou shalt not!' or 'Thou shalt!' yet still it points back to grace; for the God who speaks in the law is he who led the people out of Egypt, freed them from the yoke of bondage—the God who gave the promise to Abraham, and who has prepared a highest good, the Messianic kingdom, for his people" (Martensen). 2. *It furnished a motive for obedience to the law.* Mark the order—the same as in the Gospel; God first *saves* Israel, then gives them his *law* to keep. *Because* God had redeemed them from Egypt, and had given them, of his free mercy, this glorious privilege of being his people, *therefore* were they to keep his commandments. This was the return they were to make to him for the so great love wherewith he had loved them. Their relation to the law was not to be a servile one. Obedience was not to be a price paid for favour, but a return of grateful hearts for favours already received. From this motive of gratitude, and that they might retain the privileges he had given them, and inherit further blessing, they were to walk in the prescribed way. If, notwithstanding, a pronouncedly legal element entered into that economy, a curse even being pronounced against those who failed to keep the whole law, while the good promised to obedience appears more as legal award than as a gift of grace—we know now the reason for the covenant being cast into this legal form, and can rejoice that in Christ our justification is placed on so much better a footing. Obedience, however, is still required of us as a condition of continuance in God's favour, and of ultimate inheritance of blessing. 3. *It furnished to the pious Israelite a pledge of merciful treatment when he transgressed or fell short of the requirements of his law.* What, e.g., had David to fall back upon in the hour of his remorse for his great transgression (Ps. li.), but just such a word as this, confirmed as it was by *acts* of God, which showed that it was a word always to be depended on. This one saying, prefacing the law, altered the whole complexion of Israel's standing under law. It gave to the Israelite the assurance that he most needed, namely—that, notwithstanding the strictness of the commandment, God would yet accept him in his *sincere endeavours after* obedience, though these fell manifoldly short of the full requirement, i.e., virtually on the ground of *faith*—in connection, however, with propitiation.

III. MORAL IN ITS SUBSTANCE. This has been adverted to above. Though imposed on man by Divine authority, moral law is no arbitrary creation of the Divine will. It is an emanation from the Divine nature. (Cf. Hooker—"Of law there can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God; her voice the harmony of the world.") Herbert Spencer was never guilty of a greater misrepresentation than when he affirmed—"Religious creeds, established and dissenting, all embody the belief that right and wrong are right and wrong simply in virtue of Divine enactment" ("Data of Ethics," p. 50). We may reply with Stahl—"The primary idea of goodness is the essential, not the creative, will of God. The Divine will, in its essence, is infinite love, mercy, patience, truth, faithfulness, rectitude, spirituality, and all that is included in the idea of holiness, which constitutes the inmost nature of God. The holiness of God, therefore, neither precedes his will ('*sanctitas antecedens voluntatem*' of the schoolmen) nor follows it, but is his will itself. The good is not a law for the Divine will (so that God wills it because it is good); neither is it a creation of his will (so that it becomes good because he wills it); but it is the nature of God from everlasting to everlasting." (See also Martensen's "Christian Ethics," on "God the only Good," and on "The Law's Content.") The law, in a word, expresses immutable demands of holiness. What these are is determined in any given case by the abstract nature of holiness and by the constitution and circumstances of the being to whom the law is given. Man, e.g., is a free, immortal spirit; but he is at the same time an inhabitant of the earth, bound by natural conditions, and standing to his fellow-men in relations, some of which at least belong only to his present state of existence. Hence we find in the Decalogue precepts relating to the weekly Sabbath, to marriage, to the institution of private property, etc. These precepts are founded on our nature, and are universally obligatory. They show what duty immutably requires of us as possessing such a nature; but obviously their application will cease under different conditions of existence (Matt. xxii. 30). Only in its fundamental principles of love to God and to our fellow-beings, and in its *spiritual*

demands for truth, purity, uprightness, reverence, and fidelity, is the law *absolutely* unchangeable.

IV. COMPLETE IN ITS PARTS. Observe—1. Its *two divisions*, turning, the one on the principle of love to God, the other, on the principle of love to man. 2. *The relative position of the two divisions*—duty to God standing first, and laying the needful foundation for the right discharge of our duties to mankind. True love to man has its fountain head in love to God. Neglect of the duties of piety will speedily be followed by the neglect of duty to our neighbour. The Scripture does not ignore the distinction between religion (duties done directly to God) and morality (duties arising from earthly relations), but it unites the two in the deeper idea that all duty is to be done to God, whose authority is supreme in the one sphere as in the other. 3. *The scope of its precepts*. These cover the entire range of human obligation. The precepts of the first table (including here the Fifth Commandment) require that God be honoured in his being, his worship, his name, his day, his human representatives. The precepts of the second table require that our neighbour be not injured in deed, in word, in thought; and in respect neither of his person, his wife, his property, nor his reputation. So complete and concise a summary of duty—religious and ethical—based on true ideas of the character of God, and taking holiness, not bare morality, as its standard, is without parallel in ancient legislation.

V. SPIRITUAL IN ITS PURPORT. "The law is spiritual" (Rom. vii. 14). 1. *The law to be studied in its principles*. Taken in its bare letter, it might appear narrow. Here, however, as everywhere in Scripture, the letter is only the vehicle of the spirit. The whole law of Moses being founded on this part of it—being viewed simply as an expansion or amplification in different relations of the principles embodied in the ten words—it is plain, and common sense supports us in the view, that the *principles* are the main things, the true roots of obligation. Thus, the Third Commandment, in the letter of it, forbids false swearing, or generally, any vain use of the name of God. But underlying this, and obviously forming the ground of the command, is the *principle* that God's name, i.e., everything whereby he manifests himself, is to be treated with deepest reverence. This principle, in its various applications, carries us far beyond the letter of the precept. Read in the same way, the Sixth Commandment forbids killing, but not less the murderous motive than the murderous act; while the principle involved, viz., reverence for, and care of, human life (cf. Gen. ix. 6), branches out into a multiplicity of duties, of which the other parts of the law of Moses furnish numerous illustrations. The true key to the spiritual interpretation of the law is that given by Christ in the sermon on the Mount (Matt. v.—vii.). 2. *Summed up in love*. "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. xiii. 8—10). (1) It is the *central* requirement. "Them that love me" (ver. 6). Implied in the first and all later precepts. Whatever in the way of outward service we render to God, or man, if *love* is withheld, the law is not fulfilled. (2) It is needed to fill up the *meaning* of the special precepts. These receive their fulness of interpretation only through love. And, in the spiritual reading of them, they cannot be kept without love. It is impossible, e.g., to keep the heart free from all envy, malice, hate, covetousness, save as it is possessed by the opposite principle of love. Love is the root of fidelity to God, of spirituality in his worship, of reverence for his name, of delight in his day, etc. The more deeply we penetrate into the meaning of the law, the more clearly do we perceive that love to God and love to man are indispensable for the fulfilling of it. (3) *Love secures* the fulfilling of the law. For "love worketh no ill to his neighbour" (Rom. xiii. 10). It will not voluntarily injure another. It will not kill, rob, defraud, slander a fellow-man, or covet his possessions. On the contrary, it will seek in every way it can to do him good. It is the great *impelling* motive to obedience. "The love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Cor. v. 14). "Faith, which worketh by love" (Gal. v. 6).

VI. POWERFULLY ENFORCED.—1. By Divine threatenings (vers. 5—7). 2. By Divine example (ver. 11). 3. By Divine promises (vers. 6—12). See below. Behold, then, the beauty and perfection of the law. "Thy commandment is exceeding broad" (Ps. cxix. 96). We are not to be misled, 1. By the studied *brevity* of the law, which is part of its excellency; or, 2. By its prevailing *negative* form—a testimony, not to the unspirituality of the law, but to the existence of strong evil tendencies in the heart, needing to be repressed (Rom. vii. 7, 8; 1 Tim. i. 9, 10). Yet perfect as it is

of its kind, it is not to be compared, as a mirror of holiness, with the perfect human life of Jesus Christ. No accumulation of separate precepts can exhaust all that is contained in holiness. Precepts convey also a defective idea of the good by breaking up that which is in its own nature one—an ideal—into a number of separate parts. What, however, the law could not do for us, is done in the perfect example of our Lord. In him, law is translated into life. The ideal is no longer presented to us, as even in the Decalogue, in detached precepts, “broken lights,” “words,” which—just because holiness is so vast a thing—are left to hint more than they express, but in its true unbroken unity, in the sphered whole of a perfect human character. *Our law is Christ.*—J. O.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The Ten Commandments—an introductory reminder.* Before the speaker of these commandments proceeded to the utterance of them, it was necessary that he should call special and reverent attention to himself. Not one of the words he was about to say could either be understood or obeyed without a constant reference in thought to him who had delivered and arranged them. He did not bring them before Israel as a far seeing legislator might bring such rules as were best adapted to the limitations and infirmities of those whom he sought to guide. They were the laws of that kingdom where the King himself is a real and immutable lawgiver, he whose reign never comes to an end. Some of the commandments had a direct reference to himself; and all had to do with his service. Should it not, then, be ever a helpful and sobering truth to us that the great laws for human life thus come as expressions through a Divine will? We cannot overrate the importance of requirements which God himself solemnly declares. And just as we Christians in repeating the Lord's prayer must think constantly of the invocation to our Father in heaven, in order to enforce and enrich the plea of each petition, so in carrying out these ten commandments, each Israelite was bound to think of each commandment in connection with that Jehovah who had spoken it. The thought that he had brought them out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage was meant to give special force to everything he required from the hands of his people.

I. JEHOVAH SPEAKS OF HIMSELF IN THE LIGHT OF WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR THEM TO WHOM HE SPEAKS. He solemnly charges them to look back on *their own experience*, to consider their past suffering and helplessness, and how they had come to the present hour entirely because of what he had done for them. Note that he does not, as on former occasions, speak of himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that was a necessary mode of description when he made his first approach to them, but now they have their own rich and crowded experiences to constitute a claim for their attention and obedience. God bases his expectations on services rendered to the present generation; and the claim he makes is founded on the greatest boon that could be conferred, liberty. When from this very mountain he sent Moses to them, they were in bitter servitude; now Moses finds himself at this mountain again, with a nation of freemen around him. Jehovah is not afraid of referring to the land of Egypt, even though the people had allowed the agreeable associations of the name to override the disagreeable ones. They delighted in thinking of it as a land where they sat by the fleshpots and ate bread to the full (ch. xvi. 3; Num. xi. 4, 5). But now in this reference to himself which would henceforth be so conspicuous, Jehovah fixes together in a permanent association the land of Egypt and the house of bondage. When the people disparaged the wilderness and glorified Egypt, he made them hear again the sound of the clanking chain; and if that sound, heard only in memory, was not dreadful as in the old reality, yet God, who is not influenced by the lapses of time, knew how dreadful that reality was. It is a good thing that he remembers what men forget. Even though we be Christians, and should have better aims and better joys, we too often catch our thoughts turned longingly towards a forsaken world. And so God comes in to speak plainly and burst the bubble of this world's attractions by the emphasised truth that spiritual Egypt is the house of bondage. He that committeth sin is the slave of sin. While the people were in Egypt they had not talked of these things as pleasant; the life there, in the actual experience of it, was intolerable. And so with perfect confidence God could appeal to their past consciousness.

II. There was also an indication that **GOD HAD TAKEN AWAY ALL EXTERNAL HINDRANCES TO OBEDIENCE.** He had taken them clean out of the house of bondage. They were

now free to carry out all the observances which Jehovah was about to appoint. They had no Pharaoh to struggle with, grudging them time to serve their God (ch. v. 4); they had no danger to fear from sacrificing the abominations of Egypt within its borders. If God asks us for service, we may be sure that in the very first place, he will provide all the conditions of rendering it effectually and comfortably. As we read our New Testament, we are made to feel that God expects very large things from us. He is most exacting in his claims for self-denial and completeness of devotion to his cause, but what of that? Has he not given us his own Spirit, which is a spirit of liberty, working for the express purpose of lifting us above the crippling restraints of natural life? The very largeness of God's demands helps us to measure the largeness of God's spiritual gifts; and the very largeness of the gifts should prepare us for large demands. God's expectations are from the free. He asked nothing from Israel, save silent and submissive waiting, until the verge of the last plague, which was also the verge of liberty; and from the free *because he has freed them*, he entertains large expectations. It was to those who believed in Jesus, risen from the dead, and making his people to live in newness of life, that he gave a spirit of such power in producing obedience and conformity as never had been known before.—Y.

Vers. 3—6.—*The first and second commandments: against polytheism and image-worship.* These two commandments seem to be bound together naturally by the reason given in ver. 5. There Jehovah says, "I am a jealous God;" obviously such a feeling of jealousy applies with as much force to the worship of other gods as to the making of graven images. Consider—

I. THE POSSIBLE TRANSGRESSION HERE INDICATED. The having of other gods than Jehovah, and the representation of them by images of created things. The declaration here is not against more gods than one. Such a declaration would have been incomprehensible to the Israelite at this time, even to Moses himself. The utter emptiness of all idolatry, the non-existence, except as the imagination of a superstitious and darkened mind, of any other Deity than Jehovah was a truth not yet appreciable by those to whom Jehovah spoke. He had to take his people as they stood, believers in the existence and power of other gods, and proclaim to them with all the impressiveness that came from the demonstrations of Sinai, that none of these gods was to be in the smallest degree recognised. An idolater in the midst of his idolatries, and not yet laid hold of by Jehovah's hand, might as well have a thousand gods as one. Jehovah speaks here to those who are already bound to himself. Have they not made their promise? Did not the people answer and say, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do"? It was the right and dutiful course of every Israelite to worship him, serve him, and depend upon him. The great and pressing peril was that, side by side with Jehovah, the people should try to put other gods. And to have other gods meant, practically, to have images of them. How necessary and appropriate these two commandments were to come at this particular time and in this particular order, is seen when we consider the image-making into which Israel fell during the seclusion of Moses in the mount. This seems to have been the accordant act of the whole people; Aaron, who was soon to be the chief official in Jehovah's ritual, being the eager instrument to gratify their desires. Nor was this a mere passing danger to the Israelites, a something which in due time they would outgrow. The peril lies deep in the infirmities of human nature. Those whom Jehovah has brought in any measure to himself, need to be reminded that he is master. Jesus has put the thing as plain as it can be put, "No man can serve two masters." We cannot serve God and Mammon. Dependence on something else than God, even though there be nothing of religious form in the dependence, is a peril into which we are all liable to come. It is hard to fight—harder than we imagine till we are fairly put to the struggle—against the allurements of the seen and temporal. Even when we admit that there is an invisible God whose claims are supreme, and whose gifts, present and future, are beyond anything that the seen in its pride and beauty can afford—even then we have the utmost difficulty in carrying our admission into practice.

II. CONSIDER IN PARTICULAR HOW THE COMMANDMENT AGAINST IMAGE-WORSHIP MAY APPLY TO US. Those who go in the way of right worship are in the way to a profitable knowledge of God. They come to be recognised by him, accepted by him, and blessed

by him. Having graven images inevitably led away from Jehovah. There was no possibility of keeping the first commandment, even in the least degree, if the second even in the least degree was broken. Certainly we are under no temptation to make images, but it comes to the same thing if we have images ready made. It is conceivable that the day may come when not an image shall be left in the world, except on museum shelves, and the trade of Demetrius thus come to an end. But what of that? The change may simply be one of form. Why men should first have made images and called them gods is an impenetrable mystery. We cannot but wonder who was the first man to make an image and why he made it. But that image-making, once established, should continue and return into practice again and again in spite of all attempts to destroy it, is easy enough to understand. Habit, tradition, training, will account for everything in this way. Yet the practice of image-worship, at all events in its grossest forms, can only exist together with dense intellectual darkness. When men begin to think and question as to the foundation of things, when they get away from their mother's knee, then the simple faith in what they have been taught deserts them. There is a frequent and natural enough lamentation that those who have been taught concerning Christ in childhood, oftentimes in manhood depart from him by the way of scepticism, into utter disbelief and denial. Yet we must remember that it is exactly by this kind of process thousands in still image-worshipping lands have broken away from their image-worship. It has not satisfied the awakened and expanding intellect. There is this difference, however, that whereas the awakened intellect forsaking Christ may come back to him, and indeed actually does so oftener than we think, the awakened intellect forsaking image-worship cannot go back to it. But to something as a dependent creature he must go. A man leaving his old idolatries and not finding Christ, must needs turn to some new idolatry, none the less real as an idolatry, none the less injurious to his best interests because the image-form is absent. We must not make to ourselves anything whatever to take the place of God, intercept the sight of him, or deaden his voice. We may contradict the spirit of the second commandment, in doing things which we think profitable to the religious life and glorifying to God. A great deal that is reckoned beneficial and even indispensable in the Church of Christ, that has grown with its growth and strengthened with its strength, might come to look very questionable, if only the spirit of this commandment were exactly appreciated. How many splendid buildings, how many triumphs of the architect, how many combined results of many arts would then be utterly swept away! Men delude themselves with the notion that these things bring them nearer to God, whereas they simply take his place. In worshipping him we should regard with the utmost jealousy all mere indulgence of the senses and even of the intellect.

III. THE DIVINE REASON GIVEN FOR ATTENDING TO THESE COMMANDMENTS. Many reasons might have been given, as for instance, the vanity of graven images, their uselessness in the hour of need, the degradation in which they involved the worshippers. But God brings forward a reason which needed to be brought forward, and put in the very front place, where human thought might continually be directed to it. Polytheism and image-worship are indeed degrading and mischievous to man—but what is of far greater moment, they are also dishonouring to the glory of Deity. Those who were sliding away into the service of other gods were showing that they had no truly reverent appreciation of Jehovah; and in order to intimate the severity of his requirements with respect to exclusive and devoted service, Jehovah speaks of himself as possessing a feeling which, when found among men is like a devouring and unquenchable fire. A jealous man does well to be jealous, if he has sufficient ground for the feeling at all, if the affection, service, and sympathies that should be reserved for him are turned elsewhere. Think then of such a feeling, exalted into the pure intensity of a holy anger and bursting into action from God himself, and then you have the measure of his wrath with those who think that the glory of the incorruptible God can be changed into an image made like to corruptible man. He makes his jealousy apparent in unquestionable, deeply penetrating action. It is the action of the great I AM, who controls thousands of generations. God does, as a matter of fact, visit the iniquities of the fathers on the children, and the magnitude of what he does is accounted for by the intensity of his feelings with respect to those who give his glory to another. His almighty hand comes down with a blow the afflictive energies of which

cannot be exhausted in one or even two generations. Say not that there is something unjust about this. That each generation must take something in the way of suffering from preceding generations is a fact only too plain, altogether apart from the Scriptures. The mercy of God is that he here gives us something in explanation of the fact, and of how to distinguish its working and at last destroy it. To serve idols, to depend upon anything else than God, anything less than him, anything more easily reached and more easily satisfied—this, when stripped of all disguise, *amounts to hating God*. And a man living in this way is preparing, not only punishments for himself, but miseries for those who come after him. Many times we have advice given us to think of posterity. Depend upon it, he thinks most of posterity who serves the will of God most humbly and lovingly, with the utmost concentration and assiduity, in his own generation. Note here also the unmistakable revelation of God's merciful disposition. He visits iniquity to the third and fourth generation of them that hate him. But those who love him are blessed to thousands of generations. Not that the blessing will be actually operative, for, alas, there may come in many things to hinder. But the expressed disposition of God remains. If the posterity of the faithful to God are unblessed, it is because they themselves are utterly careless as to the peculiar privileges into which they have been introduced.—Y.

Ver. 7.—*The Third Commandment. Profanity forbidden.* This Commandment clearly comes as an appropriate sequel to the two preceding ones. Those who are Jehovah's, and who are therefore bound to glorify and serve him alone, depend on him alone, and keep themselves from all the degradations and obscuring influences of image worship, are now directed to the further duty of avoiding all irreverent and empty use of the sacred name. With respect to this, there must have been a very real danger in Israel. We have only to observe the licence of modern colloquial speech in this respect, we have only to call to mind some of the most common expletives in English, French, and German, and we shall then better understand that there may have been a great deal of the same sad and careless licence among the ancient Hebrews. Not that we are to suppose Jehovah directed this command exclusively or even chiefly against profane swearers in the ordinary sense of the term. They are included, but after all they are only a small part of those to whom the commandment is directed. It is quite possible for a man to keep above all coarseness and vulgarity of speech, and yet in God's sight be far worse than an habitual swearer. Many are concerned to avoid profane swearing, not because it is offensive to God, but because it is ungentlemanly. It needs no devoutness or religious awe to understand the couplet:—

“Immodest words admit of no defence,
For want of decency is want of sense.”

And there is as much want of decency in profane words as in immodest ones. The thing to be considered is not only the words we avoid, but the words we use. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak. This commandment, like the rest, must be kept positively, or it cannot be kept negatively. If we are found making a serious and habitual use of God's name in a right way, then, and only then, shall we be kept effectually from using it in a wrong one.

1. Evidently the first thing to keep us from empty words with respect to God is to **KEEP FROM ALL EMPTINESS AND SHALLOWNESS OF THOUGHT WITH RESPECT TO HIM.** Thinking is but speaking to oneself; and God's commandment really means that we must labour at all times to have right and sufficient thoughts concerning him. We might almost say, take care of the thought and the speech will take care of itself. All our thinking about God, as about every topic of thought, should be in the direction of what is practical and profitable. Blessed is he who has made the great discovery, that of the unseen cause and guide, behind all things that are seen, he can only get profitable knowledge as that Great Unseen is pleased to give it. We who live amid the great declarations of the Gospel are really thinking of God in a vain and displeasing way as long as we suppose it possible to get any true knowledge of him except in Christ. Right knowledge of God, and therefore profitable thoughts of him must be gained by experimental personal search into the riches of God in Christ Jesus. Think—

ing of this sort will not be vain, shallow, fugitive thinking, seeing that it springs out of apprehended, personal necessities, has an immutable basis of fact, a rewarding element of hope, and is continually freshened by a feeling of gratitude towards one who has conferred on us unspeakable benefits. Surely it is a dreadful sin to think little, to think seldom, and to think wrongly of that profoundly compassionate God, who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, to save it from perishing by the gift of eternal life. No thoughts of ours indeed can measure the fulness of that sublime love, and we shall even fall short of what the holiest and devoutest of men can reach; but there is all the more need why we should labour in constant meditation on the saving ways of God, according to our abilities. Put the word "God" on a sheet of paper, and then try to write underneath all that the name suggests, particularly all that it suggests in the way of individual benefit. Perhaps the writing may come to an end very soon, and even what is written be so vague and valueless as to make you feel that this commandment of God here is not a vain one so far as concerns you.

II. THEN WE MUST NOT TAKE THE NAME OF GOD IN VAIN, IN OUR INTERCOURSE WITH OUR FELLOW-MEN. God, our God, with all his claims and all his benefits, cannot be spoken about too much in the circles of men, if only he is spoken about in a right way: but that right way—*how hard it is to attain*. Much speaking concerning him, even by those who do it officially, is very dishonouring to his name and hindering to his rule in the hearts of men. Preachers of the word of life and duty, the word concerning divine gifts and requirements, need to take great heed in this respect, for whenever they speak without proper impressions as to the solemnity of their message, they are assuredly taking God's name in vain. There has also to be a consideration of the audience. The words of God's truth and salvation must be as far as possible words in season, not wasted, as pearls before swine. It needs that we should strive and watch incessantly to have all attainable fitness as the witnesses of God. Jesus would not have the testimony of demons to his Messiahship, but chose, prepared, and sanctified such men as he saw to be suitable; and then when he had found fit witnesses, even though few, he sent them forth to bear their testimony, sure that it would be sufficient for all who had the right mind to receive it. It is awful, when one only considers it, in how many instances God's name is taken in vain, by the use of it to sanctify unholy ends, justify unrighteousness, and give to error what dignity and force can be gained from an appeal to divine authority. When the Scriptures were quoted to justify slavery, what was this but taking the name of God in vain? How much of it there must have been in theological controversy, where disputants have got so embittered by partisan spirit that they would twist Scripture in any way so as to get God on their side, instead of labouring as honest men to be on the side of God. Look at the glutton sitting down to pamper his stomach from the loaded table; but first of all he must go through the customary grace and make a show of eating and drinking to the glory of God in heaven, when in truth the god he really worships is his greedy, insatiable belly. We may do many things in the name of the Lord, but that does not make them the Lord's things. "Lord, Lord" may ever be on our lips, we may even get a very general reputation for our devotedness to God and goodness; but all this may not prevent us from hearing at the last, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

III. Most particularly we must guard against profanity IN OUR APPROACHES TO GOD. If we are his at all, there must be constant approaches to him, and his name therefore must be constantly on our lips. 1. We must guard against *formality*. We must not take a name on our lips that expresses no felt reality. To confess sins and needs and supplicate pardon and supply when the heart is far away from the throne of grace, is certainly taking God's name in vain. 2. We must guard against coming in *other than the appointed way*. A very elaborate and comprehensive prayer may be constructed to the God of nature and providence, but even though it may seem to be of use for a while, it will show its emptiness in the end if God's own appointment of mediation through Christ Jesus be neglected. Do not let us deceive ourselves with words and aspirations that are only dissipated into the air. For a suppliant to know of Christ and yet ignore his mediation, is assuredly to take God's name in vain, however honest the ignoring may be. 3. Then surely there is an empty use of God's name in prayer, if we ask in *other than the appointed order*. The order of thought in all right approach to God is such as our Great Teacher has himself presented to us. Is it the sinner who is coming, wretched

and burdened? Jesus approves the prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Sinners never take the name of God in vain, if they come to him with two feelings blended in one irrepressible cry, the feeling of God's anger with all sin and the feeling of his unflinching compassion for the sinner. Or if it be the disciple and servant who is coming to God, then the order of thought for his approach Jesus has also given. We must ever think of him as our Father in heaven, and first of all of such things as will sanctify his name, advance his kingdom and procure the perfect doing of his will on earth. We must make all our approaches to God with our hearts entirely submitted to him, otherwise we shall only find that we are taking his name in vain.—Y.

Vers. 8—11.—*The Fourth Commandment: the sacred Sabbath.* I. THE GROUND OF THIS COMMANDMENT. God, who had spoken to Israel as to those whom he had brought out of the house of bondage, and who had bidden Moses speak of him to the captives as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, now takes the thoughts of his people as far back as it is possible for them to go. They are directed to think of the great work of him who in six days made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is. "All the earth is mine," he had bidden Moses say in ch. xix. 5; and of course the Israelites, whatever their other difficulties in the way of understanding God's commandments, had no question such as modern science has thrown down for us to ponder with respect to these alleged days of creation. Though indeed, as is now generally agreed, no difficulty is found in this question when we approach it rightly. God's thoughts are not as our thoughts; his ways are not as our ways; and so we may add his days are not as our days, seeing that with him one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. The great matter to be borne in mind by ancient Israelites—and for every Christian the consideration remains whether he also should not very strictly bear it in mind—was that by this seventh day of rest after creation, God gave the great rule for the consecration of his people's time. It is to a certain extent correct to say that this precept is a positive one; but it is not therefore arbitrary. God may have seen well to give the precept in such emphatic way, just because the need of setting apart one day out of seven is in some way fixed in the nature of things. It is a question worth while asking, why creation is set before us as having occupied six successive periods. Why not some other number? May not the periods of creation have been so arranged with a view to the use of them as a ground for this commandment? God sanctified the seventh day because it was the best day—best for human welfare and Divine glory; and it seems to have been at Sinai that he first distinctly made this sanctification. Israel knew already that God rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made (Gen. ii. 2); now it is known—at least it is known in part—why this resting was not till the seventh day, and also not later. May it not be that the expression "God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made," (Gen. ii. 3) was inserted by Moses after the transactions at Sinai, as a suitable addition to the statement that God rested from his work? If this verse was not inserted in the Genesis record until after the instructions from Sinai, then we have some sort of explanation why no clear, indubitable sign of the Sabbath is found in patriarchal times.

II. THE MODE OF KEEPING THIS COMMANDMENT. Let us distinctly bear in mind the object to be attained. The seventh day was to be *sanctified*, and in order that it might be properly sanctified, a scrupulous rest from ordinary work was necessary. The *rest* was but the means to the *sanctification*; and the sanctification is the thing to be kept prominently in view. The mere resting from work on the seventh day did an Israelite no good, unless he remembered what the rest implied. The commandment began, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy," not "Remember to do no work therein." Certainly it was only too easy to forget the requirement of rest; but it was easier still to forget the requirement of holiness. A man might rest without hallowing, and so it had to be enjoined on him to shape his rest that hallowing might be secured by it. Certain of the animals required for holy purposes by God, were to be such as had not borne the yoke. The animal could not be given to God and at the same time used for self. And in like manner the Sabbath could not both be given to God and used for self. Therefore the Israelite is charged to do no work and let no work be done, even by the humblest of his slaves. He himself must get no temporal benefit from this day. God has so arranged,

In his loving providence and holy requirements, that six days' work shall supply seven days' need. This lesson the manna distinctly teaches if it teaches anything at all. And now that the Jewish Sabbath has gone, the Christian has to ask himself how far the mode of Sabbath-keeping in Israel furnishes any guide for him in his use of the Lord's day. He is a miserable Christian who begins to plead that there is no distinct and express commandment in the New Testament for the keeping of a sacred day of rest. To say that the Sabbath is gone with the outward ordinances of Judaism is only making an excuse for self-indulgence. True, the sacrifices of the law are done away with, but only that imperfections may give place to perfections. In the very doing away, a solemn claim is made that the Christian should present his body as a living sacrifice; and one cannot be a living sacrifice without feeling that all one's time is for doing God's will. When in the inscrutable arrangements of Providence, we find that one day in seven has actually come to be so largely a day of cessation from toil, surely the part of Christian wisdom is to make the very best of the opportunity. There is, and there always will be, room for much improvement as to the mode of keeping the day of rest; but in proportion as we become filled with the spirit of Christ and the desire for perfection, in that proportion we shall be delivered from the inclination to make Sunday a day for *self*, and led forward in resolution, diligence and love, to make it a day for God. The more we can make our time holy time, the more we shall make ourselves holy persons. If in God's mercy we find Sunday a day of larger opportunities, let it be *according to our individual opportunity*, a day of larger achievements. Each one of us should say, "I am bound to discover how God would have *me* use this day." My neighbour Christian may feel constrained to use it in a way that, if I were to imitate him, might not promote my own spiritual advantage, or the glory of God. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind, only let him take care that he has a persuasion and acts conscientiously and lovingly up to it.

III. THE PECULIAR EMPHASIS LAID ON THIS COMMANDMENT. "Remember." Not of course that this commandment is more important than the rest. He who breaks one breaks all, for each is a member of the whole as of a living unity. But there must have been a special reason in the mind of God for calling attention to this commandment. We are told to remember what we are likely to forget. Also, certain things we are exhorted to remember, because if we only remember them we shall come in due course to other things which cannot be so constantly in the mind, and which indeed the mind may not yet be able properly to grasp. He who remembers the right way will assuredly come to the right end, even though he may not be constantly thinking of it. We may be sure that keeping the Sabbath day *really* holy, had a very salutary effect towards keeping all the rest of the commandments. It gave time for reflection on all those affairs of daily life in which there are so many opportunities and temptations to set at nought the righteous claims both of God and of our fellow-men. And so the Christian may ever say to himself, "Soul, *remember* the day of rest which God has so graciously secured to thee." God, though he has condescendingly done so much to come near to needy men with his supplies of grace, gets soon hidden by the cloud and dust of this world's business. It is only too easy to forget the spirit of these commandments, and be unfair, unkind, malicious and revengeful toward our fellow-men in the jostlings and rivalries of life. *Remember* then. Let us but attend to this and the rest of *God's remembers*, and we may be sure they will do a great deal to neutralise that forgetting which is inevitably incident to the infirmities of fallen human nature.—Y.

Ver. 12.—*The Fifth Commandment: the commandment for children.* I. LOOK AT THIS COMMANDMENT AS IT CONCERNED THE PARENTS. 1. *This commandment gave the parents an opportunity for telling the children how it originated.* Not only an opportunity, but we may say a necessity. It was a commandment to children, through their parents. All the commandments, statutes, and judgments, were to be taught diligently to the children (Deut. vi. 7), and this one here would require very earnest and special explanation in the family. It will be seen that it was a commandment which could not be isolated; a self-willed parent could not quote it with any advantage for the sake of upholding arbitrary authority. The Israelite parent had to explain how these commandments were given; he had to narrate the events in Sinai, and these in turn compelled a reference to the exodus and the bitter experiences of Egypt. Parents had well

to consider how much depended on themselves in making their children duly acquainted with all the glorious doings and strict requirements of Jehovah. If a parent had to deal with a disobedient and despising child, he was able to point out that this requirement of honouring father and mother was God's most strict requirement, and God was he who had rule and authority over parent and child alike. 2. *Thus father and mother were evidently required to honour themselves.* No special verbal utterance was here required, telling father and mother to remember the obligations to offspring, and anyway this was not the proper place for it. The commandments here are *universal* commandments, such as all men incur the temptation of breaking. Thus it was eminently fitting to have a word for children, enjoining upon them the proper feeling towards parents; as all know the filial relation, but all do not know the parental one. (One of the merits of the Decalogue is its brevity and sententiousness. No father could expect his children to honour the parental relation unless he did so himself; and in measure as he more and more comprehended the import of the relation, in that measure might his children be expected to respond to his treatment of them. "Honour all men," says the apostle Peter; and to do this we must begin at home in our own life, and put the proper value on ourselves. God has put immense honour on father and mother; and it is the curse, loss, and fearful reservation of penalty for many parents that they do not see what momentous interests have been put in their stewardship. 3. *God thus showed his earnest desire to help parents in their arduous, anxious work.* The work of a parent in Israel who had weighed all his responsibilities was no light matter. Great opportunities were given him, and great things might be done by him; things not to be done by any other teacher or guide, and he had thus a very comforting assurance that God was his helper. Helper to the father, and, bear in mind, to the mother also. It is worthy of note that *father and mother* are specially mentioned. She is not left in the obscurity of a more general term. God would give to both of them according to their peculiar opportunities all understanding, wisdom, forbearance, steadfastness, discrimination of character, that might be necessary for their work.

II. AS IT CONCERNED THE CHILDREN. A commandment was not needed to teach children as to the making of some sort of distinction between their father and mother and other men and women. But, in order that the distinction might be a right one, and evermore real and deepening in its presence and influence, such a commandment as this was imperatively needed. As we have said, it was a commandment universal in its scope, because all are or have been in the filial relation, but as a matter of fact it would address itself directly to the young. They were laid hold of as soon as anything like intelligence, power to obey, and power to understand the difference between right and wrong manifested themselves. God came and made his claim upon them, in a way as suitable as any to their childish consciousness. They were to honour father and mother, not because father and mother said so, but because God said so. Plainly the honouring included both deep inward feeling and clear outward expression. The outward expression, important as it was, could only come from real and habitual feeling within. Outward expression by itself counted for nothing. Honouring with the lips while the heart was far removed from the parent would be reckoned a grievous sin against God. The child had to grow up esteeming and venerating the parental relation everywhere. It could not honour its own father and mother and at the same time despise the parents of other children. *The promise here given* obviously a suitable one for children. To them the prospect of a long life, in the land already promised, was itself a promise agreeable to the limitations of the old covenant, when there could be no pointing in clear terms to the land beyond death; and we may be very sure that, according to this promise, filial obedience had a corresponding temporal reward.—Y.

Vers. 13—17.—*The individual Israelite considered in his duties towards his neighbour.* Of these five commandments—namely, against murder, adultery, theft, slander and covetousness, it almost goes without saying that their very negativeness in form constitutes the strongest way of stating a positive duty. From a proper consideration of these commandments all possible manifestations of brotherliness will flow. They show the spirit we should cherish towards our neighbours; those who equally with ourselves are the objects of Divine providence and mercy. They show what we are

bound to give and what we have equally a right to expect. Pondering the serious and injurious actions here indicated we note—

I. **THE GREAT HARM WHICH MEN CAN DO TO ONE ANOTHER.** A man maliciously disposed, sensual, reckless, unscrupulously selfish, has thus the extent of his power set before him. That life which man has no power to give, he can take away at a single blow. A man in the gratification of his sensual passions is able to destroy domestic peace, gladness and purity. Property, which may be the fruit and reward of long industry, is swept away by those who will not work for themselves as long as they can get others to work for them. Reputation may be taken away by adroit and plausible slander. A man's whole position may be made uncertain by those who on the right hand and the left look enviously on that position and wish to make it their own. It is when these possibilities are borne in mind that we feel how true it is that even the best guarded of earthly store-houses is nevertheless the one where the thief can break through and steal. Industry, temperance, caution, vigilance, will guard many points of human life, but what avails, if even a single one is left that cannot be called invulnerable? If, then, our fellow men are so much in our power, how it becomes us to quell the very first outbreaks of all that is malicious, envious, selfish and sensual! If we allow the evil in us to grow, we know not what evil it may inflict on the innocent and happy.

II. But if these commandments show a dark and menacing side in our relations to others, they equally show a bright one. **THERE IS GREAT GOOD WHICH WE CAN DO TO ONE ANOTHER.** The man who has power to kill, has, on the other hand, power to do much in the way of preserving, cherishing and invigorating the lives of others. Instead of pulling down others by a degrading companionship to the level of his own impure heart, he can do something by seeking purity himself to draw others toward a like quest. Instead of stealing, he will work not only to sustain himself, but that from his superfluity, if possible, he may give to those who have not. He who has spoken ill of men will find it just as easy to speak well, if only he is so disposed. That tongue with which the renewed heart blesses God will also be constrained to say what is kind, commendatory and helpful to others. Covetousness will give place to a gracious and generous disposition that constantly takes for its motto, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." It is only when we are doing our neighbours all the good we can, that we may be really sure we are carrying out the commandments of God. There are only the two ways, the forbidden and the commanded one; and if we are not treading heartily and resolutely in the commanded one, it follows as a matter of course that we are in the forbidden one.

III. It is something to remember that **THE GOOD WE CAN DO BY KEEPING THESE COMMANDMENTS IS GREATER THAN THE ILL WE CAN DO BY BREAKING THEM.** God has put us largely in the power of one another, that thereby we might have the happiness coming from loving service and mutual association in giving and receiving; but, at the same time, he has made us so that while we are very powerful as co-workers with him, yet even our greatest efforts are comparatively powerless against those who put themselves under his protection. Those injuring others do indeed inflict a great injury from a certain point of view; but they terribly deceive themselves in thinking that the injury is such as can never be compensated for. Christ has given to his people the word of comfort against all assault and spoliation from evil men:—"Fear not them that kill the body." The priceless treasures, constituting the essence of every human life, are not without a storehouse because the earthly storehouse proves insufficient. The truth seems to be that man has it in his power to do more good than he can conceive, more good certainly than he ever attempts. He has not the faith to believe that incessant and plenteous sowing will bring good results, to be manifested in that day when all secrets are brought fully to light. And so on the other hand, the malicious man exaggerates his power. He thinks he has done more than he possibly can do. Good is left undone for want of faith, and evil is done through too much faith. Many an evil act would never have been committed if the doer had only known how his evil, in the wondrous reach of God's providence, would be turned to good. And so the evil-doer, the man of many crimes, if perchance the hour comes to him when he reflects in self-condemnation in the past, and says in his heart that all repentance is vain, should yet find hope and illumination as he considers how the evil done to others is an evil which

God can neutralise, which he can even transmute into good. He who hurts his neighbour and rejoices over the mischief, may find, when it is too late, that the only real evil has been to himself, because he has persisted in an impenitent heart.—Y.

Vers. 16—21.—*The ten words.* "And God spake all these words." "And the people stood afar off: and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was." (Ex. xx. 1, 21). Our subject is the law of the ten commandments, and—

1. THE NAMES of the code, for names are oft the keys to things. There are five chief names; four in the Old Testament and one in the New. 1. "*The ten words.*" ["The ten commandments" is an unscriptural phrase.] (Ex. xxxiv. 28; Deut. iv. 13; x. 4 See Heb.) This name implies that the code was in a very special sense the distinct utterance of God. The utterance touched that which was central in human life, viz., duty. 2. "*The law,*" i.e., the heart and core of the Mosaic legislation. All the rest was as the fringe to the robe of righteousness. 3. "*The testimony.*" God's attestation of his mind as to our moral carriage through life. 4. "*The covenant.*" But care should be exercised as to the putting of this. Israel was not to keep the ten words in order to salvation, but because Israel *had been* saved. Spiritual obedience springs from gratitude—cannot be given as the *price* of salvation. 5. "*The commandments.*" (Matt. xviii. 17). The names of the code stamp it as unique. The Mosaic legislation stands out like a mountain range from all other codes historic in the world; but the "ten words" are the ten peaks of that mighty range.

II. THE MOMENT when God gave the "ten" was critical and significant. 1. *Subsequent to salvation* (Ex. xx. 1). Trace the evangelical parallel, show that this is the order of the divine love, first deliverance, and then direction for life. 2. *Before ritual.* Hence the subordination, even for the Jew, of ritual to morals. For us the symbolic ritual is no more. Our prerogative is that of unveiled gaze upon the spiritual.

III. THE DELIVERY of the "ten words." [The object here should be so to describe the incidents of the delivery, on the basis of the sacred narrative, aided by topographical illustration, as to exhibit the unique character of this code. The following hints may be of service]:—The great plain north of Sinai; Sinai to the south; the barren character of this huge natural temple [Stanley's "J. C." i. 128]; on the third day every eye turned to the mountain; mists rising like smoke; lightning; thunder like ten thousand trumpets; reverberation; earth-trembling. The people would have drawn away, but Moses led them near the base. He ascended; but returned, that he, as *one of the people*, and with them, might hear the code. God alone. Then the very voice of very God, possibly pronouncing the "ten" in their shortest form. [Ewald: "Israel," ii. 163, Eng. tr.] The cry of the people for a mediator. If we had to-day a phonogram even of that awful voice, some would still say, "It is the voice of a man, and not of a god."

IV. THE PRESERVATION. The "ten" were—1. *Graven by God.* The record supernatural, like the delivery. On granite; not too large for a man to carry; graven on both sides; symbol of the completeness, inviolability, and perpetuity of the Divine law. Note the seven or eight weeks' delay ere the tables were given, and the intervening incidents. 2. *Kept in the ark.* In that which was a memorial of the desert life; the wood, acacia of the wilderness. In that which was central to the life of Israel. In Israel a sanctuary, a holiest of all, the ark, and in the deep recesses of that the idea of duty enshrined. The tables last seen at Solomon's dedication. Are they now lying with the wreck of Babylon in the valley of the Euphrates?

V. THE ORDER AND THE ARRANGEMENT. 1. *There were five words on each table.* So we think. Great diversity of opinion as to the division and the throwing of the "ten words" on the two tables. According to the division we adopt, the first table concerned itself with God—his *existence, worship, name, day, and representative.* But if the parent is the representative of God, then there are suggestions for the character and the administration of the parent; as well as for the intelligent obedience of the child. 2. *The five words concerning duty to God come first.* Religion ever comes before morality, and morality without that foundation must be partial and imperfect. Man must first be in right relation with the Father in heaven, then he will come to be right with all the children.

VI. THE COMPREHENSIVENESS. Passages like Josh. i. 7, 8; Ps. cxix. 18, 72, imply

great depth and breadth in these "ten." Are they really so comprehensive as is implied? 1. (*Glance at the "ten."*) We have seen how comprehensive are the first five. [See above, v. 1.] Note the comprehensiveness of the second. We are not to assault the life, the family, the property, the reputation, the peace (by coveting and threatening what they have), of our fellow-men. 2. *Pierce into the spirit of the "ten,"* and note!—(1) *The negative must include the positive; e.g., we are bound to conserve life, lest by neglect we kill.* (2) *The absolute form covers all cases; e.g., the sixth commandment stands absolute, unless dispensed with by the superintention of a higher law.* There may be things more sacred even than life. (3) *The external includes the internal.* (Matt. v. 27, 28.) Given the lust, its gratification does not depend upon the man, but upon circumstances out of his control; therefore he is guilty. Besides, what we are is of more moment than what we do. (4) *The principle of obedience in all is love.*

VIII. THE PRESENT USE AND OFFICE OF "THE TEN." [For detailed exposition of each of "the ten," in relation to our own time and circumstances, see "The Ten Commandments," by R. W. Dale, M.A.] On the use and office the following positions may be firmly laid down:—1. *The law of "the ten words" was, and is, something absolutely unique.* Of the unique character all that has been previously said is illustration. It may, then, be reasonably inferred that "the ten" will have some special bearing on our moral life. 2. It implies that *God claims authority over the moral life of man.* [On this see valuable observations on the decay of the sense of authority, its evil effects, etc., Dale's "Ten Commandments," pp. 6—13.] 3. It was not intended to afford man an opportunity for winning salvation. That is God's free gift. 4. Salvation given, *God means the law to be obeyed.* [On this see also Dale, pp. 13—16.] 5. The effort to obey will deepen man's sense of the need of God's delivering mercy. The effort brings a deeper acquaintance with the law, and so we come to know more of—(1) the righteousness of God—(2) the depravity of man. 6. *A growing conformity is, however, blessedly possible.* 7. *There comes with growing conformity freedom from law.* Love dispenses with the literal precept. This is the ideal of the New Testament. Still "the ten words" have ever their use for those on the low planes of spiritual life. 8. And even with those free from the law, *it will still have the following offices:*—(1) To keep the Christian under grace as the source of all his serenity and bliss. (2) To restrain from sin in the presence of temptation. (3) To keep before the aspiring saint the fair ideal of righteousness.—R.

Vers. 3—11.—*The soul for God only.* I. GOD'S DEMAND. "Thou shalt have no other," &c. All else is emptiness and falsehood. There must be nothing even of our holy things put between the soul and God. His presence must be the soul's life, the very air it breathes.

II. HOW THE DEMAND MAY BE FULFILLED. 1. By keeping ourselves from idols. Our daily avocations, our interests, affections, pleasures, may lead to our esteeming something our chief good and making it to be instead of God to us. God must be seen behind his gifts, and be more to us than all besides. 2. By watchful fear and hope. We bring evil not upon ourselves only, and the blessings which rest upon obedience are an everlasting heritage. We sow seeds of evil or of blessing which yield many harvests (vers. 5, 6). 3. By reverence (ver. 7). God's name must not be emptied of its power to touch the heart by our lightness or hypocrisy. 4. By keeping sacred the sabbath rest (vers. 8—11). (1) It will be a day of self-revelation, of rebuke for the evil in us, of strengthening to the good. (2) It will be a day for the remembrance of God; and (3) of participation in his rest.—U.

Ver. 12.—*The commandment with promise.* I. THE DUTY IMPOSED. 1. Its reasonableness. Reverent, loving subjection to parents is obedience to the deepest instincts of the heart. 2. Its pleasantness. This subjection is rest and joy: it is ceasing from doubt and inner conflict; it lets into the spirit the sunshine of a parent's loving approbation.

II. THE PROMISE: "That thy days," &c. Obedience to parents is the condition of national prosperity. 1. It is respect for law and loyal acceptance of the teachings of the past. 2. It is denial of the spirit of self will and self pleasing. 3. It guards youth from excess and vice. 4. It prepares for the understanding of and submission to the

will of God. 5. It lays broad and deep in the nation's life the foundations of industry and strength and of moral, as well as material, greatness.—U.

Vers. 13—17.—*Our threefold duty to our neighbour.* I. HE IS NOT TO BE INJURED IN ACT. 1. *His life is to be held sacred.* It is God's great gift to him and it is God's only to take it away, by express command, or by his own judgment. This is a law for nations as well as individuals. In every unjust war this command is trampled under foot. 2. *His home is sacred.* The wreck of homes which lust has made! The holy, loving refuge of childhood and youth desolated, and its very memory made a horror and anguish! 3. *His property is sacred.* It is the man's special stewardship from God. God can bless us also, for all things are his, but this stands between our neighbour and the Master, to whom he must render his account.

II. HE IS NOT TO BE INJURED BY WORD. We may lay no hand upon his life, his home, his goods, and yet our tongue may wound and rob him. We may cause respect and love to fall away from him wrongfully. Our diminishing aught of these, save as the servants of truth, is a crime before God.

III. HE IS NOT TO BE WRONGED IN THOUGHT. God asks not only for a blameless life but also for a pure heart, in which lust and hate and envy and greed have no place. Sin is to be slain in its root.—U.

Vers. 1—2.—*Utility of a course of teaching on the commandments*, that Divine law which can never be destroyed. Let those who object to the preaching of morality remember John Wesley's words: "I find more profit in sermons on either good tempers or good works than in what are vulgarly called 'gospel sermons.'" Consider—

I. THE DIVISION AND GROUPING OF THE COMMANDMENTS. 1. *Division.* We know that there are *ten*—the ten words—but how are the ten words made up? The modern Jewish method makes the introductory announcement, a "first word," and combines our first and second as the "second word." By others the first and second are combined as the first, and then the tenth divided to complete the number. Our own ordinary division is most likely to be correct; but various usage shows that the importance attaches not to the *number* but the *sense*. 2. *Grouping.* Two tables, but how many on each? Augustine held that the first table contained three, the second seven, whence he drew some mystical conclusions with regard to the Trinity. The popular view includes four in the first table, and six in the second. Most likely, however, there should be five in each table [perhaps connected with the hand as the symbol of action]. On this view we shall see that in each table the four first commandments are rooted in the fifth.

II. THE SPEAKER AND THE MOTIVE. 1. *The speaker* (cf. Deut. v. 22).—God, Jehovah, a personal Deity, and one whose nature is changeless (Mal. iii. 6; Jas. i. 17). Moses did not evolve the law out of his own head; he *heard* it, he *received* it, he *enunciated* it, but "God spake all these words." 2. *The motive.*—The motive appealed to for obedience is too often *fear*; the motive too which Israel was most inclined to act upon. God, however, makes his appeal not to fear, but to the sense of gratitude:—"Remember what I have done for you, then hear what I expect you to do for me." The deliverer has a right to lay down rules of conduct for those whom he has delivered; whilst at the same time gratitude to him inspires them with a motive for obedience. Apply to ourselves: God has redeemed *us*; we should obey him not from fear, but from love—not that we *may* get something out of him, but because we have got so much already.

III. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS. 1. There is an *order* in the arrangement. "Order is heaven's first law," and it shows itself in the code from heaven. *First* God, our *filial* relations; then man, our *fraternal* relations; the upward-looking and the outward-looking aspects of life. Under each, too, the order is maintained; first we are shown the blossom, then the stem, then the root. The flower of worship is rooted in the home, and the flower of love is rooted in the heart. 2. The commandments are indications of the Divine will from which they spring. Our duty is to study what God has *said* in order that we may discover what he *wishes*. The *old* covenant was on stone-tables, easily intelligible and very definite; the *new* covenant is on hearts of flesh, it contains *promptings* to duty, rather than directions. We need both; we must use the old that we may give effect to the new, and the new that we may fulfil the old. [*Illustration.*—For engine to fulfil its work, *steam* needed inside to propel, *lines* outside

to direct.] The new covenant cannot render the old nugatory; it is well to have motive power, but we still need the lines laid down by which to guide ourselves when we have it.—G.

Vers. 3-6. These two commandments are complementary: one God only to be worshipped, one way only in which to worship him. Consider:—

I. THE FIRST COMMANDMENT. 1. *How Israel would understand it.* "No foreign god in opposition to me." The natural idea would be that Jehovah was one amongst many deities; that possibly, away from Egypt, some other god might have higher authority (cf. 2 Kings xviii. 33-35). In any case it would be hard to realise that he was more than God of gods; others might be inferior to him, but surely they might claim an inferior worship. All such notions are set aside at once. Whether there are other gods or no, all such must be Jehovah's enemies; to offer them worship of any kind was to be disloyal to Jehovah, and to break the covenant. 2. *How it applies to ourselves.* Polytheism, a thing of the past! In theory perhaps, but how about our practice? Obedience is the best evidence of worship; our God is he by reference to whom we govern our conduct, and regulate our actions. Illustrate from the case of the man whose life is given to the pursuit of wealth—wealth is practically his deity; or the case of one whose conduct is regulated by constant reference to public opinion; wealth, public opinion, and the like may be nothing more than personified abstractions, none the less we may serve them far more consistently than we serve God. Such service is worship, worship of an alien deity; it involves disloyalty to Jehovah, and enrols us amongst the forces of his foes. Quite as easy for *us* to break this commandment as it was for Israel; it needs to be reiterated in *our* ears no less persistently than it was in their ears.

II. THE SECOND COMMANDMENT. As the first has to do with the *object* of worship, so this has to do with the *manner* of worship. An image degrades the ideal, it can only present God, and that imperfectly, under one out of many aspects. One image of God alone is adequate (Col. i. 15). To the Jew, this second commandment was a fence to guard the empty shrine, which shrine could only receive its occupant when "the Word was made flesh" at the incarnation of our Lord. Notice:—1. *The effect of breaking the commandment.* Degrading the God worshipped, it led on naturally to the degradation of the worshipper, and through the worshipper his posterity was affected, so as to become yet more degraded. Who could have a better excuse than Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, for breaking the commandment? Who could have broken it more carefully? Considerations of utility seemed to justify him. He might have argued that the first commandment was all-important, and that to ensure respect for it he must tamper with the second. None the less the effect was manifest (2 Kings xvii. 22, 23). The sin of Jeroboam was the ruin of his people. 2. *The bearing of the commandment on ourselves.* Christ has come. The empty shrine is filled. We possess the true image, and can worship God in Christ. "But Christ, you say, is unseen; thoughts wander in prayer, I need some object by which to fix them, some symbol upon which they may stay themselves and rest." The excuse is plausible; but it is the same excuse as a Jew in old times might have offered. A man may use, as good men have used, the crucifix, e.g., as an aid to devotion. But the crucifix, or any other symbol, is utterly inadequate; it shows Christ only under one aspect: we must worship him in all his fulness if we take him as the image of the invisible Jehovah. To confine our thoughts to Calvary is to limit, and by limiting to degrade the ideal. The crucifix has much to answer for in narrowing men's views, and making their religion one-sided and incomplete. For a Christian to obey the second commandment, he must worship Christ in all his fulness. Only so can he worship God with that pure worship which is alone acceptable.

"Show me not only Jesus dying,
As on the cross he bled,
Nor in the tomb a captive lying,
For he has left the dead.
Not only in that form suspended,
My Saviour bid me see;
For to the highest heavens ascended,
He reigns in majesty!"—G

VERS. 7, 8.—The first commandment deals with the *object* of worship; the second, with the *manner* of worship; in the third and fourth we have the *method* of worship, true reverence and genuine devotion.

I. THE THIRD COMMANDMENT. 1. *Obedience to the letter insufficient.* None ever obeyed it thus more strictly than the Jews did. The Sacred Name, called the shuddering name; only pronounced once annually by the High Priest on the Great Day of Atonement. So strictly was the command kept that the true pronunciation of the name is lost to us. Even in our own Bibles we have evidence of the ancient practice, "The LORD" being used as a substitute for Jehovah. Yet, with all this, cf. Ezek. xxxvi. 20. The name, which was never uttered by the lips, was yet profaned by the conduct of the worshippers. We, too, may never perjure ourselves, or speak profanely, yet the tenor of our whole life may bring God's name into contempt. The commonest excuse made by those who never enter a place of worship is based upon the inconsistent conduct of those who frequent such places regularly. They may not go themselves, but they know well enough who do go, and they know also the kind of lives which they who do go are leading. 2. *The true obedience.* They who worship God must worship him in spirit and in truth. True reverence is a thing of the heart, which shines through and illuminates the conduct. This leads us to:—

II. THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT. True reverence will best show itself in copying the example of the person revered. The fourth commandment shows us God's example made plain for a man to copy. 1. *The rest-day to be kept holy.* (1) Nature teaches us that a rest-day, a Sabbath, is a necessity. He who works seven days a week is a bad economist of his time. He simply shortens life. The body must be laid aside the sooner to keep its disregarded Sabbaths in the grave. (2) The Holy-day is no less necessary than the holiday. Man's nature is complex, and his spirit needs rest and refreshment, quite as surely as his body needs them. [*Illust.*: You may shut up a man's piano, but that only rests the instrument, it does not necessarily rest the instrumentalist.] The rest for a man's spirit is only to be obtained by sharing the spiritual rest of God; if the holiday be not a holy-day this spiritual rest will still be lacking. 2. *The days of labour to be modelled on God's pattern.* Labour as much commanded as rest; but labour, as rest, after the Divine model. All that God does, he does earnestly and thoroughly. To work as God works is to work with the *heart* as well as with the hands (Col. iii. 23). One cannot wonder that the rest-day is profaned, when the days of toil are profaned no less, when a man's chief object seems to be not to *do* his work, but to have done with it. If God had worked as we work, he could scarcely have called his work "very good." The world by now would have been a dilapidated chaos, more appalling than the waste from which it sprang. The commandment is not "Six days shalt thou *loiter*," but "Six days shalt thou *labour*."

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS.—Mere literal keeping of the commandments may bring them and their author into contempt. We can only "magnify the law and make it honourable" by keeping it from the heart outwards. The Jews kept the third and fourth commandments literally enough. Our own Sunday legislation dates from the time of Charles II., when, of all times, God's law was, perhaps, the most fearfully profaned. "My son, give me thine heart," that is the invitation which first requires to be accepted. If we would really keep the commandments, let our prayer be: "Lord have mercy upon us, and incline *our hearts* to keep thy law."—G.

Ver. 12.—Previous commandments have dealt with the *object* and *manner* of worship; this deals with the nursery and school of worship. Consider:—

I. THE INJUNCTION IN ITSELF. 1. *Absolute*; parents to be *honoured*, whether living or departed, known or unknown, good or evil. 2. *Hard to obey in some cases*; yet always *possible*, for remember the *father* and *mother* may be honoured, even though the individuals fall short of the ideal they should exemplify. One can honour from the standpoint of the *child*, even those who from any other standpoint may be despicable. [*Illust.*: Dr Macdonald's story of "Robert Falconer;" the father is a reprobate scamp, yet the son, persistently honouring his fatherhood, at length wins him back to respectability.] 3. *Mischief of thoughtless disrespect.* No honourable shame to be ashamed of one's own parentage, especially when, if rightly looked at, there is nothing to be ashamed of in it. No doubt apparent disrespect may sometimes grow out of a wholesome familiarity;

still, even so, painful to the parent, whilst it injures the child in the opinion of right-minded people. [Common shame of doing, or refusing to do things out of respect to a parent's wishes. At most, if the wish is respected, it is merely a "humouring of the old people," as though the command were "humour," instead of "honour" "thy father and mother."] Why chafe at such simple duties as those which spring from the most sacred of relations. There is a far worse bondage than that of "a mother's apron strings;" it is not well to rupture needlessly those cords of a man which are the bonds of love. If you want a reason for the command:—

II. HOME REVERENCE IS THE ROOT OF WORSHIP. That ladder which Jacob saw is always reared within the shadow of the home. Even with him, an exile, it was the God of *his father* who stood above it. The parents, or those who stand in the place of parents, are the only God a child knows at first. Worship, like other things, comes by practice and experience: the first lessons are learnt in the home. Practically, God is revealed through the parent; other things equal, no reverence for parents, there will be no reverence for God. No doubt there are homes and homes; some where you can almost catch the rustle of the angel wings; others, withered husks of home, blasted before the breath of hell. Still, even in the worst homes the ladder is planted, could one but see it. Take away home and its associations, and you leave it with no ground to stand on. Notice in this light the great responsibility of parents. Further:—

III. HOME REVERENCE IS THE SOURCE OF INDIVIDUAL AND NATIONAL PERMANENCE. The *position* of the commandment teaches its connection with worship, the *promise* attached to it its connection with prosperity. It ensures:—1. *The prosperity of the individual.* The man who does not honour and respect his parents has not gained the *habit* of reverence; he does not honour God, he does not honour all men. What follows?—(1) Not honouring God, there is no power but self to restrain self. Impulses, desires, etc., are likely, unreined, to run away with him. A man so run away with is rushing post haste to death. (2) Not honouring men, he will hold aloof from men. They may hinder, they are not likely to help him. The friction of life intensified; all that is done—done with twice the effort. Such a man may be successful, not likely to be long-lived. The needless friction must wear out the life. Could the test be applied, an insurance company would be justified in charging a lower premium on one who kept this commandment, than on one who habitually disregarded it. 2. *The prosperity of the nation.* For (1) That nation is most stable which finds itself in reverence for the past. The "Land of settled government" is the land—

"Where Freedom broadens slowly down
From precedent to precedent."

(2) That nation is most stable which adopts the principle of the fourth commandment and respects authority above numbers. The commandment does not say, "Honour the family vote," it says, "Honour thy father and thy mother."

Conclusion.—Home is linked with heaven; the earthly parent with the Father of eternity. Would you reach heaven, then reverence home; would you worship God, then honour your parents.—G.

Ver. 13.—The second table. Fraternal relations; the outward-looking aspect of life. May classify them either (1) as they affect us personally, or (2) as they affect man generally. According to (1) they deal with our *actions*, our *words*, and our *thoughts*. According to (2) they teach us:—The sanctity of life, of home, of property, of character; whilst the tenth commandment shows further that the heart is the source whence springs reverence for these sanctities. Notice as regards this sixth commandment:—

I. ITS BEARING ON ACTIONS. Murder, the criminal taking of life, varies in character; according to the nature of the life destroyed and according to the nature of the action of the destroyer. Life is threefold, of the *body*, of the *mind*, and of the *spirit*: and murder, as against each, may be *deliberate* or *careless*, resulting from *action* or from *inaction*. Illustrate from cases affecting the bodily life:—1. *Deliberate murder.* Life taken of malice aforethought. 2. *Careless murder*, resulting from negligence or culpable ignorance; e.g., the house builder who so builds his house as to injure the health of a tenant, neglecting drains, etc.; or the parent who spreads some infectious disorder

through sending his children to school whilst tainted with it. 3. *Inactive murder.* Paraphrasing James iv. 17, "He that knoweth to save life and doeth it not, to him it is murder:" e.g., a man who allows his neighbour to murder others deliberately or through carelessness. Like kinds of murder apply to the cases of the mind and spirit. The slave-owner who forbade his slaves to be educated, and who debarred them from religious privileges; the parent who stifles the spiritual development of his child through indifference. These and like cases might be instanced. "Thou shalt do *no* murder," such is the command. To the question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" the answer is, "Undoubtedly you are." If you can save life of any kind, and fail to do so, you must be classed with Cain.

II. ITS BEARING ON THOUGHTS (Matt. v. 21; 1 John iii. 15). Really a special case of the tenth commandment; or rather, this commandment is viewed in the light of the tenth. The unkind thought, fostered, soon becomes the malicious thought, and a malicious thought acts like leaven, resulting in a murderous heart. [*Illustration:* cotton wool, pure, soft, innoxious. Treat it with certain chemicals. It looks just the same; but its character is completely altered, it is transformed into an explosive, gun cotton. So, too, treat the human heart with the chemistry of envy, hatred, and malice, and it too will become an explosive—murderous, and ready for murder.] From the murderous heart proceeds murder of the worst kind; but saturate the heart with indifference or carelessness, and you still make it an explosive. "Keep," i.e., guard "thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life," or death!

III. A SPECIAL CASE. SUICIDE. Self murder does not imply hatred or malice. Still it is unlawful killing, and may be classed with extreme forms of manslaughter. It is however to be condemned on more general principles as against the spirit of the whole table of the law. It is cowardly. It is selfish. If a brother commit suicide, what are your feelings? What then your brother's feelings if you destroy your life? Juries should give in such cases more stringent verdicts. A verdict of temporary insanity results from misplaced charity; it cannot do much to alleviate the distress of friends; it helps to facilitate suicide, which would be far less frequent if the verdict on it were usually more severe.

Conclusion.—The justification of this commandment is to be found in the sanctity of the life which it protects. Bear in mind that life is God's gift, an emanation from the Deity. Keep the eyes open and keep the heart open, so will you soon find opportunities to preserve life and ward off death.—G.

Ver. 14.—A correspondence between the two tables: to worship a false god is to aim at the life of the true God. Idolatry is spiritual adultery. Besides this the sixth and seventh commandments are clearly related; the one guards the life of the individual, the other the life of the family, the sanctity of the home. Consider:—

I. THE SIN ITSELF. When a man by anticipation, or after marriage, breaks the marriage vow; when a woman acquiesces in the crime thus perpetrated, it is murder aimed at the collective life of the family. Madness for society to make light of such a crime, which, if permitted, must destroy society. For notice, the family, not the individual, is the ultimate social unit. [*Illustration.* Tree covered with foliage: individual leaves and blossoms are connected with twigs and boughs; you may kill a leaf without injury to the bough, but kill the bough, and what about the leaves?] Individuals are leaves and blossoms on the tree of life; it is through the family that they belong to the tree at all. Adultery poisons the bough, and through that withers the leaves and blossoms. Further, the sin involves a spreading plague. It spreads not merely far and wide, but on and on through future generations. You may keep it hid, you cannot keep it inactive. [*Illustrate from case of David and Bathsheba; may we not trace his mother's influence in Solomon's sin? He goes after strange women, and then after strange gods. On David's side we have Amnon's sin directly connected with Absalom's rebellion, which again is connected indirectly with the successful rebellion of Jeroboam and resulting idolatry of the northern kingdom. It is still the one sin which spreads; outwards and onwards.*] A pure home is a sound spot in the social organism; corrupt its purity, and it becomes a centre of corruption. May notice also, in this connection, that all sins of this class, fornication, uncleanness, etc., do and must manifest themselves in spite of concealment. Other sins (1 Cor. vi. 18) are "outside the body." These are

"against the body," and through the body they declare themselves. The pure may not know why they shun the impure, but instinctively they discern the signs of his impurity. His sin shows through him, as a lurid light shows through a lantern.

II. CAUSES WHICH OCCASION THE SIN. 1. *A low ideal of womanhood.* According to the Divine ideal, "man" is "male and female;" it is in the union of the sexes that the "image of God" is reflected. According to the human ideal, woman is rather man's play-mate than his help-mate; he chooses her as he would a picture, because he likes the look of her. She is in thought his toy, his doll. In unchristian countries this low ideal of woman is universally prevalent, but even in Christian countries it is too often tacitly if not verbally accepted. Such an ideal cannot but be mischievous. [*Illustration:* Take lantern from summit of light-house and place it at the foot. It will still guide the ships, though no longer off the rocks but on to them.] Woman must exert influence; place her high and it will be ennobling, set her low and it will become degrading. 2. *A low ideal of manhood.* If woman is a toy, then that part of a man's nature which can require such a costly toy, will be the most important. The animal nature will be uppermost. The desires will rule. 3. *A low level of life.* This results naturally from 1 and 2. A man cannot live above the level of his own ideals. If man is a mere animal, woman a mere toy, then marriage is a mere convention. All its sanctity has evaporated. A man will marry if he can afford a wife, if not he will take some cheaper substitute. In the light of the Divine ideal, marriage becomes a duty and a privilege; the completion of that Divine idea of which man unmarried is a mere torso. Guard, of course, against improvident marriages; at the same time it is not improvidence to share, in common, sacrifice and self-denial. One man has two hundred pounds per annum and cannot marry under four hundred pounds; another has four hundred pounds and requires one thousand pounds. If a man divides himself into his income and finds he goes once and nothing over, he may set to work and make his income larger, or he may try to make *self* smaller; many a man could so reduce his divisor, that, without any increase in his income, the quotient should be two, with a fair remainder.

Conclusion.—All such evils spring no doubt from a corrupt heart; but a high ideal will guard the heart and tend to purify it if impure. By the help of God's grace, let man reverence woman, and woman reverence man, and each reverence in himself and in the other that ideal which is their common glory. Before the splendour of the Divine image as thus mirrored in their union, adultery and sins of uncleanness must be driven afar off.—G.

Ver. 15.—The eighth commandment guards the sanctity of property. Consider:—

I. PROPERTY AND THE RIGHTS OF PROPERTY. Property is that which gives expression to individual and family life. In some sort it is an extension of the bodily organism, an added possibility of self-revelation in the sphere of sense. Social usage allows a man's right, or the right of a corporation, to absolute possession of certain things. Primarily, probably, such right is founded on the right of the labourer to the product of his labour; a man's own is what he has made his own. Such limit, however, has come to be enlarged on grounds of general utility; we may say generally that a man's property is that which social usage allows him to consider such.

II. OFFENCES AGAINST PROPERTY. 1. *Stealing.* Appropriating a man's property against the will of the owner. All condemn the thief, he is condemned even by his own conscience; however much he may steal from others he can never think it right for them to steal from him! There are, however, various kinds of diluted theft which are equally offences against the eighth commandment, though not so strongly stigmatised by society. 2. *Cognate offences.* Property in the old times consisted mainly of land, crops, and cattle. The principle involved in the eighth commandment illustrated, as applied to them, by a number of cases in Ex. xxi., xxii., all such acts as result in loss to one's neighbours, provided that loss was not inevitable, are condemned by it. Circumstances, nowadays, are somewhat different, but the principle of honesty still applies. Take a few instances:—(1) *Acts of petty dishonesty.* (a) When in a bargain one party takes advantage of the ignorance of the other; e.g., a collector finds some rarity in the possession of a man who does not know its value, and secures it far below its proper price. (b) Borrowing without definite intention to return; e.g., books, money, or other property. (c) Leaving bills unpaid for a week—

lessly long time. In such case, even though paid eventually, the creditor is defrauded of the profit which he might have made by the use of his money. (2) *Mischievous actions*; e.g., marking books or scribbling in them. Cutting initials in trees and buildings. No man has any right to depreciate by his actions the value of another man's property. (3) *Culpable negligence*. Must be as careful with the property of others as with our own property. A pure accident is not a pure accident if it would not have happened had the property been our own.

III. COMPENSATION FOR OFFENCES AGAINST PROPERTY. Cf. Ex. xxii. 9. Not enough to make good the original value, the law of restitution requires double and, in some cases, fivefold or fourfold. Such a law:—1. *Emphasises the importance of strict honesty*. In view of it possible offenders will be more cautious as to how they offend. Should it be enforced now-a-days; how many struggling tradesmen and mechanics might find themselves rescued from the verge of bankruptcy! How might charity in a thousand places spring up to banish and destroy suspicion! 2. *Secures something like adequate atonement*. Defraud a man of anything, and you defraud him of more than the value of that thing. His loss occasions further loss; loss of time, loss of temper, anxiety, inconvenience, for all which the sufferer is entitled to a recompense. Fourfold restitution may sound generous, yet even that may be less than just.

Conclusion.—Honesty is by no means such a common virtue as some suppose. It behoves us to examine ourselves as to how far our conduct may bear strict scrutiny. Are there none to whom *we* should make restitution? If so, let us be thankful if we can make it. There are losses which we occasion others, dues which we owe to God and man, yet which now, it may be, we can never make good—no remedy now exists for the lasting evil they have occasioned. There are debts we can still pay, there are others which we can never pay; who has not need to join in the petition in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our debts"?—G.

Ver. 16.—Connect with the preceding commandment. That guards the property, what belongs to a man outside himself. This guards the character, what belongs to a man inside himself. To steal the purse may be only to steal trash, but to defraud a man of his good name is to do him an irreparable injury.

I. COMMONEST FORM OF THE OFFENCE. Most often committed against comparative strangers. We calculate the effect of our words when speaking of people whom we know—the consequences may be unpleasant to ourselves if we fail to use due care. As regards others, we are far too ready to catch up and publish some prejudicial opinion; it is so much easier to speak evil than to keep silence and say nothing. Take, e.g., the language current with regard to politicians of an opposite party; what disgraceful imputation of unworthy motives is constantly permitted without a protest! We have a right to our own opinion, if we have taken due pains to form it, as to the public acts of public men; we have no right to go beneath those acts and assume that the actors are less honourable than we are. Partisans of the platform and the correspondence column would seem to care nothing for the sanctity of truth, their one aim is to blacken the character of their opponents, so as to emphasise by contrast their own purity.

II. HOW HABIT STRENGTHENS BY PRACTICE. Bear false witness against a stranger and it will be easier to bear false witness against a friend; the use of unmeasured language in the one case will lead to less measured language in the other. As a fact this is the case. People who express themselves so strongly when speaking of political opponents, are just the people who behind your back will speak of you with inaccurate unkindness. They misrepresent and misinterpret from the mere pleasure of lowering a man in the eyes of others:—

"Low desire
Not to feel lowest makes them level all;
Yea they would pare the mountain to the plain,
To leave an equal baseness"

We are all mirrors in which our neighbours' characters must be in some sort reflected. let us take care lest we reflect falsely, distorting, through flaws in our own character,

the character which is reflected through us. Two special cases should be noted:—
 1. *False witness embodied in accurate speech.* We may use true words and yet create a false impression; e.g., a remark made and repeated verbatim. The way, however, in which it is repeated, the special setting, the peculiar intonation; these things give it a very different meaning to that intended by the original speaker. The words are accurate, the testimony is false. (New music alters the character of a song.)
 2. *False witness may be borne by silence.* In discussing a man's character, silence, with or without significant looks, is eloquent. "He could have spoken," it is argued, "had he been able to say anything favourable." Silent acquiescence in the charges made is quite sufficient confirmation of their truth!

Conclusion.—The character of our neighbour, whatever his rank or position, whether the neighbour be a Prime Minister or only a domestic servant, ought to be as precious to us as our own character. It is easy enough to injure a man's good name by thoughtless speech or cowardly silence. We cannot rid ourselves of the responsibility which attaches to our carelessness or cowardice. By speech or silence we give our testimony, whether the testimony be true or false.—G.

Ver. 17.—The last commandment of the second table. Murder, adultery, theft, slander, all these spring from a corrupt heart. The wrong thought admitted nourishes the wrong desire, which in time gives birth to the wrong action. Out of the heart are the issues of life, therefore keep thy heart with all diligence.

I. THE SOURCE OF COVETOUSNESS. There are two ideals by which men mould their lives. One makes God the centre of all things, the other makes self the centre. One says "Thy will be done," the other says "My will be done." It is in the heart that accepts this latter ideal that covetousness has its home. Everything is regarded in its relation to self—the neighbour's life and home, and property, and character, are only so many possible instruments which may thwart or assist the gratification of selfishness. The thought of something which may give pleasure, leads us to the desire for the possession of that thing, and the desire will only be restrained from fulfilment by external checks which may make fulfilment difficult. A man may refrain from adultery or theft, because of the social penalties which attach to such transgressions; all the same in his inmost heart he may be a thief and an adulterer. Selfishness is the parent of all sins; its offspring is only dwarfed in growth when selfishness is restrained by society. (Cf. Matt. v. 22, 28.)

II. THE CURE FOR COVETOUSNESS. The only radical remedy is that which starts by cutting at the root of selfishness. God, not the individual man, is the centre of the universe. Man is related directly to him, and to all other things through him. It is God's will, not our own will, by reference to which we may live righteously. What then is God's will? It is that which corresponds with his character, which is love. To live as in his sight is to live in the light of love. Love in us is kindled and developed by contemplation and experience of the love which is in him. Love is that Divine affection which alone has power to expel all selfishness. Love alone can purify the heart, guard the thoughts, and discipline the desires. And what is love in practice? It is nothing more nor less than doing to others as we would they should do unto us. All men as related to God are on an equality, all, as in his sight, have equal rights. Here, however much we may differ, we are yet all on common ground. They who acknowledge one God, who accept redemption through one Saviour, who yield to the influence of one sanctifying Spirit, are in the way to the attainment of that love which is the fulfilling of the law. (Rom. xiii. 10.)

Conclusion.—Notice how the last commandment links itself on to the fulfilment of the first. The ten precepts of the two tables are ten golden links in a perfect circle. Thus regarded, that circle is none other than the perfect bond of charity (Col. iii. 14), a girdle wherewith whoso girds himself ensures a twofold peace, "Peace on earth towards men of good will," and the peace of God to keep his heart.—G.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 18-21.—**WITHDRAWAL OF THE PEOPLE AND NEARER APPROACH OF MOSES TO GOD.** The effect produced upon the people by the accumulated terrors of Sinai—"the thunderings and the lightnings, the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking"—the cloud, and the voice out of the cloud—was an awful and terrible fear. They could not bear the manifestation of the near presence of God; and therefore "they removed and stood afar off." It seemed to them as if, on hearing the voice of God, speaking out of the thick darkness, they must die (ver. 19). Moses, upon their expressing these feelings, comforted them with an assurance that God had shown his terrors, not for their injury, but to put his fear in their hearts (ver. 20), and allowed them to retire to a distance from the mount, while he himself "drew near unto the thick darkness where God was" (ver. 21).

Ver. 18.—**The people saw the thunderings.** The use of a specific verb for a generic one, with terms to all of which it is not, strictly speaking, applicable, is common to many writers, and is known to grammarians as *zeugma*. "Saw" here means "perceived, witnessed." **The mountain smoking.** Compare ch. xix. 18. In Deut. v. 23 it is said that "the mountain did burn with fire." **When the people saw it, they removed.** It appears, from Deut. v. 23, that, before retiring, the people sent a deputation of heads of tribes and elders up to Moses in the mount, to convey to him their wishes, and suggest that he should be their intermediary with God. Moses laid their wishes before God, and was directed to give them his sanction, whereupon they withdrew to their tents (ib. 30).

Ver. 19.—**And they said unto Moses.** Their whole speech, as delivered in Deuteronomy, was as follows:—"Behold, the Lord our God hath shewed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day, that God

doth talk with man, and he liveth. Now, therefore, why should we die? for this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, then we shall die. For who is there of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God, speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? Go then near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it, and do it" (Deut. v. 24-27). The speech is here abbreviated greatly; but its essential points are preserved—"Speak thou with us"—be thou our intermediary—"Let not God speak with us, lest we die."

Ver. 20.—**And Moses said unto the people.** Not immediately—Moses first held colloquy with God. God declared that the people had "spoken well" (Deut. v. 28); and authorised Moses to allow of their withdrawal (ib. 30). **Fear not.** Here Exodus is more full in its details than Deuteronomy. Moses, finding the people in a state of extreme alarm, pacified them—assured them that there was no cause for immediate fear—God had not now come in vengeance—the object of the terrors of Sinai was to "prove" them—i.e., to test them, whether they were inclined to submit themselves to God, or not—and to impress upon their minds permanently an awful fear of God, that they might be kept back from sin by dread of his almighty power. The motive of fear is, no doubt, a low one; but where we can appeal to nothing else, we must appeal to it. Israel was still a child, only fit for childish discipline; and had to be directed by the harsh voice of fear, until it had learnt to be guided by the tender accents of love.

Ver. 21.—**The people stood afar off.** They retired from the base of Sinai to their tents, where they "stood," probably in their tent doors. **And Moses drew near unto the thick darkness.** As the people drew back, Moses drew near. The display which drove them off, attracted him. He did not even fear the "thick darkness"—a thing from which human nature commonly shrinks. Where God was, he would be.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 18-21.—**The Divine presence at once attractive and repellent.** When Christ was upon the earth, so winning was his graciousness that crowds flocked to him, and one man at least exclaimed, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." But at the same time so terrible was the manifestation of his power, that there were those who "besought him that he would depart out of their coasts." God is love, and God is power, and wherever he is, he exhibits both qualities; but there are some who see mainly the love, and there are others who see only the power. Hence the Divine presence at once attracts and repels, charms men and affrights them. The Israelites invited to draw near to God, and hold with him direct communication, after brief trial,

decline the offer, and will have an intermediary. Moses, given the same invitation, and a witness of the same sights and sounds, not only stands his ground, but at the end draws more near. The reasons for the difference would seem to be these—

I. FEAR, WHERE IT IS EXCESSIVE, EXPELS LOVE. The devils, who have no love, "believe and tremble." Men, who have greatly sinned, and who therefore cannot help seeing in God mainly a "consuming fire," and "an avenger to execute wrath," lose sight of all his gentler attributes, cease to feel that he is their Father, no longer look upon him as "merciful and gracious," and consequently no longer have any feeling of love towards him. We cannot love one from whom we expect nothing but punishment.

II. LOVE, WHERE IT IS STRONG, COUNTERACTS FEAR AND MASTERS IT. "The fear of the Lord endureth for ever"—no love of which a creature is capable can altogether cast it out. The very angels veil their faces before the Lord of Hosts, and feel themselves unworthy to gaze upon the Divine perfections. But where love increases, fear diminishes. Let love grow, and become strong, and glow within the heart like a flame of fire—by degrees fear changes its character, ceases to be a timorous dread, and becomes awe. Awe and love can very well co-exist; and love draws us towards God more than awe keeps us back. Love is glad to have no intermediary—rejoices that it may "go boldly to the throne of grace"—seeks to draw as near as possible to the beloved one—so constrains fear, that fear ceases to act any longer as a deterrent, is mastered, and held under restraint. "Moses drew near into the thick darkness where God was." The loving soul presses towards God—would "see him face to face"—and "know even as it also is known."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 18—22.—*The terrors of Sinai—their design and their effects.* I. THEIR DESIGN. 1. *Not to slay the people.* The people dreaded that if God spoke to them again, they would die (ver. 19). But Moses said—No; this was not the design of the manifestation. "Fear not" (ver. 20). The voice of the law in Scripture, though it is felt in the conscience to be a voice of death (Rom. vii. 9—11), is not intended to be really so. It is meant to lead to Christ. 2. *To prove the people* (ver. 20). God gave this awful manifestation, that his fear might ever after be before their faces. They had heard with their own ears the proclamation of the law, and they had seen these terrors. If anything could awaken fear in them—a salutary fear—and keep them from apostasy, these things should. But, alas! terror is a very ineffective instrument of conversion. These Israelites soon forgot their terrors, and within forty days were dancing in mad glee round their golden calf (ch. xxxii.).

II. THEIR EFFECTS. 1. *They inspired the keenest alarm.* This is the invariable result in the sinful breast of any near approach of God. A fear akin to that of the Israelites has often been manifested—(1) In presence of unusual appearances of nature (comets, eclipses, etc.). (2) Under the powerful preaching of the realities of judgment. (3) In prospect of death. 2. *They awakened the cry for a mediator* (ver. 19). However much, under ordinary circumstances, the unbeliever may scout the idea of being indebted to a mediator, it will be strange if there do not come times in his life when he feels that he needs one. Three principles in our nature give birth to this feeling—(1) The sense of *weakness and finitude*. (2) The sense of *sin*. (3) The feeling of *need*. The longing for fellowship with God gives rise to the desire for one to mediate that fellowship, to bring it about by making peace. 3. *They impelled the self-convicted Israelites to flee from God's presence* (vers. 18, 21). This is what will take place at the last judgment. How different with Moses, who had "boldness" to enter even into the thick darkness! The good man need not fear to be *anywhere* with God—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 22—26.—THE BOOK OF THE COVENANT, (chap. xx. ver. 22, to chap. xxii. ver. 23). The Decalogue is followed by a series of laws, civil, social, and religious, which occupy the remainder of ch. xx. and the whole of the

three following chapters (ch. xxi., xxii and xxiii.). It appears from ch. xxiv. that these laws, received by Moses on Sinai, immediately after the delivery of the ten commandments, were at once committed to

writing and collected into a book, which was known as "the Book of the Covenant" (ch. xxiv. 7), and was regarded as a specially sacred volume. The document, as it has come down to us, "cannot be regarded as a strictly systematic whole" (Canon Cook): yet still, it is not wholly unsystematic, but aims in some degree at an orderly arrangement. First and foremost are placed the laws which concern the worship of God, which are two in number:—1. Against idols; 2. Concerning altars (ch. xx. 23—26). Then follow the laws respecting what our legal writers call "the rights of persons"—which occupy thirty-two verses of ch. xxi. and fall under some twenty different heads, beginning with the rights of slaves, and terminating with the compensation to be made for injuries to the person caused by cattle. The third section is upon "the rights of property," and extends from ch. xxi. 33, to ch. xxii. 15, including some ten or twelve enactments. After this we can only say that the laws are mixed, some being concerned with Divine things (as ch. xxii. 20, 29, 30; and ch. xxiii. 10—19): others with human, and these last being of various kinds, all, however, more or less "connected with the civil organization of the state" (Kalisch). In the fourth section the enactments seem to fall under about twenty-five heads. The result is that the "Book of the Covenant" contains, in little more than three chapters, about seventy distinct laws.

Ver. 22.—**Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.** The book opened with this reminder, which at once recalled its author and declared its authority. "I, who give these laws, am the same who spake the ten commandments amid the thunders of Sinai. Reverence the laws accordingly."

Ver. 23.—**Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, etc.** This is a repetition, in part, of the second commandment, and can only be accounted for by the prohibition being specially needed. The first idea of the Israelites, when they considered that Moses had deserted them, was to make a golden calf for a god.

Ver. 24.—**An altar of earth.** Among the nations of antiquity altars were indispensable to Divine worship, which everywhere included sacrifice. They were often provided on the spur of the occasion, and were then "constructed of earth, sods, or stones, collected upon the spot." The patriarchal altars had probably been of this character, and it was now provided that the same usage should continue: at any rate, elaborate structures of hewn

and highly ornamented stone should not be allowed, lest thus idolatry should creep in, the images engraved upon the altars becoming the objects of worship. **Thy burnt offerings and thy peace offerings.** The mode in which these are introduced implies that sacrifice was already a long-standing practice. The patriarchal sacrifices are well known (Gen. viii. 20; xii. 7; xxii. 9; xxxv. 1). Jethro had recently offered sacrifice in the camp of Israel (ch. xviii. 12). If the Israelites had not sacrificed to God during the sojourn in Egypt, at any rate they had kept up the idea of sacrifice; and it was for the purpose of offering sacrifices that Moses had demanded permission to go with all his nation into the wilderness. **I will come unto thee and I will bless thee.** The promise is conditional on the observance of the command. If the altars are rightly constructed, and proper victims offered, then, in all places where he allows the erection of an altar, God will accept the sacrifices offered upon it and bless the worshippers.

Ver. 25.—**And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone—i.e., if, notwithstanding my preference expressed for an altar of earth, thou wilt insist on making me one of stone, as more permanent, and so more honourable, then I require that the stones shall be rough stones shaped by nature, not stones chiselled into shape by the art of man.** For if thou lift up thy tool upon it thou hast polluted it. It is conjectured with reason that we have here an old traditional idea, which God thought fit under the existing circumstances to sanction. The real object was that altars should not be elaborately carved with objects that might superinduce idolatry. The widely prevalent notion, that nature is sacred, and that all man's interference with nature is a defilement, was made use of *economically*, to produce the desired result. No tool being allowed to be used, no forms of living creatures could be engraved, and so no idolatry of them could grow up.

Ver. 26.—**Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar.** Here the reason of decency, added in the text, is obvious; and the law would necessarily continue until sacerdotal vestments of a very different character from the clothes commonly worn by Orientals were introduced (xxvii. 3—43). After their introduction, the reason for the law, and with it the law itself, would drop. The supposed "slope of earth" by which the priests are thought to have ascended to the "ledge" on the altar of burnt offerings, and the "inclined plane," said by Josephus to have given access to the great altar of Solomon, rest on no sufficient authority, and are probably pure fictions. As soon as an ascent was needed, owing to the height of the altar, it was probably an ascent by steps (See Ezek. xliii. 17.)

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 22—26.—*The law of the altar.* I. THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP. The true God, not gods of silver, or gods of gold (ver. 23). The God who had talked with them from heaven had appeared in no visible form. "Ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice" (Deut. iv. 12). Let the sole object of our worship be the invisible, spiritual, infinite, yet *revealed* God. God's revelations of himself lay the basis of right worship. God has spoken. How reverently should we hear!

II. THE PLACE OF WORSHIP. "In all places where I record my name" (ver. 24). God records his name by making a revelation of himself, as at Bethel, Peniel, etc. Whatever places he chose for the building of his altar, till the time came for the erection of a permanent sanctuary, there would he meet with them. Religion is now set free from places (John iv. 23). Wherever two or three are met in Christ's name, there will he be in the midst of them (Matt. xviii. 20).

III. THE ALTAR OF WORSHIP. To be built of unhewn stone—*i.e.*, of natural materials (ver. 25). It was the altar of propitiation. Man is viewed as one whose sins are yet unexpiated. His art, in *that* state, would have polluted the altar. Art came in afterwards (ch. xxv. etc.). Nothing of man's own avails for propitiation.

IV. THE MATERIALS OF WORSHIP. Animal sacrifices (ver. 24). For purposes of atonement—as symbols of personal consecration (burnt offerings)—as pledges of peace and renewed fellowship (peace offerings). Not in the first, but in the other meanings of sacrifice, we are still summoned to bring them in our worship—"spiritual sacrifices" of self-surrender (Rom. xii. 1), of the broken spirit (Ps. li. 17), of praise and thanksgiving (1 Peter i. 5).

V. THE MANNER OF WORSHIP (ver. 26). Reverence and decency.—J. O.

Vers. 22—26.—*I will go unto the altar of God.* The directions given shadow forth the essentials of genuine worship. Amongst the heathen the idol is the central figure, the human symbol of the unseen God. The true God will admit no such symbol; it is a barrier against, not a step towards, the worship he desires. In true worship there must be utter self-suppression. "Obedience is better than sacrifice;" it is only through obedience that the sacrifice becomes acceptable. In this light consider—

I. THE ALTAR. To be made of earth or unhewn stones. The simple unadorned material as provided by God himself. Anything beyond this, any touch of human handicraft, pollutes it. The principle which underlies this fact:—sacrifices offered in the appointed way are acceptable; if we try to better the appointed way—to put something of our own into the sacrifice as a ground for acceptance—we spoil all. Self-obtrusion, however well-intended, is pollution. The altar is the expression of God's will: try to improve it, and it becomes instead an expression of the will of the would-be improver. "I give thee this, O God; it is not worth much, but I give it thee in this self-chosen manner, and surely that adds to its value." Not a bit: it deprives it of all value. The altar of self is not the altar of God; sacrifices offered upon it may perhaps soothe the worshipper, they cannot propitiate the Deity. The pillar, *e.g.*, of a St. Simeon Stylites does not add to the value of his prayers; they have a better chance of reaching heaven from the contrite heart at the foot of the pillar. (Cf. Col. ii. 22, 23.)

II. THE APPROACHES. If the offering be made with a pure motive, it must also be offered in a pure and reverent manner. The special direction, no doubt, aimed against the enthusiastic indecencies associated with idolatry. Still, it illustrates a principle: "All things," in the worship of God, should be done "decently and in order." God looks first at character, but he requires also that character be matched by conduct. The Corinthian Christians (1 Cor. xi., xiv.) infringed the principle, if not the precept. Many amongst modern worshippers infringe it also, *e.g.*, by indecencies of *dress*, *behaviour*, etc., in a place of worship or when engaged in prayer.

Conclusion.—Two things required of us, *humility* and *reverence*; inward and outward self-suppression. Do we want a motive? "*Mine altar*" (ver. 26). Remember who it is whom we worship. What place left for self when the heart is fixed on God?—G.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXI

THE BOOK OF THE COVENANT.—*Continued.*

1. *Laws connected with the rights of persons* (vers. 1—32). The regulations of this section concern—1. Slavery (vers. 2—6); 2. Murder and other kinds of homicide (vers. 12—15 and 20, 21); 3. Man-stealing (ver. 16); 4. Striking or cursing of parents (vers. 15, 17); 5. Assaults and injuries to the person not resulting in death (vers. 18, 19, and 22—27), both in the case of free men and of slaves; and 6. Injuries done by cattle both to free men and to slaves (vers. 28—32). The chief bodily injury whereto women are liable is not mentioned. A later enactment (Deut. xxii. 25—29) made it expiable by marriage, or else a capital offence. There are no other remarkable omissions.

Ver. 1. *These are the judgments.* The term “judgment” applies most properly to the decisions of courts and the laws founded upon them. No doubt the laws contained in the “Book of the Covenant” were to a large extent old laws, which had been often acted on; but we should do wrong to suppose that there was nothing new in the legislation. The Hebrew *mishpat* is used with some vagueness.

Vers 2—11.—*Slavery.* Ver. 2. *If thou buy an Hebrew servant.* Slavery, it is clear, was an existing institution. The law of Moses did not make it, but found it, and by not forbidding, allowed it. The Divine legislator was content under the circumstances to introduce mitigations and alleviations into the slave condition. Hebrews commonly became slaves through poverty (Lev. xxv. 35, 39), but sometimes through crime (ch. xxii. 3).

In the seventh he shall go out. Not in the Sabbatical year, but at the commencement of the seventh year after he became a slave. If the jubilee year happened to occur, he might be released sooner (Lev. xxv. 40); but in any case his servitude must end when the sixth year of it was completed. This was an enormous boon, and had nothing, so far as is known, correspondent to it in the legislation of any other country. Nor was this all. When he went out free, his late master was bound to furnish him with provisions out of his flock, and out of his threshing floor, and out of his winepress (Deut. xv. 12—14), so that he might have something wherewith to

begin the world afresh. The humane spirit of the legislation is strikingly marked in its very first enactment.

Ver. 3.—*If he came in by himself, etc.* The first clause of this verse is further explained in the next; the second secured to the wife who went into slavery with her husband a participation in his privilege of release at the end of the sixth year.

Ver. 4.—*If his master have given him a wife.* If the slave was unmarried when he went into servitude, or if his wife died, and his master then gave him a wife from among his female slaves, the master was not to lose his property in his female slave by reason of having permitted the marriage. When the man claimed his freedom at the end of the sixth year, he was to “go out” alone. Should children have been born, they were also to be the property of the master and to remain members of his household. No doubt these provisos, which cannot be regarded as unjust, had the effect of inducing many Hebrew slaves not to claim their release (vers. 5, 6).

Vers. 5, 6.—*I love my master, etc.* Affection might grow up between the slave and the master, if he were well treated. The Hebrew form of slavery was altogether of a mild kind. Masters are admonished to treat their slaves “not as bond-servants, but as hired servants or sojourners,” and again “not to rule over them with rigour” (Lev. xxv. 39, 40, 43). Even among the heathen, slaves often bore a true affection to their masters. Or, the slave might be so attached to his wife and children as to be unwilling to separate from them, and might prefer slavery with the solace of their society to freedom without it. For such cases the provision was made, which is contained in ver. 6. On the slave declaring to his master his unwillingness to go free, the master might take him before the judges, or magistrates (literally “gods”) as witnesses, and perhaps registrars of the man’s declaration, and might then reconduct him to his house, and by a significant ceremony mark him as his slave “for ever.” The ceremony consisted in boring through one of his ears with an awl, and driving the awl into the door or doorpost of the house, thereby attaching him physically to the dwelling of which he became thenceforth a permanent inmate. Almost all commentators assert that some such custom was common in the East in connection with slavery, and refer to Xen. *Anab.* iii. 1, § 31; Plaut. *Pœnul.* v. 2, 21; Juv. *Sat.* i. 104; Plutarch. *Vit. Cic.* § 26, etc. But these passages merely show that the Orientals generally—not slaves in particular—had their ears bored for the purpose of wearing earrings, and indicate no usage at all comparable

to the Hebrew practice. The Hebrew custom—probably a very ancient one—seems to have had two objects—1. The declaring by a significant act, that the man belonged to the house; and 2. The permanent marking of him as a slave, dis-entitled to the rights of freemen. **He shall serve him for ever.** Josephus (*Ant. Jud.* iv. 8, § 20) and the Jewish commentators generally maintain that the law of the jubilee release overruled this enactment; but this must be regarded as very doubtful.

Ver. 7.—If a man sell his daughter to be a maid-servant. Among ancient nations the father's rights over his children were generally regarded as including the right to sell them for slaves. In civilised nations the right was seldom exercised; but what restrained men was rather a sentiment of pride than any doubt of such sales being proper. Many barbarous nations, like the Thracians (Herod. v. 6), made a regular practice of selling their daughters. Even at Athens there was a time when sales of children had been common (Plut. *Vit. Solon.* § 13). Existing custom, it is clear, sanctioned such sales among the Hebrews, and what the law now did was to step in and mitigate the evil consequences. (Compare the comment on verse 2.) These were greatest in the case of females. Usually they were bought to be made the concubines, or secondary wives of their masters. If this intention were carried out, then they were to be entitled to their status and maintenance as wives during their lifetime, even though their husband took another (legitimate) wife (ver. 10). If the intention was not carried out, either the man was to marry her to one of his sons (ver. 9), or he was to sell his rights over her altogether with his obligations to another Hebrew; or he was to send her back at once *intact* to her father's house, without making any claim on him to refund the purchase-money. These provisos may not have furnished a remedy against all the wrongs of a weak, and, no doubt, an oppressed class; but they were important mitigations of the existing usages, and protected the slave-concubine to a considerable extent.

Ver. 8.—If she please not her master. If he decline, *i.e.*, to carry out the contract, and take her for his wife. **Then let her be redeemed.** Rather, "Then let him cause her to be redeemed." Let him, *i.e.*, look out for some one who will buy her of him and take his obligation of marriage off his hands. **To sell her to a strange nation he shall not have power.** Only, this purchaser must be a Hebrew, like himself, and not a foreigner, since her father consented to her becoming a slave only on the condition of her being wedded to a Hebrew. **Seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her.** By professing to take

her as a secondary wife, and not carrying out the contract.

Ver. 9.—And if he hath betrothed her unto his son. A man might have bought the maiden for this object, or finding himself not pleased with her (ver. 8), might have made his son take his place as her husband. In this case but one course was allowed—he must give her the status of a daughter thenceforth in his family.

Ver. 10.—If he take him another wife—*i.e.*, If he marry her himself, and then take another, even a legitimate, wife—**her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage shall he not diminish**—she shall retain during her life all the privileges of a married woman—he shall not diminish aught from them. The word translated "duty of marriage" seems to mean "right of cohabitation."

Ver. 11.—If he do not these three unto her. Not the "three" points of the latter part of ver. 10; but one of the three courses laid down in vers. 8, 9, and 10. **She shall go out free—*i.e.*,** she shall not be retained as a drudge, a mere maidservant, but shall return to her father at once, a free woman, capable of contracting another marriage; **and without money—*i.e.*,** without the father being called upon to refund any portion of the sum for which he had sold her.

Vers. 12—14.—Homicide. Ver. 12 reiterates the Sixth Commandment, and adds to it a temporal penalty—"he shall surely be put to death." The substance of this law had already been given to Noah in the words, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, *by man shall his blood be shed*" (Gen. ix. 6). Real murder, with deliberate intent, was under no circumstances to be pardoned. The murderer was even to be torn from the altar, if he took refuge there, and relentlessly punished (ver. 14). See the case of Joab (1 Kings ii. 23—34). But, if a man happened suddenly upon his enemy, without having sought the opportunity, and slew him (ver. 13), then the case was one not of murder, but at most of manslaughter, or possibly of justifiable homicide. No legal penalty was assigned to such offences. They were left to the rude justice of established custom, which required "the avenger of blood" to visit them with due retribution. According to the general practice of the Eastern nations, he might either insist on life for life or take a money compensation. With this custom, deeply ingrained into the minds of the Oriental people, the law did not meddle. It was content to interpose between the avenger of blood and his victim the chance of reaching an

asylum. Places were appointed, whither the shedder of blood might flee, and where he might be safe until his cause was tried before the men of his own city (Num. xxxv. 22-25), and afterwards, if the judgment were in his favour. Some particular part of the camp was probably made an asylum in the wilderness.

Ver. 13.—**God deliver him into his hand.** This does not seem to mean more than, "if he chance upon him without seeking him." God's providence does in fact bring about the meetings which men call accidental. **I will appoint thee a place.** When we first hear of the actual appointment, the number of the places was six—three on either side of Jordan. (See Josh. xx. 7, 8; and compare Num. xxxv. 10-15, and Deut. xix. 2.) Thus there was always a city of refuge at a reasonable distance.

Ver. 14.—**Presumptuously.** Or "proudly," "arrogantly." **Thou shalt take him from mine altar.** See the comment on ver. 12.

Vers. 15-17.—**Other capital offences.** The unsystematic character of the arrangement in this chapter is remarkably shown by this interruption of the consideration of different sorts of homicide, in order to introduce offences of quite a different character, and those not very closely allied to each other—e.g., 1. Striking a parent; 2. Kidnapping; 3. Cursing a parent.

Ver. 15.—**He that smiteth his father, etc.** To "smite" here is simply to "strike"—to offer the indignity of a blow—not to kill, which had already been made capital (ver. 12), not in the case of parents only, but in every case. The severity of the law is very remarkable, and strongly emphasises the dignity and authority of parents. There is no parallel to it in any other known code, though of course the *patria potestas* of the Roman father gave him the power of punishing a son who had struck him, capitally.

Ver. 16.—**He that stealeth a man.** Kidnapping, or stealing men to make them slaves, was a very early and very wide-spread crime. Joseph's brothers must be regarded as having committed it (Gen. xxxvii. 28); and there are many traces of it in the remains of antiquity. (See Herod. iv 183; Strab. vii. p. 467; Sueton. *Oclav.* § 32; etc.) Most kidnapping was of foreigners; and this was a practice of which the laws of states took no cognizance, though a certain disrepute may have attached to it. But the kidnapping of a fellow-countryman was generally punished with severity. At Athens it was a capital offence. At Rome it made a man infamous. We may gather from Deut. xxiv. 7, that the Mosaic law was

especially levelled against this form of the crime, though the words of the present passage are general, and forbid the crime altogether. Man-stealing, in the general sense, is now regarded as an offence by the chief civilised states of Europe and America, and is punished by confiscation of the stolen goods, and sometimes by imprisonment of the man-stealers.

Ver. 17.—**He that curseth his father, etc.** Blasphemy against God, and imprecations upon parents, were the only two sins of the tongue which the law expressly required to be punished with death (Lev. xxiv. 16). In later times analogy was held to require that "cursing the ruler of the people" (Ex. xxii. 28) should be visited with the same penalty (2 Sam. xix. 22; 1 Kings ii. 8, 9, 46). The severity of the sentence indicates that in God's sight such sins are of the deepest dye.

Vers. 18, 19.—**Severe assault.** Assault was punishable by the law in two ways. Ordinarily, the rule was that of strict retaliation—"Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe" (vers. 24, 25; compare Lev. xxiv. 20, and Deut. xix. 21). But where the assault was severe, causing a man to take to his bed, and call in the physician's aid, something more was needed. The Rabbinical commentators tell us that in this case he was arrested, and sent to prison until it was ascertained whether the person hurt would die or no. If he died, the man was tried for murder; if he recovered, a fine was imposed. This was fixed at such a sum as would at once compensate the injured man for his loss of time and defray the expense of his cure. A similar principle is adopted under our own law in many cases of *civil* action.

Ver. 18.—**If men strive together.** If there is a quarrel and a personal encounter. In our own law this would reduce this offence, if death ensued, to manslaughter. **With a stone, or with his fist.** The use of either would show absence of premeditation, and of any design to kill. A weapon would have to be prepared beforehand: a stone might be readily caught up.

Ver. 19.—**If he rise again and walk upon his staff.** If he recovered sufficiently to leave his bed, and get about with a stick to lean on, his hurt was not to be brought up against the injurer, though he died soon afterwards. Compensation was to be received, and the score regarded as wiped off.

Vers. 20, 21.—**Homicide of slaves.** In most ancient states the slave was the absolute pro-

perty of his master, and might be ill-used to any extent, even killed, without the law in any way interfering. It is said that the state of things was different in Egypt (Kalisch); but we have scarcely sufficient evidence on the point to be certain that the slave enjoyed there any real and efficient protection. At Athens, beyond a doubt, the law protected the life of the slave; and a very moderate amount of ill-treatment entitled a slave to bring an action. At Rome, on the contrary, "the master could treat the slave as he pleased, could sell him, punish him, and put him to death" (*Dict. of Greek & Rom. Antiq.* p. 1036). And this was the ordinary state of the law, particularly in Oriental countries. The Mosaic legislation must be regarded as having greatly ameliorated the condition of the native slave population. Hebrew bondmen it placed nearly upon a par with hired servants (Lev. xxv. 40); foreign slaves, whether prisoners taken in war, or persons bought in the market, it protected to a very great extent. By the law given in verses 26, 27, it largely controlled the brutality of masters, who had to emancipate their slaves if they did them any serious injury. By the law laid down in verse 20, it gave their lives the same protection, or nearly the same, as the lives of freemen. "Smiting" was allowed as a discipline, without which slavery cannot exist; but such smiting as resulted in death was, as a general rule, punishable like any other homicide. The only exception was, if the slave did not die for some days (ver. 21). In that case the master was considered not to have intended the slave's death, and to be sufficiently punished by the loss of his property.

Ver. 20.—**If a man smite his servant, or his maid.** "Maid" would commonly be chastised by their mistress, or by an upper servant acting under the mistress's authority. "A man" here means "any one." **With a rod.** The rods wherewith Egyptian slaves were chastised appear upon the monuments. They were long canes, like those used by our schoolmasters. **Under his hand.** Criminals in the East are said often to die under the bastinado; and even in our own country there have been cases of soldiers dying under the lash. A special delicacy of the nervous system will make a punishment of the kind fatal to some, which would have been easily borne by others.

Ver. 21—**If he continue a day or two—**

i.e., "If the slave does not die till a day or two afterwards." Compare the provision in ver. 19, with respect to persons who were not slaves. No special callousness to the sufferings of slaves is implied. **He is his money.** The slave had been purchased for a sum of money, or was at any rate money's worth; and the master would suffer a pecuniary loss by his death.

Ver. 22—25.—**Assault producing miscarriage. Retaliation.** Women in all countries are apt to interfere in the quarrels of men, and run the risk of suffering injuries which proceed from accident rather than design, one such injury being of a peculiar character, to which there is nothing correspondent among the injuries which may be done to man. This is abortion, or miscarriage. The Mosaic legislation sought to protect pregnant women from suffering this injury by providing, first, that if death resulted the offender should suffer death (ver. 23); and, secondly, that if there were no further ill-result than the miscarriage itself, still a fine should be paid, to be assessed by the husband of the injured woman with the consent of the judges (ver. 22). The mention of "life for life," in ver. 23, is followed by an enunciation of the general "law of retaliation," applied here (it would seem) to the special case in hand, but elsewhere (Lev. xxiv. 19, 20) extended so as to be a fundamental law, applicable to all cases of personal injury.

Ver. 22.—**If men strive and hurt a woman.** A chance hurt is clearly intended, not one done on purpose. **So that her fruit depart from her.** So that she be prematurely delivered of a dead child. **And no mischief follow.** "Mischief" here means "death," as in Gen. xlii. 4, 38; xlv. 29. **He shall pay as the judges determine.** He was not to be wholly at the mercy of the injured father. If he thought the sum demanded was excessive, there was to be an appeal to a tribunal.

Ver. 23.—**Then thou shalt give life for life.** "Life for life" seems an excessive penalty, where the injury was in a great measure accidental, and when there was certainly no design to take life. Probably the law was not now enacted for the first time, but was an old tribal institution, like the law of the "avenger of blood." There are many things in the Mosaic institutions which Moses tolerated, like "bills of divorce"—on account of "the hardness of their hearts."

Ver. 23, 24.—**Eye for eye, tooth for tooth,** etc. Aristotle says in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, that this was the rule of justice

which Rhadamanthus was supposed to act on in the judgment after death (book 5, sec. 3), and that it had the approval of the Pythagoreans. Solon admitted it to a certain extent into the laws of Athens, and at Rome it found its way into the Twelve Tables. There is a *prima facie* appearance of exact equality in it, which would captivate rude minds and cause the principle to be widely adopted in a rude state of society. But in practice objections would soon be felt to it. There is no exact measure of the hardness of a blow, or the severity of a wound; and "wound for wound, stripe for stripe," would open a door for very unequal inflictions. "Eye for eye" would be flagrantly unjust in the case of a one-eyed man. Moreover, it is against public policy to augment unnecessarily the number of mutilated and maimed citizens, whose power to serve the state is lessened by their mutilation. Consequently in every society retaliation has at an early date given way to pecuniary compensation; and this was the case even among the Hebrews, as Kalisch has shown satisfactorily. If the literal sense was insisted on in our Lord's day (Matt. v. 38), it was only by the Sadducees, who declined to give the law a spiritual interpretation.

Vers. 26, 27.—*Assaults on Slaves.* The general law of retaliation was not made to extend to slaves. For ordinary blows the slave was not thought entitled to compensation, any more than the child. They were natural incidents of his condition. In extremest cases, where he was permanently injured in an organ or a member, he was, however, considered to have ground of complaint and to deserve a recompense. But for him to revenge himself upon his master by inflicting the same on him was not to be thought of. It would have put the slave into a false position, have led to his prolonged ill-treatment, and have been an undue degradation of the master. Therefore, compulsory emancipation was made the penalty of all such aggravated assaults, even the slightest (ver. 27).

Vers. 26, 27.—*If a man smite the eye, etc.* The "eye" seems to be selected as the most precious of our organs, the "tooth" as that the loss of which is of least consequence. The principle was that any permanent loss of any part of his frame entitled the slave to his liberty. A very considerable check must have been put on the brutality of masters by this enactment.

Vers. 28—32.—*Injuries done by cattle to slaves and freemen.* For the purpose of in-

culcating as strongly as possible the principle of the sanctity of human life, the legislator notices the case where mortal injury is done to a person by a domesticated animal. The ox is taken as the example, being the animal most likely to inflict such an injury. In accordance with the declaration already made to Noah (Gen. ix. 6), it is laid down that the destructive beast must be killed. Further, to mark the abhorrence in which murder ought to be held, the provision is made, that none of the creature's flesh must be eaten. The question then arises, is the owner to suffer any punishment? This is answered in the way that natural equity points out—"If he had reason to know the savage temper of the animal, he is to be held responsible; if otherwise, he is to go free." In the former case, the Hebrew law assigned a higher degree of responsibility than accords with modern notions; but practically the result was not very different. The neglectful Hebrew owner was held to have been guilty of a capital offence, but was allowed to "redeem his life" by a fine. His modern counterpart would be held to have been guilty simply of *laches* or neglect of duty, and would be punished by fine or imprisonment.

Ver. 28.—*The ox shall be surely stoned.* He shall suffer the same death that would have been the portion of a human murderer. *His flesh shall not be eaten.* The animal was regarded as accursed, and therefore, as a matter of course, no Hebrew might eat of it. According to the Rabbinical commentators, it was not even lawful to sell the carcase to Gentiles. *The owner shall be quit—i.e., "shall be liable to no punishment."*

Ver. 29.—*If the ox were wont to push with his horns.* If he were notoriously, and to his owner's knowledge, a dangerous animal, which required watching, and no watch was kept on him, then the owner became blameable, and having by his neglect contributed to a homicide, was "guilty of death."

Ver. 30.—*If there be a fine laid upon him.* There can scarcely have been any circumstances under which the penalty of death would have been enforced. No neglect could bring the crime into the category of murder. It is assumed, therefore, that practically the penalty would be a fine, proportioned no doubt to the value of the life taken.

Ver. 31.—*Whether he have gored a son or a daughter.* If the sufferer were a child, the value of the life, and therefore the amount of the fine, would be less.

Ver. 32.—If the ox shall push a manservant or a maidservant. Hitherto, the case of free persons only has been considered. But the accident might have happened to a slave. Where this was the case, the death of the ox was still made indispensable, and

thus far the same sacredness was made to attach to the life of the slave and of the freeman. But, in lieu of a varying fine, the average price of a slave, thirty shekels of silver, was appointed to be paid in all cases, as a compensation to the master

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 2—11; 20, 21; 26, 27; 32. *The slave laws.* Slave laws belong to all communities, and not to some only, slavery being really a universal and not a partial institution. In the most civilised communities of modern Europe, there are two large classes of slaves—lunatics and criminals. The law openly condemns these last to penal servitude, which may be for life; and this “servitude,” as Lord Chief Justice Coleridge has repeatedly pointed out, is simply a form of slavery. Ancient communities differed from modern—1. In the extent to which slavery prevailed; 2. In the grounds upon which men were bound to it; and 3. In the treatment whereto those bound to it were subjected.

I. *EXTENT OF ANCIENT SLAVERY.* The slaves in ancient states were almost always more numerous than the freemen. At Athens they amounted to more than four-fifths of the community. Every free person was a slave owner, and some owned hundreds of their fellow-creatures. Perpetual insecurity was felt in consequence of the danger of revolt; and this fear reacted on the treatment of slaves, since it was thought necessary to break their spirit by severities. The evil effects of the institution pervaded all classes of the community, fostering pride and selfishness in the masters, dissimulation, servility, and meanness in the slaves.

II. *GROUND ON WHICH ANCIENT SLAVERY RESTED.* Ancient slavery did not necessarily imply any mental or moral fault in the slave. Some reached it through mental defect, as our lunatics; some through crime, as our convicts (see Ex. xxii. 3). But the great majority were either born in the condition, or became slaves through the fortune of war. Thus slavery was not commonly a deserved punishment, but an undeserved misfortune. Men found themselves, without any fault of their own, the goods and chattels of another, with no political and few social rights, bound to one who might be in all respects inferior to themselves, but who was their lord and master. A sense of injustice consequently rankled in the bosom of the slave, and made him in most cases dangerous. Slave revolts were of frequent occurrence.

III. *TREATMENT OF SLAVES IN ANCIENT STATES.* Some considerable differences may be observed between the treatment of slaves in different communities; but there are certain features which seem to have been universal. 1. Slaves were for the most part the property of individuals, and depended largely on the caprice of individuals, who might be harsh or mild, brutally tyrannical, or foolishly indulgent. 2. Slave families might at any time be broken up, the different members being sold to different masters. 3. Slaves might everywhere be beaten, and unless in case of serious injury, there was no inquiry. 4. Very severe labour might be required of them; they might be confined in workshops, which were little better than prisons, made to toil in mines, or chained to the oar as galley slaves. 5. They might be badly lodged, badly clothed, and badly fed, without the law taking any notice. 6. In most places there was no redress for any injury that a slave might suffer short of death; and in some the law took no cognisance even of his murder. The Mosaic legislation, finding slavery established under these conditions, set itself to introduce ameliorations, without condemning the institution altogether. Compare St. Paul’s conduct when he sent Onesimus back to Philemon (Phil. 12, 16). It divided slaves into two classes, Hebrew and foreign, changing the slavery of the former into a species of apprenticeship for six years, and guarding, not merely the life, but the members and organs of the latter. It acknowledged the family tie in the case of the slave, and laid down rules tending to check the separation of wives from husbands. It protected slave concubines from the caprice of a sated husband. It absolutely forbade the practice of kidnapping, whereby the slave-market was largely recruited in most countries, putting men-stealers on a par with murderers, and requiring

that they should suffer death. We may gather from the Mosaic legislation on the subject—

I. THAT THERE ARE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH SLAVERY SHOULD BE TEMPORARILY MAINTAINED. Where a whole community is uncivilised, or half-civilised, where slavery is an old-established institution, engrained not only into the laws, but into the habits and manners of the people—where there are no prisons or means of building them, and where the alternative for slavery would be the massacre of prisoners taken in war, and of criminals, it may be well that even Christian legislators should for a time tolerate the institution. The Europeans who obtain political influence in Central Africa, and other similar regions are bound to bear this in mind; and while doing their utmost to put down man-stealing, should carefully consider in each case that comes before them, whether slavery can in the particular community be dispensed with or no. To tolerate it for a while is simply to act on the lines laid down by Moses and St. Paul.

II. THAT IF UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES SLAVERY HAS TO BE MAINTAINED, ALL POSSIBLE AMELIORATIONS OF IT SHOULD BE INTRODUCED WITHOUT DELAY. The slave is entitled to be protected in life and limb, to be decently lodged, fed, and clothed, to have the enjoyment of the Sunday rest, to be undisturbed in his family relations, to have the honour of his wife and daughters respected, to have an appeal from his master if he regards himself as in any way wronged. The efforts of missionaries and other humane men in uncivilised communities, should be directed primarily to the introduction of such reforms as these into the systems which they find established there.

III. THAT, WHERE DOMESTIC SERVICE HAS SUPERSEDED SLAVERY, THERE IS STILL ROOM FOR AMELIORATIONS IN THE CONDITIONS OF SERVICE. It is not the masters of slaves only who are hard and tyrannical. In all service there is room for the exhibition on the part of the master, of indulgence on the one hand, or strictness and severity on the other. We at the present day may either oppress our servants, or deal kindly with them. True, they may leave us if we oppress them; but a good servant will not readily leave a respectable place, and a good deal of tyranny is often borne before warning is given. It is the duty of masters, not only to "give to their servants that which is just and equal" (Col. iv. 1), but to show them sympathy and kindness, to treat them with consideration, and avoid hurting their feelings. More warmth and friendliness than are at all usual in the present treatment of servants, seem to be required by the fact that they are our brethren in the Lord, joint-heirs of salvation with us, and perhaps to be preferred above us in another world.

Vers. 12—14 and 20, 21. *Laws on homicide.* Here again, in the time of Moses, a custom, regarded as of absolute obligation upon all, held possession of the ground; and nothing was practicable but some modification of it. The next-of-kin was "avenger of blood," and was bound to pursue every homicide to the bitter end, whether it was intentional and premeditated (*i.e.*, murder), or done hastily in a quarrel (*i.e.*, manslaughter), or wholly unintentional (*i.e.*, death by misadventure). Moses distinguished between deliberate murder, which the State was to punish capitally (vers. 12—14) and any other sort of homicide, which was left to the avenger of blood. In mitigation of the blood-feud, he interposed the city of refuge, whereto the man who had slain another might flee and be safe until his cause was tried. And in the trial of such persons he introduced the distinction between manslaughter and death by misadventure, allowing the avenger of blood to put the offender to death in the former case, but not in the latter. (Num. xxxv. 16—25.) Mercy and truth thus went together in the legislation.

I. TRUTH. The primary truth is the sacredness of man's life. In rude times, where it is everywhere "a word and a blow," very severe laws were necessary, if human life was not to be continually sacrificed; and so manslaughter was placed on a par with murder, made a capital offence; the sudden angry blow which caused death, though death might not have been intended, was to receive as its due punishment death at the hands of the "avenger of blood."

II. MERCY. The "avenger of blood" was not allowed to be judge in his own cause. Cases of unpremeditated homicide were to go before the judges, who were to decide whether the death was intentional or by mischance. Mercy was to be shown to the man who had blood on his hands through accident. He was to be safe within the walls of the "city of refuge." Cities of refuge were multiplied, that one might be always

within easy reach. Legislation should always seek to combine mercy with justice. Draconian enactments defeat their own purpose, since over-severe laws are sure not to be carried out. The moral sense revolts against them. Thus, when in our own country forgery was a capital offence, juries could not be got to convict of forgery. Laws should be in accordance with the conscience of the community, or they will cease to command respect. Good men will infringe them; and even courts will be slow to enforce obedience when they are infringed. Wise legislators will ever aim at embodying in the law the judgments of the more advanced conscience, and making it thus an instrument for elevating the moral sentiments of the community.

Verses 15—17.—*Injuries to parents.* The command to honour father and mother (ch. xx. 12), which is enough for the conscience, and which, if obeyed, would render all further laws upon the subject unnecessary, is here reinforced by two important enactments, intended to restrain those who do not scruple to disobey mere moral laws. The penalty of death is affixed to two crimes: 1. Smiting a parent; 2. Cursing a parent.

I. SMITING A PARENT. When it is considered that our parents represent God to us, that they are in a real sense authors of our being, that they protect and sustain us for years during which we could do nothing for ourselves, and that nature has implanted in our minds an instinctive reverence for them, the punishment of parent-strikers by death will not seem strange or excessive. A son must have become very hardened in guilt, very reckless, very heartless, very brutal, who can bring himself to lift a hand against a father, not to say a mother. There is as much moral guilt in a light blow dealt to one whom we are bound to love, honour, and protect from hurt, as in the utmost violence done to a stranger. However, according to the Talmud, it was not every light blow that was actually punished with death, but only a blow which caused a wound; and, of course, the punishment was only inflicted upon the complaint of the party aggrieved, who would be unlikely to take proceedings, unless the assault was of grave character. Probably the law had very seldom to be enforced. What it did was to invest parents with a sacred and awful character in their children's eyes, and to induce them to submit to chastisement without resistance.

II. CURSING A PARENT. To curse a parent is almost as unnatural as to strike one. ALL cursing is unsuitable to such a being as man—so full of faults himself, so liable to misjudge the character and conduct of others; but to curse those to whom we owe our existence is simply horrible. The sin is akin to blasphemy, and is awarded the same punishment. At the present day, when the Mosaic law is no longer in force, and when on this point no echoes of the Mosaic legislation are to be traced in existing codes, it is specially incumbent on conscientious persons to observe the *spirit* of the Mosaic enactments, and (as it were) make a Christian use of them. (1) "Smite not a parent," said the law, "or die the death." "Grieve not a parent" is the Christian paraphrase. "Grieve him not by disobedience, by idleness, by extravagance, by misconduct of any kind. Do not discredit his bringing up by misbehaviour. Do not stab his heart by ingratitude. Do not wither up his nature by unkindness." A child may easily, without lifting a finger, "bring down the grey hairs" of his father "with sorrow to the grave." He may "smite" him in half-a-dozen ways without touching him. Let Christian men beware of such "smiting" of their parents, and dread the "eternal death" which may follow in the place of Moses' temporal death. (2) "Curse not a parent," said the law again. We do not now, unless we part with religion altogether, curse any one. But we too often break the spirit of this law, notwithstanding. We speak slightly of our parents; we join in disrespectful comments on their manners or behaviour; we use language to them, face to face, which is wanting in reverence and unsuitable. If we would act in the spirit of the law, "curse not a parent," we must avoid all disrespectful words, all disrespectful thoughts towards them or concerning them; we must give them the honour due to parents; we must seriously consider their counsels, and as a general rule follow their advice. As temporal death was awarded to those who "cursed" parents by the Jewish law (Ex. xxi. 17), so eternal death will be the portion of such as are determinately "disobedient to parents" under the Christian dispensation.

Ver. 16.—*The crime of man-stealing.* To steal the purse of a man is a trivial

crime; to filch his good name is a serious one; but the worst robbery of all is to steal his person. Civilised, refined, polished, intellectual men, happy in the enjoyment of freedom, wealth, honour, domestic happiness, have gone to sleep in comfort, peace, and fancied security, to wake up in the grip of lawless man-stealers, who have bound them and carried them into a hopeless captivity, far from any relative or friend, to become familiar with every sort of ill-usage and indignity. Cilician and other pirates did this in the olden time; Norman sea-kings in the middle ages; Algerine corsairs so late as the last century. The blood boils when we think of the sufferings inflicted on thousands of our species by these fiends in human shape, without pity, without conscience, without remorse. Death was certainly a punishment not one whit too severe for this atrocious crime, by which the happiest of the human race might become suddenly one of the most wretched. In modern times, the conscience of mankind, enlightened by eighteen centuries of Christianity, has revolted against the enormity long committed with impunity on the negro races of Western Africa, and the slave-trade has been proclaimed a form of piracy. Yet the accursed traffic still continues in the centre and in the east of the "Dark Continent;" still quiet villagers are awakened in the dead of night by the news that the kidnapper is upon them; harmless, peaceable men, together with their wives and children, are carried off in hundreds by Arab and sometimes by so-called Christian traders, driven to the coast in gangs, shipped in crowded dhows, and sold to the best bidder in the marts of Arabia and Persia. It is a subject well worthy the consideration of Christian governments, whether a revival of the Mosaic enactment is not required, to stop a trade the profits of which are so enormous, that nothing short of death is likely to deter avaricious men from engaging in it.

Vers. 23—25.—*The rule of retaliation.* "To suffer that a man has done is strictest, straightest right," was a line which passed into a proverb in ancient Greece. The administration of justice is rendered very simple and easy by the adoption of the principle, which approves itself to simple minds, and might work well in a simple state of society. The law of "life for life" (ver. 23) remains, and must always remain, the basis on which society justifies the execution of the murderer. If "eye for eye, hand for hand, foot for foot" (ver. 24), were enforced, the criminal could not complain; but the State would suffer by the mutilation and consequent debilitation of its members. In the administration of "burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe" (ver. 25), there would be difficulties, it being almost impossible for the public executioner to inflict a burn, wound, or blow exactly similar to the burn, wound, or blow given by the criminal. These difficulties lead naturally to the substitution of "compensation" for "retaliation," which we find sanctioned in vers. 19, 22, 30, and 32. If the damage caused by a wound, burn, blow, or even by the loss of a slave or wife, can be estimated, and the injurer be made to pay that amount to the injured party, then the original loss is in a certain sense retaliated, and the wrongdoer "suffers what he has done." In the administration of justice the rule of retaliation has thus still a place. Retaliation is made unlawful by Christianity (Matt. v. 38—42), not in the administration of justice, but in the private dealings of man with man. We must not ourselves give blow for blow, "wound for wound, burning for burning;" no, nor gibe for gibe, slight for slight, insult for insult. Firstly, because we are not fair judges in our own case, and should be almost sure to overestimate our own injury; and, secondly, because we should provoke a continuance of strife. We should not even be eager to prosecute those who have injured us, if there be a chance that by patience and forbearance we may bring them to a better mind. We should be content to "suffer wrong," if by so doing we may win souls to Christ. The Christian law is, "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which spitefully use you and persecute you;" and the ground of the law is, that by so doing we may "overcome evil with good" (Rom. xii. 21).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*The "judgments."* The "rights" or "judgments" contained in this and the two following chapters show the manner in which the spirit and principles of the preceding moral legislation were intended to be applied to the regulation of the out-

ward life of the Jewish state. (1) As respects their *origin*, not a few of these laws have obviously their root in old customs, while others may have been derived from the decisions of Moses in the wilderness (ch. xviii. 16). The code, therefore, in its present shape, cannot be supposed to have been verbally dictated by Jehovah to Moses; yet God may have instructed Moses as to the particular laws which were to be embraced in it, and may have revealed his will on special points which were as yet undetermined. The "judgments" were, in any case, given to Israel under express Divine sanction (ver. 1). (2) As respects their *nature*, the laws relate to the determination of legal rights, and to the ordering of the course of justice; in part, also, to the behaviour of the members of the community to each other in various outward relations, and to fundamental religious ordinances. The spirit of the code is throughout that of the moral law; the principles embodied in it are those of the commandments. The point of view from which its statutes are to be regarded is, however, a different one from that which was occupied in considering the moral law as such. Moral law speaks with the voice of "the categorical imperative." It sets up the perfect ethical standard. What falls short of this is wrong, involves sin, and is condemned. It knows nothing of a morality which is merely relative. The practical legislator, on the other hand—much as he might wish to do so—cannot so mould external institutions as to make them all at once, and at every point, correspond with the requirements of ideal morality. He must, to a large extent, take things as they are—must start with existing conditions and usages, and try to make the best of them. Absolute morality, *e.g.*, would refuse to recognise such a state as that of war; yet, so long as wars exist—and to this hour they are of frequent occurrence—some code must be devised, representing such application of ethical maxims as is possible to military life, and to that extent stamping a moral character on the profession of the soldier. The cases of deviation from ideal morality in the laws of Moses are, however, remarkably few, relating chiefly to war, slavery, and marriage. In regard to these subjects, the legislation necessarily partakes of the backward character of the times. The statutes given are not the *absolutely* best, but the best which the people, at that stage of their moral and social development, could receive; that is, the *relatively* best—the best for them. This leads to a third point—(3) The *incompleteness* of the law. The statutes here given, so far as they partook of the imperfection of the time, were not intended to be final. Within the law itself, as will be readily perceived, there was large room for development; but even the letter of the law was not so fixed, but that, in course of time, large parts of it might, and did, become obsolete; new institutions, adapted to new needs, and introduced by proper authority, taking the place of the old ones. Mr. Robertson Smith is therefore not fair in his representation of what he calls the "traditional view," when he affirms—"The Divine laws given beyond Jordan were to remain unmodified through all the long centuries of development in Canaan, an absolute and immutable code" ("Old Testament," p. 333). On such a theory, if anyone held it, his criticism would be quite just—"I say, with all reverence, that this is impossible. God, no doubt, could have given by Moses' mouth a law fit for the age of Solomon or Hezekiah, but such a law could not be fit for immediate application in the days of Moses and Joshua. . . . God can do all things, but he cannot contradict himself; and he who shaped the eventful development of Israel's history must have framed this law to correspond with it." The reply to this is, that the most conservative defenders of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch do not deny the necessity for, and admissibility of, great developments of the principles of the law. It may suffice to quote Hengstenberg—"First, it is a gross error, though often repeated, that the Pentateuch embraces the whole civil law of the Israelites. In that portion of the Scriptures there is shown the greatest aversion from all untimely interference with the course of historical development. Only those points are determined which must be so, and in no other way, according to the fundamental maxims of the theocracy," etc. ("Authenticity," vol. ii. p. 498, Eng. trans.).—J. O.

Vers. 2—12.—*Hebrew bond-service.* The laws relating to this subject are to be found, in addition to those in the present chapter, in chs. xii. 43—45; xxii. 3; Lev. xxv. 39—55; xxvi. 13; Deut. xii. 12, 18; xv. 15—19; xvi. 11, 14; xxi. 10—15; xxiii. 15; xxiv. 7. An impartial examination of these laws will show how fallacious must be

every argument attempted to be deduced from them in favour of modern slave-holding. (On the fallacy of *all* such arguments, based on the state of matters in primitive society, see Maine's "Ancient Law," pp. 162—166.) The Mosaic law did not establish slavery—at most it accorded to it a very modified toleration. It accepted it as an existing usage, labouring to the utmost to reduce, and as far as that was practicable, to abolish, the evils connected with it. It could not well do more, for slavery, under the then existing conditions of society, was in some form or other almost inevitable, and was often the only alternative to a worse evil. Yet the law in its entire spirit and fundamental doctrines was opposed to slavery. Its doctrines of the dignity of man as made in God's image, and of the descent of all mankind from one pair, contained in principle the recognition of every human right. As a member of the theocracy, redeemed by Jehovah for himself, every Israelite was free by constitutional right (see the emphatic annunciation of this principle in Lev. xxv. 42, 55; xxvi. 13). If from temporary causes, the Hebrew lost the use of his freedom, the right to it was not thereby destroyed. It returned to him at the beginning of the seventh year. A law can hardly be regarded as favourable to slavery which makes man-stealing a crime punishable by death (ver. 18), and which enacts that a fugitive slave, taking refuge in Israel from his heathen master, is not to be delivered back to him, but is to be permitted to reside where he will in the land (Deut. xxiii. 15, 16). Bondsmen (both Hebrew and non-Israelite) were incorporated as part of the nation, had legal rights, sat with the other members of the family at the board of the passover, took part in all religious festivals, and had secured to them the privilege of the Sabbath rest. The master was responsible for the treatment of his slave; and if he injured him, even to the extent of suiting out a tooth, the slave thereby regained his freedom (vers. 26, 27). A female slave was to be treated with strictest honour (vers. 7—11), and with due consideration for her womanly feelings (Deut. xxi. 10—15). Humanity and kindness are constantly inculcated. When the Hebrew bondsman went out in the seventh year he was to go forth loaded with presents (Deut. xv. 13—16). The legislation of Moses is thus seen to be studiously directed to the protection of the slave's interests and rights. If there is a seeming exception, it is the one precept in ver. 20, on which see below. The law as a whole must be admitted to be framed in the spirit of the greatest tenderness and consideration, recognising the servant's rights as a man, his privileges as a member of the theocracy, his feelings as a husband and father. As respects the Hebrew bondsman, indeed, his position did not greatly differ from that of one now who sells his labour to a particular person, or engages to work to him on definite terms for a stated period (Fairbairn). He could be reduced to servitude only by debt, or as the penalty for theft. In this latter case (ch. xxii. 3), liberty was justly forfeited—is forfeited still in the case of those convicted of felony, and doomed to compulsory labours, or to transportation, or lengthened terms of imprisonment. The laws in the present section embrace three cases—1. That of the Hebrew servant who is *unmarried* (ver. 2). He goes out at the beginning of the seventh year. 2. That of the Hebrew servant who is *married*. In this case, if the wife came in with her husband, she goes out with him in the year of release (ver. 3); but if his master has given him a wife—presumably a non-Israelite—he has not the privilege of taking her with him when he leaves. He may, however, elect to remain in his master's service, in which case his servitude becomes perpetual (vers. 5, 6). The retention of the wife may appear oppressive, but it was, as Keil points out, "an equitable consequence of the possession of property of slaves at all." 3. The third case is that of a Hebrew daughter, sold by her father to be a maid-servant, *i.e.*, as the sequel shows, as a housekeeper and *concubine* (vers. 7—12). The master may betroth her to himself, or may give her to his son, but in either case the law strictly guards her honour and her rights. If her full rights are not accorded her, she is entitled to her freedom (ver. 11). *Lessons.* (1) Ver. 2.—The natural right of man to his freedom. (2) Ver. 5.—Recognition of the slave's personality. "In modern systems, the man is a mere chattel, but in the Mosaic system, the slave's manhood is declared. He is sovereign over himself, and is allowed the power of choice. The Southern slaveholder would not permit his slave to say, 'I will not'; but the Hebrew slave is permitted to say, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free'" (Burrows). (3) Vers. 5, 6.—Love, the true reconciler between servitude and freedom. Paul the "slave" of Christ, yet the truest freeman. (4) Jehovah's care

for the unfriended. This comes beautifully out in the law for the protection of the woman.—J. O.

Vers. 12—18.—*Murder and related capital offences.* It is characteristic of the law of Moses that its first care, in the practical ordering of the Hebrew theocracy, is for the rights of the slave. These are dealt with in the opening paragraphs. The next laws relate to murder, to man-stealing, and to smiting and cursing of parents.

I. MURDER (vers. 12—15). The same spirit of justice which attaches severe penalties to proved crimes, leads to the drawing of a sound line of distinction between voluntary and involuntary actions. Only for actions of the former class is the individual held responsible. Homicide which is purely accidental is not treated as a crime (ver. 13). Not only is the man who kills his neighbour inadvertently not punished with death, but the law interposes to protect him from the fury of such as might unjustly seek his life, by appointing for him a place of refuge. (Cf. Num. xxxv.; Deut. xix.) The deliberate murderer, on the other hand, was to be taken even from God's altar, and put to death (ver. 14). Deliberate murder implies "malice aforethought"—"intent to kill"—but it was sufficient to expose a man to the penalty attaching to this crime, that he had been guilty of an act of violence, resulting in another's death (ver. 12; cf. vers. 19, 23). Note on this law—1. The recognition of Divine Providence in the so-called accidents of life (ver. 13). 2. The sacredness attached to the human person. The religious ground of the enactment is given in Gen. ix. 6—"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." "The true Shechinah is man" (Chrysostom). 3. The ethical character of the Hebrew religion. The altar is to afford no sanctuary to the murderer. The Bible knows nothing of a religion which is in divorce from morality. This law condemns by implication all connivance at, or sheltering of, immorality, under religious sanctions (Romish huckstering of pardons, etc.).

II. MAN-STEALING (ver. 16). The statute is perfectly general. There is no evidence that it applied *only* to Hebrews, though these are specially mentioned in Deut. xxiv. 7. The stealing and selling of a Hebrew was a direct offence against Jehovah. (Cf. Lev. xxv. 42.) "For they are my servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: they shall not be sold as bondsmen." The passage is a direct condemnation of the modern slave trade.

III. SMITING AND CURSING OF PARENTS (vers. 15—17). These offences also were to be punished with death. The fact that they are bracketed in the law with murder and manstealing, gives a peculiar impression of their enormity. As if the statute book had said, after laying down the law for murder—"And for the purposes of this law, the smiting or cursing of a father or a mother shall be regarded as equivalent to the taking of a life." And this view of the matter is, in a moral respect, hardly too strong. It would be difficult to say what crime a man is not capable of, who could deliberately smite or curse father or mother. As special reasons for the severity of the law, observe—1. Hebrew society rested largely on a patriarchal basis, and the due maintenance of parental authority was a necessity of its existence. Just as it is found still that, whatever the form of social order, the spread of a spirit of insubordination to parents is the invariable prelude to a universal loosening of ties and obligations. 2. Parents are regarded as standing to their children in the relation of visible representatives of Jehovah (see fifth commandment). This, in the Hebrew theocracy, gave to the crime of cursing or smiting a parent the character of a treasonable act. It was an offence against the majesty of Jehovah, and as such, required to be promptly avenged. On the same ground it was forbidden to revile magistrates, or curse the ruler of the people (ch. xxii. 28). The law is a standing testimony to the heinousness attaching in the sight of God to the sin of filial disobedience.—J. O.

Vers. 18—36.—*Bodily injuries.* The laws in this section may be thus classified:—

I. INJURIES BY MAN. 1. *Strivers* (vers. 18, 19). The man who injured another in strife was required to pay for the loss of his time, and to cause him to be thoroughly healed. Had the man died, the case would have come under the law of ver. 12. As it was, blame attached to both parties, and the law waived the right to further satisfaction. Note—(1) One way of atoning for wrong is to seek in every way in our power to *undo*

the mischief we have caused. This, alas! cannot always be accomplished. Not always is "thorough healing"—whether bodily, mental, or moral—possible. So far as it is possible we are bound to attempt it. (2) Justice obtains her highest satisfaction when the wrongdoer can be made to contribute to the undoing of his own wrong. This principle might be more acted on than it is. 2. *Servants* (vers. 20, 21; 26, 27). A master was not to be allowed to injure with impunity even a slave purchased with his "money." If the slave was wantonly murdered, the case would come under the law of murder. If he died under chastisement, the master was punished at discretion of the judges. If the slave was in any way maimed, he obtained his freedom. It has been remarked that this is the earliest certain trace of legislation for the protection of the slave. See below. 3. *A woman with child* (vers. 22—26). The injury here is indirect. The woman is hurt in interfering in the strife between two men. Yet the law holds the man who has injured her responsible for his fault, and decrees that he shall pay heavy damages. If evil effects follow, he is to be punished under the *jus talionis*.

II. INJURIES BY BEASTS. The distinction formerly observed as made by the law between voluntary and involuntary actions (vers. 13, 14) meets here with fresh illustrations. 1. If an ox gore a man or a woman, and the gored person dies, the ox is to be stoned—a testimony to the sacredness of human life (cf. Gen. ix. 5), but the owner shall be quit (ver. 28). 2. If, however, the owner had been previously warned of the dangerous habits of the animal, and had not kept it in, there devolved on him the entire responsibility of the fatal occurrence. (1) If the person gored was a free Israelite (male or female), the life of the owner of the ox was forfeited; but an opportunity was given him of redeeming it by payment of a ransom (vers. 29—32). (2) If the person gored was a slave, the owner of the ox had to compensate the owner of the slave for the loss of his servant. The price fixed was thirty shekels of silver (ver. 32). In either case the ox was to be stoned.

III. INJURIES TO BEASTS. The same principles of equity apply here. 1. If an ox or an ass fall into a pit which has been carelessly left uncovered, the owner of the pit is required to pay in full (vers. 33, 34). 2. If one man's ox kill another's, the loss is to fall equally on both owners (ver. 35). 3. If the owner of the ox was aware of its propensity to gore, and had not kept it in, he must, as before, bear the whole loss (ver. 36). The equity of this series of precepts is not more conspicuous than their humanity. The important lesson taught by these enactments is, that *we cannot evade responsibility for our actions*. Our actions abide with us. They cleave to us. We cannot shake ourselves rid of them. We are responsible, not only for the actions themselves, but for the consequences which flow from them—for the influences they set in motion. And we are responsible, not only for direct, but for indirect consequences (ver. 22). Involuntary acts are not imputed to us, but all voluntary ones are. We are responsible, as well for what we do *not* do (having the power to do it), as for what we actually perform. We are responsible for the effects of negligence and carelessness. These principles have wide application. They cover the whole range of conduct. They apply to the moral sphere as well as to the physical. They apply, not simply to definite acts, but to the entire influence exerted by our lives. What a responsibility is this! Only grace will enable us to bear its burden.—J. O.

Ver. 20.—*The servant dying under chastisement*. This law has frequently been seized on as a blot on the Mosaic legislation—as inculcating the odious doctrine which lies at the root of modern slave-systems, viz. that the slave is a mere "chattel," and as such, has no personal rights—is entitled to no protection of life or limb. The interpretation put on this particular clause is the more unfair, that it must be admitted to be opposed to the spirit and enactments of the law as a whole, taking, as this does, so exceptionally humane a view of the slave's position (see above); and is, moreover, directly in the teeth of such clauses as those in the immediate context—"If a man smite the eye of a servant," etc. (vers. 26, 27). The enactment will appear in its right light if we view it with regard to the following considerations:—1. The law deals with slavery, not from the point of view of abstract right—from which point of view it could only be condemned—but as a recognised part of the then existing constitution of society. It takes its existence for granted. It deals with it as statesmen have constantly to deal with institutions and customs which they do not wholly approve of, but which they

cannot summarily abolish without entailing on society worse evils than those from which escape is sought. But if the right to hold property in slaves—to however limited an extent—be granted, the corollaries of this possession must be granted also. A slave cannot be treated in the eye of the law quite as a free man. His position is relatively a degraded one. The owner of slaves has pecuniary and proprietary rights in his bond-servants, which the law must take account of. The slave is the owner's "money." 2. The aim of the law is not to place the slave at the master's mercy, but to restrict the master's power over him. Ancient law recognised no restriction. The Mosaic law does. It goes at least thus far, that if the slave dies under the rod, the master shall be punished. The drift and bent of the law is for the slave's benefit. 3. It is important to remember that the case is treated here, not in its moral aspects, but solely as a question in criminal jurisprudence. The moral law has its own say in the matter, and pronounces its own judgment, irrespectively of whether the individual is proceeded against under criminal law or not. The master who, by the undue exercise of the large right of chastisement which the usage of the time allowed him, occasioned his slave's death, was responsible to God for the excess of passion which led to this catastrophe. The law of Moses gave no sanction to the master to endanger his servant's life with the rod. But moral offences do not always admit of being dealt with as crimes. To convict of murder, e.g., there is proof required of *malice prepense*, and this, in the case before us, was precisely what was not forthcoming. The legal tribunals had authority to punish the master, if the slave died under his hand; if immediate death did not take place, the master was to have the benefit of the doubt, and in view of the heavy money loss sustained in the death of the slave (on the average, "thirty shekels of silver," ver. 32), was not to be further proceeded against. 4. The law in this verse—taken in conjunction with others—was really a powerful deterrent from the misuse of authority on the part of the master. (1) It relates only to chastisement with the rod. If the master assaulted his slave with any lethal weapon, the case came under other laws, and might involve his being tried for murder. (2) The case supposed is that of a slave dying under *bonâ fide* chastisement. If murderous intent could be proved against the master—whether the slave lingered a day or two or not—there is no reason to doubt but that the law of ver. 14 would have been applied, and the master would have been put to death. (3) Involving, as the death of the slave did, criminal proceedings, and, on conviction, severe punishment, the mere danger of a fatal result ensuing would be a powerful deterrent from exceptional violence. The punishment appears to have been left to the discretion of the judges, and probably ranged from the death penalty (if deliberate murder could be proved), to a simple money fine. The mere risk of incurring such a penalty would inspire salutary caution. (4) The master also knew that if, by his temporary violence, the slave should suffer serious bodily injury, he would be entitled, if he did not die, to claim his freedom (vers. 26, 27). The fear of losing a valuable property, whether by death, or, if the slave did not die, in the way last mentioned, would infallibly co-operate with other motives in the direction of restraint. The case, therefore, stood thus, that failing proof of direct intent to murder, the probabilities were in favour of the theory that the death of the slave to whom severe chastisement had been administered, was a result not designed; and the money loss involved in the death of the slave being regarded as equivalent to a heavy fine, the law, in ordinary cases, did not see it necessary to go further. But if the case was so serious that the slave had actually died under his master's hand, or within a short space of time, then, whether the death was designed or not, the law took the matter up, and inflicted punishment according to discretion. Criminal law could scarcely have done more. The amelioration of the condition of the slave was to be looked for mainly from moral influences, which, under the Mosaic system, were assuredly not wanting.—J. O.

Vers. 23—26.—"An eye for an eye," etc. (cf. Matt. v. 38—43). The principle here enunciated is that of the *jus talionis*. Stripped of its concrete form, it is simply the assertion of the dictate of justice, that when a wrong has been done to anyone, and through him to society, an adequate compensation ought to be rendered. So rendered, it is the principle underlying every system of criminal jurisprudence. We need not suppose that (in Jewish society) it was ever literally acted upon. Commutations of various kinds would be admitted (cf. ver. 30). As a rule for courts of justice, therefore, this

principle must remain. But error arises when this rule, intended for the regulation of public justice, is transferred into private life, and is applied there to sanction the spirit of revenge. This is to pervert it from its proper purpose. So far from sanctioning private retaliation, the object of this law is to set *limits* to the passion for revenge, by taking the right to avenge out of the hands of private individuals altogether, and committing it to public officers. In contrast with the retaliatory disposition, our Lord inculcates on his disciples a forbearing and forgiving spirit; a spirit which seeks to overcome by love; a spirit, even, which is willing to forego legal rights, whenever by doing so, it can promote the good of a fellow man.—J. O.

Vers. 1-11.—*Regulations for the treatment of slaves.* I. THE CONDITIONAL ELEMENT RUNNING THROUGH THESE REGULATIONS. What a difference there is here from the strong, uncompromising imperatives of chapter xx. ! There we feel that we have to do with man, not only as he is at the time, a Hebrew in the wilderness, but with every man, in every age, and in all sorts of social circumstances. The ten commandments simply assume humanity and society. But the regulations now to be considered abound in the word "if." If certain things are done, then certain other things must be done. But then these things need not to be done at all. A man need not buy a servant; a man need not take a woman to be his companion in servitude, knowing that thereby he runs the risk of being separated from her and his offspring afterwards. These regulations have to be made for free agents, acting often thoughtlessly, or in a matter-of-fact compliance with the customs of their country. There was no real need for any of these "ifs" to pass into action. Consider how ludicrous such regulations would appear if propounded as possibilities in modern English society. The actions which they assume would be scouted as scarcely conceivable. Our notions of property, of service, and of the position of woman are quite different. And yet how many things there are even now, commonly accepted indeed as right and proper, which are no more defensible on the highest grounds than these practices of Israel in the wilderness. There are practices among Christians now, considered proper enough according to the present notions of society, and yet the day is assuredly coming when they too will seem as strange and abhorrent as the practice of a man selling his daughter to be a maid-servant. Things done without scruple, even by enlightened Christians, are far enough from what Christ would have them be. And all that can be reached is to regulate and mitigate what there is not sufficient enlightenment of conscience to abolish.

II. THE EVIDENT DESIRE TO BE JUST TO ALL THE INDIVIDUALS CONCERNED IN THESE REGULATIONS. The purchased individual must have his benefit by liberation in the seventh year; and yet the master is to be treated justly too by the recognition of the woman whom, as it were, he had lent to be a companion to the slave. So also if the slave has a notion of staying, he is compelled to treat it as a serious matter, and not play fast or loose either with master or companion. She who had been, as it were, a concubine, becomes by his desire to stay, lifted to the full privileges of a wife; and to leave then would be a wrong to her as well as the master. The principle holds good all through human society—whatsoever we want in the way of temporal advantages we must take with certain limitations. Whatever benefit there might be in buying a slave must be taken along with the limitation of the seventh year. If the slave chose to have a companion, he must make up his mind how to treat her at the six years' end; either to have liberty and lose her or keep her with life-long bondage. We should choose our position in this world, looking steadily for the guidance of infinite wisdom in our choice. If we be sure of that, then all advantages will be golden to us, and we shall not for a moment think of grumbling because of the disadvantages that must inevitably accompany them.

III. Still though there is a desire here to be just to all, IT IS EVIDENTLY THE WEAK AND UNFORTUNATE WHO ARE CHIEFLY THOUGHT OF. It is for the sake of the slave and the despised woman that these regulations are here specified. The strong in such circumstances are as a rule well able—only too well able—to look after themselves. It is the glorious mark, again and again appearing in God's dealings, that he loves to bring the enslaved nearer to liberty, the degraded nearer to the normal elevation of humanity.—Y.

Vers. 12-17.—*Capital offences.* As we look through the penalties specified for

wrong-doing in chaps. xxi., xxii., we notice that they are divisible into two great classes. Some offences are punished by death, and others by some sort of compensation for the injury done. The graduated terms of imprisonment with which we are familiar, were not of course possible to the Israelites, and if possible, perhaps would not have seemed desirable. We notice that in this chapter five capital offences are specified; there were doubtless many besides; but these are enough to show the principles on which Jehovah acted in taking away the life of the offender.

I. THE MURDERER PROPER. In chap. xx. we find the general command not to kill; and here is the instruction for the Israelites what to do with the man who deliberately and maliciously took away the life of a fellow-man. This, it is plain, was done under special authority and for special reasons. It was Jehovah's regulation for his people in their then circumstances; but we must not quote it as applicable to the punishment of the murderer generally. If on the authority of this passage we are bound to punish the murderer by death, obviously we are bound to punish him who reviles his parents, in the same way. There were reasons then for putting the murderer to death which do not now apply. The principle underlying the enactment seems to be that murder is one of the crimes which must be followed by the severest penalty man is *disposed to inflict*. So long as the infliction of a death penalty at all harmonises with the general consciousness of men, it is plain that any lesser penalty for murder is inadequate. But if once we get to the position—and it is to be hoped we are ever getting nearer to it—that only the sternest necessity justifies taking human life away, we shall then substitute perpetual imprisonment as the extreme penalty. We shall all feel then that murder is assuredly a crime which should condemn the perpetrator to life-long seclusion from the society of his fellow-men.

II. THE SMITER OF FATHER OR MOTHER. Here we see how different are the principles underlying Divine law from those underlying human law. In a modern English court of justice the smiting of a parent might perhaps receive the highest penalty incurred for the commission of an assault; but it would never be exalted into a special offence. But God in his government of Israel makes an offence against a parent to be one of the first magnitude. The severe penalty specified here corresponds with the position occupied in the Decalogue by the commandment to honour parents. God we see is ever saying and doing things to set great honour on the family, and indicate great expectations from it. It has been a boldly proclaimed principle in all ages, never more proclaimed than now, and often with great arrogance and intolerance, that individuals and families exist for the State. But here in the state that is under God's special governance provision is made that, in its punishments, that state shall honour parental authority and dignity. And of course when once *smiting* a parent was made into such a serious offence, it was but carrying the principle out to a logical and necessary conclusion to make the *curse* as great an offence. Generally, indeed, the rebellious reviling word of the lips would do more injury, inflict more pain, and be more promotive of insubordination than the blow of the hand. In the light of this enactment we see how much God expects from the parental relation. One, who in the Divine order of things, stood so high that smiting or cursing him was made a capital offence, must have been a man to whom Jehovah looked for great services, great contributions to the Divine glory, and to the prosperity of Israel.

III. THE MAN-STEALER. Within the compass of the same chapter we find provision made for recognised and openly practised customs of servitude, and also for a kind of slavery which by the penalty attached to the procuring of it is indicated as one of the worst of crimes. There was slavery and slavery. There was the buying of men in such sort as is indicated in verse 2; there was also such stealing and selling as we find an actual instance of in Gen. xxxvii. 28. Such crimes were evidently only too possible, and once committed, it might be very hard to discover the criminal or restore the captive to liberty. There was perhaps many a Joseph—and when we consider his sufferings, and the sufferings of his father, we shall not wonder at the penalty attached to the crime. Then suppose an Israelite were to sell a brother Israelite to some band of Midian merchantmen, who would take him into a far country, what would the upshot be? Not only would he be lost to loving kindred, and shut out from the sight of his dear native land, but excluded from religious privileges. God had brought out Israel from the house of bondage, that in freedom, necessary freedom, they might find

him their God, and become, in many privileges, his people. What a monstrous thing then for an Israelite, through cupidity or revenge, to sell away his brother from peculiar, from unique possibilities! He would not find in any other land the things which God intended him to have at home.

IV. THE KNOWING OWNER OF A DANGEROUS BEAST. (Ver. 29.) Here is the sound principle—a principle which goes deep in its application—that a man is responsible for all foreseen consequences of an act which it is in his power to prevent. Examine the illustrative instances mentioned. A man is the owner of a pushing ox, well known to be a brute of vicious and uncertain temper. The owner indeed has been made specially acquainted with the fact. He can then take one of the two courses, either put sufficient watch over the beast, as not knowing when it may be dangerous to human life and limb, or else in sheer recklessness determine to take the chance of all keeping right. How plain it is that a man of such a heedless spirit is not fit to have free course among his fellow-men! A human life, be it that of the veriest stranger, a mere waif and stray, or say that of an old man on the very verge of the grave, is of much more account than the life of an ox, though it be in the very prime of its strength and usefulness. The property even of a millionaire must perish sooner than the life of the poorest be imperilled. The owner of the ox is looked to here, just because the brute itself cannot be looked to. The master would not be held responsible for the action of a human servant as for that of a brute beast. And is it not plain that the announcement of this penalty here has a very stringent application to all self-indulgence? When a man is told that his course of action, however profitable, however pleasant to himself, has been actually injurious to some and is likely to be injurious to others, what is he to do? If he would do as Christ wishes him—the Christ who came to fulfil the law and the prophets—he would straightway refrain from that course of action. Commercial profits and temporal pleasures will be dearly purchased by us, if one day we have to stand before the throne of him who judges righteous judgment, to answer for selfish, reckless trifling with the best interests of our neighbours. The owner of the ox may say, “Let people keep out of my animal’s way and guard themselves.” God, we see, did not admit that principle with regard to the pushing ox; nor will he with regard to our pushing business habits or our pushing pleasures—our reckless resolution to get all we can for ourselves, at whatever risk of loss to those who may come in our way.

V. From the instances given, we may easily infer WHAT OTHER OFFENCES OF THE SAME KIND WOULD BE PUNISHED IN THE SAME WAY. Wherever there was anything peculiarly presumptuous or daring, there the occasion for death seems to have been found. That which most deeply affects the constitution of society is to be treated with the greatest severity. One man might kill another; but because it was misadventure, he would escape with temporary inconvenience. Another man, for no more than the utterance of the tongue, has to die the death. Thus, even in a scheme of government which had so much to do with outward acts as had God’s government of Israel, we have regulations which got their severity almost entirely from the evidenced state of heart on the part of the transgressor. In purely human laws the magnitude of the actual offence is always taken into account; there must be some tangible injury to person or property. But it is the very glory of these illustrative penalties here, that cursing father or mother is punished with as much severity as the actual taking away of life. How true it is from these five instances that God’s thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways!—Y.

Vers. 22—25.—*The requirement of strict equivalents in making compensation for injuries.* The particular illustration here is confessedly obscure; but there can hardly be a mistake as to the principle illustrated, viz., that when injury is inflicted on the person, the very best should be done that can be done to make an adequate compensation. When property is taken it can often be restored or things put practically as they were before; but when the person is seriously injured, there is then no possibility of exact restoration. Hence the injurer might be inclined to say that because he could not do everything by way of compensation he was at liberty to do nothing. But the requirement comes in to stop him from such easy-going reflections. Eye for eye is wanted. You must do your best to restore what you have destroyed. Obviously the purpose of the regulation is, not to justify or aid in anything like revenge, but to make men be con-

tented with the best they can get in substitution for the injury that has been done. The regulation of course was never meant to be interpreted literally, any more than our Lord's counsel that he who had been smitten on the right cheek, should turn the other to the smiter. What good would it do literally to render an eye for an eye? That would be great loss to the person injuring and not the slightest gain to the person injured. Persistent requirement of compensation is to be distinguished from a passionate seeking for revenge. And be it noted that this requirement of compensation is not to be omitted under any erroneous notions of what weakness and self-denial may compel from us as Christians. We must keep to the principle underlying the regulation here, as well as to that other glorious and beautiful principle which our Lord laid down in quoting this regulation (Matt. v. 39). He spoke to stop revenge. But surely he would have been the first to say, on needful occasion, that reckless men must not be suffered to inflict injury on the supposition that Christians would not resent it. Certainly we are not to seek compensation for injuries or punishment of those who injure simply to gratify private feelings, or get a private advantage. But if conscience is clear as to its being for the public good, we must be very urgent and pertinacious in demanding compensation. We may be sure our Master would ever have us contend with all meekness and gentleness, but also with all bravery and steadfastness for all that is right. But the thing of most importance to be learnt from this regulation is, that the most precious things attainable by us are beyond human malice or carelessness to spoil in the slightest degree. The treasures God loves to make the peculiar possession of his children are such as eye has not seen. The eye may be lost, and yet the enjoyment of these treasures remain—nay more, the very loss of the natural may increase the susceptibility of the spiritual in us. The very crippling of the body may help us to make wonderful advances towards the perfect man in Christ Jesus.—Y.

Vers. 5, 6.—“*Mine ears hast thou opened.*”—Slavery not usually considered a desirable condition. The Israelites as a people were just casting the slough of it, and God helps them in their social ordinances by emphasising the value of freedom. None the less, even here, a higher state than mere freedom is suggested; voluntary servitude may be preferred to liberty, and is very near akin to sonship. Consider:—

I. THE PREFERENCE. Naturally, to a slave freedom is an object. Slavery was a misfortune or a punishment resulting from debt or misconduct (cf. Lev. xxv. 39; Ex. xxii. 3). Thus viewed God only permitted it to continue at most for six years. Every Hebrew had been redeemed by him; and therefore permanent slavery to man would have been an infringement of his rights of ownership. Temporary servitude under the conditions which he imposed secured his rights and the privileges of those whom he had redeemed [cf. the right of a tenant to sublet a house by arrangement with the actual owner]. The relation between a serf and his employer was thus carefully defined and limited; in so far as they were linked together by a purely external bond, that bond ceased to exist at the close of six years' servitude. During six years, however, a firmer bond might have been formed and strengthened. Possession of the slave's body does not carry with it the possession of his affections; they cannot be bought and sold, but they may be won. If the owner during six years could find bands to bind the heart (Hos. xi. 4); in such case, the serf desiring it, a permanent relation might be established. It is not the abnegation of freedom, it is the exercise of freedom to choose for oneself; if a man was so bound to his employer that he preferred continuing in his service, God was willing to endorse such a preference with his consent. Nowadays, the relation of servant and employer is still more temporary than of old. At the same time, now as ever, love can prevail to win the affections and so weave by means of them a permanent and enduring bond. Love transmutes the conditions of servitude. It changes them into something which is preferable to freedom. The cords of a man bind more firmly than any other cords; but they do not confine or fetter.

II. THE SIGN OF THE PREFERENCE. The servant who wished to remain a servant was to be brought before the judges (Elohim), the representatives of God. As God's ministers they were empowered to permit the satisfaction of his desire. The ear pierced against the door post was the outward sign of this sacrament of servitude. Henceforth the man by his own desire was permanently united to the family of his employer. The pierced ear testified to the pierced heart. The sign of slavery was the badge of love.

III. **SERVANTS OF GOD.** The relation of the slave to his employer is analogous to the relation between the natural man and God. All men are his servants—debtors who cannot pay their debts. The relation however may be of a temporary character; God seeks to make it permanent by winning our hearts and our affections. Work for him in this world we must, willingly or unwillingly. He would have us willing servants; compulsory service has no moral value. “The ears opened” (Ps. xl. 6), in token of the heart won, are of more value than sacrifice and offering. Are we such willing servants? (Is. i. 5). He is willing to “open our ears,” to take us as his own for ever, but we must also ourselves be willing:—“He hath opened mine ears and I was not rebellious.” Slavery is a state of imperfection; but so also is the miscalled liberty of independence; the only perfect state for man is that “service which is perfect freedom.”—G.

EXPOSITION.

II LAWS CONNECTED WITH RIGHTS OF PROPERTY (vers. 33—36). From the consideration of injuries to the person, the legislator proceeds to treat of injuries to property, and, as he has been speaking of cattle under the one head, places cattle in the fore-front of the other. In this chapter two enactments only are made—one providing compensation in the case of a man's cattle being killed by falling into the pit, or well, of a neighbour (vers. 33, 34); and the other making provision for the case of one man's cattle killing the cattle of another (vers. 35, 36)

Vers. 33.—**If a man shall open a pit.** Rather, “If a man shall uncover a cistern.” Cisterns, very necessary in Palestine, were usually closed by a flat-stone, or a number of planks. To obtain water from them, they had to be uncovered; but it was the duty of the man who uncovered them, to replace the covering when his wants were satisfied. **Or dig a pit and not cover it.** A man who was making a cistern might neglect to cover it while it was in course of construction, or even afterwards, if he thought his own cattle would take no hurt. But in the unfenced fields of

Palestine it was always possible that a neighbour's cattle might go astray and suffer injury through such a piece of negligence. An ox, or an ass, falling into a cistern, would be unable to extricate itself, and might be drowned.

Vers. 34.—**The owner of the pit shall make it good**—i.e., “shall duly compensate the owner of the cattle for its loss.” **And the dead beast shall be his.** Having paid the full price of the slain beast, the owner of the cistern was entitled to its carcase.

Vers. 35, 36.—**If one man's ox hurt another's, etc.** The hurt might be purely accidental, and imply no neglect. In that case the two parties were to divide the value of the living, and also of the dead ox—i.e., they were to share between them the loss caused by the accident equally. If, however, there was neglect, if the aggressive animal was known to be of a vicious disposition, then the man who had suffered the loss was to receive the full value of the slain animal, but to lose his share of the carcase. This explanation, which the words of the text not only admit, but invite, seems better than the Rabbinical one, “that the dead ox should also be the property of the injured party.”

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 33—36.—**The guilt of neglect.** Sins of omission are thought lightly of by most men; but God holds us answerable for them, as much as for sins of commission. The Psalmist defines the wicked man as one who neglects to “set himself in any good way.” The neglect of the Israelites to cover their wells, or keep their cattle from goring others was to be heavily punished. Neglect and carelessness are culpable—

I. **BECAUSE THEIR EFFECTS ARE AS RUINOUS AS THOSE OF MALICE AND EVIL INTENT.** Carelessness and neglect of precautions may set a town on fire and burn hundreds in their beds. Or it may spread a loathsome and dangerous disease through a whole district. Or it may destroy the cattle of a whole county. Or it may allow moral evil to have free course, until an entire nation is sunk in corruption. Or, again, it may endanger our own lives, or destroy our souls. It is a question whether more evil does not actually result from carelessness than from deliberate intent. Youth is naturally careless. Desultory habits intensify carelessness. A deficient sense of the seriousness

of life encourages and fosters it. Advanced civilisation, with its foppishness and superciliousness, develops its growth. The present age asks, "Is anything worth caring about?"—and is deaf to the Prophet's words, "Tremble and be troubled, ye careless ones" (Isaiah xxxiii. 11).

II. BECAUSE GOD HAS IMPLANTED IN US FACULTIES OF PREVISION AND CALCULATION OF CONSEQUENCES, WHICH WERE INTENDED TO PREVENT OUR BEING CARELESS AND NEGLIGENT. Man differs from the lower animals chiefly in the possession of reason; and it is an essential part of human reason to look to the future, to forecast results, and calculate the balance of ultimate advantage and disadvantage. We know instinctively that our happiness depends on our actions; and it is therefore wholly unreasonable to be careless about how we act. If we have faculties which we might use and refuse to use them, God will be righteous to punish us for despising his gifts.

III. BECAUSE GOD HAS EXPRESSLY WARNED US AGAINST BEING CARELESS, AND EXHORTED US TO PRUDENCE AND FORETHOUGHT. "I will send a fire among them that dwell *carelessly*," said the Lord by Ezekiel. "Rise up, ye women that are at ease; hear my voice, ye *careless* daughters; give ear unto my speech; many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye *careless* women," are God's words by Isaiah. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard," exclaims the wise man, "consider her ways and be wise." And again—"Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established—keep thy heart with diligence—remove thy feet from evil." A careful cautious walk through the dangers and difficulties of life is everywhere enjoined upon us in the Scriptures; and we are plainly disobedient if we are careless.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXII

THE BOOK OF THE COVENANT, *continued*.

Laws connected with rights of property, continued (vers. 1—15). The first section—vers. 1—6—is upon theft. The general principle laid down is, that theft shall be punished if possible, by a fine. There is a moral fitness in this, since a man's desire to get what was his neighbour's would lead to the loss of what was his own. In ordinary cases the thief was to restore to the man robbed double of what he had stolen (ver. 4) but, if he had shewn persistence in wrong doing by selling the property, or (if it were an animal) killing it, he was to pay more—fourfold in the case of a sheep, fivefold in that of an ox. If the criminal could not pay the fine, then he was to be sold as a slave (ver. 3). Burglary, or breaking into a house at night, might be resisted by force, and if the burglar were killed, the man who killed him incurred no legal guilt (ver. 2); but, if the house were entered by day, the proviso did not hold (ver. 3).

Vers. 1—4.—*Laws about theft*. Ver. 1.—If a man shall steal an ox. The principal property possessed by the Israelites in the wilderness was their cattle; whence this occurs to the legislator as the thing most likely to be stolen. It required more boldness

in a thief to carry off an ox than a sheep or goat; and so the crime was visited with a heavier penalty.

Ver. 2.—If a thief be found breaking up. Rather, "Breaking in"—i.e., making forcible entry into a house. The ordinary mode of "breaking in" seems to have been by a breach in the wall. Hence the word here used, which is derived from *kháthar*, "to dig." There shall no blood be shed for him. Rather, "the blood-feud shall not lie upon him"—i.e., the avenger of blood shall not be entitled to proceed against his slayer. The principle here laid down has had the sanction of Solon, of the Roman law, and of the law of England. It rests upon the probability that those who break into a house by night have a murderous intent, or at least have the design, if occasion arise, to commit murder.

Ver. 3.—If the sun be risen upon him. If the entry is attempted after daybreak. In this case it is charitably assumed that the thief does not contemplate murder. There shall be blood shed for him. Or, "the blood-feud shall hold good in his case"—i.e., his slayer shall be liable to be put to death by the next of kin. For he should make full restitution. Rather, "He shall make full restitution." The punishment of the housebreaker, who enters a house by day, shall be like that of other thieves—to restore double. If he have nothing. Rather, "if he have not enough"—i.e., if he cannot make the restitution required, then he shall be sold for his theft. It is somewhat fanciful to suppose, that this punishment aimed at enforcing labour on those

who preferred stealing to working for their own living (Kalisch). Probably the idea was simply the compensation of the injured party, who no doubt received the proceeds of the man's sale.

Ver. 4.—If the theft be certainly found in his hand. If he be caught *in flagrante delicto*, with the thing stolen in his possession,

"whether it be ox, or ass, or small cattle," he shall restore double. The law of theft in the Mosaic legislation is altogether of a mild character, as compared with the Roman, or even with the English law, until the present century. Double restitution was a sort of "retaliation"—it involved a man losing the exact amount which he had expected to gain

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*Punishment, even for one and the same offence, should be graduated.* Some codes treat a crime which can be given a single definite name, e.g., theft, as if it were in all cases uniform, and prescribe a single penalty—death, the bastinado, a month's imprisonment. The Mosaic Law, with greater refinement and greater propriety, graduated the punishment according to the special character of the offence. The worst form of theft proper is burglary. Burglary destroys the repose of the household, introduces a feeling of insecurity, trenches upon the sacredness of the hearth, endangers life, affrights tender women and children. By permitting the destruction of the burglar, the law pronounced him worthy of death. Other forms of thieving were punished in proportion to the audacity and persistence of the thief. A man who had stolen without converting the property, was to pay back double. If he had converted it to his own use, or sold it, the penalty was heavier—fourfold for a sheep or goat, fivefold for an ox. There was especial audacity in stealing an ox—an animal so large that it could not readily be converted; so powerful that it could not easily be carried off. The graduation of punishment for all crimes is desirable—

I. BECAUSE THE SAME OUTWARD OFFENCE INVOLVES VARIOUS DEGREES OF INWARD WICKEDNESS; e.g., homicide varies between absolute blamelessness (ver. 2) and the highest degree of culpability (ch. xxi. 14). Assault may be the lightest possible matter or approach closely to murder. False witness may arise from imperfect memory, or from a deliberate design to effect a man's ruin. Lies may be "white," or the blackest falsehoods which it is possible for the soul of man to invent. Punishment is, and ought to be, in the main retributive; and as the moral guilt varies, so should the penalty.

II. BECAUSE THE OUTWARD OFFENCE ITSELF IS MORE OR LESS INJURIOUS. By an act of stealing we may rob a man of a trifle, or reduce him to beggary. By a blow of a certain force we may inflict on him a slight pain, or render him a cripple for life. By a false statement in a court of justice we may do him no harm at all, or we may ruin his character. All crimes short of homicide vary in the extent to which they injure a man; and it is reasonable that the amount of injury received should be taken into consideration when punishment is apportioned. Therefore, a rigid unbending law, assigning to each head of crime a uniform penalty would be unsuitable to the conditions of human life and the varying motives of criminals. A wise legislator will leave a wide discretion to those who administer justice, trusting them to apportion to each offence the punishment which under the circumstances it deserves.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 5, 6.—**LAW OF TRESPASS.**—Next to theft, and not much behind it, is the wanton damage of what belongs to another—as when a person injures his neighbour's crops, either by turning beasts into his field, or by causing a conflagration in it. To turn beasts in was the more determinedly malicious act, and therefore the damage done was to be compensated by making over to the injured party a like quantity of produce out of the best that a man

was possessed of; whereas simple restitution was sufficient when fire had spread accidentally from a man's own land to his neighbour's. We may conclude that if the trespass of the cattle were accidental, simple restitution sufficed; and if the fire were kindled of set purpose, the heavier rate of penalty was exacted.

Ver. 5.—If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten.—Rather "to be eaten

of," or "to be browsed upon." And shall feed.—Rather, "and it shall feed." Of the best, etc.—This means that without reference to the quality of the crop damaged, the injurer should forfeit an equal amount of his own best produce.

Ver. 6.—*If fire break out.*—It is usual in the East (as in England) to burn the weeds on a farm at certain seasons of the year

When this is done, there is always a danger, in the dry parched-up Eastern lands, of the fire spreading, and careful watch has to be kept. If this watch were neglected, a neighbour's sheaves or standing corn might be seriously damaged or even destroyed. The law punished such carelessness, by requiring the man who had kindled the fire to make restitution

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 5, 6.—*The law of love forbids all injury to a neighbour.* There are many who would scorn to steal the property of a neighbour, who yet make light of injuring it in other ways, as by trespass, or by negligence. But if we love our neighbour we shall be anxious not to injure him in any way. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour." He that allows his cattle to pasture in a neighbour's field, or his hares and rabbits to spoil a neighbour's crops, or his poultry to break bounds and damage a neighbour's garden, cannot feel towards him as a Christian should feel. Love would hinder any injuries, nay, even any intrusive or obnoxious act. Love would also be a strong check upon neglect and carelessness. Men are careful enough not to damage their own property; did they really love them, they would be as careful not to damage the property of their neighbours. And what is true of property is true of other things also. We are bound—

I. NOT TO INJURE OUR NEIGHBOUR'S CHARACTER, either by direct attacks upon it, or by carelessly suffering it to be maligned by others.

II. NOT TO INJURE HIS DOMESTIC PEACE. 1. By impertinent intrusion; 2. By spying and tale-bearing; 3. By scattering suspicions.

III. NOT TO INJURE HIS INTERESTS. 1. By divulging without necessity what may hurt him; 2. By pushing our own interests at his expense; 3. By knowingly advising him ill; 4. By setting pitfalls that he may fall into them. If we offend in any of these respects, it is our duty, so far as possible, to "make restitution"—(1) By compensating to him any loss he may have sustained; (2) By disabusing those whose minds we may have poisoned; (3) By ample and humble apology. Too often this last will be all that is in our power; for "the tongue is a fire" (Jas. iii. 6), which scatters its brands far and wide, and creates conflagrations that it is impossible to extinguish. Let each and all seek to control that "unruly member" which "setteth on fire the course of nature," and is itself "set on fire of hell."

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 7—13.—*LAW OF DEPOSITS.*—Deposition of property in the hands of a friend, to keep and guard, was a marked feature in the life of primitive societies, where investments were difficult, and bankers unknown. Persons about to travel, especially merchants, were wont to make such a disposition of the greater part of their movable property, which required some one to guard it in their absence. Refusals to return such deposits were rare; since ancient morality regarded such refusal as a crime of deep dye (Herod. vii. 86). Sometimes, however, they took place; and at Athens there was a special form of action which might be brought in such cases called

παρακαθήκης δίκη. The penalty, if a man were cast in the suit, was simple restitution, which is less satisfactory than the Mosaic enactment—"He shall pay double" (ver. 9)

Ver. 7.—*Stuff.*—Literally "vessels"—but the word is used in a very wide sense, of almost any inanimate movables.

Ver. 8.—*If the thief be not found.*—It is not clear what was to be done in this case. Kalisch supposes that it came under the law of the oath (ver. 10), and that if the man entrusted with the deposit swore that he had not embezzled it, he was let go free. But as stolen cattle were to be compensated for to the owner (ver. 12), it would seem to be more

consistent that stolen money or chattels should also have been made good.

Ver. 9.—**For all manner of trespass.**—It has been supposed that this refers to "every case of theft;" but Kalisch is probably right in restricting it to cases where a person was accused of having embezzled property committed to his care. He was in that case to appear before the judges (ch. xviii. 23), together with his accuser, and to clear himself if he could. When he failed to do so, and was "condemned," he was bound to restore double. **Which another challenges to be his.**—Rather, "which a man challenges to be the very thing" (that he deposited). The case is supposed of the depositor being able to point out that the person to whom he entrusted the deposit has it still in his keeping.

Vers. 10, 11.—**If a man deliver unto his neighbour an ass or an ox, etc.**—The deposit of cattle is unheard of in classical antiquity; but it might well be the usage of a pastoral race (Gen. xlvii. 3). The parallelism of the

verse with verse 6 indicates that a deposit of the same kind is intended. **If it die, or be hurt, or driven away.**—The deposited beast might "die" naturally; or "be hurt" by a wild beast or a fall; or be "driven away" by thieves, without anyone seeing what had happened. In that case, if the man to whom the animal was entrusted would swear that he was no party to its disappearance, the owner had to put up with the loss.

Ver. 12.—**If it be stolen.**—If, however, the case was not an ambiguous one, but certainly known to be one of theft, restitution had to be made, since it was supposed that with proper care the theft might have been prevented.

Ver. 13.—**If it be torn in pieces.**—If again there was evidence that the creature had been killed by a wild beast, this evidence had to be produced, before the owner or the judges, for the trustee to be exonerated from blame. A similar proviso is found in the laws of the Gentoos (Rosenmüller, *Orient.* vol. i. p. 148).

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 7, 8.—**The sacred character of trusts.** The main teaching of this third paragraph of ch. xxii. is the sacred character of human trusts. Men are taught that they must carefully guard the property of others when committed to their charge, and religiously restore it upon demand to its rightful owner. No conversion of such property to the use of the trustee, under any circumstances whatever, is to be tolerated. The principle laid down with respect to ancient, will apply equally to modern, trusts:—

I. If the thing entrusted be stolen, without the trustee being justly chargeable with having contributed to the theft by negligence, the loss must fall on the owner.

II. If it be lost by non-preventible accident, as when a lion carries off a lamb, or when a ship goes down at sea, the case is the same—the trustee is not liable.

III. If, on the other hand, the trustee neglect to take sufficient care, and damage occurs, he is bound to make good the injury caused by his own *laches*.

IV. If he actually embezzle the trust, simple restitution will not meet the full claims of justice. He ought to be made to refund, and to be punished besides.

V. In doubtful cases the oath, or solemn assurance, of the trustee, that he has conveyed no part of the trust to his own use, ought to be accepted.

Trusts are among the most important of the contracts and obligations, whereby human society is carried on. Strict honesty and much thought and care are requisite on the one hand, confidence, gratitude and tender consideration on the other. Trustees, it is to be remembered, do, for the most part, unpaid work. No one can be compelled to be a trustee. And unless a generous confidence is put in them, and their good intentions are presumed, alike by the law and by those for whom they act, trusteeship will be declined by prudent men, and great inconveniences will follow.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 14, 15 **LAW OF BORROWING.**—The act of borrowing is connected with that of depositing, since in both cases, the property of one man is committed to the hands of another; only, in the one case, it is at the instance and for the benefit of the man into whose hands the property passes; in the other case, it is at

the instance and for the benefit of the other party. This difference causes a difference of obligation. The borrower, having borrowed solely for his own advantage, must take all the risks, and in any case return the thing borrowed, or its value, unless the owner was still, in some sort, in charge of his own property.

Things hired are not, however, to be regarded as borrowed. If harm come to them, the owner must suffer the loss.

Ver. 14. And it be hurt or die.—The thing borrowed might be animate or inanimate; either might be "hurt;" the former might not only be hurt, but "die." Whatever the damage, and whatever the cause, unless in the single rare case of the owner being in charge, the law required the borrower to make good the loss to the owner. This law must have acted as a considerable check upon borrowing.

Ver. 15. If the owner thereof be with it.

—By "with it," we must understand, not merely present, but in charge of it, or at any rate so near it that he might have prevented the damage, had prevention been possible. **If it be an hired thing.**—If anything were paid for the use of the thing, then it was not borrowed, but hired; and the owner was considered to have counted in the risk of loss or damage in fixing the amount of the hire. He was entitled therefore to no compensation. Our own law does not rule this absolutely, but takes into consideration the proportion of the sum paid for hire to the value of the thing hired, and the general tacit understanding.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 14.—The duty of borrowers. The duty of borrowers is very simple. It is to take care that that which they borrow suffers as little hurt as possible while it remains in their possession, and to return it unhurt, or else make compensation to the lender. People will not often be found to question the propriety of these rules; but in action there are not very many who conform to them. It is a common thing to take but little care of what we have borrowed; to keep it an unconscionable time; to neglect returning it until the lender has asked for it repeatedly; to keep it without scruple, if he does not happen to ask for it. Curiously enough, there are particular things—*e.g.*, umbrellas and books, which it is supposed not to be necessary to return, and which borrowers are in the habit of withholding. Many go further, and feel under no obligation to repay even money which they have borrowed. All such conduct is, however, culpable, since it is tainted with dishonesty. Borrowers should remember—

I. THAT THEY FAIL IN THEIR DUTY TO THEMSELVES IF THEY DO NOT RESTORE WHAT THEY HAVE BORROWED. Self-respect should prevent them from a line of conduct which assimilates them to thieves, and is wanting in the boldness and straightforwardness that characterise ordinary thieves.

II. THAT THEY FAIL EGREGIOUSLY IN THEIR DUTY TO THE LENDER, who has put them under a special obligation to him.

III. THAT THEY FAIL IN THEIR DUTY TO MANKIND AT LARGE, since they do their best to deter men from ever lending, and so place difficulties in the way of borrowers. We all need to borrow at times.

IV. THAT THEY FAIL IN THEIR DUTY TO GOD, who has declared in his word, that it is "the wicked" who "borroweth and payeth not again" (Ps. xxxvii. 21).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—16.—Restitution. We have to mark again in this chapter with how even a hand the law of Moses holds the scales of justice. The cases ruled by the principle of restitution are the following:—

I. THEFT (vers. 1—5). The illustrations in the law relate to thefts of cattle. But the principles embodied apply to thefts generally (cf. ver. 7). Note—1. The law which punishes the theft, protects the thief's life. It refuses, indeed, to be responsible for him in the event of his being smitten in the night-time, while engaged in the act of house-breaking (ver. 2)—large rights of self-defence being in this case necessary for the protection of the community. The thief might be killed under a misapprehension of his purpose; or by a blow struck at random in the darkness, and under the influence of panic; or in justifiable self-defence, in a scuffle arising from the attempt to detain him. In other circumstances, the law will not allow the thief's life to be taken (ver. 3). All the ends of justice are served by his being compelled to make restitution. Blood is not to be spilt needlessly. The killing of a thief after sunrise is to be dealt with as murder. We infer from this that theft ought not to be made a capital offence. English law, at

the beginning of this century, was, in this respect, far behind the law of Moses. 2. Theft is to be dealt with on the principle of restitution. (1) It calls for more than *simple* restitution. At most the restitution of the simple equivalent brings matters back to the position in which they were before the criminal act was committed. That position ought never to have been disturbed; and punishment is still due to the wrong-doer for having disturbed it. Hence the law that if the stolen animal is found in the thief's hand alive, he shall restore double (ver. 4); if he has gone the length of killing or selling it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep (ver. 1). (2) Penalty is proportioned to offence. Both as respects the value of the things stolen, and as respects the lengths to which criminality has proceeded. 3. If direct restitution is impossible, the thief shall be compelled to make restitution by his labour—"He shall be sold for his theft" (ver. 3). It would be an improvement in the administration of justice if this principle were more frequently acted on. The imprisoned thief might be made to *work out* an equivalent for his theft; and this, in addition to the hardships of his imprisonment, might be accepted as legal restitution.

II. DAMAGE (vers. 5, 6). The damage done, in the one case to a field or vineyard, by allowing a beast to stray into it, and feed upon the produce; in the other, by setting fire to thorn hedges, and injuring the corn-stacks, or standing corn, is supposed to be unintentional. Yet, as arising from preventable causes—from carelessness and neglect—the owner of the beast, or the person who kindled the fire, is held responsible. He must make good the damage from the *best* of his own possessions. We are held fully responsible for the consequences of neglect (cf. Heb. ii. 3).

III. DISHONEST RETENTION OF PROPERTY (vers. 7—14). Cases of this kind involved judicial investigation. 1. If the charge of dishonest retention was made out, the fraudulent party was to restore double (ver. 9). 2. If an ox, ass, sheep, or any beast, entrusted to another to keep, died, was hurt, or was driven away, "no man seeing it," the person responsible for its safety could clear himself by an oath from the suspicion of having unlawfully "put his hand" to it (ver. 11). In this case, he was not required to make good the loss. 3. If, however, the animal was stolen from his premises, under circumstances which implied a want of proper care, he was required to make restitution (ver. 12). 4. If the animal was alleged to have been torn to pieces, the trustee was required to prove this by producing the mangled remains (ver. 13).

IV. LOSS OF WHAT IS BORROWED (vers. 14, 15). 1. If the owner is not with his property, the borrower is bound to make good loss by injury or death. 2. If the owner is with it, the borrower is not held responsible. 3. If the article or beast be lent on hire, the hire is regarded as covering the risk.—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

MISCELLANEOUS LAWS (vers. 16—31)

Vers. 16, 17.—*Laws against seduction.* It has been already observed that in the remainder of the Book of the Covenant there is a want of method, or logical sequence. Seduction, witchcraft, bestiality, worship of false gods, oppression, are sins as different from each other as can well be named, and seem to have no connecting link. Possibly, Moses simply follows the order in which God actually delivered the laws to him. Possibly, he wrote them down as they occurred to his memory. It is remarkable in his "law of seduction," that he makes the penalty fall with most weight on the man, who must either marry the damsel whom he has seduced, or provide her with a dowry, or, if she is a betrothed

maiden, suffer with her the penalty of death (Deut. xxii. 23, 24)

Ver. 16.—If a man entices. Rather "seduce. He shall surely endow her to be his wife. In the East a man commonly pays money, or money's worth, to the parents in order to obtain a wife. The seducer was to comply with this custom, and make over to the damsel's father the sum of fifty shekels of silver (Deut. xxii. 29), for his sanction of the marriage. If the father consented, he was compelled to marry the girl, and he was forbidden to repudiate her afterwards (*ibid.*).

Ver. 17.—If her father utterly refuse, etc. There might be such a disparity between the parties, or such an ineligibility of the man for a son-in-law, that the father might refuse to re-establish his daughter's status by the alliance. In that case the offender was to pay such a sum as would form a handsome dowry for the

injured female, and enable her to enter with proper dignity the house of whatever man might be selected for her husband.

Ver. 18.—Law against witchcraft. Witchcraft was professedly a league with powers in rebellion against God. How far it was delusion, how far imposture, how far a real conspiracy with the powers of evil, cannot now be known. Let the most rationalistic view be taken, and still there was in the practice an absolute renunciation of religion, and of the authority of Jehovah. Wizards (Lev. xix. 31) and witches were, therefore, under the Jewish theocracy, like idolaters and blasphemers, to be put to death.

Ver. 19.—Law against unnatural crime. The abomination here mentioned is said to have prevailed in Egypt, and even to have formed part of the Egyptian religion (Herod. ii. 46; Strab. xvii. p. 802; Clem. Al. *Cohort. ad Gentes*, p. 9; etc.). Though regarded by the Greeks and Romans as disgusting and contemptible, it does not seem to have been made a crime by any of their legislators. It was, however, condemned by the Gentoo laws and by the laws of Menu (xi. 17).

Ver. 20.—Law against sacrificing to false gods. Sacrifice was the chief act of worship; and to sacrifice to a false god was to renounce the true God. Under a theocracy this was rebellion, and rightly punished with temporal death. In ordinary states it would be no civil offence, and would be left to the final judgment of the Almighty. Utterly destroyed. Literally, "devoted;" but with the meaning of "devoted to destruction."

Ver. 21.—Law against oppression of foreigners. It may be doubted whether such a law as this was ever made in any other country. Foreigners are generally looked upon as "fair game," whom the natives of a country may ridicule and annoy at their pleasure. Native politeness gives them an exceptional position in France; but elsewhere it is the general rule to "vex" them. The Mosaic legislation protested strongly against this practice (ch. xxiii. 9; Lev. xix. 33), and even required the Israelites to "love the stranger who dwelt with them as themselves" (Lev. xix. 34). **For ye were strangers.** Compare Lev. xix. 34, and Deut. x. 19. In Ex. xxiii. 9 the addition is made—"For ye know the heart of a stranger"—ye know; i.e., the feelings which strangers have when they are vexed and oppressed—ye know this by your own sad experience, and should therefore have a tenderness for strangers.

Vers. 22—24.—Law against oppressing widows and orphans. With the stranger are naturally placed the widow and orphan; like him, weak and defenceless; like him, special objects of God's care. The negative precept here given was followed up by numerous posi-

tive enactments in favour of the widow and the orphan, which much ameliorated their sad lot. (See ch. xxiii. 11; Lev. xix. 9, 10; Deut. xiv. 29; xvi. 11, 14; xxiv. 19—21; xxvi. 12, 13.) On the whole, these laws appear to have been fairly well observed by the Israelites; but there were times when, in spite of them, poor widows suffered much oppression. (See Ps. xciv. 6; Is. i. 23; x. 2; Jer. vii. 3—6; xxii. 3; Zech. vii. 10; Mal. iii. 5; Matt. xxiii. 14.) The prophets denounce this backsliding in the strongest terms.

Ver. 22.—Ye shall not afflict. The word translated "afflict" is of wide signification, including ill-usage of all kinds. "Oppress," and even "vex," are stronger terms.

Ver. 23.—And they cry at all unto me. Rather, "Surely, if they cry unto me." Compare Gen. xxxi. 42.

Ver. 24.—I will kill you with the sword. It was, in large measure, on account of the neglect of this precept, that the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and destruction of its inhabitants, was allowed to take place (Jer. xxii. 3—5). **Your wives shall be widows, etc.** A quasi-retaliation. They shall be exposed to the same sort of ill-usage as you have dealt out to other widows.

Vers. 25—27.—The law of lending money and borrowing. It is peculiar to the Jewish law to forbid the lending of money at interest by citizen to citizen. In the present passage, and in some others (Lev. xxv. 35; Deut. xv. 7), it might seem that interest was only forbidden in the case of a loan to one who was poor; but the general execration of usury (Job xxiv. 9; Prov. xxviii. 8; Ezek. xviii. 13; xxii. 12), and the description of the righteous man as "he that hath not given his money upon usury" (Ps. xv. 5; Ezek. xviii. 8), seem rather to imply that the practice, so far as Israelites were concerned, was forbidden altogether. On the other hand, it was distinctly declared (Deut. xxiii. 20) that interest might be taken from strangers. There does not seem to have been any rate of interest which was regarded as excessive, and "usurious," in the modern sense. In Scripture usury means simply interest.

Ver. 26.—If thou take at all thy neighbour's raiment to pledge. Lending upon pledge, the business of our modern pawnbrokers, was not forbidden by the Jewish law; only certain articles of primary necessity were forbidden to be taken, as the handmill for grinding flour, or either of its mill-stones (Deut. xxiv.

6). Borrowing upon pledge was practised largely in the time of Nehemiah, and led to very ill results. See Neh. ch. v. *Thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down.* The reason is given in the next verse. As it could not have been worth while to take the pledge at all, if it was immediately to have been given back for good, we must suppose a practice of depositing the garment during the day, and being allowed to have it out at night.

Ver. 27.—*Whersin shall he sleep?* The outer garment worn by the ancient Hebrews was like that of the modern Bedouins—a sort of large woollen shawl or blanket, in which they enveloped the greater part of their persons. It serves the Bedouins, to the present time, as robe by day, and as coverlet by night. *When he crieth unto me.* Compare ver. 23. If the law is broken, and the man cry unto the Lord, he will hear, and avenge him.

Ver. 28.—*Law against reviling God, or rulers.* It has been proposed to render *Elohim* here either 1. "God;" or 2. "The gods;" or 3. "Judges." The last of these renderings is impossible, since *Elohim* in the sense of "judges" always has the article. The second, which is adopted by the Septuagint and the Authorised Version, seems precluded by the constant practice of the most religious Jews, prophets and others, to speak with contempt and contumely of the false gods of the heathen. The passage must therefore be understood as forbidding men to speak evil of God. (Compare Lev. xxiv. 15, 16.) *Nor curse the ruler of thy people.* Rather, "one exalted among thy people." The term is generally used of the heads of families (Num. iii. 24, 30, 35. etc.) and tribes (*ibid.* vii. 10, 18, 24. etc.) in the Pentateuch. Later, it is applied to kings (1 Kings xi. 34; Ezek. xii. 10; xlv. 7. etc.). Our translators generally render it by "prince."

Vers. 29, 30.—*Law concerning first-fruits.* God required as first-fruits from his people, 1. The first-born of their children; 2. The first-born of all their cattle; and 3. The first of all the produce of their lands, whether wet or dry; wine, oil, grain of all kinds, and fruits. The

first-born of their children were to be redeemed by a money payment (ch. xiii. 13; Num. iii. 46—48); but the rest was to be offered in sacrifice. The phrase, "*thou shalt not delay,*" implies that there would be reluctance to comply with this obligation, and that the offering would be continually put off. In Nehemiah's time the entire custom had at one period fallen into disuse. (Neh. x. 35, 36.) *The first of thy ripe fruits.* Literally, "thy fulness." The paraphrase of the A. V. no doubt gives the true meaning. *The first-born of thy sons.* Compare above, ch. xiii. 2, 12.

Ver. 30.—*Seven days it shall be with its dam.* See Lev. xxii. 27. The main object is that the dam may have during that time the natural relief derivable from suckling its offspring. *On the eighth day thou shalt give it me.* Some analogy may be traced between this proviso and the law of circumcision. Birth was viewed as an unclean process, and nothing was fit for presentation to God excepting after an interval.

Ver. 31.—*And ye shall be holy men unto me.* Ye shall not be as other men, but "a holy nation, a peculiar people;" and therefore your separateness shall be marked by all manner of laws and regulations with respect to meats and drinks, designed to keep you free from every uncleanness. One such law then follows—

Law against eating the flesh of an animal killed by another. The blood of such an animal would not be properly drained from it. Some would remain in the tissues, and thence the animal would be unclean; again, the carnivorous beast which "tore" it would also be unclean, and by contact would impart of its uncleanness to the other. *Ye shall cast it to the dogs,* is probably not intended to exclude the giving or selling of it to an alien, if one were at hand, according to the permission accorded in Deut. xiv. 21; but points simply to the mode whereby the flesh was to be got rid of, if aliens were not at hand, or if they declined to eat the animals. Dogs were so unclean that they might be fed on anything. Their chief use was to be scavengers (2 K. ix. 35, 36).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 16—28.—*The severity and the tenderness of God.* The miscellaneous laws thrown together, without any clear logical sequence or indeed any manifest connection, in the latter part of this chapter, may, generally speaking, be grouped under the two heads of instances of the Divine severity, and instances of the Divine tenderness. Here, as in so many places, "mercy and truth meet together—righteousness and peace kiss each other." God is as merciful to the weak and helpless as severe towards the bold and stubborn evil-doer. If his justice is an inalienable attribute, so is his kindness and

compassion. The twofold aspect of the Divine Nature is steadily kept before us by an arrangement in which its opposite sides are presented to our contemplation alternately.

I. INSTANCES OF THE DIVINE SEVERITY. 1. "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (verse 18). 2. "Whoso lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death" (verse 19). 3. "He that sacrifices to any god, save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed" (verse 20). 4. "Thou shalt not revile the gods (God) nor curse the ruler of thy people" (verse 28). In these utterances it is Justice that makes itself heard, wrath that manifests itself, severity that gives strict rules for human conduct, and threatens tremendous penalties in case of their infringement. (1) *Witchcraft is made a capital offence.* Moderns constantly speak of witchcraft as founded on mere illusion, and regard witches and wizards as unfortunate persons, labouring under a certain amount of self-deception, and hounded to their death by persecutors far more to blame than their victims. It is generally assumed at the present day that to hold actual communication with evil spirits, and thus obtain supernatural power, is impossible. We are told that "it is absolutely impossible to acknowledge sorcerers or witches," and that "those who pretend to be such must be considered as impious and nefarious impostors" (Kalisch). The whole round of natural phenomena is presumed to be known, and no mystery to remain anywhere. Witches and wizards are tricksters; demonology and magic, delusions; evil spirits themselves either non-existent, or relegated to another sphere, and so entirely beyond human cognisance. But the language and ideas of Scripture are different. There evil spirits are regarded as really existing, and the witch is considered to have access to them. Death would scarcely be assigned as the penalty for mere trickery and imposture. It is well deserved by those who renounce God, and place their trust in spirits of darkness altogether. While the subject must be allowed to be one about which much obscurity still lingers, it would seem necessary for those who accept Scripture as an infallible guide, to put aside the shallow theories of modern sciolists, and hold, with the wisest of all ages, that "there are more things in heaven and earth, than are dreamt of in our philosophy." (2) *Unnatural crime is made capital.* All that is contrary to nature, all that tends to produce "confusion" in his universe, is absolutely hateful to God. Human legislators cared little about a sin which a natural repulsion caused to be rare, and which had no very obvious ill effects upon society. Some religions consecrated it and made it a portion of their ceremonial. Some, and they were the greater number, viewed it with complete indifference. The Mosar legislation, differing from almost all others, placed upon the offence the brand of heinous guilt, and required that both the man and the beast should die (Lev. xx. 15, 16). (3) *The acknowledgment of false gods in an open and public way is forbidden under the same penalty.* Thought is left free—no inquisitorship is established—but if men parade their misbelief by offering sacrifices to the gods of other nations, the insult to Jehovah is to be punished capitally. It was flagrant rebellion against God, and a transgression of the fundamental law on which the community was built (ch. xx. 3). It was a pollution to the land, and might draw down Divine judgment on the nation. It was offensive to the consciences of all God-fearing men in the community. No punishment under the death-penalty could be adequate for a crime, which was against God, against the State, and against society. The severity was, however, without parallel in other codes. (4) *Reviling God, and reviling rulers are both sternly forbidden; but the penalty is not as yet affixed.* Reviling God was, like sacrificing to false gods, an overt act of insult, challenging notice, and if allowed, destructive of the theocracy. The penalty afterwards affixed to it was death (Lev. xxiv. 16). In the Book of the Covenant it was thought enough to forbid it, the temptation to such an act not being great. Reviling rulers seems to have been coupled with reviling God in order to introduce the idea that "the powers that be are ordained of God," and consequently that those who resist them "resist the ordinance of God." The death-penalty, though not positively enacted in this case, is the natural consequence of resisting one who "beareth not the sword in vain." Thus far, therefore, the legislation here placed before us is severe—almost Draconic. Expressly or impliedly the death-penalty is threatened in every case. God is shown forth as an inexorable judge, who "will by no means absolve the wicked"—and man can but tremble before him. On the other hand, in the remainder of the passage we have—

II. INSTANCES OF THE DIVINE TENDERNESS. 1. "Thou shalt neither vex a stranger

nor oppress him" (ver. 21). 2. "Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child" (ver. 22). 3. "Thou shalt not lend thy money unto any of my people that is poor upon usury" (ver. 25). 4. "Thou shalt not take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge" (ver. 26). The Divine protection is extended especially over four classes of persons. (1) *The stranger*—the sojourner in a foreign land—alien in blood, in language, in religion probably—cut off from the protection of his own government, or kinsfolk, or fellow-tribesmen, and therefore all the more appealing for protection to the pity and the providence of God. To him the Sabbath rest had been already extended by a special provision (ch. xx. 10); if he would be circumcised, he might eat the passover (ch. xii. 48, 49); he might make his offerings at the door of the tabernacle (Lev. xvii. 8, 9); he was to have access to the cities of refuge (*ib.* xxxv. 15). It was now enjoined that he should not be oppressed in any way; that he should not even be "vexed." Kindness, consideration, courtesy, were made the stranger's due. In the final summary of the law (Deut. x. 18, 19) it was declared that God "loved" him, and the general command was given to all Israelites—"Love ye the stranger; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." (2) *The widow*. His widowed mother was especially dear to our Lord; and it is perhaps with secret reference to the boundless tenderness called forth in him by her condition that throughout Scripture there is so deep a sympathy with the widow's lot. From the sad Naomi, with her piteous outbreak—"Call me not Naomi, but Mara"—to the blessed Anna and the pious Dorcas, the widows of the Revealed Word have the testimony of the Spirit in their favour. For the widow of Sarepta the great law of there being no return from the grave is first broken through, and the mother is comforted by receiving back her dead child (1 Kings xvii. 9—24). For the widow of Nain Christ wrought one of his three similar miracles. In the early Church special care was taken of widows (Acts vi. 1; 1 Tim. v. 3—9 and 16); and St. James was inspired to declare to the Church of all ages that "Pure religion and undefiled before God is this—to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jas. i. 27). (3) *The fatherless*. The orphan is generally coupled with the widow in Scripture, and God's protection is equally extended over both. In the present passage the oppression of both is alike forbidden; and in other parts of the law both are secured certain advantages (Deut. xiv. 29; xxiv. 17, 19, 21; xxvi. 12, 13, etc.). God proclaims himself in an especial sense "the father of the fatherless" (Ps. lxxviii. 5), and "the helper of the fatherless" (*ib.* x. 14); in him the fatherless "find mercy" (Hos. xiv. 2). That tender compassion of the Most High, wherewith he looks on affliction generally, is poured without stint upon those who have so much need of his support and guidance, being left without their natural earthly protector. (4) *The poor*. Poverty is a far milder affliction than bereavement, since by nature all are poor, no man bringing with him into the world any property. Still, in states where there has been an accumulation of wealth, it is a disadvantage to be born poor, and a still greater disadvantage to have known riches and to have lost them. Poverty will ever be the lot of large numbers; of the greater portion through their own fault, but of many without fault of their own. "The poor shall never cease out of the land," we are told (Deut. xv. 11); and, again, "The poor ye have always with you" (John xii. 8). God's pity embraces this large class also; and he seeks to attract to them the regards of their more fortunate brethren. Not only were the Israelites forbidden to lend money to them upon usury; but they were expressly commanded to be ready to lend to them without (Deut. xv. 7—10). Such as fell into servitude for debt, and completed their time, were not to be cast adrift or sent away empty, but to be furnished liberally out of their master's flock and granary and winpress (*ib.* vers. 13, 14), that they might begin the world again with a little capital, and be saved from destitution. In modern times, owing to change of circumstances, laws such as this do not admit of a literal obedience; but we may act in the spirit of them, by never pressing hard on the poor, by sharing with them our superfluity, by pleading for them with others, and "seeing that such as are in need and necessity have right." There is still much oppression of poor men even in Christian countries—much need of improvement in their cottages, in the sanitary condition of their surroundings, in the medical provision made for them, and in the administration of the laws for their relief when old and infirm. A wide field is open for those who would obtain the blessing promised to such as "consider the poor" (Ps. xli. 1).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 16—21.—Abominations. This series of precepts deals with seduction, witchcraft, bestiality, and the sin of sacrificing to other gods than Jehovah. The case of the seducer might have been brought under the laws embodying the principle of restitution. It forms a transition to the others, in which we pass from the sphere of judicial right to what is negatively and positively due from Israel as “an holy people” to Jehovah. 1. *Seduction.* Lewdness in every form is sternly reprobated by the law of Moses (cf. Deut. xxii. 13—30). The man who seduced an unbetrothed maid was to be compelled to marry her; or, if her parents refused, was to pay her a dowry. 2. *Witchcraft.* With equal strictness was forbidden all trafficking, whether in pretence or in reality, with unholy powers. The crime—a violation of the first principles of the theocracy—was to be punished with death. There cannot be perfect love to God, and communion with him, and trafficking with the devil at the same time. The witchcraft condemned by the law was evil in itself, and was connected with foolish and wicked rites (cf. Deut. xviii. 9—15). 3. *Bestiality.* This, as an inversion of the order of nature, and in itself an act of the grossest abominableness, was “surely” to be punished with death. 4. *Sacrificing to other gods.* Possibly this crime is mentioned here as, in a sense, the spiritual counterpart of the vices above noted, i.e., as involving (1) Spiritual adultery, (2) The worshipping of “devils” (Lev. xviii. 7; Deut. xxxii. 17), (3) Filthy and impure rites (cf. Deut. xxiii. 17, 18).—J. O.

Vers. 21—29.—Jehovah's protégés and representatives. I. JEHOVAH'S PROTÉGÉS (vers. 21—28). These are the stranger, the fatherless, the widow, and the poor generally—all of whom the Israelites are forbidden to “afflict.” The ground of Jehovah's interest in them is his own character—“for I am gracious” (ver. 27). In him, however little they may sometimes think of it or feel it, they have a constant Friend, a great invisible Protector. They are (in the sense of Roman law) Jehovah's “clients.” He is their great Patron; he identifies himself with their interests; he will uphold their cause. Injuries done to them he will resent as if done to himself, and will call the wrong-doer to strict account. If earthly law fails, let them cry to him, and he will put the *jus talionis* in operation with his own hands (vers. 23, 24, 27). Vers. 25—28 specially forbid exacting treatment of the poor. Liberal help is to be afforded them. A neighbour is not to be harshly dealt with when driven to a strait. His garment, if given as a pledge, is not to be kept beyond nightfall, which is practically equivalent to saying that it is not to be taken from him at all (ver. 27). What kindness breathes in these precepts! How justly does the law which embodies them claim to be a law of love! And how far, even yet, is our Christian society from having risen to the height of the standard they set up! Let us seek ourselves to translate them more uniformly into practice. Learn also, from these precepts, inculcating love to the stranger, how little ground there is for accusing the religion of Moses of fanatical hatred of foreign peoples.

II. JEHOVAH'S REPRESENTATIVES (ver. 28). Magistrates and rulers are to be treated with respect. They are invested with a portion of God's authority (Rom. xiv. 1).—J. O.

Vers. 29—31.—Jehovah's dues. These, as part of the law's righteousness, are to be faithfully rendered. Let us not forget, when reflecting on what is due from man to man, to reflect also on what is due from man to God. When inwardly boasting of conscientiousness in rendering to every man his own, let us ask if we have been equally scrupulous in the discharge of our obligations to our Maker. In all spheres of life God claims of our first and best (see on ch. xiii. 2, 12). God's highest due is that we be “holy.” The precept in ver. 31 is connected with the prohibition to eat flesh with the blood in it.—J. O.

Ver. 21.—The treatment of the stranger. I. NOTE THE FACT THAT STRANGERS WOULD COME INTO SUCH CONTACT WITH ISRAEL AS TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY FOR THIS TREATMENT. Jehovah had done a great deal in Israel to make them a separated people—

separated in many ways as by the land of their dwelling, their national institutions, their worship, their personal rite of circumcision; but separation, with all its rigours and all the penalties for neglecting it, could never become isolation. Solemnly indeed were the people enjoined to drive out the Canaanites, and trample down all idolatry; but there still remained the fact, that by a certain Divine and glorious necessity, strangers were to come into considerable intercourse with them. That strangers should have been drawn to them when they settled in their fertile home was only likely; but this must have happened to some extent even before. We may be perfectly certain, considering the analogies of after generations and what we read of proselytism in the New Testament, that from the very first there must have been some with the proselyte disposition in them. Few perhaps of this sort were to be found in the mixed multitude coming out of Egypt—but still there were some. The Lord knoweth them that are his. If there are those of whom John might say, "They went out from us because they were not of us," so there are those of whom the Church may ever say, "They come to us because they are of us." For such God lovingly and amply provided from the first, even when they came with all the disadvantages and difficulties of strangers to contend against. There is in this very injunction, a foreshadowing of the power and attractiveness to which Israel in due time would rise, though as yet it was but a fugitive people without discipline and without coherence. Strangers in their need were even now drawn to Israel and would be drawn still more, just as years ago their needy ancestor and his children were drawn to Egypt because of the corn that was there.

II. THE STRONG TEMPTATION TO TREAT THESE FOREIGNERS BADLY. There is a very melancholy picture of human inconsistency here presented. Liberated slaves, forgetting the horrors of their own servitude, treat with like cruelty those exposed to the opportunity of that cruelty. Men soon forget their past condition. Israel, we see, forgot the horror of their own Egyptian experiences in two ways. 1. They lusted after the flesh-pots of Egypt. 2. They failed in sympathy for the foreigners among themselves. When we have possessions and power and thus get the chance of domination, we are only too ready to treat foreigners either as interlopers wishing to spoil us, or tools fitted to increase our possessions. The world, alas! is always abounding in a great number of the feeble and unfortunate, of whom it is only too easy to take advantage. More than one class of these are mentioned in this chapter, and among them we see that the foreigner occupies a conspicuous place. The stranger is the man without friends; he comes into a place where the very things that profit the knowing are traps and snares for the ignorant. Consider the difficulties of a foreigner planted down in the midst of a huge city like London, a place of dangers and difficulties even for an Englishman who is thrown into it for the first time, and how much more for one whom ignorance of the language makes doubly strange! Blanco White, who it will be remembered was an exile from his native land of Spain, gives as an instance of Shakespeare's surprising knowledge of the human mind and heart "the passage in which he describes the magnitude of the loss which a man banished from his country has to endure by living among those who do not understand his native language." The words are those put into the mouth of Mowbray Duke of Norfolk, on his banishment by Richard II.

"The language I have learn'd these forty years,
My native English, now I must forego.
And now my tongue's use is to me no more
Than an unstringed viol or a harp,
Or like a canning instrument cased up
Or, being open, put into his hands
That knows no touch to tune the harmony:
Within my mouth you have engaol'd my tongue,
Doubly portcullis'd with my teeth and lips;
And dull unfeeling barren ignorance
Is made my gaoler to attend on me."

If this be so, the stranger's feelings are some index to the temptations of those among whom he is cast. There may not be downright robbery, but there are tricks of trade, extortionate charges on pretence of making hay while the sun shines; in short there are all sorts of human foxes ever on the watch to catch the ignorant, the innocent, and the

confiding. But are God's people amenable to charges of this kind? It is evident that the Israelites were, from this warning to them. It was so easy to turn Jehovah's denunciations of the idolater into excuses for maltreating the stranger because he had the look of an idolater. Nay more, how easy it was both to yield to the idolatry and maltreat the stranger!

III. THE GREAT CONSIDERATION WHICH IS TO LEAD TO PROPER TREATMENT OF THE STRANGER. "Ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." Great as the temptation was to treat strangers badly, such treatment if only looked at in a certain light would be scarcely excusable at all. This possible treatment of the stranger is to be looked at in the clear light of our Lord's parable concerning the forgiven yet unforgiving debtor. Israel had been strangers in Egypt, not only foreigners among the Egyptians, but to some extent exiles from God, who had put on the appearance of having forgotten them. But now he had brought them to himself, they were to be his people, a holy nation; and it was want of loyalty to God, it was behaviour unworthy of a holy nation for them to treat strangers as the Egyptians had treated Israel. God hates the oppressor everywhere and pities the oppressed. The people of God never dishonour their name more than when they trample on the alien from the commonwealth of Israel and the stranger from the covenant of promise. The alien may become as the home-born. The stranger may become familiar with Divine covenants and promises as if he were an Israelite from the womb. Even already the Israelites were being warned against counting too much on outward signs and natural descent. We should ever be looking for the minimum of living faith rather than the maximum of formal orthodoxy. A tiny seed is more to be cherished than a huge log of timber; for the one has whole living forests in it, and the other is dead and dead it must remain. We must labour to get the insight whereby we may penetrate through strange outward aspects and discern the spiritual life and sympathies underneath. God will give us the eye to discover, the honest and good eye, whether the stranger who comes is a wandering sheep seeking the true flock or a wolf in sheep's clothing. To mistake the sheep for the wolf is equally lamentable with mistaking the wolf for the sheep. The Pharisaic spirit so easily finds entrance, welcome and dominion in our breasts. It is so natural to play the censor towards those who sin the sins which we have no temptation to fall into. He without mercy for him that seems a stranger to God, may suspect that he is still a stranger himself. Many even of the Israelites at Mount Sinai had not been brought to God in the full sense of the term. There was but a local contiguity to the awful demonstrations, not an attachment of the whole heart to the pure and glorious God who was behind the demonstrations.—Y.

Vers. 22—24.—*The treatment of the widow and the fatherless.* This injunction is even more humiliating to receive than the preceding one. It was bad enough to find those who had been foreigners in Egypt oppressing foreigners among themselves, and forgetting their own sufferings and deliverances. Still the slight excuse was available that as God's mercy to Israel receded into the past, and became a mercy to a former generation rather than a present one (at least, so it might be plausibly put), it was only too likely to be forgotten. Men are unable to make the past stand with any power against the influences of the present. But here are those, the widow and the fatherless, whom Nature in her ever fresh and living power, marks out herself as irresistible objects for pity and succour. What a disgrace to human nature that an injunction not to afflict the widow and fatherless should be necessary! And yet common observation only too often and sadly tells us that the widow and fatherless children may easily become the victims of an inconsiderate and unscrupulous self-seeking, which in its practical results is as afflicting as the most deliberate cruelty. *It is a very beautiful element of God's revelation of himself in the Scriptures, that he is so often set before us as caring for the fatherless and the widow, and denouncing those who do not care for them.* Widows in their needs, and his supply for their needs, appear in some of the most prominent scenes of the sacred page. Observe the provision that was made for the fatherless and the widow, along with the Levite and the stranger, to eat of the tithe of the yearly produce (Deut. xiv. 29), and also to get their share in the rejoicings at the feast of weeks and the feast of tabernacles (Deut. xvi. 11—14). The neighbour's raiment might be taken to pledge under certain conditions, but a widow's raiment was not to be taken in pledge at

all (Deut. xxiv. 17). The forgotten sheaf in the field, and the gleanings of the olive boughs and of the vineyards, were to be left for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow (Deut. xxiv. 19—21); and cursed was he to be who perverted the judgment of the same (Deut. xxvii. 19). When God sustained Elijah, at the time of judicial drought and famine in the land, he sustained the widow and the fatherless at the same time; and who knows how many widows and fatherless besides? It is part of the praise which is due to God in song, that he relieves the fatherless and the widow. A Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows is God, in his holy habitation (Ps. lxxviii. 5; cxlvi. 9). There can thus be no mistake about God's interest in those who are left without their natural provider and protector. But then on the other hand, these very same Scriptures *which assure us of God's concern, remind us of man's cruelty, unrighteousness, and oppression*. Job tells us of those who drive away the ass of the fatherless, and take the widow's ox for a pledge (xxiv. 3); and it was part of memory's brightening, as he thought upon his happier past, that he had delivered the fatherless and caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. God sent Isaiah to the hypocrites, the formal religionists who satiated God with ceremonial observances, to bid them turn to the realities of righteousness; and one of the foremost things among these was to judge the fatherless and plead for the widow. The faithful city had fallen, until those whose duty it was to judge the fatherless, and have the cause of the widow come to them, had sunk into companions of thieves and seekers of bribes. In the parable of the judge who feared not God, neither regarded man, we may be sure there is great significance beyond the purpose for which it was spoken. While first of all it teaches the need of importunity in prayer, it reminds us also how hard it is for the feeble woman, whose sphere has been the seclusion of home, to come out in the world and make her way against the oppressor and against the judge, who would be quick enough to listen to her if she was only rich, and could bribe him. By sheer carelessness and thoughtlessness, *by the sin of omission even more than the sin of commission*, we may fall into the wickedness of afflicting the widow and the fatherless; and to be on the alert to succour them is the only way in which we can effectually guard against this wickedness. We see that even in the Church of Christ, and in those first days when all that believed were together, and had all things in common—when all seemed so beautiful and promising, heaven fairly begun on earth—even then, and only too soon, the widows began to complain that they were neglected in the daily ministrations. Some of this perhaps was mere mendicant grumbling, but much of it would have a real cause. The only way we can keep the oppressor's heart out of us is to have the heart living and acting under the power of a Divinely-inspired love. It is a first principle of Christian ethics that if we are not doing good, we are doing ill; and we may be parties to the worst oppression, even when we are not thinking of oppression at all. In what a light does this Mosaic injunction bring out the teaching of James as to that practical element in pure religion of visiting the fatherless and the widow. If the Christian—his opportunities, his motives, his consolations, his resources to help and advise being what they are—does not visit the fatherless and the widow, depend upon it others will with very different designs. The greatest promptitude and decision are needed to anticipate the action of the rapacious and selfish.—Y.

Vers. 25—27.—*The treatment of the poor*. Here are two regulations, commanding not to be usurious in the lending of money to the poor, and not to retain the pledged garment over night. How forcibly they bring out the one crowning ill connected with poverty in the eyes of the world! The poor man is the man without money; and lack of money bars his way in only too many directions. Let him be ever so noble in character, ever so heroic, wise, and self-denying in action, it avails nothing. The poor wise man delivered the little city that was besieged by a great king; yet no man remembered that same poor man. These Israelites had gone out of Egypt with immense wealth, but probably even then it was very unequally distributed; and the tendency would be, as the tendency always is, for the inequality to become greater still. Hence in this regulation God was addressing those who from the inordinate feeling of desire which wealth inspires, would be peculiarly tempted to take advantage of the poor. God never shows any mercy to the rich man so far as his riches are concerned. Those riches are full of peril, and fuller of peril to their owner than to any one else.

He who counselled, by his Son, to pluck out the right eye and cut off the right hand, is not likely to pay respect to a thing like wealth, even more external still. The chief matter in these regulations is how the poor and needy may be most advantaged, and whatever will do that most effectually is the thing to be done. Whether *mere money* be lost or gained is a matter of no consequence whatever.

I. THESE PROVISIONS WITH RESPECT TO LENDING OBVIOUSLY DO NOT EXCLUDE GIVING. "*If thou lend money,*" etc. But God, in many instances, would be better pleased with giving than with lending. If only men were seeking with all their hearts to do his will, all these minute regulations would be unnecessary. *The advantage of the poor*, as we have just seen, was the main thing to be considered here. And it might be for the advantage of the receiver, and still more for the advantage of the giver in the highest sense of the word advantage, to give, hoping to receive nothing again. Just as money does untold harm when foolishly and wickedly spent, so when wisely spent it may do untold good. Lending may serve well, but giving may serve much better; and that is the wisest course which is judged to do the most good. Some would find it easier to give than to lend, being naturally generous, disposed to lavishness, shrinking from the risk of being thought stingy. And yet sometimes in giving they would be doing a very hurtful thing, for lending would be better.

II. Nor is there anything like A FORBIDDING OF THE LOAN OF MONEY FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES. If one man lends to another a certain sum of money with which to trade, it is plain that he acts lawfully in getting interest for the use of it. For if he were not lending money to another, he would be using it himself, and the interest represents his profit, which is the same whoever uses the money. The trade of the world, and therefore the good of the world would be greatly limited and hampered but for the use of borrowed capital. It may be that the man who has the capital has neither the disposition nor ability to use it. Let him then, upon a fair consideration, lend the capital to the man who can use it.

III. Chiefly we must strive to avoid THE TAKING SELFISH ADVANTAGE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR'S NECESSITIES. Rather we should rejoice to take advantage of these necessities to show beyond all dispute, that the love of God is indeed the ruling principle of our hearts. Man's extremity, it has often been said, is God's opportunity, and so it should be the Christian's opportunity. By timely aid, if we have it to bestow, let us strive to deliver the poor from the clutches of the usurer, and especially let us give our aid to what may be devised for the curing of poverty's disease altogether. Every alteration either in laws or customs which will tend to diminish poverty—let it have our strenuous support. Bear in mind that whatever each man has beyond a certain moderate share of this world's goods can only come to him because others have less than reasonable comfort demands. We should ever be aiming by all methods that are reasonable, just, and practicable, to secure to each one neither poverty nor riches, but just that food which is convenient for him. God wishes every man to have his daily bread; and it is an awful thing that we by our selfishness do so much to make the question of daily bread the only one that many of our fellow-creatures have time or inclination to ask. It seems to take every hour and every energy to keep the wolf from the door.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE BOOK OF THE COVENANT.—Continued.

Vers. 1—19.—MISCELLANEOUS LAWS—continued. The same want of logical arrangement appears in this chapter as in the preceding one. The first nine verses contain some twelve laws, of which not more than two that are consecutive can be said to be on the same subject. There is perhaps in the section a predominant idea of warning against sins and

errors connected with the trial of causes before a court, but verses 4 and 5, at any rate, lie quite outside this idea. From verse 10 to verse 19 the laws are connected with ceremonial observance and include (1) The law of the Sabbath, (2) of the Sabbatical year, (3) of the Great Festivals, (4) of sacrifice, and (5) of first-fruits.

Ver. 1.—The ninth commandment is here expanded and developed. *Thou shalt not raise a false report*, forbids the origination of

a calumny; the other clause prohibits the joining with others in spreading one. Both clauses have a special reference to bearing witness in a court, but neither would seem to be confined to it.

Ver. 2.—**Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.** Rather, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to evil." A law alike for deed, for word, and for thought. The example of the many is to be shunned. "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." But "strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it" (Matt. vii. 13, 14). It is extraordinary that so many, even of professing Christians, are content to go with the many, notwithstanding the warnings against so doing, both of the law and of the Gospel. **Neither shalt thou speak,** etc. Rather, "Neither shalt thou bear witness in a cause to go aside after a multitude to put aside justice." The general precept is followed by a particular application of it. In judging a cause, if thou art one of the judges, thou shalt not simply go with the majority, if it be bent on injustice, but form thine own opinion and adhere to it.

Ver. 3.—**Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause.** After the many precepts in favour of the poor, this injunction produces a sort of shock. But it is to be understood as simply forbidding any undue favouring of the poor because they are poor, and so as equivalent to the precept in Lev. xix. 15, "Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor." In courts of justice, strict justice is to be rendered, without any leaning either towards the rich, or towards the poor. To lean either way is to pervert judgment.

Ver. 4.—**Thine enemy's ox.** A private enemy is here spoken of, not a public one, as in Deut. xxiii. 6. It is remarkable that the law should have so far anticipated Christianity as to have laid it down that men have duties of friendliness even towards their enemies, and are bound under certain circumstances to render them a service. "Hate thine enemies" (Matt. v. 43) was no injunction of the Mosaic law, but a conclusion which Rabbinical teachers unwarrantably drew from it. Christianity, however, goes far beyond Mosaism in laying down the broad precept—"Love your enemies."

Ver. 5.—**If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee,** etc. The general meaning of the passage is clear—assistance is to be given to the fallen ass of an enemy—but the exact sense of both the second and third clauses is doubtful. Many renderings have been suggested; but it is not clear that any one of them is an improvement on the Authorised Version. **Thou shalt surely help with him.** The joint participation in an act of mercy towards a

fallen beast would bring the enemies into friendly contact, and soften their feelings towards each other.

Ver. 6.—As in verse 3 men were warned not to favour the poor unduly in courts of justice out of compassion for them, so here there is a warning against the opposite, and far more usual error, of leaning against the poor man in our evidence or in our decisions. The scales of justice are to be held even; strict right is to be done; our feelings are not to be allowed to influence us, much less our class prejudices.

Ver. 7.—**Keep thee far from a false matter.** Hold aloof, i.e., from anything like a false accusation. Neither bring one, nor countenance one, else those mayest cause the death of an innocent and righteous man, and bring down on thyself the vengeance of him, who will not justify the wicked.

Ver. 8.—**And thou shalt take no gift.** The worst sin of a judge, and the commonest in the East, is to accept a bribe from one of the parties to a suit, and give sentence accordingly. As such a practice defeats the whole end for which the administration of justice exists, it is, when detected, for the most part, punished capitally. Josephus tells us that it was so among the Jews (*Contr. Apion.* ii. 27); but the Mosaic code, as it has come down to us, omits to fix the penalty. Whatever it was, it was practically set at naught. Eli's sons "turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment" (1 Sam. viii. 3). In David's time, men's hands were "full of bribes" (Ps. xxvi. 10). Solomon complains of wicked men "taking gifts out of their bosoms to pervert the ways of judgment" (Prov. xvii. 23). Isaiah is never weary of bearing witness against the princes of his day, who "love gifts and follow after rewards" (Is. i. 23); who "justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him" (*ib.* v. 23). Micah adds his testimony—"Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob and princes of the house of Israel, that *abhor judgment and pervert all equity.* They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof *judge for reward*" (ch. iii. 9—11). The gift blindeth the wise. See Deut. xvi. 19.

Ver. 9.—**Thou shalt not oppress a stranger.** This is a repetition of ch. xxii. 21, with perhaps a special reference to oppression through courts of justice. For thou knowest the heart of a stranger. Literally, "the mind of a stranger," or, in other words, his thoughts and feelings. Thou shouldst therefore be able to sympathise with him.

CEREMONIAL LAWS (vers. 10—19).

Vers. 10, 11.—**Law of the Sabbatical year.** Days of rest, at regular or irregular intervals, were well known to the ancients: and some

regulations of the kind existed in most countries. But entire years of rest were wholly unknown to any nation except the Israelites, and exposed them to the reproach of idleness. (See Tacit. *Hist.* v. 4:—"Septimum die otium placuisse ferunt, quia is finem laborum dedit; dein, blandiente inertia, septimum quoque annum ignavia datum"). In a primitive condition of agriculture, when rotation of crops was unknown, artificial manure unemployed, and the need of letting even the best land sometimes lie fallow unrecognised, it may not have been an uneconomical arrangement to require an entire suspension of cultivation once in seven years. But great difficulty was probably experienced in enforcing the law. Just as there were persons who wished to gather manna on the seventh day (ch. xvi. 27), so there would be many anxious to obtain in the seventh year something more from their fields than Nature would give them if left to herself. If the "seventy years" of the captivity were intended exactly to make up for omissions of the due observance of the sabbatical year, we must suppose that between the time of the exodus and the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the ordinance had been as often neglected as observed. (See 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21.) The primary object of the requirement was, as stated in ver. 11, that the poor of thy people may eat, what the land brought forth of its own accord in the Sabbatical year being shared by them (Lev. xxv. vi.). But no doubt it was also intended that the Sabbatical year should be one of increased religious observance, whereof the solemn reading of the law in the ears of the people at the Feast of Tabernacles "in the year of release" (Deut. xxxi. 10) was an indication and a part. That reading was properly preceded by a time of religious preparation (Neh. viii. 1—15), and would naturally lead on to further acts of a religious character, which might occupy a considerable period (*ibid.* chs. ix. and x.). Altogether, the year was a most solemn period, calling men to religious self-examination, to repentance, to the formation of holy habits, and tending to a general elevation among the people of the standard of holiness. What they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. There was to be no regular ingathering. The proprietor, his servants, the poor, and the stranger were to take what they needed; and the residue was to be for the cattle and for the beasts that were in the land (Deut. xxv. 6, 7). Thy vineyard—thy oliveyard. Corn, wine, and oil were the only important products of Palestine; and this mention of the vineyard and the oliveyard shows that one and the same law was to hold good of all the lands in the country, however they might be cultivated. The whole land was to rest.

Ver. 12.—*Law of the Sabbath, repeated.* Nothing is here added to the teaching of the Fourth Commandment; but its *merciful* character is especially brought out. Men are called on to observe it, in order that their cattle may obtain rest, and their servants, together with the stranger that is within their gates, may find refreshment. It is to be borne in mind that the foreign population of Palestine was mostly held to hard service. (See 2 Chron. ii. 17, 18.)

Verse 13 contains two injunctions—one general, one special:—1. "Be circumspect" (or cautious, careful) "in respect of all that I command you." 2. "Do not so much as utter the name of any false god." Not even to mention their names, was to show them the greatest contempt possible; and, if followed out universally, would soon have produced an absolute oblivion of them. Moses, it may be observed, scarcely ever does mention their names. Later historians and prophets had to do so, either to deliver the true history of the Israelites, or to denounce idolatries to which they were given. There are many words one would wish never to utter; but while wicked men do the things of which they are the names, preachers are obliged to use the words in their sermons and other warnings.

Vers. 14—17.—*Law of Festivals.* "The sanctification of days and times," says Richard Hooker, "is a token of that thankfulness and a part of that public honour which we owe to God for admirable benefits, whereof it doth not suffice that we keep a secret calendar, taking thereby our private occasions as we list ourselves to think how much God hath done for all men; but the days which are chosen out to serve as public memorials of such his mercies ought to be clothed with those outward robes of holiness whereby their difference from other days may be made sensible" (*Eccles. Pol.* v. 70, § 1). All ancient religions had solemn festival seasons, when particular mercies of God were specially commemorated, and when men, meeting together in large numbers, mutually cheered and excited each other to a warmer devotion and a more hearty pouring forth of thanks than human weakness made possible at other times. In Egypt such festivals were frequent, and held a high place in the religion (Herod. ii. 58—64). Abraham's family had probably had observances of the kind in their Mesopotamian home. God's providence saw good now to give supernatural sanction to the natural piety which had been accustomed

thus to express itself. Three great feasts were appointed, of which the most remarkable features were—1. That they were at once agricultural and historical—connected with the regularly recurrent course of the seasons, and connected also with great events in the life of the nation; 2. That they could be kept only at one spot, that namely where the tabernacle was at the time located; 3. That they were to be attended by the whole male population. The three festivals are here called—1. *The Feast of Unleavened Bread* (ver. 15), the early spring festival, at the beginning of barley harvest in the month Abib (Nisan), commemorative of the going forth from Egypt; 2. *The Feast of Harvest* (elsewhere called “of weeks”) at the beginning of summer, when the wheat crop had been reaped, commemorative of the giving of the law; and 3. *The Feast of Ingathering* (ver. 16) in Tisri, at the close of the vintage, when all the crops of every kind had been gathered in, commemorative of the sojourn in the wilderness. The first of the three, the feast of unleavened bread, had been already instituted (ch. xiii. 3—10); the two others are now for the first time sketched out, their details being kept back to be filled in subsequently (Lev. xxiii. 15—21, and 34—36). Here the legislator is content to lay it down that the great feasts will be three, and that all the males are to attend them.

Ver. 15.—*The feast of unleavened bread.* This commenced with the Passover, and continued for the seven days following, with a “holy convocation” on the first of the seven and on the last (Lev. xxiii. 5—8). Unleavened bread was eaten in commemoration of the hasty exodus from Egypt (ch. xii. 34). A sheaf of new barley—the first-fruits of the harvest—was offered as a wave-offering before the Lord (Lev. xxiii. 10—14). Every male Israelite of full age was bound to attend, and to bring with him a free-will offering. In the time appointed of the month—i.e., on the fourteenth day (ch. xii. 18). *None shall appear before me empty.* This rule applies, not to the Passover only, but to all the feasts.

Ver. 16.—*The feast of harvest.* Fifty days were to be numbered from the day of offering the barley sheaf, and on the *fiftieth* the feast of harvest, thence called “Pentecost,” was to be celebrated. Different Jewish sects make different calculations; but the majority celebrate Pentecost on the sixth of Sivan (May 25). The main ceremony was the offering to God of two leavened loaves of the finest flour

made out of the wheat just gathered in, and called the first-fruits of the harvest. The festival lasted only a single day; but it was one of a peculiarly social and joyful character (Deut. xvi. 9—11). Jewish tradition connects the feast further with the giving of the law, which must certainly have taken place about the time (see ch. xix. 1—16). *The first-fruits.* Rather, “*Of the first-fruits.*” The word is in apposition with “harvest,” not with “feast.” *Which thou hast sown.* The *sown* harvest was gathered in by Pentecost; what remained to collect afterwards was the produce of plantations.

The feast of ingathering. Called elsewhere, and more commonly, “the feast of tabernacles” (Lev. xxiii. 34; Deut. xvi. 13; xxxi. 10; John vii. 2), from the circumstance that the people were commanded to make themselves booths, and dwell in them during the time of the feast. The festival began on the 15th of Tisri, or in the early part of our October, when the olives had been gathered in and the vintage was completed. It lasted seven, or (according to some) eight days, and comprised two holy convocations. In one point of view it was a festival of thanksgiving for the final getting in of the crops; in another, a commemoration of the safe passage through the desert from Egypt to Palestine. The feast seems to have been neglected during the captivity, but was celebrated with much glee in the time of Nehemiah (Neh. viii. 17). *In the end of the year—i.e., the end of the agricultural year—when the harvest was over—as explained in the following clause.*

Ver. 17.—*Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord God.* This seems to moderns a very burdensome enactment. But we must remember that Palestine is not bigger than Wales, and that great gatherings had great attractions for many in the ancient world, when they were the only means by which information was spread, and almost the only occasions on which friends and relations who lived far apart could expect to see each other. The European Greeks had, in their Olympian and other games, similar great gatherings, which occurred once or twice in each year, and, though under no obligation to do so, attended them in enormous numbers. It may be doubted if the religious Hebrews *felt* the obligation of attendance to be a burthen. It was assuredly a matter of great importance, as tending to unity, and to the quickening of the national life, that they should be drawn so continually to one centre, and be so frequently united in one common worship. Most students of antiquity regard the Greek games as having exerted a strong unifying influence over the scattered members of the Grecian family. The Hebrew festivals, occurring so much more frequently, and required to be attended by *all*, must have

had a similar, but much greater, effect of the same kind.

Ver. 18.—*Law of the Paschal sacrifice.* That the Paschal lamb is here intended by "my sacrifice," seems to be certain, since the two injunctions to put away leavened bread, and to allow none of the victim's flesh to remain till the morning (see ch. xii. 10), are combined in the Paschal sacrifice only. Of all the offerings commanded in the law the Paschal lamb was the most important, since it typified Christ. It may therefore well be termed, in an especial way, "God's sacrifice." By the fat of my feast some understand the fat of the lamb, others the best part of the feast (Keil)—i.e., the lamb itself. In ch. xxxiv. 25, which is closely parallel to the present place, we read, for "the fat of my feast," "the sacrifice of the feast of the passover."

Ver. 19.—*Law of first-fruits.* The first of the first-fruits may mean either "the best of the first-fruits" (see Num. xviii. 12), or "the very first of each kind that is ripe" (ib. verse 13). On the tendency to delay, and not bring the very first, see the comment on ch. xxii. 29. The house of the Lord. Generally, in the Pentateuch we have the periphrasis—"the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to put his name there" (Deut. xii. 5, 11, 14; xvi. 16; xxvi. 2, etc.); but here, and

in ch. xxxiv. 26, and again in Deut. xxi. 18, this "place" is plainly declared to be "house" or "temple."

Law against seething a kid in the mother's milk. The outline of law put before the Israelites in the "Book of the Covenant" terminated with this remarkable prohibition. Its importance is shown—1. By its place here; and 2. By its being thrice repeated in the law of Moses (see ch. xxxiv. 16; and Deut. xiv. 21). Various explanations have been given of it; but none is satisfactory, except that which views it as "a protest against cruelty, and outraging the order of nature," more especially that peculiarly sacred portion of nature's order, the tender relation between parent and child, mother and suckling. No doubt the practice existed. Kids were thought to be most palatable when boiled in milk; and the mother's milk was frequently the readiest to obtain. But in this way the mother was made a sort of accomplice in the death of her child, which men were induced to kill on account of the flavour that her milk gave it. Reason has nothing to say against such a mode of preparing food, but feeling revolts from it; and the general sense of civilised mankind echoes the precept, which is capable of a wide application—*Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.*

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—3; 6—9.—*God's care for the administration of justice.* The well-being of a community depends largely on the right administration of justice within its limits. It has been said that the entire constitution of England with all its artifices, complications, balances, and other delicate arrangements, exists mainly for the purpose of putting twelve honest men into a jury-box. *Fiat justitia, ruat cælum.* Anything is preferable to the triumphant rule of injustice. The present passage clearly shows that God recognises very decidedly the importance of judicial proceedings. By direct communication with Moses, he lays down rules which affect—1. The accuser; 2. The witnesses; and 3. The judge.

I. WITH RESPECT TO THE ACCUSER. False accusation is to be avoided, and especially capital charges against the innocent (ver. 7).

II. WITH RESPECT TO WITNESSES. Men are to beware of either inventing an untrue tale or giving any support to it when it has been invented by others (ver. 1).

III. WITH RESPECT TO JUDGES. 1. They are not to act like Pilate and "follow a multitude to do evil" (ver. 2). 2. They are not either unduly to favour the poor (ver. 3); or 3. To wrest justice against them (ver. 6). 4. They are not to oppress strangers (ver. 9). And 5. They are, above all things, not to take a bribe.

Accusers, beware! Be sure that your charge is true, or do not make it. A false charge, even though proved false, may injure a man for life—he may never be able to recover from it. Particularly, be careful, if your charge is a serious one, involving risk to life. You may, if successful, "slay the innocent and the righteous" (ver. 7). Nay, you may slay a man by a false charge which does not directly affect his life—you may so harass and annoy him as to drive him to suicide, or "break his heart," and so shorten his days. Even if you have a true charge to bring, it is not always wise or Christian to bring it. St. Paul would have us in some cases "take wrong" and "suffer ourselves to be defrauded" (1 Cor. vi. 7).

Witnesses, beware! Do not give untrue evidence, either in the way of raising false

reports yourselves, or of supporting by your evidence the false reports of others. The witnesses who cause an innocent person to be condemned are as much to blame as the false accuser. Be very careful in giving evidence to speak "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Depose to nothing of which you are not sure. If you are uncertain, say that you are uncertain, however much the adverse counsel may browbeat you. In cases of personal identity, be specially careful. It is exceedingly easy to be mistaken about a man whom you have seen only once or twice.

Judges, beware! On you the final issue depends. Be not swayed by popularity. Yield not to the outcries either of an excited mob, or a partisan press, when they shout, "away with him!" Hold the scales of justice even between the rich man and the poor, neither suffering your prejudice of class to incline you in favour of the former, nor a weak sentimentality to make you lean unduly towards the latter. Be sure not to oppress foreigners, who must plead to disadvantage in a country, and amid proceedings, that are strange to them. Above all, do not condescend to take a bribe from either side. A gift is a weight in the scales of justice; and "a false balance is an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xi. 1).

Vers. 5, 6.—*The duties which men owe to their enemies.* These duties may be considered as they were revealed to men. 1. Under the law: and 2. Under the gospel.

I. UNDER THE LAW. Men were required to protect the interests of their enemies, when they could do so without loss to themselves. For instance—1. They were not to cut down fruit trees in an enemy's country (Deut. xx. 19, 20). 2. They were not to remove a neighbour's landmark, even though he might be an enemy. 3. They were to hasten after an enemy's ox or ass if they saw it going astray, to catch it, and bring it back to him. 4. They were to approach him, if they saw his ass fallen under the weight of its load, and to help him to raise it up. 5. If he were suffering from hunger or thirst, they were to give him bread to eat and water to drink (Prov. xxv. 21). 6. They were to refrain from rejoicing over his misadventures (*ib.* ch. xxiv. 17).

II. UNDER THE GOSPEL. Men are required under the Gospel to do all this, and much more. 1. They are to "love their enemies" (Matt. v. 44). 2. To do good to them in every way—feed them (Rom. xii. 20), bless them (Matt. l.s.c.), pray for them (*ib.*), be patient towards them (1 Thess. v. 14), seek to convert them from the error of their ways (Jas. v. 20), save them (*ib.*). Christ set the example of praying for his enemies upon the cross—God set the example of loving his enemies when he gave his Son to suffer death for them—the Holy Spirit sets the example of patience towards his enemies, when he strives with them. We have to forgive our enemies day by day their trespasses against us—to pray and work for their conversion—to seek to overcome their evil with our good. In temporal matters, it is our business to be most careful that we do them no injury, by misrepresentation, by disparagement, by unfair criticism, by lies, even by "faint praise." We are to "love" them; or, if poor human nature finds this too hard, we are to act as if we loved them, and then ultimately love will come.

Vers. 10, 11.—*The Sabbatical year.* The Sabbatical year—an institution peculiar to the Israelites, and quite contrary to anything of which they had had experience in Egypt—is a remarkable proof,

I. OF THE DIVINE WISDOM. Under the ordinary circumstances of tillage, land from time to time requires rest. In Egypt it was otherwise. There, under the exceptional circumstances of a soil continually recruited by the spread over it of a rich alluvium from the great river, not only was the whole arable area capable of producing good crops year after year, without ever lying fallow, but from the same soil several crops were ordinarily taken in the course of the twelvemonth. The Israelites had had no experience of any other agriculture than this for above four centuries. Yet now, suddenly, a new system is adopted by them. God knew that the system of Egyptian tillage was not suitable for Palestine—that there the soil would not recruit itself—that, cultivated on the Egyptian system, it would rapidly become exhausted; and therefore he devised, in the interests of his people, a new system for Palestine. The whole land should have rest one year in seven. Thus only, in the then existing condition of agriculture, could exhaustion be prevented, productivity secured, and the land enabled to retain its character of "a good land," "a land flowing with milk and honey," "a land of corn and wine, of bread and vineyards,

and oil olive," "a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates—a land of oil olive, and honey—a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it" (Deut. viii. 8, 9).

II. OF THE DIVINE BENEFICENCE. Under the system thus Divinely imposed upon the Israelites, three beneficent purposes were accomplished. 1. *The proprietor was benefited.* Not only was he prevented from exhausting his farm by over-cropping, and so sinking into poverty, but he was forced to form habits of forethought and providence. He necessarily laid by something for the seventh year, and hence learnt to calculate his needs, to store his grain, and to keep something in hand against the future. In this way his reason and reflective powers were developed, and he was advanced from a mere labouring hind to a thoughtful cultivator. 2. *The poor were benefited.* As whatever grew in the seventh year grew spontaneously, without expense or trouble on the part of the owner, it could not be rightfully considered to belong exclusively to him. The Mosaic law placed it on a par with ordinary wild fruits, and granted it to the first comer (Lev. xxv. 5, 6). By this arrangement the poor were enabled to profit, since it was they especially who gathered the store that Nature's bounty provided. In the dry climate of Palestine, where much grain is sure to be shed during the gathering in of the harvest, the spontaneous growth would probably be considerable, and would amply suffice for the sustenance of those who had no other resource. 3. *The beasts were benefited.* God "careth for cattle." He appoints the Sabbatical year, in part, that "the beasts of the field" may have abundance to eat. When men dole out their food, they have often a scanty allowance. God would have them, for one year in seven at least, eat their fill.

Ver. 12.—*The rest of the Sabbath.* In the fourth commandment it is the main object of the Sabbath that is put prominently forward. It is a day to be "kept holy"—a day which God has "blessed and hallowed." Here, on the contrary, our attention is called to its secondary object—it is for "*rest*" and "*refreshment*." Perhaps men of the classes who are in easy circumstances do not sufficiently realise the intense relief that is furnished by the Sunday rest to the classes below them, to the over-taxed artisan, the household drudge, the wearied and stupefied farm-labourer—nay, even to the clerk, the accountant, the shopkeeper, the salesman. Continuous mechanical work of one and the same kind is required of most of those who labour, from morning till night, and from one end of the week to the other. The monotony of their occupations is terrible—is deadening—is sometimes maddening. For them, the treat that the Sunday affords is the single gleam of light in their uniformly murky sky, the single ray of hope that gilds their else miserable existence, the single link that connects them with the living world of thought, and sentiment, and feeling, for which they were born, and in which their spirits long to expatiate. *Rest!* To the tired brute, forced to slave for his owner up to the full measure of his powers, and beyond them—ready to sink to the earth the moment he is not artificially sustained—who goes through his daily round in a state that is half-sleep, half-waking—what a blessed change is the quietude of the Sunday, when for four-and-twenty hours at least he enjoys absolute and entire repose, recruits his strength, rests all his muscles, is called on to make no exertion! *Refreshment!* How thrice blessed to the overwrought man, and still more to the overwrought woman, is the relaxation of the dreadful tension of their lives which Sunday brings! "No rest, no pause, no peace," for six long days—days beginning early and ending late—days without change or variety—without relaxation or amusement—wretched, miserable days, during which they wish a hundred times that they had never been born. On such the Sunday rest falls as a refreshing dew. Their drooping spirits rise to it. They inhale at every pore its beneficent influences. They feel it to be "a refuge from the storms of life, a bourne of peace after six days of care and toil, a goal to which they may look with glad hearts, and towards which they may work with hopeful spirits amid the intense struggles, and fervid contests, and fierce strifes of existence." Without the Sunday rest, *modern* life, at any rate, would be intolerable; and the mass of those who are actively engaged in its various phases would drift into idiocy, or be driven to madness!

Vers. 14—17.—*Festival times.* I. FESTIVALS ARE COMMEMORATIONS. The joyful occurrences of our own lives we by a natural instinct commemorate yearly, as the day

comes round when they happened to us. Our birth-day, our wedding-day, are thus made domestic festivals. Similarly, a nation commemorates the Day of its Independence, or the three glorious days of its Revolution, or the day on which its armies gained a great and crowning victory. It is reasonable that the practice thus established should be followed also in the Church of God, and the days on which great spiritual blessings or deliverances were granted to it kept in remembrance by some appropriate and peculiar observance. The Jews kept three great festivals, to which afterwards two others were added, all of them more or less commemorative. The Passover commemorated the *passing over* of the houses of the Israelites by the destroying angel and the hasty flight out of Egypt; the feast of Pentecost commemorated, according to Jewish tradition, the giving of the law; tabernacles recalled and perpetuated the dwelling in tents in the wilderness; Purim, the deliverance from the malice of Haman; the Dedication, that from Antiochus Epiphanes. And Christian festivals are of a similar character. Advent commemorates the approach, and Christmas the birth, of Christ, Epiphany his manifestation to the Gentiles, Easter his resurrection from the dead, Ascension-day his ascent into heaven, Whitsuntide the coming of the Holy Ghost. "Saints' days," as they are called, commemorate the entrance into final bliss of those whose names they bear. All the greater, and almost all the lesser, festivals of the Christian Church are commemorations, days appointed for perpetuating the remembrance of events dear to the Christian heart and deeply interwoven with the Christian life. It follows that—

II. FESTIVALS ARE TIMES OF SPIRITUAL JOY. There are some to whom religion seems altogether a melancholy thing. Religious persons they suppose to be dwellers in perpetual sadness, gloomy, ascetic, dull, cheerless, miserable. But this is altogether a mistake. Holy joy is continually required of men as a duty in the Bible. "Rejoice evermore," says the great apostle of the Gentiles (1 Thess. v. 16); and again, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice" (Rom. xii. 15). "O be joyful in the Lord," is a constant cry of the Psalmist. Our Lord bade us "rejoice and be exceeding glad," even when we are persecuted, and assured us that "our joy no man taketh from us." There may be a sobriety in Christian joy which distinguishes it from the fitful, feverish, and excited joy of the world; but it is joy—true joy—nevertheless. And for this joy no times are so fitting as festival times. "This is the day which the Lord hath made," said holy David; "*let us rejoice and be glad in it.*" "Offices and duties of religious joy," as Hooker notes, "are that wherein the hallowing of festival times consisteth" (Eccles. Pol. v. 70, § 2). The set services of religion on festival days take a tone of gladness beyond the common; and the "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" suited for such occasions are of a still more jubilant type. Then especially do the precepts hold—"Rejoice in the Lord," "Serve the Lord with gladness," "Show yourselves joyful unto the Lord—sing, rejoice, and give thanks."

III. FESTIVALS SHOULD BE TIMES OF THANKSGIVING. Nothing is more remarkable in man than his deadness, and dulness, and apathy in respect to all that God has done for him. Warm gratitude, lively thankfulness, real heartfelt devotion, are rare, even in the best of us. Festivals are designed to stir and quicken our feelings, to rouse us from our deadness, to induce us to shake off our apathy, and both with heart and voice glorify God, who hath done so great things for us. Festivals bring before us vividly the special Divine mercy which they commemorate, and at the same time present to our view the beneficent side, so to speak, of the Divine nature, and lead us to contemplate it. God is *essentially* love; "he declares his Almighty power *most chiefly* in showing mercy and pity" (Collect for Eleventh Sunday after Trinity). Festivals remind us of this. We lose the advantage of them wholly if we do not stir ourselves, on occasion of them, to some real outpouring of love and thanks to him who granted us the blessing of the time, as well as every other blessing, and every "good and perfect gift" of which we have the enjoyment.

IV. FESTIVALS SHOULD BE TIMES OF BOUNTY. When the soul of a man is glad, and penetrated with the sense of God's goodness and mercy towards it, the heart naturally opens itself to a consideration of other men's needs and necessities. Being glad itself, it would fain make others glad. Hence, in the old world, great occasions of joy were always occasions of largess. The Israelites were commanded to remember the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow at the time of their festivals (Deut. xvi. 14); and the practice

was to "send portions" to them (Neh. viii. 10; Esth. ix. 22). We shall do well to imitate their liberality, and to make, not Christmas only, but each festival season a time of "sending portions" to the poor and needy.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—10.—*Doing justice and loving mercy.* In pursuance of its great requirement of love to one's neighbour, the law next prohibits the raising of a false report, the bearing of false witness in a court of justice, and the wresting of judgment. Recognising however, that "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matt. xv. 19), the law, in addition to forbidding the outward acts, is at pains to warn against the motives and influences which most commonly lead to these acts. This section naturally follows the catalogue of "rights" in previous chapters, as dealing with cases of litigation arising on the basis of these "rights." Notice:—

I. THE SINS PROHIBITED. 1. *The raising of a false report.* This also is a species of false witness, though of a less formal character than the bearing of false witness in a court of justice. The forms it may assume are innumerable. The three principal are:—(1) Deliberate invention and circulation of falsehoods. (2) Innuendo, or malicious suggestion. (3) Distortion or deceitful colouring of actual facts. In God's sight slander ranks as one of the worst of offences. It indicates great malevolence. It is grievously unjust and injurious to the person traduced. It is certain to be taken up, and industriously propagated. For a calumny is never wholly wiped out. There are always some evil-speaking persons disposed to believe and repeat it. It affixes a mark on the injured party which may remain on him through life. Everyone is interested in the suppression of such an offence—the parties immediately concerned, the Church, society at large, the magistracy, God himself—of one of whose commandments (the 9th) it is a daring violation. It is a form of vice which should incur the emphatic reprobation of society, and which, where possible, should be visited with heavy legal penalties. 2. *False witness in court.* This, as a deliberate attempt to poison the stream of public justice, is a crime which admits of no palliation. It is a form of vice which, so far as we know, has never found a defender. All ages and all societies have united in condemning it as an offence deserving of severe punishment. Yet many a privately-circulated slander may do more harm than a falsehood uttered in the witness-box. God judges of these matters, not by their legal but by their moral turpitude. 3. *Wresting of judgment.* The corruption of public justice here reaches the fountain head. The judge who gives dishonest decisions betrays the cause of righteousness. He misrepresents the mind of God. He inflicts irremediable injury on the innocent. He opens a floodgate to iniquity. Few men, therefore, are guiltier than he. God will not spare him in the day of his judgment. Even in private life, however, we need to beware of judging rashly, of judging with bias and prejudice, of judging so as to do wrong to individuals, of judging so as to injure truth and retard progress and improvement. This also is "wresting judgment."

II. MOTIVES LEADING TO THESE SINS. 1. *The influence of the crowd* (ver. 2). There is an infectiousness in the example of a crowd which only a firm back-bone of principle, and some independence of mind, will enable us to resist. The tendency is to follow the multitude, even when it is to do evil. (1) Men like to be on the side that is popular. They dread the reproach of singularity. There are those who would almost rather die than be out of the fashion. (2) A crowd can ridicule, and a crowd can intimidate. It may put pressure upon us which we have not the moral courage to resist. (3) A thing, besides, does not look so evil, when many are engaged in doing it. They do not, of course, call it evil. They put new names upon it, and laugh at us for our scruples. This may lead us to think that the course in which we are asked to join is not so very bad after all. So we belie or dissemble our real convictions, and do what the crowd bids us. To such influences we are certain to fall a prey, if we are governed by the fear of man more than by the fear of God (Acts iv. 19, 20), or if we seek the praise of man more than the honour which comes from God (John v. 44; xii. 43). As counteractives to the influence of the crowd we do well to remember that the "vox

populi" is not always "vox Dei;" that the fashion of the day can never make that right which the law of God declares to be wrong; that the voice of the multitude is one thing to-day, and another thing to-morrow, while truth and duty remain one and the same; that whatever others think, it can never be lawful for us to act contrary to our *own* convictions; that if the multitude are bent on doing evil, it is our duty, not to go with them, but to be witnesses for the truth in opposition to their courses; that great guilt attaches to us if we do wrong simply in deference to popular sentiment; finally, that there is one who judges us, that is, God, and that he will surely call us to account for all such unfaithfulness to conviction (ver. 7). 2. *False sympathy.* Judgment was not to be wrested, nor false witness given, out of any quasi-benevolent wish to do a good turn to the poor (ver. 3). The poor man is not to be unjustly dealt with (ver. 6), but neither is he to receive favour. A court of law is not the place for sentiment. Equal measure is to be meted out to all. Judgment is to be given impartially as between brother and brother; rich and poor; citizen and foreigner (ver. 9); applying the same principles to each case, and keeping in view the essential merits as the sole thing to be regarded. 3. *Enmity.* Enmity to another, or the consideration of another's enmity to us, is not to be allowed to sway us in giving judgment in his cause, or in any other matter in which his rights are affected. This seems to be the connection of vers. 4, 5, with what precedes and follows; but the duty is taught somewhat indirectly by laying down the principle that enmity is not to be allowed to influence us *at all*, in *any* of our dealings with our neighbours. The illustrations taken are very striking, and fairly anticipate the gospel inculcation of love to enemies (cf. Deut. xxii. 1, 4). If an enemy's ox or ass was seen going astray, the Israelite was not to hide himself, and let it go, but was "surely" to take it back again. Or if his enemy's ass fell under a burden, he was not to yield to the temptation to forbear help, but was "surely" to help him to lift it up. *A fortiori*, he was not to allow himself to be in any way influenced by enmity in giving evidence before the judges, or in pronouncing judgment on a cause brought before him. 4. *Covetousness.* (Ver. 8.) This forbids bribery. It is impossible for a judge to take a bribe, whether given directly or indirectly, and yet retain his integrity. Despite of himself, the gift will blind his eyes, and pervert his words. For the same reason a man can never be an impartial judge in his own cause.—J. O.

Vers. 10—20.—*Sabbaths and feasts.* I. SABBATHS. 1. *The Sabbatic year* (vers. 10, 11). Every seventh year the land was to lie fallow, and what it spontaneously produced was to be a provision for the poor, and for the beasts of the field. There was connected with the ordinance a special promise of unusual fertility in the sixth year—of such plenty as would make the nation independent of a harvest in the seventh (Lev. xxv. 21, 22). The Sabbatic year was (1) A period of rest for the land. Even nature requires her seasons of rest. Only thus will she yield to man the best of her produce. The seventh year's rest was an agricultural benefit. (2) A period of rest for the labourer. It gave him time for higher employment. Moses enjoined that the whole law should be read on this year at the feast of Tabernacles (Deut. xxxi. 10, 14). This may have been designed to teach, "that the year, as a whole, should be much devoted to the meditation of the law, and engaging in services of devotion" (Fairbairn). (3) A merciful provision for the poor. It laid an arrest on man's natural selfishness, and taught beneficence and consideration for the needy. It showed that if *man* cared not for the poor, *God* did. (4) It was a test of obedience. It would test conclusively whether the people were disposed to obey God, or would be ruled only by their own wills. In point of fact, the ordinance was not kept. It proved to be too high and Divine a thing for covetous and selfish dispositions. The neglect of it commenced very early, and lasted till the period of the captivity (2 Chron. xxxvi. 21). (5) A periodical reminder that the land, and everything that grew upon it, belonged to God. Had the Israelites observed the ordinance, the recurrent plenty of the sixth year would, like the double supply of manna on the sixth day in the wilderness, have been a visible witness to them of the supernatural presence of Jehovah in their midst. 2. *The weekly Sabbath* (ver. 12). The invaluable seventh day's rest was also to be sacredly observed by the nation. Well-kept Sabbaths have much to do with national prosperity.

II. FEASTS. The stated festivals were three (vers. 14—17). The design in their appointment was to commemorate mercies, to keep alive the memory of national events,

to foster a sense of unity in the people, to quicken religious life, to furnish opportunities of public worship. They afforded a means of strengthening the bond between the people and Jehovah, promoted brotherly intercourse, infused warmth and gladness into religious service, and were connected with a ritual which taught the worshippers solemn and impressive lessons. The feasts were:—1. The *Passover*—here called “the feast of unleavened bread” (vers. 15—18). It commemorated the great National Deliverance (see on Ex. xii.). The use of unleavened bread was a call to spiritual purity (1 Cor. v. 8). The blood was offered (ver. 18) as an ever-renewed atonement for sin. The “fat” of the sacrifice betokened the consecration of the best. 2. *Pentecost*—here called “the feast of harvest, the first-fruits of thy labours” (ver. 16). Its primary reference was agricultural. It was a recognition of God in the gift of the harvest. It besought his blessing upon the labours of the field. It consecrated to him the first-fruits (ver. 19) of what he had given (two wave-loaves, Lev. xxiii. 17). In the dedication of the wave-loaves, as in the weekly presentation of the shewbread in the tabernacle (ch. xxv. 30), there was further symbolised the dedication to God of the life which the bread nourished. Fitly, therefore, was this day chosen for the presentation to God of the first-fruits of his Church (Acts ii.). 3. *The feast of Tabernacles*—“the feast of ingathering” (ver. 16). This was the feast of the completed harvest, when the corn, the wine, and the oil, had all been gathered in. During the seven days of the feast the people dwelt in booths, in commemoration of their wanderings in the wilderness. The dwelling in booths was a symbol also of their present pilgrim condition on earth, as “strangers and sojourners” (Ps. xxxix. 12). The precept in ver. 19, which seems related to this feast,—“Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother’s milk,” had probably reference to some harvest superstition. On its moral lessons, see Deut. xiv. 21.—J. O.

Vers. 1—9.—*Seeking the things which make for justice.* The illustrations adduced in these nine verses show the various ways in which men may be tempted to injustice in judicial procedure. Those who believe themselves wronged have to appeal to their fellow men to settle the matter so far as human capacity can settle it. Hence the positions indicated in this passage. We see plaintiffs, defendants, witnesses, judges, and supporters and sympathisers, and the great aim set before all of them is the attainment of just conclusions. Men feel nothing more bitterly than unjust treatment; and yet just treatment is one of the most difficult of all things to get. Even he who himself has been unjustly treated cannot be induced to treat others justly. Thus there are put before the individual Israelite here illustrations of all the ways in which it is possible for him either to help or to hinder justice.

I. THE ISRAELITE IS CAUTIONED LEST BY YIELDING TO UNWORTHY MOTIVES, HE SHOULD HELP OTHERS TO GAIN VICTORIES OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. It is only too easy to send abroad an empty story which may end in the ruin of an innocent man. We may become afflicted with a spirit of partisanship which, even if it lead not to downright lying, may prompt to exaggerations and distortions, just as valuable for the attainment of malicious purposes. He who would not deliberately fabricate a lie will nevertheless be well disposed to believe it when fabricated by another, and will then utter it for truth. We easily believe what we want to believe. It is so pleasant to be with the multitude; to go against it requires a great deal of courage, and a deep devotion to what is just, as the paramount thing to be considered in all judicial enquiries. Let us feel that justice is not a matter of majorities, but of great principles honestly and ably applied to particular cases, the nature of these cases being determined by evidence which has been carefully sifted and arranged so as to get at the truth. He who comes into a court of justice comes there in the simple and sufficient claims of his humanity; all considerations of popular applause, all sympathy with a poor man, *merely as a poor man*, are entirely out of place. We must guard against all cheap sentiment; we must be just before we are generous. Adroit appeals to the feelings of a jury are part of the stock-in-trade of a practised advocate; and witnesses themselves understand how to profit by the prejudices and weaknesses of sensitive minds. The poor, the sick, the maimed only too often think that they may gain by their poverty, their feebleness, their mutilation, what is not to be gained by the righteousness of their cause. Everyone, therefore, who has to do with a court of justice needs great circumspection to keep himself clear of all words and actions such as might lend themselves to injustice. The

effort of one may not secure a just judgment, but each individual must do his part. Then the stain of injustice is not on his garments.

II. **AN INJURED PERSON MUST KEEP CLEAR OF PERSONAL ANIMOSITY IN THE PURSUIT OF HIS RIGHTS.** An illustration is given from the misfortune which may happen to his enemy's ox or ass (vers. 4, 5). We must never forget that our enemy is also our neighbour. If a man wrongs us, it does not cancel that wrong to do him wrong in return. There is a certain appointed way of getting all such wrong put right, and if it cannot be put right in that way there is no other to be found,—no other at least so far as human aid avails. For a man to see his enemy in this position, with ox or ass gone astray or in any way needing help, is a capital chance for showing that no petty grudge actuates him in legal proceedings. He who is treated wrongly must seek for justice, but he will gladly hail the opportunity of showing that it is justice only that he seeks. It is often those who are most unyielding in the matter of right who are also most tender and assiduous in the matter of compassion. It is an easier thing through sentimental weakness to countenance a poor man in his cause than to take the trouble of driving home a lost ox or ass to its owner. The very same considerations of right which make a man feel that he cannot sit down tamely under injustice, should also make him feel that he cannot allow the property of others to go to ruin, when his timely intervention will save it.

III. **THERE ARE DIRECTIONS IN PARTICULAR FOR THOSE WHO HAVE TO JUDGE.** The instructions in vers. 6—9 seem specially to concern the judge. Plaintiffs, defendants and witnesses are only occasionally in courts of justice, but the judge is always there. It is his daily work to settle right as between man and man. Those who have to come before him are instructed and cautioned to come in a just spirit; but inasmuch as many of them will not attend to the instructions, it is the business of the judge to neutralise as far as he can their unrighteous approaches; and it seems to be particularly implied that he must keep himself from all temptations such as come so fascinatingly through the rich and the powerful. He with whom judicial decisions rest will have many to tempt him if he shows himself at all open to temptation. Let the judge remember that his judgment, though it may gain a cause, does not effect a final settlement. Through prejudice or bribery he may justify the wicked; but that does not hold them justified. He must not say of anyone who comes before him, that he is only a poor man or a foreigner and therefore his interests cannot matter. It should be his joy to feel and his pride to say that no one went away from him with wrongs unredressed, so far as any searching of his could discover the doer of the wrong. A judge has great opportunities. Every upright, discerning and scrupulous judge does much in the circle of his own influence to keep a high standard of right and wrong before the minds of his fellow men.—Y.

Vers. 14—17.—*A threefold cord is not quickly broken.* To forget is far easier than to remember. Festivals are like posts to which we can fasten the cords of memory, so that, securely fastened, we may not drift down the stream of Lethe. To forget facts is to ignore the duties to which facts prompt us. We must leave undone what we ought to do, unless we take measures to keep us in remembrance. The great fact which the Israelites needed to remember was the relation of dependence in which they stood to God. He had freed them from slavery, he had provided them with food, he had given them, besides, the means of enjoyment—wine and oil—above all that they could ask or think. By means of the three great annual festivals threefold security was given against forgetfulness of this fact. To keep the festivals was to realise the relation, and to strengthen it by practical acknowledgment. Consider—

1. **THE FEAST OF FREEDOM.** In this connection (ver. 15) the unleavened bread is the point emphasised—to be eaten for seven days, a full week, at the commencement of the sacred year. As a reminder it suggested—1. *Past slavery.* The tyrannous oppression of Egypt; hopeless condition ere God looked upon them; life but a synonym for bare existence; even sustenance depending upon the caprice of others. 2. *Past deliverance.* The paschal night; unleavened bread the accompaniment of the first paschal feast; food a very secondary consideration when freedom was in question. 3. *Present duties.* God had delivered them from slavery that they might serve him as his free people; an inner slavery worse than the outer; a purification needed in the heart even

more important than that in the home. The leaven of malice and wickedness must be sought out and put away; so long as they retained *that*, freedom was but a nominal privilege.

II. **THE FEAST OF FIRST-FRUIITS.** Linked on to the second day of unleavened bread. God would have his children look forward; and so he makes the first blessing a seed in which are enwrapped others. Freed by God, the people could appropriate, as his children, the promise made to children (Gen. i. 29, as modified by the fall, Gen. iii. 19). The gift of food was God's gift, but their cooperation was needed for its fruition; it was to be the *fruit*, not the *creation* of their labours. Familiarity breeds forgetfulness as often as it breeds contempt. A reminder needed that human labour can, at most, work up God's raw material. [The *cerealia*, or corn plants, well called "a standing miracle." Apparently a cultivated grass, yet no known grass can be improved into corn by cultivation. Corn can be degraded by artificial means into a worthless perennial; as it is, it is an annual, exhausting itself in seeding, needing man's labour to its perfection and preservation.] To get his food, man is constantly reminded that he must be a fellow-worker with God.

III. **THE FEAST OF INGATHERING.** As the year rolls on, it exhibits more and more of God's goodness and bounty. It calls for ever fresh acknowledgment of that love which gives "liberally and upbraideth not." Freedom a great gift, the capacity to work for one's own livelihood; so, too, food, the means through which that capacity may find exercise; further, God gives all the fruits of the earth in their season, so that man through his labour may find not merely health but happiness. Naturally this was the most joyful of all the festivals—the blossoms which glorified the stem springing from the root of freedom. To rejoice in the Lord is the final outcome of that faith which enables us to realise our sonship.

Conclusion.—These festivals have more than an historical interest. They teach the same truths as of old, but for Christians their meaning is intensified. Unleavened bread is associated with Calvary, freedom from the tyranny of sin (1 Cor. v. 7, 8). Linked to this is our first-fruits festival; Christ, the first-fruits (1 Cor. xv. 20), made our food through the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost. The feast of ingathering is not yet, but we may rejoice in it by anticipation (1 Peter i. 6). The final festival is described for us by St. John in the Revelation (vii. 9—17). Blessed are they who, with robes washed white, shall share the joy of that feast of Ingathering.—G.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 20—31.—**THE REWARDS OF OBEDIENCE.** God always places before men "the recompense of the reward." He does not require of them that they should serve him for nought. The "Book of the Covenant" appropriately ends with a number of promises, which God undertakes to perform, if Israel keeps the terms of the covenant. The promises are:—
1. That he will send an angel before them to be their guide, director, and helper (vers. 20—23).
2. That he will be the enemy of their enemies (ver. 22), striking terror into them miraculously (ver. 27), and subjecting them to other scourges also (ver. 28).
3. That he will drive out their enemies "by little and little" (ver. 30), not ceasing until he has destroyed them (ver. 23).
4. That he will give them the entire country between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean on the one hand, the Desert and the Euphrates on the

other (ver. 31). And 5. That he will bless their sustenance, avert sickness from them, cause them to multiply, and prolong their days upon earth (vers. 25, 26). At the same time, all these promises—except the first—are made conditional. If they will "beware" of the angel and "obey his voice," then he will drive their enemies out (vers. 22, 23): if they will serve Jehovah, and destroy the idols of the nations, then he will multiply them, and give them health and long life (vers. 24—26), and "set their bounds from the Red Sea even unto the Sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river" (ver. 31). So far as they fall short of their duties, is he entitled to fall short of his promises. A reciprocity is established. Unless they keep their engagements, he is not bound to keep his. Though the negative side is not entered upon, this is sufficiently clear. None of the promises, ex-

cept the promise to send the angel, is absolute. Their realisation depends on a strict and hearty obedience.

Ver. 20.—**Behold, I send a messenger before thee.** Jewish commentators regard the messenger as Moses, who, no doubt, was a specially commissioned ambassador for God, and who might, therefore, well be termed God's messenger. But the expressions—"He will not pardon your transgressions," and "My name is in him," are too high for Moses. An angel must be intended—probably "the Angel of the Covenant,"—whom the best expositors identify with the Second Person of the Trinity, the Ever-Blessed Son of God. **To keep thee in the way** is not simply "to guide thee through the wilderness, and prevent thee from geographical error," but to keep thee altogether in the right paths, to guard thy going out and thy coming in, to prevent thee from falling into any kind of wrong conduct. **The place which I have prepared** is not merely Palestine, but that place of which Palestine is the type—viz., Heaven. Compare John xiv. 2:—"I go to prepare a place for you."

Ver. 21.—**Provoke him not.** On the disobedience of the Israelites to this precept, see Num. xiv. 11; Ps. lxxviii. 17, 40, 56, etc. **My name is in him.** God's honour he will not give to another. He does not set His Name in a man. The angel, in whom was God's Name, must have been co-equal with God—one of the Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

Ver. 22.—**If thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak.** The change of persons in the latter clause—"all that I speak," instead of "all that he speaks"—implies the doctrine of the *perichoresis* or *circuminsessio*, that God the Father is in the Son and the Spirit, as they are in him. **An adversary to thy adversaries.** Rather "an afflictor of thy afflictors."

Ver. 23.—**The Amorites, and the Hittites, etc.** The nations of Canaan proper, to whom the Gergashites are sometimes added. See the comment on ch. iii. 8. **I will out them off.** Or "cut them down," i.e., destroy them from being any longer nations, but not exterminate them, as is generally supposed. David had a "Hittite" among his "mighty men" (2 Sam. xxiii. 39), and was on friendly terms with Aramnah the "Jebusite" (*ibid.* ch. xxiv. 18—24.).

Ver. 24.—**Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works.** It is always to be borne in mind that with the idolatries of the heathen were connected "works of darkness," which it is shameful even to speak of. The rites of Baal and Ashoreth, of Chemosh, Molech, Rimmon, and the other Canaanite and Syrian deities were at once defiled by the

abomination of human sacrifices, and polluted with the still more debasing evil of religious impurity. "The sacrifice offered to Ashoreth," says Dr. Dollinger, "consisted in the prostitution of women: the women submitted themselves to the visitors of the feast, in the temple of the goddess or the adjoining precinct. A legend told of Astarte (Ashoreth) having prostituted herself in Tyre for ten years: and in many places matrons, as well as maidens, consecrated themselves for a length of time, or on the festivals of the goddess, with a view of propitiating her, or earning her favour as *hieroduli* of unchastity. . . .

In this way they went so far at last as to contemplate the abominations of unnatural lust as a homage rendered to the deity, and to exalt it into a regular cultus. The worship of the goddess at Aphaca in Lebanon was specially notorious in this respect. The temple in a solitary situation was, as Eusebius tells us, a place of evil-doing for such as chose to ruin their bodies in scandalous ways. . . . Criminal intercourse with women, impurity, shameful and degrading deeds, were practised in the temple, where there was no custom and no law, and no honourable or decent human being could be found." (*Jew and Gentile*, vol. i. pp. 428, 429; Darnell's translation.) **Thou shalt utterly overthrow them.** The heathen gods are identified with their images. These were to be torn from their bases, overthrown, and rolled in the dust for greater contempt and ignominy. They were then to be broken up and burnt, till the gold and the silver with which they were overlaid was calcined and could be stamped to powder. Nothing was to be spared that had been degraded by idolatry, either for its beauty or its elaborate workmanship, or its value. All was hateful to God, and was to be destroyed.

Ver. 25.—**He shall bless thy bread and thy water.** If the Israelites were exact in their obedience, and destroyed the idols, and served God only, then he promised to bless "their bread and their water"—the food, i.e., whether meat or drink, on which they subsisted, and to give them vigorous health, free from sickness of any kind, which he pledged himself to take away from the midst of them. Though Christians have no such special pledge, there is, no doubt, that virtuous and godly living would greatly conduce to health, and take away half the sicknesses from which men suffer, even at the present day.

Ver. 26.—**There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren in thy land.** This blessing could not have followed upon godly living in the way of natural sequence, but only by Divine favour and providential care. It would have rendered them rich in flocks and herds beyond any other nation. **The number of thy days I will fulfil.** There shall be no premature deaths. All, both men and women,

shall reach the term allotted to man, and die in a good old age, having fulfilled their time. Godly living, persisted in for several generations, might, perhaps, produce this result.

Ver. 27.—**I will send my fear before thee.** The fear which fell upon the nations is seen first in the case of Balak and the Moabites. "Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many" (Num. xxii. 3). Later it is spoken of by Rahab as general (Josh. ii. 9, 11). A very signal indication of the alarm felt is given in the history of the Gibeonites (ib. ix. 3, 27). **I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee.** For the fulfilment of this promise see Num. xxi. 3, 24, 35; xxxi. 7; Josh. viii. 20—24; x. 10, etc. Had their obedience been more complete, the power of the Canaanitish nations would have been more thoroughly broken, and the sufferings and servitudes related in the Book of Judges would not have had to be endured.

Ver. 28.—**And I will send hornets before thee.** This is scarcely to be taken literally, since no actual plague of hornets is mentioned in the historical narrative. "Hornets" here, and in Deut. vii. 20; Josh. xxiv. 12, are probably plagues or troubles of any kind, divinely sent to break the power of the heathen nations, and render them an easier prey to the Israelites, when they made their invasion. Possibly, the main "hornets" were the Egyptians, who, under Rameses III., successfully invaded Palestine about the time of Israel's sojourn in the wilderness, and weakened the power of the Hittites (Khita). **The Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite.** By a common figure of speech, a part is put for the whole—three nations for seven. The three names seem to be taken at random, but include the two nations of most power—the Canaanites and the Hittites.

Ver. 29.—**I will not drive them out from before thee in one year.** The Divine action is for the most part "slack, as men count slackness"—it is not hasty, spasmodic, precipitate, as human action is too often. Men are impatient; God is strangely, wonderfully patient. He would not drive out the Canaanitish nations all at once—1. **Lest the land should become desolate,** there being an insufficient population to keep down the weeds and maintain the tillage; and 2. **Lest the beast of the field should multiply** so as to become a danger to the new-comers. It is

related that when the kingdom of Samaria was depopulated by the removal of the Ten Tribes, there was a great increase of lions, which preyed upon the scanty remnant left (2 Kings xvii. 25). Even in France, after the Franco-German war, it was found that in many districts wolves increased. A third reason why the nations were not subdued all at once, not mentioned here, is touched in Judg. ii. 21—23—"The Lord left those nations, without driving them out hastily, that through them he might prove Israel, whether they would keep the way of the Lord to walk therein, or not."

Ver. 31.—**And I will set thy bounds from the Red Sea even unto the sea of the Philistines.** This passage by itself would be sufficient to confute Dr. Brugsch's notion, that the *Yam Suph* (or "Red Sea" of our translators) is the Lake Serbônîs, which is a part of the Mediterranean or "Sea of the Philistines," and cannot stand in contrast with it. The "Sea of the Philistines" and the "Red Sea" mark the boundaries of the Holy Land East and West, as the "Desert" and the "River" (Euphrates) do its boundaries North and South. That Moses here lays down those wide limits which were only reached 400 years later, in the time of David and Solomon, and were then speedily lost, can surprise no one who believes in the prophetic gift, and regards Moses as one of the greatest of the Prophets. The tract marked out by these limits had been already promised to Abraham (Gen. xv. 18). Its possession by Solomon is distinctly recorded in 1 Kings iv. 21, 24; 2 Chr. ix. 26. As Solomon was "a man of peace," we must ascribe the acquisition of this wide empire to David. (Compare 2 Sam. viii. 3—14; x. 6—19.) **The river (han-nahar)** is in the Pentateuch always the Euphrates. The Nile is *ha-y or*. A powerful kingdom established in Syria is almost sure to extend its influence to the Euphrates. **I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand.** Compare Josh. xxi. 44, for the first fulfilment of this prophecy. Its complete fulfilment was reserved for the time of David. **Thou shalt drive them out.** The mass of the Canaanites were no doubt "driven out" rather than exterminated. They retired northwards, and gave strength to the great Hittite kingdom which was for many centuries a formidable antagonist of the Egyptian and Assyrian empires.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 20—31.—*God's promises sometimes absolute, but for the most part contingent on obedience.* "Behold, I send an angel before thee." Here was a positive promise. An angel, a guide, a protector, would go before them throughout their wanderings in the wilderness, and lead them into the promised land—lead, at any rate, some remnant of them, out of which God would make a great nation. Thus much was certain. God's word to give his descendants the land of Canaan was pledged to Abraham, and he

would not go back from it. They should reach Canaan, and an angel should lead them; but the rest was all more or less uncertain. If they *indeed* obeyed God, and did as he commanded, then he would be an enemy to their enemies, and give them full possession of the land of promise. If they truly served Jehovah, and not idols, then he would grant them health and long life, and other temporal blessings. And so it is with Christians. God gives absolutely certain blessings to all whom he accepts into covenant with him; but the greater part of the blessings which he has promised are contingent on their behaviour.

I. BLESSINGS PROMISED TO CHRISTIANS ABSOLUTELY. 1. A Divine guide is promised to all. The Holy Spirit, speaking in men's hearts, directing and enlightening their conscience, tells them continually how they ought to walk, points out the way, offers his guidance, nay, presses it on them, and seeks to lead them to heaven. The guide is more than an angel—God's holy name is in him. Nor does he guide only. He supports the footsteps, strengthens, sustains, comforts men. 2. Membership in Christ is promised. "I am the vine; ye are the branches." "Abide in me." We are as branches cut out of a wild olive, which have been grafted, contrary to nature, into a good olive-tree, to partake of its root and fatness (Rom. xi. 17—24). We are "made members of Christ," for the most part, in our infancy, without effort or merit of our own, by God's great mercy.

II. BLESSINGS WHICH ARE CONTINGENT ON OUR OBEDIENCE. 1. The answer of a good conscience towards God—a great blessing—can only, by the very nature of the case, belong to those who have striven always to be obedient, and have served the Lord from their youth. 2. Growth in grace is granted only to such as cherish and follow the grace already vouchsafed them. 3. Spiritual wisdom and understanding are attained by none but those who, having "done the will of God, know of the doctrine" (John vii. 17). 4. Assistance against spiritual enemies is contingent on our doing our best to resist them. 5. Length of days is attached as a special blessing to obedience to parents (Eph. vi. 2, 3). Finally, and above all—6. The eternal bliss which is promised us in another world is conditional upon our "patient continuance in well-doing" in this. We must "so run that we may obtain." Most of those to whom the promises of Ex. xxiii. were addressed, forfeited them by their misconduct, and did not enter Canaan. They "lusted," they became "idolaters," they "tempted God," they "committed fornication," they "murmured"—and the result was that they "were overthrown in the wilderness." And "all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 11, 12).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 20—33.—*Promises and warnings.* These conclude the Book of the Covenant.

I. PROMISES. 1. *An angel guide* (vers. 20—23). But this angel was no ordinary or created angel. He is repeatedly identified with Jehovah himself. God's "name"—his essential nature—was in him. He is one with Jehovah, yet distinct from him—no mere personification, but a real hypostasis. See the careful treatment of "the doctrine of the Angel of the Lord," in Oehler's "Old Testament Theology," vol. i. pp. 188—196 (Eng. trans.). We view the "angel" as the pre-incarnate Logos—Christ in the Old Testament. Israel's guide was the Son of God—the same Divine Person who is now conducting "many sons unto glory," and who is become "the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him" (Heb. ii. 10; v. 9). 2. *Defence against enemies* (ver. 22). If Israel obeyed God's voice, and did all that God spake, their enemies would be reckoned his enemies, and their adversaries his adversaries. And "if God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. viii. 31). 3. *Aid in the conquest of Canaan* (vers. 23, 27—31). Apply throughout to the spiritual warfare of the individual and of the Church. (1) The way for the conquest would be prepared. God would send his *fear* before the Israelites (ver. 27)—would, as stated in Deuteronomy, put the dread of them, and the fear of them, upon the nations that were under the whole heaven (Deut. ii. 25; xi. 25; cf. ch. xv. 15, 16). There is a presentiment of defeat in the hearts of the enemies of God, especially when the Church is energetic and fearless in her work, which goes far to secure the

victory for the latter. Something whispers to them that their "time is short" (1 Cor. vii. 29; Rev. xii. 12; cf. Matt. viii. 29). Moral forces are all on the side of the kingdom of God. They assist its friends, and operate to enervate and discourage its enemies. The Christian worker may rely on numerous invisible allies in men's own hearts. Workings of conscience, stings of fear, dread of God, etc. God would also send *hornets* before the Israelites, to drive out the Canaanites from their strong castles (ver. 28). To us there seems no good reason for taking this declaration otherwise than literally. If taken symbolically, the "hornets" are equivalent to the stings of fear, etc., above referred to. A veritable hornet warfare this, and one of great value to the Gospel cause. Taken literally, the "hornets" may be regarded as types of secret *providential* allies—of the co-operation of God in his providence, often by means of things insignificant in themselves, but working, under his secret direction, for the furtherance of his kingdom, and the defeat of those opposed to it. In a million unseen ways—how encouraging the reflection!—Providence is thus aiding the work of those who fight under Christ's captaincy. (2) They would be prospered in battle (ver. 27). The individual, in his warfare with the evil of his own heart—the Church, in her conflict with the evil of the world—enjoy a similar promise. If Christ inspires, if he, the captain of the Lord's host, gives the signal to advance, victories are certain. However numerous and powerful our spiritual enemies, greater is he that is with us than they that are against us (1 John iv. 4). (3) The conquest would be given by degrees. God would drive out their enemies before them, "little by little" (ver. 30). The reason given is, "lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee" (ver. 27). The method was a wise one. It doubtless had its dangers. Remaining idolatry would tend to become a snare. The delay in the extirpation of the Canaanites had thus its side of trial—it would act as a moral test. In other respects it was attended with advantage. It would make the conquest more thorough. It would enable the Israelites to consolidate, organise, and secure their possessions as they went along. It would prevent the multiplying of the beasts of the field. And quite analogous to this is God's method of conducting us unto our *spiritual* inheritance. The law of "little by little" obtains here also. "Little by little" the believer gains the victory over evil in self, and the heart is sanctified. "Little by little" the world is conquered for Christ. In no other way is thorough conquest possible. Suppose, *e.g.*, that, as the result of extraordinary shakings of the nations, a multitude of unconstructed tribes, peoples, communities, were suddenly thrown into the arms of Christendom—even supposing the conversions real, how difficult would it be to prevent mischiefs from arising! Compare the troubles of the Reformation Churches. Make the yet more extravagant supposition that by some supreme moral effort—the evil of our own hearts being suddenly aroused to intense activity—it pleased God to give us the victory over the whole of this evil at once. How little could we do with such a victory when we had it! Thrown at once upon our own hands, how difficult it would be to know what to do with ourselves! Would not new foes—fantastic conceits—speedily arise from the ground of our yet undisciplined natures, to give us new troubles? The surest method is "little by little." It is not good for any man to have more than he needs—to have a greater victory than he can rightly use; *e.g.*, a man who reads more books than he can mentally digest and assimilate; who has a larger estate than he can manage; who has more money than he can make a good use of. And yet the fact of evil still lurking in our hearts, and continuing in the world around us, exposes us to many perils. It acts as a moral test, and so indirectly conduces to the growth of holiness. 4. *Material blessings* (vers. 25, 26). In the land to which he was conducting them, God would give the people of Israel abundance of food and water; would take away all sickness from their midst (cf. "I am the Lord that healeth thee." ch. xv. 26); would greatly bless their flocks and herds; and would lengthen out their days to the full term (cf. Deut. xxviii. 1—14). The blessings of the new covenant are predominantly spiritual (Eph. i. 3). Yet even under it, "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. iv. 8). Godliness has a natural tendency to promote temporal well-being. So ample a measure of prosperity as that promised in the text could, however, only accrue from direct Divine blessing. The absolute form of the expression answers to the absoluteness of the requirement—"Obey my voice, and do *all* that I speak" (ver. 31). Falling short of the ideal obedience, Israel fell short also of the ideal fulness of the blessing. 5.

Expansion of bounds (ver. 31). Only once or twice was this maximum of possession touched by Israel. Failure in the fulfilment of the condition kept back fulfilment of the promise. The Church's destiny is to possess the whole earth (Ps. ii. 8).

II. WARNINGS. If these glorious promises are to be fulfilled to Israel, they must obey the voice of God and of his angel. Let them beware, therefore,—1. Of *provoking the angel* (ver. 21). God's name was in him, and he would not pardon their transgressions. That is, he would not take a light view of their sins, but would strictly mark them, and severely punish them. He was not a Being to be trifled with. If his wrath against them were kindled but a little, they would perish from the way (Ps. ii. 12). He was one with Jehovah in his burning zeal for holiness, and in his determination not to clear the guilty. See below. The Gospel is not wanting in its similar side of sternness. There is a "wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. vi. 17). There is a "judgment" which "begins at the house of God" (1 Pet. iv. 17). There is the stern word—"It shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people" (Acts iii. 23). Cf. also Heb. ii. 2, 3; x. 26—39; xii. 25. 2. They *must not serve other gods* (ver. 24). Conversely, they were utterly to overthrow the idol gods, and to break down their images. "Where Jesus comes, he comes to reign." No rival will be tolerated alongside of him. We cannot serve (1) God and Maummon (Matt. vi. 24). (2) God and fashion (1 John ii. 15—18). (3) God and our own lusts (2 Pet. i. 4; ii. 20, 21). (4) God and human glory (John v. 44). The worship of Jehovah and that of *any* of the world's idols will not amalgamate. See reflected in these commands the principles which are to regulate the relation of God's servants at this hour to the world and to its evil—(1) No toleration of it (Matt. v. 29, 30). (2) No communion with it (2 Cor. vi. 14—18; Eph. v. 3, 11). (3) Unceasing war against it (2 Cor. x. 4; Col. iii. 5). 3. They *must make no league with the Canaanites* (ver. 32). The lesson taught is, that believers are to seek their friendships, their alliances, their consorts, etc., elsewhere than among the ungodly. We are not only to keep out of harm's way, and avoid occasions of sin, but we are to labour to remove from our midst *entirely* what experience proves to be an incurable snare.—J. O.

Ver. 21.—*The angel provoked*. The language in this passage is very strong, and may occasion difficulty. "Provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgressions; for my name is in him." If this angel is the Son of God, he who afterwards became incarnate for man's salvation, and who died to procure forgiveness for us, it startles us to hear of him—"he will not pardon your transgressions." When we think, too, on what God's name imports—on the revelation subsequently made of it,—"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, *forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin*," etc., it astonishes us to learn that this angel, in whom the name is, will not pardon Israel's sin. The history, also, may be thought to create difficulties. For, undeniably, the Israelites were often pardoned. They were, in truth, continually being pardoned; for, "stiff-necked" as they were, they could not have stood for a day in their covenant, had not God's mercy been constantly extended to them. It is plain, therefore, from the nature of the case, that the expression is not to be taken absolutely; the sense in which it is to be understood well deserves investigation.

I. IN WHAT SENSE TRUE OF ISRAEL. The general meaning is, as stated above, that the angel would not look lightly on their offences, would not pass them over, but would severely punish them. This accorded with the constitution under which they were placed, to which it belonged, that "every transgression and disobedience" should "receive a just recompense of reward" (Heb. ii. 2). The context suggests, or admits of, the following qualifications—1. The statement refers, it will be observed, to what the angel will do when "provoked"—to what will happen when his wrath is "kindled" against Israel (cf. Ps. lxxviii. 21, 49, 50, 59, etc.). But how long did this Divine conductor *bear* with Israel before permitting his wrath to be thus kindled against them! He was "slow to anger." What pardon was implied in his very long-suffering! 2. The transgressions alluded to are not ordinary offences—not the sins of infirmity and short-coming which mark the lives even of the best—but such outstanding acts of transgression as are mentioned in the context—fundamental breaches of the covenant. These were the sins which would specially provoke the angel (cf.

Deut. xxxii. 5, 15—28). They would be “surely” punished. 3. The general assertion that transgressions will not be pardoned does not imply that there is *no* room left for intercession and repentance; that, *e.g.*, an alteration in the spiritual conditions might not procure, if not remission, at least a sensible *alleviation* of the penalty; that prayer, proceeding from a contrite heart, might not obtain the *removal* of affliction, or the restoration of the penitent to Divine favour. Great severity, nevertheless, attaches to this announcement. The history is the best commentary upon it. It is literally true that, after the ratification of the covenant at Sinai, no serious transgression of Israel was allowed to go unpunished. In no case did even repentance avail *wholly* to avert chastisement. At most, the penalty was lightened, or shortened in duration. Thus, on the occasion of the sin of the golden calf, the earnest intercession of Moses availed to save the people from destruction, and obtained from God the promise that he would still go with them; but it did not save the idolaters from being smitten with the sword of Levi (ch. xxxii. 28), or prevent the Lord from still “plagu^{ing}” the people “because they made the calf, which Aaron made” (ch. xxxii. 35). Cf. later instances, *e.g.*, Nadab and Abihu (Lev. x. 1—8); the murmuring at Taberah (Num. xi. 1—3); the lusting at Kibroth-hattaavah (Num. xi. 4—35); the rebellion at Kadesh, punished by the rejection of that whole generation (Num. xiii., xiv.); the revolt of Korah (Num. xvi., xvii.); the sin at Meribah, when even Moses forfeited his right to enter the land of promise (Num. xx. 1—13); the later murmuring, when the people were punished by fiery serpents (Num. xxi. 7—9); the idolatry and fornication of Baal-peor (Num. xxv.). This severity is the more remarkable when we remember how leniently God dealt with the people *before* the ratification of the covenant with Sinai. “All murmurings before they came to Sinai were passed over, or merely rebuked; all murmurings and rebellions after Sinai bring down punishment and death” (Kitto). We trace the same principle of dealing through the whole history of the Old Testament. David, *e.g.*, is personally forgiven for his sin of adultery; but the temporal penalty is not remitted (2 Sam. xii.). He is punished on a later occasion for numbering the people, and has the choice given him of three evils; and this, notwithstanding his sincere repentance (2 Sam. xxiv.). So Manasseh is said to have “filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, which the Lord would not pardon” (2 Kings xxiv. 5). The congruity of this strict dealing with a dispensation of law is sufficiently obvious; and, in the light of the examples quoted, the language of the text will not be felt to be too strong.

II. HOW FAR TRUE UNDER THE GOSPEL. The Gospel, as befits its nature, places in the forefront, not the declaration that God will *not* pardon sin, but the announcement of the terms on which he *will* pardon. It is a declaration of mercy to those who are viewed as already under wrath—the law having accomplished its design of convincing men of sin. The terms, however, on which the Gospel proposes to grant forgiveness are of such a nature as fully to establish the truth underlying this text; viz., that God, as a God of holiness, will not clear the guilty (cf. Ex. xxxiv. 7). 1. This truth is the *presupposition* of the Gospel. Else whence its demand for atonement? Why is sin not simply condoned—not simply waived aside as something admitting of unconditional pardon? In view of the fact that the Gospel absolutely refuses pardon save on the ground of “the shedding of blood,” it certainly cannot be accused of making light of guilt, or of ignoring its relations to justice. God remains the just God, even while he is the Saviour (Rom. iii. 26). Stated otherwise, it is on the ground of the principle in the text, that a Gospel is needed. “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom. i. 18). No clearing of the guilty here. The principle in question is the general principle of God’s moral administration (Rom. ii. 6—12). 2. This truth still applies in its rigour to those who “disobey” the Gospel. For these there is no pardon. There remains for them only judgment and fiery indignation (Heb. x. 27). So solemn is the truth that “there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved” (Acts iv. 12). 3. Even believers, notwithstanding that they receive spiritual pardon, must not expect to escape *temporal* chastisements, appropriate to their offences. So far as sin’s penalties are bound up with natural law it is certain that they will *not* escape them. They may be spiritually pardoned, yet, as respects the temporal penalty, may, like Esau, find no place for repentance, though they seek it carefully with tears (Heb. xii. 17). God

alone is judge of how far, and with what measure of benefit to the individual, and of glory to himself, he can remit temporal chastisements (Ex. xxxiii. 19). Respect will doubtless be had to the circumstances under which the sin was committed, to the depth and sincerity of the repentance, to the publicity of the scandal (cf. 2 Sam. xii. 14), to the moral benefit likely to accrue, etc. 4. Hypocritical professors of Christ's name will be dealt with according to this rule. They will be punished with special severity (Matt. xxiv. 51).

III. HOW RECONCILABLE WITH GOD'S REVEALED ATTRIBUTE OF MERCY. Our thoughts revert to the revelation of God's name in ch. xxxiv. 6, 7. The attributes of mercy occupy the foreground, yet not to the denial of the sternness of holiness, which, in the latter clauses, finds distinct expression. "Forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and *that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers,*" etc. God's mercy to Israel was exhibited compatibly with what has been seen to be the meaning of the text—(1) In his great long-suffering in *bearing* with their provocations. (2) In his turning aside the fierceness of his anger, in answer to earnest intercession, or when signs were shown of repentance. (3) In limiting the *measure* of his wrath—either by exchanging a severer penalty for a lighter one, or by shortening the time of infliction. Cf. Ps. lxxviii. 38—"But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not, yea, many a time turned he his anger away and did not stir up all his wrath. For he remembered that they were but flesh," etc. (4) In granting spiritual pardons, even when temporal penalties were not revoked. (5) In restoring the penitent to favour, after punishment had taken effect in inducing contrition. (6) In keeping covenant with the children, even when rejecting the fathers. (7) The full reconciliation is seen in the Gospel, in the fact of the atonement.—J. O.

Vers. 20—23.—*The angel of the covenant.* Certain of the matters on which Jehovah had been speaking immediately before the promise of the angel, assumed that the people would assuredly come to dwell in a land very different from that in which they were now sojourning. God had done so much to call forth faith that, in spite of all ugly symptoms of unbelief and murmuring, he could only go on speaking as if the faith would become a regular habit steadily finding deeper root in the Israelite heart. Thus we find him giving rules for the cultivation of cornlands, vineyards and oliveyards into which they had not yet come; rules for the harvest feast and a feast of ingathering of all the fruits, when as yet there was no indication of such an ingathering being possible. It was fitting, therefore, that Jehovah should follow up his statement of regulations by speaking confidently of the people's entrance into the land where the regulations were to be observed. That land was not yet in sight. So far, indeed, they had been travelling away from it rather than towards it, and the district in which they now were was suggestive of anything but cornlands, oliveyards and vineyards.

I. THERE IS THE DISTINCT ASSURANCE OF SUFFICIENT GUIDANCE. The reference here is presumably to that glory-cloud in which God was to manifest his presence right onward till Canaan was reached. That cloud was to be unintermitting and unmistakable in its guiding efficiency. Whatever perplexities might come to a devout and attentive Israelite because of other things, no perplexities were possible as to the way in which he should go. He might wonder why God led him in such a way; but that it was really God's way he need not have any doubt whatever. Thus we see how lovingly God ever deals with the ignorance of his people. What is necessary for them to know is made as plain as the necessity demands. They did not need any discussions and counsels among themselves, any balancing of the pros and cons which might determine them to one path rather than another. God perfectly knew the way and the needs and dangers of the way. He himself is never in doubt as to what his people should do. He is no blind leader of the blind. He was taking Israel into the land which he had prepared, and the way was prepared as much as the destination. Whatever uncertainty and vacillation there may be about the Christian life comes not from him who leads, but from those who follow. Indeed, our very vacillation becomes more conspicuous as we contrast it with the steady undeviating path marked out by our leader. Compare the announcement that is made concerning the angel here with the demand of Jesus upon his disciples—"Follow me."

II. THERE IS THE INDICATED PERIL OF NEGLECTING THAT GUIDANCE. Not to follow

the true guide, of course, means all the loss, pain and destruction that come from getting into false ways. But such consequences are not dwelt upon here. The thoughts of the people are rather directed to the sin they would commit by neglecting the intimations of the angel. "My name is in him." It was not a mere creature of Jehovah, which he used for an index. There was in the guiding-cloud a peculiar manifestation of Jehovah himself, whom the people would neglect if in a fit of self-will they were to turn away and follow the superficial intimations of their earthly surroundings. The great peril was that of coming under the wrath of God because of disobedience. It was only too easy to become used even to the presence of a miraculous cloud. The after conduct of the people shows that the tone of warning here adopted was a wise tone. They were likely to forget how much the presence of the angel demanded from them. That angel was there not only in mercy but in authority. To neglect him was to offend him. And because the cloud, in the ordinary circumstances of it, had nothing to terrify, because the penal consequences of neglecting it did not lie on the surface, it was needful to remind the people how much of holy wrath with unbelief and self-reliance lay within this messenger from God. The negligent Israelite needed to be solemnly assured that there was something even worse than mere failure to attain the earthly Canaan. The foreshadowing is here given of that dreadful doom which fell upon Israel shortly after and kept them in the wilderness for forty years. God can turn all the wanderings of the disobedient into a species of imprisonment and punishment from himself.

III. THERE IS A MOST INSTRUCTIVE INTIMATION AS TO THE RESULTS OF ACCEPTING THAT GUIDANCE. The very results show how indispensable the guidance is. Enemies and adversaries are in front, and God makes no concealment of the fact. If Israel has had already to deal with Amalekites in the comparative barrenness of the Sinaitic peninsula, what may not be expected when the confines of the fertile promised land are reached? That which is to be a good land to Israel, has long been a good land to the nations at present dwelling in it. But though these enemies lie in front,—enemies fighting with all the valour of desperation for their homes and their property,—yet all will prove victorious for Israel, if only Israel acts obediently towards God's angel. The enemies of God's people are not great or little in themselves. That which is great at one time may become little at another, and that which is little, great; and all because of the fluctuations in the spirit of faith. In Ex. xvii. we read of Amalekites discomfited and Jehovah threatening utterly to put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. But turn to Num. xiv. and a very different story has to be told of how the Amalekites smote and discomfited the children of Israel. If we would be strong for every conflict and assured of every victory, it must be by a calm looking towards the will of God. The will of God tells the way of God; and when we meet our enemies in that way all their preparations avail them nothing.—Y.

Vers. 24—33.—*The prospect in the promised land.* I. THE TREATMENT OF ITS FORMER OCCUPANTS. 1. *The avoidance of their idolatries.* God cautions us against those dangers which we are most likely to overlook. When once the Israelites entered the promised land and were fairly settled there, they would show no lack of energy and discrimination in doing their best to guard their temporal possessions. But the most serious dangers are those against which walled cities and great armies are no defence. God could easily cut off the idolaters and put Israel in their place; but what about the idolatries? Whether these should also be expelled would depend upon the guard which God's people kept over their own hearts. It is very noticeable that as God takes the thoughts of his people forward to their future habitation, he begins with a solemn caution against idolatry and closes with the same. There is thus a kind of correspondence with the order occupied in the Ten Commandments by those against polytheism and image-worship. It was not possible to make mention too often of the subtle perils which lay in the Canaanitish gods. 2. *Jehovah's complete defeat and expulsion of the former inhabitants.* This is indicated in a variety of impressive ways. Only let his people be faithful to him, and Jehovah will go before them as a dread to all who come in contact with them. Evidently God would have his people understand that nothing was to be feared from the very greatest external resources available against them. Let enemies threaten and unite and seek allies far and wide. The greater their efforts, the more

signal will be their defeat. We must ever believe that our true strength is in God. It was never intended that Israel should be looked on as a mighty military power. Rather it should be a cause of astonishment among the nations that it was able to stand against all the resources gathered against it. Whenever the Israelites began to trust in themselves and think they were able to awe their enemies, then they were lost. God only can terrify with the terror that lasts. We may confidently leave him to scatter confusion among those whom we, with all our demonstrations, are unable to impress.

3. *The injunction to enter into no covenant with the former inhabitants.* He who had been expelled by nothing less than an awful Divine force was not to be allowed to return under pretence of a peaceful submission. Peace, concord, mutual help—we may say God would ever have these between man and man, nation and nation—but at the same time we constantly get the warning against crying, peace! peace! when there is no peace. If a foreigner came forsaking his idolatries, there was an appointed way for him into Israel, and a welcome to be cordially given. But by no stretching of charity could it be made attainable for the idolater to settle down side by side with the worshipper and servant of Jehovah.

II. *THE LARGE POSITIVE BLESSINGS TO COME UPON ISRAEL.* The expulsion and permanent exclusion of the former inhabitants, much as they are insisted on, were but the negative condition, the clearing of the ground, so as to bless Israel with something positive. Very fittingly does God blend together the mention of these positive blessings with cautions and warnings as to the treatment of the former occupants. As the blessings were considered, the wisdom of the cautions would appear; and as the cautions were considered, so earnest and express, the greatness of the blessings would appear. God presents himself here as one very solicitous to make the land not only a good land for his people, but one cherished so as to make the best of its advantages. For this purpose he begins with a kind of graduated expulsion of the former inhabitants. Instead of expelling them by a sudden overwhelming blow, he rather does it little by little. The enemies of Israel were not to be multiplied needlessly by exposing their land to wild beasts; and the human enemies, contrary to their own designs and desires, were to leave for Israel the fruit of their own industries. If the Israelites had been asked which would be better,—to cast out their enemies at once or by a gradual process, they would probably have replied, “at once.” God will ever adopt the right plan to secure the most of blessing for his people. Thus we may learn a lesson with regard to the expulsion of evil still. God is still driving out evil little by little, and in so doing he is building up good little by little. Thus the Israelites were to get a gradual and secure settlement in the land; and then that settlement was to prove eminently profitable. Four great elements of prosperity are mentioned. 1. *The blessing of the bread and the water.* All that was connected with the obtaining of food and drink would be under God’s watchful providence. What are the bread and the water unless he blesses them? God can turn the most fertile of lands into a very proverb of barrenness. Why, then, very Canaan had been afflicted with famine. It was because for some reason the blessing of God had been withheld from the bread and the water that the fathers of Israel had found their way into Egypt. 2. *The maintenance of health.* This is put in the most expressive way by indicating it in the aspect of banished sickness. Disease is such a common sight to us, and presents itself in such varied forms, that in no way can God’s blessing of health be more emphatically revealed than by describing him as the one who healeth all our diseases. To a large extent this health was to be the consequence of blessing the bread and the water, giving by them, thus blessed, abundant and nutritious food. 3. *The productiveness of animal life.* In a perfectly obedient Israel there were to be no abortions, no barren wombs. It was just because there was disobedience in Israel that such cries as those of Hannah were heard (1 Sam. i. 11). Evidently all this normal generative efficacy largely depended on the blessing of the bread and water and the blessing of health. That any animal whatever, either human, or lower than human, should cast its young or be barren, was in itself a sort of disease. 4. *The fulfilling of the days.* The hoary head with its crown of glory is the appointed possession of God’s people. That so few obtained it only showed how much there was of imperfection in Israelite national life. These purposed blessings did not find their way into reality. The people were disobedient, unbelieving, self-regarding; and hence the seeds of blessing which assuredly God sowed among them either remained dead or struggled forth into a very imperfect life.—Y.

Ver. 20.—*Mine angel shall go before thee.* A prepared people have to be led into a prepared place (ver. 20). To lead them a guide is necessary, and God provides a guide.

I. *THE GUIDE AND HIS OFFICE.* 1. *His nature and character.* (1) *An angel, i.e.,* a Divine messenger; not merely a messenger of God's appointment, but a messenger from God's presence. Men may be empowered to act as angels; but naturally during his time of probation man is made "lower than the angels." The angel guide is superhuman; he helps to direct affairs in this world, but his home is in another. The history certainly implies so much as this; and no theory save that which assumes the fact of such superhuman guidance can adequately account for the marvellous coincidences through which progress was ensured. The enthusiasm of Moses might fire a people, but it is not enough to fire them; they must be fired at the right moment, and with a definite aim. Some superhuman agent, who could view time from the standpoint of eternity and direct men's actions in accordance with the real necessities of the position, there must have been. [Cf. a game of chess played, as sometimes in India, with living pieces. Success does not depend so much on the strength of the armies on the board as on the skill of the players off the board, who view the whole position from above.] History cannot be explained if we ignore the unseen hand which directs and controls the movements of the actors. (2) *"My name is in him."* The Divine guide must share the Divine character. God's deputy must be God-like. As viewing things from the standpoint of eternity, he is able to guide through the maze of time; but to view things from the standpoint of eternity he must be a sharer in the life of eternity, the eternal name must be so written on his heart that his guidance may be free from all suspicion of caprice. 2. *His office.* (1) *To keep in the way.* The guide must be a guardian as well. Guides who forget the dangers of the way, intent only on reaching their destination, may push on to the goal themselves, yet lose their charge before they reach it. God-commissioned guides are empowered also to keep and guard those who are given into their care (John xvii. 12). (2) *To bring to the prepared place.* If the guide must be a guardian, the guardian must also be a guide. He must protect during the advance, but he must not protect at the expense of progress; his charge has to be brought through the wilderness, not to be maintained there behind barricades and bulwarks. The people of Jehovah are led by the minister of Jehovah, who secures their entrance into the place prepared, if only they will accept his guidance. A place is prepared for us, as for Israel (John xiv. 2). A guide also is given us (John xiv. 16—18). We must not forget his twofold office, to keep in the way and to insist upon our moving forward.

II. *THOSE GUIDED AND THEIR DUTIES.* The angel guide has to direct men; that he may direct them, they must acknowledge his authority. Two things necessary:—1. *Reverence.* The disposition of the heart which cannot but show itself in the conduct. Assured that the angel bore the Divine name, men must beware of him, assured that he had the right to speak with authority. A command from such a guide needed no reasons to enforce it. 2. *Obedience.* (1) *Positive.* His commands must be obeyed. There must be no delay, no shrinking back. (2) *Negative.* There must be no attempt to evade their real fulfilment by a merely apparent and formal compliance. True obedience is obedience of the spirit as well as of the letter; mere literal obedience may consist with actual provocation. Remembering who our guide is, we must remember also that the like duties are required of us in relation to him. To resist the Spirit is to grieve him, and grieving may eventually quench his power with us; one more step seals our destruction—"He that blasphemeth the Spirit of God" sins the unpardonable sin.

III. *BLESSINGS CONSEQUENT ON FULFILMENT OF DUTIES.* We may call them temporal and eternal; blessings of the pilgrimage and blessings of the home. By the way, guarded by our guide, no enemy has power to hurt us; at the last we reach our home, to find there eternal health and happiness.

Concluding question.—What is our relation towards the guide whom God has given us? (Heb. ii. 2—3.)—G.

Vers. 20—33.—*The Mediatorial Guide.* "Behold I send an angel before thee," etc. (Exodus xxiii. 20). [We omit from homiletic treatment Exodus xx. 22—xxiii. 19, containing a large amount of minute legislation; but if any one for special reason

wishes to deal with any of these laws, he will find a careful and exhaustive analysis in Lange on "Exodus." Most of them have strict and sole reference to the Hebrew Commonwealth, and are obsolete for the Christian.] This passage contains a series of promises, which all centre in an august personage, called here an "angel." That this is so will determine the character of our exposition, and the Christian uses of it.

I. THE ANGEL. None other than the "Angel of Jehovah," the Angel-God of the Old Testament, i.e., the Lord Jesus Christ. Reference is here made to those many epiphanies, which preceded the Great Epiphany of the incarnation. That these were appearances of the Lord Jesus may be argued:—1. *It seems reasonable that there should be anticipations of the incarnation.* True, we could not prophesy them beforehand; but when they do take place, they commend themselves to our reason. It seems in a sense natural, that He, who was coming to dwell here, should once and again "come down to deliver." 2. *The history of the appearance of the angel shows:—*(1) *That he was Divine.* (i.) Perfection implied in the authority he wields, and the promises he gives. (ii.) Swears by himself. (iii.) The object of worship. (iv.) Subject of Divine names and attributes. (2) And yet there is *that which differentiates Him from the Eternal Father.* All this accords with the doctrine of the Trinity; and that the angel was Christ the Lord.

II. HIS OFFICE. We assume now that the angel was the Lord Jesus; that what he was to the ancient Church he is now. He is ever present—sometimes unseen—often recognised. His office as here set forth is that of:—1. *A Leader.* He led Israel, mainly by the pillar of cloud; but not in such a way as to dispense with Israel's action. The Lord acts, but never so as to swamp our individuality. It was for Israel: (1) To watch the cloud: (2) To exercise their own judgment on minor matters. See Num. x. 31. Our danger is to rely exclusively on our own judgment, and not to look for the waving of *That Hand.* 2. *A Sentinel.* "To keep in the way" in the double sense:—(1) To hold us in the path, and (2) to defend us on that path. The practical truth here is, that Christ's keeping is not absolute or independent of our will and action. He watches, that we may watch. This vital practical truth seems to us to be well illustrated by Swedenborg's doctrine of the "Proprium;" which is well exhibited in "Outlines of the Religion and Philosophy of Swedenborg" by Dr. Parsons. Ch. viii. 3. *Moral magistracy.* "He will not pardon your transgressions, for my name is in Him"—what can this mean? There is reference here to the moral magistracy exercised over us, on our pilgrim way, noting transgression, visiting for it, chastising, chastening, with a view to ultimate removal. Appeal to life for evidence of the reality of that corrective jurisdiction.

III. OUR DUTY. 1. *Loyalty to God*, ver. 25. 2. *Recognition of his representative*; i.e., the angel; i.e., the Lord Jesus. 3. *Obedience*; i.e., to the leader, etc. (vers. 21, 22.) N.B. "If thou shalt indeed obey His voice, and do all that I speak." Mark how God identifies himself with the angel. 4. *Avoidance of fellowship and complicity with evil* (vers. 32, 33). *Any* intercourse for the Jew with the heathen was full of peril. It seems now to be assumed that no companionship for the Christian has any danger. This assumption false, as the tendency to worldliness and open sin shows. 5. *Active antagonism to all Anti-theisms* (v. 24). It will not do to be content with standing on the defensive. Has not the time now come to carry the war into the enemy's camp?

IV. THE PROMISES. These cover really all the blessings consequent on a life of practical godliness. Thinking rather of our own position than of the literal meaning of the promises in relation to the life of Israel, they may be classified as follow:—1. *God on our side* (vers. 22, 23). 2. *Our daily provision blessed* (ver. 25). There shall be enough; but whatever there is shall have gladness with it. 3. *Health* (ver. 25). 4. *Wealth* (ver. 26). 5. *Long life* (ver. 26). 6. *Influence*, before which even adversaries shall bend (ver. 27). 7. *Enlargement of power and of room for its exercise* (v. 31). 8. In the bestowal of these blessings, our Father in heaven will show to us great *considerateness* (vers. 29, 30). 9. *Safe conduct to the promised rest* (ver. 20). Those who know the argument of Binney:—"Is it possible to make the best of Both Worlds?" will well understand how, under what conditions, and with what limitations, blessings of this sort—mainly secular in character—fall to the lot of the Lord's redeemed.—R

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 32, 33.—FINAL WARNING AGAINST IDOLATRY. The “Book of the Covenant” ends as it began, with a solemn warning against idolatry. (See ch. xx. 23.) “Thou shalt make no covenant with them *nor with their gods.*” Thou shalt not even suffer them to dwell side by side with thee in the land, on peaceable terms, with their own laws and religion, lest thou be ensnared thereby, and led to worship their idols and join in their unhallowed rites (ver. 33). The after history of the people of Israel shows the need of the warning. From the exodus to the captivity, every idolatry with which they came into close contact proved a sore temptation to them. As the author of Kings observes of the Ten Tribes—“The children of Israel did secretly those things which were not right against the Lord their God, and they built them high places in all their cities. . . . And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree; and there they burnt

incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom the Lord carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger; for they served idols, whereof the Lord had said unto them, “Ye shall not do this thing” (2 Kings xvii. 9—12).

Ver. 32.—Thou shalt make no covenant with them. See below, ch. xxxiv. 12—15. According to the forms usual at the time, a treaty of peace would have contained an acknowledgment of the gods of either nation, and words in honour of them. (See the “Treaty of Rameses II. with the Hittites,” given in the *Records of the Past*, vol. iv. pp. 27—32.) This would have been equivalent to “making a covenant with their gods.”

Ver. 33.—They shall not dwell in the land. This law did not, of course, affect proselytes; nor was it considered to preclude the continuance in the land of the enslaved Gibeonites. It forbade any Canaanite communities being suffered to remain within the limits of Palestine on friendly terms with the Hebrews. The precaution was undoubtedly a wise one.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 32, 33.—The Peril of Idolatry. Idolatry is the interposition of any object between man and God, in such sort that the object takes the place of God in the heart and the affections, occupying them to his exclusion, or to his disparagement. Idolatry proper, the interposition between God and the soul of idols or images, seems to have possessed a peculiar fascination for the Israelites, either because their materialistic tendencies made them shrink from approaching in thought a mere pure Spirit, or perhaps from their addiction to the sensual pleasures which accompanied idolatry, as practised by the greater part of the heathen. (See the comment on ver. 24.) In modern times, and in countries where Protestantism is professed by the generality, there is little or no danger of this gross form of the sin. But there is great danger of other forms of it. In order to make any practical use of those large portions of the Old Testament which warn against idolatry, we have to remember—

I. **THAT COVETOUSNESS IS IDOLATRY.** Wealth is made an idol by thousands in these latter days. All hasten to be rich. Nothing is greatly accounted of which does not lead to opulence. God is shut out from the heart by desires, and plans, and calculations which have money for their object and which so occupy it that there is no room for anything else. The danger has existed at all times, but it has to be specially guarded against at the present day, when Mammon has become the most potent of all the spirits of evil, and men bow down before, not an image of gold, but gold itself, whatever shape it may take.

II. **THAT SELFISHNESS IS IDOLATRY.** Men make idols of themselves—of their own happiness, quiet, comfort—allowing nothing to interfere with these, and infinitely preferring them to any intrusive thoughts of God, his glory, or his claims upon them. Persons thus wrapped up in themselves are idolaters of a very gross type, since the object of their worship is wholly bad and contemptible.

III. **THAT PROFLIGACY IS IDOLATRY.** Men idolise a wretched creature,—a girl, or woman, possessed of some transient beauty and personal attractions, but entirely devoid of a single estimable quality. For such a creature they peril all their prospects, both in this life and the next. They make her the queen of their souls, the object of their adoration, the star by which they direct their course. The ordinary consequence is shipwreck, both here and hereafter. When so poor an idol as a weak wanton has

stepped in between the soul and God, there is little chance of a real repentance and return of the soul to its Maker.

IV. THAT AMUSEMENT MAY BE IDOLATRY. It is quite possible so to devote oneself to amusement as to make it shut out God from us. Those who live in a whirl of gaiety, with no time set apart for serious duties, for instructing the ignorant, consoling the afflicted, visiting the poor and needy—nay, with scant time for private or family prayer—are idolaters, and will have to give account to a “jealous God,” who wills that his creatures should worship him and not make it their highest end to amuse themselves.

V. THAT LOVE OF FASHION MAY BE IDOLATRY. Vast numbers of persons who find no amusement in the pursuit, think it necessary to do whatever it is the fashion to do. Their life is a perpetual round of employments in which they have no pleasure, and which they have not chosen for themselves, but which the voice of fashion forces upon them. They drag themselves through exhibitions which do not interest them; lounge at clubs of which they are utterly weary; dine out when they would much rather be at home; and pass the evening and half the night in showing themselves at balls and assemblies which fatigue and disgust them. And all because Fashion says it is the correct thing. The idol, Fashion, has as many votaries in modern Europe as ever the Dea Syra had in Western Asia, or Isis in Egypt; and her votaries pass through life as real idolaters as the worshippers of the ancient goddesses, albeit unconscious ones.

SECTION XIV.—CHAPTER XXIV.

COMPLETION OF THE COVENANT, AND ASCENT OF MOSES INTO THE CLOUD ON SINAI.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXIV

Vers. 1—8.—THE RATIFICATION OF THE COVENANT. The giving of the Book of the Covenant being now completed, Moses, having received directions with respect to another ascent into the mount (vers. 1, 2), descended to the people, and in the first instance declared to them the main heads of the Covenant, which they received with favour, and expressed their willingness to obey (ver. 3). Not, however, regarding this as a sufficiently formal ratification, the Prophet proceeded to write out in a “Book” the whole of the commands which he had received. He then built an altar, erected twelve pillars, offered sacrifice, and having collected half the blood of the victims in basins, summoned the people to an assembly. At this, he read over solemnly all the words of the Book to them, and received their solemn adherence to it (ver. 7); whereupon, to complete the ceremony, and mark their entrance into covenant, he sprinkled the blood from the basins on the twelve tribes, represented by their leaders, and declared the acceptance complete (ver. 8). The ceremony was probably modelled on some customary proceedings, whereby important contracts between

man and man were ratified among the Hebrews and Syrians.

Vers. 1, 2.—It has been supposed that these verses are out of place, and suggested to remove them to the end of verse 8. But no change is necessary. It is quite natural that God should have given the directions before Moses descended from the mount, and that he should have deferred executing them until the people had accepted the covenant. Nadab and Abihu were the two eldest of Aaron’s sons, and so his natural successors in the priesthood, had they not sinned by offering “strange fire” (Lev. x. 1, 2). They had been mentioned previously, in ch. vi. 23. Seventy of the elders. On the elders of Israel, see ch. iii. 16, and xviii. 21. The “seventy” elders may, together with Nadab and Abihu, have represented the twelve tribes, six from each. **Worship ye afar off.** Though all were to ascend the mount to a certain height, only Moses was to go to the top. The others, being less holy than Moses, had to worship at a distance.

Ver. 3.—**And Moses came.** Moses descended from the mount, and reported to the people all the words of the Lord—all the legislation contained in the last three chapters and a half (ch. xx. 19, to ch. xxiii. 33), not perhaps *in extenso*, but as to its main provisions. **And all the people answered with one voice,** promising obedience. In times of excitement, a common impulse constantly animates an entire multitude, and an exaltation of feeling

leads them to make pledges, which they are very unwilling to stand by afterwards. Hence Moses requires something more than a verbal assent.

Ver. 4.—**Moses wrote all the words of the Lord.** We may presume that they were miraculously brought to his remembrance by that Spirit of Truth which guided all the Prophets (2 Pet. i. 21; John xiv. 26). Having written the words, he waited till the next day, and then **rose up early and builded an altar**, in preparation for the sacrifice without which no covenant was regarded as binding. **And twelve pillars.** Symbolical of the twelve tribes. Compare Josh. iv. 3, 9, 20.

Ver. 5.—**And he sent young men.** The Levitical priesthood not being as yet instituted, either all the people were regarded as holy, and so any one might offer sacrifice, or the “young men” selected may have been of the number of the first-born, who were priests in their respective families until the appointment of Aaron and his sons to be priests of the nation (ch. xxviii. 1). No doubt young men were selected as most competent to deal with struggling animals.

Ver. 6.—**Moses took half of the blood.** The blood, which symbolised the life of the victim, was the essential part of every sacrifice, and was usually poured over the altar, or at any rate sprinkled upon it, as the very crowning act of offering. (See Lev. i. 5; iii. 8; etc.) On this occasion Moses retained half of the blood, and **put it in basins**, for the purpose of so uniting all the people in the sacrifice, and thereby the more solemnly pledging them to the covenant, which the sacrifice at once consecrated and consummated. (See Heb. ix. 18—20.) The other **half of the blood** was, according to the usual practice, **sprinkled upon the altar.**

Ver. 7.—**And he took the Book of the Covenant.** In this book we have the germ of the Holy Scriptures—the first “book” actually mentioned as written in the narrative of the Bible. Genesis may contain other older documents, inserted by Moses, under the sanction of the Holy Spirit, in his compilation. But his own composition, if we except the burst of

poesy called forth by the passage of the Red Sea (ch. xv. 1—18), would seem to have commenced with “the Book of the Covenant.” Upon this nucleus the rest of the law was based; and it was to explain and enforce the law that Moses composed the Pentateuch **In the audience of the people.** Literally, “in the ears of the people,” which is equally intelligible, and more graphic. **And they said,** etc. The people made the same answer as before (ver. 3), adding a general promise of obedience to all that God might command in future.

Ver. 8.—Moses then proceeded to the final act—He took the blood from the basins, and **sprinkled it**—not certainly upon all the people, who numbered above two millions—but upon their leaders and representatives, the “elders” and other chief men, drawn up at the head of each tribe, and thus brought within his reach. It has been supposed by some that he merely sprinkled the blood on the twelve pillars, as representing the twelve tribes; but, had this been the case, the expression in the text would probably have been different. We read, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that he “sprinkled both the book, and *all the people*” (Heb. ix. 19). As he sprinkled, he said, **Behold the blood of the covenant,** etc. It was a common practice among the nations of antiquity to seal covenants with blood. Sometimes the blood was that of a victim, and the two parties to the covenant prayed, that, if they broke it, his fate might be theirs (Hom. *Il.* iii. 298; *xix.* 252; *Lev.* i. 24; *xxi.* 45; etc.). Sometimes it was the blood of the two parties themselves, who each drank of the other's blood, and thereby contracted a blood-relationship, which would have made their breaking the covenant more unpardonable (Herod. i. 74; *iv.* 70; Tacit. *Ann.* xii. 47). Moses seems to have followed neither practice at all closely, but, adopting simply the principle that a covenant required to be sealed with blood, to have arranged the details as he thought best. By the sprinkling of both the altar and the people the two parties to the covenant were made partakers of one and the same blood, and so brought into a sort of sacramental union.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 3—8.—*Man's readiness to enter into covenant with God, and promise unlimited obedience.* In any covenant which God proposes to man, the advantages offered to him are so great, and the requirements made of him so manifestly “holy, just, and good,” that it is almost impossible that he should calmly consider the terms and reject them. It is his natural instinct to exclaim—“All that the Lord hath said I will do, and be obedient.” There are many reasons for this feeling, of which the following are some:—

I. THE CREATURE IS MORALLY BOUND TO OBEY ITS CREATOR. That which an intelligent agent has made belongs to him absolutely, and cannot resist his will without rebellion. Now, “it is God that has made us, and not we ourselves.” We are his, whether we choose to obey him or no—his to punish or reward—to kill or make alive—to exalt to happiness or condemn to misery. We cannot resist his will without being self-con-

denied. The reasons which make disobedience to a father morally wrong tell with increased force if applied to God, who is far more truly than our father,—1. The author of our existence; 2, The preserver of our life; and 3, The bestower upon us of favours and benefits which we cannot possibly repay.

II. MAN'S BEST INTERESTS ARE PROMOTED BY A PERFECT OBEDIENCE. Every law ever imposed by God on man has been imposed for man's sake, and tends to his advantage. If a man were truly wise, he would lay down for himself as rules of conduct exactly those laws which are laid down for his guidance in Holy Scripture. The man whose obedience approaches nearest to perfection is the happiest. For every act of disobedience there is a natural penalty.

III. THE HIGHEST ASPIRATION OF MAN'S NATURE IS TO DO GOD'S WILL. Angels have no other desire but this. Man has a thousand desires, but, together with them, has an inward conviction that it is better for him to resist than to gratify the greater number. His passions draw him one way, his reason another, his affections, perhaps, a third. He has no unmixed satisfaction but in following the lead of the highest principle within him; and this principle is the love of God, which prompts him to make it the sole object of his life to please God by so acting as God would have him. Man, therefore, readily promises obedience—as of old at Sinai, so now at baptism and confirmation, or, again, after a sudden conversion; and, under the excitation of stirred feelings and an awakened conscience, imagines that he will keep to his brave resolve; but when the excitement is past, and the feelings have calmed down, and the tame, dull course of ordinary life is entered upon, then it is found not so easy to observe the promises made, and “do all that the Lord has said, and be obedient.” The flagrant contrast between the conduct of the Israelites and their words is known to all. The contrast is, perhaps, less, but it is still great, between the pledges given by Christians and their acts. Performance ever lags far behind promise. “The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Temptations assail—Satan spreads his wiles—the lower nature turns traitor, and men fall away. Happy, if, while there is still time, they “return and repent, and do the first works,” and casting themselves upon Christ obtain pardon for their disobedience from the ever-merciful God.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—2, 9—11.—*The vision of God for the selected few.* I. THOSE SELECTED FOR THIS VISION. That Moses himself went up was a matter of course. It was good for him to be there for the strengthening of his own faith. He himself would rejoice in the assurance thus given that the promise of the people was accepted. As to those who went up with him, it is clear that in the revelation something was being done to prepare them for official positions afterwards. They got this glorious sight not because they deserved it more than others, but because they needed it more. Moses required helps in order that he might be a mediator between God and the whole nation, and so these men, the seventy elders in particular, needed help in acting as mediators between Moses and the people. Doubtless it was intended that they should go down again among the people and be witnesses as to what they had seen. Would it not give an elder greater influence in after days if the people took knowledge of him that he had been with Moses in the mount? Notice, that in spite of this great revelation, Aaron soon fell away into the great transgression of the golden calf, and a little later Nadab and Abihu perished before the Lord for their disobedience. And may we not say that their sin was all the greater, just because they had been favoured with a privilege which they had failed to profit by?

II. THE VISION ITSELF. “They saw the God of Israel.” There is a mysterious yet most instructive reticence as to exactly what it was that they saw. As to what shape and form were seen nothing is said; and even concerning the circumstances nothing more is ventured than an indication of the sapphire work on which he stood. And since we find this reticence of description it behoves us to put corresponding restraint on our conjectures: we may infer that the purpose of this vision was to give a plain and encouraging contrast between what was now seen and what had been seen before. When God's people are at peace with him—and there was a symbolic peace at this time—then

there is a cessation of such terrorising manifestations as we read of in ch. xix. When we see all that strange mingling of terrible darkness, light, and sound, which make up the thunderstorm, we know that Nature is striving to recover her balance. That balance recovered, the body of heaven resumes its clearness; nay it often appears in even more than its accustomed beauty. All the dark and frowning appearances of God, all things that shake and confuse the soul, are meant to lead on to a calming and attracting revelation of God such as this revelation to Aaron and his companions but feebly typifies. First, the presence of God is made known amid thunder, lightning and smoke, and everything trembles to its centre at but the touch of his feet: then there is the change to where he is lifted clean above the polluting earth. Instead of disturbance there is unruffled peace, the beauty and profundity of the cloudless heaven. Thus by this outward symbol should we think of the quiet, untroubled heart where dwells the reconciled God. The more complete that reconciliation, the more settled the peace which we have with God, the more may the state of our hearts be indicated by the language which is here employed.

III. THE EXPERIENCES OF THIS CHOSEN COMPANY DURING THE VISION. 1. *They were made to feel unmistakably God's benignity towards them.* He did not lay his hand upon them. That they were not swiftly stretched in death upon the mountain side is spoken of as if in itself a subject of congratulation. The negative must come before the positive. The thought of complete salvation from danger must precede the thought of positive growth and enrichment. It was scarcely credible that men should see God and live. How dependent we are for our conclusions on narrow experiences, sometimes on most superstitious fears! The day is coming when, if we only accept all purifying ministrations, we shall not only see God and live, but also wonder that so long we should have been able to live without seeing him. 2. *This benignity is particularly experienced in their being allowed to eat and drink before God.* It is in the companionship of the table that social intercourse is commonly supposed to reach its perfection. This eating and drinking before God indicated that a certain composure of mind had been attained, and that the company had some real enjoyment of the position in which it was placed. There is a setting forth of the Divine blessing which ever rests on true fellowship of the saints. As many as are right with God personally are drawn together for united enjoyment as well as for united service. There is no place where the hearts of men are really one but when they are gathered before him who has the sapphire work under his feet. There, and there only, do we find the secret of that penetrating harmony which dissolves and utterly destroys all discords.—Y.

Vers. 3—8.—*The terms of the covenant accepted.* I. OBSERVE HOW CLEARLY THESE TERMS HAD BEEN STATED. Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments. All the way to Sinai the people had the opportunity of seeing the *power* of Jehovah; at Sinai something of his *glory* had been manifested; and now in these words and judgments the *character* and will of Jehovah were made known. It is observable that at their first approach to Sinai the people had expressed their willingness to be obedient to God (ch. xix. 8). But he does not seek to bind them down by a formal contract until he has made clear the laws under which he would have them to live. It is well for us to bear in mind that God distinctly and emphatically states all things of practical and present importance. We indeed may have a very imperfect understanding of his statements; but the statements in themselves are perfectly plain, only requiring that our minds should be brought into a right state of humility, and concentrated upon the study of God's holy commandments with the requisite degree of attention.

II. OBSERVE ALSO THE WAY IN WHICH THESE TERMS HAD BEEN ACCEPTED. The people answered with one voice. There was a remarkable unanimity. Are we to take it that there was a complete, universal, cordial shout of acceptance? There is no reason to suppose otherwise, no reason to suppose but that a profound impression had been made on every mind. Not the slightest word appears to indicate discord. But of course, although there was no discord in the expression, there was great diversity in the state of mind which underlay the shout of acceptance. The emotion finding vent in this unanimous acceptance could be traced back in a few instances to a thoroughly awakened conscience, desiring to live a thoroughly righteous life, and be in true and

complete conformity to the will of God; for there were men of David's spirit long before David's time. But in how many was there nothing more than the inconsiderate shout of those who, after all God had said, had yet not the slightest knowledge of his will! And yet with all these profound differences the superficial enthusiastic agreement evidently served a purpose. For not only was there a word, but also a highly significant and impressive deed. Notice that all the preparations in the way of altar, pillars, offerings, etc., made so carefully by Moses, are not said to have been made by God's commandment. The most we can say is, that they were not out of harmony with his will. They were a visible representation, a kind of writing out of the great contract into which the people thus entered. There stood the altar signifying the presence of God, and there the pillars signifying the twelve tribes, and there was the blood with its principle of life joining together, in a glorious unity, Jehovah and his people. The great and lamentable differences underneath are neither forgotten nor underrated; but for the time they are not regarded. The unity of feeling thus secured was made to serve a great symbolic purpose. These people, by word and deed, by the erection of these pillars, and by the acceptance of the sprinkled blood, took part in a great historic act, and declared that they were the people of God in a way the consequences of which they could not afterwards escape.

iii. Observe this very remarkable thing—THAT GOD SHOULD HAVE ACCEPTED THEIR ACCEPTANCE. He knew how much and how little it meant, and yet he did not point out the rashness of the utterance, he did not interfere with the symbolic actions by which Moses more deliberately set forth the adhesion of the people. We are bound, therefore, to conclude that in whatever ignorance and sudden enthusiasm the people might subscribe to this covenant, yet that subscription was right. The laws that God gave from Sinai are the laws for men to live by. The constitution of God's kingdom was by this great symbolic act solemnly introduced into Israel, and made the constitution of Israel also. Every nation, if it is to be anything more than a mere crowd, must have a constitution. Some constitutions grow, and like all things that grow, they occasionally branch out in unexpected directions. Other constitutions, men meet together to determine and formulate, like that of the American republic. But here is a constitution which comes down out of heaven from God; and in a great historic act, the nation into which it comes accepts it. Hence those born under that constitution were bound to accept it also. There was no nation on the face of the earth that had such securities, privileges, and prospects as Israel had under these laws from Sinai. The government was neither a despotism nor a democracy. The people were neither under an arbitrary will which might capriciously change, nor did they depend upon their own fluctuating opinions. God, if we might use such an expression, was bound by these laws, even as the people were themselves.—Y.

Vers. 4.—“*If any man will do the will he shall know of the doctrine.*” What a man receives must depend upon what he is able to receive. [Illustration. The sponge absorbs more water than the wood, because its pores are more open.] To receive the light of revelation the spiritual pores must be well opened; and this depends upon inward conditions—the will to obey, followed by obedience. Here a revelation is impending. Notice—

I. READINESS OF THE WOULD-BE RECIPIENTS. Moses had declared the Divine will. The hearers might have been indifferent, or they might have been disheartened by the stringency of the injunctions. In either case, through their imperfect condition, more perfect light must have been delayed. For a little, however, they were rapt out of self; and though, it may be, the momentary enthusiasm did not pierce clouds which years only could disperse, yet they were ready for the moment to gain a glimpse, at any rate, of the Divine glory. “All the words which the Lord hath said will we do:” such was the utterance of the people's disposition at the moment. Temporary inclination, however, is not everything; at best it only marks out the way along which effort may compel habit. For a nation to speak with “one voice” is something; but it needs discipline and training to secure the “one heart” as well. The first step towards securing this has next to be taken:—

II. READINESS CONFIRMED AND ACCEPTED. A record needed to impress the memory; a sacramental symbol to impress the imagination. 1. *The record.* “Moses wrote all

the words of the Lord," and, when he had read what he had written, the people confirmed their previous promise (ver. 7). A written reminder of the covenant as accepted by them was all-important; a dying enthusiasm goes hand in hand with a waning memory; only a record which will revive the memory can avail to rekindle the enthusiasm. Our own experience illustrates this. The diary, the marked Bible—what a suggestive eloquence they have, not only to remind of old times, but to re-awaken old feelings! 2. *The sacramental symbol.* Burnt-offerings, the outward sign of dedication and obedience; peace offerings, the outward sign of gratitude and thanksgiving. Half the blood sprinkled on the people and half on the altar, symbol of the union between man and God so long as his commands were thankfully obeyed. So long as man is in the flesh he needs such sensible and visible emblems. His senses are a function of himself; to lay hold of them is to lay hold of him through them. The Bible is our record of what God requires of us; but baptism and the Lord's Supper give outward expression to the teaching of the Bible. Each confirms the influence of the other; we need both to support our resolutions.

III. *THE PARTIAL REVELATION.* The people had expressed their willingness to obey; and, further, they had openly confirmed that expression. Time, however, was needed to test and strengthen their resolution: they could not be admitted to the full blaze of light merely because, in partial darkness, they had for a little gazed towards its dawning. A few are selected to represent the multitude (vers. 1, 9—11); and even of these few, not all are admitted to equal nearness. Enough is revealed to help faith, more would probably have only injured its growth. [Illustration: Plants are kept from too much light until they are firmly rooted.] Faith, here, needed *rooting*: until that was accomplished an economy of reserve was necessary.

Concluding considerations.—1. The honest promise of obedience is accepted by God as of moral value. He encourages sincerity by glimpses of the reward in store. 2. Only obedience tested by difficulty can win the realisation of the beatific vision. The people must share the life-long training of Moses before they can enjoy with the like freedom his privilege of intimacy with God. Willingness to obey brings knowledge; but full knowledge comes with full obedience.—G.

Vers. 3—9.—*The ratification of the covenant.* These verses contain the account of the formal ratification of the covenant between Israel and Jehovah—an event, the most momentous in the history of the nation, big, for weal or woe, with unimaginable issues, and a shadow of the better covenant which God now makes with Christians. Observe—

I. *THE RATIONALITY OF THE COVENANT.* God desires from his people "reasonable service" (Rom. xii. 1). He would not have them enter it in haste. Vows made under the influence of sudden impressions are not to be trusted. Once committed to his service, God will deal with us with strictness (ch. xxiii. 21). But he does not wish us to commit ourselves till we have carefully considered the nature of the step we are taking, and the magnitude of the issues involved (cf. Luke xiv. 26—34). See this illustrated in the history of the covenant with Israel. The covenant was entered into—1. *With great deliberation.* It was not forced on Israel. The negotiations connected with it were intentionally drawn out and prolonged, just that the people might have the opportunity of pondering well the character of the proposed engagement. Alike in the events of the exodus, and in the miracles of the desert, they had had abundant experience of the character of the Being with whom they were allying themselves. Arrived at Sinai, preliminary proposals were made to them, and an opportunity given them at the outset of saying Yea or Nay (ch. xix. 3—9). Their acceptance of these proposals was followed by the giving of the law, which drew from them a new promise to do whatever God should speak to them (ch. xx. 19; Deut. v. 27). An interval ensued, during which Moses was in the mountain (ch. xx. 21). On descending, he recites to them "All the words of the Lord, and all the judgments" (ver. 3); and once again they promise full obedience. Even then the matter is allowed to stand over till the morrow, when Moses appears with the written book in his hand, and they are asked, finally, if they adhere to what they have said (ver. 7). Greater precautions against rash committal could scarcely have been taken. 2. *After careful instruction.* Pains were taken fully to inform the people of the terms of the covenant, before asking them

to enter into it. The law was uttered by God's own voice. The "judgments" were recited to them by Moses. They were read a second time from the "book." Their assent to the covenant was thus sought to be made an intelligent one. If we engage ourselves to God, he would have us do it with "understanding." 3. *Amidst impressive solemnities.* These—the reading of the words from the book, the sprinkling of the blood, etc.—were of a nature adapted to arouse the minds of the people to a just sense of the momentousness of the transaction. From the whole we learn that if dedication is the result of an act, it should be of a calm, sober, thoughtful act; it cannot be done too solemnly or too intelligently. Our religious life should have a rational basis.

II. THE BOND OF THE COVENANT. The nucleus of the transaction is the people's promise—"All the words which the Lord hath said will we do" (ver. 3)—"All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient" (ver. 7). There is a tone of rashness—of self-confidence—in this promise, as given by Israel, which forewarns of subsequent defection. The people evidently had but little knowledge of their own hearts. They had little perception of the spiritual requirements of this law. They had not learned to distrust themselves. Their surrender to the Divine will was not thorough or heart-whole. (See on ch. xix. 8.) It remains true, however, that surrender of the will to God, in the spirit of obedience, is an indispensable condition of being received into covenant with him. "The idea of the servant of God is complete only when he who is bound to God also binds himself to God's will, following God perfectly." (Oehler.) This is as true of the Gospel as of the law. The obedient will is implicit in faith. The end contemplated in salvation is obedience. We are made free from sin that we may become servants of righteousness (Rom. vi. 18). The recognition of this—the acceptance of the obligation—is involved in conversion, in saving faith, in the new birth, in the coming to Christ, or however else we may express the change from death to life. If we no longer speak of the promise of obedience as the "bond" of the covenant, it is only because that which the Gospel primarily demands of us, viz. faith, goes deeper than such a promise, while implicitly containing it. The object of spiritual trust is, ultimately, God himself, and in the Gospel, Christ, as the sent of God to be the Saviour of the world; but such trust invariably involves the yielding up of the will to God, and is on its practical side, an energy of holiness. The true believer is, of necessity, a doer of the will of the Father. "Faith, without works, is dead" (James ii. 17—26). (See further, on ch. xix. 5.) It is, however, well that this *implicit* element in faith should also be allowed to become *explicit* in distinct acts of consecration or of self-dedication to God. This brings us very near to what we have in this covenant with Israel. See below.

III. THE CEREMONIAL OF RATIFICATION. (1) Moses "built an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel" (ver. 4). (2) Young men of his appointment sacrificed burnt-offerings and peace-offerings unto the Lord (ver. 5). (3) The blood of the sacrificed animals was divided: half was put in basins, and half sprinkled on the altar (ver. 6). (4) The words of the book of the Covenant were next solemnly read in the audience of the people; and the latter renewed their assent to them (ver. 7). (5) The blood was then cast upon the people out of the basins, and the Covenant was declared to be concluded (ver. 8). Two points here claim our attention. 1. The ratifying of the Covenant with sacrifice; and 2. The action with the blood. Both were significant. 1. *The sacrifices.* The burnt-offering was primarily a symbol of self-surrender (cf. Ps. li. 16—19). The idea embodied here, therefore, was, that in the institution of the Covenant, what was required was the unconditional surrender of the offerer, with all that belonged to him, to God. The peace-offering symbolises reconciliation and fellowship. But the offering of the sacrifices had also a propitiatory reference. This is plain from the sprinkling of the blood on the altar. It is sprinkled there as atoning for the people's sins. It was through the blood of propitiation that peace was made, that reconciliation was brought about. This teaches several things. It shows (1) That Israel was viewed by God as sinful. (2) That it was not on legal grounds, but as an act of grace, that they were being admitted into covenant. (3) That the covenant embodied grace as well as law. (4) That God would deal graciously with Israel, if they sincerely *endeavoured* to keep his law, notwithstanding many defects and failures. (5) That their attitude under the law, in seeking to fulfil its righteousness, ought to be an evangelical, not a legal one, i.e., they

ought to draw their motives, their encouragement, and their hope, not from the thought of their self-sufficiency to keep the law, or from the idea that they were actually keeping it in such a way as legally to entitle them to the blessing, but from the conviction of God's mercy to them, which, as it was the *foundation* of their national existence, so was it the real ground of their standing all along. 2. *The sprinkling of the blood on the people.* It is, as Keil remarks, the *one* blood which is sprinkled on the altar and on the people; and it is not sprinkled on the people, till it has been presented and accepted on the altar. Applied to the people, the blood had the effect of formally cleansing them from sin, and of consecrating them to God's service. God thereafter claimed them as his special property. Redeemed life is his. Made free from sin, we become servants of God (Rom. vi. 22).—J. O.

Vers. 7, 8.—*Consecration.* By the sprinkling of the blood of sacrifice, and by their voluntary acceptance of obligations to obedience, the children of Israel became, formally, the people of Jehovah. They had avouched themselves to be the Lord's. They had taken on them the vows of his service. They were now consecrated to be doers of his will. The same idea of consecration is embodied in the New Testament word "saint." The believer is one of a sanctified, a consecrated, a priestly people, set specially apart "to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. ii. 5). Consider—

I. *THE NATURE OF CONSECRATION.* Consecration, as a Christian duty, involves three ideas—separation from evil, devotement to God, and ceaseless pursuit of holiness in heart and life. It has its ground in the fact of redemption, and in the sense of God's mercies. The consecrated heart then becomes a sanctuary in which God dwells by his Holy Spirit; while this sacred indwelling in turn becomes a new source of obligations to holiness. The holiness we are to aim at is a holiness like God's own—nothing lower (1 Pet. i. 15, 16). Consecration, if never so complete as the Christian could wish, may always be perfect, at least in aim, in spirit, in intention, in desire. We are expected, like Caleb, to follow the Lord *fully*. The Divine ideal is the absolute consecration of him who said—"Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (Heb. x. 9; John iv. 34). "I would rather," says Spurgeon, "my child had a perfect copy to write by, though he might never equal it, than that he should have an imperfect copy set before him, because then he would never make a good writer at all." The Scriptural idea of consecration comes out in the light of the usage of the cognate word—"sanctify." God himself is the fountain of sanctity or holiness. The whole Mosaic ritual was a grand apparatus for impressing this thought of God's holiness upon the minds of his worshippers. Everything to be used in his service, as contaminated by sin, required to be purged with blood (Heb. ix. 21). To this, in special cases, succeeded an anointing with oil (ch. xxx. 25—32). Thus purged and anointed, the sanctuary, person, sacred vessel, or whatever it might be, was regarded as completely sanctified; in other words, as separated from common uses to the service of a holy God. The High Priests and Levites of the Old Covenant were all thus specially sanctified to God. But these things were only shadows; we have the realities corresponding to them under the New Covenant. If a man is really in Christ, he is already, by God's act, through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, and the holy anointing of the Spirit, a consecrated person, and ought to regard himself as such. This is the Divine side of the matter. There is clearly, however, a vast difference between the consecration of a mere utensil, say the golden candlestick, or the pots and vessels of the sanctuary, and the consecration of a living, moral, intelligent being. A material thing is sanctified simply by the act of setting it apart to sacred uses; its nature admits of nothing more. But the consecration of a moral being implies an act on his own part, as well as on God's, else the consecration has no reality; it is such only in name and form. The essence of it lies in a free, cheerful, *self*-dedication of the person (cf. Rom. xii. 1). Here, then, are two sides of this subject, the Divine and human—the ideal and the real—which two sides are constantly reappearing in Scripture, sometimes apart, sometimes blending together, sometimes standing side by side, almost with the force of contradictions, e.g., "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, even as ye are unleavened" (1 Cor. v. 7). In short, God's consecration gives us a standing and an ideal; but it is only as we consciously accept this standing

and ideal as our own, and seek to give them reality by *self*-dedication, and the strenuous pursuit of holiness, that our consecration becomes truly effectual. God's consecration of us becomes, so to speak, the ground of our own consecration of ourselves, and of constant striving after that perfection which is implied in the ideal he sets before us. Hence all those manifold Scripture images which imply sanctification as a *process*, and a work of God's grace constantly going on within us.

II. **ADVANTAGES OF CONSECRATION.** We come back to the old point that consecration, regarded as a duty, is a personal act whereby, out of a sense of God's mercies, and specially his grace in redemption, a believer solemnly dedicates himself and all that he has to the service and glory of God. Such consecration, with the surrender of the obedient will, is already, as seen in the previous homily, implicit in every exercise of saving faith. Great moral advantages, however, accrue from making one's consecration to Christ a distinct solemn act, again and again to be repeated, each time, we shall hope, with more perfect self-surrender; and the remembrance of which is to go along with us in the discharge of every duty. This corresponds pretty nearly to the meaning of the Israelitish covenant.

Consecration is *the basis of acceptable service*. (1) Consecration of self *precedes* all other consecrations; as of time, substance, talents, service, etc. It is only where self is consecrated, that the consecration of anything else is acceptable. What St. Paul says of charity, that without it all special gifts and acts, even feeding the poor, or giving his body to be burned, are valueless, we may say with equal truth of self-dedication. It is *self* God wants—the love, reverence, devotion, service of self; not a mere share of self's possessions. On the other hand (2), the consecration of self *includes* all other consecrations. If we are God's, then all is God's that is ours. Our time is God's; so is our money, our talents, our influence, everything we have. Let Christians ask, whether, in this view of the matter, consecration is in their case being carried out into all its legitimate results. Not that God desires "a gift;" but he desires "fruit that may abound to our account" (Phil. iv. 17).

Consecration secures nobler service; it is likewise *a source of immense strength in the active pursuit of holiness*. In any course of conduct, we know the value of a definite purpose and aim. Most of all it is important to have as the clear, definite motto of our lives—"To me to live is Christ." We know then exactly what we are living for. Consecration invests a man's whole being with a sanctity from which evil shrinks back repelled. The same sanctity spreads itself over all he has and does. He feels that he must be holy "in *all* manner of conversation." Even on the bells of his horses he sees something written, "holiness to the Lord." He has "holy garments;" and his great business is to watch and keep his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame (Rev. xvi. 15). His body is the temple of the Holy Ghost; and he dare not desecrate with worldly pollutions the place where God dwells. He has definitely separated himself from evil; and he must not return to it.

Consecration *resolves questions of casuistry*. How often do we find good people, or people who wish to be good, puzzling and perplexing themselves with questions of this kind—Dare I read this book? Should I go to this party? May I engage in this amusement? Can I take this profit? Unless we greatly mistake, most of these difficulties would disappear with more perfect consecration. A truly consecrated man carries in his breast a principle which easily guides him through all such cases, and makes many things right and pure to him which others would stumble at, while it leads him to discountenance and condemn much that they would pass unnoticed.

Finally, consecration is *absolutely essential to success in prayer*. The heart that has not said—"All for Christ," is in no fit state to approach God's throne to supplicate blessings for Christ's sake. There must be iniquity hidden away in that heart somewhere; and "if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps. lxxi. 18). But the consecrated man, as a true priest of God, has free access to the holiest of all. He asks what he will, and it is given him. Prayer, indeed, is no prayer, unless it is the outcome of a heart which is the seat of deep consecration, and where the Lord is *habitually* sanctified. Only to such prayer are the promises yea and amen.

From all this, it is manifest that consecration pertains to the deepest essence of religion. Yet many feel as if sometimes they could almost close with Christ, were it not for this very matter of consecration. Their hearts are still clinging to something

which God requires them to forego; and clinging to this, they rightly judge that they cannot be Christ's disciples. Let them reflect that for this something they sacrifice eternal life.—J. O.

Vers. 1, 2, 9—11.—*The Covenant made.* I. THE VISION OF GOD (1, 2, 9, 11).—1. It is for the called alone. God manifests himself only to the repentant and the believing. 2. These are *commanded* to approach. This is our warrant for confident boldness of access: he has called us. 3. The vision is bestowed upon those from whose midst the mediator has gone into God's immediate presence and who wait his return (ver. 2). 4. It is given as they go upwards into the mount where the Lord's will is declared (9). The heart which seeks after holiness admits the light in which God will by-and-by be manifested. 5. The vision is sure: "they saw the God of Israel." 6. For the called the vision of God is not destruction, but safety and joy. We meet the unveiling, not only of infinite holiness, but also of infinite love. The vision of the Divine glory was a wonder and delight; and the place of vision became a place of feasting.

II. THE RATIFYING OF THE COVENANT.—1. It was made with a willing people: "all the words which the Lord hath said will we do." 2. It was made with a people who were in possession of God's testimonies: he "told them all the words of the law," he "wrote all the words of the Lord." God's light must reveal sin and need before it may manifest his salvation. 3. God and his people are bound together by the blood of accepted sacrifice. The blood of sprinkling is peace and power to the saved.—U.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 9—11.—*THE SACRIFICIAL FEAST AND THE VISION OF GOD.* After the covenant had been ratified by the unanimous voice of the people, Moses proceeded to carry out the injunctions with respect to Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the elders, which he had received while still in the mount (see the comment on vers. 1, 2). Taking them with him, he ascended Sinai once more to a certain height, but clearly not to the summit, which he alone was privileged to visit (vers. 2 and 12). The object of the ascent was twofold. 1. A sacrificial meal always followed upon a sacrifice; and the elders might naturally desire to partake of it as near the Divine presence as should be permitted them. This was their purpose in ascending. 2. God desired to impress them with a sense of his awful majesty and beauty, and was prepared for this end to manifest himself to them in some strange and wonderful way as they were engaged in the solemn meal (ver. 11). This was his purpose in inviting their presence. The manifestation is described in ver. 10. It was a "vision of God," but of what exact nature it is impossible to say. Having recorded it, the author parenthetically notes that the Divine vision did not destroy any of those who beheld it, or cause them any injury, as might have been expected.

Ver. 9.—*Then went up* Compare ver. 1.

The mountain was to be partially ascended, but not to any great height. Nadab, Abihu, and the elders were to "worship God *afar off*."

Ver. 10.—*They saw the God of Israel.* These words can scarcely mean less than that they saw with their bodily eyes some appearance of the Divine being who had summoned them to his presence for the purpose. Moses, we know, saw a "similitude of God" (Num. xii. 8). Isaiah "saw the Lord sitting upon his throne" (Is. vi. 1). Ezekiel saw upon the throne "the appearance of a man" (Ezek. i. 26). It does not follow from Deut. iv. 12, 15, that the elders saw no similitude, since in that passage Moses is speaking, not to the elders, but to the people, and referring, not to what occurred at the sacrificial feast after the ratification of the covenant, but to the scene at the giving of the Ten Commandments previously (ch. xx. 1—18). What the form was which the elders saw, we are not told; but as it had "feet," it was probably a human form. It may have been hazy, indefinite, "too dazzling bright for mortal eye" to rest upon. But it was a true "vision of God"—and, as Keil says, "a foretaste of the blessedness of the sight of God in eternity." *There was under his feet, as it were, a paved work of a sapphire stone.* Rather, "and under his feet was, as it were, a work of clear sapphire." Nothing is said concerning a pavement, but only that below the feet of the figure which they saw was something, which looked as if it were made of bright blue sapphire stone, something as clear and as blue as the blue of heaven. Canon Cook

supposes the actual sky to be meant; but the expression, "*as it were*, the body of heaven," or "*like* the very heaven," makes this impossible. A thing is not like itself.

Ver. 11.—**The nobles**—i.e., the notables—the seventy elders, and other persons, already mentioned (vers. 1, 9). **He laid not his hand.** God did not smite them with death, or pestilence, or even blindness. It was thought to be impossible to see God and live. (See above, Gen. xxxii. 30; Ex. xxxii. 20; Judg. vi. 22, 23, etc.) **Man** was unworthy to draw near to God in any way; and to look on him

was viewed as a kind of profanity. Yet some times he chose to show himself, in vision or otherwise, to his people, and then, as there could be no guilt on their part, there was no punishment on his. It is generally supposed that, in all such cases, it was the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity who condescended to show himself. **Also they saw God.** Rather, "they both saw God, and did eat and drink." The two were simultaneous. As they were engaged in the sacrificial meal, God revealed himself to them.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 9—11. *The Covenant Meal on Sinai.*—The Old Testament contains no mention of any other meal so wonderful as this. Newly entered into covenant with God, fresh from the blood of sprinkling, which was representative of the blood of Christ, Moses, Aaron with his two sons, and the seventy elders, half-way up Sinai, engaged in the sacrificial feast upon the peace-offerings (ver. 5), when lo! the heaven was opened to them, and there burst upon their astonished sight a vision of Jehovah in his glory and his beauty, standing on pellucid sapphire, dazzling in its brilliance. As the meat and drink entered their mouths, God shone in upon their souls. It was indeed a "wondrous festivity," and certainly not without a spiritual meaning, extending to all time, and even beyond time into eternity. Surely, we may say, without over-great boldness, or any undue prying into holy things:—

I. THAT THE MEAL WAS A TYPE OF THAT DIVINE FEAST WHICH THE LORD INSTITUTED ON THE NIGHT OF HIS BETRAYAL, FOR THE SUSTENTATION OF HIS PEOPLE. The Holy Communion is a feast upon a sacrifice—the sacrifice of Christ—partaken of by Christians as the most solemn rite of their religion, in the wilderness of this life, for their better sustentation and support through its trials. It brings them very near to him, as it were into his presence. As they partake of the bread and wine, they partake of him; his light shines into their souls; his beauty and glory are revealed to their spirits; they obtain a foretaste of heaven. Blessed is the man who thus eats and drinks in his kingdom—eating and drinking *and seeing God*.

II. THAT THE MEAL WAS, FURTHER, A TYPE OF THAT MARRIAGE-SUPPER OF THE LAMB, WHEREOF ALL THE FAITHFUL SHALL ONE DAY PARTAKE IN HEAVEN (Rev. xix. 7—9). There the saints shall eat and drink in the Divine presence, their meat the heavenly manna, angels' food, their drink the wine which they "drink new" in their Father's kingdom. The glory of God shall shine on them. For the place of their dwelling "has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it;" for it is "the glory of God that lightens it, and the Lamb that is the light thereof" (ib. xxi. 23). The sapphire of Sinai has there its counterpart; for "the first foundation" of the city wherein they dwell "is jasper, and the second sapphire" (ib. 19). The Divine presence is with them perpetually; for the "throne" of God is there, and they "see his face," and "his Name is in their foreheads" (ib. xxii. 4). Thrice blessed they who attain to this heavenly feast, and are counted worthy of that beatific vision!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2, 9—12. *A vision of God.*—Prior to the ratification of the covenant, God had given Moses instructions that, immediately on the conclusion of the ceremonies, he, together with Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu (representatives of the future priesthood), and seventy of the elders of Israel (representatives of the body of the people), should again ascend the mountain (vers. 1, 2). The design was to partake of a sacrificial feast, perhaps held on the flesh of the peace-offerings of ver. 5, by way of solemn conclusion to the proceedings of the day. Another part of the design was that the elders might receive a new revelation of Jehovah, setting forth the milder glories of his

character as a God reconciled with Israel, in contradistinction to the manifestations on Sinai, which revealed him solely as the God of law and terror. The later revelation was the counterbalance of the earlier. It does that justice to the character of God, as standing in friendly relations to his people, which was not possible in harmony with the special design, and within the special limits, of the revelation from the summit of the mount. It showed him as the God of grace. It taught Israel to think of him, to love him, to trust him, and to worship him as such. It kept them from being overwhelmed by the remembrance of the former terrors. It forestalled that view of the graciousness of God which was afterwards peculiarly associated with the mercy-seat and with Mount Zion, and is now the aspect of his character predominant in the Gospel (see on Sinai and Zion, ch. xix. 16—19). We are told, accordingly, that when the company ascended the mount, "they saw the God of Israel" (ver. 10). What they did see is not further described than that "there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness" (ver. 10). The vision, however, was plainly one addressed to the outer or inner sense, an "appearance" of God in some recognisable way. So mild and beneficent was the spectacle, nevertheless, that it seems to have disarmed all terror; and Aaron and his sons, with the "nobles," ate and drank while still witnessing it. We may regard the vision, in its relation to the situation of Israel, as—1. *Declarative*. It gave a view of the character of God. (1) To some extent of his *essential* character. The blue of the sapphire symbolised his holiness, while in the deep, clear ether was mirrored his untroubled purity, his superiority to earthly passion and disturbance, his perfect blessedness, his transcendency over creation, etc. (2) More especially of his *gracious* character. The idea suggested was that of a God *at peace* with Israel—reconciled. The vision would be read in its contrast with the previous revelation. The terrors of the law-giving were now laid aside; all is sweetness, beauty, mildness, serenity, love. This vision of God as a God *at peace* with Israel, is mediated by the offering of sacrifice. It is so also under the Gospel. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. v. 19). 2. *Symbolic of privilege*. (1) The "nobles," though in God's presence, suffered no harm. "Upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand" (ver. 11). He *might* have done so, for they were by nature sinners. But they were safe, as sprinkled with blood of atonement, and as in presence of a God of mercy. Though sinners, we are permitted in Christ to draw nigh to God. He will not harm us; he will welcome, accept of, and bless us. (2) Though in God's presence, they "did eat and drink" (ver. 11). They had this freedom before him; this feeling of confidence. It is only the revelation of God as a God of grace which can inspire this confidence. Their eating and drinking was symbolical of the privilege of every pious Israelite, sheltered from his sin in God's mercy, and taking confidence from his word of grace. Much more is it symbolic of the privilege of Christians, in whom perfect love casts out fear (1 John iv. 18). 3. *Prefigurative of future blessedness*. The goal of the kingdom of God is the feast of perfected bliss in glory, where the saints shall eat and drink and see God with no intervening veils, and in the full beauty of his love and holiness. 4. *A warning*. These seventy elders ate and drank in God's presence, yet at last perished in the desert. Nadab and Abihu were consumed by fire. Cf. the warning (Luke xiii. 26, 27).

Lessons—1. The vision of God in Christ disarms fear. 2. Let us try to see God, even in our eating and drinking (1 Cor. x. 31). 3. Those sheltered by Christ's blood are safe. Note the following—(1) There are those who eat and drink, and do not see God. (2) There are those who see God, and cannot eat and drink. (3) There are those who eat and drink, *and* see God" (Rev. W. B. Robertson, D.D.).—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 12—18.—MOSES' ENTRY INTO THE CLOUD, AND FORTY DAYS' COMMUNE WITH GOD. It was necessary now that Moses should receive full directions for the external worship of God, the sanctuary, and the priesthood. Every religion has something tangible and

material about it—holy places, holy things, rites, ceremonies, rules, forms, regulations. If man sets himself to devise these things of his own head, he may very easily go wrong, and find his elaborate inventions "an offence" to God. To avoid this—to secure the result that

all should be pleasing and acceptable to "the High and Holy One which inhabiteth eternity," it was thought fitting that "patterns" should be shown to Moses of all that was to be made for the worship (Heb. viii. 5), and exact details given him with respect to the material, size, shape, and construction of each. The results are put before us in seven chapters (chs. xxv.—xxxii.). For the purpose of allowing ample time for the communications which had to be made and of securing that undivided attention which was requisite in order that all should remain fixed in the memory, God summoned his servant to a long and solitary colloquy, on the mountain summit whereon the cloud rested (ch. xix. 18), apart from all his people. Moses, of course, obeyed; but before ascending, arranged with the elders that in his absence Aaron and Hur should have the direction of affairs, and decide all doubtful questions (ver. 14). He then went up the mountain, accompanied for part of the way by Joshua, who is now spoken of as his "minister," or "attendant" (ver. 13). Joshua probably remained with him for six days, while Moses waited for a summons to enter the cloud. On the seventh day the summons came: and Moses, leaving Joshua, entered the cloud, and was hid from the sight of all men.

Ver. 12.—**Come up to me.** Moses, apparently, had descended again into the plain, with Aaron and the seventy elders, after the festival was over. (See ver. 14, and compare ch. xxxii. 1.) He is now commanded to reascend, and be there—i.e., "And continue there"—foreshadowing the length of the stay. **Tables of stone, and a law, and commandments,** etc. Literally, "Tables of stone, and the law and the commandments which I have written." The three expressions alike refer to the Decalogue, which alone God wrote. **That thou mayest teach them.** Rather, "to teach them." God wrote the commandments on stone, in order to inculcate them with the greater force upon his people.

Ver. 13.—**Moses went up.** Prompt to obey, Moses, though he had only just descended from the mount, immediately made ready to set forth and again ascend it. This time he was attended by his minister, Joshua, whose arm he had employed on a former occasion against the Amalekites (ch. xvii. 9—13). The name, Joshua, is, however, still given him by anticipation, since he did not receive it until he was sent by Moses to explore the land of Canaan (Num. xiii. 8, 16).

Ver. 14.—**And he said unto the elders.**

Before taking his departure for the long sojourn implied in God's address to him, "Come up to me into the mount, and be there" (ver. 12), Moses thought it necessary to give certain directions to the elders as to what they should do in his absence—1. They were to remain where they were—i.e., in the plain at the foot of Sinai, until his return, however long it should be delayed. 2. They were to regard Aaron and Hur as their leaders, and his (Moses') representatives. In case of any difficulty arising, they were to refer the matter to them. On Hur see the comment upon ch. xvii. 12.

Ver. 15.—**Moses went up into the mount.** Having made the necessary arrangements for the government of the people during his absence, Moses ascended, in company with Joshua, to the upper part of the mountain, and there waited for some further summons. A cloud, or, rather, the cloud previously mentioned (ch. xix. 16), stood gathered upon the highest eminence, and marked the special presence of God there. Moses, though called up into the mount, would not intrude into this inner sanctuary, until specially bidden to enter it.

Ver. 16.—Now occurred a remarkable pause. The summons had been given to Moses, and he had obeyed it. He was there on the platform a little below the summit, ready, but waiting for a further call. The call was not made for six days. A holy calm reigned upon Sinai—the cloud rested upon the summit, and in the cloud was the glory of the Lord. Moses and Joshua waited near—but for six days there was no sign. God thus taught Moses, and through him the world, that near approach to him requires long and careful preparation. Moses, no doubt, was occupied during the six days in continual prayer. At last, on the seventh day, the call, which Moses had expected, came. God called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. God summoned him to a closer approach—bade him enter the cloud—and draw as nigh to him as possible.

Ver. 17.—Meanwhile, to those below in the plain, "the glory of the Lord" on the summit above them, was like devouring fire on the top of the mount. They had but to lift their eyes thither, and they saw his wonderful glory—showing like a huge fire—on the spot from which he had spoken to them (ch. xx. 18). This manifestation continued certainly for the first six days; whether it lasted longer or not is open to question.

Ver. 18.—**And Moses went into the midst of the cloud.** Quitting Joshua, Moses at last, in obedience to the call out of the midst of the cloud, entered within its shadow and disappeared from human vision. In this abnormal condition, alone with God, he continued for thirty-four days, making, together

with the six days before he entered the cloud, the forty days and forty nights of the text before us. It is noted in Deut. ix. 9, that during the whole of this time he was without food. Compare Elijah's fast (1 Kings xix. 8), and our blessed Lord's (Matt. iii. 2).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 12—18.—*Prolonged commune with God.* Prolonged commune with God is the soul's truest strengthening, and sweetest refreshment. Without it our spirits languish—we grow weary and faint—worldliness creeps upon us—our thoughts and discourse become “of the earth, earthy”—we have no life or liveliness in ourselves, and can impart none to others. Moses' commune was abnormal, extraordinary, inimitable by us in its main features—its duration, locality, nearness of access, and completeness of isolation. But it may serve as a pattern to us in many respects, nevertheless.

I. IN THE PREPARATION FOR IT. Here we note (1) a ready heart. “Moses rose up”—did not delay, did not offer objections, did not say, “Suffer me first” to do this or that, but responded to the call of God at once. (2) A thoughtful regard for others. Moses instructed the elders how to act while he was away. “Tarry ye here”—“Seek ye to Aaron and Hur, if ye have matters to do.” (3) A willingness to help others towards the higher life, to carry them on with him, as far as he might. “Moses rose up, and his minister, Joshua.” (4) A patient and reverential waiting. Summoned, called up, bidden to draw near, he yet rested for six days outside the cloud, longing to enter in, but withheld by a sense of unworthiness and a fear of intrusion, fasting all the while, and seeking to prepare himself for the nearer approach by supplication and meditation.

II. IN THE PLACE OF IT. A holy place—“the mount of God”—a place sacred from common uses—into which worldly thoughts could scarcely penetrate. We, who have no Sinai, have at any rate our churches, and other sacred buildings—some of them always open, not merely for public worship, but for private prayer and meditation—inviting us to enter in and draw nigh to God. In our houses we have, or may easily have, our oratories—spots reserved for prayer and praise, and sacred thought—sanctuaries in the desert of life—places in which all that we see will remind us of heavenly things.

III. IN THE SECLUSION OF IT. The world was shut out. Relations, elders, people, left below in the plain—left with strict injunctions to remain—“Tarry ye here.” Even the faithful Joshua parted from—and “the cloud” entered. The cloud—the awful cloud—“thick darkness” (ch. xx. 21); yet within the darkness a marvellous light. *Such* seclusion we cannot obtain—but we may obtain an approach to it. We may “enter our closet, and shut to the door” (Matt. vi. 6), and let it be known that we would be undisturbed; or we may seek the solitude of a church at an hour when there is no public service, and no one present who will meddle with us; or we may, even at the present day, find solitudes in nature, deep woods, or lone mountain tops, or unfrequented glens, where we may feel ourselves secure from intrusion, and stand face to face with God, and know him near, and pour out our hearts before him. A modern poet, in one of his better moments, says—

“My altars are the mountains, and the ocean,
Earth, air, sea—all that springs from the Great Whole,
Who hath produced, and will receive the soul!”—

and truly on any lone spot an altar may be raised, and worship offered, as acceptable to God as any that is addressed to him “in pillared fanes, 'neath fretted roofs, 'mid storied glass or sculptured monuments.” Even in the whirl and bustle of a great city, solitude is not very far from us. Half an hour's journey by steamer or rail, and ten minutes' walk, may take us into still woods, or shady lanes, or on to open heaths, where we shall not see a fellow creature or hear a sound reminding us of man.

IV. IN THE CONTINUANCE OF IT. “Forty days and forty nights!” As we cannot have the *complete* seclusion which Moses enjoyed, so neither can we look for such sustained *commune* as his. We must eat and drink—we can rarely leave our worldly

work to others—family claims, correspondence, business imperatively require our attention—six weeks' interruption of communication between ourselves and the outer world would, in most cases, break or tangle all the threads of which our life is composed. But still some prolonged periods of religious contemplation and commune between the soul and God are needed, if the soul is to retain the vigour of its life, or its ability to be of service to others. With this view religious "retreats" have been devised, lasting sometimes a week or ten days. Where men's duties allow of it, they may be well worth a trial. The weary spirit may derive more refreshment from them than from the ordinary "holiday." The heart may be purified, the aspirations raised, the insight into doctrinal truth augmented, above all, the love of God so intensified in the soul, by the suspension of all secular thought and the devotion of the whole mind to religion and worship, during the three, or five, or seven, or ten days of a "retreat," as would scarcely be possible, under the present conditions of our life, in any other way.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 12—18.—*Moses ascends the mount.* Observe, 1. *He alone* ascends (ver. 12). Aaron and his sons, with the seventy elders, were left behind. *Their* privilege was great as compared with that of the body of the people. Yet even they are not permitted to enter the cloud—to draw nigh into God's immediate presence. The limitations and imperfections of the legal economy are stamped on these arrangements. How superior the standing of Christians, who are *all* permitted to draw nigh; who have now the privilege, formerly possessed only by Moses, of beholding with unveiled face the Divine glory in the ecstasy of immediate vision (2 Cor. iii. 18). 2. The design of this ascending was *primarily to receive the stone tablets* (ver. 12). These were to be written by God's own finger. God took every pains to impress upon the minds of the people that the law they had to deal with was *his* law. Its perpetuity was symbolised by the rock tablets. 3. *Moses made arrangements for the conduct of business in his absence* (ver. 14). His absence would be a trial of the faith and disposition of all parties. 4. *The fire still burned on the summit of the mount* (vers. 16, 17). This, notwithstanding the vision of ver. 10. The economy was outwardly and characteristically one of law; interiorly, one of grace. Even Moses had to wait seven days for the summons (ver. 16).—J. O.

Moses' sojourn with God the type of Christ's. I. THE MEDIATOR: MOSES THE TYPE OF JESUS. He must needs pass up into God's presence: "Come up to me . . . and be there." It is there, in communion with God, that gifts are received for men. The power and blessing we now receive there, are prophecies of the power and glory with which Jesus will come again. 2. He must pass up to receive the law and commandments which God had written. Jesus will return with the perfected will of the Father. 3. The days of seclusion are numbered. Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights. We know not how many or few they be; but each hour the coming of the Lord draws nearer.

II. THE ATTITUDE OF GOD'S PEOPLE MEANWHILE. They tarry for the Mediator: "tarry ye here for us until we come again unto you." The attitude of the Churches to-day should be confident, joyous expectation: "this same Jesus will in like manner come again." 2. They are ministered unto by those who tarry with them (ver. 14). (1) The blessing bestowed in these temporary leaders. (2) Their responsibility: let them not be leaders or helpers to the people in their idolatry, as Aaron.

III. THE VISION GRANTED THEM. The mountain is covered with clouds; but from the mountain top flames out the glory of the Lord. The eye cannot follow him who has entered within the veil; but we can behold the glory of the Lord, and know that every word of God will be fulfilled.—J.

SECTION XV.—CHAPTERS XXV.—XXXI.

INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING THE TABERNACLE AND ITS FURNITURE, INCLUDING THE PRIESTLY ATTIRE.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXV

Vers. 1-7.—THE TABERNACLE AND THE GIFTS FOR IT. The great principles of the moral law had been given in the Ten Commandments uttered by God amid the thunders of Sinai. The "Book of the Covenant," or short summary of the main laws, civil, political, and social, had been communicated to Moses, and by him reduced to a written form (ch. xxiv. 4). A solemn league and covenant had been entered into between God and his people, the people undertaking to keep all the words of the Lord, and God to be their Protector, Guide, and King. But no form of worship had been set up. Abstract monotheism had been inculcated; and worship had been so far touched upon that an "altar" had been mentioned, and certain directions, chiefly negative, had been given with respect to it (ch. xx. 24-26). It remained that the abstract monotheism should be enshrined in forms, obtain a local habitation, and be set forth before the eyes, and so fixed in the heart and affections of the people. God was now about to declare to Moses what the character of the habitation should be, its size, form, and materials. But before doing this, as a first and fitting, if not necessary, preliminary, he required of the people to bring of the best of their possessions for the service which he was about to institute, enumerating the substances which he would condescend to receive at their hands, and especially enjoining upon them that all should be offered willingly and from the heart (ver. 2).

Ver. 2.—**Speak unto the children of Israel that they bring me an offering.** The word translated "offering" is that commonly rendered "heave-offering;" but it seems to be used here (as in ch. xxx. 13; xxxv. 5, etc.) in a generic sense. The propriety of the people, when God was about establishing his habitation among them, presenting to God all the materials needed, is self-evident and requires no comment. **Of every man that giveth it willingly.** Literally, "of every man whose heart drives him." God will have no gifts but such as are freely offered. He "loveth a cheerful giver." If a man gives "grudgingly or of necessity," God rejects the gift. On the

noble spirit which the people showed when the appeal was made to them, see ch. xxxv. 21-29; and ch. xxxvi. 3-7.

Ver. 3.—**This is the offering—gold and silver and brass.** Gold was needed for the overlaying of the boards, whereof the ark was composed (ver. 11); for the "crown of gold," which surmounted it (*ibid.*); for the "rings" (ver. 12); the "mercy-seat" (ver. 17); the cherubim (ver. 18); the dishes, the spoons, the covers, the bowls (ver. 29); the candlestick (ver. 31); the tongs and snuff dishes (ver. 28); the hooks and taches (xxxvi. 6, 32); for the covering of the table of shew bread (ch. xxxv. 24); and of the staves and pillars (*ib.* 28: ch. xxxvi. 32, 37); and also for many parts of the dress of the High Priest (ch. xxviii. 6, 8, 11, 14, etc.). Silver was required for the sockets which supported the boards of the Tabernacle (ch. xxxvi. 19); and for the "hooks" and "fillets" of the pillars of the court (ch. xxvii. 10). Brass, or rather bronze, was wanted for the "taches" which coupled together the curtains of the tent (ch. xxvi. 11); for the "sockets" which received the pillars or tent-poles (*ib.* 37); for the external coating of the altar (ch. xxvii. 2); for the vessels and utensils of the altar (*ib.* 3); for the covering of its staves (*ib.* 6); for the sockets of the pillars of the Court (ch. xxvii. 10); for the "pins" of the Court (*ib.* 19); and generally for the vessels of the Tabernacle (*ibid.*). To understand how the Israelites could supply all that was wanted, we must remember, 1. That they had a certain amount of ancestral wealth, as that which Joseph had accumulated, and what Jacob and his sons had brought with them into Egypt. 2. That they had received large presents of gold and silver from the Egyptians just before their departure (ch. xii. 35); and 3. That they had recently defeated, and no doubt despoiled, the Amalekites (ch. xvi. 8-13). Whether they had further made money by trade since they entered the Sinaitic peninsula, may be doubted. The supposition is not at all needed in order to account for their wealth.

Ver. 4.—**And blue, and purple, and scarlet.** Cloths of these three colours seem to be meant. The material was probably wool; the blue dye probably indigo, which was the ordinary blue dye of Egypt; the purple was no doubt derived from one or other of the shell-fish so well-known to the Syrians (of which the one most used was the *Murex trunculus*), and was of a warm reddish hue, not far from crimson; the scarlet (literally, "scarlet worm" or "worm scarlet,") was the produce of the

Coccus ilicis, or cochineal insect of the holm oak, which has now been superseded by the *Coccus cacti*, or cochineal insect of the prickly pear, introduced into Europe from Mexico. **And fine linen.** The word used is Egyptian. It seems to have designated properly the fine linen spun from flax in Egypt, which was seldom dyed, and was of a beautiful soft white hue. The fineness of the material is extraordinary, equalling that of the best Indian muslins (Wilkinson's *Ancient Egyptians*, vol. iii. p. 121). It would seem that the Israelite women spun the thread from the flax (ch. xxxv. 25), and that the skilled workmen employed by Moses wove the thread into linen (ib. 35). **And goat's hair.** The soft inner wool of the Angora goat was also spun by the women into a fine worsted (ib. 26), which was woven into cloths, used especially as coverings for tents.

Ver. 5.—And rams' skins dyed red. The manufacture of leather was well-known in Egypt from an early date, and the Libyan tribes of North Africa were celebrated for their skill in preparing and dyeing the material (Herod. iv. 189). Scarlet was one of the colours which they peculiarly affected (*ibid.*). We must suppose that the skins spoken of had been brought with them by the Israelites out of Egypt. **And badgers' skins.** It is generally agreed among moderns that this is a wrong translation. Badgers are found in Palestine, but not either in Egypt or in the wilderness. The Hebrew *takhash* is evidently the same word as the Arabic *tukhash* or *dukhshah*, which is applied to marine animals only, as to seals, dolphins, dugongs, and perhaps sharks and dog-fish. "Seals' skins" would perhaps be the best translation. (Compare Plin. *H. N.* ii. 55; Sueton. *Octav.* § 90.) **Shittim wood.** It is generally agreed that the *Shittah* (plural *Shittim*) was an acacia, whether the seyal (*Acacia seyal*) which now grows

so abundantly in the Sinaitic peninsula, or the *Acacia Nilotica*, or the *Serissa*, is uncertain. The seyal wood is "hard and close-grained of an orange colour with a darker heart, well-adapted for cabinet work;" but the tree, as it exists nowadays, could certainly not furnish the planks, ten cubits long by one and a half wide, which were needed for the Tabernacle (ch. xxxv. 21). The *Serissa* might do so, but it is not now found in the wilderness. We are reduced to supposing either that the seyal grew to a larger size anciently than at present, or that the *serissa* was more widely spread than at the present day.

Ver. 6.—Oil for the light. That the sanctuary to be erected would require to be artificially lighted is assumed. Later, a "candlestick" is ordered (vers. 31-37). The people were to provide the oil which was to be burnt in the "candlestick." In ch. xxvii. 20, we are told that the oil was to be "pure oil olive beaten." **Spices for anointing oil.** Anointing oil would be needed for the sanctification of the Tabernacle, the ark, and all the holy vessels, as also for the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood. The spices required are enumerated in ch. xxx. 23, 24. They consisted of pure myrrh, sweet cinnamon, sweet calamus, and cassia. **And for sweet incense.** The spices needed for the incense were, according to our translators, stacte, onycha, galbanum and frankincense (*ib.* 34).

Ver. 7.—Onyx stones. On the need of onyx stones, see ch. xxviii. 9, 20. **Stones to be set in the ephod, etc.** Rather, "stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastplate." The only stones required for the ephod were two large onyx stones; for the breastplate twelve jewels were needed (*ibid.* 17-20), one of them being an onyx. It has been proposed to translate the Hebrew *shoham* by "beryl" instead of "onyx;" but onyx, which is more suitable for engraving, is probably right.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1-7.—The law of acceptable offerings.—For offerings to be acceptable to God, it is necessary—

I. **THAT THEY BE FREELY OFFERED BY A WILLING HEART.** Offerings were to be taken of those "whose heart *drove* them to it" (compare Tennyson—"His own heart *drove* him, like a goad"), not of others. There was to be no tax—no church rate. The entire tent-temple was (with one unimportant exception) to be the produce of a free offering. Thus was generosity stirred in the hearts of the people, and emulation excited. They gave so liberally that they had to be "restrained from bringing" (ch. xxxvi. 6). This is noble and acceptable service, when no exhortation is required, no persuasion, no "pressing"—but each man stirs himself up, and resolves to do the utmost that he can, not seeking to obtain the praise of men, but desirous of the approval of God. A like spirit animated those who lived in David's time (1 Chr. xxix. 6-9); and again those who returned from the Babylonian captivity with Zerubbabel (Ezr. ii. 68, 69; Neh. vii. 70-72).

II. **THAT THEY BE OF THINGS EXCELLENT IN THEIR KIND, AND THE BEST THAT WE POSSESS OF EACH.** All that is rich and rare, all that is lovely and beautiful, all that is expensive and magnificent, is suitable for an offering to God. We must not "give to him of that which costs us nothing." We must not offer "the blind and the lame, and

the sick" (Mal. i. 8) to him. Things excellent in their kind befit *his* service. Gold and silver, of metals; of fabrics, silk, and velvet, and fine linen; of woods, cedar, and acacia, and olive, and sandal-wood; of stones, ruby and diamond, and emerald; of spices, myrrh, and cinnamon, and cassia, and frankincense. Each, however, can only give what he has. Cedar, and olive, and sandal-wood were unattainable in the desert, and so acacia sufficed; silk and velvet were unknown, wherefore God accepted linen and woollen fabrics, and goat's hair; rubies and diamonds were uncut, so God was content with emeralds and sapphire, and onyx. The widow's mite pleases him, as much as the alabaster box of spikenard very precious, or the price of an estate brought and laid at the apostles' feet. If men "have little," he is content when they "give gladly of that little," provided still that they give him of their best. And this is true of other offerings besides material ones. The best of our time should be his—the fair promise of youth—the strength of manhood—not the weakness of decrepitude. The best of our powers should be his—our warmest affections, our intensest thoughts, our highest aspirations—not the dull tame musings of an exhausted and jaded spirit. Each man should seek to consecrate to God's service the best that he possesses in intellect, in knowledge, in fortune.

III. THAT THEY BE SUCH IN KIND AS HE HAS DECLARED HIS WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT. There were "unclean animals" which were an abomination if offered to God. There are gifts of intellect, valuable in their way, which are unsuitable for the service of the sanctuary. Many a picture of the highest power, and exhibiting the greatest genius, would be out of place in a church. God points out with sufficient clearness in his holy word, the kinds of gifts with which he is pleased. It will be well for man to "do all things after the pattern showed him in the mount"—to avoid "will-worship"—and even in his offerings, to follow in the line of precedent, and see that he has a warrant for what he proposes doing in God's honour.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—*The materials for the sanctuary.* I. GOD REQUIRED THESE FROM THE PEOPLE. It might have been thought that in order to make this holy habitation, this tent for God travelling along with his people, God himself would have in some way supplied the material. Even as he gave Moses the stones on which the law was written (in the first instance at all events), so he might have made a sanctuary to descend in marvellous manner into the midst of Israel. But it pleased him, who we may be sure always does the wise and fitting thing, to act differently. He required the materials for this sanctuary from the people. They could not provide food for themselves—but they could provide such a dwelling-place for Jehovah as he would approve and accept. These people who had required so many interventions of God to deliver and secure them had yet been carrying with them in the midst of all their helplessness the great store of wealth indicated in this passage. It is somewhat perplexing to consider the revelation thus afforded of the Israelite condition. In their hearts these people were sinful, idolatrous, unbelieving, unstable—it is humiliating to gaze on the sad exhibition of human nature they present—and yet they had managed to surround themselves with these treasures. They were those who had been laying up treasures on earth; and so far these treasures had been of little use; for what will it profit a man to have all this store of gold and silver, and brass and fine linen, and what not, if he lack the daily bread?—all the efforts of the people, all their scraping, had ended in the bringing of these things into the wilderness where they seemed of no use. Even gold and silver would not buy bread in the wilderness. But now, behold how God can take this gold and silver and show how to make a profitable and acceptable use of it. When we begin to look regretfully on the results of our natural efforts as if those efforts had been wasted, he comes in to overrule our ignorance and folly. By his consecrating and re-arranging touch, the treasures upon earth can be transmuted into treasures in heaven.

II. THE WILLINGNESS THAT MARKED THESE GIFTS. These materials, valuable as they were, yet yielded in respect of worth to an element more valuable still. These rare and beautiful materials, workable into such beautiful forms, could have been gotten without human intervention at all, if that had been the whole of the necessity. As not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like one of the lilies, so nothing man can make

with his utmost art is so beautiful as the handiwork of God. Nor is the question altogether one as to what is beautiful to the outward eye. The value of beautiful forms is a thing only too easily exaggerated. But no one can exaggerate the beauty of a spiritual action, the beauty of a gift where the willingness and devotion of the whole heart are manifest. This tabernacle might be a very inferior structure, when measured by such principles as dictated Grecian art; but this was a thing of no consequence when compared with the higher consideration that its materials were freely brought. There was none of that extortion and slavish toil, such as we read of in connection with some of the huge fabrics of ancient civilisations. What blood and tears, what reckless expenditure of human life, for instance, in the construction of buildings like the pyramids! When we look at the great buildings—aqueducts, roads, of ancient times—we must not look at the outward appearance only. These Israelites doubtless had helped in the building of splendid structures; but the foundation of these structures was laid in oppression, and therefore on their topstone rested a destroying curse. There was nothing about all the tabernacle more beautiful than the willingness that marked the gift of the materials. There was no specific demand on any particular person. Let everyone consider for himself whether he will give, and how much. A free-will offering of the inferior brass would be of ever so much more value than an extorted one of gold or silver, or precious stones.

III. THE MATERIALS OF THE GIFTS. Evidently such things were taken as the people had by them; but of *these things the very best were taken*. Being already in the possession of the people, and valued by them, they were exactly the things to test the willingness of their disposition. When God asks us to give, he asks us to give of our best. All this gold and silver symbolised what was most precious in the heart within. One is reminded of Paul's words with respect to the materials that might be laid upon the foundation given in Christ (1 Cor. iii. 12). We must not bring to God just what we do not want ourselves. The *value* of the gifts constituted a most searching test of willingness, and willingness was the particular quality that needed to be tested at this time. Men willing to give gold and silver, might be reasonably supposed as willing to give anything else within their power. Then there was a test also in the *variety* of the gifts. The man without gold and silver would not escape the responsibility of considering what he could do in the way of another gift. For the needs of the tabernacle God required a large diversity of materials; and probably there were few in Israel but could do something towards the supply if only they were so disposed.—Y.

Vers. 1, 2.—*God loveth a cheerful giver*. A message to the people. Like messages are often sent, but seldom welcomed. Even when God demands an offering, many people grudge to give it; they yield, as to a kind of heavenly highwayman, of necessity if at all. Consider here:—

I. THE OFFERING REQUIRED. 1. *Purpose*. Jehovah will give the people a visible sign of his presence in their midst. He will have a home amid their homes, a tent dwelling like in character to their dwellings. More than this—he will be their guest. They shall provide for him the sacred tent. If we count it an honour for a town to receive and entertain a member of our royal family, how much greater an honour to be permitted to entertain the head of the royal family of heaven! 2. *Materials*. All manner of things required (vers. 3—7), so that all can share the privilege of providing them. Some may give a few gold ornaments; even a poor man may yet find some goat's hair for cloth. Not a member of the nation but can do his part in helping to rear the tabernacle for God. All gifts can be used, so that each may have a share in the work. 3. *A precedent for ourselves*. God treats us as he treated Israel. He asks our help in building for him a spiritual temple, a dwelling-place in which men are the living stones. Some can give personal effort; some can give money to assist the actual workers; no one so poor but that he can give something. Surely the opportunity of helping God is one which ought not to be undervalued.

II. THE CONDITION OF ACCEPTANCE. All may help, but on one condition—they must help “willingly,” with the “heart.” The offering is valued not on its own account, but as a symbol of that which is more valuable. Gifts to God are a kind of human sacrament, which God deigns to receive at the hands of man: they are acceptable as outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace. If the grace be wanting, the gifts

are worthless. God is good enough to make needs for himself that his creatures may have the privilege of satisfying them; if they degrade the privilege into a tax, he would rather be without their assistance. How often is this forgotten! We give to God, when asked, for many reasons. It is the proper thing to do, and respectability requires it; or it will get our name into some subscription list; or we may have an uneasy feeling that we ought to give, and to soothe our uneasiness we must do something. "Grudgingly and of necessity" is the epitaph which must be written above such wasted offerings. God cannot accept as gifts offerings which are never truly given. He may use them, for they are his in any case to do as he wills with them; he cannot, however, enter them in his inventory as received from the giver who nominally presents them. Only he who gives with his heart has his name set down in the inventory of God. The two mites of the widow are remembered; the talents of the ostentatious tax-payer are forgotten.

III. THE RESPONSE MADE. The people of Israel realised their privileges. They remembered what God had done for them, and were eager to manifest their gratitude. They gave even more than enough (xxxvi. 6, 7). Their hearts stirred them up, and their spirits made them willing (xxxv. 21); so that they even had to be restrained. What an example for us! Church debts, fettered missionary enterprise, ministers of the Gospel converted into persistent yet unsuccessful beggars; what are the Lord's people doing when such phenomena abound? Do we not need to be reminded of the privilege offered us, which is so fearfully profaned? Do we not need to stir up *our* hearts, and to take active measures to make our spirits willing? The roused heart loosens the purse-strings; only the willing spirit can offer the willing and generous gift.—G.

Vers. 1-9.—*The rearing of the Lord's sanctuary.* I. FROM WHAT IT IS FORMED. 1. Of material supplied by his redeemed. To them only request and direction come—"Let *them* make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them." This is still our high calling, to make God a dwelling-place in the earth. Are we obeying? Is God being glorified by us? 2. Of their free-will offerings. There is no constraint; everything is free and spontaneous—the loving gifts of children, not the forced labour of slaves. 3. Of their choicest and best, and yet, 4, of things named by God himself. Even here we are not left to impose burdens upon ourselves. God's word and the Spirit's voice in the heart will direct us.

II. GOD IS THE ARCHITECT OF HIS OWN SANCTUARY. The building and furniture are to be in every particular according to *his own plan* (ver. 9). We may not bring into God's worship or service our own devices. The stepping aside from the simplicity of God's ordinances is disservice. It is contempt of God or open rebellion to his authority.—U.

Vers. 1-10.—*The command to build a sanctuary.* The covenant being now ratified, everything was prepared for Jehovah taking up his abode with the people. He would dwell among them as their King. In keeping with the genius of the dispensation, commands are given for the erection of a visible sanctuary. It is here called "mikdash," or sanctuary (ver. 8), and "mishkân," or dwelling-place (tabernacle, ver. 9), the latter being the name most commonly applied to it. Considering the purpose which the sanctuary was to serve, and the "plenitude of meaning" designed to be conveyed by its symbolism, it was necessary that the whole should be constructed under immediate Divine direction. A plan of the tabernacle, embracing minute details, was accordingly placed before the mind of Moses on the mount (ver. 9). It was presented in its completeness to his inner eye, before any part of it was set up on earth. The ark of Noah, the tabernacle of Moses, and the temple of Solomon (cf. 1 Chron. xxviii. 11, 12, 19), are probably the only buildings ever erected from plans furnished by direct revelation. In the building of the spiritual temple—the Church—God is himself not merely the architect, but the builder; and the beauty and symmetry of the structure will be found in the end to be perfect (cf. Rev. xxi.). Consider—

I. THE MATERIALS OF THE TABERNACLE. These were ordered to be collected before the work began. They were to be—1. *Costly* and *various*—representing (1) every department of nature (mineral, vegetable, animal); (2) the richest products of each, so far as accessible in the desert (gold, silver, fine linen, dyed skins, precious stones, etc.);

(3) all varieties of human skill. The design was to make a *palace* for Jehovah: a beautiful and glorious house. 2. *Abundant*. There was to be no stint in the gifts. Profuse liberality befitted the occasion. Grudging in our gifts to God betrays an unworthy spirit. 3. *Free-will offerings* (ver. 2). This point is put in the foreground. The people were to bring an offering—"Of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering." Observe in this—(1) The people first offered *themselves* to God (ch. xxiv. 7), then their gifts. This is the true order. Compare what is said of the Macedonian believers (2 Cor. viii. 1-6). (2) The giving of *themselves* to God was followed by the devotion to his service of the best of their *possessions*. The consecration of self, as formerly remarked, includes all other consecrations. If we are God's, then all is God's that is ours. He has the first claim on everything we have. Our best ought cheerfully to be dedicated to him. (3) God values only such gifts as come from a *willing* heart. He loves the cheerful giver (2 Cor. ix. 7). He puts no value on givings which are *not* cheerful. (4) Free-will offerings are necessarily various in kind and amount. Not all could give gold, or silver, or precious stones. Some, whose means were small, could probably give only their labour in working up the gifts of the wealthier. Each gave as he was able, and according to the *kind* of material in his possession. So far, however, as the gifts were offered willingly, they met with God's acceptance. The giver was accepted in his gift, not according to its absolute amount, but according to his ability, and to the spirit in which he gave. (Cf. 2 Cor. viii. 12.) And all the gifts were needed. The variety which they exhibited was part of their appropriateness. What one could not furnish another could. Many kinds of gifts are required in Christ's service, and there is none so poor but he can furnish something which others have not at command. The Lord accepts, and will use, all. (5) God's dwelling with his people must rest on a voluntary basis. They must *wish* him to dwell among them, and must *prove* their wish by voluntarily providing the materials for his sanctuary. A living Church will show its desire for God's presence, and will evince its gratitude, and its sense of obligation to him, by large and willing gifts in his service. These, indeed, are not conclusive as proofs of genuine spiritual interest; but the absence of them speaks with sufficient plainness of spiritual coldness. (6) The ideal state in the Church is that in which "ordinances of Divine service" are freely supported by the gifts of the people. This principle found distinct expression, not simply in the free-will offerings for the making of the tabernacle, but in the general arrangements of the Jewish economy. The law prescribed amounts—commanded tithes, etc., but the fulfilment of the obligation was left to the individual conscience. It was not enforced by legal means. What was given had to be given freely.

II. THE IDEA OF THE TABERNACLE. Some remarks on this subject seem called for before entering on the study of details. A firm grasp of the central idea is essential to a right understanding of the parts. The tabernacle may be considered—(1) *Actually*, as the literal dwelling-place of Jehovah with his people; (2) *symbolically*, as in its different parts and arrangements symbolical of spiritual ideas; and (3) *typically*, as prophetic of better things to come. The typical treatment, however, will best be connected with what is to be said under the two former heads. 1. *Actually*, the tabernacle was the place of Jehovah's dwelling with his people (ver. 8). This is to be viewed as, on the one side, a privilege of the Church of Israel; but, on the other, as a step towards the realisation of the great end contemplated by God from the first, as the goal of all his gracious dealings with our race, namely, the taking up of his abode among them. God *seeks* an abode with men. He cannot rest with perfect satisfaction in his love to them till he has obtained this abode (Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14). He *wishes* to dwell with them. The history of revelation may be viewed as but a series of steps towards the realisation of this idea. The steps are the following—(1) God dwelling with men *in the visible sanctuary of the Jews*—the tabernacle and temple. This served important ends. It brought God near to men. It enabled them to grasp the reality of his presence. It was, however, but a very imperfect stage in the realisation of the truth. It would not have suited a universal religion. There was, besides, no congruity between the nature of the spiritual Deity and a building "made with hands." It was but an outward, local presence which this visible sanctuary embodied. The union between the dwelling and the Dweller was not inherent or essential; it could at any moment be dissolved. Higher realisations of the idea were possible. (2) God dwelling with men *in Christ*,

Christ pointed to himself as the antitype of the temple (Matt. xii. 6; John ii. 19—22). He was Immanuel, God with us (Matt. i. 23). The fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him (John i. 14; Col. i. 15; ii. 9). The temple in this case is not a mere material structure, but a holy, and now perfected, humanity. The union is personal and indissoluble. The revelation of God, through the medium of humanity, cannot rise higher than it has done in Christ. The life of God in the individual and in the Church is but the unfolding of the fulness already contained in him (John i. 16). This unfolding, however, is necessary, that the temple-idea may reach its complete fulfilment. A third stage, accordingly, is (3) God dwelling *in the soul of the believer*. Rather, we should say, in the *humanity* of the believer—body, soul, and spirit forming, unitedly, a habitation for God through the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. vi. 19). In this tabernacle, as in the former, there is the innermost shrine—the holy of holies of the spirit, the “inner man” in which is deposited the law of the Lord (Eph. iii. 16); a holy place—the soul or mind, with its lamps of understanding, etc.; and an outer court—the body—the external side of the being, open and visible to all. The individual, however, taken by himself, is but a fragment. The full idea is realised (4) *in the Church as a whole*—the whole body of believers, in heaven and on earth, with Christ as Head. This is the true and the living temple (Eph. ii. 21, 22). Realised in part on earth, and wherever a portion of the Church of Christ exists, the perfection of the manifestation of the idea is reserved for the future and for glory. Cf. Rev. xxi. 3—“The tabernacle of God is with men,” etc. The idea of the Jewish tabernacle thus finds its fulfilment (1) in the body of Christ; (2) in the body of the believer; (3) in the body of the Church. 2. *Symbolically*—the tabernacle figured out, in its structure, its contents, and its arrangements, various spiritual truths. (1) On the ark and its symbolism, see next homily. (2) The separation into two apartments had as its basis the twofold aspect of God’s fellowship with man. The holy of holies was God’s part of the structure. Its arrangements exhibited God in relation to his people. The outer apartment—the holy place—exhibited in symbol the calling of the people in relation to God. The shew-bread and the lighted lamps, with the incense from the golden altar, emblematised aspects of that calling. See next homily. (3) The arrangements of the tabernacle had further in view the symbolising of the imperfect condition of privilege in the Church under the old economy. A veil hung between the holy place and the holy of holies. Into this latter the high priest only was permitted to enter, and that but once a year, and not without blood of atonement. The mass of the people were not allowed to come nearer than the outer court. They could enter the holy place only in the persons of their representatives, the priests. All this spoke of distance, of barriers as yet unremoved, of drawbacks to perfected communion. The arrangements were of such a nature as studiously to impress this idea upon the mind. Accordingly, at the death of Christ, the removal of these barriers, and the opening of the way for perfected fellowship between God and man, was signified by the striking circumstance of the rending of the veil (Matt. xxvii. 51). It is implied in the teaching of Scripture that a like imperfection of privilege marked the condition of the departed just, and that this also was removed by Christ, who, passing into the highest heavens, made manifest, both for them and for us, the way into the holiest of all. (Cf. Heb. ix. 6—13; x. 19, 20; xi. 39, 40; xii. 23.)—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 8, 9.—GENERAL DIRECTIONS. After the gifts which God will accept have been specified, and the spirit in which they are to be offered noted (ver. 2), God proceeds to unfold his purpose, and declare the object for which the gifts are needed. He will have a “sanctuary” constructed for him, an habitation in which he may “dwell.” Now, it is certainly possible to conceive of a religion which should admit nothing in the nature of a temple or

sanctuary; and there are even writers who tell us that a religion has actually existed without one (Herod. i. 131, Strab. xv. pp. 1039—41). That God should “dwell” in a house, as a man does, is of course impossible; and the Hebrews were as deeply impressed with this truth as any other nation (1 Kings viii. 27; 2 Chr. ii. 6; Is. lvi. 1; Jer. xxiii. 24, etc.). But a religion without a temple was probably unknown in the days of Moses; and, with such a people as

the Hebrews, it is inconceivable that religion could have maintained its ground for long without something of the kind. "It was," as Kalisch says, "above all things necessary to create a firm and visible centre of monotheism, to keep perpetually the idea of the one omnipotent God alive in the minds of the people, and so to exclude for ever a relapse into the pagan and idolatrous aberrations" (*Comment on Exodus*, p. 365). A sanctuary was therefore to be constructed; but, as the nation was in the peculiar position of being nomadic, without fixed abode, that is, and constantly on the move, the usual form of a permanent building was unsuitable under the circumstances. To meet the difficulty, a tent-temple was designed, which is called *mishkán*, "the dwelling," or *'ohel*, "the tent," which was simply an Oriental tent on a large scale, made of the best obtainable materials, and guarded by an enclosure. The details of the work are reserved for later mention. In the present passage two directions only are given:—1. A sanctuary is to be constructed; and 2. Both it, and all its vessels, are to be made after patterns which God was about to show to Moses.

Ver. 8.—A sanctuary wall expresses the Hebrew *miqdash*, which is derived from *qādash*—"to be holy." It is a name never given to the temples of the heathen deities. **That I may dwell among them.** Compare

ch. xxix. 45; Num. xxxv. 34. There is a sense in which "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands" (Acts vii. 48; xvii. 24)—i.e., he is not comprehended in them, or confined to them; but there is another sense in which he may be truly said to dwell in them, viz., as manifesting himself in them either to the senses, or to the spirit. In the tabernacle he manifested himself sensibly (ch. xl. 34, 35, 38).

Ver. 9.—The patterns. Many of the old Jewish commentators supposed, that Moses was shown by God a real material structure, which actually existed in the heavens, far grander than its earthly copy, after which he was to have the tabernacle fashioned. Some recent Christian writers, without going these lengths, suggest that "an actual picture or model of the earthly tabernacle and its furniture was shown to him" (Keil). But the words of the text, as well as those of Acts vii. 44, and Heb. viii. 5, are sufficiently justified, if we take a view less material than either of these—i.e., if we suppose Moses to have had impressed on his mind, in vision, the exact appearance of the tabernacle and its adjuncts, in such sort that he could both fully understand, and also, when necessary, supplement, the verbal descriptions subsequently given to him. It is unnecessary to inquire how the impression was produced. God who in vision communicated to Ezekiel the entire plan of that magnificent temple which he describes in ch. xl.—xlii., could certainly have made known to Moses, in the same way, the far simpler structure of the primitive Tabernacle.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 8.—*Earthly sanctuaries typical of the heavenly dwelling-place.* Such habitations as God condescends to acknowledge for his in this earthly sphere, are, all of them, more or less types of the New Jerusalem, the eternal heavenly home. "The temple of God was opened in heaven," says St. John the Divine, "and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament" (Rev. xi. 19); and again, "After that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened" (ch. xv. 5). Note the following common features:—

I. THE CENTRAL CARDINAL FACT IN EACH AND ALL IS, THE MANIFEST PRESENCE OF GOD. Of the Tabernacle we are told—"Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Ex. xl. 34, 35). Christian churches have the promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"—and again, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of you." In the New Jerusalem "the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof" (Rev. xxi. 23). And the saints "see his face" (ib. xxii. 4).

II. THE SECOND LEADING FACT IS THE EXISTENCE IN EACH OF "MANY MANSIONS." An outer court, a porch, a holy place, and a holy of holies, are features manifestly common to the Hebrew tabernacle and temple with Christian churches. These give different degrees of access to God, and imply different degrees of fitness to contemplate him. In heaven there is a throne—the throne of God and of the Lamb—and round

about the throne four and twenty seats for four and twenty elders to sit on (Rev. iv. 4); and beyond these angels (*ib.* v. 11), and martyrs (*ib.* vii. 14); and, last of all, "the nations of them that are saved" (*ib.* xxi. 24). And each individual of the "nations" finds his fitting place.

III. IN ALL, THE OCCUPATION OF THOSE WHO HAVE FOUND ENTRANCE IS THE PRAISE AND WORSHIP OF GOD. "Enter into his courts with praise," says holy David, of the tabernacle (Ps. c. 4)—"be thankful unto him, and bless his name." "When ye come together, every one of you has a psalm," says St. Paul of a Christian Church. In heaven there is "a great voice of much people, saying, Alleluia: Salvation and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God, for true and righteous are his judgments . . . and again they say, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth; let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him" (Rev. xix. 1—7).

IV. IN ALL, THE WORSHIPPERS ENJOY A SACRED FEAST. Of the worship of the tabernacle sacrifice was an essential part; and a sacrificial feast, of which the offerer partook, always followed the sacrifice. In Christian worship upon earth, the crowning act is a heavenly banquet, to which the minister in Jesus' name invites all the faithful.

"Hail sacred feast, which Jesus makes
Rich banquet of his flesh and blood!
Thrice happy he, who here partakes
That sacred stream, that heavenly food."

In the New Jerusalem there is a "tree of life," which bears "twelve manner of fruits;" and they who enter in "have right to the tree of life" (Rev. xxii. 2, 14), and are "given to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (*ib.* ii. 7). How far this is literal, how far allegorical, we shall scarcely know till we are translated to that celestial sphere, and become dwellers in that glorious city.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 8, 9.—*God's dwelling-place among his people.* God announces to Israel that he is about to take up his abode in their midst, and that various offerings are to be used in the construction of a suitable dwelling-place. Observe here—

I. JEHOVAH'S CONDESCENDING REGARD FOR THE WANTS OF ISRAEL. This tabernacle with all its belongings was not constructed for any real need that Jehovah had of it. The people had to construct tents for themselves because they needed them, and the making of a tent for Jehovah was also in condescending compliance with *their need*. This thought is brought out still more clearly by the parallel reference to the incarnation in John i. 14, where it is said that the Word tabernacled among us. Something in the shape of an ever visible dwelling-place of God was given to the people, that thus they might comfort their hearts with the assurance that he was constantly near them, sympathising with them in their changing circumstances and requirements. The people had been compelled to go to Sinai, there to be impressed with the majesty of God and receive his commandments; but at Sinai they could not stay. With all its glories and revelations, it was but a halting place on the way to Canaan. God had indeed already given an assurance of his daily providence in the manna; but he now added a further sign than which none could be more expressive, none more illustrative of the desire of God to adapt himself to the spiritual blindness and infirmity of men. He took for himself a tent like the rest of the travellers through the wilderness. Where a dwelling place is we look for an inhabitant, and especially where it is manifestly kept in order and regularly attended to. If at any moment an Israelite was in doubt whether God was indeed with the people, here through the sight of the tabernacle was his readiest resource to expel all doubt. God's own house with its services and attendants was continually before him to rebuke and remove his unbelief.

II. THOUGH JEHOVAH CONDESCENDED TO DWELL IN A TENT, YET THAT TENT HAD TO BE A HOLY PLACE. The condescension was simply a condescension in circumstances. God himself remained the same. He who was holy and jealous, when removed to a distance from the people, amid the clouds and sounds of Sinai, was not the least altered

as to his vigilant holiness by coming down to the apparent limitations of a tent. Coarse and humble though the tent appears, there is an unspeakably glorious inhabitant within whose presence exalts and sanctifies the tent. God himself thus furnishes an illustration of the truth that those who humble themselves shall be exalted. He needs not to preserve his glory by extraneous and vulgar pomps. And just because this dwelling-place of God was a tent, the people needed to remember its function with peculiar carefulness. Though it was only a tent, it was God's tent. A very mean tent, that in ordinary circumstances would excite no attention, would be carefully guarded if the king happened for a night to make his abode therein.

III. **THIS HOLINESS WAS MADE CONSPICUOUS BY THE CHARACTER AND FORM OF THE TABERNACLE AND ITS FURNITURE.** Just imagine if, instead of prescribing an exact pattern for everything, God had left the people to make any sort of structure they liked. In the first place there would hardly have been unanimity. Those who might have been very willing and united in the bestowal of raw material would at once have split asunder in attempting to settle how the material was to be used. Then, even if a majority had proceeded to action, they would probably have introduced something idolatrous, assuredly something that savoured rather of human error than Divine truth; and the error would have been none the less because those who committed it, committed it in a spirit of cordial devotion to what they believed was best. What an exposure is thus made of the plausible notion that if only men are in earnest, God will accept the will for the deed! As to the supply of the raw material, God stipulated for free will there—perfect liberty either in giving or withholding. But the raw material once gathered, the freedom of the givers was at an end. God himself supplied the moulds in which the gifts were to flow. A dwelling-place for God must supply all his wants for the time being. He must have just exactly those ordinances of worship and those channels of Divine distribution which he deems best. God's wants, as we see more and more from a careful study of the Scriptures, are not as man's wants; and therefore we must wait humbly for him to reveal what it is impossible for man to conjecture. The materials for the tabernacle and the instruments thereof were human and earthly, but the patterns are Divine and heavenly. We know not into what beautiful, glorious, and serviceable forms man and his belongings may be wrought, if only he will humbly and attentively wait for directions from God above. These Israelites, when all was finished according to the pattern in the mount, had then something to show which would make an impression on men of the right sort in the outside world. Here was an answer to the question, "Where is now your God?" Visible he himself is not; but here is a dwelling-place not in anything constructed after art and man's device, but entirely of Divine direction. All our institutions are nothing unless we can trace them to the inspiration and control of God.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 10—22.—THE PATTERN OF THE ARK.

—Moses is first shown, not the pattern of the tabernacle, but the patterns of those things which it was to contain—the ark, the table of shew-bread, and the seven-branched candlestick, or lamp-stand, with its appurtenances. The ark, as the very most essential part of the entire construction, is described first.

Ver. 10.—Thou shalt make an ark of shittim wood. Arks were an ordinary part of the religious furniture of temples in Egypt, and were greatly venerated. They usually contained a figure or emblem of some deity. Occasionally they were in the shape of boats; but the most ordinary form was that of a cupboard or chest. They were especially constructed for the purpose of being carried about

in a procession, and had commonly rings at the side, through which poles were passed on such occasions. It must be freely admitted, that the general idea of the "Ark," as well as certain points in its ornamentation, was adopted from the Egyptian religion. Egyptian arks were commonly of sycamore wood. **Two cubits and a half**, etc. As there is no reason to believe that the Hebrew cubit differed seriously from the cubits of Greece and Rome, we may safely regard the Ark of the Covenant as a chest or box, three feet nine inches long, two feet three inches wide, and two feet three inches deep.

Ver. 11.—Thou shalt overlay it with pure gold. Or, "cover it with pure gold." As gilding was well known in Egypt long before the time of the exodus, it is quite possible that the chest was simply gilt without and

within. It may, however, have been overlaid with thin plates of gold (a practice also known in Egypt, and common elsewhere)—which is the view taken by the Jewish commentators. The crown of gold was probably an ornamental moulding or edging round the top of the chest.

Ver. 12.—Four rings of gold. These rings were to be fixed, not at the upper, but at the lower corners of the chest, which are called *pa'amoth*, literally "feet" or "bases." The object was, no doubt, that no part of the chest should come in contact with the persons of the priests when carrying it (see ver. 14). As Kalisch notes, "the smallness of the dimensions of the ark rendered its safe transportation, even with the rings at its feet, not impossible."

Ver. 13.—Staves of shittim wood. Similar staves, or poles, are to be seen in the Egyptian sculptures, attached to arks, thrones, and litters, and resting on the shoulders of the men who carry such objects.

Ver. 14.—That the ark may be borne with them. The Hebrew ark was not made, like the Egyptian arks, for processions, and was never exhibited in the way of display, as they were. The need of carrying it arose from the fact, that the Israelites had not yet obtained a permanent abode. As soon as Canaan was reached, the ark had a fixed locality assigned to it, though the locality was changed from time to time (Josh. xviii. 1; 1 Sam. iv. 3; vii. 1; 2 Sam. vi. 10, etc.); but in the desert it required to be moved each time that the congregation changed its camping-ground.

Ver. 15.—The staves, when once inserted into the rings of the ark, were never to be taken from them. The object probably was that there might be no need of touching even the rings, when the ark was set down or taken up. The bearers took hold of the staves only, which were no part of the ark. On the danger of touching the ark itself, see 2 Sam. vi. 6, 7.

Ver. 16.—The testimony which I will give thee, is undoubtedly the Decalogue, or in other words, the two tables of stone, written with the finger of God, and forming his testimony against sin. (Compare Deut. xxxi. 26, 27.) The main intention of the ark was to be a repository in which the two tables should be laid up.

Ver. 17.—Thou shalt make a mercy seat. Modern exegesis has endeavoured to empty the word *kapporeth* of its true meaning, witnessed to by the Septuagint, as well as by the Epistle to the Hebrews (ix. 5). It tells us that a *kapporeth* is simply a cover," being derived from *kāphar*, to cover,"—used in Gen. v. 14, with respect to covering the ark with pitch. But the truth is that *kapporeth* is not derived from *kāphar*, but from *kipper*, the Piel form of the same verb, which has never

any other sense than that of covering, or forgiving sins. In this sense it is used in the Old Testament some seventy times. Whether the mercy seat was the real cover of the ark of the covenant, or whether that had its own lid of acacia wood, as Kalisch supposes, is uncertain. At any rate, it was not called *kipporeth* because it was a cover, but because it was a seat of propitiation. On the importance of the mercy seat, as in some sort transcending the ark itself, see Lev. xvi. 2, and 1 Chr. xxviii. 11. Atonement was made by sprinkling the blood of expiation upon it (Lev. xvi. 14, 15). **Of pure gold.** Not of wood, plated with metal, or richly gilt, but of solid gold—an oblong slab, three feet nine inches long, two feet three inches wide, and probably not less than an inch thick. The weight of such a slab would be above 750 lbs. troy, and its value above 25,000*l.* of our money. The length and breadth were exactly those of the ark itself, which the mercy seat thus exactly covered (ver. 10).

Ver. 18.—Two cherubims. The form "cherubims," which our translators affect, is abnormal and indefensible. They should have said either "cherubim," or "cherubs." The exact shape of the Temple cherubim was kept a profound secret among the Jews, so that Josephus declares—"No one is able to state, or conjecture of what form the cherubim were" (*Ant. Jud.* viii. 3, § 3). That they were winged figures appears from verse 28 of this chapter, while from other parts of Scripture we learn that cherubim might be of either human or animal forms, or of the two combined (Ezek. i. 5—14; x. 1—22). These last have been with some reason compared to the symbolical composite figures of other nations, the andro-sphinxes and crio-sphinxes of the Egyptians, the Assyrian winged bulls and lions, the Greek chimæra, and the griffins of the northern nations. But it is doubtful whether the cherubim of Moses were of this character. The most sober of recent inquirers (Bp. Harold Browne, Canon Cook, Kalisch, Keil), while admitting the point to be doubtful, come to the conclusion that they were in all probability, "winged human figures, with human face too." In this case their prototype would seem to have been the winged figures of Ma, the Goddess of Truth, frequently seen inside Egyptian arks, sheltering with their wings the scarabæus or other emblem of the deity. (See Lepsius, *Denkmäler*, pt. iii. pl. 14; Wilkinson in Rawlinson's *Herodotus*, vol. ii. p. 85, 2nd edition; Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. i. p. 304.) **Of beaten work shalt thou make them.** Not cast, i.e., but hammered into shape (LXX. *τοπειρά*). The word "cherub" is thought to be derived from an Egyptian root, *karabu*, signifying "to hammer" (*Speaker's Commentary*, vol. iv. p. 207). **In the two ends.** Rather, "From

the two ends"—i.e., "rising," or, "standing up from the two ends."

Ver. 19.—**On the one end . . . on the other end . . . on the two ends.** The preposition used is in every case the same as that of the last clause of ver. 18—viz., *min*, "from." The idea is that the figures rose from the two ends.

Ver. 20.—**The cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high.** Compare ch. xxxvii. 9. It would seem that the two wings of both cherubs were advanced in front of them, and elevated, so as to overshadow the mercy seat. This was a departure from the patterns furnished by the figures of Ma (see the comment on ver. 18), since in them one wing only was elevated, and the other depressed. It is clear that in no case was any part of the Hebrew sacred furniture a mere reproduction of Egyptian models. Whatever was made use of was so transformed or modified as to acquire a new and independent character. **Their faces, etc.** The words are not without difficulty; but the generally received meaning appears to be correct—that the faces were bent one towards the other, but that both looked downwards, towards the mercy seat. Thus the figures, whether they were standing or kneeling, which is uncertain, presented the appearance

of guardian angels, who watched over the precious deposit below—to wit, the two tables.

Ver. 21.—**Thou shalt put the mercy seat above the ark.** Rather, "upon the ark"—"thou shalt cover the ark with it." This had not been expressed previously, though the dimensions (ver. 17), compared with those of the ark (ver. 10), would naturally have suggested the idea. **In the ark thou shalt put the testimony.** This is a mere repetition of verse 16, marking the special importance which attached to the provision.

Ver. 22.—**And there I will meet with thee.** The whole of the foregoing description has been subordinate to this. In all the arrangements for the tabernacle God was, primarily and mainly, providing a fit place where he might manifest himself to Moses and his successors. The theocracy was to be a government by God in reality, and not in name only. There was to be constant "communing" between God and the earthly ruler of the nation, and therefore a place of communing. Compare ch. xxix. 42—45. The special seat of the Divine presence was to be the empty space above the mercy seat, between the two cherubim, and above the ark of the covenant.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 10—22.—*The symbolism of the ark of the covenant.* The symbolical meaning of the ark of the covenant may be considered, either (1) separately, as to its parts; or (2) collectively, as to the bearing of its several parts one upon the other.

I. SEPARATELY, AS TO ITS PARTS. These were (1) The ark itself, or chest; (2) The mercy seat; and (3) The cherubim. (1) The ark, or coffer of acacia wood, coated within and without with pure gold, and intended as a receptacle for the law written by the finger of God, would seem to have represented Divine law as enshrined in the pure nature of God. Acacia is said to be one of the most incorruptible of woods, and gold is undoubtedly the most incorruptible, as well as the most precious, of metals. The law of God—"holy, just, and good" (Rom. vii. 12)—needs such a receptacle. It dwells fitly in God himself—in the incorruptible hearts of the sinless angels—and in the undefiled hearts of godly men. It is in itself pure and incorrupt, an emanation from him who is essential purity. It is a "golden" rule, perfect, lovely, beautiful. It is no cruel code of a tyrant, but the only rule of action by which the well-being of man can be secured. At the same time there is severity and sternness in it. It was written on stone, and shrined in gold. It was fixed, unbending, unchangeable. (2) The mercy seat represented God's attribute of mercy. It covered up the law, as he "covers up" the sins and offences of his people (Ps. xxxii. 1; lxxxv. 2; Rom. iv. 7). It was prepared to receive the expiatory blood wherewith the high-priest was to sprinkle it, the blood that typified the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ (Lev. xvi. 14). It was of gold because mercy is the most precious of God's attributes. It was placed *over* the law, because mercy transcends justice. (3) The cherubim represented at once guardianship and worship. Doubtless holy angels at all times guarded invisibly the ark, and especially the "testimony" which it contained. The presence of the two golden figures signified this holy watchfulness to the Israelites, and spoke to them of the intense holiness of the place. The shadowing wings represented protecting care; and the cherubic form showed that the most exalted of creatures were fitly employed in watching and guarding the revelation of the will of the Almighty. By their attitude, standing or kneeling with bent heads and faces turned down toward the mercy seat, they further

spoko of worship. On the Divine presence, which was manifested "from between them," they dared not gaze—their eyes were lowered, and fixed for ever on the mercy seat—the embodiment of the Divine attribute of mercy. As under the new covenant angels desired to look into the mystery of redemption (1 Pet. i. 12), so, under the old, angels doubtless saw with admiring wonder God commencing the recovery of a lost world; they looked on his attribute of mercy with rapture but with amaze; it was a new thing to them; the angels who lost their first estate had not elicited it; man alone had been thought worthy of the "afterthought," whereby sin was condoned, and the salvation of sinners made possible.

II. COLLECTIVELY, AS TO THE BEARING OF THE SEVERAL PARTS ONE UPON ANOTHER. The teaching of the ark in this respect was, primarily, that of David in the eighty-fifth psalm: "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Mercy without justice is a weak sentimentality, subversive of moral order. Justice without mercy is a moral severity—theoretically without a flaw, but revolting to man's instinctive feelings. The synthesis of the two is required. The law, enshrined in the holiest place of the sanctuary, vindicated the awful purity and perfection of God. The mercy seat, extended above the law, assigned to mercy its superior directive position. The cherubic figures showed the gaze of angels riveted in astonishment and admiration on God's mode of uniting mercy with justice, by means of vicarious suffering, which he can accept as atonement. Finally, the Divine presence, promised as a permanent thing, gave God's sanction to the expiatory scheme, whereby alone man can be reconciled to him, and the claims both of justice and of mercy satisfied.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Chap. xxv., vers. 10—16; chap. xxxvii., vers. 1—5.—*The ark of the testimony.* When Jehovah provided for Israel an abiding record of his holy will, it was needful that Israel should also provide an appropriate receptacle. Nor was it left to Moses and the people to determine what might be most appropriate. Jehovah arranged things so that all the religious service of the people gathered around the two tables of stone. An Israelite gazing upon the great holy place of another nation and inquiring what might be its innermost treasure hidden and guarded from all presumptuous approach, would get for answer that it was some image graven by art and man's device; and he would further learn that the supposed will of this deity found its expression in all licentious and abominable rites. But, on the other hand, a gentile, looking towards Israel's holy place and inquiring what might be behind the curtains of the tabernacle, and expecting perhaps to hear of some magnificent image, would be astounded with a very different reply. No image there! and not only no image, but words graven by God's desire which forbade fabrication of everything in the shape of an image. Within that gilded box of shittim wood there lie written the leading requirements for those who would obey the will of Jehovah. *Litera scripta manet.* The spot where that ark had a resting-place was a sacred spot, not approachable by the common multitude: but this was not because there was anything to conceal. The recesses of heathenism will not bear inspection. The character of the deity worshipped corresponds with the degradation of the worshippers. But here is the great distinction of that Divine service found in Israel, that however vile the people might be, and even the officiating priests, an exposure of the hidden things of their sacred place would have been an exposure of their apostasy. No Israelite needed to be ashamed of what lay within the ark on which he was bound to look with such veneration, which he was bound to guard with such assiduity; and if it be true that every human heart ought to be a sanctuary of God, then the very heart of hearts should be as the ark of the testimony in the sanctuary of old. Our hearts should be better than our outward services. We should have the consciousness that God's will has a real, an abiding, a cherished, a predominating place in our affections. All the actions of life should flow from the fountain formed by the ever living force of a Divine will within us. Let us ever consider the internal more than the external. If the internal be right, the external will come right in due time. If God's commandments—the full scheme of Christian virtues—are indeed written in our hearts, then all superficial hindrances and roughness can only last for a little time. The Divine life ruling within must subdue all things to itself.—Y.

Chap. xxv., vers. 17—22; chap. xxxvii., vers. 6—9.—*The mercy seat and the cherubim.* The ark already indicated as the repository of the two tables, is now further indicated as the resting-place of the mercy seat and the cherubim. Thus there was presented to the thoughts of the people a Divinely constituted whole, a great symbolic unity which set forth the glory and the mystery of God's presence as no unaided human conception could have done, however sublime, however sincere. The ark, the mercy seat, and the cherubim once made and placed in position, were hidden away from the general gaze. Bezaleel looked no more upon his handiwork. But though the things behind the veil were themselves hidden, yet their general character and relations were known. Hidden in one sense, in another sense they were all the more manifest just because they were hidden. It was perfectly well known that behind the veil God made himself known as the God of the commandments, the God of the mercy seat, the God shining forth between the cherubim. The proximity of the mercy seat to the tables of the law was an excellent way of showing that the requirements inscribed on these tables were to be no dead letter. If they could not be honoured by a heartfelt and properly corresponding obedience, then they must be honoured by a heartfelt repentance for transgression, an adequate propitiation, and an honourable forgiveness. There was a place for profound and permanent repentance, and a place for real and signal mercy to the transgressor: but for a slurring over of disobedience there was no place at all. Very close indeed are the law and the gospel. The law, when its comprehensiveness and severity are considered, magnifies the gospel; and the gospel, when we consider how emphatically it is proclaimed as being a gospel, magnifies the law. Then we have also to consider *what may be signified by the presence of the cherubim*; and surely we shall not go far wrong in connecting these golden figures here with the presence of those awful guardians who prevented the return of Adam and Eve to the scene of earthly bliss which they had forfeited. The presence of these cherubim suggested a solemn consideration of all that man had actually lost; God looking from between the cherubim, was looking as it were from the scene of the ideal human life on earth; that life which might have been the real, if man had only persisted according to the original injunction of his Maker. Thus the cherubim are associated, first with the barrier against return, and then with the working out of a plan for glorious and complete restoration. There is here no word of the flaming sword. The cherubim seem to be regarded as contemplative rather than active, somewhat as St. Peter phrases it when he speaks of things which the angels desire to look into. Over against the delight of those faithful ones who guarded Eden, we must set the thought of those in whose presence there is such inexpressible joy over the repenting sinner. God looked forth from between these symbols of the unsullied creatures who serve him day and night continually, and towards those people whom, though at present they were disobedient, carnalised, and unsusceptible, he nevertheless called his own. Sinners may be so changed, renewed, and energised as to be joined in the most complete harmony of service even with the cherubim.—Y.

Vers. 10—40. What must be found with every soul that is God's dwelling-place:—

I. **THE ARK** (vers. 10—22). *The place where the Lord meets and communes with us.* 1. It contained the testimony. The light of the meeting-place with God is the word concerning righteousness and sin. There is no communion with God if that be left out. The law which searches and condemns us must be honoured as God's testimony. 2. Between God and the law we have broken is the mercy seat, sin's glorious covering, on which the cherubim—emblems of the highest intelligence and purity of creation—look, and before which we also bow, with adoring awe. 3. Over the mercy seat rests the cloud of God's glory. We shall meet God only as we seek him here. His glory can be fully revealed and the might of his salvation proved here alone.

II. **THE TABLE OF SHEW-BREAD, THE SOUL'S ENTIRE CONSECRATION.** 1. The bread was the emblem of God's people. The twelve cakes represented the twelve tribes. The fruit of the great Husbandman's toil is to be found in us. 2. God's joy is to be found in us. The Lord's portion is his people. 3. We are to be prepared and perfected for his presence, and to be for ever before him (ver. 30).

III. **THE CANDLESTICK, THE EMBLEM OF THE LORD'S PEOPLE, AND THEIR WORLD-SERVICE.** 1. It is made of pure gold, the only metal that loses nothing, though passed through the fire and whose lustre is never tarnished. 2. It was the only light of the

holy place. The true Christian Church the only light which in the world's darkness reveals the things of God and the pathway to his presence.—U.

Vers. 10—40.—*The ark, the table, and the candlestick.* The instructions for the making of these essential parts of the tabernacle furniture occupy the remainder of the chapter. The directions for making the altar of incense are postponed to ch. xxx. 1—10. The reason seems to be that the uses of this altar could not be described without reference to commands which were to be given respecting the altar of burnt-offering—to which the altar of incense stood in a certain relation of dependence—and to the ordinance for the institution of the priesthood. The instructions have respect to the internal relation of the parts.

I. THE ARK AND MERCY SEAT (vers. 10—23). This was the heart of the sanctuary—the throne of Jehovah. As the nucleus of the whole structure, it is described first.

1. *The ark proper* (vers. 10—17). For details, consult the exposition. A plain wooden box or chest, overlaid within and without with pure gold, and borne upon staves, for the insertion of which rings were provided in its feet or corners, its structure could not well have been simpler. On the resemblances and differences between this ark and the religious arks of the Egyptians, see the interesting article in “*Kitto's Cyclopædia*.” The ark, in the religion of Israel, was simply a depository for the two tables of stone—the tables of the covenant. In its freedom from idolatrous symbols (in this respect a contrast to the Egyptian arks), it was a testimony to monotheism; in the character of its contents, it testified to the ethical foundation of the religion—to the severe and stern morality which formed its basis. If ever doubt is cast on the pure moral character of the Hebrew faith, it should suffice to refute it, to point to the ark of the testimony. What a witness to the ruling power of the moral in this religion that, when the sacred chest is opened, the sole contents are found to be the two stone tables of the moral law (ver. 16)! The deposition of these tables in the ark, underneath the mercy seat, had three ends. (1) They testified to the fact that God's kingdom in Israel was founded on immutable justice and righteousness (Ps. lxxxix. 15; xcvi. 2). Even grace, in its actings, must respect law. Favour cannot be dispensed on terms which make the law “void” (Rom. iii. 31). If sin is pardoned, it must be with full recognition of the law's claims against the sinner. The ultimate end must be to “establish the law” (Rom. iii. 31). Only in the Gospel have we the clear revelation of how, on these terms, mercy and truth can meet together, and righteousness and peace can kiss each other (Ps. lxxxv. 10; Rom. iii. 21—27). (2) They testified to the covenant obligation. The tables were, as Oehler calls them, “the obligatory document of the covenant.” As such they were laid up in the heart of the sanctuary. (3) They testified against Israel's sins and backslidings. They testified against *all* sin in Israel, but especially against rebellion and deliberate apostasy. This appears to be the special force of the expression—“the testimony,” “tables of testimony,” etc. (Cf. Deut. xxxi. 26, 27—“Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, *that it may be there for a witness against thee*. For I know thy rebellion,” etc.)

2. *The mercy seat* (ver. 17). The mercy seat, or propitiatory, made of pure gold, served as a lid or covering to the sacred chest. The name, however, as the Piel form implies, had more especial reference to the covering of sins. Sprinkled with blood of atonement, the mercy seat cancelled, as it were, the condemnatory witness of the underlying tables—covered sin from God's sight (ver. 21). From above this mercy seat, and from between the two cherubim that were upon it, God promised to meet with Moses, and to commune with him (ver. 22). The gracious element in the covenant with Israel here reaches its distinct expression. Jehovah could “by no means clear the guilty;” *i.e.*, he could not call sin anything else than what it was, or tamper in the least degree with the condemnatory testimony of the law against it; but he could admit atonements, and on the ground of expiatory rites, could forgive sin, and receive the sinner anew to his favour. The mercy seat thus foreshadowed Christ, as, in his sacred Person, the great Propitiatory for man (Rom. iii. 25)—priest, sacrifice, and mercy seat in one. On the basis of mere law, there can be no communion between God and man. The blood-sprinkled mercy seat must intervene. Only on the ground of Christ's mediation and intercession, can God transact with sinners.

3. *The cherubim* (vers. 18—23). The cherubic figures were formed from the same piece of

gold which constituted the mercy seat, and rose at either end of it, with wings over-spreading the place of propitiation, and faces turned inward. On the various interpretations, see the exposition. The view which finds most favour is that which regards the cherubim, not as real and actual, but only as symbolic and imaginary beings—hieroglyphs of creation in its highest grade of perfection. Egyptian and Assyrian art abound in similar ideal forms, most of them representative, not of qualities of the creature, as distinct from its Creator, but of attributes of God revealed *in* creation. This view, also, has been taken of the cherubim of Scripture, but it must be rejected as untenable. We confess that, after all that has been written of the purely ideal significance of these figures—"the representative and quintessence of creation, placed in subordination to the great Creator"—we do not feel the theory to be satisfactory. We incline very much to agree with Delitzsch: "The Biblical conception considers the cherub as a *real heavenly being*, but the form which is given to it changes; it is symbolical and visionary." (*Hist. of Redemption*, p. 29.) It seems fair to connect the cherubim with the seraphs of the temple-vision in Isaiah (vi. 2); and this, taken with Gen. iii. 24, points strongly in the direction of an angelic interpretation. The conception, however, unquestionably underwent development, and in the highly complex form in which it appears in Ezekiel may quite possibly take on much more of the ideal character than it had at first; may, in short, closely approximate to what is commonly given as the meaning of the symbol. Confining ourselves to the figures of the tabernacle, we prefer to view them, with the older writers, and with Keil and others among the moderns, as symbolic of the angel hosts which attend and guard the throne of Jehovah, zealous, like himself, for the honour of his law, and deeply interested in the counsels of his love (1 Pet. i. 12). The angel-idea is so prominent in the theology of Israel that we should expect it to find *some* embodiment in this symbolism. And what finer picture could be given of angels than in these cherubic figures, who, with wings outspread and faces lowered, represent at once humility, devotion, adoration, intelligence, service, and zeal? On the angels at the giving of the law, see Deut. xxxiii. 2. On the assembly or council of holy ones, see Ps. lxxxix. 6—9. The wings of the cherubs constituted, as it were, a protecting shade for those who took refuge under them in the Divine mercy (Ps. xci. 1). Jehovah's guards, they appear in the symbol as ready to defend his Majesty against profane invasion; as avengers of disobedience to his will; as sheltering and aiding those who are his friends. They are, when otherwise unemployed, rapt in adoration of his perfections, and deeply intent on the study of his secrets. So interpreted, the cherubs are hieroglyphs of the heavenly spiritual world.

II. THE TABLE OF SHEW-BREAD (VERS. 23—31). The table was part of the belongings of the holy place. This shows it to have been primarily connected, not with the relation of God to Israel, but conversely, with the works and services of the people, in their relation to Jehovah. Like other articles in the sanctuary, the table was to present a golden exterior, and on it were to be placed twelve cakes of shew-bread (ver. 30; Lev. xxiv. 5—9), with flagons for purposes of libation (ver. 29). The shew-bread had thus the significance of a meat-offering. The sense may be thus exhibited. Bread is the means of nourishment of the natural life. The twelve cakes represented the twelve tribes. The presentation of the bread on the table was, accordingly, 1. A recognition of Jehovah's agency in the bestowal of what is necessary for the support of life. Natural life is supported by his bounty. The cakes on the table were a grateful acknowledgment of this dependence. Spiritually, they pointed to the higher bread with which God nourishes the soul. They remind us of our duty to give thanks for this, not less than for the other. The true bread is Christ (John vi. 32). 2. A dedication of the life so nourished to him whose goodness constantly sustained it. We take this to be the essential feature in the offering. The life-sustaining food and drink is placed upon the table of Jehovah. In the act of placing it there, the tribes offer, as it were, to God, the life which it sustains, and which is derived from his bounty. The meaning could not be better expressed than in words borrowed from St. Paul—"Unto which promise, our twelve tribes, *instantly serving God day and night*, hope to come" (Acts xxvi. 7). Perpetual consecration—a life fruitful in good works, and acts of holy service to God. This is the conception which is embodied in the shew-bread. Here, also, the symbolism points to a life higher than that nourished on material bread, and might almost be said to pledge to Israel the gift of the higher bread needed for it. Fed on this bread from heaven—*i.e.*, on Christ, who gave himself

for us (John vi. 51), we are to live, not to ourselves, but to him who died for us, and rose again (2 Cor. v. 15).

III. THE GOLDEN CANDLESTICK (vers. 31—40). This sacred ornament was, like the mercy seat, to be made of pure gold. Art was to be allowed to do its best to make it massive, shapely, beautiful. Stem and branches were to be wrought with great artistic skill. The lamps, seven in number, fed with beaten olive oil (ch. xxvii. 20, 21), were to burn all night in the sanctuary. The immediate design of its introduction was, of course, to illuminate the holy place. Symbolically, the candlestick represented the calling of Israel to be a people of light. Compare, as regards Christians, Matt. v. 14, 16; Phil. ii. 15. The church is the abode of light. It has no affinity with darkness. The light with which it is lighted is the light of truth and holiness. The lamps are the gifts of wisdom and holiness, which Christ bestows upon his people. Their own souls being filled with light, they become, in turn, the lights of the world. The oil which feeds the light is the oil of God's Holy Spirit. Note—we cannot make a higher use even of natural gifts, say of knowledge or wisdom, than to let their light burn in the sanctuary—in the service of God.—J. O.

Vers. 18—21.—*He maketh the winds his messengers, and his ministers a flame of fire.* The cherubim were to be of one piece with the mercy seat, the whole a lid, or guard above the lid, to the ark or chest which contained the tables of the law.

I. THE CHERUBIM AND THEIR MEANING. 1. *The symbol.* They are not described here; but by comparing the various passages in which they are referred to we may get a general notion as to their appearance. Ezekiel, who must have been familiar with their appearance, describes them as seen in his vision (Ezek. i.), four wings, four faces, etc. In Rev. iv. the same idea is seen in a developed form, four creatures having each a different face, and each having six wings. This latter feature suggests identity with the seraphim in Isaiah's vision (ch. vi.), and the name "seraphim," which seems connected with fire or burning, reminds us of the "flaming sword" with which the cherubim are associated in Gen. iii. 24. In any case wings, fire, and a mixture of the human and the animal in their appearance are characteristic features. 2. *That which is symbolised.* Wings in Scripture almost always represent the wind. The appearance of the cherubim is as fire. Their faces are those of the chief beasts—the lion, the bull-calf, the man, the eagle. Their form tends towards the human. On the whole, we may say they represent nature under her manifold aspects, nature as interpreted chiefly through the natural man in his perfection regarded as a part of nature. The cherubim shadow forth the natural creation according to the Divine ideal. The clause in the Te Deum—"To thee, cherubim and seraphim continually do cry," is the Benedicite condensed into a sentence!

II. POSITION AND OFFICE OF THE CHERUBIM. 1. *Position.* One piece with the mercy seat. Nature, in spite of appearances, is a manifestation of God's mercy to man. His voice may not be in the tempest or the fire, yet the tempest and the fire form a canopy to that throne whence issues the "still, small voice." If we regard the mercy seat as typical of Christ (cf. Rom. iii. 25), then we are reminded of the mysterious relation which exists between Christ and nature (Col. i. 17; John i. 1, etc.). 2. *Office.* Here they protect the ark and its contents, as in Gen. iii. 24, they "keep the way of the tree of life." The way of the tree of life is the way of righteousness, the way of the law of God. Thus the cherubim above the ark declare that nature, a manifestation of God's mercy, is also the guardian of God's law.

III. PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS. 1. Nature *does* guard the way of the tree of life, the law of God. There is a tendency implanted in the very constitution of nature which "makes for righteousness." Break a law, and, by God's merciful ordinance, you are compelled to reap the penalty. Sin in secret, yet you cannot escape the cognisance of this vigilant, sleepless, unconscious sentinel [cf. Eugene Aram's dream]. It is "full of eyes within and without." 2. Nature is a manifestation of mercy. Undiscoverable transgression would be irretrievable damnation. Christ, too, is one with the mercy seat; nature is rooted in the Divine Word. If we go to that throne of grace we may still obtain mercy, and win, through Christ, peace with the avengers.—G.

EXPOSITION.

VERS. 23—30.—THE TABLE OF SHEW-BREAD.

From the description of the ark, which constituted the sole furniture of the most holy place, God proceeded to describe the furniture of the holy place, or body of the tabernacle, which was to consist of three objects—1. A table, called the table of shew-bread ("bread of presence" or "bread of setting-forth"). 2. A candelabrum, or lamp-stand; and 3. An altar for the offering of incense. Of these the table seems to have been regarded as of primary importance; and its description is therefore made to follow immediately on that of the ark. It was of acacia wood, overlaid with pure gold, and was of the most ordinary shape—oblong-square, i.e., with four legs, one at each corner. The only peculiar features of the table, besides its material, were the border, or edging, which surrounded it at the top, the framework which strengthened the legs (ver. 25), and the rings by which it was to be carried from place to place.

Ver. 23.—Two cubits shall be the length thereof, etc. The table was to be three feet long, one foot six inches broad, and two feet three inches high. It was thus quite a small table, narrow for its length, and about two inches below the ordinary height.

Ver. 24.—Thou shalt overlay it with pure gold. Again, gilding may be meant; but a covering with thin plates of gold is perhaps more probable. A crown of gold round about. A border, or edging round the top, which would prevent anything that was placed on the table from readily falling off. (Compare ver. 11.)

Ver. 25.—A border of a hand-breadth. Rather "a band" or "framing." This seems to have been a broad flat bar, placed about half-way down the legs, uniting them and holding them together. It was represented in the sculpture of the table which adorned the Arch of Titus. (See the *Speaker's Commentary*, vol. i. p. 363.) A golden crown to the border—i.e., an edging at the top of the bar, which could be only for ornament.

Ver. 26.—The four corners that are on the four feet, is scarcely an intelligible expression. *P'oth*, the word translated "corners," means properly "ends;" and the direction seems to be, that the four rings should be affixed to the four "ends" of the table; those ends, namely, which are "at the four feet." It is a periphrasis, meaning no more than that they should

be affixed to the feet, as Josephus tells us that they were. (*Ant. Jud.* iii. 6, § 8.)

Ver. 27.—Over against the border. Rather "opposite the band" or "framing"—i.e., opposite the points at which the "band" or "framing" was inserted into the legs. Bishop Patrick supposes that the table "was not carried up as high as the ark was, but hung down between the priests, on whose shoulders the staves rested." But it is carried upright in the bas-relief on the Arch of Titus, and might have been as easily so carried as the ark. (See the comment on ver. 12.) Of the staves. Rather, "for staves." Staves for the table had not yet been mentioned; and naturally the word has no article.

Ver. 29.—The dishes thereof. Literally "its dishes," or rather perhaps, "its bowls" (LXX. *τρίβλια*). They were probably the vessels in which the loaves were brought to the table. Loaves are often seen arranged in bowls in the Egyptian tomb decorations (Lepsius, *Denkmäler*, pt. ii., pls. 5, 19, 84, 129, &c.). Spoons thereof. Rather, "its incense cups"—small jars or pots in which the incense, offered with the loaves (Lev. xxiv. 5), was to be burnt. Two such were represented in the bas-relief of the table on the Arch of Titus. Covers thereof and bowls thereof. Rather, "its flagons and its chalices" (LXX. *σπονδία και κύαθοι*)—vessels required for the libations or "drink offerings" which accompanied every meat-offering. To cover withal. Rather, as in the margin, "to pour out withal." So the Septuagint, Vulgate, Syriac, and most of the Targums.

Ver. 30.—Thou shalt set upon the table shew-bread before me alway. Here we have at once the object of the table, and its name, explained. The table was to have set upon it continually twelve loaves, or cakes, of bread (Lev. xxiv. 5), which were to be renewed weekly on the sabbath-day (*ibid.* ver. 8), the stale loaves being at the same time consumed by the priests in the holy place. These twelve loaves or cakes were to constitute a continual thank-offering to God from the twelve tribes of Israel in return for the blessings of life and sustenance which they received from him. The bread was called "bread of face," or "bread of presence," because it was set before the "face" or "presence" of God, which dwelt in the holy of holies. The Septuagint renders the phrase by *ἄρτοι ἐνώπιον* "loaves that are face to face"—St. Matthew by *ἄρτοι τῆς προσέσεως* "loaves of setting-forth"—whence the *Schau brode* of Luther, and our "shew-bread," which is a paraphrase rather than a translation

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 23—30.—*The symbolism of the table of shew-bread.* Before the holy of holies, within which was the Divine Presence, dwelling in thick darkness behind the veil, was to be set perpetually this golden table, bearing bread and wine and frankincense. The bread and wine and frankincense constituted a perpetual thank-offering, offered by Israel as a nation to the high and holy God. The idea was that of a constant memorial (Lev. xxiv. 8), a continual acknowledgment of the Divine goodness on the part of the nation. The essence of the offering was the bread—we know of the wine only by implication; the frankincense is distinctly mentioned (*ib.* ver. 7), but is altogether subordinate. Israel, grateful to God for maintaining and supporting its life, physical and spiritual, expressed its gratitude by this one and only *never ceasing* offering. It was intended to teach—

I. THAT GRATITUDE WAS DUE TO GOD FROM HIS PEOPLE PERPETUALLY. Men are so cold by nature, so selfish, so little inclined to real thankfulness, that it was well they should be reminded, as they were by the shew-bread, of thankfulness being a continuous, unending duty, a duty moreover owed by all. No tribe was ever exempt, however reduced in numbers, however little esteemed, however weak and powerless. The *twelve* loaves were perpetually before the Lord.

II. THAT GRATITUDE MUST BE SHOWN BY OFFERINGS. The best offering is that of a "pure heart;" but no man of a pure heart, who possessed aught, was ever yet content to offer merely "the calves of his lips"—men instinctively give of their best to God. Bread, the staff of life—wine, that maketh glad the heart of man—frankincense, the most precious of spices, are fitting gifts to him. The offering of bread signifies the devotion of our strength—of wine, the devotion of our feelings—of frankincense, the devotion of our most sublimised spiritual aspirations to the eternal. Israel, as a nation, perpetually offered these offerings, and thereby inculcated on each individual of the nation the duty of doing the same, separately and individually, for private, as the nation did for public, benefits.

III. THAT NO OFFERING COULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO GOD, UNLESS ALL ITS SURROUNDINGS WERE PURE AND HOLY. The loaves were to be of the finest flour (Lev. xxiv. 5). The frankincense was to be "pure frankincense" (*ib.* ver. 7). The table was to be overlaid with "pure gold" (Ex. xxvi. 24). All the utensils of the table were to be of the same (*ib.* ver. 29). Nothing "common or unclean" was to come into contact with the offering, which was "the most holy unto the Lord" of all the offerings made to him (Lev. xxiv. 8). The purity and perfection of all the material surroundings of the offering suggested the need of equal purity in those who offered it.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Chap. xxv., vers. 23—30; chap. xxxvii., vers. 10—16.—*The table of shew-bread.* Between the ark of the testimony and the table of the shew-bread we see this great correspondence—that they were of the same material of shittim wood and had the same adornment of gold. But along with this correspondence there was a great difference, in that the ark of the testimony stood within the veil, while the table of shew-bread stood without. The ark of the testimony had the mercy seat above it, while the table of the shew-bread had the lighted candlestick over against it. There must be some significance in having the table on the people's side of the veil rather than God's side; and may it not be that the table with its bread and the candlestick with its light were meant to set forth God's providential support and illumination of all his people? The shew-bread was not so much an offering presented to God as something placed on the table by his command, regularly and unfailingly, to symbolise the unfailing regularity with which he supplies his people in their ordinary wants. The daily meat offering with its fine flour was the representation of the labour of the people: and so we may take the shew-bread as representing that blessing of God without which the most diligent toil in sowing and watering avail nothing. The God of the shew-bread is the God in whom we live and move and have our being; we cannot do without him for the necessities and comforts of natural life. Were he to cease the operations of his energy—

in nature, it would soon be seen how utterly fruitless is all our working just by itself. A great and efficient providing power cannot be denied by whatsoever name we choose to call him. Would we know him and more of him than we can ever know in nature—we must think of what lies within the veil. He gives us the things belonging to the outer holy place, the bread and the light, the natural strength and the natural wisdom, in order that we may come to know him in his spiritual demands and his ability to satisfy the deepest demands of our hearts. The God who gives that bread to his people, of which the shew-bread was an ever renewed sample, gives it that we whose lives are continued by the bread may spend them to his glory. God feeds us that we may be in *all things his servants*, and not in *anything* our own masters.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

THE GOLDEN CANDLESTICK (VERS. 31—40).

Though the holy of holies was always dark, unless when lighted by the glory of God (ch. xl. 34, 35), the holy place, in which many of the priests' functions were to be performed, was to be always kept light. In the day-time sufficient light entered from the porch in front; but, as evening drew on, some artificial illumination was required. In connection with this object, the golden candlestick, or rather lamp-stand, was designed, which, together with its appurtenances, is described in the remainder of the chapter.

Ver. 31.—**A candlestick.** The golden candlestick is figured upon the Arch of Titus, and appears by that representation to have consisted of an upright shaft, from which three curved branches were carried out on either side, all of them in the same plane. It stands there on an octagonal pedestal, in two stages, ornamented with figures of birds and sea-monsters. This pedestal is, however, clearly Roman work, and no part of the original. **Of beaten work.** Not cast, but fashioned by the hand, like the cherubim (ver. 18). **His shaft.** Rather, "its base" (literally "flank"). **His branches.** Our version follows the Septuagint; but the Hebrew noun is in the singular number, and seems to designate the upright stem, or shaft. The "branches are not mentioned till ver. 32, where the same noun is used in the plural. **His bowls, his knops, and his flowers.** Rather, "its cups, its pomegranates, and its lilies." The "cups" are afterwards likened to almond flowers (ver. 33); they formed the first ornament on each branch; above them was a representation of the pomegranate fruit; above this a lily blossom. The lily-blossoms supported the lamps, which were separate (ver. 37). The remainder were of one piece with the candlestick.

Ver. 32.—**Six branches.** The representation on the Arch of Titus exactly agrees with this description. It was a peculiarity of the "candlestick," as compared with other cande-

labra, that all the branches were in the same plane.

Ver. 33.—**Three bowls made like unto almonds.** Cups shaped like almond blossoms seem to be intended. Each branch had three of these in succession, then a pomegranate and a lily-flower. The lily probably represented the Egyptian lotus, or water-lily. In the other branch. Rather, "on another branch." There were six branches, not two only. The ornamentation of two is described; then we are told that the remainder were similar.

Ver. 34.—**In the candlestick:** i.e., in the central shaft or stem, which is viewed as "the candlestick" *par excellence*. Here were to be twelve ornaments, the series of cup, pomegranate, and lily being repeated four times, once in connection with each pair of branches, and a fourth time at the summit.

Ver. 35.—**A knop under two branches of the same.** The branches were to quit the stem at the point of junction between the pomegranate (knop) and the lily.

Ver. 36.—**All it.** Rather, "all of it." **Shall be one beaten work.** Compare ver. 31.

Ver. 37.—**The seven lamps.** The lamps are not described. They appear by the representation on the Arch of Titus to have been hemispherical bowls on a stand, which fitted into the lily-blossom wherewith each of the seven branches terminated. **They shall light the lamps.** The lamps were lighted every evening at sunset (ch. xxvii. 21; xxx. 8; Lev. xxiv. 3, etc.), and burnt till morning, when the High Priest extinguished them and "dressed" them (ch. xxx. 7). **That they may give light over against it.** The candlestick was placed on the southern side of the holy place, parallel to the wall, the seven lamps forming a row. The light was consequently shed strongly on the opposite, or northern wall, where the table of shew-bread stood.

Ver. 38.—**The tongs thereof.** Tongs or pincers were required for trimming the wicks of the lamps. Compare 1 Kings vii. 49; 2 Chr. iv. 21. **Snuff-dishes** were also needed for the reception of the fragments removed from the wicks by the tongs "Snuffers,"

though the word is used in Ex. xxvii. 23, in the place of tongs, had not been invented, and were indeed unknown to the ancients.

Ver. 39.—*Of a talent of pure gold shall he make it.* The candlestick, with all its appurtenances, was to weigh exactly a talent of gold. The value of the Hebrew gold talent is

supposed to have been between 10,000*l.* and 11,000*l.* of our money.

Ver. 40.—*Their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount.* Compare ver. 9, and the comment *ad loc.* It would seem from this passage that the “patterns” were shown to Moses first, and the directions as to the making given afterwards.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 31—40.—*The symbolism of the candlestick.* The light which illuminated the darkness of the tabernacle can represent nothing but the Holy Spirit of God, which illuminates the dark places of the earth and the recesses of the heart of man. That the light was sevenfold is closely analogous to the representation of the Holy Spirit in the Revelation of St. John, where there are said to be “seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God” (Rev. iv. 5). It is generally allowed that these “seven spirits” represent the one indivisible but sevenfold Spirit, who imparts of his sevenfold gifts to men. Seven is, in fact, one of the numbers which express perfection and completeness; and a sevenfold light is merely a light which is full and ample, which irradiates sufficiently all that it is designed to throw light upon. The light from the golden candlestick especially irradiated the opposite wall of the tabernacle where the table of shew-bread was set, showing how the offerings of the natural man require to be steeped in the radiance of the Spirit of God in order to be an acceptable gift to the Almighty. We may see—

I. IN THE PURE GOLD OF THE CANDLESTICK THE SPOTLESS PERFECTION OF HIM, WHOSE EMBLEM IS THE INNOCENT DOVE—WHO IS “THE SPIRIT OF PURITY.” The pure light of the refined olive oil, and the pure gold of the candlestick were in harmony. Both indicated alike the Spirit’s awful holiness. Both taught the presence of One, who was “of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.”

II. IN THE SIMPLE YET BEAUTIFUL ORNAMENTATION OF ALMOND BUDS, AND POMEGRANATES, AND LILIES, WE MAY SEE THE DELIGHT OF THE SPIRIT IN ALL THINGS LOVELY, SWEET, AND INNOCENT. The Spirit of God, which, when the earth was first made, “brooded upon the face of the waters” (Gen. i. 2), still tenderly watches over creation, and rejoices in the loveliness spread over it by his own influences. Flowers and fruits are among the most beautiful of created things, and well befit the interior of the sanctuary where God’s presence is manifested, whether cunningly carved in stone, or fashioned in metal-work, or, best of all, in their own simple natural freshness.

III. IN THE SOFT RADIANCE SHED AROUND BY THE CANDLESTICK, WE MUST SEE THE ILLUMINATING POWER OF THE SPIRIT, WHICH GIVES LIGHT TO THE WORLD. Spiritual gifts, however diverse, are his gifts. “To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing; to another faith; to another prophecy; to another miracles; to another tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will” (1 Cor. xii. 8—11). It is he who “doth our souls inspire, and lighten with celestial fire.” It is he from whom all wisdom and knowledge, and spiritual illumination are derived. He informs the conscience, guides the reason, quickens the spiritual insight, gives us discernment between good and evil. Christ is “the light of the world,” but Christ diffuses his light by his Spirit. Man’s contact is closest with the Third Person of the Trinity, who communicates to the soul every good and perfect gift which has come down to it from the Father of lights. Illumination is especially his gift; and it is therefore that light and fire are made the especial symbols of his presence (Matt. iii. 11; Acts ii. 3, 4; Rev. iv. 5).

IV. IN THE SEVENFOLD LIGHT OF THE SEVEN LAMPS WE MAY SEE THE FULLNESS AND COMPLETENESS OF THE ILLUMINATION WHICH THE SPIRIT VOUCHSAFES TO MAN. Fullness and completeness in respect to man’s needs—not absolute completeness or fullness; for “Now, we see through a glass darkly,” “we know in part only—not as we

are known." But "his grace is sufficient for us." We know all that we need to know—we see all that we need to see. "Full light" and "true knowledge" are for another sphere; but still, even here, we are privileged to see and know as much as would be of advantage to us. Inspired messengers have declared to us what they have felt justified in calling "the whole counsel of God" (Acts xx. 27). We are familiarly acquainted with mysteries, which the very "angels desire to look into" (1 Pet. i. 12).

V. IN THE PROVISION OF TONGS AND SNUFF-DISHES WE MAY SEE THAT THE CO-OPERATION OF MAN IS REQUIRED, IF THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIGHT VOUCHSAFED TO HIM IS TO REMAIN UNDIMMED. The lamps of the golden candlestick had to be "dressed" each morning. Perpetual vigilance is necessary. Phrases once instinct with power lose their force; and new phrases, adapted to each new generation, have to be coined and circulated. The translation of the word of God in each country has from time to time to be revised, or an accretion of usage will dim the light of the pure word, and overshadow it with traditional glosses. Teachers must be watchful, that they do not suffer the light of their teaching to grow dim; hearers must be watchful, that they do not by their obstinacy refuse to give the light passage into their souls.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Chap. xxv., vers. 31—40; chap. xxvii., vers. 17—24.—*The candlestick.* As the shew-bread was a symbol of what Jehovah gave to his people in one way, so the lighted candlestick in all the preciousness of its material and elaboration of its workmanship was a symbol in another way. And even as the shew-bread was in magnitude only as a crumb of all the great supply which God gives in the way of food, so the candlestick even in full blaze was but as a glimmer compared with all the light which God had gathered and arranged in various ways to guide and cheer his people. But glimmer though the light of the candlestick might be, it was quite enough to act as an inspiring and encouraging symbol for all who, seeing, were able to understand. From that place between the cherubim, shrouded as it was in awful sanctity, there radiated forth abundance of light for every one in Israel who was disposed to profit by it. In heathendom the perplexed went long distances to consult renowned oracles, only to find that for all practical purposes they might just as well have stayed at home. There was a great boast of illumination; but the reality turned out ambiguous and delusive. But here is the seven-branched candlestick (seven being the perfect number) to indicate that God would assuredly give all needed light to his people. On one side stood the shew-bread, and over against it the light. So we need God's guidance to show us how to use what materials he puts in our hands for our support. It is only too easy for man, following the light of a corrupted nature, to waste, abuse, and degrade the choice gifts of God. Consider the vast quantities of grain that instead of passing through the hands of the baker to become food, pass through the hands of the brewer and distiller to become alcohol. In all our use of the resources which God has placed in our hands, we must seek with simplicity of purpose and becoming humility for God's light, that we may be assured of God's will. God has placed us in the midst of such profusion that we may use it for him and not for self. And is not a lesson taught us in this respect by the very candlestick itself? It was made of gold. The Israelites at this time seem to have had great store of gold; and left to their own inclinations, they gave it for shaping into an image to be worshipped. Now, by causing this candlestick to be made of gold, Jehovah seemed to summon his people to give their gold to aid in supporting and diffusing his light. What God gives may be a curse or a blessing, just according to the spirit in which we receive and use it. We can desire no nobler office than to be ourselves as lamps, doing something to shed abroad that great, true light of the world, which radiates from the person of Christ. He who is living so as to make Christ better known amid the spiritual darkness of the world has surely learnt the great lesson that God would teach to all ages by this golden candlestick in his sanctuary of old.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Vers. 1—37.—**THE TABERNACLE.** The sacred furniture which the tabernacle was to contain having been described, with the exception of the “altar of incense”—the description of which is reserved for ch. xxx. (vers. 1—10)—directions were next given for the sacred structure itself. This was to consist of three main things—1. A quadrangular enclosure thirty cubits long by ten broad, open at one end, and on the other three sides enclosed by boards of acacia-wood overlaid with gold—called the *mišhkán*, or “the dwelling-place,” in our version usually translated “tabernacle.” 2. A tent of goat’s hair, supported upon poles, and stretched by means of ropes and tent-pegs in the ordinary manner over the *mišhkán*. This is called the *’ôhel*—which is the usual word for a “tent” in Hebrew, and is so translated generally (Gen. iv. 20; ix. 21; xiii. 31; xviii. 1, etc.), though in this chapter, unfortunately, “covering” (ver. 7); and 3. A “covering”—*miškēh*, to be placed over the *’ôhel*, composed of rams’ skins dyed red, and seals’ skins (ver. 14). Subordinate parts of the structure were—(a) The sockets, or bases, which were to receive and support the upright boards (vers. 19—25); (b) The bars which were to hold the boards together (vers. 26—29); (c) The veil, stretched on pillars, which was to be hung across the “dwelling-house,” and to separate it into two parts, the “holy place” and the “holy of holies” (vers. 31—33); and (d) The curtain or “hanging” at the open end of the “dwelling-place,” where there were no boards, which was intended to close that side of the structure when necessary (vers. 36, 37).

The fine linen covering (vers. 1—6).

Ver. 1.—Thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains. These “ten curtains” are explained in the verses which follow to be ten “breadths,” so fastened together as to form practically a single curtain or awning, which constituted the ceiling or inner covering of the tabernacle. The mode of its arrangement is not quite certain. Some suppose that it was really a part of the “tent,” being laid over the same framework as the goats’ hair curtain (Fergusson, Cook); others believe it to have been strained across the *mišhkán* and fastened to the top of the boards on either

side, thence depending, either inside or outside (Bähr, Keil). The former supposition appears the more probable. **Fine twined linen** is linen the threads of which are formed of several fine strands twisted together. This is often the case with Egyptian linen. On blue and purple and scarlet, see the comment upon ch. xxv. 4. **Cherubims of cunning work.** Rather, “cherubim, the work of a skilled weaver.” Figures of cherubs were to be woven into the hangings in the loom itself, not embroidered upon them afterwards.

Ver. 2.—**Eight and twenty cubits.** This is the exact length required for a rectangular tented roof over such a space, which should descend (as tent roofs usually do) within about seven feet of the ground. The comparison made in vers. 12, 13, between the fine linen covering of the *mišhkán* and the goats’ hair covering of the “tent,” implies that the one was directly under the other, and that both were arranged in the same way. **The breadth of four cubits.** This gives for the entire length of the curtain (4 by 10), 40 cubits, or ten cubits more than the length of the boarded space. The roof must thus have been advanced some distance in front of the tabernacle proper, or rectangular boarded space. **Every one of the curtains shall have one measure.** They shall all, i.e., have the same measure.

Ver. 3.—When the ten “breadths” had been woven, five were to be sewn together to form one portion of the awning, and the other five to form another portion, the reason for this being, probably, that if all the ten breadths had been sewn together, the awning would have been too cumbersome to have been readily folded together, or easily conveyed when the people journeyed.

Ver. 6.—The Authorised Version gives the sense fairly. The two curtains, each composed of five “breadths,” were to be united by means of one hundred loops, fifty on each curtain, which were to be coupled together by fifty “taches” or clasps. The loops were to be of the “blue” material used generally in the textile fabrics of the tabernacle (ch. xxv. 4; xxvi. 1, 31, 36), and the “taches” or clasps were to be of gold. In this way the covering of the *mišhkán* was to be completed.

The goat’s skin tent-cloth (vers. 7—13).

Ver. 7.—From the inner covering of the tabernacle the directions proceed to the external covering, or rather coverings, which constituted the real strength of the structure, and its protection from wet or stormy weather. Curtains of goats’ hair, such as the Arabs still use, as the ordinary covering of their tents (Layard, *Nin. and Bab.*, p. 171), were to form a true “tent” (*’ôhel*) above the

tabernacle, being supported by tent-poles, and kept taut by means of cords and pegs (ch. xxvii. 19; xxxv. 18). See the representation in Dr. W. Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. iii. p. 1454, which is reproduced in the *Speaker's Commentary*, vol. i. p. 376. To be a covering. In ch. xxxvi. 14, we have—"he made curtains of goats' hair for the tent over the tabernacle," which is far better. The word used in both places is the same (*ôhel*). **Eleven curtains**—i.e., "eleven breadths." Compare ver. 1.

Ver. 8.—**The length . . . shall be thirty cubits.** A tent with a rectangular roof, over such a chamber as the *mishkân*, brought down, as tents usually are, within six or seven feet of the ground, would have required a covering of this length. If the slope of the roof had been greater, the covering must have been longer. **The breadth . . . four cubits.** This gives for the entire covering, when made up, a width of forty-four cubits, or sixty-six feet. As the entire length of the *mishkân* was only thirty cubits, or forty-five feet, it is evident that the tent projected considerably beyond the tabernacle, either at both ends, or, at any rate, at one end. Probably the projection was at one end only—viz., in front; where it constituted a porch, eighteen or twenty feet deep. The temple, which was modelled after the tabernacle, had a porch fifteen feet deep.

Ver. 9.—**Thou shalt couple, etc.** As with the inner awning of linen, so with the goats' hair tent-cloth. The whole when made up was to be in two pieces, for convenience of transport. (See the comment on ver. 3.) The number of breadths in the tent-cloth being uneven, the two pieces were to be of different sizes, one containing five, and the other six, "breadths." **Thou shalt double the sixth curtain in the forefront of the tabernacle.** "Tabernacle" here is a mistranslation; since the Hebrew word is *ôhel*, "tent." The meaning may be, either that the sixth breadth was to be doubled back upon the fifth, or that half of it was to be doubled back upon the other half. The latter view is to be preferred, since otherwise the extra breadth would have been superfluous.

Ver. 10.—**Fifty loops in the edge of the curtain that couplet the second.** Rather, "fifty loops at the edge of the second curtain of coupling." The two portions of the goats' hair covering were to be united in exactly the same way as those of the inner awning of linen. Fifty loops were to be sewn on to the edge of the extreme, or outermost, breadth of each portion, and these loops were to be connected by clasps or links. The outermost breadth on which the loops are sewn, is called the curtain of coupling."

Ver. 11.—**Fifty laches of brass.** Rather

"of bronze." The links of the inner curtain were of gold (ver. 6).

Ver. 12.—**The remnant which remaineth, etc.** Both this and the next verse presume a very close connection between the fine linen covering of the *mishkân* and the goats' hair tent-cloth which protected it. "The remnant that remaineth" is the half-breadth by which the tent-cloth would overlap the linen covering at the back of the tent, when at the front half of the eleventh breadth had been turned back upon the other half (see comment on ver. 9). This "remnant" was to be allowed to hang down over the back part of the tabernacle.

Ver. 13.—**And a cubit.** Rather, "And the cubit." The cubit by which the goats' hair tent-cloth, which was thirty cubits across (ver. 6), would exceed the linen covering, which was twenty-eight cubits (ver. 2), on either side of the tabernacle, was to be allowed to hang down, like a valance, hiding so far the golden boards of the tabernacle.

The outer protection (ver. 14).

Ver. 14.—**And thou shalt make a covering for the tent.** Nothing is said of the size of this covering; but, as its object was clearly to protect the roof of the tent from penetration by wet, it seems reasonable to suppose that it extended at least as far as the boards of the tabernacle. To do this, it must have been thirty cubits long, and fourteen broad.

The boarding of the tabernacle (vers. 15-30).

Ver. 15.—**Boards . . . of shittim wood.** These boards were to be fifteen feet long by two feet three inches broad, and, if they were each of a single plank, can scarcely have been furnished by any of the acacias which now grow in the Sinaitic peninsula. It is possible, however, that they were made up of two or more planks, since the name by which they are designated, *kereth*, is thought to be applied in Ezek. xxvii. 6, to the "deck of a ship." **Standing up.** The way in which they were to be made to "stand up" is explained in vers. 17 and 19. They were not to have one end sunk in the ground, but to be fitted by means of "tenons" into silver "sockets."

Ver. 17.—**Two tenons.** Literally, "hands." Projecting rods, such as those common in our dinner tables, seem to be meant. They may have been of metal, let into the boards to a certain depth, and projecting several inches beyond them. Or, possibly, they may have been of acacia wood. **In one board**—i.e. "In each board"—no doubt, at the bottom of each. **Set in order one against the other.** Arranged, i.e., at regular intervals, the position of each corresponding to the position of its fellow.

Ver. 18.—**Twenty boards.** Each board being a cubit and a half in width (ver. 16), the

length of the chamber was, necessarily, thirty cubits. **On the south side southward.** Literally, "On the south side, to the right." The Orientals regarded it as natural to look to the east, and spoke of the east as "in front," the west as "behind," the north as "on the left," and the south as "on the right hand."

Ver. 19.—Forty sockets of silver. Nothing is said of the shape of these "sockets." They were certainly very massive, as each contained a silver talent (ch. xxxviii. 27), and thus weighed from eighty to ninety pounds. It has been supposed that they stood on the ground, and formed a sort of continuous base, out of which the planks rose. But this would have constituted a very unsafe structure. Kalisch is probably right in his view, that the sockets were let into the ground—resembling those at the bottom of a gate, into which the bolt is pressed down. Each socket received one of the "tenons."

Ver. 20.—The second side . . . the north side. The north side, or left hand, was always regarded as less honourable than the south side or right hand (see Gen. xlviii. 13—20), probably because in the northern hemisphere the sun illumines the south side. It showed the superior dignity of the south side that the golden candlestick was set against it (ch. xl. 24).

Vers. 22, 23.—For the sides of the tabernacle westward. Rather, "for the back" (*ῥὰ ὀπίσω*—LXX.). Here there were to be **six boards** only, which would give the abnormal and improbable width of nine cubits. The additional cubit required was no doubt obtained from the corner boards, or posts, each of which added to the (internal) width half a cubit (see ver. 23).

Ver. 24.—They shall be coupled together beneath . . . unto one ring. This is very obscure, and might be explained in several ways. Perhaps it is best to suppose that the coupling was by the "bars," cf. vers. 26—29, the ends of which fitted into a sort of double ring, like the figure 8, attached to the corner posts. **Above the head.** Rather "at" or *near* the head.

Ver. 25.—And they shall be eight boards. Counting in the two corner boards, or posts, the boards of the back would be eight. Each of them was to have two "tenons," like the boards of the sides, and every "tenon" was to have its own silver "socket." Thus the "sockets" would be sixteen, two under each board.

Vers. 26—28.—Bars of shittim wood. To give greater stability to the structure, to keep the boards in their places, and to prevent there being any aperture between them, five bars were to be made for each side, and the same number for the end, of the *mishkân*, which were to be passed through rings attached to

the boards—one at least to each—and thus to hold the boards firmly together. The middle bar in each case was to extend the whole length of the enclosure (ver. 28), and thus in two cases to be thirty cubits, or forty-five feet long. The exact length, and the disposition of the other bars is not indicated; but it is with reason conjectured that two were above and two below the "middle bar"—that all were horizontal—and that each coupled together one half of the boards of each side. The length of each was probably fifteen cubits; and the ends which reached the two corner posts at the back ran into the corner rings, which were shaped so as to receive the two bars (see ver. 24). It is not said whether the bars were inside or outside the *mishkân*; but the best authorities suppose them to have been outside.

Ver. 29.—The rings were to be of solid gold; the boards and the bars of acacia wood overlaid with gold.

Ver. 30.—According to the fashion. Where the description was incomplete (and it could not but be incomplete in many points), Moses was to follow his recollection of the "pattern," which either in vision, or otherwise—he had seen in the mount. This would be his best guide, for

"Segnius irritant animum demissa per aures,
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus."

Vers. 31—35.—The veil and the ordering of the holy places.

Ver. 31.—A veil. The veil was to be of the same material and workmanship as the inner covering extended over the *mishkân*, and like that, was to have figures of cherubim woven into its texture by a skilled weaver.

Ver. 32.—Four pillars. The contrast between these four pillars of the interior, and the "five pillars" at "the door of the tent" (vers. 36, 37), is striking, and justifies the supposition that the veil in the tabernacle did not completely divide the holy of holies from the holy place, but formed a screen, above which the space was open. If the veil had been hung from the top of the tented roof, so as completely to separate the two places, there must have been five pillars, or at any rate an odd number, in the interior. **Their hooks shall be of gold.** These are hooks attached to the pillars, for the purpose of their having the curtains hung upon them. **Upon the four sockets.** The word "sockets" has no article. Translate—"Thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold, with their hooks of gold, and standing upon four sockets of silver." The pillars probably had "tenons," like the boards (ver. 17), which were inserted into silver sockets, let into the ground.

Ver. 33.—Thou shalt hang up the veil

under the *taches*. If the "*taches*" of ver. 6, or even of ver. 11, are intended, and "under" is to be taken strictly as "immediately under," the *mishkán* must have been divided by the veil into two equal, or very nearly equal parts; and the tabernacle must in an important particular have completely differed from the temple. In the temple the holy place was twice the length of the holy of holies (1 Kings vi. 16, 17). It is possible that "under" may be used vaguely, or that the "*taches*" of this verse are the "hooks" of ver. 32. **That thou mayest bring in.** Rather, "And thou shalt bring in." The clause is directive. **The most holy.** Literally, "the holy of holies"—the inner chamber, that within the veil, which constituted the *adytum*, or innermost recess of the tabernacle. The ark and the mercy-seat were the special furniture of this inner sanctuary. To these is added later (ch. xxx. 1—10) the altar of incense.

Ver. 35.—**The table** here is, of course, "the table of shew-bread" described in the preceding chapter (vers. 23—30), immediately after the mercy-seat. It was to be set "without the veil," in the holy place or outer chamber, against the north wall. **The candlestick** is the seven-branched lamp-stand de-

scribed in ch. xxv. 31—39. It was to be placed **over against the table**, and consequently on the south side (ch. xl. 24).

Vers. 36, 37.—*The entrance to the tent.*

Ver. 36.—**Thou shalt make a hanging.** A curtain which could draw up and down, seems to be intended. When let down, it probably covered the entire eastern side, or front of the tabernacle. When raised, it allowed the eye to penetrate into the holy place.

Ver. 37.—**Five pillars.** The central pillar was, no doubt, as Mr. Fergusson long ago pointed out, one of two tent-poles, which supported between them a ridge-pole, over which were thrown the coverings that formed the roof of the tent. Its height was probably fifteen cubits, so as to give a due slope to the roof. The two pillars nearest to the central one probably measured ten cubits, and stood in line with the two walls of the *mishkán*. The outer pair would then have a height of five cubits, and support the two extremities of the goats' hair covering. **Their hooks.** The hooks whereby the "hanging" was attached to the pillars. Compare ver. 32. **Sockets of brass**—i.e., of bronze. These were probably let into the ground, like the other sockets.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—37.—*The symbolism of the tabernacle structure.* I. That the HOLY OF HOLIES typified heaven itself is declared in the Epistle to the Hebrews (ch. ix. 7—12). In it were the forms of cherubim, representing the angelic choir, and between them was the manifestation of the presence of God himself. It was cut off from the rest of the sanctuary by the veil, which none was to lift save the High Priest once a year: "the Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all"—i.e., into heaven—"was not made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing" (*ib.* ver. 8).

II. **THE VEIL** thus typified and represented the separation between man and God—the awful barrier which shuts out from the Divine presence all, even the holiest, unless they have with them the blood of expiation, "that speaketh better things than that of Abel." The veil was covered with cherubic forms, reminding men of those watchers at the gate of Eden, who with "a flaming sword that turned every way, kept the way of the tree of life" (Gen. iii. 24). Men saw in the thick curtain that hid the holiest from view, that heaven was shut to them, unless a "new and living way" could be found, whereby they might enter. They had impressed upon them the awful holiness and inaccessibility of the Supreme Being, and their own unworthiness to approach him. They learnt that God had hidden himself from them, until some "better time," when the veil would be rent, and in and through their true High Priest, and through faith in his blood, they might "have boldness to enter into the holiest."

III. **The tabernacle outside the veil—THE HOLY PLACE**, as it was called—represented the church militant. Here was perpetual worship offered to the God behind the veil. Hither were all who had received the holy anointing, and so been made "priests to God" (Rev. i. 6) privileged to enter. Here was a perpetual thank-offering presented to God in the shew-bread that lay always upon the table. Here was illumination from the seven-fold lamp which typified the Holy Spirit (see above on "the symbolism of the candlestick"). The place was "all glorious within" (Ps. xlv. 13)—on the walls "clothing of wrought gold,"—above, a canopy of "fine twined linen, and blue and purple and scarlet, with cherubim of cunning work" interwoven into it—at either end a curtain of nearly similar materials. Those who looked on the tabernacle from

without saw the goats' hair, and the rams' skins, and seals' skins, and perceived in it no beauty that they should desire it. The beauty was revealed to those only who were within. So now, the Church is despised and vilified by those without, valued as it deserves only by those who dwell in it. Again, the structure seems weak, as does the structure of the Church to worldlings. A few boards, an awning, a curtain or two—what more frail and perishable! But, when all is "fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth" (Eph. iv. 16), when by a machinery of rings and bars, and tenons and solid sockets, and pillars and hooks, the whole is welded into one, under Divine direction and contrivance, the fragility disappears. "God's strength is made perfect in weakness." A structure is produced which continues, which withstands decay, which defies assaults from without, which outlasts others seemingly far stronger, and bids fair to remain when all else is shattered and destroyed. "Behold! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The tabernacle, frail as it was, lasted from the exodus until the time when Solomon expanded it into the temple. Our tabernacle, the Church, will endure until it shall please God to merge it in a new and wonderful creation—"the new Jerusalem" (Rev. xxi. 2, 10—27; xxii. 1—5).

IV. THE CURTAIN AT THE ENTRANCE symbolises the fact, that there is a division between the Church and the world. The curtain may be lifted at times; but the world has only glimpses of the real inner life of the Church, does not fully see it, does not comprehend it. The life consists in worship—in contemplation, prayer, and praise. The world "cares for none of these things." It may glance curiously at the external fabric, and scoff a little at the contrast between the homely goats' hair that shows itself in one part, and the "blue and purple and scarlet, and fine twined linen wrought with needlework" that is seen in another; it may be angered at the sight of "pillars overlaid with gold," and ask scornfully, "Wherefore this waste?" But it does not care to consider seriously the fitness of these things, or to weigh the reasons for them. The only interest which it feels is one arising from cupidity: the Church, it thinks, would be worth plundering; and it looks forward hopefully to the time when it will "divide the spoil."

V. The support of the entire fabric upon TENONS and SOCKETS indicates that the Church is detached from earth, has here no resting-place, no continuing abode, awaits removal to heaven. What is of the earth, is earthy. If the Church were of the earth, if it were a human institution, if it rested on human wisdom, or power, or affection, it would be swayed by human emotions; it would seek those things which are the main objects of human desire; it would cease to witness for God; it would be powerless to raise man above himself and fit him for the life which is to come. But the Church is not of man's building. Christ built it. It is his. He is its "chief corner-stone;" and therefore, "while it touches earth, it belongs altogether to heaven."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—37.—*Jehovah's dwelling.* Instructions are now given for the making of the "dwelling-place," of that sacred house or tent which was to be the special abode of Jehovah, and within which, when reared according to the fashion shown to Moses in the mount (ver. 30), the sacred articles described in the previous chapter were to be deposited. We need not encumber our homily with the minutiae of construction. It will suffice to direct attention to the general arrangement of parts, and to the costly and beautiful character of the erection as a whole. 1. *General arrangement.* The tabernacle may be described as a quadrangular enclosure of boards, sumptuously overlaid with gold, and fitted beneath into sockets of silver (vers. 15—30). Over this were placed (1) the tabernacle-cloth proper—a finely-woven double curtain of byssus, glowing all over with figures of cherubim, in blue, and purple, and scarlet (ver. 1). (2) A tent cloth of goats' hair (ver. 7). (3) Exterior coverings. These consisted of rams' skins dyed red, and of skins of seals (ver. 14). Loops and taches united the two divisions of the tabernacle and tent-cloths. The clasps in the one case were of gold (ver. 6), in the other of brass (ver. 11). Internally, four pillars supported a magnificent veil, also wrought in blue, and purple, and scarlet with figures of cherubim (vers. 31, 32). This

divided the sacred enclosure into two apartments, the outer, the holy place, and the inner, the holy of holies, the true dwelling of Jehovah. The division, as already seen, "corresponded to the design of the tabernacle, where Jehovah desired not to dwell alone by himself, but to come and meet with his people" (Keil). The holy of holies, accordingly, contained the ark; the holy place, the symbols of the vocation of the people. It was the place of the people's approach to God. Another curtain, "wrought with needlework," and, like the veil, suspended from pillars by hooks of gold, hung before the entrance in front. The pillars, in this case, were *five* in number (vers. 36, 37). For details, dimensions, and theories of arrangement, consult the exposition. No scheme yet propounded is entirely free from difficulties. The general measurements, and the mention of "pins" in ch. xxvii. 19, point strongly in the direction of a tent form such as that suggested by Mr. Fergusson (*Dict. of Bible, art. Temple*). A difficulty, on this theory, arises from the statement that the veil was to be hung "under the taches" (ver. 33). But the expression, "under the taches," may be used of a high-roofed structure with some degree of latitude, otherwise we must suppose that the veil originally divided the sanctuary into two apartments of equal size. 2. *Glory and beauty of the dwelling-place*. Within the limits of its dimensions, the tabernacle was really a place of great splendour—a costly and magnificent erection. We should err, however, in going much beyond the general effect to be produced in seeking for symbolical meanings. The shittim wood, the precious metals, the colours, the finely-embroidered linen fabrics, have significance only as adding to the beauty and richness of the place designed for Jehovah's abode. The end was, as far as possible, to rear a residence worthy of "the King of glory," or, from another point of view, to set forth, by the external splendour of the dwelling, the surpassing glory and magnificence of him who dwelt in it. Thus also was enhanced the idea of the singular honour enjoyed by those who were permitted to minister before him (see Fairbairn). The cherubic figures woven into the tabernacle drapery, point, if our interpretation of these figures is correct—to the host of angels who continually attend Jehovah, who are his willing servants in all that relates to his kingdom, who take so deep an interest in its progress, who furnish to his people a constant model of obedience (Matt. vi. 10), and who may be viewed as joining with them, in all their services, in the worship of their King. They are part of the heavenly community, to which, as citizens in God's kingdom, we belong (Heb. xii. 22). The chapter suggests the following general reflections:—1. Whatever glory or beauty the tabernacle possessed was derived ultimately from God. Man could but work up materials furnished to him by the Maker of all. So with the "beauties of holiness" in the Church. It is God who gives us of his grace, and who works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure (Phil. ii. 13). 2. The tabernacle, in another aspect of it, was a product of human art and skill. The plan was Divine; the materials were from God; but the workmanship was man's. It is a characteristic of the "spiritual house" which God is now building on earth, that it also is being reared by human agency, and that each individual has it in his power to contribute something to its beauty. Every holy life that is being lived is the weaving of a beautiful fabric for the adornment of this house. 3. God's condescension is seen in his *willingness* to dwell with Israel in this wilderness-made abode. Magnificent as it was, it was but a paltry abode to offer to the maker of heaven and earth—to the possessor of all things. Yet Jehovah did not spurn it. He sought an abode with men. His dwelling in the tabernacle was, in some aspects of it, a grander thing than his inhabitation of the infinities of space. It told of a God who does not spurn to enter into personal relations with his creatures. He will stoop as far as holiness permits, in his endeavour to reach them, and to lift them up to communion with himself. 4. The tabernacle, glorious as it was, was but the type of dwelling-places more glorious than itself. We have found the antitypes in the once abased, but now glorified, humanity of Christ; in the renewed heart of the believer; in the redeemed Church as a whole. God prefers the temple of the humble and contrite heart to the grandest building ever reared by hands of man (Is. lvii. 15).—J. O.

Vers. 1—37.—*The tabernacle itself*. Consider here—

I. GOD'S COMMANDMENT THAT A DWELLING-PLACE SHOULD BE PROVIDED FOR HIM. Against even the least degree of image-making there was a stern edict; and we might also

have expected that there would be equal sternness in forbidding the creation of aught in the shape of a holy house. For what on the face of it would seem more probable than this, that the erection of a holy house would be a strong inducement towards the fashioning of some visible representation of Deity? Thus we might conjecture; but our conjectures soon get swept away as we are made clearly to understand that it was a good thing for Israel that Jehovah their God, their guide, and their unfailing support, should have a dwelling-place in the midst of their dwelling-places. Such a dwelling-place was no necessity for him, but to the people it was a help so great, that it became a necessity; and so we see they were more than permitted, they were even commanded, to construct an enclosure which should be reckoned the house of God. When we want to find one of our fellow-men, we reckon that it is at his house we shall find him easiest; and just as it is possible, by going and making proper request at the palace-gates, to get a great favour from a king without even a momentary vision of his face, so an Israelite was to be taught that by going to the holy dwelling of Jehovah—whom no man had seen or could see—he might unquestionably secure Divine benefits. As there was a condescension in the new dispensation, so there was in the old. He who became to a certain extent circumscribed in the limits of a human body, only carried out into a more abiding and far-reaching mystery, the circumscribing which first became a fact at Sinai. He who has the heaven for his throne and the earth for his footstool, chose to make the narrow limits of the tabernacle his peculiar dwelling-place. He meant Israel to understand that he was there, as he was nowhere else.

II. THE PECULIAR FORM WHICH THIS DWELLING-PLACE ASSUMED. Even as the people dwelt in tents, easily set up and easily taken down, so God, in the midst of them, likewise dwelt in a tent. There was of course an elaboration and costliness about the tent of Jehovah, such as could not be found in the tents of even the noblest and wealthiest of the people; but still it was essentially a tent. A correspondence obtained between this tabernacle with all its splendid adornments which could not have obtained, if even the plainest of true buildings had taken its place. It is most needful for us to remember that the house of God in the midst of his people was not a building that had foundations. It was strictly suited to their wants. It was more suited to their immediate future than they themselves had any apprehension of; and we cannot but feel that for one thing, God had in view their forty years' wandering. They had not yet sinned the sin which led to this penalty; but that sin was before the mind of him who knew their expectations and their instability. Then it would appear also that God had nothing else than a tabernacle in view, even after his people secured each one their place in the lot of their temporal inheritance. It is not perhaps too much to say that the erection of the splendid temple which glorified Solomon's reign was no part of the Divine intent. God made the erection of that imposing mass to work in with his intent; but in the end it proved to have no more stability than the tabernacle which preceded it. Bear in mind what Jesus said of the temple which was standing in his time. His disciples in admiration pointed to the great stones which went to compose it; but Jesus in the discernment of his heart nevertheless was able to point out that not one stone should be left on another. The temple seemed more stable than the tabernacle; but it was only a seeming. Well-meaning men, not able to escape from carnal notions, may make God's house to take the temple-form, but God himself will take care that it has the tabernacle-reality. It is not in what we can make with our hands, be we ever so liberal, be we ever so diligent, that God can find a real abode. His real abode is in ourselves, in each of us who are holy and perfected individuals through our believing connection with Christ, and still more in the midst of his perfected people, joined together in the inexpressible, indestructible harmony of heaven.—Y.

Ver. 30.—“*God dwelleth not in temples made with hands.*” An idea, to be realised, must be embodied; e.g., thoughts must be expressed in words; the vision of the artist must take form on canvas or in marble. So, too, with the Divine ideas; they also must be embodied, and as presented for man's instruction, they must be so embodied that man may apprehend them. The unseen must be made visible; the pattern on the mount must be modelled and reared up upon the plain. Notice—

I. THE DIVINE IDEAL. Moses was shown the original Divine embodiment, not a mere toy model which he was to enlarge, but the actual God-fashioned tabernacle, in

all the perfection of its related parts. So far as man was concerned, it might be a purely ideal structure; but the ideals of earth are the realities of heaven. The holy of holies, and the holy place, and the outer court—all these must exist, or Moses could not have been shown them. May we not also discern dimly that reality which Moses saw? The holy of holies, where God's throne is set—heaven in its innermost recesses, screened off from earth by the blue sky-curtain, which no unaided eye can pierce. The holy place and the outer court, God's earthly sanctuary, his Church in this world, related on the one side to heaven, and on the other to the world around it; the visible heavens are, in some sort, an expression of this Divine idea, illuminated by the sun (cf. Ps. xix.), and with the earth—from man's standpoint—forming a kind of outer court. Even this true tabernacle (cf. Heb. viii. 2) is only an embodiment of the Divine idea; but then it is the Divine embodiment, the expression found for it by God himself.

II. THE HUMAN COPY. The divine ideal as divinely embodied is still beyond man's understanding; it needs to be translated for men into language with which they are familiar. The child must be spoken to as a child (Is. xxviii. 11), "with stammering lips and a feigned tongue." The tabernacle of nature expresses God's idea in polysyllables; the tabernacle which Moses reared translates it into easier language. Notice—1. *The holy of holies.* (1) The sanctity of the Divine dwelling-place emphasises the sanctity of its Divine inmate. "Clouds and darkness are round about him." "Holiness becometh his house for ever." (2) "Righteousness and judgment are the establishment of his throne;" it is founded upon a guarded law. (3) Mercy rejoiceth over judgment. God is just, or righteous, but also the justifier who makes righteous. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." 2. *The holy place.* God has made it possible for man to approach him. They who may not bear the presence may yet be admitted to the ante-chamber. The Church is the link between heaven and earth, as the high priest is the link between the Divine and human. Notice—(1) *The golden altar.* The fumes of the incense may penetrate the veil, which shuts out the priest who offers it. Prayer can go where the worshipper cannot go. (2) *The golden candlestick.* No lamp needed in the holiest place (cf. Rev. xxi. 23). Here, when man meets with God, for man's sake the lamp is needed. The light derived from God must be guarded by man, so only is the required illumination to be secured. (3) *The golden table.* Furnished week by week with food satisfying alike to God and man. Such the Church—a heaven on earth. Prayer ascending towards the unseen holy; light from God carefully guarded; offerings wherein God and man both find satisfaction—such are the notes of a true Church, one wherein man may have communion with his Maker, holy as preluding to the holy of holies. (4) *The outer court.* Here we have the first stage in man's progress from the world God-wards. The altar and the laver, sacrifice and purification, must come before communion. Consecration and cleansing precede intercourse and fellowship, and these again prepare for the beatific vision.

Conclusion.—What is the central thought thus shadowed forth? Is it not this:—God's holiness can only be approached step by step, whilst the road by which we must approach it is that which will ensure for us growth in holiness. "The pure in heart shall see God;" the beatific vision is for those only whose spiritual eyesight has been prepared for its reception. We cannot come up to the throne of God save through the outer court and through the sanctuary; sacrifice and cleansing, illumination and communion; then, for those who can receive it, the open vision and the presence of God.—G.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVII

VERB. 1-8.—THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING. From the description of the tabernacle, or sacred tent in which worship was to be offered by the priests, it followed in natural sequence, that directions should be given concerning the court, or precinct, within which the taber-

nacle was to stand. Ancient temples were almost universally surrounded by precincts, which the Greeks called *τεμένιον*, whereto a sacred character attached; and this was particularly the case in Egypt, where the *temenos* seems to have been a regular adjunct to the temple (Wilkinson in Rawlinson's *Herodotus*, vol. ii. p. 202, 2nd edition). Among the chief

uses of such an open space, was the offering of victims on altars, as these could not be conveniently consumed elsewhere than in the open air, on account of the clouds of smoke and the fumes of the sacrifices. As in the description of the tabernacle, the furniture was first described, then the structure, so now the altar takes precedence of the court which was to contain it.

Ver. 1.—Thou shalt make an altar. Rather, “the altar.” God had already declared that he would have an altar made to him in the place where he should “record his name” (ch. xx. 24). And, even apart from this, an altar would be regarded as so essential an element in Divine worship, that no place of worship could be without one. **Of shittim wood.** God had required (1 s. c.) that his altar should be “of earth,” or else of unhewn stones (ch. xx. 25). The command now given was to make, not so much an altar, as an altar-case (see ver. 8). There can be no doubt that Jarchi is right in supposing that, whenever the tabernacle for a time became stationary, the hollow case of the altar was filled up with earth, and that the victims were burnt upon this **Four-square.** Altars were commonly either square or round. An Assyrian triangular one was found by Mr. Layard at Nineveh; but even this had a round top. The square shape is the most usual, and was preserved, probably in all the Temple altars, certainly in those of Solomon (2 Chr. iv. 1) and Herod (Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* v. 5, § 6).

Ver. 2.—The horns of it. Literally, “its horns.” Horns were not usual adjuncts of altars; indeed they seem to have been peculiar to those of the Israelites. They were projections at the four top corners, probably not unlike the horns of bulls, whence their name. Criminals clung to them when they took sanctuary (1 K. i. 50; ii. 28); and the blood of sin-offerings was smeared upon them (ch. xxix. 12; Lev. viii. 15; ix. 9; xvi. 18, etc.). Victims also were sometimes, when about to be sacrificed, bound to them (Ps. cxviii. 27). According to Kalisch, “The horns were symbolical of power, of protection and help; and at the same time of glory and salvation.” **His horns shall be of the same.** Part and parcel of the altar, that is, not extraneous additions. **Thou shalt overlay it with brass.** A solid plating of bronze is no doubt intended, such as would protect the shittim wood and prevent it from being burnt.

Ver. 3.—His pans to receive his ashes. Literally, “to cleanse it from fat”—i.e., to receive what remained after burning the victims, which would be ashes mixed with a good deal of fat. **His shovels.** These would be used in removing the ashes from the altar, and depositing them in the pans. **His basins.**

Vessels for receiving the blood of the victims and from which it was poured on the altar. Compare ch. xxiv. 6. **His flesh hooks.** So the Septuagint, and our translators again in 1 Sam. ii. 13. They would seem by the latter passage to have been three-pronged forks, the proper use of which was, no doubt, to arrange the various pieces, into which the victim was cut, upon the altar. **His fire-pans.** The word used is generally translated “censers” (Lev. x. 1; xvi. 12; Num. iv. 14: xvi. 6, 17, etc.), but sometimes “snuff-dishes” (ch. xxv. 38; xxxvii. 23). It here perhaps designates the vessels used for carrying burning embers from the altar of burnt-offering, to the altar of incense on certain occasions (Lev. xvi. 12). Etymologically, it means simply “a receptacle.” **All the vessels thereof thou shalt make of brass.** Rather, “of bronze.” Bronze was the usual material of utensils and implements in Egypt (Birch, *Guide to British Museum*, pp. 13–21; 28, 29; 35–41; etc.). Copper was scarcely used without the alloy of tin which converts it into bronze; and brass was wholly unknown. A trace of iron is sometimes found in Egyptian bronze.

Ver. 4.—Thou shalt make for it a grate. Rather, “a grating.” This was probably a protection for the lower part of the altar, and prevented it from being touched by the feet of the ministrant priests. It was outside the altar, and had the rings attached to it, by which the altar was carried when the Israelites journeyed.

Ver. 5.—Thou shalt put it under the compass. The “compass” (*karkób*) is spoken of as if it were something well-known; yet it had not been previously mentioned. Etymologically the word should mean “a cincture” or “band” round the altar; and thus far critics are generally agreed. But its position, size, and object, are greatly disputed. Some hold that it was a broad bench, or step, on which the officiating priests stood at the time of a sacrifice, and that its position was about the middle of the altar. Others think that it was a mere border round the top, from which the net-work depended, and that the object of both was to catch anything that might fall from the altar. Others again, while placing it mid-way in the altar, regard it as a mere ornament, only projecting slightly, and forming a sort of finish to the net-work. This, which is the view of Knobel, seems to be, on the whole, the most probable one. **That the net may be even to the midst of the altar.** If the “compass” was at the top, the net must have extended thence to the middle. If it was mid-way in the altar, the net must have covered the lower half. To us this latter seems the more probable view. But the point is uncertain.

Ver. 6, 7.—Staves, or poles, were needed for the carriage of the altar from place to

place, as for the ark (ch. xxv. 13) and the table of shew-bread (*ib.* ver. 28). They were to be inserted into the rings mentioned in ver. 4. As the altar was of bronze, so the rings were to be of bronze, and the staves overlaid with bronze. There is a gradual descent in the preciousness of the materials from the holy of holies to the holy place, and from that to the court

Ver. 8.—**Hollow with boards shalt thou make it.** See the comment on ver. 1. The term here used for “boards,” (which is different from that in ch. xxvi. 15—29) implies strength and solidity. **As it was showed thee in the mount.** Compare ch. xxvi. 30, with the comment *ad loc*

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—8.—*The symbolism of the brazen altar.* The noticeable points of this altar are its position, material, ornaments, and purpose or use.

I. ITS POSITION. (1) It was without the sanctuary, in the open court beyond; (2) under the canopy of heaven; (3) directly in front of the sanctuary, and so of the ark and the mercy-seat. (1) It was without the sanctuary, that none might venture inside the holy structure, and so draw nigh to God without passing it, and obtaining from it the purification which it could confer. Even if the priests on the way to the tabernacle did not always stop at the altar to offer a victim as a sacrifice, they would have the thought of the need of expiation brought home to them by the sight of it, and might as they passed propitiate the Most High by the offering of a prayer. The position of the altar taught that man's *first* need is to have his sins and impurities purged away; and that until this is done, he must not presume to worship God, or enter into his presence, or offer the sacrifice of praise, or mingle in the company of those who form “the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven.” (2) It was under the open canopy of heaven, visible to all, accessible to all, for all Israel might enter the court; thereby teaching, that the necessary purification was intended by God to be open to all, and that his eye looked down from heaven with favour upon all who desired to be purged from their impurities, and were willing to accept the appointed mode of purging. (3) It was directly in front of the sanctuary, and so of the ark and the mercy-seat. By this position it pointed to them, led the eye towards them, reminded men of them. With God, in the holy of holies, was at once justice, and also mercy—the law and the mercy-seat. Here, at the altar, was the place where the two could be reconciled, where “mercy and truth might meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other.” Here was to be begun that purging, both of the nation and of individuals, which was only complete when once in the year the high priest entered into the holiest, with the blood of the sin-offerings, and sprinkled it on the horns of the altar that was within the veil (ch. xxx. 10), and “on the mercy-seat eastward” (Lev. xvi. 14), so atoning both for himself and for the sins of the people (Heb. ix. 7).

II. ITS MATERIAL. The material was (1) shittim or acacia wood; (2) bronze; and (3) earth; the earth alone constituting the true altar (ch. xx. 24), and the wood and metal a casing, by means of which the earth was kept together. (1) Shittim, or acacia, the most incorruptible of woods, typified the purity required in all that is set apart for God. (2) Bronze, the metal most common in the use of the time, indicated that the altar was for every-day employment by the mass of the people (Lev. i.—vii.). (3) Earth, pure fragrant mould, that of which man was formed at the first (Gen. ii. 7), and into which he is resolved at the last (Gen. iii. 19), may well have represented Humanity; so that in the altar, which God had required to be made of earth (Ex. xx. 24), he saw Humanity making its offerings to him,—peace-offerings in thankfulness for his mercies, sin-offerings in deprecation of his anger, burnt-offerings in complete dedication of the whole being to his service. Or the mould may primarily have represented this earth, on which we live, whereof it is the essence as being the life-sustaining portion, and only secondarily man, for whom the earth was brought into existence, and of which he is the master.

III. ITS ORNAMENTS. These were, (1) perhaps, its cincture; (2) certainly, its horns. (1) The cincture, or “compass” (ver. 5), if it was wholly for ornament, may simply have indicated the propriety of adorning and beautifying everything which is brought

into the service of the sanctuary. Without some wreath, or moulding, where the grating began, the altar would have had a bare and unfinished look. It would have been wanting in elegance and beauty. The pattern shown to Moses in the mount did not allow of this. It left nothing bare, unsightly, inelegant, out of taste. God chose to be worshipped "in the *beauty* of holiness." It is easy to disparage beauty; and certainly beauty alone, not accompanied by purity and goodness, is worthless, vain, trivial. But, as men desire beauty in their own houses, furniture, utensils, vessels, implements, so natural piety leads them to desire even greater beauty for the houses, vessels, etc., used in the service of God. "The house," said David, "that is to be builded for the Lord, *must be exceedingly magnificent*" (1 Chron. xxii. 5). And congruity requires that, if a house be magnificent, all its contents, down to the meanest vessel, should possess some beauty; otherwise, the law of harmony is broken—a discord manifests itself. (2) The horns at the four corners, uprearing themselves to heaven, and showing conspicuously, as symbols of power and strength, spoke of the God to whom the altar was reared, and indicated his ability to help, protect, and succour his worshippers. But there was also a human side to their symbolism. They further indicated the victory which man gains over death and Satan by means of expiation, the height to which he is exalted when the atonement made for him cleanses him from all sin. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

IV. ITS PURPOSE. We have assumed throughout that the purpose of the altar—its main purpose—was expiation. Its proper title was "the altar of burnt-offering." All offerings, except those which the high priest offered at the altar of incense in the holy of holies, were to be made at this brazen altar before the door of the tabernacle. Hither were the Israelites to bring alike their peace or thank-offerings, their burnt-offerings, and their sin-offerings. Expiation was the sole idea of the last of these, and a main idea of the second; it was absent only from the first. Thus it was the predominant idea of sacrifice. The altar witnessed to the guilt of man in God's sight, and the need of an atonement being made for him before he could be reconciled to "the High and Holy One." It witnessed also to God's eternal purpose, that a way of reconciliation should be devised, and made known to man, and that thus it should be put into his power to make his peace with God. The true victim was not indeed as yet offered. Bulls and goats, lambs and rams, could never of themselves, or of their own proper force, sanctify the unclean or take away sin. It was only by virtue of the death which their sacrifice prefigured, that they had any atoning force, or could be accepted by God as expiatory. Each victim represented Christ—the one and only sacrifice for sin which could propitiate the Father. And the altar therefore represented and typified the cross on which Christ died, offering himself thereon to the Father as both priest and victim. Shape and material were different, and the mode of death was different; but each was the material substance on which the atoning victim died, each was stained with the atoning blood; and each was unspeakably precious to the trembling penitent who felt his need of pardon, and, if possible, even more precious to him who knew that atonement had thereon been made for him, and felt his pardon sealed. No true Israelite would sacrifice on any altar but that of the sanctuary. No true Christian will look for pardon and atonement anywhere but to the cross of Christ, and to him who on that altar gave his life for man.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS

Vers. 1-21.—*The tabernacle and its teachings.* I. THE ALTAR OF SACRIFICE. 1. The situation of the altar. (1) It faced the worshipper as he entered. The cross of Christ must be held up before men, if they are to be brought nigh to God. (2) It stood before the holy place, and had to be passed by all who entered there. The realisation of Christ's atonement for sin is the only path to God's presence. 2. The altar, on which the sacrifice for sin is laid, is the place of power. The horns, the symbol of Divine power. The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation. 3. In Christ God gives us a place for accepted offerings. The altar was Israel's as well as God's: upon it were laid their

offerings as well as those prescribed for the daily service and the great day of atonement. In Christ we are able to offer sacrifices that are well pleasing to God.

II. THE COURT OF THE TABERNACLE. 1. Its limits were appointed by God himself. The Church must be made no broader than his commandment makes it. In his own time he will make it conterminous with the world; but meanwhile we must obey his commandment and fulfil his purpose by making it conterminous with living faith. 2. It was for all Israel. Living faith in Christ should be a passport to all his churches. 3. How the court was formed—(1) Its walls were made of fine linen. The distinction between the world and the Church is righteousness. (2) The gate was formed of blue and purple and scarlet. Entrance is had not by man's righteousness, but by bowing beneath the manifested grace of God in Christ.

III. THE OIL FOR THE LAMPS. 1. It was the free-will offering of the people. The light of the world springs from the consecration of believers. 2. It was to be pure. Believers must keep themselves unspotted from the world. 3. It was to be beaten, not pressed, and thus be the finest which the olive could yield. The highest outcome of humanity is the Christ-like life. 4. The lamps were to burn always. Our light, the flame of love, must burn constantly before God, and its radiance be shed always before men. 5. The lamps were to be tended by the ministers of God. The aim of those who labour in word and doctrine should be the development of Christ-like life, love to God and man.—U.

EXPOSITION.

Ver. 9—18.—THE COURT BEFORE THE TABERNACLE. The description of the altar is (as already observed) naturally followed by that of the court which was to contain it, and in which it was to be the most conspicuous object. This is given with great clearness in ten verses, and presents scarcely any problem for solution. The court was an oblong square, three hundred feet in length and seventy-five in breadth. It was enclosed by curtains, hung on sixty pillars, placed at intervals of seven feet and a half apart. The pillars were connected by rods, and each of them fitted into a socket. There was but one entrance, which was at the eastern side, midway in it. It was thirty feet wide, and had its own curtains and its own pillars. These curtains were of similar material with those at the entrance to the tabernacle, but the hangings round the rest of the court were merely of fine white linen.

Ver. 9.—*Thou shalt make the court.* Rather, "a court." For the south side southward. Rather, "For the south side, upon the right." Compare the comment on ch. xxvi. 18. *Hangings.* The word used is a rare one in this sense, quite different from those which have been employed for "curtains" or "hangings" previously (ch. xxvi. 1, 7, 36). The LXX. translate by *iota* "sails;" and the Jewish commentators believe a loosely woven sail-cloth to be intended. *Fine twined linen.* See the comment on ch. xxvi. 1.

Ver. 10.—*And the twenty pillars thereof,* etc. Literally, "And its pillars, twenty (in

number), and their sockets, twenty (in number, shall be) of bronza." The hooks of the pillars are loops whereto the curtains were to be attached. See ch. xxvi. 32. Their fillets It is now generally agreed that the word used designates "connecting rods," which joined the pillars at the top, and probably helped to support the "hangings." These, and the "hooks," were of solid silver.

Ver. 11.—The north side of the court is to be exactly similar to the south in all respects.

Ver. 12.—The west side is also to be similar, except that it is to be half the length, fifty cubits—and, therefore, requires only half the number of pillars and sockets.

Ver. 13.—The breadth of the court on the east side eastward. Rather, "in front toward the east." The Rabbinical tradition was that Adam found himself on his creation fronting towards the east, and had consequently the south on his right, the north on his left, and the west behind him. Hence, they said, the four cardinal points received the names of *kedem*, "in front" (the east); *yámin*, "the right hand" (the south); *akhór*, "behind" (the west); and *shemól*, "the left hand" (the north). For this use of all four words, see Job xxxiii. 8, 9.

Ver. 14.—The hangings of one side. Literally, "of one shoulder." The two extreme parts of the east side, between the entrance (ver. 16) and the corners are thus named. They were to extend on either side a distance of fifteen cubits, and to have their curtains suspended to four pillars, one of them being the corner pillar, which is not counted. Hence the pillars are said to be three

Ver. 16.—For the gate. The word used is

the common one for "gate;" but here it rather signifies "entrance." Strictly speaking, there was no "gate;" the worshippers entered by drawing aside the curtain. This was a **hanging** of similar material, colours, and workmanship to that which hung in front of the tabernacle (ch. xxvi. 36). By its contrast with the white linen screen which surrounded the rest of the court, it would show very clearly where men were to enter.

Ver. 17.—**Filleted with silver.** Rather, "joined by silver rods." See the comment on ver. 10. They were also to have their capitals overlaid with silver (ch. xxxviii. 17).

Ver. 18.—**The length and the breadth** of the court had been already implied in what had been said of the external screen-work, or "hangings" (vers. 9 and 12). What the verse adds is the height of the pillars, which was five cubits, or seven feet six inches.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 9—18.—*The Court of the Tabernacle.* I. **THE USE OF THE COURT.** The court was primarily a precinct inclosing the sacred structure, and preserving it from contact with the roughnesses of the rude world without. It formed a sort of vestibule to the tent-temple, which awoke solemn thoughts, and gave men time to put away secular considerations, and attune their minds to the Divine harmonies, before entering the house itself, which contained the manifestation of the Divine presence. God must be approached with preparation, humbly, reverently, tremblingly. The court at once preserved the sacred structure from accidental or intentional profanation, and helped to prepare the priests for the duties of their office. Secondly, the court was the place of sacrifice. It contained the brazen altar, whither all Israel was to bring their gifts. Here were offered, at once all the stated sacrifices, daily, or weekly, or monthly, or yearly, and all the irregular and voluntary offerings which the piety of the Israelites induced them to bring in. The smoke of victims continually ascended from it to heaven. Here was the place for expiation—for thankfulness—for self-dedication to the service of God.

II. **THE PERSONS ENTITLED TO HAVE THE USE OF IT.** These were all Israel—young and old, rich and poor, great and small, priests and laymen. Into the holy of holies none but the high priest, into the holy place none but the priests might enter. But the court was common to the priesthood with the laity. Hither came, to "the door of the tabernacle of the congregation," every pious Israelite who was minded to offer a sacrifice of any kind—whose heart swelled with gratitude for mercies received, and who therefore brought a "thank-offering"—whose soul was weighed down with the sense of sin, and who sought relief by the sacrifice of a "sin-offering"—whose awakened spirit told him that unless the soul wholly rests on God there is no peace for it, and who, as a sign of absolute self-dedication, came to offer a "burnt-offering." Hither came many a man, and many a woman, like Hannah (1 Sam. i. 7—11), in sore trouble, and offered to the Lord Almighty their vows. Whatever may have been the practice with respect to the temple, while the tabernacle endured, the whole congregation had free access to it. Here they felt themselves to be that "kingdom of priests"—that "holy nation"—which God had declared that they should be (ch. xix. 6). Here they realised, at any rate to some extent, that blessing which is among the greatest of the Christian's privileges—the right to "come boldly to the throne of grace" (Heb. iv. 16)—to "draw near to God," without an earthly mediator, "in full assurance of faith" (ib. x. 22)—to "cast all our care upon him"—to have direct communion with him—to speak with him, "as a man speaks with his friend."

III. **THE POSITION OF THE COURT WITH RESPECT TO THE REST OF THE TABERNACLE.** There was clearly a gradation in holiness. The inner shrine had a sanctity peculiar to itself, expressed by the very name, "holy of holies." Here was the greatest beauty and the greatest magnificence. Walls entirely of gold, curtains of cunning work, interwoven with the graceful forms of cherubim, furniture all covered with gold, golden cherubs of beaten work upon the mercy-seat—above all, the glory of God showing in the space between these figures. A lesser degree of sanctity belonged to the outer chamber—"the holy place;" and this was indicated by inferior richness and magnificence. Though gold was still the metal chiefly used, silver, and even bronze (ch. xxvi. 37), were introduced. The outer curtain was not wrought with cherubim (ver. 36). The change was even greater between the "holy place" and the court. In the court was no gold, but only silver and bronze. The "hangings" were for the most part plain. Only

at the entrance did the eye rest upon the mingled glory of blue and purple and scarlet, and upon the cunning work of embroidery. The furniture and utensils were of bronze only. Again, the gradation was marked by the law of admission: into the court, all the congregation; into the "holy place," the priests only; into the "holy of holies," none but the high priest. And thus it will be always, as we are nearer to God or further from him. If we dwell only in his courts, on the outer verge of his kingdom, we must be content with the bronze and plain linen of bare acceptance; we must not expect favour, glory, beauty. If, on the other hand, we press forward from his courts into his sanctuary; if we strive ever to advance in holiness, then he has better things in store for us. "For brass he will give gold" (Is. lx. 17), for acceptance, approval—for mere pardon, communion and fellowship; and to such as press into the inner shrine, with the "boldness" that is now legitimate (Heb. x. 19), he will reveal himself in the full splendour of his majesty, and in the perfect glow of his love.

EXPOSITION.

Ver 19.—THE VESSELS OF THE TABERNACLE. There were many "vessels of the tabernacle" which have not hitherto been mentioned, as the great laver in the court (ch. xxx. 18; xl. 30) with the basins for washing which must have belonged to it; the pins or pegs whereby the various curtains were extended and supported; and probably much sacrificial apparatus besides what is enumerated in ver. 3. All these were to be of bronze, the commonest metal of the time, but one very suitable for the various purposes, being, as the Egyptians manufactured it, of great hardness, yet exceedingly ductile and ready to take all shapes. Its usefulness and convenience caused it to retain its place, even in the gorgeous and "magnificent" temple of Solomon (1 Chron. xxix. 2, 7), where it was employed for the two great pillars, Jachin and Boaz, for the

great laver or "brazen sea," for the smaller lavers upon wheels, for the pots, the shovels, the basins, the snuffers, the spoons, and many other sacred vessels (1 Kings vii. 15—45; 2 Kings xxv. 13, 14). Though "common," it was never reckoned "unclean," or less fitted for the service of the sanctuary than silver or gold. It had, however, its own proper place, an inferior place to that held by the more precious metals.

Ver. 19.—All the pins thereof. The "pins" of the tabernacle are undoubtedly the pegs or tent-pins, whereby the tent-cloth wherewith it was covered was extended and kept taut. There were also probably similar pegs or pins for cords used to keep the "pillars" (ch. xxvi. 37) or tent-poles in place. The pins of the court supported in the same way the pillars of the court (vers. 10—15).

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 19.—*The value in God's sight of what is common and homely.* God does not despise anything that he has made. "His mercy is over all his works" (Ps. cxlv. 9). Each of them has its fit and proper place. Each one of them is needed in his universe. Much less does he despise any of his human creatures. He has seen fit to gift them variously, to make some of gold, some of silver, and some of brass, some to honour, and some to comparative dishonour; but for all he has a use. No intellect is too homely, no nature too rude and unrefined to find a place *somewhere* in his Church where it can do him service, and even perhaps do it better than a more refined and more highly gifted nature. Difference, gradation, variety, is the law of his universe. "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory" (1 Cor. xv. 41). In the angelic hierarchy there are angels and archangels, principalities, and powers; in the Church triumphant there are grades—princes who sit on thrones, judges of tribes, rulers over ten cities, rulers over five cities, and a "great multitude" who have no authority, but are simply "saints." And so it is, and must ever be, in the Church militant. "There are diversities of gifts," higher and lower natures, minds of extraordinary power, and dull, homely intellects. But all have their use; for all there is room; and God values each. God will have

none despised. The brazen vessels of the outer court—ash-pans and basins, and flesh-hooks, and fire-pans, and tent-pins—were as much needed for the tabernacle and its service, as the silver sockets and rods, or the golden taches, and rings, and snuff-dishes. Bronze is more suitable for many purposes than gold; and ordinary human nature can do God's work better in many positions than great gifts or extraordinary intellect.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 20, 21.—THE OIL FOR THE LAMP. It has been observed that this paragraph is somewhat out of place. It would more appropriately, according to human ideas, have terminated ch. xxv. But "God's ways are not as man's ways, nor his thoughts as man's thoughts." It is frequently difficult—sometimes impossible—for the keenest human intellect to trace the connecting links between one portion of God's word and the next. In such cases it is best not to speculate on the nature of the connection, but to content ourselves with laying to heart the lesson which each portion teaches separately.

Ver. 20.—Thou shalt command. Compare ch. xxv. 6, where the general command had been given. Here certain additions are made as to the quality of the oil which was to be brought. The oil was to be pure olive oil beaten—that is to say, it was to be olive oil purified from any admixture of that watery juice which the Romans called *amurea*; and it was to be of the kind which is obtained by mere beating or pounding in a mortar, and not by crushing in a mill. Oil of this kind, which is usually made from the unripe fruit, is reckoned much the best; it is clear and colourless, and gives a bright pure light with little smoke. To cause the lamp to burn always. It has been supposed from this expression that the lamp must have been kept constantly burning both day and night; and Josephus declares that this was actually so, at least with three out of the seven lights (*Ant. Jud.* iii. 7, § 7). But there are several places in Scripture which state, or imply, the contrary. (See especially Ex. xxx. 8; and 1 Sam. iii. 3.) It seems to have been the

duty of the high-priest to light the lamps every evening, and to give them a sufficient supply of oil to last till daybreak, at which time "the lamp of God went out" (1 Sam. i. s. c.) The supposition that "one light at least was always burning" (Kalisch), because no daylight could penetrate into the structure through the *fourfold* covering, ignores the fact that light would enter through the *single* curtain at the entrance, as well as the probability that some portion of that curtain may generally have been looped up. If we regard the lamp as extinguished during the daytime, we must understand "always" here to mean "regularly every night."

Ver. 21.—The tabernacle of the congregation. Rather, "the tent of meeting"—the tent where God would meet the earthly ruler of the people (ch. xxv. 22), and give him commands and directions—not the place of meeting for the people themselves, who might in no case go beyond the entrance to the structure. **The testimony**—i.e., the ark which contained the "testimony," or two tables of stone written with the finger of God. **Aaron and his sons.** Compare ch. xxiv. 1. The intention to confer the priesthood on the descendants of Aaron, first openly revealed in the next chapter (vers. 1—43), is tacitly assumed from time to time in the earlier narrative. **Shall order it from evening to morning.** See the comment on ver. 20. It is difficult to assign these words any distinct meaning unless we accept the view, that the lamp burnt during the night only. **It shall be a statute for ever.** This expression is not at all common. In Exodus it occurs only here and in four other places. In Leviticus it is met with some six or seven times. The portions of the law thus characterised must be regarded as of special importance. (See the homiletics on this verse.)

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 20, 21.—Oil for the lamp. I. THE PEOPLE'S DUTY. (1) The people were to bring the oil regularly—to attend to what may have seemed to them a little matter, but what was in God's sight of such importance that he made it "a statute for ever"—and to attend to it with such regularity that oil should never be lacking. (2) They were to bring of their best. The oil was to be from the olive—not from the sesamé plant, or the castor-oil plant, or the *Raphanus olifer*, or from any vegetable which furnished oil of a coarse kind. It was to be "pure," not adulterated, as oils often were in Egypt (Plin. *H. N.* xiii. 1), and not mixed with the *amurea*, or watery juice of the olive, which made

it unfit for burning. Next, it was to be "beaten oil"—oil made with extra trouble by careful pounding with the hand, instead of rough mechanical crushing in mills.

II. **THE PRIESTS' DUTY.** The priests were perpetually to trim and tend the lamps. Daily, at even, they were to light them; daily, in the morning, they were to extinguish them, if any were still alight; to trim the wicks; to cleanse the bowls which held the oil; and to replenish them with a proper supply. They were to take every care that a pure light was constantly maintained night after night, so that the house of God should never be dark, or even obscure, but be ever ready for worship, ever illumined, ever prepared for any visitation of its Lord, who might come at the third, or the sixth, or the ninth, or the twelfth hour. It does not appear that there were any night services in the tabernacle; but the lighted lamp was a testimony that the Church continued ever on the watch, strove ever to be "the light of the world" (Matt. v. 14)—like the wise virgins, "kept its lamp burning." And this is the duty of ministers at all times. The Christian ministry must take care that the light of the Church shines pure and bright continually—that nothing dims it—that it glows ever as a beacon light, a guide and a help amid the storms and tempests of the world. If the people do not bring a due supply of oil—i.e., of loving, faithful service—the Church must suffer, its light be dimmed. If the people do their duty, and the ministers fail, if they are careless, or slothful, or self-seeking, or worldly, or wanting in faith, the result is the same—the flame flickers; the light sinks and threatens to go out; gross darkness settles down upon the people. A Church in this condition must expect to have its candlestick removed, unless it repents, and bestirs itself, and turns to God, and "does the first works" (Rev. ii. 5), and "strengthens the things that remain and are ready to die" (ib. iii. 2).

III. **THE TRUE LIGHT.** After all, let ministers and people be as faithful as they will, let them "keep their lamps burning," and cause "their light to shine before men" ever so brightly, still they are not, they will never be, "the true light." Christ is "the true light"—"the light that shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not"—"the light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John i. 4—9). In him are hid "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"—nothing needful for man to know but he has taught it—nothing expedient for man to see but he has revealed it. "His word is a lantern unto our feet, and a light unto our paths." He is both an outward and an inward light. His gospel illumines the world without—penetrates its dark places, exposes its unholy doings, throws a flood of light upon the past, makes plain to us the ways of God with man. And his Spirit illumines the soul within, quickens and guides the conscience, makes our own way plain before our face, "enables with perpetual light the dulness of our blinded sight." He is the only true "light of the world"—the light which will endure throughout all time—the one Teacher who cannot deceive—the one Guide who cannot lead astray! And he is the light of the world to come. "In him is the well of life; and in his light shall we see light" (Ps. xxi. 9). The "holy city, New Jerusalem," has therefore "no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it," because "the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—20.—The brazen altar and court of the tabernacle. From the sanctuary, we pass in this chapter to the outer court, the principal object in which was the brazen altar, or altar of burnt offering.

I. **THE BRAZEN ALTAR** (vers. 1—9). 1. *Form of the altar.* The altar was a four-square case of shittim wood, five cubits long and five broad, made with four horns, and overlaid with plates of bronze. Round it, at some distance from the ground, was apparently a ledge, on which the priests stood when engaged with the sacrifices. We must suppose that the central part was filled with earth, or with the unhewn stones commanded in ch. xx. 24, 25. The "grate of network" of ver. 4, seems to us to have supported the ledge, or compass of ver. 5. Some take a different view of it. 2. *Its horns.* These are rightly understood as the points in which the force or virtue of the altar concentrated itself. 3. *Its uses.* It was—(1) the place to which the people brought their offerings to God; (2) the place at which reconciliation was made for sin; (3) the place on which the parts of the sacrifices which belonged to God were consumed by fire. Here, at the altar, were

the victims slain; around the altar the atoning blood was poured or sprinkled; in the case of the sin offering, the blood was smeared upon the horns: with live coals from the altar did the priest replenish his censer when he went in to burn incense before the Lord. On this altar was laid the daily burnt-offering, together with the "sacrifices of righteousness," "the burnt-offering, and whole burnt-offering" (Ps. li. 19), by which the people expressed their consecration to God. Here were consumed the fat and choice parts of the peace-offerings, etc. 4. *Its typical significance.* (1) The altar, as the place of atonement, reminded the worshipper of sin, and of his need of cleansing from sin's guilt. In this way, it pointed forward to Christ, in whom the whole ritual of sacrifice reaches its consummation. (2) As the altar of burnt-offering, it taught the duty of unconditional and entire surrender to the will of God. This offering up of the whole being to God in inward consecration underlies the special acts of consecration symbolised in the shew-bread, in the lighted candlestick, and in the ascent of incense from the golden altar. (3) As God's altar, it was a witness to the Divine readiness to pardon; yet a testimony to the stern truth that without shedding of blood there is no remission (Heb. ix. 22).

II. THE COURT OF THE TABERNACLE (vers. 9—20). On the general construction of the court, see the exposition. We have to view it as a spacious enclosure of a hundred cubits by fifty, its sides formed by linen hangings, five cubits in height, and supported by pillars of brass (bronze) five cubits apart, to which the hangings were attached by hooks and fillets of silver. The brazen altar stood in the forepart of the court; the tabernacle towards the rear. Between the brazen altar and the tabernacle was the laver. The design of this court was to furnish the people, who were precluded from entering the sanctuary, with a place in which they might still, though at some distance, personally appear before Jehovah. The court conferred a privilege, yet taught a lesson. The fact that he could approach no further than its precincts painfully reminded the Israelite that, as yet, the work of atonement was incomplete—that he still stood, because of his unholiness, at a great distance from God. In the gospel of Christ, these barriers are all done away with.—J. O.

Vers. 20, 21.—*The burning lamp.* God's care for his sanctuary descends even to so small a matter as the replenishing and trimming of its lamps. Note—1. The *end* of the ordinance. God desires that the light obtained from the lamps in his sanctuary be—(1) pure, (2) bright, (3) constant. The best light possible. Such should be the light of the Christian life. 2. The *means* to this end. (1) The lamps were to be fed with the *best* and *purest* oil. The Holy Spirit. (2) The lamps were to be duly trimmed and ordered. Watchfulness, care. The light needs to be attended to.—J. O.

Vers. 20, 21.—*The oil for the lamp.* A special commandment was given that the oil should be pure and rich:—

I. THAT THERE MIGHT BE A DUE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE LIGHT AND THE GLORY OF THE CANDLESTICK. The candlestick was composed of the most precious of all metals, and it had been fashioned by the hands of an artist Divinely chosen and inspired. Great, therefore, would have been the incongruity, if any but the steadiest and most brilliant light had shone forth from this candlestick. Indeed the provision of the very best material might seem to have been self-suggested and to require no commandment at all, did we not know how forgetful, how inconsiderate human nature is. Man needs to be kept up to the mark by sharp and frequent admonitions; else he will keep the best for himself, and let anything be put forward for such a mere formality as too often he reckons the service of God to be. Still it surely would not require much thought to perceive how disgraceful a dim light would be in connection with such a glorious fabric as the candlestick presented. But there is a more glorious fabric far than this candlestick, if we only consider each human life that comes into this world; if we only consider the riches and strength that are in each one of us by natural constitution. There is something very glorious about the natural life of man, in spite of its depravity, its miseries and its mortality; and God has given us the opportunity of still further glorifying our natural life in this world by offering to make us supports such as may aid in sustaining and diffusing the light he would shed abroad amongst men. When God puts his gospel into the charge of human beings he calls

attention to the peculiar glory and eminence of our nature. The more faithful his servants have been to the gospel charge put into their hands, the more they have revealed how vile a thing humanity is. God wishes us in all our connection with him to be worthy of our humanity, and to keep ever in our thoughts the gulf that divides us from even the highest of the brutes. Man is never more truly human, never more fully an exponent of the peculiarities of his nature than when he is doing his best to reveal the saving light of God to men. The Christian, no matter what he may lack in such endowments as the world values, is the best kind of man; and the better Christian he becomes, the higher he stands in that best kind wherein he is already numbered.

II. THAT THERE MIGHT BE A DUE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE LIGHT AND THE GLORY OF THE MOST HOLY PLACE. From between the cherubim within the veil God shone forth when it was so required with a glory and impressiveness which no light of human invention could rival. But outside the veil the seven-branched candlestick was ever to be lighted in the night-time to symbolise the glorious illumination which came from Jehovah himself. How important, therefore, that the light should be the very best which man could afford! Nowhere in all the tents of Israel was there to be a brighter light than that which shone in the holy place. A symbol was needed of such light, instruction and wisdom, as are not to be found in the most sagacious and experienced of men, advising simply upon the grounds of human sagacity and experience. When we look at a Christian we must be able to look at one whose light, while it does not fail in a certain sense to glorify himself, glorifies still more his Father who is in heaven. Every Christian is meant to live so as to arrest the attention of men, and make them ask whence comes the power to inspire him with such remarkable motives and make him the agent of such remarkable effects. Whereas the humiliating confession is to be made that most Christian lives are lived on such a low level that one is led to ask "Is this all?" We read of remarkable manifestations and approaches of the Divine in the way of an incarnate Son of God, a resurrection of the dead, a descent into the Church of a life-giving and transforming Spirit, so that all believers may become new creatures in Christ Jesus; and then, when we look at these professed new creatures, and see how much remains unchanged, inveterate as ever, we ask "Is this all the product of Christ's appearance on the earthly scene?" It is a dreadful reproach that we should let our inconsistency and infirmity be made an excuse for unbelievers to mock at God. We ought to be so under Divine influences, as to combine in one the bright candlestick and the pure, rich oil; and then from us there might shine forth in a pure inviting radiance, a light such as would guide, and cheer while it guided, many a wanderer to God.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Vers. 1—12.—THE HOLY GARMENTS. The special object of the present chapter is to prescribe the form, materials, colour, etc., of the holy garments—or the attire of those who were to minister in the tabernacle at the time of their ministration. As the service of the tabernacle was about to be committed to Aaron and his sons, their selection for this office is mentioned in verse 1, and their investiture and consecration briefly touched in verse 41. Otherwise the whole chapter is concerned with the attire. That of Aaron is first prescribed (vers. 4—39). It consists of an ephod (vers. 6—12); a breastplate (vers. 13—30); a robe (vers. 31—35); a mitre (vers. 36—38); a coat, or tunic; and a

girdle (ver. 39). The dress of his sons follows. It comprises drawers (ver. 42), tunics, girdles, and caps or turbans (ver. 40). Incidentally it is mentioned in verse 43, that drawers are also to be worn by Aaron; and, in conclusion, the neglect of this ordinance in the case of either Aaron or his sons is forbidden under penalty of death.

Ver. 1.—*Take thou unto thee.* Literally, "Make to draw near to thee." Moses had hitherto been of all the people the one nearest to God, the medium of communication. He was now to abdicate a portion of his functions, transferring them to his brother and his brother's sons. By this act he would draw them nearer to him than they were before. It is worthy of remark that he makes no remonstrance or opposition, but carries out God's will in this matter as readily and

willingly as in all others. (See Lev. viii. 4-80.) From among the children of Israel. The LXX. read "And from among the children of Israel," as if others besides the family of Aaron had been admitted to the priesthood. But this is contrary to the entire tenor of the later narrative. The existing Hebrew text is correct. Nadab and Abihu, and again, Eleazar and Ithamar, are always coupled together in the Pentateuch (ch. vi. 23; xxiv. 1; Lev. x. 1, 12; etc.), while a marked division is made between the two pairs of brothers. It is probably the sin and early death of the two elder (Lev. x. 1-2) that causes the separation. Of Ithamar after the death of his brothers, nothing is known. Eleazar became high priest (Num. xxxiv. 17; Josh. xiv. 1; xvi. 4; etc.).

Ver. 2.—**Holy garments** have provoked an extreme aversion and an extreme affection at different periods of the world's history. In Moses' time probably no one thought of raising any objection to them. Priestly dresses of many different kinds were worn in Egypt, and some costume other than that of ordinary life, was probably affected by the priest class of every nation. Without entering into any elaborate "philosophy of clothes," we may say that the *rationale* of the matter would seem to be that expressed with great moderation by Richard Hooker—"To solemn actions of royalty and justice their suitable ornaments are a beauty. Are they in religion only a stain?" (See *Eccl. Pol.* v. 29, § 1.) The garments ordered to be made for Aaron and his sons (ver. 41), are said to have been for **glory and for beauty**. 1. "For glory." To exalt the priestly office in the eyes of the people—to make them look with greater reverence on the priests themselves and the priestly functions—to place the priests in a class by themselves, in a certain sense, above the rest of the nation. 2. "For beauty." As fit and comely in themselves—suitable to the functions which the priests exercised—in harmony with the richness and beauty of the sanctuary wherein they were to minister. God, himself, it would seem, is not indifferent to beauty. He has spread beauty over the earth. He will have beauty in his earthly dwelling-place. He requires men to worship him "in the beauty of holiness" (Ps. xxix. 2; xvi. 9; 1 Chron. xvi. 29). He ordains for his priests rich and splendid dresses "for glory and for beauty."

Ver. 3.—**Wise-hearted**. In modern parlance the heart is made the seat of the affections and emotions, the brain of the intellect. But the Hebrew idiom was different. There the heart was constantly spoken of as the seat of wisdom. (See below, ch. xxxi. 6; xxxv. 10, 25; xxxvi. 1, 2; Job ix. 4; Prov. xi. 29, etc.) The spirit of wisdom might seem to be scarcely necessary for the work of con-

structing a set of priestly garments; but where "glory and beauty" are required, high artistic power is needed; and this power is regarded by the sacred writers, as indeed it is by most of those who have written on the human understanding—notably Plato and Aristotle—as a very important part of the intellect. *Techné*, says Aristotle, involves *theoria*, as well as *æsthesis* and *genesis*, requires, i.e., a knowledge of high abstract truths, as well as the perceptive faculty which we commonly call "taste," and the constructive one known as "power of execution." (See *Eth. Nic.* vi. 4, § 4.) It is, with him, one of the five chief intellectual excellences. To **consecrate him**. Investiture in the holy garments was made a part of the ceremony of consecration (ch. xxix. 5-9; Lev. viii. 7-9, 13), as it is in the English Ordinal in the consecration of a bishop.

Ver. 4.—**These are the garments**. The enumeration does not follow the same order exactly as the description. The two agree, however, in giving the precedence to the same three articles of apparel out of the six—viz., the breast-plate, the ephod, and the robe. **His sons**—i.e., his successors in the office of high priest.

The materials of the priestly garments.

Ver. 5.—The materials for the priestly garments were to be limited to six—precious stones, which are not here mentioned, as being ornamental, rather than essential, parts of the apparel; a blue thread, known as "blue" (compare ch. xxv. 4); a purple or crimson one, known as "purple;" a scarlet one, known as "scarlet;" and a white one, which is called "fine linen." These were the same materials as those used for the veil (ch. xxvi. 31), and curtains (ib. 1, 36) of the sanctuary; but probably the fabric was of a more delicate quality. **They shall take**—i.e., "They," the wise-hearted men to whom the work was to be entrusted—"shall take," or receive from Moses—"the (necessary) gold, blue, purple," etc. In the original all these words have the definite article prefixed.

The Ephod

Ver. 6.—**They shall make the ephod**. The word *ephod* signifies etymologically any "vestment" or "garment;" but in its use it is confined to the special vestment here described, the great object of which was to be a receptacle for the "breast-plate." The ephod was a sort of jerkin or waistcoat, consisting of two pieces, one to cover the chest and the other the back, joined together probably by a seam, above the shoulders, and united at the waist by a band called "the curious girdle of the ephod." This band was of one piece with the ephod, being woven on either to the front or the back part; it held the other part in place, and was passed round

the body and fastened either with a clasp, or with buttons, or strings. Of gold, of blue, of purple, etc.—i.e., “of the same materials as the curtains and veil of the sanctuary, with the addition of gold.” The gold was probably in the shape of gold thread, or wire of extreme tenuity, and was introduced by the needle after the fabric had been woven, as was commonly done in Egypt (Herod. iii. 47; Wilkinson’s *Ancient Egyptians*, vol. iii. p. 128; compare below, ch. xxxix. 3). The white, blue, purple, and scarlet threads were doubtless woven into a pattern of some kind; but it is impossible to say what the pattern was. In Egypt patterns were not much affected, the dress worn being commonly white, with a stripe sometimes at the edge; but the Semitic tribes, who bordered Egypt on the East, affected gay colours and varied designs, if we may trust the Egyptian wall-paintings. With cunning work. Literally, “work of the skilled (workman).” Some of the Hebrews had evidently carried on the trade of weaving in Egypt, and had brought their looms with them. The Egyptian looms were hand-looms, and of no great size; they admitted of easy transport.

Ver. 7.—**The two shoulder-pieces thereof.** Literally, “Two shoulder-pieces.” There is no article, and no possessive pronoun. At the two edges thereof. Literally, “at its two ends.” A union of the back and front flaps of the dress by a seam at the top of the shoulder seems to be intended. Female dresses were made in this way among the Greeks, but fastened with a brooch or buckle.

Ver. 8.—**The curious girdle.** Josephus says of the ephod, *ὥστε περισφίγγεται ἄμμοσι διαπερικλιμένη. χρυσοῦ συνιφασμένον*, “it is fastened with a girdle dyed of many hues, with gold interwoven in it.” Hence its name, *khéshab*, which means properly “device” or “cunning work.” Of the ephod. Rather “of its girdling”—i.e. “wherewith it (the ephod) was to be girded.” Shall be of the same. Compare above, ch. xxv. 19. The girdle was to be “of one piece” with the ephod, woven on to it as part of it, not a separate piece attached by sewing. According to the work thereof. Rather, “of like workmanship with it.”

Ver. 9.—**Two onyx stones.** The correctness of this rendering has been much disputed. The LXX. give *σμάργδος*, “eme-

rald,” as the Greek equivalent in the present passage, while many argue for the beryl (Winer, Rosenmüller, Bollermann), and others for the sardonyx. This last rendering has the support of Josephus and Aquila. The sardonyx is, in fact, nothing but the best kind of onyx, differing from the onyx by having three layers—black, white, and red—instead of two—black and white—only. When large, it fetches a high price, as much as a thousand pounds having been asked for one by a dealer recently. The probability is, that it is the stone here intended. It is an excellent material for engraving. With respect to the possibility of Moses having in the congregation persons who could engrave the sardonyx, we may remark that the Egyptians cut stones quite as hard, from a date long anterior to the exodus. Grave on them the names of the children of Israel. Egyptian names are frequently found engraved on rings and amulets in hard stone; these rings and amulets date from the time of the twelfth dynasty. The names here intended are evidently the Israelite tribe names, which are reckoned as twelve, the double tribe of Joseph counting as one only. (Compare Num. i. 10; Deut. xxxiii. 13—17.)

Ver. 10.—**The other six names of the rest.** Literally, “The remaining six names.” According to their birth—i.e., in the order of seniority—or perhaps, in the order observed in ch. i. 2—4, where the children of the two legitimate wives are given the precedence.

Ver. 11.—**With the work of an engraver.** Rather, “an artificer.” The engravings of a signet. Signets in Egypt were ordinarily rings, on the bezel of which the name of the owner was inscribed. Some were of solid gold; others with cylindrical bezels of glass or hard stone. On the early use of such signet rings in Egypt see Gen. xli. 42. Cylinders, strung round the wrist and engraved with a name and titles, were common in Mesopotamia from B.C. 2000. Ouches of gold. Settings in open-work or filagree seem to be intended—a kind of setting which is very common in Egyptian ornaments.

Ver. 12.—**Stones of memorial unto the children of Israel.** Rather “for the children of Israel”—stones, i.e. which should serve to remind God that the high priest represented the twelve tribes, officiated in their name, and pleaded on their behalf.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—**The glory of holy garments.** “Holy garments”—garments appropriated to the service of God in his sanctuary—will always be “glorious,” however simple they are:—1. As the dress of office for those whose office is of an exalted and glorious character, who are “ambassadors for God,” and “stewards of his mysteries.” 2. As associated with rites, which show forth, and help forward, the glorious work of redemption: and 3. As typical of the glorious robes which will be worn by the saints in heaven. The

garments assigned by the will of God to the Levitical priesthood were, further, glorious in themselves, *i.e.*, splendid, magnificent, of rich and beautiful materials. They thus harmonised with the richness and magnificence of the tabernacle, and afterwards of the temple, and taught the people, by the eye, that whatever is rich and rare should be devoted to the service of God. But the highest glory of holy garments is to be found in those "robes of righteousness," which the set apparel of priests is intended to suggest and signify (Ps. cxxxii. 9; Is. lxi. 10). The white linen of priestly robes tells of purity and innocence—gold and jewels, of precious gifts and graces—azure, the hue of heaven, speaks of heavenly thoughts and aspirations—the scarlet and the purple are signs of the martyr spirit, which is willing to "resist unto blood" (Heb. xii. 4). If the priest or the Levite have no other adorning but that of the outward apparel, if they are not "clothed with the garments of salvation" (Is. l. s. c.), and robed with righteousness, "holy garments" will little avail either themselves, or those to whom they minister. The "marriage garment" required of each Christian in Holy Scripture is purity of life and conduct; and certainly without this, "holy garments" are vain, and lose both their "glory" and their "beauty."

Vers. 6—12.—*The symbolism of the ephod and its onyx stones.* The ephod was, *par excellence*, the priestly garment. When idolatrous rites grew up in Palestine, which sheltered themselves under the pretence of being modifications, or adaptations, of the Sinaitic religion, an ephod was always retained, and made a prominent feature in the new form of worship (Jud. viii. 27; xvii. 5; xviii. 14; etc.). The ephod came to be worn by all Israelitish priests (1 Sam. xxii. 18; Hos. iii. 4), and even by laymen when engaged in sacred functions (2 Sam. vi. 14; 1 Chron. xv. 27). Its materials and workmanship united it pointedly with the tabernacle (ch. xxvi. 1), and especially with the holy of holies (*ib.* ver. 31). It may be considered—

I. AS **TYPEFYING THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.** The shoulder pieces of the ephod were to be "joined together" (ver. 7). The "curious girdle" was to be of one piece with it (ver. 8). Though formed of various parts, it was to be one single indivisible garment, united both above and below, and always worn in its entirety. The seamless robe of our Blessed Saviour is generally allowed to prefigure his one Church. The ephod as worn, was, perhaps, not seamless; but still it was "woven of one piece," and so far resembled the Lord's garment.

II. AS **REPRESENTING THE VARIETY OF GIFTS AND GRACES WITHIN THE CHURCH.** The blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and gold, and gems of the ephod gave it a variety and a beauty which made it the most glorious of all the priestly vestments. Variety has a charm of its own, and is a mark of the Church, in which there is such vast "diversity of gifts," though there is but one spirit. Gold is especially appropriate for the dignity of those whom God has made "both priests and kings." "The king's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold" (Ps. xlv. 13). Purple, too, is an imperial colour, and suits those who shall "reign with Christ for ever" (Rev. xxii. 5).

III. AS **CONSTITUTING, WHEN WORN BY THE HIGH-PRIEST, A PRESENTATION OF THE CHURCH TO GOD IN PERFECT BEAUTY.** The onyx, or sardonyx stones, with the twelve names engraved upon them, completed the representative character of the ephod, and showed clearly that the high priest, when, thus attired, he entered the sanctuary, presented before God the Church whereof he was the head, as freed from sin by the expiation which he had made at the altar before entering, and made meet for the presence of the Most High. And this presentation was, we are distinctly told (Heb. ix. 9—12; x. 19—22), a type or figure of that far more precious one, which Christ is ever making before his Father's throne in heaven, where he presents to him his Church, "a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 27), washed in his blood, redeemed by his death, sanctified by his in-dwelling. Christ can and will purge his elect from all sin (1 John i. 7); Christ can and will present them pure before God. He has his "sealed" ones of all the twelve tribes (Rev. vii. 4—8); and, besides these, he has others who are equally his—"a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues" (*ib.* 9)—who "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (*ib.* 14), and whom he will "present faultless" to his Father.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*The priests' garments.* I. OBSERVE HOW THE INDIVIDUAL IS HERE SUBORDINATED TO THE OFFICE. Jehovah tells Moses here, amid the solemnities of the mount, that his brother Aaron and Aaron's sons are to be taken for service in the priest's office; but no word is said concerning the characters of any of these men, not even Aaron himself. There is a demand that those who made the priestly garments should be wise-hearted, men with a spirit of wisdom which Jehovah himself would put into them; but nothing is said as to Aaron himself being wise-hearted. Nor is there any indication given beforehand of any personal fitness that he had for the office. We gather much as to the way in which God had been training Moses; but Aaron so far as we can see, seems to have been led by a way that he knew not. All the commandment to Moses is, "take to thee Aaron thy brother." He is indicated by a natural relation, and not by anything that suggests spiritual fitness. It is interesting to compare the utter absence of any reference here to personal character with the minute details of what constitutes fitness for bishop and deacon, as we find these details in the epistles to Timothy and Titus. In the old dispensation where there was but the shadow of good things to come, the trappings of the official and the ceremonies of the office were of more importance than the character of any individual holder. The purpose of Jehovah was best served, in proportion as the people, beholding Aaron, forgot that it was Aaron, and were chiefly impressed by the fact that they were looking on the appointed priest of the Most High.

II. OBSERVE WHAT WAS AIMED AT IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS. They were to be for glory and for beauty. Not only different from the garments of the common people, but much more splendid. Gold was worked into the very substance of these garments; precious stones glittered upon them; and everything was done to make them beautiful and impressive. Nor was the splendour of these garments for a mere occasional revelation. Though not worn constantly, yet they had to be assumed for some part of every day; and thus all eyes were continually directed to symbols of the glory, beauty, and perfection which God was aiming to produce in the character of his people. There was as yet no finding of these things in human nature. The gold of human nature could not yet be purified from its debasing dross; but here for a symbol of the refined and perfected man, was gold, pure and bright, we may imagine, as ever came out of the furnace; and here were these precious stones, inestimably more precious since the tribal names were graven on them, and with the preciousness crowned when they took their place on the shoulders and breasts of the priest. Thus, whenever these stones flashed in the light, they spoke forth afresh the great truth, that this priest so gloriously attired, was the representative of the people before God; not a representative whom they had elected for themselves, and who would therefore go to God on a peradventure, but one who, because God himself had chosen him, could not fail to be acceptable. The principle underlying the direction to make these splendid garments is that which underlies the use of all trappings by government and authority. The outward shows of kingly state, the crown, the sceptre, the throne, the royal robes—these may not be impressive now as once they were; but they have been very serviceable once, and may still serve an important purpose, even though it be not easily perceived. It might make a difference in the administration of justice, if the garb of those who are the chief administrators were to differ nothing in public from what it is in private.

III. OBSERVE THAT TO SHOW FURTHER THE IMPORTANCE ATTACHED TO THESE GARMENTS, GOD HIMSELF PROVIDED SKILL FOR THE MAKING OF THEM. Much skill might be needed, far more than could be guessed by the observer, to make these garments graceful and impressive. What was all the richness of the material unless there was also dextrous, tasteful, and sympathetic workmanship? The gold, and the blue, and the purple, and all the rest of the promising materials would have availed nothing in some hands to avert a clumsy and cumbrous result. The people provided all they could, and it was a great deal; but God had to provide the craftsmen in order to make full use of the people's gift.—Y.

Vers. 1, 2.—"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" The tabernacle (cf. outline on xxvi. 30) shows through what steps a man must pass who would approach God. The

high priest shows what the man must be like who would attempt to take those steps. The dress of the high priest is usually said to have consisted of eight pieces, viz.: breast-plate, ephod with its girdle, robe of the ephod, mitre, gold plate or holy crown, brodered robe, drawers, girdle. Such a dress is meant to be *characteristic*, to shadow forth what ought to be the character of the man who wears it. As the high priest represents the people in their relation to God, the character required in him must be the character required in all would-be worshippers. Take a few points:—

I. THE WORSHIPPER MUST BE IN HARMONY WITH HIS SURROUNDINGS. The colours and materials of the garments are the same as those of the tabernacle with its veil and entrance curtain—gold, blue, purple, scarlet, fine linen. So, too, the character of the worshipper must match with the character of the sanctuary. What can a man do in heaven if he be not heavenly-minded? Every one, in the end, like Judas, must go to his own place; the character of the individual must decide the character of his surroundings (cf. Matt. xxii. 11—13).

II. HE MUST BE CAPABLE OF REFLECTING THE LIGHT AMID WHICH HE WALKS AND THE GLORY WHICH HE IS APPROACHING. The breast-plate is, amongst the garments of the high priest, what the mercy seat is amongst the furniture of the sanctuary. In some sort, also, the two are related; the mercy seat is the throne of glory, the resting-place of the shechinah, whilst the breast-plate reflects the same glory, and glorifies the wearer by reflecting it. 1. *Man is glorified by reflecting the glory of God.* The more he can reflect, the more manifold the ways in which he can reflect it, the more perfect is the glory which is revealed on him. We may note, however, that the high priest representing the nation, the breast-plate which he wears suggests rather the *national* than the *individual* reflecting power. The one grows out of the other, but amongst individuals some may reflect as the sardius, some as the topaz, etc. The great thing is that they *do* reflect, though each may reflect differently to others. Remember, too, that the glory of each helps to make and to intensify the glory of the whole. 2. *The reflector is the breast-plate.* The breast-plate covers and symbolises the heart or the affections. "God is love," and the glory of God is the glory of love made manifest. Only love can reflect love; the loving heart is the enlightened and the enlightening heart.

III. PROGRESS MUST NOT BE SILENT BUT MUSICAL. The robe of the ephod with its border of embroidered pomegranates, blue, red, and crimson; bells of gold alternating with the pomegranates. The music of the priest's movement is associated with fruitfulness; look whence the sound comes and you see the varicoloured pomegranates. So, too, the melody of a holy life rings out from amongst good deeds; deeds which like the varicoloured pomegranates are all one fruit, "the fruit of the Spirit" (cf. Gal. v. 22). Such fruit advertises to his fellows a man's progress along the way of holiness (cf. Ecclesiasticus xlv. 9, "a memorial to the children of his people"); yet specially is it required by God for his own pleasure and satisfaction (cf. xxviii. 35): whether men hear or no, the golden bells must not be silent.

IV. THE WORSHIPPER MUST BE HELMETED AND CROWNED WITH HOLINESS. (Cf. xxviii. 36.) The golden plate with its inscription. 1. Generally, it may be said, that they who approach a holy place must approach it as a holy people. We have safeguards against unseemliness and impurity (xxviii. 42). 2. Specially does the head, associated with the intellect, need consecration. Unless the head be protected the heart must soon cease to reflect. He who lays aside the helmet of holiness cannot retain the breast-plate of glory.

Conclusion.—We want to draw nigh to God. The tabernacle shows us by what successive stages we must approach him; the high priest shows us how in character and conduct we must be prepared for those successive stages. As we should put it now-a-days,—to get to heaven a man must be like Christ; the journey thither can only be achieved by those who are in communion with the great High Priest. In and through him we may draw nigh; growing daily more heavenly-minded, and therefore more fit for heaven; reflecting more and more of the light and glory which shines out upon us; making life musical with the melody of good works, a sweet sound in God's ears and a sign to direct men's attention God-wards; consecrated wholly to God's service, hallowed now by outward dedication; at length like the great High Priest himself, to be not merely *hallowed* but altogether *holy*.—G.

Vers. 1—43.—*The priests and their garments.* From instructions about inanimate things, we come now to *persons*. Aaron and his four sons were to be set apart for the office of the priesthood, and garments were to be made for them, "for glory and for beauty." Aaron was to be high priest ("the priest who is higher than his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured," Lev. xxi. 16); his sons were to be ordinary priests. The high priest was a very especial type of Christ.

1. *THE INSTITUTION OF THE PRIESTHOOD* (ver. 1). Hitherto there had been no distinct class invested with the office of the priesthood. The need for a separate priesthood arose with the giving of the law, with the entrance of Israel into covenant relationship with God, and with the founding of a sanctuary. 1. *With the giving of the law.* A distinct revelation had been made of God's holiness. But God's holiness had as its correlative the unholiness of the people. By the law came the knowledge of sin. A priesthood, specially sanctified to God's service, became necessary to mediate between an unholy people and a holy God. 2. *With the establishment of a covenant relationship between Israel and Jehovah.* In virtue of the covenant, Israel became to God "a kingdom of priests and an holy nation" (ch. xix. 5). It was this priestly calling of the nation which found official expression in the priesthood of the house of Aaron. The priests were "vicars," in the sense of the following passage—"A truly vicarious act does not supersede the principal's duty of performance, but rather implies and acknowledges it. . . . In the old monastic times, when the revenues of a cathedral or cure fell to the lot of a monastery, it became the duty of that monastery to perform the religious services of the cure. But inasmuch as the monastery was a corporate body, they appointed one of their number, whom they denominated their vicar, to discharge those duties for them. His service did not supersede theirs, but was a perpetual and standing acknowledgment that they, as a whole and individually, were under the obligation to perform it" (Robertson of Brighton, Sermons, vol. ii. p. 92). That is to say, the priests stood in a representative relation to the body of the people. They acted in the name of the community. 3. *With the founding of a sanctuary.* "The groundwork of this new form of religion stood in the erection of the tabernacle, which God chose for his peculiar dwelling-place, and through which he meant to keep up a close and lively intercourse with his people. But this intercourse would inevitably have grown on their part into too great familiarity, and would thus have failed to produce proper and salutary impressions upon the minds of the worshippers, unless something of a counteracting tendency had been introduced, fitted to beget feelings of profound and reverential awe toward the God who condescended to come so near to them. This could no otherwise be effectually done than by the institution of a separate priesthood, whose prerogative alone it should be to enter within the sacred precincts of God's house, and perform the ministrations of his worship" (Fairbairn). The Aaronic priesthood had thus a twofold function to discharge in relation to the people. 1. *Representative.* It represented the nation in its priestly standing and vocation. It performed sacerdotal acts in the name of the tribes. The representative character culminated in the person of the high priest. 2. *Mediatory.* The priesthood mediated between the people and Jehovah. It was the link of communion between the holy and the unholy. Gifts and offerings, which otherwise, on account of the unholiness of the people, would not have been accepted, were accepted at the hands of the priests. The high priest transacted with God *on behalf* of his constituents as well as in their name. It pertained to him, and to the other priests, "to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Heb. ii. 17). The priesthood, and especially the high priest, thus typifies Christ—(1) in his Divine appointment to his office (Heb. v. 5, 6); (2) in his personal and official holiness (Heb. iv. 15; vii. 26); (3) in his representative relations to his people (Heb. vi. 20); (4) in his work of mediation and intercession (Heb. ix. 11, 12, 24); (5) in his heavenly glory (Heb. ii. 9). Note, however, the following point of difference (one among many) between the high priest and Christ. The Jewish high priest embodied priestly rights *already existing in the nation*. Believers, on the contrary, derive their priestly rights *from* Christ. They are admitted to a share in *his* priestly standing. Their priesthood, unlike that of the old covenant, is purely spiritual. It includes privileges formerly possessed only by the official classes, *e.g.*, the right of direct access to God (Eph. ii. 18; iii. 12·Heb. x. 19).

II. *THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS* (vers. 2—43). Having chosen his priests, God next

proceeds to clothe them. As the office was of his appointment, so must the garments be which are to be the *insignia* of it. Nothing is left to individual taste. The articles of attire; their shape, material, colour, workmanship; the manner of their ornamentation; everything is fixed after a Divine pattern. The garments are to be "for glory and for beauty" (vers. 2, 40), indicative of the official dignity, of the sacred character, and of the honourable prerogatives of the wearers of them. Men are even to be inspired with "the spirit of wisdom" (ver. 3), for the purpose of making them, so entirely are they to be garments of Divine origin. Look (1) at what these garments were, and (2) at the functions and privileges of the priesthood as shadowed forth in them. 1. *The parts of the priestly dress.* The dress of the ordinary priests, with the exception of the girdle of needlework (cf. ch. xxxix. 29), was to be of fine white linen. It consisted of an embroidered coat, a cap, and plain white linen drawers. The high priest's garments were of a much richer order. They embraced (1) the ephod, with its curious girdle (vers. 6-15). (2) The breast-plate, in which were to be placed "the Urim and Thummim" (vers. 15-31). (3) The robe of the ephod, "all of blue," and embroidered along the hem with pomegranates. Alternating with the pomegranates were to be little golden bells, which should give a sound when the priest went into the holy place, and when he came out (vers. 31-36). (4) The mitre, on which was to be a plate of gold, fastened with blue lace, and engraved with the words—"Holiness to the Lord" (vers. 36-39). (5) A brodered coat, girdle, and drawers, similar to those of the ordinary priests (ver. 39). 2. *The symbolism of the dress.* The blue of the robe of the ephod denoted the heavenly origin of the priest's office; the shining whiteness of the ordinary garments, the purity required in those who served before Jehovah; the gold, the diversified colours, the rich embroidery and gems, in the other articles of attire, the exalted honour of those whom Jehovah had chosen, and caused to approach to him, that they might dwell in his courts (Ps. lxx. 4). More specifically, the garments bore testimony (1) to the fundamental requirement of holiness in the priesthood. This requirement found its most distinct expression in the engraved plate on the high priest's mitre. Holiness was to be the characteristic of the people as a whole. Most of all was it required in those who stood in so peculiarly near a relation to Jehovah, and on whom it devolved to make atonement for the others. The requirement is perfectly fulfilled in Christ, whose people, in turn, are called to holy living. (2) To the representative character of the priesthood. This was beautifully imaged by the fact that, both on his shoulders and on his breast, the high priest bore precious stones engraved with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (vers. 9-13; 17-23). Another indication of this representative character is found in the order to place bells upon the hem of the robe of the ephod, that the people might hear the sound of his movements as he went in and out of the holy place (ver. 35). Conscious that he was transacting in God's presence in their name, they were to follow him with their thoughts and prayers in the different parts of his sacerdotal task. It was, however, the wearing of "the breast-plate of judgment" (ver. 29), which most specially declared that the high priest appeared before God as the people's representative. His function, as clothed with the breast-plate, was to sustain the "right" of the children of Israel before Jehovah (ver. 30). The "right" included whatever claims were given them on the justice and mercy of Jehovah by the stipulations of the covenant. It was a "right" derived, not from unflinching obedience to the law, but from Jehovah's goodness. It was connected with atonement. Our "right," in like manner, is embodied in Christ, who bears us on his heart continually in presence of his Father. (3) To the priestly function of mediation. The onyx stones on the shoulders of the high priest, each having engraved on it six of the names of the tribes of Israel (ver. 12), indicated that on him rested the burden or responsibility of the entire congregation. A more distinct expression of this idea is given in ver. 38, in connection with the gold plate of the mitre, engraved with HOLINESS TO THE LORD—"It shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord." A shadow of the higher mediation. Our persons, gifts, and works find acceptance only in Christ. (4) To the need of sympathy in the priest, as a qualification for his office. The high priest was to bear the names of the children of Israel upon his heart, graven on the stones of the breast-plate (ver. 29). Christ has perfect sympathy

(Heb. ii. 14—18; iv. 14—16). The people also, as is hinted in ver. 35, were to have sympathy with their priest. (5) To the function of the priest, as revealer of God's will (ver. 30). Urim and Thummim—whatever these were—are now superseded by the external word, and the inward illumination of Christ's Spirit. Christ gives forth unerring revelations of the will of the Father. "Lights and perfections" is not too high a name to bestow upon the Scriptures (Ps. xix. 7—12; 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16).—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 13—30.—THE BREAST-PLATE. It has been noticed that the ephod had for its main object or purpose to be a receptacle for the breast-plate which was attached to it after it had been put on, and formed its principal ornament. The Hebrew word *khoohen*, which is translated "breast-plate," means "ornament;" and the *khoohen* must certainly have been the most striking and brilliant object in the whole attire of the high priest. Externally, it did but repeat the symbolism of the ephod, exhibiting the high priest as the representative of the twelve tribes, whose names were engraved upon its twelve stones, as well as upon the onyxes of the ephod. Internally, it had, however, another, and a deeper import. It contained within it the Urim and the Thummim (ver. 30), by means of which God was consulted, and signified his will to his people. This must be regarded as its main end and use. It was from the *decisions* thus given that it received the name of "the breast-plate (or ornament) of judgment."

Ver. 13.—Ouches of gold. "Buttons" according to one view (Cook): "sockets," according to another (Kalisch): "rosettes," according to a third (Keil). Some small ornament of open-work (see the comment on ver. 11), which could be sewn on to the ephod, and whereto a chain might be attached, seems to be intended. The object was to fasten the "breast-plate" firmly to the ephod.

Ver. 14.—At the ends. The meaning of the Hebrew word *migbâlôth* is very doubtful. Jarchi and Rosenmüller approve of the rendering of our translators. Geddes, Boothroyd, and Dathe render "chains of equal length." Gesenius, Kalisch, Canon Cook, and others, believe the true meaning to be "wreathed," or "of wreathen work," so that the next clause, "after the manner of a rope," would be simply exegetic. **Of wreathen work.** Literally, "after the manner of a rope." Cords of twisted gold wire were frequently used, instead of chains, by the Egyptians.

Ver. 15.—The breast-plate. As the *khoohen* was to be worn upon the breast (ver. 29), this name is appropriate: but it is not a translation of *khoohen*. **Of judgment.** See the

introductory paragraph to this section. Kalisch translates "the breast-plate of decision." It was to be made, so far as its main fabric was concerned, of exactly the same materials as the ephod. See ver. 6.

Ver. 16.—Four square . . . being doubled. It has been generally supposed that the doubling was merely for the purpose of giving additional strength to the work, which was to receive twelve heavy gems; but Gesenius and others are of opinion that the object was to form a bag, in which the Urim and Thummim, which they regard as material objects, might be kept. **A span.** Half a cubit, or about nine inches.

Ver. 17.—Settings of stones. These were similar to those of the two shoulder stones—i.e. of filagree or *cloisonné* work—as appears from ch. xxxix. 13. The first row of the stones is said to have been composed of a sardius, or sard, a topaz, and a carbuncle. Of these names the first only would seem to be tolerably certain. The second cannot be right, since the topaz was too hard a stone to be engraved by the ancient engravers. We may conjecture that the chrysolite, a pale stone not unlike the topaz, but far less hard, was the gem intended. The "carbuncle" is also thought to be wrong; and the "beryl" is suggested by some; by others "a sort of precious corundum." Emerald, to which the "smaragdus" of the LXX. and Josephus would seem to point, cannot be right, since that stone is fully as hard as the topaz.

Ver. 18.—The second row an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. Here all the names must be wrong, for none of these three stones could be cut by the ancient engravers. Probably, carbuncle (or garnet), lapis lazuli, and onyx are intended.

Ver. 19.—The third row a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst. The term "ligure" is unknown in modern mineralogy; and it is to the last degree uncertain what stone the ancients intended by their *lingurium* or *lapis ligurius*. Some think that "jacinth," others that "tourmaline," is the stone here meant. A few suggest *amber*, but *amber* cannot receive an engraving. "Agate" and "amethyst" are generally allowed to be right translations.

Ver. 20.—The fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper. If the identifications above suggested are allowed, two at least of these translations must be rejected. We have

supposed the third stone in the first row to have been the "beryl," and the third in the second the "onyx." Perhaps we should translate, "a turquoise, a sardonyx, and a jasper." (See the comment on ver. 9.) **Their inclosings.** Rather, "their settings," as in ver. 17.

Ver. 21.—The stones shall be with the names. Rather, "according to the names;" the number of the stones shall agree with that of the names, viz., twelve. **Everyone with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes.** Rather, "every one according to its name, they shall be for the twelve tribes," i.e., each, according to the name that is on it, shall stand for one of the twelve tribes.

Ver. 22.—Chains at the ends. Compare the comment on ver. 14. Kalisch translates, 'chains of wreathen work, twisted in the manner of ropes.'

Vers. 23—28.—These verses present no difficulty. They describe very minutely, and with some tautology, the mode in which the breast-plate was to be fastened to the ephod. It was to have four rings, two at its two upper corners (ver. 23), and two just behind its two lower corners (ver. 26); a gold twist or cord was to be passed through each of the two upper rings, and then attached to the "ouches" or settings of the shoulder stones (ver. 25; compare vers. 11—14). A blue lace or ribbon was to be passed through each of the two lower rings, and these laces were to be tied to two rings, sewn for the purpose on to the front of the ephod a little above the "curious girdle" (vers. 26, 27). By these four fastenings at its four corners, the breast-plate was securely attached to the ephod, and could not readily get loose from it.

Ver. 27.—Over against the other coupling thereof. Rather, "near its joining." The "joining" of the ephod is perhaps the place where the "curious girdle" was woven on to it.

Ver. 29.—And Aaron shall bear, etc. 'Aaron,' i.e., "shall not only bear the names of the twelve tribes upon his shoulders (ver. 12), but also upon his heart." He shall thus make a double presentation of them to God continually. The explanation is somewhat fanciful, that the names on the shoulder-stones indicated that the people were a burthen to him, while those on the stones of the breast-plate, being upon his breast, indicated that he bore them affection. The breast and the shoulder were probably chosen as being conspicuous and honourable positions.

Ver. 30.—Thou shalt put in the breast-plate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim. The words *Urim* and *Thummim* mean respectively "Lights" and "Perfections," or perhaps "Light" and "Perfection—the plural form being merely a plural of honour. They were well translated by Aquila and Symmachus, φωτισμοί καὶ τελειότητες: less well by the

LXX. ἡ ἀλάστωσις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια: still worse by the Vulgate, *Doctrina et Veritas*. What exactly the two words represented is doubtful in the extreme. It has been supposed by some that they were not material objects, but a method by which God communicated his will; e.g., a miraculous light, or a miraculous voice. But such things as these could not have been put by Moses either "in," or "on the breast-plate of judgment." Modern critics are generally agreed that the Urim and Thummim must have been material objects of one kind or another. The objects suggested are—1. The engraved stones of the breast-plate. 2. Two small images, like the teraphim. 3. A gold plate, engraved with the name of Jehovah. 4. Three plates or slips; one blank, one engraved with "yes," and one with "no." 5. Diamonds, cut and uncut, with marks engraved on them. Against the first of these views it is urged with very great force that the present passage shows the Urim and Thummim to be something quite distinct from the breast-plate—something which was to be added to the breast-plate after all the stones had been set in it; and which Aaron was to bear upon his breast in addition to the breast-plate and its jewels (compare ver. 29 with ver. 30). Against the fourth and fifth, it is sufficient to observe that they are pure conjectures, without any basis of authority, either in Scripture or tradition. The second and the third remain. The third has important Jewish names in its favour, but is open to the objection that it makes a single object correspond to both words. The second alone seems to have any basis in Scripture, which certainly connects the use of *teraphim* with the use of an ephod (Judg. xvii. 5; xviii. 14, 17, 20; Hosea iii. 4). On the whole, while admitting that there is no sufficient evidence to determine the question, we incline to regard the Urim and Thummim as small images, kept in the bag of the "breast-plate" (ver. 16), by means of which the high priest gave a decision when he was consulted. How the decision was arrived at, is an even more difficult problem than the one which we have attempted to solve. Some suppose the two images to have been used as lots, one giving an affirmative and the other a negative answer. Others imagine, that by gazing attentively upon them, and fixing his thoughts on the qualities which they symbolised—illumination and perfection—the high priest was thrown into an ecstatic state which enabled him to prophesy aright. The notion has even been started, that an angel spoke by their lips, and answered any question that was put to them. The truth seems to be that no theory on the subject can be more than a theory—quite arbitrary and conjectural—neither Scripture nor tradition furnishing any hint on the matter. If we knew how men divined from teraphim (2 Kings xxiii. 24

Ezek. xxi. 21 : Zech. x. 2), we might thence obtain some inkling of the truth, since there is much probability in the view, that the teraphim were employed as an unauthorised substitute for the Urim and Thummim. (See Judg. xvii. 5 : xviii. 5, 6, 14-20.) But the method of this divination is wholly unknown. It is not however likely to have been a mere casting of lots, which is a very simple process, and requires no images; nor can this explanation of the decision by Urim and Thummim be regarded as having probability in its favour. Perhaps, of all the theories, that which supposes the Urim and Thummim to have been objects gazed at by the high priest until he entered the ecstatic state, is the least objectionable. It must not, however, be considered an essential part of this

theory, that the material objects were derived from the religion of Egypt (Plumptre). The objects must have been well known to Moses and to those for whom he wrote; otherwise, they could not have been introduced, without any account of their nature, as, "*The Urim*" and "*The Thummim*." They had probably been long possessed and consulted by the nation, which was accustomed to believe that it received enlightenment from them. Perhaps they were a sort of teraphim, but unconnected with any idolatrous worship. It is quite conceivable that an old usage, hitherto unauthorised, but not debased by any flagrant corruption, should have been adopted by Divine command into the Mosaic ritual, purified of any evil that attached to it, and consecrated to an important purpose.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 13-30.—*The Teachings of the Breast-plate.* The breast-plate of judgment has many aspects, and teaches us several important truths—e.g. :—

I. *THE PRECIOUSNESS OF SOULS IN GOD'S SIGHT.* The tribes of Israel are represented by gems—gems of the most precious kinds known to, and workable by the engravers of the day—sard, and onyx, and carbuncle, and lapis lazuli, and chrysolite, and perhaps turquoise. We are reminded by this of the saying of the Lord recorded by the prophet Malachi—"They (that fear me) shall be mine in that day *when I make up my jewels*" (Mal. iii. 17). His own elect are the "jewels" of Christ, wherewith he decks himself as a bridegroom with his ornaments (Is. lxi. 10). As Israel was of old, not only his "special people," but his "peculiar treasure" (Ex. xix. 5), so are Christians now—each one of them dear to him; each one of them purchased with his blood; each one of them a stone in that glorious temple whereof he is the chief corner stone—a "white stone," having on it "a new name written" (Rev. ii. 17; iii. 12).

II. *THE VARIETY IN THEIR GIFTS.* Each stone in the breast-plate was different from all the rest—each had its own peculiar beauty. One was more brilliant, one more lovely in its hue, one more curious from its complexity. Yet the breast-plate needed all, would not have been perfect without all. None could say to its neighbour—"I have no need of thee." Contrast with its neighbours heightened the effect of each and so added to its beauty. It is the same with Christ's "jewels"—no two are alike—each has his own peculiar characteristics, his idiosyncrasy. And the crown in which the jewels are set is rendered more beautiful than it would otherwise have been by this diversity and variety. An endless repetition of even that which is most lovely palls. Of the thousands upon thousands whom Christ has saved and will save, no two but will be different; no one but will add somewhat to the majesty and beauty of the Church in heaven by its peculiar and distinctive character.

III. *THE HIGH VALUE OF HIDDEN GIFTS OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE.* It was not from its external beauty—from the gold and purple, and scarlet, and blue, and fine linen of its main fabric, or from its ouches and its golden chains of wreathed work; or even from the dazzling brilliancy and varied hues of its twelve gems—that the breast-plate of the high priest drew either its main value or its honourable title. It was "the breast-plate of judgment;" and this "judgment" was wholly unconnected with the external beauty and gorgeous appearance of the breast-plate. Hidden away in the treasury of its innermost folds lay the mysterious objects, known as "light" and "perfection," by means of which the priest pronounced his "judgments," and declared the will of God to the people. These constituted the true glory of the breast-plate. While the twelve stones symbolised the twelve tribes, with their varied gifts and faculties (Gen. xlix. 3-27; Deut. xxxiii. 6-25), the Urim and the Thummim symbolised light and perfection—intellectual and moral excellence—those best gifts of

wisdom and moral knowledge which are the crowning graces of the regenerate human being (Eph. i. 8, 17; Phil. i. 9; Col. i. 9, 10; etc.).

IV. THE PROPRIETY OF REFERRING ALL OUR DOUBTS TO GOD FOR DECISION. Though the Christian Church does not enjoy, any more than did the post-captivity Jewish Church (Ezra ii. 63), the advantage of oracular responses from on high, though our High Priest is gone before us into the holiest, and has taken with him the light and perfection, which are his alone, yet it is still possible to refer doubts to God, and so obtain light enough to serve as a guide to conduct. If we take our difficulties to God on our knees, and ask his counsel upon them in a faithful spirit, we have full reason to trust that we shall receive illumination from him. What after prayerful communion with God appears to us the best course to take, we may accept as his decision, his voice speaking to us. How consoling and encouraging the thought that we can, each one for himself, in the solitude of our chambers cast the burthen of our cares upon One who is perfectly good and perfectly wise, and who has promised to be our guide unto death!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—38.—*Aaron in his priesthood the type of Jesus.*

I. IN HIS APPOINTMENT (ver. 1). 1. He is chosen of God (Heb. v. 4), and therefore our accepted intercessor. 2. He is taken from among his brethren; "from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me." The priest who ministers before God for us must go up with a brother's heart and with experience of human infirmity (Heb. iv. 15).

II. IN HIS ARRAY. The holy garments were "for glory and for beauty," the symbol of the perfect humanity of Jesus; "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners."

III. IN HIS SYMPATHY. 1. The names of the tribes were engraved upon and identified with the choicest jewels. Christ not only remembers us; we are loved, honoured, treasured by him. 2. The name of each tribe was engraved upon a separate, and different kind of jewel. We are not grasped by our high priest in a mass; we are individually known, loved, cared for. 3. The names were borne upon Aaron's heart whenever he went into the holy place (ver. 29), for a memorial before the Lord continually. We are held in perpetual remembrance before God.

IV. IN HIS VICARIOUSNESS. 1. That remembrance was burden-bearing; he went in for them, his heart was bowed before God in the consciousness of their sin and need. For us in our sin and need Christ's entreaties ascend day and night. 2. In his zeal for holiness (vers. 36—38). Christ, sin's sacrifice, shall also be sin's destruction.—U.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 31—35.—THE ROBE OF THE EPHOD. Underneath the ephod and breast-plate the high priest was to wear a robe, or frock, wholly of blue. This robe was to have a hole for the head at the top, and was to be woven without seam (ch. xxxix. 22). It was put on over the head, like a habergeon or coat of mail, and probably reached below the knee. Josephus says that it had no sleeves

Ver. 31.—**All of blue.** This plainness and uniformity offered a strong contrast to the variegated hues of the breast-plate and ephod, and threw those portions of the attire into greater prominence. If the blue used was indigo, the effect of the contrast must have been heightened

Ver. 32.—**An hole in the top of it.** A mere circular hole for the head to go through, unaccompanied by a slit or longitudinal opening. **In the midst of it.** Midway between the two arm-holes. **A binding of woven work round about the hole of it.** This would strengthen the edge of the opening, and prevent it from tearing or fraying. The binding was probably sewn on after the frock was woven. **As it were the hole of an habergeon.** Linen corselets or habergeons have been found in Egypt. They were sometimes covered with metal scales, and were of the make here indicated. (See the author's *History of Egypt*, vol. i. p. 446.) The word here used for "habergeon" (*takhārūh*) is Egyptian.

Ver. 33.—**Upon the hem of it.** Literally "at its edge" **Pomegranates** Tassels in the

shape of pomegranates, of three colours, seem to be intended. An ornament of the kind is common in Assyria, but not in Egypt. Bells of gold between them. The bell is not often found in Egypt, and seems certainly not to have been in common use there. It was, however, often hung round the necks of horses in Assyria (*Ancient Monarchies*, vol. ii. pp. 8, 14, 15, 27), and is so simple an object that its invention was probably very early. The Assyrian bells are shaped almost exactly like our own, as are the classical ones.

Vers. 34, 35.—A golden bell and a pomegranate. Hebrew tradition gives a most uncertain sound with respect to the number of the bells. According to some, they were 12 only; according to others, 72; according to a third school, 365! Equally conflicting are the explanations given of their symbolism—(1) that they typified the proclamation and expounding of the law by the high-priest—(2) that they were a musical offering of praise—(3) that they marked kingly dignity, since Oriental kings sometimes wore bells—and (4) that

they were a call to vigilance and attention. This last view is supported by the words of verse 35—it shall be upon Aaron to minister, and his sound shall be heard, or “that its sound may be heard.” The bells were a means of uniting priest and people in one common service—they enabled the people to enter into and second what the priest was doing for them, and so to render his mediation efficacious—they made the people’s worship in the court of the sanctuary a “reasonable service.” And hence the threat, which certainly does not extend to all the priestly garments, implied in the words, “that he die not.” If the high priest neglected to wear the robe with the bells, he separated himself off from the people; made himself their substitute and not their mouthpiece; reduced their worship to a drear formality; deprived it of all heartiness and life and vigour. For thus abusing his office, he would deserve death, especially as he could not do it unwittingly, for his ears would tell him whether he was wearing the bells or not.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 31.—*The Teachings of the Robe.* I. THE NEED OF HEAVENLY CALM AND PURITY. The robe was to be of one hue—uniform, peaceful; without glitter; something on which the eye could rest itself with a quiet satisfaction. And it was to be “blue”—the colour of heaven, the hue which God has spread over “that spacious firmament on high,” which in his word represents to us his dwelling. “The blue sky is an image of purity.” Nothing purer, nothing calmer, nothing more restful, than the deep soft azure of the eternal unchanging sky. The high priest’s robe was to mirror it. He was to present himself before God in a robe “all of blue.” So let us present ourselves before him arrayed in purity and peacefulness.

II. THE NEED OF UNITY. If the ephod was to some extent emblematic of the oneness of the Church, so, and much more, was “the robe of the ephod.” It was of woven work (ch. xxxix. 22), absolutely seamless—one, emphatically, in material, in hue, in texture. So Christ prayed that his Church might be one—“as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us—one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one” (John xvii. 21—23). Visible unity is broken up; but something of invisible unity there may still be, if all true lovers of Christ will cultivate the spirit of unity; judge charitably; think the best they can of all branches of the Church; look to the good points of each; pray for their advance in holiness and in the knowledge of Christ; work with them so far as they can—e.g., for charitable and moral objects, amicably. If we thus act, if we be thus minded, we shall, in a true sense, put on “the robe of the ephod”—we shall be promoters, and not hinderers, of unity.

III. THE NEED OF KEEPING OUR ATTENTION FIXED ON THE ACTIONS OF OUR TRUE HIGH PRIEST, AND JOINING IN THEM. The bells of the robe were to advertise the people of every movement made by the high priest, and enable them to take their part in his actions. To profit by the contrivance, they had to keep their ears attent to the sound, and their minds fixed on the service which was in progress within the sanctuary. We Christians have equal need to mount up in thought continually to that holy place, whither Christ has taken our nature, and set it down at the right hand of God—to join with him as he pleads his meritorious sacrifice on our behalf; to “have boldness” with him “to enter into the holiest;” with him to ask the Father to pardon our sins; with him to intercede for the whole Church; with him to pray that strength may be given us to persevere. We do not, indeed, need bells to tell us how he is employed at each

successive moment, because he is always doing all these things for us—always interceding, always pleading his sacrifice, always beseeching his Father to forgive us and sustain us. We may join him in these acts at any moment. Thus, bells are not necessary for us; but still they may sometimes help us. Many an Israelite, whose thoughts wandered and became fixed on worldly things, when no sound issued from the sanctuary, was recalled to a sense of religion, and the recollection of his soul's needs, by the tinkling of the priest's golden bells. So Christians, who ought in heart and mind ever to ascend to where Christ sits at the right hand of God (Col. iii. 1—3; Eph. ii. 6, etc.), but whose attention will wander to earth and earthly objects, may sometimes by the chime of bells, or by their solemn toll, be woken up to higher thoughts,—recalled, as it were, from earth to heaven, taken back from the vain distractions of the world to that holy place where their High Priest is ever interceding for them.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 36—38.—THE MITRE. Josephus tells us that the head-dress of the high priest was "not a conical cap, but a sort of crown, made of thick linen swathes" (*Ant. Jud.* iii. 7, § 3). It was thus really a species of turban. The colour was white; and the only ornament on it was the gold plate, with its blue ribbon or fillet.

Ver. 36.—Thou shalt make a plate of pure gold. The plate, though a mere ornament of the mitre, was, at once, its most conspicuous and its most significant feature. Placed directly in front, right over the forehead, and probably of burnished gold, it would attract universal attention, and catch the eye even more than the breast-plate. Its position made it "the culminating point of the whole priestly attire" (Kalisch)—and its inscription gave to that position extraordinary force and significance. For it taught that "holiness to the Lord" is the very highest crown and truest excellence of religion—that to which all ceremonial is meant to conduce—that without which all the paraphernalia of worship must ever be in God's sight a mockery. It set this truth conspicuously before the eyes, and was apt to impress it upon the hearts of all. It

taught the high priest himself not to rest upon outward forms, but to aim in his own person, and teach the people to aim continually, at internal holiness. The extreme importance of this, causes the putting forward at once of the plate and its inscription before any account of the "mitre" is given.

Ver. 37.—Thou shalt put it on a blue lace. In ch. xxxix. 31, it is explained that the blue lace, or ribbon, was "tied to it," probably at either end. That it may be upon the mitre—i.e., "that it may be kept in place, and not slip from its position on the mitre."

Ver. 38.—It shall be upon his forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the sacred things. Imperfection attaches to everything that man does; and even the sacrifices that the people offered to God required to be atoned for and purified. It was granted to the high priest in his official capacity to make the necessary atonement, and so render the people's gifts acceptable. For this purpose he was invested with an official holiness, proclaimed by the inscription upon the plate, which exhibited him as the type and representative of that perfectly Holy One, through whom alone can any real atonement be made to the Father. **It shall be always upon his forehead—i.e., whenever he ministers.**

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 36—38.—The Teachings of the Mitre. The main lesson taught by all the priestly garments is intensified in the mitre, namely, the need of holiness. "Without holiness no one shall see God;" "Holiness becometh thine house for ever." The high priest was to be—

I. HOLY, OFFICIALLY. By his birth, of Levi and Aaron—by his bringing up—by his consecration—by his investiture—by his representative position as priestly head of his nation and type of Christ—he was set apart from all others, dedicated to holy employments, assigned a holy character. Of these things he could not dispossess himself. Even a Caiaphas "prophesied, being high priest that same year."

II. HOLY, PERSONALLY. To wear holy garments, to be employed about holy things and yet to be impure in heart and life, is to be a "whited sepulchre," beautiful outwardly, but "within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness" (Matt. xxiii. 27). Nothing can be a greater offence to God. A high priest, with "holiness to the Lord"

written upon his brow, and unholiness working in his brain and nestling in his heart, was a moral contradiction, a paradox, a monstrosity. Such there may have been, and their official acts for the benefit of others God may have accepted and allowed, since otherwise the innocent would have suffered for the guilty; but their hatefulness in his sight must have been great, and their punishment will be proportionate. We may believe that such cases were few. Not many men can bear to be hypocrites. The holy attire, the holy offices, the profession of holiness upon the brow, must have helped to make the great majority holy, or at least harmless, in life—true “examples to the flock” (1 Pet. v. 3)—holy, not merely officially, but personally.

III. A CAUSE OF HOLINESS IN OTHERS. The high priest, as the religious leader of the nation, had to help forward holiness in every possible way—(1) Ceremonially, by his official actions; (2) Ministerially, by teachings and exhortations; (3) Individually, by the force of example. It was his mission to make the people “accepted before the Lord.” The mediation which he offered not only purified from legal defilements, but, by virtue of his typical character, purged the conscience and cleansed the soul from sin. His exhortations and example had the natural force of one in authority, and must have been potent at all times. It was at his peril if he took life too easily, and rebuked sin too mildly, and was not “a faithful priest,” as appears from the history of Eli (1 Sam. ii. 22—36; iii. 13; iv. 11—18). Unfaithful priests are, in truth, an abomination, and have need to tremble at the “terrors of the Lord.” Those who have undertaken a holy office are doubly bound to holiness. If men “corrupt the covenant of Levi,” God will “send a curse upon them, and curse their blessings” (Mal. ii. 2, 8).

EXPOSITION

Ver. 39.—**THE TUNIC AND GIRDLE.** From the outer garments, which were the most important and distinctive, a transition is now made to the inner ones, in which there was nothing very remarkable. The linen drawers are for the present omitted, as not peculiar to the high priest. Directions are given for the tunic and the girdle. The former is to be woven in some peculiar way—so as to be diapered, as some think—and the latter is to be “the work of the embroiderer.”

Ver. 39.—**Thou shalt embroider.** This is certainly not the meaning of the Hebrew. Some peculiar mode of weaving the coat is intended. **The coat.** Rather, “the tunic” or “shirt.” The *kellóneth* was a long linen

gown or cassock, worn immediately over the drawers. It reached to the feet, and had tightly-fitting sleeves (Joseph. *Ant. Jud.* iii. 7, § 2). Whether it showed beneath the “robe of the ephod,” or not, is uncertain; but the sleeves must certainly have been visible. The *kellóneth* was white. **Thou shalt make the mitre of fine linen.** This direction had not been previously given. It is a little out of place. **Thou shalt make the girdle of needlework.** Literally, “of the work of the embroiderer.” The girdle was worn directly over the linen shirt, and under “the robe of the ephod.” It would seem that it was not seen at all, unless its ends hung down below “the robe of the ephod.” It was however to be artistically embroidered (See ch xxxix. 29.)

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 39.—*The Lesson of the Tunic.* The tunic, or inner vest, was to be of fine linen, and of spotless white. Both the material and the hue denoted purity. God’s priests must be clothed in purity from top to toe. Purity must wrap them round on every side. This purity may be hidden—unseen of man, or nearly unseen. But God sees it and honours it. The tunic, though it must be all of white, shall not lack its ornamentation. It is to be diapered with a pattern, like the best damask cloths, and so to be rich and costly.

The Lessons of the Girdle. (1) Girdles were less for beauty than for use. Men girded themselves for battle, for a race, for active exertion of any kind. The high priest was to have his loins continually girded, that he might be ready at all times for God’s service. But he was not to make a parade of this readiness. The girdle was to be hidden under the robe of the ephod. (2) Hidden as it was, the girdle was to be costly

and beautiful—of many colours, the work of the skilled embroiderer. The Israelites were taught by this, that things devoted to God's service, *whether they be seen or not*, should be of the best. The intention is not to please men's eyes by beauty of colour or form, or richness of material, but to do honour to God. Scamped work in places where it is not seen has been thought allowable by many a church-architect; dust and untidiness in hidden corners are tolerated by many who have the care of sacred buildings. True piety will make no difference between the seen and the unseen, the hidden and that which is open to sight, but aim at comeliness, fitness, beauty, in *all* that appertains to the worship of God.

EXPOSITION.

VERS. 40—43.—THE APPAREL OF THE ORDINARY PRIESTS. The chapter concludes with brief directions concerning the official attire of the ordinary priests. This was to consist of linen drawers like those of the high priest; of a tunic, also of linen (ch xxxix. 27), shaped like his, but not diaped; of a linen girdle, the exact character of which is not stated; and of a close-fitting cap. The entire dress, with perhaps the exception of the girdle, was white. The linen drawers were regarded as of primary necessity, and the priest who did not wear them was threatened with death.

Ver. 40.—For Aaron's sons. His actual sons at this time—his descendants afterwards, to whom the priesthood was rigidly confined. *Thou shalt make coats.* The verb is different from that used in ver 39, and seems to imply that the priests' tunics were not to be patterned. *Girdles.* It has generally been supposed that these were of the same material and workmanship as the high priest's; but this is nowhere stated. In ch. xxxix. 29, the high priest's girdle alone is spoken of. *Bonnets.* Certainly not "bonnets" in the modern sense. Plain, close-fitting caps, shaped like a cup, or rather basin, seem to be meant. Such caps were often worn in Egypt, but not by the priests. *For glory and for beauty.* See above, ver. 2. It is very noticeable, that the extremely simple attire of the ordinary priests—a dress of pure white, without anything ornamental about it, unless it were the girdle—is still regarded as sufficient "for glory and for beauty." White robes have certainly a vast amount of scriptural testimony

in their favour (Lev. xvi. 4; Mark ix. 3; John xx. 12; Acts i. 10; Rev. iv. 4. vi. 11; vii. 9, 14, etc.).

Ver. 41.—Thou shalt put them upon Aaron thy brother, etc. These words serve to connect the present chapter with the following one. They contain the first intimation that Moses is not only to cause the holy garments to be made, but to invest the priests in them, and further to consecrate both Aaron and his sons by anointing. On this point, see the comment on ch. xxix. 7—9.

Ver. 42.—Linen breeches. Rather, "linen drawers" (Kalisch), such as we see worn by the Egyptians generally, reaching from the waist to a little above the knee. (See Wilkinson in Rawlinson's *Herodotus*, vol. ii. p. 113, 2nd ed.) This also was of linen (Herod. ii. 83). *Unto the thighs—i.e.*, to the bottom of the thighs where they adjoin on the knee.

Ver. 43.—When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation. Literally, "when they go into the tent of meeting—i.e., the place where God and the high priest were to meet. *The holy place.* The "holy place" seems in this passage to include the court of the tabernacle, wherein the altar was situated. *That they bear not iniquity.* To "bear iniquity" is to incur guilt, or have sin imputed to one. If even through forgetfulness a priest entered the sanctuary without this necessary article of clothing, and so risked an unseemly exposure of his person, he was to be accounted guilty, and punished by death. This was to be a "statute for ever," and to apply both to the high priest and the ordinary priests. Compare ch. xx. 26.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 40—42.—The priests' attire. The dress of the ordinary priests teaches us—

I. THAT NOT ONLY THE CHIEF, BUT THE SUBORDINATE, MINISTERS OF THE SANCTUARY MUST BE CLAD IN HOLINESS. The priests' garments are called "holy," no less than the high priest's (ver. 4). They are almost entirely of fine white linen. The linen drawers denote the need of holiness with respect to sins of the flesh. The linen cap implies purity of thought and imagination. The linen tunic is symbolical of the complete sanctification in which the whole man should be wrapped. The girdle, also of linen, marks the need of purity in respect of all the active part of life. In every one

of these respects the ordinary priests were on a par with the high priest. The same holiness was required of both.

II. THAT IN EXTREME SIMPLICITY THERE MAY BE A HIGH DEGREE OF BEAUTY. The priests' garments were, like the high priest's (ver. 2), "for glory and for beauty" (ver. 40). And, being designed by God for those ends, they doubtless attained them. Yet, unless the girdle was an exception, they were all white. So, when Jesus was transfigured, "his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them" (Mark ix. 3). There is a wondrous beauty in pure, spotless, snow-white raiment. Still more is there beauty in the simplicity of a spotless life. A pure mind—a pure heart—pure conduct—simple, uniform performance of every-day duty—what is more lovely, more glorious? To such the Divine Bridegroom will address the words—"Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee" (Cant. iv. 7).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Vers. 1-37.—THE CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTS. From the description of the priestly attire, the Divine Law-giver passed to the form of priestly consecration, whereof investiture in the "holy garments" was a part. The ceremony of consecration was to consist of four things:—1. Ablution; 2. Investiture; 3. Chrism or Anointing with oil; and 4. Sacrifice. In the directions given, we have, first, the preparation of the offerings (vers. 1-3); secondly, directions for the ablutions (ver. 4); thirdly, directions for the investiture of Aaron (vers. 5, 6), of his sons (vers. 8, 9); fourthly, directions for the anointing (ver. 7); and fifthly, directions as to the mode in which the sacrifices should be offered and disposed of (vers. 10-34). A command is then given that the ceremonies should be repeated every day for a week (ver. 35); and another, that the altar should receive consecration at the same time as the priests (vers. 36, 37). Additional light is thrown on most of these matters by the account contained in Leviticus (ch. viii.), of the manner in which Moses carried out the directions here given to him.

Ver. 1.—This is the thing that thou shalt do to them—i.e., "This is the ceremonial that thou shalt use on the occasion." There is a tacit reference to verse 41 of ch. xxviii., which had announced that the priests were to be consecrated. **Take one young bullock.** The offerings were to be provided beforehand, so as to be in readiness when the investiture and anointing were over. Hence they are mentioned first. **Rams without blemish.** Literally "perfect." On the offence to God of offering him blemished offerings, see Mal. i. 6-14.

Ver. 2.—Unleavened bread was regarded as purer than leavened, since fermentation is a

sort of corruption. See the comment on ch. xii. 15. **Cakes tempered with oil.** Literally, "mixed with oil," i.e., having oil as one of their ingredients, in contrast with the wafers, which had oil poured over them.

Ver. 3.—Thou shalt bring them in the basket. Rather, "Thou shalt offer them." A preliminary offering of the animals and of the "meat-offerings," in the lump seems to be intended. This, apparently, preceded the ablution.

Ver. 4.—The Ablution.

Ver. 4.—Unto the door of the tabernacle. The great laver was to be placed between the entrance to the tabernacle and the altar of burnt-offering (ch. xxx. 18). It was to this probably that Aaron and his sons were to be brought. Its main purpose was to be a lustral vessel, placed ready for the various ablutions which the law required (ib. 19-21). **Thou . . . shalt wash them with water.** Ablutions were an important part of the ceremonial of almost all ancient religions. In Egypt, the priests were compelled to wash themselves from head to foot in cold water twice every day, and twice every night (Herod. ii. 37). In the religion of Zoroaster frequent washing with water was prescribed for many kinds of impurity (Zendavesta, viii. p. 271, et seq.). The Greeks were particularly addicted to ceremonies of which ablution formed a part; and it is to Rome that we are indebted both for the word and for the idea of "lustration." It is a true instinct which has taught men the analogy between physical and moral purity, and led them to typify the removal of spiritual, by the cleansing from physical, defilement. The religion given at Sinai set a stamp of approval in many points on what may be called "the religion of nature;" and among them on this. Ablutions were required of the priests, not only at consecration, but every time that they entered the tabernacle, or sacrificed on the altar of burnt-offering (ch. xxx. 20). Washing was a main feature in the cleansing of leprosy (Lev. xiii. 54, 58) and of the leper

(*ib.* xiv. 8). It was also employed for the purification of many minor defilements (*ib.* xi. 25; xv. 5; xvii. 15, etc.). At what date it first came into use in the admission of proselytes is uncertain. Whether the washing of consecration extended to the whole body, or was limited to the hands and feet, is also a point on which critics have disagreed, but one of no great importance. (See John xiii. 9, 10.)

Vers. 5, 6.—The Investiture of Aaron.

Ver. 5.—Thou shalt take the garments. The directions, as here given, are incomplete, and not quite in the right order. In the LXX. they are still more incomplete. For the full process of investiture, we must look to Lev. viii. 7—9. There we find that the process included nine acts.—1. The putting on of the linen tunic. 2. The girding with the under-girdle. 3. The putting on of the robe of the ephod. 4. The putting on of the ephod. 5. The girding with the curious girdle of the ephod. 6. The putting on of the breast-plate. 7. The putting into the breast-plate of the Urim and Thummim. 8. The putting on of the mitre. 9. The affixing to the mitre of the golden plate.

The second and seventh are omitted here; and the order of the fifth and sixth is inverted.

Ver. 6.—The holy crown. The plate of gold with its blue ribbon, or lace, formed a species of diadem, such as in the East seems to have been always regarded as the special emblem of royalty. An ornament of the kind seems to have been introduced into Egypt by Khuenaten or Amenôphis IV. It marked the royal character of the high priest, who, as the main type of Christ in the Mosaic law, was bound to be "Prophet, Priest, and King." (Compare Lev. viii. 9.)

Ver. 7.—The Chrism or Anointing.

Ver. 7.—The anointing oil had been mentioned previously in ch. xxv. 6, when "spices" had been required from the congregation to form a portion of it. Its composition is given in ch. xxx. 23—25; a passage from which we gather that it was exceedingly rich and costly. **And pour it upon his head.** Compare Ps. cxxxiii. 2. While ablution is a rite common to many religions, the religious use of unction is peculiar to the Mosaic and the Christian. In the Mosaic it was applied to initiate into their office the prophet, the priest, and the king. In Christianity it was originally a rite by which sick persons were miraculously cured (Jas. v. 14, 15), from which use it was afterwards extended by ecclesiastical authority to other important ceremonies. The typical meaning under Christianity is clear; the oil represents the Holy Spirit, and the anointing the outpouring of that Spirit on those who are the objects of it. Christ himself obtained his

title of Christ (or Messiah), because he was "anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power" (Acts x. 38). Under Mosaicism this idea was, at most, latent. Uction was understood to mark (1) Dignity, because the olive was the first of trees (Judg. ix. 9); and (2) Continuance, because oil preserves things for a long time from corruption. Uction with the holy oil of the sanctuary no doubt further signified consecration to God's service. It was applied not only to the priests, but to the tabernacle, the ark, the table of shew-bread with its vessels, the seven branched candlestick, the altar of incense, the altar of burnt offering, and the laver, all of which thereupon became "most holy" (ch. xxx. 26—29).

Vers. 8, 9.—The Investiture of Aaron's sons

Ver. 8.—Thou shalt bring his sons. See verse 4. They were to be brought to the door of the tabernacle. **Put coats upon them.** The investiture of the high priest consisted of nine acts (see the comment on ver. 5); that of the ordinary priests of three only. 1. The putting on of the linen tunics. 2. The girding with the girdles. 3. The putting on of the cap. They do not seem to have been anointed, as Aaron was, by having the holy oil poured upon their heads, but only by having some of it sprinkled upon their garments (ver. 21; Lev. viii. 30).

Ver. 9.—The bonnets. Rather "caps" There is no article. **Thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons.** Literally, "Thou shalt fill the hand of Aaron and the hand of his sons." Installation in an office was usually effected among the Eastern nations by putting into the hand of the official the insignia which marked his functions. In this particular case certain portions of the offerings were used as the insignia. See ver. 24.

Vers. 10—34.—The Consecration Offerings.

Ver. 10.—Thou shalt cause a bullock to be brought. Rather, "the bullock,"—i.e., "the bullock mentioned in ver. 1, which was to be made ready before the ceremonies commenced." Aaron and his sons were to put their hands upon the head of the bullock, in order to identify themselves with it, and transfer to it the guilt of their own sins and imperfections, since it was to be a "sin-offering" (ver. 14; compare Lev. iv. 4).

Ver. 12.—Thou shalt take of the blood, and put it upon the horns of the altar. The virtue of the altar was regarded as residing especially in its horns. Here expiation was obtained by the blood—"which is the life"—of the victim being first smeared upon the four horns, and then the remainder poured out at the altar's base. Such was the usual practice with "sin-offerings" (Lev. iv. 7) whereof this was to be the first example

Ver. 13.—**Thou shalt take all the fat, etc.** Among all nations who have offered sacrifices, it has been very usual to select certain parts of the victim only for burning upon the altar, and to dispose otherwise of the remainder. The Greeks commonly burnt on the altar the thighs and the fat only. The Romans burnt certain parts of the intestines only, and called them *prosecta, prociolis, or oblagmina*. In Egypt, according to Herodotus, the greater part of the body was burnt; but the head, the neck, the shoulders, and the lower part of the legs, as well as the paunch, were reserved and not burnt (Herod. ii. 40). The fat was generally regarded as the best part of the offering, and most acceptable to the gods. This was probably on account of its burning with a bright flame and helping to consume the rest of the offering. **The omentum that is above the liver.** Probably the membrane which covers the upper part of the liver, sometimes called "the small omentum." (*reticulum jecoris*, Vulg.)

Ver. 14.—**The flesh . . . shalt thou burn with fire without the camp.** Such was the rule with sin-offerings generally (Lev. iv. 11, 12). The curse of sin which was on them, made them unfit for food and even unworthy of burial within the camp. On the symbolism of the burial, see Heb. xiii. 11—13. **His dung.** That which the bowels contained at the time of death.

Ver. 15.—**One ram.** Literally "the one ram"—i.e., "one of the two rams mentioned in verse 1." **Put their hands.** Here, again, the object was to identify themselves with the victim, and make it their representative; though now, as the ram was to be a burnt offering, self-sacrifice, rather than expiation, was the leading thought.

Ver. 16.—**Thou shalt take his blood and sprinkle it.** Rather, "and cast it." The blood was to be thrown from a basin, not sprinkled with the hand or with hyssop. Rabbinical tradition says that it was so cast at two of the corners, and thus moistened all the four sides. This was regarded as casting it "on the altar round about."

Ver. 17.—**Thou shalt cut the ram in pieces.** Literally, "into its pieces," which Kalisch supposes to mean "into its natural limbs." Egyptian sculptures show us animals thus cut up, and offered at sacrificial feasts to ancestors. **Wash its inwards—i.e., its "intestines"**—probably the stomach and bowels only. **Its legs.** The lower joints of the leg, with the foot, to which it was likely that dust might attach. **Put them unto his pieces—i.e., "replace them after washing with the other pieces,"** or joints, into which the animal had been cut.

Ver. 18.—**Thou shalt burn the whole ram upon the altar.** This became the general law of the burnt-offering (Lev. i. 9, 13, 17). It

indicated that self-sacrifice was wholly acceptable to God; whereas in sin-offerings there was a taint of evil which rendered all but certain parts of the victim unacceptable (ver. 14). **A sweet savour.** This is not to be understood in the coarse sense in which heathen writers used similar expressions, meaning by them (as it would seem) that the gods were really pleased with the odour of sacrifices. No candid mind can ascribe to the Hebrews such anthropomorphism. Evidently no more is meant than that the offering would be pleasing to God. See Gen. viii. 21; Lev. i. 9, 13, 17, etc.

Ver. 19.—**The other ram.** Compare ver. 15; and see also vers. 1 and 3, where two rams had been mentioned. This second ram is called, "the ram of consecration" in ver. 22, and again in Lev. viii. 22. It was "by far the most peculiar part of the whole ceremony" (S. Clark). It must be viewed as a "peace-offering" (Lev. iii. 1—17), but one of a peculiar character. The application of the blood to the persons of the priests was altogether unique, and most significant. It was the crowning act of consecration, and implied the complete dedication of their life and of all their powers to the service of the Almighty.

Ver. 20.—**The victim having been offered and accepted, its blood had a sanctifying power.** Placed upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron and his sons, it sanctified that organ, which was to be ever open to the Divine voice; placed upon the thumb of their right hand, it sanctified their ministerial actions; placed upon the great toe of their right foot, it sanctified their whole walk in life, their "going out," and their "coming in." The consecrated life of the victim which they had offered "was given back to them, in order that it might be devoted to the service of the Lord."

Ver. 21.—**Thou shalt take of the blood . . . and of the anointing oil.** Apparently, this is the only unction that the ordinary priests were to receive. (Compare Lev. viii. 30.) The mixture of the blood with the oil is unusual, and presents some difficulties; but perhaps it is best to view it as symbolising the intimate union which exists between justification and sanctification—the atoning blood, and the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit. **And sprinkle it.** The verb is different from that used in ver. 16, and is rightly rendered, "sprinkle." **He shall be hallowed and his garments.** As the garments shared in the sprinkling, they shared also, so far as was possible, in the consecration. It was hence especially that they became "holy garments."

Ver. 22.—**The rump.** Rather, "the tail." Oriental sheep have very commonly a broad fat tail, which weighs from six to twenty

pounds, and is sometimes laid upon a little cart with two wheels, which the sheep drags after it (Herod. iii. 113; Leo African. ix. p. 293 A; Fellows, *Asia Minor*, p. 10; Gesenius ad voc. מַלְיָה). There is no doubt that a "tail" of this kind is here meant. **The caul.** Rather, "the membrane." See the comment on ver 13. **The right shoulder.** Or "leg," according to some. The difference is not important.

Ver. 23.—One cake of oiled bread—i.e., one of the "unleavened cakes tempered with oil," mentioned in ver. 2. Out of the basket of the unleavened bread. See ver. 3.

Ver. 24.—Thou shalt put all in the hands, or "on the hands." The offerings were to be laid first, on the hands of Aaron, and then on those of his sons, which were to support them; while Moses, putting his hands under theirs, made a waving motion with them towards the four corners of the heavens, to indicate that the gifts were offered to the omnipresent God. This process was that "filling of the hand," by which the actual installation in office took place. Moses, by the act, transferred the priestly functions, which he had hitherto exercised, to his brother and his brother's descendants. He made them by his muscular energy perform their first priestly act.

Ver. 25.—Thou shalt receive them at their hands and burn them. Moses was still to continue the priestly acts, and to complete the peace-offering by burning the selected parts (ver. 22) on the brazen altar. (See Lev. iii. 3-5.)

Ver. 26.—Thou shalt take the breast. Henceforth Aaron and his sons were to have the breast of all wave-offerings (Lev. vii. 31-34); but on this occasion, as Moses officiated, the breast was to be his.

Vers. 27, 28.—A short digression is here made, from this particular offering, to all future offerings for consecration. For the future both the breast and the right shoulder are to belong to the priests. The shoulder, moreover, is to be "heaved," and only the breast "waved;" "heaving" being a single lifting up of the offering towards heaven, while "waving" was a repeated movement in a horizontal direction. Wave and heave offerings are always connected with the portions of the priests, or with things dedicated to God's service. (See ch. xxv. 2; xxxv. 22, 24; xxxviii. 24, 29; Lev. vii. 30-34; Num. xviii. 11, 19, 24, etc.)

Vers. 29, 30.—Here we have a second digression, also concerning future consecrations. The holy garments made for Aaron were to be preserved after his death, and used at the consecration of each successive high priest, who was to be anointed and consecrated in them, and to wear them for seven days from the time that he entered upon his office. Eleazar's investment in them is mentioned

(Num. xx. 28); but not that of any later high priest.

Ver. 31.—The ram of consecration—i.e., the part of the ram that was left and had not been burnt (ver. 25). Seethe his flesh in the holy place. This was understood to mean boiling at the door of the tabernacle (Lev viii. 31). A sacrificial meal followed on every peace-offering, in which the offerers participated. (See above, ch. xviii. 12.)

Ver. 32.—The bread that is in the basket—i.e., the loaf, cake, and wafer which still remained in the basket after one of each had been subtracted (see ver. 23, and compare vers. 2, 3).

Ver. 33.—They shall eat those things wherewith the atonement was made. An atoning force pervaded all sacrifice. Sin-offerings were wholly expiatory; burnt-offerings and peace-offerings partially so (Lev i. 4). **A stranger shall not eat thereof.** "A stranger" in this place does not mean a foreigner, but anyone who is not a priest.

Ver. 34.—Thou shalt burn the remainder with fire. Compare above, ch. xii. 10.

Vers. 35-37.—The repetition of the ceremonial, and the consecration of the altar.

Ver. 35.—Seven days shalt thou consecrate them. The repetition of the ceremony seven times on seven separate days seems to be intended. Thus was an ideal completeness given to it. Compare the seven days' compassing around of Jericho (Josh. vi. 3, 4.), the seven washings in Jordan by Naaman (2 Kings v. 14), the seven ascents to the top of Carmel by the servant of Elijah (1 Kings xviii. 43, 44), etc.

Ver. 36.—Thou shalt cleanse the altar, when thou hast made an atonement for it. Rather, "thou shalt purify the altar by making an atonement for it." The sin-offering for the altar was the same bullock which served for Aaron and his sons. Its virtue was applied to the altar by smearing the blood upon its horns and pouring the remainder at its base (ver. 12). See Lev. viii. 15:—"And Moses took the blood, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about with his finger, and purified the altar, and poured the blood at the bottom of the altar, and sanctified it." **And thou shalt anoint it.** In his execution of these directions, Moses separated the anointing of the altar from the cleansing, placing it even before the anointing of Aaron. He anointed it by sprinkling the holy oil upon it seven times (Lev. viii. 11).

Ver. 37.—Seven days shalt thou make an atonement. All the ceremonial was to be repeated seven times, not only the atonement for the altar (Lev. viii. 33). **An altar most holy.** Literally, "holiness of holinesses," as in ch. xl. 10. **Whatever toucheth the altar shall be holy.** Rather, "must be holy." Nothing that is not holy must touch it (Kalisch).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—37.—*The Consecration of the first High Priest.* Aaron may be viewed as either (1) a type of Christ, or (2) a pattern to all ministers who shall come after him.

1. AS A TYPE OF CHRIST, he typifies especially Christ's priestly character. (1) Christ "glorified not himself to be made an high priest" (Heb. v. 5), but was appointed by his Father, when he swore to him, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Ps. cx. 4). So Aaron took not the honour of the high priesthood to himself (Heb. v. 4), but was chosen by God (Ex. xxviii. 1—38), and invested with his office by Moses (Lev. viii. 6—36). (2) Christ was "the Messiah"—the anointed one—anointed with that profusion and abundance, with which none other ever was or will be—for "God gave not the Spirit unto him by measure" (John iii. 34). Aaron received the holy oil in profusion, by pouring. "The precious ointment ran down upon his beard"—nay, "went down to the skirts of his clothing" (Ps. cxxxiii. 2). (3) Christ was at once priest and king—"born king of the Jews" (Matt. ii. 2); crucified as "king of the Jews" (ib. xxvii. 37); crowned by the soldiers in mockery (ib. 29); founder of an imperishable "kingdom" in reality. Aaron, in his capacity of priest, wore a diadem, a "holy crown" (Ex. xxix. 6; Lev. viii. 9), and may thus be regarded as having had committed to him "a royal priesthood." (4) Christ has "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hid away (*ἀποκρυφῶς*) in him" (Col. ii. 3), and could freely declare the will of God to man. Aaron had the precious Urim and Thummim hid away in the folds of his breast-plate, and by their means could obtain a knowledge of God's will in any practical matter. Lastly, (5) Christ is the great mediator between God and man, the one and only man who can intercede for his brethren effectually, who can make real atonement for their sins, and reconcile them to his Father. Aaron's special office was to make continual atonement for all the sins of the people by such sacrifices as were appointed by the law, to intercede for his brethren with God continually, and to be a mediator between them and him, representative of the true mediator.

II. AS A PATTERN TO MINISTERS, Aaron is (1) solemnly called by God and set apart for his high office. (2) Prepared for it by an ablution, which typifies the removal of all impurity. (3) Invested with it by a human authority, viz., Moses. (4) Required on all occasions of its exercise to wear robes of office. (5) Anointed with a holy oil, typical of the graces of the Holy Spirit. (6) Appointed to minister continually before God in the tabernacle of the congregation. (7) Appointed to resolve doubts by declaring God's will in difficult cases which should be brought before him. (8) Required to bear upon his brow, in the sight of all men, a profession of "Holiness to the Lord." The official Aaron is thus, in numerous respects, a pattern and example to all—even Christian ministers; but the personal Aaron is, on the contrary, rather a warning. The weakness which allowed the worship of the golden calf, and the presumption which led to "murmuring against Moses" (Num. xx. 10—12) indicate a character which, if it had some virtues, had many and very serious defects.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—38.—*The rites of consecration for the priesthood.* The next portion of the Divine directions relates to the formal investiture of Aaron and his sons with the priests' office. This was to be made the occasion of a solemn and imposing ceremonial. "The rites of consecration proclaimed the necessity of holiness—a holiness not their own, but imputed to them by the grace of God; and following upon this, and flowing from the same source, a plentiful endowment of gifts for their sacred office, with the manifest seal of heaven's fellowship and approval" (Fairbairn). We may view the inaugurative ceremonies as having reference—

1. TO THE PRIESTHOOD, IN THE SIMPLEST IDEA OF IT (vers. 4—10). Aaron and his sons were to be—1. Washed with water—symbol of purification from all uncleanness (ver. 4). 2. Clothed with the holy garments—which robing was the real installation. Aaron was to be first robed (vers. 6, 7), afterwards his sons (vers. 8, 9). 3. Anointed—symbol of the abundant communication of Divine influences (ver. 7). The anointing took place immediately after investiture. See exposition. Nothing could be simpler

than these introductory ceremonies, which yet, in connection with the symbolism of the dress, meant a great deal. They "filled the hand" of the priest with his office (ver. 9), declared the need of holiness in the discharge of his duties, and conveyed to him the gifts of heavenly grace necessary for their right performance. So Christ "glorified not himself to be made an high priest" (Heb. v. 5), but was formally installed in his office by the Father; was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. vii. 26); and is endued above measure with the Spirit (John iii. 34).

II. TO THE PRIESTHOOD, AS HELD BY SINFUL MEN (vers. 10—15). The direct installation to the priesthood is followed by ceremonies having reference to the personal sinfulness of the holders of the office. The fact could not be overlooked that the law was making men priests that had infirmity (Heb. vii. 28). Themselves sinful, Aaron and his sons were not as yet fit to transact with God as mediators for others. The true High Priest, having *no* sin, laboured under no disqualification of this kind (Heb. vii. 27); but it was different with priests "taken from among men" (Heb. v. 1). They needed to have sacrifices offered for themselves. "This, therefore, was what was next provided; and through an entire series of sacrifices and offerings they were conducted as from the depths of guilt and condemnation to what indicated their possession of a state of blessed peace and most friendly intercourse with God" (Fairbairn). The sacrifices were three—a sin-offering (vers. 10—15); a burnt-offering (vers. 15—19); and a peace-offering (vers. 19—22); and these sacrifices, with the accompanying ceremonies, were to be repeated on seven successive days (ver. 35). The altar, as defiled by the sin of those officiating at it, was likewise to be cleansed by the blood of the sin-offering (vers. 36, 37). This is the first appearance of the sin-offering in the law.

III. TO QUALIFICATIONS, DUTIES, AND EMOLUMENTS (vers. 15—38). The sin-offering had especially to do with the removal of guilt. The second sacrifice—the burnt-offering—denoted the duty of unconditional and entire surrender to Jehovah. The third—"the ram of consecration" (ver. 22)—was that by which the newly-made priests were wholly put into the functions and rights of their office. 1. The ram's blood was significantly applied to different members of the person (ver. 20). It was put upon the tip of the right ear, upon the thumb of the right hand, and upon the great toe of the right foot, of Aaron and of his sons. This denoted, of course, entire dedication of the person to God's service, in hearing, in acting, and in the daily walk. It beautifully symbolises, not only the perfect consecration of him whose meat it was to do his Father's will (John iv. 34), but the completeness of devotion which ought to characterise each of his disciples, who also are priests to God. 2. The priests were sprinkled with the ram's blood and oil mingled (ver. 21). This symbolised the new life of God, in which the priest was "henceforth to move and have his being, in conjunction with the Spirit, on whose softening, penetrating, invigorating influence all powers and movements of that Divine life depend" (Fairbairn). 3. The portions of the sacrifice which belonged to God, with a loaf, cake, and wafer, of the meat offering—symbolic of fruitfulness in good works—were next to be placed on the priests' hands, and waved before the Lord (ver. 24). This signified, (1) "The conveyal of the function which belongs to the priest to offer the fat pieces of God's altar; and (2) the infeoffment of the priests with the gift, which they receive in future for their service, but which they must now give over to Jehovah, because they are not yet fully dedicated, and therefore cannot yet themselves act as priests" (Jehler). The conclusion of the ceremony was a sacrificial meal, indicative of restored fellowship, and happy communion with God (vers. 31—35). Vers. 29, 30, provide for the handing down of the high priest's office to Aaron's sons. The priesthood continued till superseded by that of the greater Priest "after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. vii.).—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 38—42.—THE DAILY SACRIFICE. The consecration of the altar, which is made a part of the consecration of the priests, is to be followed immediately by the establishment of the daily sacrifice. Two lambs are to be offered day by day to the Lord, one in the

morning and the other in the evening, as "a continual burnt-offering" (ver. 42), in acknowledgment that the life of the people belonged to Jehovah (Cook), and that they were bound to offer perpetually "themselves their souls and bodies, to be a reasonable

holy, and lively sacrifice" to him. The burnt-offerings were to be accompanied by appropriate "meat and drink-offerings"—i.e., by a certain quantity of flour mingled with olive oil for the one, and a certain quantity of wine for the other—indications of the debt of gratitude which the nation owed to God for his continual benefits.

Ver. 38.—**Lambs of the first year.** Compare ch. xii. 5. The LXX. add "without blemish." But this is unnecessary, as all victims were to be without blemish (Lev. xxi. 20; Deut. xv. 21, etc.).

Ver. 39.—**At even.** Literally, "between the two evenings." (See the comment on ch. xii. 6.) Josephus says (*Ant. Jud.* xiv. 4, § 3) that the hour in ordinary use was three.

Ver. 40.—**A tenth deal**—i.e., a "tenth part." The tenth part of an ephah is no doubt meant. This was sometimes called "an omer" (ch. xvi. 36), and would be about three pounds weight of flour, or a little more. **One fourth part of an hin of beaten oil.** The word *hin* is said to be Egyptian. It occurs here for the first time. The *hin* was the sixth part of a *bath*, and probably contained about one pint and a half English. **The fourth**

part of an hin of wine for a drink-offering. The application of the "drink-offerings" is uncertain. Josephus says (*Ant. Jud.* iii. 9, § 4) that they were poured out round the brazen altar. But the analogy of the "meat offering" makes it probable that a portion only was thus treated, while the greater part belonged to the priests. In the entire provision by which burnt and peace-offering were to be necessarily accompanied with meat-offerings and drink-offerings, we can scarcely be wrong in seeing an arrangement made especially for the convenience of the priests.

Ver. 41.—**Thou shalt do thereto according to the meat-offering, etc.** "Thou shalt offer"—i.e., "the same meat-offering and drink-offering with the evening as with the morning sacrifice." For a sweet savour. See the comment on ver. 18.

Ver. 42.—**Throughout your generations.** Rather, "for your generations." The tabernacle of the congregation. Rather, "of meeting"—"the tabernacle of meeting, where I will meet you." The verb and substantive are modifications of the same word, נָפַח. It is this passage which definitely fixes the meaning of the phrase incorrectly rendered "the tabernacle of the congregation" by our translators.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 38-42.—*The value of a daily service.* Perpetual remembrance of God is one of the greatest needs for the maintenance and furtherance of religion. "Pray without ceasing." "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. iv. 6). "I have set the Lord *always* before my face" (Ps. xvi. 8). These and numerous other texts lay down the perfect law—constant worship of the Almighty. But human weakness, and the pressing concerns of life, make literal compliance with the perfect law impossible. And in his mercy God relaxes the law. "At evening and morning, and at noonday, will I pray," says the man after his own heart (Ps. lv. 17); "and he shall hear my voice." Daniel prayed "three times a day, with his window open towards Jerusalem" (Dan. vi. 10). Coldness and worldliness have in the Christian Church reduced, for the most part, the "three times" to twice; but still the obligation is acknowledged under all circumstances at morn and even to lift the heart to God, and "look up." Now, it is a great help towards maintaining this minimum that there should be, twice a day, a public service. The daily morning and evening sacrifice were a perpetual reminder to the Israelites of their duty in respect of prayer—they felt the "lifting up of their hands" to be—according to the time of it—a morning or "an evening sacrifice" (Ps. cxli. 2). And so, in the Christian Church, public service twice a day, which prevails widely, is of great value.

1. AS REMINDING MEN OF THE DUTY OF SUCH CONSTANT SUPPLICATION—as keeping it before them, by the sight of open church doors, and the sound of chiming bells, that God is, at the least, to be addressed twice a day, at morn and even, in earnest, heartfelt prayer; to be praised and thanked for his mercies, intreated for his forgiveness, besought for his support, and help, and blessing. What is done by public authority rouses attention, provokes inquiry, raises a general feeling that it would not be done unless it were right. Many a man, who has long neglected private prayer, has been led to acknowledge himself wrong, and to revert to the practice of it by the witness borne—the protest made—by those churches which persistently keep up the substitute for the morning and evening sacrifice of the tabernacle and temple, to wit—that daily morning and evening

service in the sanctuary, which the Church of England, among others, enjoins upon her ministers.

II. **AS ENABLING THEM TO PERFORM THE DUTY IN QUIETNESS, WITHOUT DISTRACTION.** In many homes there is no quietness, no retired spot to which husband, or wife, or child can go for silent communion with the Almighty Father, or the Saviour. All is noise, tumult, bustle, hurry—nay, sometimes, all is quarrel, angry words, cruel blows, threats, curses. Private prayer in such households, if it was ever known, drops out of use. Frequently, it is not allowed—it provokes an outbreak—if done at all, it has to be done secretly, hastily, in fear and trembling. In such cases, how great a blessing is it to those who feel the need of prayer, that there should be somewhere near them a sacred spot, whither they can, occasionally at any rate, betake themselves to pray their own prayers, or join in the prayers of others as may seem best to them, and feel the near presence of the Almighty! “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord!” “One day in thy courts is better than a thousand” elsewhere.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 38—43.—*The daily burnt-offering.* Symbol of consecration of life of the nation. 1. Offered at morn and even. 2. Continually. 3. With meat-offering—dedication of life in its practical activities.—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 43—46.—**GOD'S PROMISES.** The chapter terminates with a parenthetic insertion of various promises, intended to cheer the Israelites under the hard circumstances of their wanderings in the wilderness, and growing out of the mention of the tabernacle as “the tabernacle of meeting” (ver. 42). “There,” says God, “He will meet, not only Moses, to speak to him, but also the children of Israel, to receive their offerings, hear their prayers, and grant their requests. There will he meet them, and there his glory shall be; and the tabernacle shall be thereby sanctified. He will sanctify both the tabernacle and the altar; he will sanctify, moreover, both Aaron and his sons; and he will dwell among the children of Israel, and be their God; and they shall know him.” Very precious and gracious promises, made absolutely; though, as the result showed (2 Chr. xxxvi. 14—18), contingent on their obedience; and faithfully performed, as long as even a remnant was obedient, during a space of above seven hundred years from the Exodus to the Captivity!

Ver. 43.—**There will I meet the children of Israel.** Lay Israelites might not enter the tabernacle, and could only “meet God” at its entrance, when they brought their sacrifices to the altar. He promises, however, to meet them on these occasions with favour

and acceptance. **The tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory.** Compare ch. xl. 34. The presence of the Shechinah was the true sanctification of the tabernacle—all the rest was mere type and figure. God not only “put his name there,” but put his presence there visibly.

Ver. 44.—**I will sanctify . . . the altar.** See Lev. ix. 24, where we learn that on the first occasion of Aaron's offering sacrifice upon the brazen altar, “there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat.” Thus the altar had its miraculous sanctification, as well as the tabernacle, and was not merely consecrated by human instrumentality. **I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons.** It would seem to follow, by parity of reasoning, that here also something more is intended than had been accomplished by the rites of consecration. The verb is in the future—“*I will sanctify*”—and must allude to something which has not yet taken place. Probably, sanctification of the spirit is intended—that Divine influence upon the heart which alone makes men really and truly “holy.” (Compare Lev. xxi. 8, 15; xxii. 9, 16.) But in this case the promise must have been conditional. God would sanctify them so far as they would allow him.

Ver. 45.—**I will dwell among the children of Israel.** Compare ch. xxv. 8. Primarily, the indwelling of the Shechinah in the holy of holies is, no doubt, meant; but the expression need not be limited to this. God would be present with his people in manifold ways

—to direct, sustain, enlighten, defend, and save them. **And will be their God.** Compare ch. vi. 7. What treasures of love, protection, bounty, tenderness, and pardon, are there in this phrase!

Ver. 46.—**And they shall know,** etc. When they experience my protection, bounty, love, tenderness, pardon they shall truly feel and

know in their inmost hearts, that I am the same God who delivered them out of the bondage of Egypt, and brought them forth, for the very purpose of “dwelling among them.” **I am Jehovah, their God.** No other God could deliver after this sort. No other God could be so long-suffering to a “stiff-necked people.”

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 43—46.—*God's promises to Israel.* Here we may note—I. THE DIVINE GOODNESS AS SHOWN IN THE MAKING OF PROMISES. Man has no claim upon his Maker. Our “goodness extendeth not to him.” So far forth as we “do him true and laudable service,” we are “unprofitable servants—we have done that which was our duty to do” (Luke xvii. 10). But how little of such service is rendered! How great are our shortcomings! How many our “sins, negligences, and ignorances!” How little do we deserve anything but evil at God's hand! And yet, he not only bears with us, but makes us gracious promises. He binds himself to us beforehand by express engagements—he pledges his own sacred word to bestow upon us divers blessings. Here he promised Israel five things—1. The sanctification of the tabernacle by the Shechinah; 2. The sanctification of the altar; 3. Holiness in Aaron and his sons; 4. His own permanent abiding presence with them as their God; and 5. Their own recognition of him as their Lord God—the deliverer who brought them out of Egypt—the eternal—*Jehovah Eloheyhem*. And to Christians he has promised far more—pardon, redemption, acceptance, sanctification by the Holy Spirit, eternal life! Utterly unworthy as we are, these promises have been made to us. God's infinite goodness has caused him to condescend to enter into covenant with his creatures; and the promises which he has made to us, “he for his part will most surely keep and perform.”

II. THE DIVINE FAITHFULNESS, AS SHOWN IN THE FULFILMENT OF THE PROMISES MADE. (1) The sanctification of the tabernacle was effected by the entrance into it of the Shechinah (ch. xl. 34); (2) That of the altar by the fire which “came out from before the Lord” (Lev. ix. 24); (3) Aaron and his sons were sanctified to the effectual performance of all their ministerial acts, and were further personally sanctified, so far as their own wills would permit; (4) God did abide with his people Israel, notwithstanding all their shortcomings, for at least seven centuries; defended them from their enemies; taught them by his prophets; made them a praise and a wonder among the nations. And, on the whole, (5) notwithstanding occasional defections, Israel did recognise Jehovah as their God, did maintain his worship, did observe his laws, did believe that he dwelt among them, and was “the Lord their God.” Shall we think that to us he will be less faithful? Shall we doubt that he will give to us the covenanted blessings—pardon, and redemption, and acceptance, and sanctification, and eternal life? Surely, “God is not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent.” He is “the faithful and the true” (Rev. xix. 11). He never broke a promise. All to which he is pledged he will most assuredly perform, if we only are not wanting on our part.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 43—46.—*Israel sanctified by God's presence.* 1. Three grades of sanctification. (1) By blood. (2) Unction of the Spirit. (3) Personal Divine indwelling. 2. God's dwelling with Israel sanctifies (1) the tabernacle; (2) his servants; (3) the whole people.—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXX.

Vers. 1—10.—THE ALTAR OF INCENSE. This chapter has the appearance of being one in which accidental omissions are supplied. The natural place for a description of the altar of incense—part of the furniture of the holy place (ver. 6)—would seem to have been ch. xxv. 10—40, where we have the descriptions of the ark, the mercy-seat, the table of shew-bread, and the candlestick; the natural place for “the ransom of souls,” the earlier part of the same chapter (ver. 8), where the silver is required which was to be collected in this way; the natural place for an account of the bronze laver, ch. xxvii., where the bronze altar, near which it stood, is described; the natural place for the composition of the holy oil, ch. xxix., where its use is commanded (vers. 7, 21); and the natural place for a description of the perfume the same as for the altar on which it was to be offered. Whether Moses made the omissions in writing his record, and afterwards supplied them in the present chapter, or whether Divine wisdom saw fit to give the directions in the order in which we now have them, cannot be determined. Hitherto certainly no sufficient reason has been shown for the existing order, which hence *appears* accidental. The altar of incense was to be in many respects similar to the altar of burnt-offering, but of smaller size and richer material. Both were to be “four-square,” and both of shittim wood cased with metal; but the former was to be taller, the latter shorter, than it was broad; and while the latter was to be cased with bronze, the former was to have a covering of gold. The place for the altar of incense was the main chamber of the tabernacle, a little in front of the veil; and its purpose was, as the name implied, the offering of incense to Almighty God. This was to be done by the officiating priest, twice a day, morning and evening, and in practice was performed before the morning, and after the evening sacrifice.

Ver. 1.—An altar to burn incense upon. The offering of incense was an element in the religious worship of most ancient nations. In Egypt frankincense was especially used in the festivals of the god Ammon (*Records*

of the Past, vol. x. pp. 18, 19); and on one occasion an Egyptian sovereign sent a naval expedition to Arabia for the express purpose of bringing frankincense and frankincense trees to Egypt, in connection with the Ammon feasts (Brugsch, *History of Egypt*, vol. i. pp. 305—311). The Babylonians burnt a thousand talents’ weight of frankincense every year at the great festival of Bel (Herod. i. 183). The Greeks and Romans offered frankincense, as a rule, with every offering; and in the early ages of Christianity it was made the test of a Christian whether he would do this or no. What exactly the religious notion was which underlay these acts, or whether it was the same everywhere, may be questioned. In the Mosaic religion, however, there can be little doubt that, in the main, incense symbolised prayer. (See Ps. cxli. 2; Luke i. 10.) **Of shittim wood.** Compare above, ch. xxvii. 1.

Ver. 2.—Four square shall it be. Like the altar of burnt-offering. See the comment on ch. xxvii. 1. **Two cubits shall be the height thereof.** Altars of this small size are often represented on ancient vases and other remains. (See Dr. Smith’s *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, pp. 117 and 1174.) **The horns thereof.** It seems to be assumed that an altar must have horns. Those of the altar of incense were to have the blood of certain sin-offerings smeared upon them (Lev. iv. 7, 18). **Shall be of the same—i.e., “shall be of one piece with the top of the table”—**not projections added to it. Compare ch. xxvii. 2.

Ver. 3.—Thou shalt make unto it a crown of gold—i.e., a border, or moulding, all round the top, to prevent anything from falling off. Compare what is said of the table of shew-bread, ch. xxv. 24.

Ver. 4.—By the two corners. Rather, “on its two sides.” The ensuing clause is redundant. All that is meant is, that the altar should have two rings only—not four—one at each side, directly below the moulding. As it was so small, two rings were enough. **For the staves.** Rather, “for staves.”

Ver. 5.—The staves were to be of acacia wood, overlaid with gold, like those used for carrying the ark (ch. xxv. 13) and the table of shew-bread (ib. 28).

Ver. 6.—Thou shalt put it before the veil. It might have been doubtful from what is said here, which side of the veil the altar was to be placed. The doubt is precluded by the narrative of what Moses actually did in ch. xl. 21—29, which makes it clear that the altar was placed with the golden candlestick and the table of shew-bread, outside the veil, in the “holy place,” and not within the

"holy of holies." **Where I will meet with thee.** See above, ch. xxv. 22.

Ver. 7.—Sweet incense. Literally, "incense of perfumes." For the composition of the incense, see vers. 34-38. **When he dresseth the lamps.** The lamps of the golden candlestick were to be trimmed and cleaned, their wicks looked to, and fresh oil added, if necessary, every morning, immediately after day-break. See the comment on ch. xxvii. 21. The duty devolved on the priests.

Ver. 8.—At even. Literally, "between the two evenings." (See the comment on ch. xii. 6.) The offering of incense by the high priest twice a day, at the time of the morning and evening sacrifice, indicated that prayer was needed as constantly as expiation, and that neither might for a single day be intermitted. **A perpetual incense.** "Perpetual," in the sense that it was to be burnt twice a day, as long as the religion lasted—not in the sense that it was to be kept burning constantly.

Ver. 9.—By strange incense is meant any which was not prepared according to the directions given in vers. 34-38. None such was ever to be offered. Nor was the altar to be used for **burnt-offering, meat-offering, or drink-offering.** For burnt-offering it was manifestly unfit; but the prohibition of the others seems to show a determination to keep its use markedly distinct from that of the brazen altar in the court, which was to receive all that was offered either for expiation, or for self-dedication, or in gratitude. On the sole

exception made to this general law, see the comment on the next verse.

Ver. 10.—Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in the year. Once in the year, on the great day of atonement—the tenth day of the seventh month—the high priest, after burning incense within the veil, and sprinkling the blood of a bullock and a ram towards the mercy seat, was to take of the blood, and put it on the horns of the altar of incense "to make an atonement for it—to cleanse it and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel" (Lev. xvi. 18, 19). This was not making it an altar of expiation, but merely expiating it. There was, however, another use for the altar, where it seems to have served for an altar of expiation. When the high priest had sinned in his official character, and offered a sin-offering for his cleansing (Lev. iv. 3-12), or when the whole congregation had committed an offence through inadvertence, and did the same (ib. 13-21), the high priest was to put of the blood of the sacrifice on the horns of the altar of incense, "for the expiation of his own sin and the sin of the people" (Keil). In these two cases, the altar of incense served the purpose of the altar of burnt-offering, on which was put the blood of private sin-offerings (ib. 22-35). It is most holy. There seems to be sufficient reason for considering the altar of incense as, next to the ark and mercy seat, the most sacred object in the furniture of the tabernacle. This precedence indicates the *extreme* value which God sets upon prayer.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1-10.—The symbolism of the Altar of Incense. We have seen that the ascent of incense signifies the mounting up to heaven of the grateful odour of man's earnest and heart-felt prayers. The altar, therefore, symbolises the heart which offers such prayers,—

I. **IN ITS MATERIALS.** The altar is of acacia wood and gold—the one a symbol of soundness and strength, the other of purity. Prayer, to be acceptable, must proceed out of a true heart—a sound, honest, sincere, strong heart—not one that is weak and unstable, one thing to-day and another to-morrow; but one that is consistent, steady, firm, brave, resolute. And it must also proceed out of a pure heart. The gold of the altar was to be "pure gold," refined till every atom of the native dross was purged away. And the heart of the worshipper should be refined similarly. There is much native dross in the hearts of all men. The discipline of life, the furnace of affliction, under God's blessing, does much to purge the dross. But something of it always remains. One only was absolutely pure. We must approach God through the intercession of Christ, and then our incense will mount up from a golden altar heavenwards.

II. **IN ITS SITUATION.** The altar was "by the ark of the testimony"—directly in front of the mercy seat—very close to the Divine presence, therefore. Prayer brings us into the presence of God. The heart that is drawn upward, and fixed in worship and adoration in its Creator and Redeemer, feels itself near to him. Near, very near; yet still separated by a veil. The eyes of the body cannot pierce that impenetrable curtain, which shrouds the invisible world from our eager, curious gaze. The heart itself cannot so lift itself up as to rise out of the present conditions of its mortal, finite nature,

and really enter the empyrean. There is still a veil between man and the spiritual world. Through death only can he pass beyond it.

III. IN ITS HORNS, WHICH WERE SYMBOLS OF POWER. Great is the might of prayer. By means of it the heart has power with God, can wrestle with him, as Jacob did; and as it were, force him to bless it (Gen. xxxii. 26). The parable of the importunate widow illustrates this power. Let us follow her example; let us persist, let us besiege God with our prayers, for ourselves, for others, and we shall prevail with him; at length he will hear us. It has been questioned in these "last days" whether prayer is ever answered; and tests have been proposed, by which men have hoped to demonstrate its inefficiency. But God will not be tested. "Thou shalt not tempt" (*i.e.* "try" or "test") "the Lord thy God." He does not undertake to answer faithless, or even doubting, wavering prayers. The promise is—"Whoever shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and *shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe* that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith" (Mark xi. 23).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1-11.—*The Altar of Incense.* See below, vers. 34-38.—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 11-16.—**THE RANSOM OF SOULS.** The various commands given with respect to the tabernacle and its furniture would necessarily involve a very considerable outlay; and it was important that Moses should receive directions as to the source, or sources, whence this expenditure was to come. In ch. xxv. 2-7, one source had been indicated, *viz.*, the voluntary contributions of the people. To this is now added a second source. On occasion of the numbering of the people—an event which is spoken of as impending (ver. 12)—Moses was told to exact from each of them, as atonement money, the sum of half a shekel of silver. The produce of this tax was to be applied to the work of the sanctuary (ver. 16), and it is found to have formed an important element in the provision for the cost, since the total amount was above a hundred talents, or, more exactly, 301,775 shekels (ch. xxxviii. 25). The requirement of atonement money seems to have been based on the idea, that formal enrolment in the number of God's faithful people necessarily brought home to every man his unworthiness to belong to that holy company, and so made him feel the need of making atonement in some way or other. The payment of the half-shekel was appointed as the legal mode under those circumstances. It was an acknowledgment of sin, equally binding upon all, and so made equal for all; and it saved from God's vengeance those who,

if they had been too proud to make it, would have been punished by some "plague" or other (ver. 12).

Ver. 12.—**When thou takest the sum.** The sum had been taken roughly at the time of the exodus (ch. xii. 37). Moses was now, it would seem, about to take it again, more accurately. No command had ever been given that the people should not be numbered; and the Egyptian habit of compiling exact statistics naturally clung to one who had had an Egyptian training. (See the "Statistical Tables of Karnak," in the "*Records of the Past*," vol. ii. pp. 19-28.) **A ransom.** Rather "an expiation," "an atonement"—(as in ch. xxix. 33, 36)—something to show that he was conscious of sin, and of his not deserving to be numbered among God's people. **That there be no plague.** "That they be not punished for undue pride and presumption." There is no thought of such a "plague" as was provoked by David's numbering (2 Sam. xxiv. 15).

Ver. 13.—**Half a shekel.** The shekel of later times was a silver coin, about the size round of our shilling, but considerably thicker, and worth about one shilling and eightpence. But at the date of the exodus coins were unknown, and the "shekel" meant a certain weight. The burthen imposed by the tax was evidently a light one. **The shekel of the sanctuary.** A standard weight in the possession of the priests, equal probably to about 220 grains troy. **Twenty gerahs.** The word "gerah" means "a bean;" and the *gerah* must have been a weight equal to about eleven

grains troy. It remained in use to the time of the captivity (Ezek. xlv. 12).

Ver. 14.—**From twenty years old and upward.** Twenty was the age at which an Israelite was reckoned a man; at twenty he became liable to serve in the wars (2 Chron. xxv. 5), and entered otherwise on the duties of citizenship. At twenty the Levites began their service in the temple (1 Chron. xxiii. 24, 27; 2 Chron. xxxi. 17; Ezra iii. 8).

Ver. 15.—**The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less.** This is very emphatic testimony to the equal value of souls in God's sight. The payment was "the ransom of a soul" (ver. 12)—an acknowledgment of God's mercy in sparing those whose

life was justly forfeit. As each soul that he has created is equally precious in his sight, and as he designs equally the salvation of all—it was fitting that the same exact sum should be paid in every case.

Ver. 16.—The application of the "atonement money" is stated more distinctly in ch. xxxviii. 27, 28. It was employed for the silver sockets that supported the boards of the tabernacle, and for the hooks, capitals, and connecting rods of the pillars which surrounded the court. Thus employed, it was a continual "memorial" in the eyes of the people, reminding each man of his privileges and duties.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 12-16.—*The atonement money.* Remark three things:—

I. **THE ATONEMENT MONEY WAS REQUIRED OF ALL.** "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 23). "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John i. 8). There was to be no exemption. Moses and Aaron were to bring their half-shekel no less than the others; the priests had to make the offering, just the same as the laity; the rulers, as much as the common people. The lesson taught was, that every soul was guilty before God—all unclean in his sight, who "is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity"—all in need of pardon and cleansing. So far there was certainly "no difference" (Rom. iii. 22). "Every mouth was stopped" (ib. 19). Boasting was excluded—the right attitude of the soul towards God shown to be one of humility, deprecation, penitence.

II. **THE SAME ATONEMENT MONEY WAS REQUIRED OF EACH.** It is true to say, that all men equally are guilty in God's sight; but it would not be true to say that all are equally guilty. Yet the same atonement was required of all. "The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less." This marks that one and the same atonement is required, whatever be the degree of a man's guilt, whether he be (so far as is possible) "a just man needing no repentance," or "the chief of sinners." On the man's part is required in every case "repentance and faith;" these, however, cannot atone. The true "atonement money," the true "redemption," the real "ransom of souls," is the death of Christ—one and the same for all—necessary for all—not too much for the least, not too little for the most guilty; but "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world." It saves all that trust in it—saves them from wrath and death—saves them from sin—atones for them—puts them "at one" with the Father.

III. **THE ATONEMENT WAS TO BE KEPT IN MIND, TO BE FOR A PERPETUAL MEMORIAL.** There are those who are content to acknowledge that Christ has died for them, and has saved them, who yet object to giving the fact, what they call, undue prominence. They would acknowledge it once for all, and then have done with it. But this is not the general teaching of the Bible, nor is it that of the present passage. The "atonement money" was to be so employed as to be "a memorial unto the children of Israel before the Lord" perpetually. They were to have the shapes of silver, into which it had been cast, ever before their eyes. And assuredly there is nothing in the whole range of spiritual facts which deserves such continual remembrance, such constant dwelling upon in thought, as the atonement made for us by Christ. Herein alone have we hope, trust, confidence. Hereby alone are we saved. The cross of Christ should be ever before the Christian's eye, mind, heart. He should not for a moment forget it, much less be ashamed of it.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 11—16.—*The numbering of Israel and their ransom.* I. THE NUMBERING OF THE PEOPLE, AN EMBLEM OF THE JUDGMENT. God's claims were brought home to them; their unworthiness was contrasted with the place assigned to them as the people whom God had visited with his light and salvation. When we remember that we are the Lord's, and the light of that just claim is shed upon our life, it is to our shame and confusion. But life will be read at last in this very light!

II. THE ATONEMENT WHICH SHIELDS US. 1. It is a ransom for the life: "that there be no plague among them when thou numberest them." God's wrath will not smite if this be provided. 2. It must be given from one's own in that judgment day. Christ to avail us then must have been made ours by faith. It must be Christ in us. 3. It is required from all. None are guiltless. 4. The same is demanded from each. All alike are in themselves lost and under God's wrath. 5. The atonement is for the service of the tabernacle. The changed life of God's people through the indwelling of Christ is for God's service now, and the manifestation of his glory hereafter.—U.

Vers. 11—17.—*The atonement money.* It pertained to the full admission of Israel to theocratic privilege, that, the nation as a whole having been admitted into covenant, a formal registration should be made of at least the grown part of the community. Directions were accordingly issued for the taking of a census, which had also in view a more complete military organisation of the nation than as yet existed. The males of the tribes from twenty years old and upwards were to be made to pass before Jehovah, and were to be regularly counted and enrolled as members of the holy commonwealth. This act, however, which involved a near approach to Jehovah, and was on the part of the individual an entrance into the full rights of his citizenship, called for some new recognition of the principle of atonement on which the covenant was built. Hence the ordinance that each individual of those who were numbered should make an offering of half a shekel of silver, as a ransom or atonement for his soul (ver. 15). The silver thus obtained was to go for the service of the tabernacle (ver. 16). On which observe—1. *The money was money of atonement.* It was paid in ransom for life. If we seek the principle on which the ransoming proceeds, we must view the half shekel in the light of the practice of commutation. In strictness, atonement could be made only by blood. Here, as in other cases, the animal sacrifice is commuted for money, and the money, in virtue of that for which it is commuted, is admitted as atonement. The purpose to which the silver was to be applied required that the ransom should take this form. 2. *All were to be taxed alike.* "The rich shall not give more, nor the poor less" (ver. 15). This intimates that, as respects his need of atonement, no man has any advantage over his neighbours. "There is no difference" (Rom. iii. 22). It intimates, too, the essential equality of men in the eyes of God. 3. *The money was to be applied to the work of the tabernacle.* The greater part of it was used in making the silver sockets for the dwelling-place (ch. xxxviii. 27). Thus (1) the tabernacle—symbol of God's kingdom in Israel—was founded on the silver of atonement. This, surely, was a profound testimony to the fact that only on the basis of atonement can communion exist between heaven and earth. (2) Each Israelite was individually represented in Jehovah's sanctuary. His tribute money formed part of it. He had a stake and interest in it. The honour was great: not less so the responsibility.—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 17—21.—*THE BRAZEN LAVER* That the tabernacle was to have an ample supply of water had been implied in the directions given for the washing of Aaron and his sons at its outer door (ch. xxix. 4). That it would contain some provision of the kind is further indicated by the command to "wash the in-

wards" of victims (ib. 17). We have now in this place, the special directions given to Moses on the subject. He was to provide a brazen, or rather a bronze laver, which was to stand on a separate "foot," or base, of bronze, in the court of the tabernacle, between the entrance to the tabernacle and the "brazen

altar." This was to be kept constantly supplied with water, and was to furnish whatever might be needed for the various ceremonies. Among its other uses, it was to supply liquid for the constant ablution of the priests, who were to wash both their hands and their feet on every occasion of their entering the sacred tent, and even on every occasion of their ministering at the brazen altar (ver. 20). This law was to be "a statute for ever" (ver. 21), and its violation was to be punished by death.

Ver. 18.—**A laver.** It is remarkable that nothing is said respecting either the shape or the size of the laver. In 1 Kings we have an elaborate description of the "molten sea," which replaced it in Solomon's temple, as well as an almost equally elaborate one of ten other lavers made by Hiram, Solomon's artist, at the same time. We may perhaps assume from these examples that the brazen laver of the tabernacle was a large bronze vase or basin, standing upon a stem, which was fixed into a base. It was probably fitted up with an apparatus of taps and cocks. Between the tabernacle . . . and the altar. The Rabbinical commentators say that it was not

exactly in the middle, but a little towards the south side.

Ver. 19. **Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet.** Ablution by clear fresh water is so plain and simple a type of purity as to have been used in almost all religions. The hands and the feet would designate symbolically all a man's active doings, and even his whole walk in life—his "goings out" and his "comings in," in the phraseology of the Hebrews. There would also be a special practical need for such ablutions in the case of persons who were employed about bloody sacrifices, who slew the victims, sprinkled the blood, and even dashed it against the base of the altar. On some rare occasions the priests were required to bathe their whole persons, and not their hands and feet only (see above, ch. xxix. 4; and below, Lev. xvi. 4).

Ver. 20.—**That they die not.** Compare ch. xxviii. 35 and 43. Contempt of the simple and easy regulation to wash at the laver would imply contempt of purity itself; and so an entire hypocrisy of life and character, than which nothing could be a greater offence to God.

Ver. 21.—**It shall be a statute for ever.** Compare ch. xxvii. 21; xxviii. 43; xxix. 9, etc. Even to him—i.e., to Aaron.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 18—21.—**The Brazen Laver.**—Primarily, the brazen altar has its antitype in THE CHRISTIAN FONT. "Baptism saves us," says St. Peter (1 Pet. iii. 21). "Arise and be baptised, and wash away thy sins," said Ananias (Acts xxii. 16). "There is one baptism for the remission of sins," said the Nicene Fathers. As the priests had to wash at the laver ere they might enter the sanctuary, so entrance into the Church, by the institution of Christ (Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 16; John iii. 5), is by baptism. To wash, of course, is by itself not enough—each of us must "lead the rest of his life according to this beginning." So the priests, besides washing, had to observe *all* God's other ordinances.

Ultimately, both the laver and the font, both the priestly ablutions and the Christian sacrament of baptism, are types of the true washing, which is WASHING IN THE BLOOD OF CHRIST. This washing is—

I. ABSOLUTELY, AND IN ALL CASES, NEEDFUL. Only "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7). "If Christ wash us not, we have no part in him" (John xiii. 8). The saved in heaven are those who have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. vii. 14). Baptism is "generally necessary" since Christ came and instituted it; yet no one doubts that many unbaptized persons have entered heaven. But not one has entered, or will ever enter, whom the blood of Christ has not cleansed. "Wash me, Saviour, or I die," is the constantly repeated cry of every Christian heart.

II. A SOVEREIGN REMEDY THAT NEVER FAILS TO SAVE. Thus "washed," we are at once both "justified and sanctified" (1 Cor. vi. 11); both pardoned and made pure. Thus washed, we have access to the Father; we are made fit to enter his courts; our robes are made white, and not only our robes, but our souls. God will never reject one who comes to him in the wedding garment of a robe that Christ has cleansed. Only we must be sure to keep our robes clean—we must not "defile our garments" (Rev. iii. 4)—we must wash them again and again in the purifying blood; we must look nowhere else for salvation, but only to the Cross, and we must look to that perpetually.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 17—34.—*The laver and the anointing oil.*

I. THE LAVER (vers. 17—22). This was to be made of brass (bronze), and was to be placed near the door of the tabernacle between it and the altar. It was to be used by Aaron and his sons for purposes of ablution. A new symbol of the purity required in those who serve before Jehovah. The Christian contracts daily defilements in his walk, for which also daily cleansing is required (cf. John xiii. 10; 1 John i. 7).

II. THE ANOINTING OIL (vers. 22—34). Precious, fragrant, holy. To be applied not only to Aaron and his sons, but to the tabernacle and all its vessels. See Homily on Consecration (ch. xxiv. 6, 7). The oil is the symbol of the Spirit. The holiness imparted to Aaron and his sons by this anointing, and by the rites of consecration generally, was indeed no more than a ceremonial or official holiness. It pertained to the office rather than to the man. Yet the holders of the office were, in virtue of their consecration, laid under obligations to personal holiness as well. The private character of the priest might not avail to nullify his official acts; but the absence in the public representative of the spiritual qualifications for his office would not be allowed to go unpunished. Iniquity in the priest would be visited both on priest and people.—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 22—33.—THE HOLY OIL. The composition of the oil required for anointing the priests (ch. xxix. 7), the altar (ib. 36), the tabernacle itself (ver. 26), and its furniture (vers. 27, 28), was a necessary matter for Moses to know, and is now declared with much minuteness; the exact weight of each spice, and the exact quantity of the olive oil being given (vers. 23, 24). Directions are added for its use (vers. 26—30); and finally, a warning is given against its application to any persons except the priests, or its composition for any other purpose besides the use of the sanctuary (vers. 31—33).

Ver. 23.—Principal spices. The ancients recognised a vast variety of spices. Pliny notices an ointment which was composed of twenty-six ingredients, chiefly spices (*H. N.* xiii. 2, § 18). Herodotus mentions five "principal spices" as furnished by Arabia (iii. 107), of which four seem to be identical with those employed in the holy oil. Pure myrrh. Literally, "myrrh of freedom," or "freely flowing myrrh." The shrub which yields myrrh (*Balsamodendron myrrha*) produces two kinds—one, which exudes spontaneously, and is regarded as the best (*Plin. H. N.* xii. 35; Theophrast. *De Odoribus*, § 29); and another, of inferior quality, which flows from incisions made in the bark. It is the former kind which is here intended. Myrrh was among the ancients in high request as a spice. It was used by the Egyptians for embalming (Herod. ii. 86), in Persia as an odour (Athen. *Deipn.* xii. p. 514, A); by the Greeks for incense (Heph. Fr. 340) and in unguents (Aristoph. *Eq.* l. 1332); by the later Jews in

funerals (John xix. 39); and was largely exported from Arabia and Ethiopia into various parts of Asia and Europe. Sweet cinnamon. Cinnamon was a far rarer spice than myrrh. It is only mentioned three times in the Old Testament (cf. Prov. vii. 16; Cant. iv. 14). I am not aware of any trace of it in Egypt; but Herodotus says that it was obtained by the Greeks from Arabia in his day (iii. 111). It is the inner bark or rind of a tree allied to the laurel, and called by some *Laurus cinnamomum*, by others *Cinnamomum zeylanicum*. The tree now grows only in India on the Malabar coast, in Ceylon, Borneo, Sumatra, Cochin China, and China. If its habitat has not suffered contraction, we must regard the mention of it here as indicative of a very early commerce of a very extensive character. Sweet calamus. Aromatic reeds, probably of several distinct kinds, seem to have been the produce anciently of Palestine, Arabia, Mesopotamia, and India. It is impossible to say what exactly was the species here intended. Calamus is mentioned as a spice in *Is.* xliii. 24; *Jer.* vi. 20; *Ezek.* xxvii. 17; and *Cant.* iv. 14; but the term used (*kāneh*, "cane") is vague; and it is not at all clear that one species only is alluded to.

Ver. 24.—Cassia. The modern cassia is the inner bark of a tree distinct from the cinnamon tree, known to botanists as *Cinnamomum cassia*, which is a native of India, Java, and the Malay peninsula. In taste and scent, it bears a strong resemblance to cinnamon, but is more pungent and of coarser texture (Cook). It is uncertain, however, if this is the spice here indicated. The Hebrew word used is *kiddāh*, not *ketsiōth* (as in *Ps.* xlv. 5); and it is very doubtful whether the two are identical. On the shekel of the sanctuary.

see the comment on ver. 13; and on the hin, see ch. xxix. 40.

Ver. 25.—**An oil of holy ointment.** Literally, “an oil of holy anointing,” or “a holy anointing oil,” as our translators render in ver. 31, and also in the last clause of the present verse. **An ointment compound after the art of the apothecary.** Not a simple mixture of the ingredients mentioned, but the product of trained skill and knowledge applied to the materials. Jewish tradition says that the essence of each spice was extracted from it, and only these essences mingled with the olive oil. We are told later (ch. xxxvii. 29) that the task of preparing the holy oil was committed to Bezaleel.

Vers 26—29.—**Thou shalt anoint the tabernacle.** The first application of the holy oil was to be to the inanimate objects constituting the paraphernalia of worship—viz., 1. The tabernacle itself as a whole; 2. The furniture of the holy of holies—the ark and mercy seat; 3. The furniture of the holy place—the shewbread table, the candlestick, and the altar of incense; and 4. The furniture of the court—the altar of burnt-offering, and the laver. After applying the oil to these, Moses was to proceed to the anointing of the priests. (Compare Lev. viii. 10—12.)

Ver. 27.—**The table and all his vessels.** See above, ch. xxv. 29. **The candlestick and his vessels.** See ch. xxv. 37, 38.

Ver. 28.—**The altar of burnt-offering with all his vessels.** See ch. xxvii. 3.

Ver. 30.—**And thou shalt anoint Aaron, etc.** Not till all his surroundings had received sanctification was Aaron to be consecrated. The tent, the ark, the table, the candlestick, the altar of incense, the brazen altar, the laver, and its base, each and all were to be touched with the holy oil, and thereby formally dedicated to God's service (Lev. viii. 10, 11), and then at last was Moses to “pour of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anoint him, to sanctify him” (ib. 12). So God constantly prepares men's spheres for them before he inducts them into their spheres. Even in the next world our Blessed Lord “prepares places for us.”

Ver. 32.—**Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured—i.e.,** “it shall not be used by any privately as a mere unguent, but shall be reserved wholly for sacred purposes.” **Neither shall ye make any other like it, after the composition of it.** Rather, “after its proportion.” The Israelites were not forbidden the use of the different materials in their unguents, or even the combination of the same materials, provided they varied the proportions. The object is simply that the holy oil should remain a thing separate and apart, never applied to any but a holy use.

Ver. 33.—**Upon a stranger.** A “stranger” here means any one not of the family of Aaron. Compare ch. xxix. 33.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 23—25.—*The sweetness of the Holy anointing Oil.* The holy oil had infused into it the essence of four “principal spices”—myrrh, that scents the garments of the great king (Ps. xlv. 8; Cant. iii. 6); cinnamon, the choicest of the spices of distant Ind; sweet calamus, that exhales its best fragrance when bruised; cassia, which, together with sweet calamus, formed one of the glories of the market of Tyre (Ezek. xxvii. 19). How passing sweet must have been the odour of these blended perfumes—each delicious alone—all enhanced by the combination, which had taxed the best skill of the “apothecary” (ver. 25)! But the sweetness of our anointing oil is greater. “We have an unction from the Holy One.” Our “anointing oil” is the Blessed Spirit of God. What is there in all the experiences of this world so sweet to the weary soul as he? How sweet and dear is he—

I. IN THE SOFT GENTLENESS OF HIS DESCENT UPON US. Silently, unperceivedly, without sight, or sound, or stir, the gentle influence comes—steals into the heart—only by degrees makes its presence known to us. A crisis—a manifest change—“tongues of fire,” or the rush of a “mighty wind” would cause the weak believer to tremble with fear, and perhaps draw back to his undoing. Our “anointing oil” descends upon us soft as “the dew of Hermon, which fell upon the hill of Zion.”

“He comes, sweet influence to impart,
A gracious willing guest,
While he can find one humble heart
Wherein to rest.”

II. IN THE METHOD OF HIS ORDINARY WORKING. Not by rude shocks, or sudden terrible alarms; but by the mild coercion of little checks and scarcely-felt restraints—

by whispers softly breathed into the ear of the soul—by the suggestion of good thoughts—by the presentation of holy memories—does he effect his ends. Wise as any serpent, harmless as his own emblem, the dove, he feeds us as we are able to receive of him. He has “milk” for such as stand in need of milk. He has “strong meat” for such as can bear it. manifold and diverse are his gifts, but given to every man “to profit withal” (1 Cor. xii. 7).

“His is that gentle voice we hear,
Soft as the breath of even,
That checks each fault, that calms each fear,
And speaks of Heaven.

“And every virtue we possess,
And every conquest won,
And every thought of holiness,
Are his alone.”

III. IN HIS PATIENCE WITH US WHEN WE ARE WAYWARD. God once declared, “My spirit shall not always strive with man” (Gen. vi. 3); and Scripture warns us that the Holy Ghost may be “resisted” (Acts vii. 51) and even “quenched” (1 Thess. v. 19). But how wonderful is his patience and forbearance towards those who thwart and oppose him! How unwilling is he to give them up! How loth to quit their souls, and leave them to their own guidance! Assuredly he is “provoked every day” by each one of us. But he is not even angry—he simply “grieves” (Eph. iv. 30)—is “vexed” (Is. lxiii. 10)—made sorrowful. No sooner do we show any signs of relenting than he forgives—encourages us, cheers, comforts, consoles. “There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” Such a friend to man is “the Comforter.”

IV. IN HIS KINDNESS TOWARDS US WHEN WE TURN TO HIM. It is the Christian’s privilege to speak with God “as a man to his friend” (Ex. xxxiii. 11). With the in-dwelling Spirit we may ever have this “mystic sweet communion.” Would we speak to him at any moment, his ear is attent to hear. Unworthy as we are, unclean as we are, rebellious as we are, and self-willed, and self-seeking, he will commune with us, if we will commune with him—he will tell us of the things of heaven, “guide us into all truth” (John xvi. 13), “receive of Christ’s and show it unto us” (ib. 14). The sweetness of such commune is inexpressible—it may well “ravish our heart” (Cant. iv. 9) and make us “sick of love” (ib. v. 8).

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 34—38.—THE HOLY INCENSE. It remained to give directions concerning the composition of the incense, which, according to verse 7, was to be burnt upon the altar of gold. That it was to be of one and one only peculiar kind had been already implied in the prohibition to burn “strange incense” (ver. 9). Moses is now told exactly how it was to be composed. As the oil was to contain four spices, so was the incense to be made of a like number—stacte, onycha, galbanum, and frankincense—of each the same quantity (ver. 34). The art of the apothecary was to be called in for making it up (ver. 35). A portion of it was to be “beaten very small,” and placed in front of the ark of the covenant, probably on the golden altar outside the veil (ver. 36). A prohibition is added, similar to

that given with respect to the holy oil: no one is to make any like it for private use, under pain of being “cut off from his people” (vers. 37, 38).

Ver. 34.—Take unto thee sweet spices. Rather, “Take unto thee spices,” or “perfumes.” The word has no epithet. Stacte. The Hebrew word used means simply “a drop” (Job xxxii. 27), and might be applied to any gum or resin which exuded from a tree. We have no clue to the gum here intended but that which is furnished by the rendering of the LXX., στακτή, which our translators have followed. Now the Greeks seem to have called two gums by this name—one, the natural exudation from the myrrh tree, called above (ver. 23) “pure myrrh,” or “the myrrh that flows freely;” and the other gum storax. As it is not likely that the same substance has been given two

names within the space of ten verses, we must suppose the latter to be meant. Gum storax is the produce of a tree allied to the poplar, and known as *Styrax officinalis*, which grows abundantly in Syria and Palestine. It was frequently used as a perfume by the ancients (Herod. iii. 107; Plin. *H. N.* xii. 17, § 40). *Onychia*. The Hebrew word, *shé-khéleth*, seems to mean a "shell" of some kind or other. The Greek *ὄνυχα*, Lat. *onychia*, was applied to the *operculum*—the "nail" or "claw"—of certain shell-fish of the genus *Strombidae*, which were common in the Red Sea, and elsewhere. The particular *strombus* which furnishes the *onychia* of the ancients is thought to have been the *Unguis odoratus* or *Blatta Byzantina*. The *opercula* of these shell-fish have, when burnt, a strong odour, "something like castoreum." The *onychia* is, again coupled with galbanum and gum storax in Eccl. xxiv. 15. *Galbanum*. The Hebrew word *khell'nah*, is so near the Greek *χαλβάνη* and the Latin *galbanum* that it has with good reason been assumed to designate the same substance. Galbanum is a gum well known both to ancients and moderns. It is admitted into the pharmacopeia. Several plants seem to produce it, as the *Opidia galbanifera*, the *Galbanum Persicum*, and a plant which grows in Northern Persia, very like the *Ferula erubescens*. When burnt, galbanum has a strong pungent odour, which is said to be disagreeable by itself, but to improve and preserve other odours (Plin. *H. N.* xii. 54). *Frankincense*. On the wide use of frankincense, see the comment on ver. 1. It was the produce of a tree which anciently flourished in Arabia, but which appears to have degenerated, and now produces only an inferior quality. The best frankincense comes

now from the high lands of India. It exudes from a tree called *salai* (the *Boswellia serrata* or *thurifera* of botanists). Some think that the frankincense exported largely from Arabia to the neighbouring nations was in part the produce of this tree imported by the Arab merchants from Hindustan.

Vers. 35.—*A confectio after the art of the apothecary*. Like the holy oil, the incense was to be artistically compounded by one accustomed to deal with such ingredients. It was actually, in the first instance, the work of Bezaleel (ch. xxvii. 29). *Tempered together*. This translation is supported by the authority of the Septuagint and the Vulgate, and is defended by Canon Cook. But the mass of modern critics is in favour of the translation "salted," or "with salt." (So Buxtorf, Gesenius, De Wette, Kalisch, Keil, etc.) Knobel suggests "comminuted," identifying *málakh* with *márah*. The point is not one of much importance.

Vers. 36.—*Thou shalt beat some of it very small*. This is against Knobel's rendering of *málakh*, which would imply that *all* was broken into small pieces. A certain portion only was to be thus prepared from time to time and placed ready for offering. It was to be put before the testimony—i.e., opposite the ark, but outside the veil. This near vicinity to the Divine Presence rendered it most holy.

Vers. 37, 38.—*Ye shall not make unto yourselves, etc.* None shall be made by any man for private use according to the same recipe, since the compound, as described, is "holy unto the Lord." If any man does so, he shall be "cut off from among his people"—i.e., "put to death by the civil authority." (See ch. xxxi. 14.)

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 34—38.—*The Holy Incense*. Let us note here—

I. THE COMPOSITION OF THE INCENSE (vers. 34, 35). The utmost care was taken in the law that the incense should be properly composed, of the right materials, in the right proportion. Equal care is to be taken by Christians with their incense. Prayer is not to be adventured on rashly, carelessly, unpreparedly. The matter, even the very words, of prayer should be carefully weighed beforehand. To approach God with unworthy thoughts, to beseech him for those temporal advantages which we ought to regard as of no moment at all, is to "pray amiss"—to approach him with "strange incense." Equally unbecoming is it to use homely or over-familiar expressions in prayer. What we have to aim at is to reflect "the mind of Christ." Christ has given us three pattern prayers—1. The Lord's prayer; 2. The intercessory prayer after the last supper (John xvii.), and 3. The prayer in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt. xxvi. 39). Let these be our frankincense, and stacte, and onycha. For a fourth material, we may use the Psalms of David—especially the penitential Psalms. We need not then to fear lest our incense should be "strange."

II. THE CONTINUAL PRESENTATION OF THE INCENSE (ver. 30).—A portion of the incense was to be "beaten very small, and put before the testimony"—i.e., before the ark and the presence of God, where it was to remain continually. It was not to be lighted,

but to be in constant readiness for lighting. So there is in the Christian heart a prayerful temper, ever present before God, which God accepts and values, in the intervals between actual prayer. Our incense cannot always be mounting in cloud after cloud to the courts of heaven. But the temper may be in us, ready to kindle, at all times.

III. THE VALUE OF THE INCENSE. The incense was among the things that were "most holy" (ver. 36). God set special store by it. He would have it near him—in front of the tabernacle—only just outside the veil—and he would have it there constantly. So it pleases him to value the prayers of his saints. Angels offer them (Rev. viii. 3). They ascend before his throne (*ib.* 4). They are acceptable to him. They have power with him. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jam. v. 16). One humble prayer, breathed by the publican, gained him forgiveness—"justified" him. One earnest prayer, uttered by the penitent thief, obtained him Paradise. There is no limit to the value of faithful prayer, whereby we draw upon the bank of omnipotence.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—11, 34—38.—*The golden altar and the perfume.* The golden altar was of small dimensions, a cubit in length, a cubit in breadth, and two cubits high. It was a true altar, as shown by its square shape, and by its horns. Its place was immediately in front of the veil dividing the two portions of the sanctuary, with the innermost of which—the holy of holies—it was regarded as having the more intimate connection (1 Kings vi. 22; Heb. ix. 4). The command was that Aaron should burn upon it sweet incense morning and evening—in the morning when he trimmed, and in the evening when he lighted, the lamps. This was done, in the one case, at the offering of morning, in the other, at the offering of evening sacrifice, the synchronism of the acts deserving our attention. Once a year the horns of the altar were to be smeared with the blood of the sin-offering. Minute directions are given for the making of the incense (vers. 34—38). It was to be "salted, pure, and holy" (ver. 35). The burning of this incense on the altar was at once a symbol of prayer and devotion, and a call to the congregation to engage in these spiritual exercises (Ps. cxli. 2; Luke i. 10; Rev. v. 8; viii. 3, 4). As an act of the priest, it may be viewed as a type of the intercession of Christ. The service of this altar suggests the following ideas—1. *Prayer*—taking the word in its widest sense, as denoting the exercise of all devout feeling and spiritual desire towards God—is the holiest act of the spiritual life. It is figured as incense. And the altar of incense stood in immediate relation with the holy of holies. The altar and the incense offered upon it, are declared to be "most holy" (vers. 10, 36). The reason is not difficult to find. The very essence of the devotional life expresses itself in prayer. Its love, its awe, its thankfulness, its aspirations, its unutterable yearnings after God—its breathings after holiness, its very contrition and sorrow for its sins—all ascend to Jehovah in this supreme act of the nature. Words bear but a small part in prayer. The province of words is to define. Hence the soul, in the intensity of its aspirations, in its reachings out towards the infinite, often feels the need of escaping from words, of leaving them behind. Prayer becomes "the burden of a sigh"—"the falling of a tear"—perhaps a purely inward act of the mind realising union with Jehovah. Or its uncontrollable desires may express themselves in "groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. viii. 26). And it is precisely these unutterable parts of our prayers which are the sweetest to God. The appropriate symbol of them is the incense, rising in its unconfined wreaths from the priest's censer, or from the golden altar. 2. *Prayer is an act of sacrifice.* "In prayer," says Martensen, "the profoundest act of conscience and obedience is inwardly accomplished, for prayer is only in so far a laying hold and appropriation of God, as it is likewise a sacrifice; and we can only receive God into us when we likewise give ourselves to him. He who offers no sacrifice in his prayer, who does not sacrifice his selfwill, does not really pray." 3. *The connection with the sacrifice of burnt-offering.* The coals for the altar of incense were brought from the altar of burnt-offering (cf. Lev. xvi. 12, 13). This teaches that the worshipper needs reconciling before he can acceptably offer the sacrifices of his devotion. But there is a further connection, arising from the significance of the burnt-offering as a symbol of dedication. Keil says truly—"The incense-offering was not only a spiritualis-

ing and transfiguring of the burnt-offering, but a completion of it also." The connection may be stated thus. The yielding up of the life to God, symbolised in the continual burnt-offering, transforms itself in practice into the three following modes of self-surrender. 1. Holy practical activity, of which the fruit, good works, is represented in the *sheen-bread*. 2. Public witness-bearing for God, by manifestation of the truth, and by holiness of walk—represented by the *candlestick*. 3. Devotion—"the soul's going forth to unite itself in appropriate actings with the great centre of Being, and to devote its own inmost being to him" (Fairbairn)—symbolised by the *burning of the incense*. This is the culminating act of self-devotion, and crowns the sanctuary-worship, raises it to its consummation. 4. *Connection with light*. The incense was to be burned at the time of the trimming, and again of the lighting of the lamps. The brighter the light, the purer the devotion. In Christianity no countenance is given to the maxim that devotion is connected with ignorance. Christ and his apostles attach the utmost importance to the possession of right knowledge, and to growth in it. Growth in knowledge is the condition of sanctification, of spiritual fruitfulness, of enlargement of nature, of being filled with all the fulness of God. 5. *Prayer a daily duty*. The "perpetual incense before the Lord" reminds us of the apostolic injunction, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. v. 17). Prayer, devotion, is to be the element we live in. And prayer, "with thanksgiving," is to sanctify everything we do (Eph. v. 20; Phil. iv. 6; Col. iii. 17; 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5).—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXI

Vers 1—11.—THE CALL OF BEZALEEL AND AHOIAB. The directions for the construction of the tabernacle and its furniture being now complete, and the composition of the holy oil and the holy incense having been laid down minutely, it only remained to designate the persons to whom the oversight of the work was to be especially entrusted. These were to be two—Bezaleel, of the tribe of Judah, as head and chief; Ahoiab, of the tribe of Dan, as his assistant. There can be no doubt that they were selected, primarily, as already possessing superior artistic powers and acquirements; but in appointing them God promised an infusion of special wisdom and knowledge, so that they were at once naturally and supernaturally fitted for their task. It is important to note that artistic ability is thus distinctly recognised as being quite as much a gift of God as any other, and indeed as coming to man through the Spirit of God (ver. 3). Artistic excellence is not a thing to be despised. It is very capable of abuse; but in itself it is a high gift, bestowed by God on a few only, with the special intent that it should be used to his honour and glory—not indeed in his direct service only—but always so as to improve, elevate, refine mankind, and thus help towards the advancement of God's kingdom.

Ver. 2.—I have called by name. God "calls by name" only those whom he appoints to some high office, as Moses (ch. iii. 4; xxxiii. 12), Cyrus (Is. xlv. 3, 4), and here Bezaleel and Ahoiab. He honours us highly in even condescending to "know us by name," still more in "calling" us. Bezaleel is traced to Judah in Chronicles through five ancestors—Uri, Hur, Caleb, Hezron, and Pharez, Judah's son by Tamar. The genealogy, though less contracted than most of those in Exodus, probably contains two or three omissions. The son of Hur. Hur, the grandfather of Bezaleel, is thought to be the person mentioned in ch. xvii. 10, and ch. xxiv. 14.

Ver. 3.—The Spirit of God. There is no article in the Hebrew, any more than in Gen. i. 1; and some would therefore translate "a Divine Spirit"; but no change is needed. *Ruakh elohim* contains in itself the idea of singularity, since God has but one Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the medium of communication whereby God the Father bestows all gifts upon us. In wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge. By the first of these terms is meant the power to invent and originate; by the second ability to receive and appreciate directions and suggestions; by the third, such information as is acquired by experience and acquaintance with facts. Bezaleel was to have all these, and, in addition, was to be wise in all manner of workmanship; i.e.—to possess manual dexterity, the power of artistic execution.

Vers. 4, 5.—The result of these gifts would be to enable him—1. To devise cunning works—i.e., to design everything excellently; and 2. To work in all manner of

workmanship—i.e., to carry out his designs with success. It has been said that "as everything that had to be done was prescribed in strict and precise detail, there was to be no exercise of original powers of invention nor of taste" (Cook); but this was scarcely so. The forms of the cherubim, the patterns to be woven into the stuffs, or embroidered on them, the shapes of the vessels, of the capitals of the pillars, and of the laver were not prescribed in the directions. Bezaleel and Aholiab would have had to design them after such a description as Moses could give of the "pattern" which he had seen in the mount. In doing this, there would be much room for the exercise of inventive power and taste.

Ver. 5.—**In cutting of stones**—i.e., "in gem-cutting." The fabric of the tabernacle was entirely of metal, cloth, and wood. **In carving of timber.** Rather "cutting." The word is the same as that used of the stones. And no ornamental "carving" of the wood-work was prescribed.

Ver. 6.—**Aholiab** appears to have had the entire charge of the textile fabrics, both woven and embroidered (ch. xxxviii. 23). **Of the tribe of Dan.** It is remarkable that Hiram, the chief artist employed by Solomon for the ornamental work of the temple, was also a descendant of Dan (2 Chron. ii. 14).

Yet the Danites were in general rather warlike and rude than artistic (Gen. xlix. 17; Deut. xxxiii. 22; Judg. xiii. 2; xviii. 11, 27). **In the hearts of all that are wise hearted have I put wisdom.** "Unto him that hath shall be given." Those who were already "wise hearted"—possessed, that is, of artistic power—were selected by God to receive extraordinary gifts of the same kind.

Ver. 7—11 contain an enumeration of the various works already commanded to be made. The same order is observed, except that here the tabernacle itself is placed first, and the altar of incense takes its natural position next to the candlestick.

Ver. 10. **The cloths of service.** Rather "the vestments of office"—i.e., the distinguishing vestments of the High Priest, which he alone was allowed to wear. These were the blue robe, the ephod, the girdle of the ephod, and the breast-plate (ch. xxviii. 6—35). **The holy garments.** The rest of the High Priest's dress—i.e., the linen drawers, the diapered tunic, the inner girdle and the mitre (ib. 39, 43; Lev. xvi. 4), which constituted his whole apparel on the great day of atonement. **The garments of his sons**—i.e., the linen drawers, tunics, girdles, and caps, mentioned in ch. xxviii. 40, 42.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 3—6.—**Artistic excellence.** I. ITS FOUNDATION A NATURAL GIFT. God singled out from the mass of the people such as were "wise hearted." A natural foundation was necessary for his spirit to work upon. It is generally allowed, in the case of a poet, that "*nascitur, non fit.*" But the same is true of all art-genius. Every artist, be he poet, painter, sculptor, musician, or mere designer of furniture, requires to have a something implanted within him from the first, out of which his artistic power is to grow, and without which he could never attain to excellence. Bezaleel and Aholiab were such persons. They were men of natural genius, with a special aptitude for the task to which they were set.

II. THE NATURAL GIFT MAY BE LARGELY INCREASED AND IMPROVED BY GRACE. There is a natural affinity between artistic excellence and spirituality. God, who gives artistic power originally for wise and good purposes, will, if men use the power worthily, augment it by the direct action of his Spirit on their intellects. Those poets, painters, etc., who have been good men, have found their artistic ability improve with time. Those who have lived evil lives have found it deteriorate. The spirit of devotion gave to the school of Angelico, Francia, and Perugino, its wonderful power and intensity. Milton's religious ardour sublimised his poetry. The best art has always had a religious purpose, and derived much of its excellence from its association with religion. Men who regard their gifts as a trust, and exercise them in the fear of God, find constantly that their conceptions grow in grandeur and dignity, while their execution becomes more and more happy. The spirit of God fills them with wisdom, and understanding, and knowledge, and even with "all manner of workmanship."

III. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE NATURAL GIFT MAY BE PERVERTED TO EVIL, AND BECOME A CURSE BOTH TO ITS POSSESSOR AND OTHERS. There is no intellectual power which is not liable to misuse. Artistic excellence is perhaps more liable to it than most others. If it is divorced from moral goodness, and made a mere instrument of self-glorification, it becomes debased at once. And the decline is easy from bad to worse. "*Facilis descensus Averni.*" There are few things which have worked greater evil in

the world than high artistic genius combined with moral depravity. A whole generation may be utterly corrupted by a single sensualistic poet. Sculpture and painting have less influence; yet still a sensualistic school of either may have a most deleterious effect upon the morals of an age. It is of the greatest importance that such a perversion of artistic genius should not take place. It should be impressed on all that their artistic powers are the gift of God, to be accounted for just as much as other gifts; to be used, as *all* gifts are to be used, to his honour; to be made to subserve the ends for which his kingdom has been established upon earth—the advance of holiness, the general elevation, refinement and spiritualisation of mankind, and the special purifying to himself of a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—12.—*Bezaleel and Aholiab.* The calling of these two craftsmen for the work of the sanctuary, and the statement concerning Bezaleel that Jehovah had “filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship” (ver. 3), suggest various important lessons. On the distinction of the terms—“wisdom,” “understanding,” “knowledge,” see the exposition, and consult the valuable notes on Eph. i. 8, Col. i. 9, in the Bishop of Durham’s Commentaries. The general moral is, that when God has any important work to be done, whether in Church or State, he will not fail to raise up, and in due time to “call by name,” the individuals needed for the doing of it. The preparatory training school of these individuals may be far removed from the scene of their future labours. Bezaleel and Aholiab were trained in Egypt. Cf. what is said in “From Log Cabin to White House” of Presidents Lincoln and Garfield, of the United States—“Both of these statesmen were born in log-cabins, built by their fathers, in the wilderness, for family homes. Both were poor as mortals can well be. Both were born with talents of the highest order; but neither enjoyed early advantages of schools and teachers . . . Both worked on a farm, chopped wood, and did whatever else was needful for a livelihood, when eight years of age,” etc. Thus God gifts, trains, prepares men, without a hint of the use to which he means afterwards to put them. Till the event discloses it, the honour in reserve for them is kept a secret, even from themselves. The gem is polished in obscurity by the master’s hand. Ultimately it is brought to light, and astonishes the beholders by the rare finish of its beauty. The tabernacle was built with the spoils of the Egyptians in more senses than one. More special lessons are the following—

I. ALL GIFTS ARE FROM GOD. Not simply gifts of intellect, of oratory, of holiness, of spiritual understanding, but gifts of every kind, from the highest to the lowest. Grace, in the case of Bezaleel, Aholiab, and their fellow-craftsmen, proceeded on a basis of natural endowment. Cf. ver. 6—“into the hearts of *all* that are wise hearted I have put wisdom.” Skill in handicraft is a species of mental excellence, and deserves the name “wisdom.” It, also, is from God. So with *all* natural talents; with, e.g., the poetic gift; gifts of music, painting, sculpture, architecture; business faculty; the gift of statesmanship; the power to “think out inventions”; the skill of the artificer. This truth lies at the basis of the demand for a religious use of gifts.

II. NATURAL GIFTS ADMIT OF INDEFINITE EXPANSION AND ENLARGEMENT UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF GOD’S SPIRIT. The workers in the tabernacle were supernaturally assisted in their work. Nothing less than this is implied in the words—“And I have filled him with the spirit of God” (ver. 3); “into the hearts of *all* that are wise hearted I have put wisdom” (ver. 6). Grace aids nature. Regeneration is often accompanied by a mysterious and almost miraculous improvement in the powers of knowledge, so much so that, from a state of stolid imbecility, a person may be seen rising up and standing forth an acute argumentative pleader for the truth. (Cf. Dr. Wm. Anderson on “Regeneration,” p. 37.) What holds good of the general invigoration of the powers, may be expected to apply in the particular. Dedication of self carries with it dedication of gifts. And if an individual dedicates to God any special gift which he possesses, seeking, whether in the Church or in pursuit of an ordinary calling, to use the same for God’s glory, it will be his privilege to have it aided, strengthened, purified, and largely enhanced in its operations by the influences of Divine grace. The commonest

work will thus be better done, if done in the spirit of prayer. And so with the noblest. Milton speaks of his great epic as a work "not to be raised from the heat of youth, or the vapours of wine, like that which flows at waste from the pen of some vulgar amourist or the trencher-fury of a rhyming parasite—nor to be obtained by invocation of Dame Memory and her siren daughter, but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his seraphim, with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases."

III. RELIGION SANCTIFIES LABOUR. The Bible is a text-book of instruction on the dignity of labour. It has no sympathy with the contemptible foppishness which looks on labour as degrading. It includes labour in religion. It sees in the occupation of the humblest handicraftsman the exercise of a Divine gift. The good man who, whether he eats or drinks, or whatsoever he does, does all to the glory of God (1 Cor. x. 31) does not demean himself by an honest calling, but transfigures his calling into part of his service to his Maker. In his case, *laborare est orare*. The shewbread on the table in the sanctuary was a recognition of the sacredness of labour. It had as one of its meanings the dedication to God of the exercise of the calling by which Israel won its daily bread. So *manual* labour was sanctified to God in the making of the tabernacle. But it was reserved for Christianity to give the crowning proof of the dignity of labour by showing it ennobled and glorified in the person of its Founder. The fathers of the Christian Church, in contrast with the Greeks and Romans, who looked on artisans and barbarians with contemptuous disgust, preached in their noblest tones the duty and dignity of honourable toil. "The proudest bishops were not ashamed to dig; a Benedict worked six hours a day with hoe and spade; a Becket helped regularly to reap the fields. The monks at once practised labour, and ennobled and protected it. The towns and the middle classes grew up under their shelter. *Laborare est orare* became the motto of Christian life" (Farrar; cf. Lecky, "History of Rationalism," vol. ii. p. 261).

IV. THE HIGHEST USE OF GIFTS IS TO DEDICATE THEM TO THE SERVICE OF GOD IN THE WORK OF HIS CHURCH. Transformed by grace, and employed in the service of religion, gifts become graces—"Charismata." All labour, all gifts, admit of being thus devoted. The handicrafts can still bring their tribute to God, if in no higher way, in the erection of places for his worship. Art can labour in the adornment of the sanctuary (cf. Is. lx. 13). The service of praise affords scope for the utilisation of gifts of music, vocal and instrumental. There is need for care lest art, ministering to the worship of God, should overpower devotion; but, considered in itself, there need be no jealousy of the introduction of the tasteful and beautiful into God's service. It is meet that the Giver of gifts should be served with the best our gifts can yield. Earthly callings may minister to God's kingdom in another way, by bringing of their lawful gains and laying them at Christ's feet. There is, besides, the private consecration of gifts to God, as in the case of Dorcas, making coats and garments for the poor (Acts ix. 39), or as in the case of a Miss Havergal, or an Ira D. Sankey, consecrating to God a gift of song. Minor lessons taught are—(1) Gifts are not all alike, yet God can use all. (2) Some are made to lead, others to serve and follow, in the work of God's kingdom. We glorify God most when unambitiously content to fill our *own* place; when not envious of the greater gifts of others. The humblest is needed. Bezaleel could ill have dispensed with the artificers; Aholiab, with the needle-workers. They in turn needed the master minds to direct *them*. There should be no jealousy among those engaged in the same work (cf. 1 Cor. xii.). (3) Diversity of gifts gives rise to division of labour. (4) Bezaleel and Aholiab, though of different tribes (Judah and Dan), wrought together as friends, were not opposed as rivals. What kept out the spirit of rivalry was the consciousness that both were working in a sacred cause, and for God's glory, not their own. The feeling that we are working for Christ should keep down dissensions among Christians.—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 12—17.—THE PENALTY FOR NOT OBSERVING THE SABBATH. Various reasons have been given for this recurrence to the sanctity of the sabbath. Kurtz connects it with the giving of the two tables, in which "the law of the sabbath held a particularly prominent

place." Kalisch and others view it rather as the sequel to the directions concerning the tabernacle, and as designed to teach "that the holy service in the tabernacle could not supersede the observance of the sabbath, but derived from that observance its true value." A third set of critics regard the recurrence to the subject as purely practical—being intended to meet an immediate danger—that of the people, in their zeal to erect the tabernacle, setting sabbath observance at naught. (So Jarchi, Aben-Ezra, Clark, Rosenmüller, Canon Cook, and others.) It is to be observed, however, that the present passage is not a mere repetition. It adds to former notices (ch. xx. 8—11; xxiii. 12) two new points:—1. That the sabbath was to be a sign between God and Israel, a "distinguishing badge," a "sacramental bond" (Cook); and 2. That its desecration was to be punished with death (ver. 15). These were supplementary points of so much importance as to furnish ample reason against their announcement being delayed.

Ver. 13.—**Verily.** Rosenmüller suggests, "Nevertheless." But there is no need for any change. It is a sign. Hitherto circumcision had been the only visible "sign" that the Israelites were under a special covenant with God—his people, bound to him by special ties (Gen. xvii. 9—14; Acts vii. 8). The adoption of circumcision by the Egyptians and other nations (Herod. ii. 104) had produced the effect that this "sign" was no longer distinguishing. It might be still "a sign of profession"; but it had ceased to be "a mark of difference"; and some other mark was therefore needed. Such the observance of the sabbath by entire abstinence from servile work became. No other nation adopted it. It continued to Roman times the mark and badge of a Jew (Juv. *Sat.* vi. 159; xiv. 96). **That ye may know, etc.** By keeping the sabbath day as a day of holy rest the Israelites would know—

i.e., would realise severally in their own persons, that God was their sanctifier. Sanctification would be the fruit of their obedience.

Ver. 14.—**Every one that defleth it shall surely be put to death.** To defile the sabbath was to do any unnecessary servile work upon it. Works of mercy, works of necessity, and works connected with religious observance were not prohibited. (See Matt. xii. 1—7; 10—12.) The penalty of death for breaking the sabbath seems to moderns over-severe; but the erection of sabbath-observance into the special sacramental sign that Israel was in covenant with God made non-observance an offence of the gravest character. The man who broke the sabbath destroyed, so far as in him lay, the entire covenant between God and his people—not only broke it, but annulled it, and threw Israel out of covenant. Hence, when the sin was committed, no hesitation was felt in carrying out the law. (See Num. xv. 32—36.)

Ver. 15.—**The sabbath of rest.** Rather, "a sabbath." There were other sabbaths besides that of the seventh day (ch. xxiii. 11; Lev. xxv. 2—12; &c.). By the expression, "a sabbath of rest"—literally, "a rest of resting"—the idea of completeness is given. Perhaps the best translation would be—"in the seventh is complete rest."

Ver. 16.—**For a perpetual covenant.** The sabbath is itself a covenant—i.e., a part of the covenant between God and Israel (ch. xxiv. 4)—and it is, also, a sign of covenant—i.e., a perceptible indication that the nation has entered into a special agreement with God, and undertaken the observance of special laws.

Ver. 17.—**It is a sign.** See above, ver. 13. **For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth.** See the comment on ch. xx. 11. **And was refreshed.** Literally, "and took breath." The metaphor is a bold one, but not bolder than others which occur in holy scripture (Ps. xlv. 23; lxxviii. 65). It does but carry out a little further the idea implied in God's "resting." We cannot speak of any of God's acts or attributes without anthropomorphisms.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 13—17.—**Covenant signs.** To each covenant which he has made with man, God has attached some special sign or signs. And each sign has been significant, has set before the mind of those to whom it was given some great religious truth.

I. **THE FIRST COVENANT SIGN WAS THE RAINBOW.** God had destroyed by a deluge the whole human race, except eight persons. It pleased him, after this, to enter into a covenant with Noah and his sons (Gen. ix. 8, 9), and through them with the human race, that he would never bring such a destruction upon the world again (ib. 11). Of this covenant he appointed the rainbow to be the sign, symbolising by its brightness and beauty his own mercy (ib. 14—17). Here the religious truth taught and impressed by the sign was that precious one, that God is not only a just, but also a merciful God.

II. THE SECOND COVENANT SIGN WAS CIRCUMCISION. When God selected Abraham out of the entire mass of mankind to be the progenitor of the chosen race and of him especially in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed, and entered into a covenant with him, it was in these words—"Thou shalt keep my covenant, thou and thy seed after thee in their generations—this is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee, every man child among you shall be circumcised" (Gen. xvii. 9, 10). Hence the covenant itself was called "the covenant of circumcision" (Acts vii. 8). This rite of initiation, the covenant sign of the Abrahamic dispensation, shadowed forth the great truth that man has an impurity of nature, which must be put away before he can be brought near to God and received into his full favour.

III. THE THIRD COVENANT SIGN WAS THE SABBATH. Its institution to be a covenant sign is set forth in the words, "Verily, my sabbaths ye shall keep, for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations" (Ex. xxxi. 13). It witnessed to the truth that God requires distinct and open acknowledgment at the hands of men, and not only so, but material worship at stated times, the least that will content him being one day in seven. The nations, when they served him at all (Acts x. 35), served him irregularly. They knew nothing of a definite day, or a formal apportionment of time, for his service. By the institution of the Sabbath the Israelites were taught, and through them the world, that God is interested in man, claims his thoughts, sets a value on his worship, and will not be satisfied with mere occasional acknowledgment, but demands that a fixed proportion of our time shall be dedicated to his worship exclusively.

IV. OTHER COVENANT SIGNS. No further covenant signs were given until our Lord came upon earth. Then two were instituted in the Sacraments. Baptism taught the same truth as circumcision—the need of putting away impurity; but taught it by a simpler rite, and one to which no exception could be taken. The Lord's Supper taught a new truth, the necessity of reconciliation through the death and atoning blood of Christ. It witnessed to the certain fact that man cannot save himself, cannot atone for his own sins, but needs a mediator, a redeemer, an atoner, to make satisfaction for him.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 12—18.—*The Sabbath.* If this prohibition to work upon the Sabbath is introduced, as probably it is, lest the people, in their zeal for the service of the sanctuary, should be tempted to infringe upon the holy day, it has certain obvious sides of instruction turned towards ourselves. We cannot but see in it *the high honour which God puts upon his Sabbath*. 1. It is the one command of the Decalogue to which reference is made in the conclusion of this series of instructions. This implies its great importance. It shows that, in God's esteem, the observance of the Sabbath was intimately bound up with the best interests of Israel. 2. The Sabbath is declared to be a *sign* between God and the Israelites. It was to be a memorial to future generations that Jehovah had made a covenant with the nation, and had sanctified them to himself. But its very selection for this purpose was a tribute to its importance. The reason of the selection could only be that the Sabbath was in itself a boon of the highest kind to Israel, and had important bearings on the state of morals and religion. A well- or ill-spent Sabbath, as all history shows, has much to do with the character both of the individual and of the community. The Sabbath, further, is a "sign" in this respect, that it is at once a means for the promotion of true religion, and a *test or indication* of its presence. A disregard of Divine authority shows itself in nothing more readily than in a disposition to break in upon the day of rest—to take from it its sacred character. 3. The Sabbath is not to be infringed upon, even for the work of the tabernacle. There was no such excessive haste, no such imperative call, for the sanctuary being finished, that the Sabbath needed to be broken by the plying of handicrafts, in order to get it done. We are taught that even our zeal for God's work is not to be allowed to betray us into unnecessary infractions of the day of rest. This is not, of course, to be applied to spiritual work, to afford an opportunity for which is one end of the giving of the Sabbath. 4. The breaker of the Sabbath was to be put to death. This was not too

severe a punishment for the deliberate breaking of a law so repeatedly enforced, and the observance of which had been made by Jehovah a "sign" of the covenant between himself and Israel. Slight as the act seems, it was, in this case, a crime of a very flagrant order. It was punished as an act of treason. At the conclusion of these commands, God gave to Moses the two tables of testimony, "tables of stone, written with the finger of God." A symbol (1) of the perpetuity of the law, (2) of its want of power to regenerate (2 Cor. iii. 7).—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Ver. 18.—THE TABLES OF TESTIMONY. It had been assumed, in the directions given for the construction of the ark, that God would give, in some material form, a document to be called "the testimony," which was to be laid up inside it (ch. xxv. 16). It is not too much to say that the tabernacle, with its various appurtenances, was constructed for this purpose; the rest of the tabernacle was designed with a view to the holy of holies—the holy of holies was designed as a receptacle for the ark—and the ark was designed as a receptacle for the tables of testimony. This section could, therefore, scarcely be concluded without some definite account of the document which was to give the ark and the tabernacle itself, its main significance

Ver. 18.—When he had made an end of communing. Literally, "when he had finished speaking." **Two tables.** Rather, "the two tables"—i.e., the tables promised when he went up into the mount (ch. xxiv. 12). **Of stone.** Stone was the ordinary material on which Egyptian documents were engraved, both at the time of the Exodus, and before and after. They were, however, for the most part, either inscribed upon the natural rock, or engraved on the walls of temples or tombs. Inscriptions upon slabs of stone are rare, more especially in the early times, and would scarcely have occurred to Moses himself. **Written with the finger of God—i.e., "inscribed supernaturally"**—not cut by any human hand. Compare ch. xxxii. 16. It is idle to speculate on the exact mode of the Divine operation.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 18.—The Tables of Testimony were in many respects like the document impressed upon them. For instance, they were—

I. **OF STONE, AND THEREFORE ENDURING AND WELL NIGH IMPERISHABLE.** Few things are more enduring than some kinds of stone. Inscriptions exist, engraved on stone, which are certainly anterior to Abraham. No remains in metal go back so far. Gold and silver are, comparatively speaking, soft. Iron corrodes. Steel was unknown at the period. The material selected to receive the moral law was as nearly indestructible as possible. The tables may still exist, and may one day be discovered under the mounds of Babylon, or in the bed of the Euphrates. The character of the material was thus in harmony with the contents of the tables, consisting, as they did, of laws whereof no jot or tittle shall pass away till the fulfilment of all things (Matt. v. 18).

II. **WRITTEN WITH THE FINGER OF GOD.** The stones had the laws engraved upon them by a Divine agency which is called "the finger of God." The laws themselves had been long previously written with the finger of God in the fleshly tables of men's hearts. The Divine power, which was competent to do the one, could no doubt with ease accomplish the other. The human heart is the most stubborn of all materials, and the most difficult to impress permanently.

III. **TWO-FOLD.** Twin tables, alike in the main, but inscribed differently. So was the law of the tables two-fold—containing (1) man's duty to God, and (2) his duty to his neighbour. It is uncertain how the Ten Commandments were divided between the two tables, but quite possible that the first four were written on one table, and the last six on the other. In that case the material division would have exactly corresponded to the spiritual.

IV. **WRITTEN ON BOTH THEIR SIDES** (ch. xxxii. 15). So the moral law—the law of the Decalogue—is written both within and without the human heart—presses externally upon men as a rule of right which they are constrained to obey, and approves itself to them from within, as one which the voice of conscience declares to be binding,

apart from external sanction. The book seen in vision by Ezekiel (Ezek. ii. 9) was "written within and without" (*ib.* 10), like the tables; but its entire contents were "lamentation, and mourning, and woe." The moral law, as convincing us of sin, has a painful side; but it sustains as much as it alarms, and produces as much effort as mourning.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Vers. 1—6.—THE IDOLATRY OF THE GOLDEN CALF. During the absence of Moses in Mount Sinai, an absence of nearly six weeks, the Israelites grew impatient, and regarding their leader as lost to them, and the Divine Presence which they had hitherto enjoyed as lost with him, insisted on having a symbol of that presence made for them, which should henceforth go in front of the host and so lead them on in their journeyings. It would seem that the pillar of the cloud, which had gone before them from Succoth to Sinai, was now removed from the camp, and resting upon the "mount" where Moses was (ch. xxiv. 15). Under these circumstances they wanted a visible tangible something, in which they could regard the Divine Presence as resting, and whereto they might offer worship and sacrifice (ver. 8). They therefore went to Aaron, whom Moses had bid them consult in any difficulty (ch. xxiv. 14), and requested him to "make them a god." Aaron had not the courage to meet this request with a plain negative. As Augustine and Theodoret conjecture with much probability, he sought to turn them from their purpose by asking them to give up those possessions which he conceived that they most valued—viz. the personal ornaments of their wives and children. But he had miscalculated the strength of their fanaticism. The people immediately complied—the ornaments were brought in—and Aaron was compelled, either to fly from his word, or to lend himself to the people's wishes. He did the latter. Either looking to Egypt for a pattern, or falling back on some old form of Syrian or Chaldean idolatry (see the comment on ver. 4), he melted down the gold and cast it into the form of a calf. The "god" being thus made, an altar was built to it (ver. 5) and sacrifice offered (ver. 6). Such was the condition of affairs when Moses, having just received the two tables of stone, was warned by God of what had occurred, and bidden to descend from Sinai.

Ver. 1.—The people saw that Moses delayed

to come down. He had been absent, probably above a month. It was the first day of their worship when he descended; and a week would suffice for the collection of the ornaments, the formation of the mould, and the casting of the idol. **Unto Aaron.** It is not clear why no mention is made of Hur, who had been made co-regent with Aaron (ch. xxiv. 14); but perhaps Aaron was known to be the weaker of the two. **Up, make us gods.** Most moderns translate "a god." But the word is vague, and the speakers did not themselves perhaps care whether one idol was made or more. **Which shall go before us.** The Israelites were apparently tired of their long delay at Sinai, and were anxious to proceed upon their journey. They wanted a visible god at their head, to give them confidence and courage. Compare 1 Sam. iv. 3—8. **We wot not what is become of him.** He might, they thought, be dead—he might have returned to Egypt—he might be going to stay always with God in the mount which they did not dare to approach. At any rate, he was lost to them, and they might never see him again.

Ver. 2.—Break off. "Take off" would perhaps be a better translation. The ear-rings would not require any breaking. They were *penannular*, and could be removed by a smart pull. **Your wives, your sons, and your daughters.** See the comment on ch. iii. 22. It is implied that the men did not wear ear-rings. At an earlier date the household of Jacob, chiefly men, had worn them (Gen. xxxv. 4).

Ver. 3.—All the people broke off the golden ear-rings. Thus, as is supposed, disappointing Aaron, who had counted on the refusal of the women to part with their finery, and the reluctance of the men to compel them. Had ear-rings been still regarded as amulets (Gen. l. s. c.) it is not likely that they would have been so readily given up.

Ver. 4.—And fashioned it with a graving tool. Rather, "and bound it (the gold) in a bag." Compare 2 Kings v. 23, where the same two Hebrew words occur in the same sense. It is impossible to extract from the original the sense given in the Authorised Version, since the simple copula *vau* cannot mean "after." When two verbs in the same tense are conjoined by *vau* "and," the two actions must be simultaneous, or the latter follow the former. But the calf cannot have been graven first, and then molten. It is

objected to the rendering, "he bound it in a bag," that that action is so trivial that it would be superfluous to mention it (Keil). But it is quite consonant with the simplicity of Scripture to mention very trivial circumstances. The act of putting up in bags is mentioned both here and also in 2 Kings v. 23, and 2 Kings xii. 9. **They said.** The fashioners of the image said this. **These be thy gods.** Rather, "This is thy God." Why Aaron selected the form of the calf as that which he would present to the Israelites to receive their worship, has been generally explained by supposing that his thoughts reverted to Egypt, and found in the Apis of Memphis or the Mnevis of Heliopolis the pattern which he thought it best to follow. But there are several objections to this view. 1. The Egyptian gods had just been discredited by their powerlessness being manifested—it was an odd time at which to fly to them. 2. Apis and Mnevis were not molten calves, but live bulls. If the design had been to revert to Egypt, would not a living animal have been selected? 3. The calf when made was not viewed as an image of any Egyptian god, but as a representation of Jehovah (ver. 5). 4. The Israelites are never taxed with having worshipped the idols of Egypt anywhere else than in Egypt (Josh. xxiv. 14; Ezek. xx. 8; xxiii. 3). To us it seems probable that Aaron reverted to an earlier period than the time of the sojourn in Egypt, that he went back to those "gods on the other side of the flood," which Joshua warned the Israelites some sixty years later, to "put away" (Josh. I. s. c.). The subject is one too large for discussion here; but may not the winged and human-headed bull, which was the emblem of divine power from a very early date in Babylon, have retained a place in the recollections of the people in all their wanderings, and have

formed a portion of their religious symbolism? May it not have been this conception which lay at the root of the cherubic forms, and the revival of which now seemed to Aaron the smallest departure from pure monotheism with which the people would be contented?

Ver. 5.—He built an altar before it. Aaron thus proceeded to "follow a multitude to evil" (ch. xxiii. 2), and encouraged the idolatry which he felt himself powerless to restrain. Still, he did not intend that the people should drift away from the worship of Jehovah, or view the calf as anything but a symbol of him. He therefore made proclamation and said, **Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord** (literally, "to Jehovah").

Ver. 6.—They rose up early on the morrow. The people were like a child with a new toy. They could scarcely sleep for thinking of it. So, as soon as it was day, they left their beds, and hastened to begin the new worship **Burnt offerings and peace offerings.** It is evident that both of these were customary forms of sacrifice—neither of them first introduced by the Law, which had not—except so far as the "Book of the Covenant" was concerned—been promulgated. Compare Jethro's offerings (ch. xviii. 12). **The people sat down to eat and drink.** A feast almost always followed upon a sacrifice, only certain portions of the victim being commonly burnt, while the rest was consumed by the offerers. See the comment on ch. xviii. 12. **And rose up to play.** This "play" was scarcely of a harmless kind. The sensualism of idol-worship constantly led on to sensuality; and the feasts upon idol-sacrifices terminated in profligate orgies of a nature which cannot be described. See the application of the passage by St. Paul in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (x. 7), and compare verse 25

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1-6.—The hankering after idols, and its consequences. There is a war ever going on in human nature between the flesh and the spirit (Rom. vii. 23; viii. 1-13). The two are "contrary the one to the other." From the time of their leaving Egypt, the Israelites had been leading a spiritual life, depending upon an unseen God—following his mandates—reposing under the sense of his protection. But the strain was too much for them. So long as they had Moses with them, to encourage them by his exhortations and support them by his good example, they managed to maintain this higher life, to "walk in the spirit," to "live by faith and not by sight." When he was gone, when he seemed to them lost, when they had no hope of seeing him again, the reaction set in. The flesh asserted itself. They had given way to idolatry in Egypt, and worshipped, in part, Egyptian gods, in part, "the gods which their fathers served on the other side of the flood" (Josh. xxiv. 14, 15); they had, no doubt, accompanied this worship with the licentiousness which both the Egyptians (Herod. ii. 60) and the Babylonians (ib. i. 199) made a part of their religion. Now the recollection of these things recurred to them, their desires became inflamed—the flesh triumphed. The consequences were—

I. THAT THEY BROKE A PLAIN COMMAND OF GOD, AND ONE TO WHICH THEY HAD RECENTLY PLEDGED THEMSELVES. "All the words which the Lord hath said," they had declared "we will do" (ch. xxiv. 3); and among these "words" was the plain one—"Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them." Nevertheless they required Aaron to make them a material god, and it was no sooner made than they hastened to worship it with burnt-offerings and other sacrifices.

II. THAT THEY PROCEEDED TO BREAK THE MORAL LAW WRITTEN IN THEIR HEARTS, AND LATELY REINFORCED BY THE PLAIN PROHIBITION OF THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT. "They sat down to eat and drink, and *rose up to play*." They engaged in licentious dancing (ver. 19), and perhaps laid aside some of their usual garments (ver. 25). They turned a worship, which they still pretended to render to Jehovah (ver. 5) into an orgy. If they did not proceed to the lengths of completed sin, they entered upon the slippery path which, almost of necessity, leads to it. By this conduct they so provoked God—

III. THAT THEY RAN THE RISK OF BEING SWEEPED AWAY FROM THE EARTH. A sentence of death was at first pronounced against the whole people (ver. 10), and would infallibly have taken effect, had not Moses interceded, and by his intercession prevailed. Universal apostasy deserved universal destruction. There is no reason to believe that the execution of the sentence pronounced would have been stayed, but for the expostulation and the prayer recorded in verses 11—13.

IV. THAT THEY ACTUALLY BROUGHT UPON THEMSELVES A HEAVY PUNISHMENT. The immediate slaughter of three thousand was required to purge the offence (ver. 28). The sin was further visited upon the offenders subsequently (see comment on ver. 34). Some were, on account of it, "blotted out of God's book" (ver. 33). Christians should take warning, and not, when they have once begun "living after the Spirit," fall back and "live after the flesh" (Rom. viii. 13). There are still in the world numerous tempting idolatries. We may hanker after the "lusts of the flesh," or "of the eye"—we may weary of the strain upon our nature which the spiritual life imposes—we may long to exchange the high and rare atmosphere in which we have for a while with difficulty sustained ourselves, for the lower region where we shall breathe more easily. But we must control our inclinations. To draw back is to incur a terrible danger—no less a one than "the perdition of our souls." It were better "not to have known the way of righteousness," or walked in it for a time, "than, after we have known it," and walked in it, "to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto us" (1 Pet. ii. 21).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*The Golden Calf*. I. THE PEOPLE'S REQUEST TO AARON. 1. *The cause of the request*. There are really two causes to be considered here, first, a cause of which they were conscious, and then, secondly, a deeper cause of which they were not conscious. The delay of Moses to return was the reason they put forward. We must do them the justice of noticing that they seem to have waited till the forty days were well-nigh expired before preferring their request; and an absence of forty days was inexplicable to minds as yet so spiritually darkened and benumbed as those of the majority of the people. What he could have to do, and how he could live so long, away up on a barren mountain, was beyond their power of imagination. Moses was given up just as a ship is given up when it has not been heard of for many days after the reasonable period of the voyage. It was not a case of being out of sight, out of mind; he had been a great deal in mind, and the general conclusion was that in some mysterious way he had vanished altogether. But there is also the deeper reason of the request to be found in the people's continued ignorance of the real hold which Jehovah had upon them, and the sort of future towards which he would have them look. Their action here was founded not on what they knew, but emphatically on what they did not know. They could not say, "Moses is dead," or "he has forsaken us." They could only say, "We wot not what is become of him." So far as outward circumstances were concerned, the people seem to have been in a state of comparative security and comfort. When

Moses went up into the mountain, he knew not how long he would have to wait; that was not for him or Aaron or any man to know. But however long he was to be away, all due provision had been made for the people's welfare. The daily morning manna was there; and Aaron and Hur were appointed to settle any disputes that might arise. There is no word of any external enemy approaching; there is no threatening of civil strife: there is not even a recurrence of murmuring after the fleshpots of Egypt. All that was needed was quiet waiting on the part of the people; if they had waited forty months instead of forty days, there would have been nothing to cause reasonable astonishment; for Jehovah and not man is the lord of times and seasons. 2. *The request itself.* There is a certain unexpectedness in this request. Who is it that is missing? Moses, the visible leader, "the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt." Hence we might suppose the first feeling of the people would be to put some one in Moses' place; even as later they said, "Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt" (Num. xiv. 4). But instead of this their cry to Aaron is, "Make us gods." How little did Moses expect, when he put Aaron to be counsellor of the people in his absence, that it was for image-worship they would seek his help! And yet the more we ponder, the more we shall be led to feel that this was just the kind of request that might be expected from the people. Their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob believed in the invisible Jehovah; but faith in the invisible will not go down from generation to generation, as if it were a blood quality. The God of Abraham was one whom, though Abraham could not see, he could hear as speaking with most miraculous organ. But these people at Sinai wanted above all things a god whom they could see, even though it was but a lifeless, sightless, voiceless image. Great is the mystery of idolatry. How men have come to bow down to stocks and stones is not a question to be dismissed with a few contemptuous words. These idolatrous Israelites were seeking satisfaction for a desire of the heart as imperious in its own way as bodily hunger and thirst. They wanted something to be a centre of worship and religious observances in general, and the quickest way seemed to fabricate such a centre by the making of gods. Whereas, if they had only been patient and trustful and waited for Moses, they would have found that, even by the very absence of Moses, God himself was providing for the worship of the people. We have here another illustration of the frequent follies of popular decisions. The greatest thing that required to be done for these Israelites was the thing that needed to be done *in them*.

II. AARON'S COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUEST. He shewed great readiness in falling in with the request; and it has been suggested that his readiness was only in appearance, and that he hoped the women would refuse to surrender their cherished ornaments, thus making the construction of a suitable image impossible. It may have been so; but why should we not think that Aaron may have been as deeply infected with the idolatrous spirit as any of his brother Israelites? There is everything to indicate that he went about the execution of the request with cordiality and gratification. And it must not be forgotten that in the midst of all his forgetfulness of the command against image-worship, he evidently did not think of himself as forsaking Jehovah. When the image and the altar were ready, it was to Jehovah he proclaimed the feast. What Aaron and the people along with him had yet to learn was that Jehovah was not to be served by will-worship or by a copy of the rites observed in honouring the gods of other nations. Thus all unconsciously, Israel demonstrated how needful were the patterns given in the mount. The feast to Jehovah, indicated in ver. 6, was nothing but an excuse for the most reckless and degrading self-indulgence. How different from the ideal of those solemn seasons which Jehovah himself in due time prescribed; seasons which were meant to lift the people above their common life into a more hearty appreciation of the Divine presence, goodness and favour, and thus lead them into joys worthy of the true people of God.—Y.

Vers. 1—7.—*The sin of the golden calf.* Disastrous effects followed in the camp of Israel on the withdrawal of Moses to the mount. Moved as by a common impulse, the people "gathered themselves together," and demanded of Aaron that he should make them "a god," i.e. an idol, that it might go—be carried in procession—before them (cf. Amos v. 26). It was a case of "hand joined in hand" to do iniquity (Prov. xi. 21). Many, doubtless, looked on the movement with dismay and horror (cf. ver. 28); but

their voices were drowned in the general clamour. The "lewd fellows of the baser sort" (Acts xvii. 5) had, for the moment, the upper hand in the host, and swept all before them. Intimidated by the show of violence, Aaron weakly acceded to the people's request. The whole incident strikingly illustrates the commanding space which must have been filled in the camp of Israel by the personality of Moses, and affords some measure of the turbulent and refractory dispositions of the multitude whom ordinarily he had to deal with. It sheds light, also, on the greatness of Moses' character, set as that is in contrast with the weakness and irresolution exhibited by Aaron. Consider—

I. THE PEOPLE'S TRIAL (ver. 1). Every situation in which we can be placed has its elements of trial. These are purposely mingled with our lot (1) that dispositions may be tested, and (2) that life may be to us in fact, what it is needful that it should be for the proper development of character, viz. a succession of probations. The trial of the Israelites consisted: 1. In *the delay in the return of Moses*. Moses had disappeared in the mountain. Weeks had passed without his return. It had not been told the people how long his absence was to last. This constituted a trial of faith and patience. It gave colour to the allegation that Moses had perished—that he had gone from them for ever. Cf. what is said in Luke xii. 37—49 of the uncertainty left to rest upon the time of the Lord's second advent. Faith has its trial here also. Because Christ's coming is delayed, there are those who would fain persuade themselves that he will not return at all (2 Pet. iii. 4). 2. In *the scope given by his absence for the manifestation of character*. On this, again, compare Luke xii. 37—49. It was the first time since the departure from Egypt that the people had been left much to themselves. Hitherto, Moses had always been with them. His presence had been a check on their wayward and licentious tendencies. His firm rule repressed disorders. Whatever inclinations some of them may have felt for a revival of the religious orgies, to which, perhaps, they had been accustomed in Egypt, they had not ventured, with Moses in the camp, to give their desires publicity. The withdrawal of the lawgiver's presence, accordingly, so soon after the conclusion of the covenant, was plainly of the nature of a trial. It removed the curb. It left room for the display of character. It tested the sincerity of recent professions. It showed how the people were disposed to conduct themselves when the tight rein, which had hitherto kept them in, had been a little slackened. It tested, in short, whether there were really a heart in them to keep all God's commandments always (Deut. v. 29). Alas! that in the hour of their trial, when so splendid an opportunity was given them of testifying their allegiance, their failure should have been so humiliating and complete.

II. THE PEOPLE'S SIN. Note—1. *The sin itself*. They had made for them "a molten calf" (ver. 4), which, forthwith, they proceeded to worship with every species of disgraceful revelry (ver. 6). The steps in the sin are noted in the narrative. (1) They approached Aaron with a demand to make them "a god." The light, irreverent way in which, in connection with this demand, they speak of their former leader—"As for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him" (ver. 1)—betrays an extraordinary levity, ingratitude, and callousness of nature. (2) They stripped themselves of their ornaments of gold for the making of the "god" (ver. 3). They did this gladly. People, as a rule, spend freely on their vices. They are not so ready to part with their valuables for the service of Jehovah. (3) They mixed up their calf worship with the service of the true God. On the supposed connection with the ox- and calf-worship of Egypt, see the exposition. The calf made by Aaron was evidently intended as a symbol of Jehovah (ver. 4). The result was an extraordinary piece of syncretism. An altar was built before the calf, and due honours were paid to it as the god which had brought Israel out of Egypt (vers. 4, 5). A feast was proclaimed to Jehovah (ver. 5). When the morrow came, the people "offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings," only, however, to engraft on the sacrificial festivities the rites of the filthiest heathen worship (ver. 6; cf. ver. 25). It was their own passions which they sought to gratify; but, in gratifying them, they still endeavoured to keep up the semblance of service of the revealed God. Strange that the wicked should like, if possible, to get the cloak of religion even for their vices. But light and darkness will not mingle. The first requirement in worship is obedience. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. xv. 22). "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xv. 8). It was

monstrous to propose to worship the spiritual Jehovah, who had expressly forbidden the use of graven images in his service, under the symbol of a calf, albeit the idol was of gold. It was worse than monstrous, it was hideous, to employ the name of the Holy One to cover the shameless and revolting orgies with which their calf-worship was associated. (4) They were *eager* in this worship. They rose up early in the morning to engage in it (ver. 6). Would that God's people were as eager in *his* service as these servants of Belial were in the service of their idol! 2. *The sin in its generic character.* The sin at Sinai was a case (1) of sense reasserting its supremacy over faith. "As for this Moses, we wot not what has become of him" (ver. 1). (2) Of carnal tendencies regaining the ascendancy over temporary religious impressions. (3) Of engrained evil habits resuming their sway after having been for a time forcibly kept in check. The incident shows that nothing short of a thorough regeneration, of a radical change of heart, can be relied on to keep men in the way of good. It is the *heart* that needs renewal. David seized the matter at the root when he was led to pray, "Create in me a clean heart" etc. (Ps. li. 10). It was the want of this thorough renewal which was the bane of Israel (Deut. xxxi. 27—30). 3. *Aggravations of the sin.* The circumstances under which the sin was committed added greatly to its enormity. (1) It was a sin committed immediately after solemn covenant with God. The transactions recorded in ch. xxiv. were not yet forty days old. The people had literally heard God speaking to them. They had acknowledged the solemnity of the situation by entreating Moses to act as mediator. They had formally, and under awful impressions of God's majesty, pledged themselves to life-long obedience. Yet within this brief space of time, they had thrown off all restraints, and violated one of the main stipulations of their agreement. A more flagrant act of impiety it would be difficult to imagine. (2) It was a sin committed while Moses was still in the mount transacting for them. He had gone to receive the tables of the law. He had been detained to receive instructions for the making of the sanctuary—that God might dwell among them. A solemn time, truly! While it lasted, the people might surely have been depended on to conduct themselves with at least ordinary propriety. Instead of this, witness their mad gambols round their calf. The very time when, of all others, their frame of mind ought to have been devout, sober, prayerful, was the time chosen for the perpetration of this great iniquity.

III. *AARON'S SHARE IN THE TRANSGRESSION.* This, it is to be noted, the narrative makes no attempt to conceal. It tells the story with perfect impartiality. The Bible, like its author, is without respect of persons. If Aaron leads the people astray, he must, like others, submit to have the truth told about him. This is not the way of ordinary biographies, but it is the way of Scripture. It is one mark of its inspiration. It is a guarantee of its historic truthfulness. The conduct of Aaron cannot be justified; but suggestions may be offered which help to render intelligible. 1. *Aaron was placed in a situation in which it was very difficult to know exactly what to do.* A mob confronted him, evidently bent on gratifying its dangerous humour. Its demand was peremptory. To resist its will was to run the risk of being stoned. The temptation which, in these circumstances, naturally presented itself to a timid mind, and to which Aaron yielded, was to put the people off, and endeavour to gain time by some show of concession. In the interval, Moses might return, and the difficulty would be solved. See the mistake of this policy. It was (1) wrong. It involved a sacrifice of principle. It was temporising. (2) Weak. Had Aaron been brave enough to take a firm stand, even at the risk of losing his life for it, not improbably he might have crushed the movement in its bud. As it was, his sanction and example gave it an impetus which carried it beyond the possibility of being subsequently controlled. (3) Self-defeating. A temporising policy usually is. The favourable chance on which everything has been staked, does not turn up. Moses did *not* return, and Aaron, having yielded the preliminary point, found himself hopelessly committed to a bad cause. 2. *Aaron may have thought that by requiring the women of the camp to part with their personal ornaments, he was taking an effectual plan to prevent the movement from going further* (ver. 2). They might, he may have reasoned, be very willing to get gods, and yet not be willing to make this personal sacrifice to obtain them. If this was his idea, he was speedily undeceived. The gold ornaments came pouring in (ver. 3), and Aaron, committed by this act also, had no alternative but to proceed

further. "He received them at their hands," etc. (ver. 4). 3. *Aaron may have thought that, of the two evils, it would be better to put himself at the head of the movement, and try to keep it within bounds, than to allow it to drift away, without any control whatever.* He may have argued that to allow himself to be stoned would not make matters better, but would make them greatly worse. On the other hand, by yielding a little, and placing himself at the head of the movement, he might at least succeed in checking its grosser abuses. This is a not uncommon opiate to conscience, in matters involving its compromise of principle. It is the idea of the physician who humours a mad patient, in the hope of being able to retain some control over him. The step was a false one. Even with madmen, as wiser doctors tell us, the humouring policy is not the most judicious. With a mob, it is about the worst that could be adopted.

IV. GENERAL LESSONS. 1. The strength of evil propensities in human nature. 2. The fleetingness of religious impressions, if not accompanied by a true change of heart. 3. The degrading character of idolatry. Sin bestialises, and the bestial nature seeks a god in bestial form (cf. Rom. i. 21—32). "Men," says Xenophanes, "imagine that the gods are born, are clothed in our garments, and endowed with our form and figure. But if oxen or lions had hands, and could paint and fashion things as men do, they too would form the gods after their own similitude, horses making them like horses, and oxen like oxen." But we have seen that men also can fashion their gods in the similitude of oxen. "They that make them are like unto them" (Ps. cxv. 8). 4. Mammon-worship is a worship of the golden calf. Cf. Carlyle on "Hudson's Statue" ("Latter-Day Pamphlets").—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 7—14.—THE INTERCESSION OF MOSES.

Moses, in Sinai, was so far removed from the camp, and the cloud so shut out his vision of it, that he had neither seen nor heard anything unusual, and was wholly ignorant of what had happened, until God declared it to him (vers. 7, 8). After declaring it, God announced his intention of destroying the people for their apostasy, and fulfilling his promise to Abraham by raising up a "great nation" out of the seed of Moses (ver. 10). No doubt this constituted a great trial of the prophet's character. He might, without sin, have acquiesced in the punishment of the people as deserved, and have accepted the promise made to himself as a fresh instance of God's goodness to him. There would have been nothing wrong in this; but it would have shown that he fell short of the heroic type, belonged to the ordinary run of mortals, was of the common "delf," not of "the precious porcelain of human clay." God's trial of him gave him an opportunity of rising above this; and he responded to it. From the time that he reached full manhood (ch. ii. 11) he had cast in his lot with his nation; he had been appointed their leader (ch. iii. 10); they had accepted him as such (ch. iv. 31); he had led them out of Egypt and brought them to Sinai; if he had looked coldly on them now, and readily separated his fate from theirs, he would have

been false to his past, and wanting in tenderness towards those who were at once his wards and his countrymen. His own glory naturally drew him one way, his affection for Israel the other. It is to his eternal honour that he chose the better part; declined to be put in Abraham's place, and generously interceded for his nation (vers. 11—13). He thereby placed himself among the heroes of humanity, and gave additional strength and dignity to his own character.

Ver. 7.—*Go, descend*—i.e., "make haste to descend—do not tarry—there is need of thy immediate presence." *Thy people, which thou broughtest, etc.* Words calculated to awaken the tenderness between which and self-love the coming struggle was to be.

Ver. 8.—*They have turned aside quickly.* A few weeks have sufficed to make them forget their solemn pledges (ch. xix. 8; xxiv. 3), and fly in the face of a plain unmistakable commandment. *A molten calf.* In the contemptuous language of Holy Scripture when speaking of idols, such an emblematic figure as the Babylonian man-bull would be a mere "calf." That the figure made by Aaron is called always "a molten calf"—literally, "a calf of fusion"—disposes of the theory of Keil, that it was of carved wood covered with gold plates hammered on to it. *These be thy gods, which have brought thee.* Rather, "This is thy god, which has brought thee." The plural must be regarded as merely one of dignity.

Ver. 9.—*A stiffnecked people.* This

epithet, which becomes *epitheton uisitatum*, is here used for the first time. It does not so much mean "obstinate" as "perverse"—like a horse that stiffens the neck when the driver pulls the right or left rein, and will not go the way he is wanted to go. (Compare ch. xxxiii. 3, 5; xxxiv. 9; Deut. ix. 6, 13; xxxi. 27; etc.)

Ver. 10.—Now, therefore, let me alone. This was not a command, but rather a suggestion; or, at any rate, it was a command not intended to compel obedience—like that of the angel to Jacob—"Let me go, for the day breaketh" (Gen. xxxii. 26). Moses was not intended to take the command as absolute. He did not do so—he "wrestled with God," like Jacob, and prevailed. **That my wrath may wax hot.** Literally, "and my wrath will wax hot." **I will make of thee a great nation.** (Compare Num. xiv. 12.) God could, of course, have multiplied the seed of Moses, as he had that of Abraham; but in that case all that had been as yet done would have gone for nought, and his purposes with respect to his "peculiar people" would have been put back six hundred years and more.

Vers. 11-13.—Moses has three pleas where-

with he "wrestles with God:"—1. Israel is God's people, for whom he has done so much that surely he will not now destroy them, and so undo his own work. 2. Egypt will be triumphant if Israel is swept away, and will misapprehend the Divine action. 3. The promises made to Abraham (Gen. xv. 5; xvii. 2-6; etc.), Isaac (ib. xxvi. 4), and Jacob (ib. xxviii. 14; xxxv. 11), which had received a partial fulfilment, would seem to be revoked and withdrawn if the nation already formed were destroyed and a fresh start made.

Ver. 14.—The Lord repented of the evil. Changes of purpose are, of course, attributed to God by an "economy," or accommodation of the truth to human modes of speech and conception. "God is not a man that he should repent." He "knows the end from the beginning." When he threatened to destroy Israel, he knew that he would spare; but, as he communicated to Moses, first, his anger, and then, at a later period, his intention to spare, he is said to have "repented." The expression is an anthropomorphic one, like so many others, on which we have already commented. (See the comment on ch. ii. 24, 25; iii. 7, 8; xxxi. 17; etc.)

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 7-10.—*The anger of God.* God may well be angry when his people apostatise; and having recently professed entire submission to his will (ch. xix. 8; xxiv. 3), rebel suddenly, and cast his words behind their backs. God's anger against Israel was at this time intensified—

I. BY THEIR EXTREME INGRATITUDE. He had just delivered them by a series of stupendous miracles from a cruel bondage. He had brought them out of Egypt—he had divided the Red Sea before them, and led them through it—he had given them a complete victory over the Amalekites. He was supporting them day after day by a miraculous supply of food. He had condescended to enter into covenant with them, and to make them his "peculiar treasure"—"a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (ch. xix. 5, 6). He was further engaged in giving them a law which would place them far in advance of other nations, and render them the main source of life and light in a world of moral darkness and deadness. There had been no moment in their history when they were more bound by every consideration of duty, honour, and thankfulness to cling to Jehovah—yet, spite of all, they had rebelled and rushed into idolatry.

II. BY THE SUDDENNESS OF THEIR APOSTASY. "They have turned aside *quickly* out of the way," said the Almighty to Moses (ver. 8). A few weeks only had gone by since they had declared themselves God's willing servants—had entered into covenant with him, and promised to keep all his commandments. What had caused the sudden and complete change? There was nothing to account for it but the absence of Moses. But surely it might have been expected that their convictions would have had sufficient root to outlive the disappearance of Moses for as long as six weeks. The fact, however, was otherwise. They were of those who had "no root in themselves"—and as soon as temptation came, they fell away. The remembrance of their old idolatries came upon them with a force that they had not strength to resist—and it happened unto them according to the true proverb: "The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Pet. ii. 22).

III. BY THEIR SINNING AGAINST ABUNDANT LIGHT. Until the delivery of the second commandment at Sinai, it might perhaps have been a doubtful point whether the worship of God under a material form was, or was not, offensive to him. But after that

delivery, all doubt was removed. The bowing down to an image had been then and there declared an "iniquity," an offence to a "jealous God," which he would visit unto the third and fourth generation. Nor was this all. An express prohibition of the very act that Israel had now committed, had been put in the forefront of the "Book of the Covenant"—which opens thus—"Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven—ye shall not make with me gods of silver, *neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold*" (oh. xx. 22, 23). It was impossible therefore that they should plead ignorance. Knowingly and wilfully they had transgressed a plain command of the Great God, whose power and glory had so lately been revealed to them. They had sinned in the full light of day. Christians in their manifold idolatries—of covetousness, lust, fashion-worship, etc.—are more ungrateful than even the Israelites, since they sin against One who has died to redeem them, and they sin against a still clearer light—the double light of a full revelation of God's will, and of a conscience enlightened by the Holy Ghost. God's wrath may well "wax hot against them, to consume them from the face of the earth."

Ver. 11—15.—*The intercession of Moses.* This intercession should be studied and laid to heart by all Christians, especially by Christian ministers, whose duty it is to "watch for the souls" of others, as "they that must give account." It was—

I. EARNEST AND IMPASSIONED. No feeble voice, no lukewarm, timid utterance, was heard in the words whereby the leader sought to save his people. Prayer, expostulation, almost reproach, sound in them. God is besought, urged, importuned, to grant the boon begged of him. The tone of Jacob's answer rings in them,—"I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" (Gen. xxxii. 26).

II. UNSELFISH, OR RATHER SELF-RENOUNCING. The promise, "I will make of thee a great nation," has evidently taken no hold of the unselfish nature of the prophet. He declines to give it a thought. God must keep his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—not make a new promise, as if everything was now to begin afresh. The offer, which might have tempted any man, is simply set aside, as if it had not been made, or at any rate could not have been seriously meant; and the whole energy of the speaker concentrated on inducing God to spare his people.

III. WELL-REASONED. Three arguments are used, and each of them has real weight. (1) Israel is God's people—has been chosen, called, taken into covenant, protected and defended after a marvellous fashion. All this Divine effort would have been simply thrown away, if the announced purpose were carried out and Israel destroyed. God does not usually allow his plans to be balked, his designs to remain unaccomplished. If he "has begun a good work," he (commonly) wills to "bring it to good effect." Will he not do so in this case? (2) Are the enemies of God to be allowed a triumph? Israel's destruction would afford to the Egyptians an ample field for scoffs, ridicule, self-glorification. Would God suffer this? (3) Promises had been made, with great solemnity ("Thou swearst by thine own self," ver. 13), to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that the "peculiar people" should spring from them. These might be kept in the letter, but would they be kept in the spirit, if all their descendants were now destroyed, except some three, and a new nation was created out of the descendants of Moses?

IV. EFFECTUAL. "The Lord repented of the evil, which he thought to do unto his people" (ver. 14). The intercession of Moses prevailed—the announced purpose was given up. God spared his people, though his anger against them continued; and they were punished in a different way (vers. 33—35).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 7—14.—*The wrath of Jehovah and the intercession of Moses.* I. JEHOVAH DESCRIBES TO MOSES THE APOSTASY OF ISRAEL. Jehovah is omniscient; even while spreading before Moses, with all elaboration, the patterns in the mount, his all-observant eye is equally on the doings of the people below. And now, just when Moses is expecting to be dismissed with his instructions for the people, he is fated to learn that they have proved themselves utterly unworthy of Jehovah's great designs. The thing described is an utter, shameless, and precipitate apostasy from Jehovah. Previous outbreaks of the

evil heart were as nothing compared to this. If it had only been the sin of a few, some half-secret departure from Jehovah confined to a corner of the camp; if there had been a prompt repudiation of it and punishment of it on the part of the great majority: then, indeed, Jehovah might have found cause even for rejoicing that the apostasy of the few had been occasion to prove the fidelity of the many. But alas! the transgression is general; there is a public adoption of the golden calf with worship and sacrifice. The idolatrous spirit has been shown in the completest and most demonstrative way. Idolatry, with its awful degradations and its fatal influences, must always be an abomination to God; but how peculiarly abominable when it rose in the midst of a people with whom God had been dealing with the tenderest compassion and the sublimest power! It is to be noticed that God calls special attention to the *quickness* of this apostasy. "They have turned aside *quickly* out of the way." The fact of course was that they had also been turned quickly *into that way*, and kept in it by a kind of external force. They might promise, and while they promised mean to keep the promise, but nature was too much for them; and as soon as the Divine constraint was in any way relaxed they returned to the old path. The impression Jehovah would make on the mind of his servant is that nothing can be expected from them.

II. Jehovah indicates to Moses THE RIGHTEOUS SEVERITY WITH WHICH HE PROPOSES TO TREAT ISRAEL (vers. 9, 10). We have to think here not only of the words of Jehovah, but also of the attitude of Moses, which seems to be indicated by these words. Even before Moses puts in his earnest intercession, we have a hint of what is in his heart. Jehovah says, "Let me alone;" as one man, about to strike another, might speak to some third person stepping between to intercept the blow. In the speaking of Jehovah's words there must have been an indication of wrath, such as of course cannot be conveyed by the mere words themselves. And what, indeed, could Jehovah do, but give an unmistakable expression of his wrath with such an outbreak of human unrighteousness as is found in idolatry? No doubt there is great difficulty in understanding such expressions as those of Jehovah here. When we remember the low estate of the Israelites spiritually, and the infecting circumstances in which they had grown up, it seems hardly just to reproach them for their lapse into idolatry. But then we must bear in mind that the great object of the narrative here is to show how Jehovah cannot bear sin. The thing to be considered first of all is, not *how* these Israelites became idolaters, but the sad and stubborn fact that they seemed inveterate idolaters. Such a decided manifestation of idolatry as the one here revealed, when it came to the knowledge of Jehovah, was like a spark falling into the midst of gunpowder. It matters not how such a spark may be kindled; it produces an explosion the moment it touches the powder. The wrath of God must be revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Yet doubt not that the God who spoke here in such wrath and threatening *loved these Israelites in the midst of their apostasy*. But it was not possible in one and the same moment, and from one and the same voice, to make equally evident love for the benighted apostate himself, and wrath because of the evil that was so intimately mixed with his nature. On such an occasion it became God to give a direct and emphatic expression of wrath from his own lips, leaving his love and pity to be known indirectly through the intercession of his servant Moses. When Jehovah is angry, it is then we need most of all to remember that love is the great power in his nature.

III. Jehovah further indicates A CERTAIN TEMPTING POSSIBILITY TO MOSES. "I will make of thee a great nation." Thus we see how the word of Jehovah is made to serve two purposes. It both expresses the fulness of wrath with an apostate people, and at the same time puts a cherished servant upon a most effectual trial of his magnanimity and mediatorial unselfishness. Thus this proposition of Jehovah comes in most beautifully to emphasise the simplicity and purity of the feeling of Moses in his subsequent mediation. And though Moses makes no reference to this proposition, it is well to be enabled to see how little hold any self-seeking thoughts took of his mind.

IV. THE REPLY OF MOSES HAS NOW TO BE CONSIDERED. Not that we need stay to investigate the merits of the considerations which Moses here puts forward. He could only speak of things according as they appeared to him. We know, looking at these same things in the light of the New Testament, that even if God had destroyed these people as at first he hinted, his promises would not therefore have been nullified. The temporal destruction of a single generation of men, however perplexing it might have

seemed at the time, would afterwards have been seen as neither any hindrance in the fulfilment of God's purposes, nor any dimming of the brightness of his glory. Be it remembered that these same people whom God brought out with great power and a mighty hand, yet nevertheless perished in the wilderness. Spared this time, they were in due season cut down as cumberers of the ground. And as to any scornful words the Egyptians might speak, God's glory was not at the mercy of their tongues; for it had been manifested beyond all cavil in a sufficiently terrible chapter of their own history. Then as to the words spoken to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, even if all but Moses had been swept away, yet in him the seed of Abraham would have been continued, just as in the days of the flood. God did not utterly destroy the human race, but narrowed it down to one family. And more than all we should bear in mind that the true fulfilment of God's promises was to Abraham's spiritual seed; they who being of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. Hence we must not too readily conclude that *what Moses said* was the thing which here influenced Jehovah in what is called his repentance. The influential power was, that here was a man to *say something*, to act as a mediator, one deeply concerned to secure escape for these people, even while they, revelling in the plain below, are all unconscious of their danger. Notice that Moses says nothing by way of excuse for the people. Indeed, the full magnitude of their offence had not yet been comprehended by him; and it is interesting to contrast his pleadings here with an angry God, and his own wrath when he came actually in sight of the golden calf. The one thing Moses fixes on, in his appeal to God, is the great Divine purpose for Israel. He recalls how great that purpose is; he is profoundly concerned that it should not be interfered with; and so we are led to think of Jesus the true Mediator, with a knowledge of Divine purposes and human needs, such as it was not for Moses to attain. Consider how Jesus dwells and caused his apostles to dwell on God's great purposes for the children of men. Thus both from Moses the type, and Jesus the antitype, we should learn to think of men not as they are only, but as they ought to be, and as God proposes they should be. Evidently Moses kept constantly in mind God's purposes for Israel, even though he knew not how profound and comprehensive those purposes were. So let us, knowing more than Moses of God's purposes for men in Christ Jesus, keep constantly in mind that which will come to all who by a deep patient, and abiding faith approve themselves true children of Abraham.—Y.

Ver. 14.—*Some powers restrain, some compel.* Here we see a restraining power, and one which can even restrain God. Notice—

I. *EVIL THREATENED.* 1. *Justly merited.* Remember all that had gone before: deliverance after a series of awe-inspiring judgments on the oppressors; warnings after previous murmurings; now, with a fuller revelation of God's majesty, this act of impatient apostasy: all compelled to the conclusion that the people were utterly stiff-necked (ver. 9). 2. *Complete and final.* As a moulder in clay, when he finds his material getting hard and intractable, throws it down, casts it away, and takes up with something more pliable, so God determines with regard to Israel (ver. 10). Let the children of Israel go, and let the children of Moses inherit the promises.

II. *THE INTERCESSION.* Only one thing held back the judgment (ver. 10). As though God could not act without the consent of Moses. [Cf. Hot sun would melt snow but for shadow of protecting wall.] The heat of God's wrath cannot consume so long as Moses stands in the way and screens those against whom it burns. What a power! See how it was exercised:—1. *Unselfishly.* He might have thought, "A disgrace to me if these people are lost when I have led them;" this fear, however, provided against by the promise that he shall be made "a great nation." The intercession is prompted by pure unselfishness; Moses identifies himself with those for whom he pleads; and this gives the power. To come between the sun and any object, you must be in the line of the sun's rays; and to come, as Moses did, between God and a people, you must be in the line of God's will. 2. *With perfect freedom.* Moses talks with Jehovah as a trusted steward might with his employer: (1) Why so angry when he has exercised such power on their behalf? (ver. 11). (2) Why should the Egyptians be permitted to taunt him with caprice and cruelty? (ver. 12). (3) Let him remember his oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (ver. 13). The unselfish man need not fear to speak thus openly with God. Unselfishness is so God-like that it permits familiarity whilst it guards against irreverence.

III. EVIL REPENTED OF. Notice:—1. The repentance was in direct answer to the intercession (cf. vers. 12, 14). God did as Moses begged that he would do. Had Moses been less firm, God's wrath would certainly have consumed the people. Yet—2. God cannot change! No: but Moses kept his place [cf. the wall screening the snow]; and therefore the conditions were never such as they must have been for judgment to be executed. God's repentance was one with Moses' persistence. The evil threatened was against *the people*, but the people *apart from Moses*. Moses identifying himself with them altered the character of the total.

Conclusion.—What Moses did for his people that our Lord does for his Church (Rom. viii. 34; Heb. vii. 25). That also we may do, each in his measure in behalf of others. It is the Pharisee who thanks God that he is not as other men are! True men love rather to identify themselves with their race, thus, salt-like, saving it from corruption giving it shelter by the intercession of their lives.—G.

Vers. 7—15.—*The first intercession.* If Israel has been forgetting God, God has not been forgetting Israel. His eye has been on all their doings. There has not been a thought in their heart, or a word on their tongue, but, lo! it has altogether been well known to him (Ps. cxxxix. 4). It is God's way, however, to permit matters to reach a crisis before he interposes. For a time he keeps silence. During the inception and early stages of the movement in Israel, he makes no discovery of it to Moses. He allows it to ripen to its full proportions. Then he tells his servant all that has happened, and orders him to repair at once to the scene of the apostasy (vers. 7—11). Mark the expression:—“*Thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves*”—indicating that they are no longer God's, that the covenant is broken. Moses intercedes for Israel, urging various pleas why God should not destroy them (vers. 11—14). Consider—

I. THE DIVINE WRATH. “Let me alone,” says God, “that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them” (ver. 10). This wrath of God against the sin of Israel was—1. *Real*. What we have in these verses is no mere drama, *acted* between God and Moses, but a most real wrath, averted by most real and earnest intercession. But for Moses' intercession, Israel would actually have been destroyed. 2. *Holy*. Wrath against sin is a necessary part of God's character. Not that we are to conceive of the thrice Holy One as swayed by human passions, or as needing to be soothed by human entreaty. But sin does awaken God's displeasure. He would not be God if it did not. “Resentment against sin is an element in the very life of God. It can no more be separated from God than heat from fire. . . . God is merciful. What does this mean? It means a willingness to lay aside resentment against those who have sinned. But it follows that the greater the resentment, the greater is the mercy; if there is very little resentment, there can be very little mercy; if there is no resentment at all, mercy is impossible. The difference between our religion, and the religion of other times, is this—that we do not believe that God has any very strong resentment against sin, or against those who are guilty of sin; and since his resentment has gone, his mercy has gone with it. We have not a God who is more merciful than the God of our fathers, but a God who is less righteous; and a God who is not righteous, a God who does not glow with fiery indignation against sin is no God at all.” Put otherwise,—a God who cannot be angry with my sin, is one from whom it would be meaningless in me to sue for pardon. His pardon, could I obtain it, would have no moral value. Yet, 3. *Restrained*. The expression is peculiar—“Now, therefore, *let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot*,” etc. The meaning is, that God is self-determined in his wrath, even as in his love (cf. ch. xxxiii. 19). He determines himself in the exercise of it. It does not carry him away. In the present instance he restrained it, that room might be left for intercession. The words were a direct encouragement to Moses to entreat for his erring charge.

II. MOSES' INTERCESSION (vers. 11—15). The last occasion on which we met with Moses as an intercessor was at the court of Egypt. We have now to listen to him in his pleadings for his own people. Four separate acts of intercession are recorded in three chapters (cf. vers. 31—35; chs. xxxiii. 12—18; xxxiv. 9). Taken together, they constitute a Herculean effort of prayer. Each intercession gains a point not granted to the previous one. First, the reversal of the sentence of destruction (ver. 14); next, the

consent of God to the people going up to Canaan, only, however, under the conduct of an angel (ch. xxxiii. 1—4); third, the promise that his own presence would go with them (ch. xxxiii. 14); finally, the perfect re-establishment of friendly relations, in the renewal of the covenant (ch. xxxiv. 10). Like Jacob, Moses, as a prince, had power with God, and prevailed (Gen. xxxii. 28). It is to be noted, also, that this advance in power of prayer is connected with an advance in Moses' own experience. In the first intercession, the thought which chiefly fills his mind is the thought of the people's *danger*. He does not attempt to excuse or palliate their *sin*, but neither does he make direct confession of it. He sees only the nation's impending destruction, and is agonisingly earnest in his efforts to avert it. At this stage in his entreaty, Moses might almost seem to us more merciful than God. A higher stage is reached when Moses, having actually witnessed the transgression of the people, is brought to take sides with God in his wrath against it. His second intercession, accordingly, is pervaded by a much deeper realisation of the *enormity* of the sin for which forgiveness is sought. His sense of this is so awful, that it is now a moot question with him whether God possibly *can* forgive it (ver. 32). The third intercession, in like manner, is connected with a special mark of Jehovah's condescending favour to himself (ch. xxxiii. 9), emboldening him to ask that God will restore his presence to the nation (ver. 15); while the fourth follows on the sight which is given him of Jehovah's glory, and on the revelation of the name (ch. xxxiv. 5—8). Observe more particularly in regard to the intercession in the text—1. *The boon sought*. It is that God will spare the people, that he will turn aside his fierce anger from them, and not consume them (ver. 12). Thus far, as above hinted, it might almost seem as if Moses were more merciful than God. God seeks to destroy; Moses pleads with him to spare. The wrath is in God; the pity in his servant. (Contrast with this the counter scene in Jonah iv.) The affinity of spirit between Jehovah and Moses, however, is evinced later, in the hot anger which Moses feels on actually witnessing the sin. God's mercy, on the other hand, is shown in giving Moses the opportunity to intercede. It was he who put the pity into his servant's heart, and there was that in his own heart which responded to it. 2. *The spirit of the supplication*. (1) How absolutely *disinterested*. Moses sets aside, without even taking notice of it, the most glorious offer ever made to mortal man—"I will make of thee a great nation" (ver. 10). This was *Moses'* trial. It tested "whether he loved his own glory better than he loved the brethren who were under his charge." He endured it nobly. (2) How intensely *earnest*. He seems to clasp the feet of God as one who could not, would not, leave, till he had obtained what he sought. (3) How supremely *concerned about God's glory*. That is with Moses the consideration above all others. 3. *The pleas urged*. Moses in these pleas appeals to three principles in the Divine character, which really govern the Divine action—(1) To God's regard for his own work (ver. 11). The finishing of work he has begun (Phil. i. 6). (2) To God's regard for his own honour (ver. 12). Moses cannot bear to think of God's action being compromised. (3) To God's regard for his own servants (ver. 13). The love he bears to the fathers (cf. Deut. iv. 31; x. 15). These are points in God's heart on which all intercession may lay hold. 4. *The effect produced*. God repented him of the evil he thought to do to Israel (ver. 14). Repented, *i.e.*, turned back from a course which his displeasure moved him to pursue, and which, but for Moses' intercession, he would have pursued. It does not appear, however, that Moses was at this time informed of the acceptance of his intercession. Notice, also, that the *actual* remission was bestowed gradually. In this first act of intercession God sees, as it were, the point to which the whole series of intercessions tends, and in anticipation thereof, lays aside his anger.—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Ver. 15—19.—MOSES BREAKS THE TWO TABLES. The entire conference between God and Moses being now ended, Moses hastened to descend from the mount, and interpose in the crisis that had arisen. He took carefully the two tables of stone, which he had received, in his

two hands (Deut. ix. 15), and set out on his return to the camp. On the way, he fell in with Joshua, who must have been on the watch for his descent, and the two proceeded together. When a certain portion of the distance had been traversed, the sounds of the

festivity which was going on in the camp reached their ears; and Joshua, mistaking the nature of the shouts, suggested that fighting was in progress (ver. 17). Moses, however, better instructed in the actual nature of the proceedings (vers. 7, 8), caught their character more correctly, and declared that what he heard was nothing but shouting (ver. 18). Soon afterwards, the camp came into sight—a disorderly crowd, half stripped of their garments (ver. 25), was singing choruses and dancing round the figure which Aaron had cast—the sights and sounds were those of a dissolute orgy—Moses was struck with horror and in the frenzy of his indignation, dashed the two tables to the ground and broke them into fragments (ver. 19). The people, he felt, were utterly unworthy of the holy laws which he had brought them—they had “altogether gone out of the way”—they had become “abominable”—at the moment he perhaps despaired of obtaining mercy for them, and expected their entire destruction. God had not as yet told him whether he would “turn from his fierce wrath,” or not.

Ver. 15.—The two tables . . . were in his hand. In Deut. ix. 15, using greater particularity, Moses says that they were “in his two hands.” One was in each hand probably. **Written on both their sides.** This is the case generally with Assyrian and Babylonian tablets, but not with Egyptian ones, which are moreover scarcely found at this early date. Here we seem to have again an indication that some of the Israelitic civilisation had come to them from “Ur of the Chaldees.”

Ver. 16.—The tables were the work of God. Shaped, i.e., by the same power by which the commandments were inscribed upon them; not, necessarily, of matter newly created for the purpose.

Ver. 17.—When Joshua heard. This abrupt introduction of Joshua, who has not been mentioned for seven entire chapters, is curious. Probably he had considered himself bound, as Moses' minister (ch. xxiv. 13), to await his return, and had remained in the middle portion of the mount, where he may have fed upon manna, until Moses came down from the top. **The noise of the people.** It is noted by travellers, that in all the latter part of the descent from Sinai, the plain at its base is

shut out from sight; and that sounds would be heard from it a long time before the plain itself would open on the view (Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 44). Sounds, however, which come circuitously, are always indistinct; and it is not surprising that Joshua, knowing nothing of the proceedings in the camp, should have fancied he heard a sound of war.

Ver. 18. This verse is difficult to translate, being markedly antithetical and at the same time idiomatic. Perhaps it would be best to render—“It is not the voice of them who raise the cry of victory, nor is it the voice of them who raise the cry of defeat—the voice of them who raise a cry do I hear.” The verb is the same in all the three clauses; and it would seem that Moses simply denied that there was any sound of war without making any clear suggestion as to the real character of the disturbance.

Ver. 19.—The dancing. Rather “dancing.” There is no article; and as the subject had not been mentioned before, the use of the article would have been unmeaning. Dances were a part of the religious ceremonial in most ancient nations. Sometimes they were solemn and grave, like the choric dances of the ancient Dorians, and (probably) that of David in front of the Ark (2 Sam. vi. 5-22); sometimes festive and joyous, yet not immodest, like the Pyrrhic and other dances at Sparta, and the dancing of the Salii at Rome; but more often, and especially among the Oriental nations, they were of a loose and lascivious character. In Egypt, the dancers appear to have been professionals of a degraded class, and the dancing itself to have been always sensual and indecent; while in Syria, Asia Minor, and Babylon, dancing was a wild orgy, at once licentious and productive of a species of phrenzy. We must suspect that it was this sort of dancing in which the Israelites were engaged—whence the terrible anger of Moses. He saw idolatry before his eyes, and idolatry with its worst accompaniments. In the extremity of his anger, he cast the tables out of his hands, dashed them violently against the ground, and broke them. For this act he is never reprehended. It is viewed as the natural outcome of a righteous indignation, provoked by the extreme wickedness of the people. We must bear this in mind when we come to consider the justice or injustice of the punishment which he proceeded to inflict on them for their sin (vers. 26-29).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 15-19.—The act of Moses in breaking the tables. At first sight the act seems impious, and wholly inexcusable. Here was a marvel—the greatest marvel existing in all the world—transcending the finest statue, the most glorious picture—more wonderful

than the pyramids themselves or the great temple of Karnak—here was a monument shaped by the hand of God, and inscribed with his finger in characters that would have possessed through all ages an undying interest for man. Here, moreover, was a precious deposit of truth—God's *great* revelation to his people—put in a written form, and so rendered unalterable; no more liable to be corrupted by the uncertainty of human memory, or the glosses of tradition—pure, changeless, perfect truth; the greatest blessing that man can receive. All this, committed by God to his servant's care, and knowingly, wilfully destroyed in a moment of time! The thing seems, at first, incredible; yet we have the witness of God that it is true. Then we ask, How could Moses have so acted, and was not his action inexcusable? We look to Scripture, and we find that he is never blamed for it. He relates it of himself without any sign of self-condemnation—nay! he, at a later date, reminds the people of it in a tone which is evidently one of self-approval (Deut. ix. 17). What is the explanation of all this? It may help us to find a satisfactory answer, if we consider—

I. THE PROVOCATION TO THE ACT. Moses had left the people devoted apparently to God's service. When he reported to them the entire contents of the "Book of the Covenant," they had answered *with one voice*, "All the words which the Lord hath said, we will do" (ch. xxiv. 3). He had given them in charge to Aaron and Hur, on whose faithfulness he might well imagine himself justified in placing complete reliance. He had been absent less than six weeks—it might seem to him that he had been absent but a few days. And now—now that on rounding a corner of the gorge through which he was descending—he comes in sight of them once more and has them fully presented to his view, what is it he beholds? He sees the entire people—Levites and priests as well as laymen—dancing around a golden idol in a lewd and indecent way! Was not this enough to move him? Was it not enough to transport him out of himself, and render him no longer master of his actions? The wickedness of the people stood revealed to him, and made him feel how utterly unworthy they were of the treasure which he was bringing them. Yielding to an irresistible impulse, in a paroxysm of indignation, to shew his horror at what he witnessed, he cast the tables to the ground. God seems to have regarded the provocation as sufficient, and therefore Moses receives no blame for what he did.

II. THE ACT ITSELF. The act was the destruction of a record which the people were at the moment setting at naught. It was akin to the action of God in withdrawing light from them who sin against light. It was a deserved punishment. It was a way of declaring to the people that they were unworthy to receive the truth and should not receive it. Those who saw Moses descend saw that he was bringing them something, carefully, in his two hands, and must have felt that, as he had gone up to the summit to God, it must be something from God. When he lifted up his two hands, and with a gesture of abhorrence, cast the "something" to the ground, there must have gone through them a sudden thrill of fear, a sudden sense of loss. They must have felt that their "sin had found them out"—that their punishment had begun. Casting the tables down and breaking them, was saying to the multitude in the most significant way—"God has cast you off from being his people."

III. THE SEQUEL OF THE ACT. If anything could have brought the Israelites generally to a sense of their guilt and shame, it would have been the act of Moses which they had witnessed. As it was, a deep impression seems to have been made; but only on the men of his own tribe. When Moses, shortly afterwards, demanded to know, "Who was on the Lord's side?" (verse 26), "all the men of Levi"—i.e., the great mass of the tribe—rallied to him, and were ready to become the executioners of his wrath upon the most determined of the idolaters. This revulsion of feeling on their part was probably brought about, in a great measure, by the exhibition of indignation on the part of Moses, which culminated in his dashing the tables to the earth.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 15—25.—*The return of Moses to the camp.* It may well be believed that it was with deeply agitated heart Moses, stunned by the tidings he had just received, rejoined his faithful attendant, and as speedily as possible descended the rocky sides of

the mountain. Great was the contrast between the things heavenly on which for forty days and forty nights his eyes had been uninterruptedly feasting, and the scenes he was now to witness. Even the light of common day could hardly seem otherwise than strange to him, emerging from his ecstasy. His bodily aspect, too, would be considerably altered. But in his spirit there is a stored-up energy, the product of his long rapture, which it only needs the sight of Israel's sin to kindle into awful heat of wrath.

I. THE BREAKING OF THE TABLES (vers. 15-19). The downward journey was a silent one. Moses refrains from communicating to Joshua the news he has received. He is absorbed in his own thoughts. And while he muses, the fire burns (Pa. xxxix. 3). So soon as they approach the camp, sounds of revelry are heard. Joshua, with his soldier's instinct, thinks at once of war, but Moses can tell him that it is "not the voice of them that shout for mastery," nor yet "the voice of them that cry for being overcome" that he hears, but "the voice of them that cry" (ver. 8). Even Moses, however, is unprepared for the spectacle which presents itself, as, pursuing the descent, some turn in the road at length puts before his eyes the whole scene of folly. The tables of testimony are in his hands, but these, in his hot anger, he now dashes from him, breaking them in pieces on the rocks (ver. 19). It was an act of righteous indignation, but symbolic also of the breaking of the covenant. Of that covenant the tables of stone were all that still remained, and the dashing of them to pieces was the final act in its rupture. Learn, 1. The actual sight of wickedness is necessary to give us full sympathy with God in the not displeasure with which he regards it. 2. The deepest and most loving natures are those most capable of being affected with holy indignation. Who shall compete with Moses in the boundlessness of his love for Israel? But the honour of Jehovah touches him yet more deeply. 3. It is right, on suitable occasions, to give emphatic expression to the horror with which the sight of great wickedness inspires us.

II. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CALF (ver. 20). Returning to the camp, Moses brought the orgies of the people to a speedy termination. He had little difficulty in restoring order. His countenance, blazing with anger, and exhibiting every sign of grief, surprise, and horror, struck immediate dismay into the evil-doers. No one, apparently, had the courage to resist him. The idolaters slunk in guilty haste to their tents, or stood paralysed with fear, rooted to the spot at which he had discovered them. He, on his part, took immediate steps for ridding the camp of the visible abomination. "He took the calf which they had made and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it." View this—1. As a *bitter humiliation*. What could be more humiliating to these idolaters than to see their god ground to powder, and its dust made into a nauseous mixture, which afterwards they were compelled to drink? But is not this the end of all sin? The instruments of our sin become the instruments of our punishment. Our sin turns to bitterness. The golden sheen by which it at first allured us disappears from it. It ends in humiliation and degradation. 2. As a *righteous retribution*. Why was the calf thus ground to powder, and given to the Israelites to drink? It was no mere act of revenge on Moses' part. It was no hasty doing of his anger. It was a just retribution for a great sin. It was a method deliberately adopted of branding idol and idolaters alike with the print of the Almighty's judgment. It suggests to us the *correspondence* between sin and its punishment; the certainty of our sins coming home to roost; the fact that sin will be paid back to us in its own coin. Sin and retribution hang together. We "receive the things done in the body" (2 Cor. v. 10). 3. As a *prophecy of worse evil to come*. Bitter as this humiliation was, it was not the whole. It was but the mark put upon the deed by God, which told those who had committed it that they must abide by it, and be prepared to eat the fruit of their doings. The drinking of the dust had its sequel in the slaughter and the plagues (vers. 27, 35). Even so, the bitterness and humiliation following from sins in this life do not exhaust their punishment. They warn of worse punishment in the world to come.

III. AARON'S EXCUSES (vers. 21-25). The first duty was to destroy the calf. This accomplished, or while the work was proceeding, Moses addresses himself to Aaron. His words are cuttingly severe,—“What did this people unto thee?” etc. (ver. 21). Aaron, on his side, is deprecating and humble. He is afraid of Moses' anger. He addresses Moses as “my lord,” and proceeds to make excuses. His excuses are typical, and deserve consideration. 1. He falls back upon the old, old plea—as old as Eden—

that the blame of his sin rested on some one else than himself. "Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are bent on mischief. For they said to me," etc. (vers. 22—24). It is, as we say, the old, old story of all evil-doers—"It wasn't me, indeed it wasn't; it was those wicked people who made me do it." It is the weak, childish excuse of all who, having been tempted into sin, or having through their own irresolution fallen into it, have not the honesty or manliness to make at once a frank avowal of their fault. An easy way this, were the excuse admissible, of getting rid of our responsibility; but transgressors were early taught that they will not be allowed to avail themselves of it (Gen. iii. 12—20). It is not a plea which will be held valid on the day of judgment. All, more or less, are conscious of pressure exerted on them by their circumstances. There is, however, no fatality binding us to yield to that pressure, if yielding means sin. The pressure is our *trial*. Aaron's sin lay in his unmanly fear, in his not having the resolution to say at the critical time, No. Probably Aaron would have urged that if he had not yielded, the people would have killed him. "Then," Moses would have answered, "let them kill you. Better a thousand times that they had killed you than that you should have been the means of leading Israel into this great sin." Yet how often is the same species of excuse met with! "I couldn't help it;" "The necessity of my situation;" "Compelled by circumstances;" "Customs of the trade;" "If I hadn't done it, I would have offended all my friends;" "I should have lost my situation," etc. It may be all true: but the point is, Was the thing wrong? If it was, the case of Aaron teaches us that we cannot shield ourselves by transferring the blame of what we have done to circumstances. 2. If Aaron's first excuse was bad, the second was worse—it *just happened*. He put the gold, poor man, into the fire, and "*there came out this calf!*" It came out. He did not make it; it *just came out*. This was a kind of explaining which explained nothing. Yet it is precisely paralleled by people attributing, say, to their "luck," to "chance," to "fate," to "destiny," what is really their own doing. Thomas Scott says—"No wise man ever made a more unmeaning or foolish excuse than Aaron did. We should never have supposed 'that he could speak well,' were we to judge of his eloquence by this specimen." Note—(1) The right way of dealing with a fault is frankly to acknowledge it. (2) Though Moses so severely rebuked Aaron, he could yet intercede for him (Deut. ix. 20). The future high priest, who truly had "infirmity" (Heb. v. 2), needed, on this occasion, an intercessor for himself. The severity of Moses was the severity of aggrieved love.—J. O.

Vers. 15—35.—*Judgment and mercy*. I. THE DESCENT OF MOSES THE EMBLEM OF THE LAW'S ENTRANCE INTO A WORLD OF SIN (vers. 15—29). 1. He came with tables written by God's own finger. The Divine origin and claims of the law are still attested by its own nature and by man's conscience. 2. He was met by the exhibition of gross and defiant sin. The law does not come to a people waiting to receive the knowledge of God's will, but busy with their idolatry and breaking what they already know to be his will. 3. The law's advent, therefore, is in wrath (ver. 19). (1) The broken tables declare that God's covenant is broken. This is still shown in the taking away of God's word from the sinful: it is not understood. Though held in the hand, a veil is drawn between the soul and it. Spiritual death, rationalism, and infidelity, are tokens to-day of God's broken covenant. (2) The burning of the idol, etc. The broken law is a prophecy and foretaste of wrath. (3) The slaughter of the persistent idolaters. The place of feasting becomes the place of death.

II. THE INTERCESSOR. 1. His deep consciousness of the evil of their sin (vers. 30, 31). The intercessor cannot make light of man's iniquity. He who bore our burdens felt their weight and terribleness as we have never yet done. 2. His love. Though he hates their iniquity, his life is bound up with theirs (ver. 32).

III. THE TERRIBLENESS OF SIN AS SEEN IN THE MIRROR OF THE DIVINE ANGER. 1. The impossibility of ransom. "Whoever hath sinned against me him will I blot out of my book." There is but one sacrifice which avails, and that reaches the heart of the sinful and changes it. 2. Mercy to the unrenowned only means a delayed judgment: "Nevertheless, in the day when I visit I will visit their sins upon them."—U.

EXPOSITION.

Ver. 20.—**MOSES DESTROYS THE GOLDEN CALF.** The first vengeance which Moses took was upon the idol. It was probably hollow, and possibly of no great size. He might easily break it to pieces and subject the pieces to the action of fire, whereby they would be calcined, and might then be easily reduced to powder. This powder he caused to be mixed with the stream of the brook that flowed from Sinai, so that the Israelites were obliged to swallow with their drink particles of their own idol. Compare the action of Josiah with respect to the "grove" set up in the temple precincts by Manasseh (2 Kings xxiii. 6), which was not identical, but still was similar. It has been suggested that this portion of the narrative is out of proper chronological order; and this may be so far true that the calcining and mixing with the water were at this point commanded rather than executed; but the destruction of the idol would naturally be the first thing which Moses would take in

hand, and provide for, before proceeding to anything else. Only when the "abomination" was removed and its destruction commenced, would he turn his attention to other points.

Ver. 20.—**Burnt it and ground it to powder.** Silver and gold subjected for a short time to a white heat, which may be easily produced by bellows, readily calcine, and are then easily crushed to a fine powder. Silver becomes detonating. I am not aware whether the case is the same with gold also. **Strawed it**—i.e., "sprinkled it." We need not suppose Moses to have done the whole—or even any part—himself. It was enough that he directed it to be done. **The water.** The article shows some particular water to be meant. We learn from Deuteronomy that it was the water of "the brook that descended out of the mount." **Made the children of Israel drink of it.** The brook being the only water readily accessible, the Israelites, if they drank at all, were compelled to risk swallowing particles of their "god."

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 20.—*Idolatry condemned by the idol's weakness and nothingness.* An idol is "nothing in the world" (1 Cor. viii. 4)—has no power—cannot even save itself. Nothing convinces men of the vanity of idolatry so much as to see their idol destroyed. We read in Bede that Northumbria was converted chiefly through the priest Coifi running a tilt at the great idol of the day, and throwing it to the ground (*Eccles. Hist.* ii. 13). Hence the command given "utterly to abolish idols" (Is. ii. 18). And what is true of idols proper, is true also, in its measure, of all those substitutes for God which the bulk of men idolise. Riches readily make themselves wings, and vanish, leaving their worshipper a beggar. Wife, mistress, favourite child, lover, erected into an idol, is laid low by death, decays, and crumbles in the grave. Reputation, glory, sought and striven for throughout long years as the one sole good, fades suddenly away before the breath of slander or the caprice of fortune. And when they are gone—when the bubble is burst—men feel how foolish was their adoration. Their idolatry stands self-condemned by their idol's weakness and nothingness.

EXPOSITION.

VERS. 21–24.—**AARON TRIES TO EXCUSE HIMSELF.** Having taken the needful steps for the destruction of the idol, Moses naturally turned upon Aaron. He had been left in charge of the people, to guide them, instruct them, counsel them in difficulties (ch. xxiv. 14). How had he acquitted himself of his task? He had led the people into a great sin—had at any rate connived at it—assisted in it. Moses therefore asks, "What had the people

done to him, that he should so act? How had they injured him, that he should so greatly injure them?" To this he has no direct reply. But he will not acknowledge himself in fault—he must excuse himself. And his excuse is twofold:—1. It was the people's fault, not his; they were "set on mischief." 2. It was a fatality—he threw the gold into the fire, and "it came out this calf." We are not surprised, after this, to read in

Deuteronomy, that "the Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him," and was only hindered from his purpose by the intercession of Moses

Ver. 21.—**What did this people unto thee?** Moses does not suppose that the people had really done anything to Aaron. He asks the question as a reproach—they had done nothing to thee—*had* in no way injured thee—and yet thou broughtest this evil upon them. **So great a sin.** Literally, "a great sin"—the sin of idolatry. If Aaron had offered a strenuous opposition from the first, the idolatry might not have taken place—the people might have been brought to a better mind.

Ver. 22.—**Let not the anger of my lord wax hot.** Aaron's humility is extreme, and the result of a consciousness of guilt. He nowhere else addresses Moses as "my lord." **Set on mischief.** Or "inclined to evil" (Kalisch).

Ver. 23.—**Make us gods.** Rather "Make us a god."

Ver. 24.—**There came out this calf.** Aaron speaks as if he had prepared no mould, but simply thrown the gold into the hot furnace, from which there issued forth, to his surprise, the golden calf. This was not only a *suppressio veri*, but a *suggestio falsi*. Having no even plausible defence to make, he is driven to the weakest of subterfuges.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 22—24.—**Aaron's excuses.** We are all ready enough to condemn Aaron for his insincere and shifty answer; but do not the apostle's words occur to any of us?—"Therefore, thou art inexcusable, O man, whosever thou art that judgest, for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things" (Rom. ii. 1). Do not we all, when we are taxed with faults, seek to shift the blame of them elsewhere? *e.g.* :—

I. ON THE PEOPLE WITH WHOM WE LIVE. Society, we say, is corrupt—is "set on mischief." Its customs are wrong, we know; but it is too strong for us. We must conform to its ways. There is no use in resisting them. Public men say—"Such and such changes in the law would be bad—we know it—we admit it—but the people ask for them, so we must lend ourselves to their wishes, and take steps to get the changes made." Or again—"This or that war would be unjust, iniquitous, a flying in the face of Christian principle. To engage in it would be a crime—a disgrace to the age we live in." But let the popular voice call for the war a little loudly—and the public man yields, silences the remonstrances of his conscience, and becomes an active agent in bringing the war about. And the case is the same in private life. Ask a man why he spends on entertainments twice as much as he spends in charity, and he will immediately lay the blame on others—"every one does it." Ask him why he wastes his whole time in frivolous pursuits, newspaper-reading, club-gossiping, card-playing, party-going, and his reply is the same. Descend a little in the social scale, and ask the manufacturer why he scamps his goods; the shopkeeper why he adulterates; the ship-owner why he insures ships that he knows to be unseaworthy and sends out to be wrecked—and his answer is parallel—"every one in his line of business does the same." They compel him to follow their bad example. Descend again, ask the confidential servant why he takes "commission" from tradesmen; the cook, why she hides fresh joints among the broken victuals; the footman, why he purloins wine and cigars; they defend themselves with the same plea—"It is wrong, they know: but their class has established the practice." "We are all the victims of our social surroundings; it is not we who are in fault, but the crowd that pushes us on."

II. ON THE NATURE THAT GOD HAS GIVEN US, ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH WE ARE PLACED. Sins of temper and sins of impurity are constantly set down by those who commit them to their *nature*. Their tempers are naturally so bad, their passions naturally so strong. As if they had no power over their nature; as if again, they did not voluntarily excite their passions, work themselves up into rages; "make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." In thus doing they construct the mould into which the sins run. Sins of dishonesty are commonly attributed to *circumstances*: the temptation came in their way, men say, without their seeking it, and was too much for them, was not to be resisted. So with drunkenness, idleness, and the other sins connected with evil companionship; men's plea is they were brought into contact with persons who dragged them, almost forced them into evil courses. Had they been

more happily circumstanced it would have been different. As if a man did not to a large extent make his own circumstances, choose his companions, construct his own way of life. We are not forced to company with any men, much less any women, out of business hours. We are not compelled to go to places of public amusement where we are tempted. The "circumstances" which lead to sin are usually circumstances which we might easily have avoided, if we had chosen, as Aaron might have avoided making the mould, or even asking for the ornaments.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 25-29.—MOSES FINISHES THE RING-LEADERS. The presence of Moses in the camp—his impressive act in breaking the tables—even his seizure of the idol and consignment of it to destruction—did not arrest the licentious orgy in which the people had engaged before his coming. The "play" that had followed on the feasting still continued; though we may suppose that many had been impressed and had desisted. Moses felt that an example must be made, and a stop put to conduct which was more and more provoking the Almighty, and might at any moment bring down the judgment of complete destruction upon the whole people. He therefore took his station at the main gate of the camp (ver. 26), and shouted the words—"Who is on Jehovah's side? Here, to me!" The sound of the words could not, of course, have reached very far—but they rallied to him those of his own tribe who stood near, and thus placed a strong force at his disposal. Moses bade them get their swords, and proceed through the camp from end to end, slaying the idolaters—not, we may be sure, indiscriminately, but executing God's judgment on those who were most conspicuous and persistent. They were especially bidden not to spare their own nearest and dearest, which implies that many Levites were among the ringleaders. The result was the destruction by the sword of three thousand men—and the suppression of the festival. It is not to be doubted that Moses had Divine sanction for what he did in this matter (ver. 27).

Ver. 25.—The people were naked. It has been suggested that "licentious" or "unruly" would be a better rendering (Gesenius, Dathé, Rosenmüller, Kalisch, Cook), but the primary sense of *pharus* is "naked," "stript;" and of the licentious orgies of the East, stripping or ~~uncovering~~ the person was a

feature (Herod. ii. 60), so that there is no reason for changing the expression used in the Authorised Version. Moses saw that most of the people were still without the garments that they had laid aside when they began to dance, and were probably still engaged in dancing and shouting. Aaron had made them naked. Aaron is said to have done that to which his actions had led. He had made the calf and proclaimed a festival. The "nakedness" had naturally followed. Unto their shame among their enemies. Amalekites were no doubt still hovering about the camp; indeed, the tribe probably still held most of the surrounding mountains. They would witness the orgy, and see the indecent and shameful exposure.

Ver. 26.—Moses stood in the gate of the camp. We must understand "the principal gate," since the camp had several (ver. 27). Who is on the Lord's side! Let him come to me. Literally, "Who for Jehovah? To me"—but expressed, as the Hebrew idiom allows, in three words, forming an excellent rallying cry. All the sons of Levi—i.e., all who heard the cry. It is evident that there were Levites among the idolaters (vers. 27, 29).

Ver. 27.—Go in and out from gate to gate, etc., i.e., "pass through the whole camp—visit every part of it—and, where you see the licentious rites continuing, use your swords—do not spare, though the man be a brother, or a companion, or a neighbour—strike nevertheless, and bring the revel to an end."

Ver. 28.—About three thousand. We cannot gather from this, as some have done, that the Levites who rallied to Moses were only 3,000—for every Levite was not obliged to kill a man—but only that, when this number was slain, the idolaters desisted from their orgy.

Ver. 29.—For Moses had said. Moses, on giving them their commission (ver. 27), had told them, that their zeal in the matter would be a consecration, and would secure them God's blessing. They earned by it the semi-priestly position, which was soon afterwards assigned to them (Num. iii. 6-13).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 26—28.—*The punishment of idolatry.* God did not long allow the sin against his majesty to remain unpunished. He declared his will to Moses (ver. 27)—“Thus saith the Lord God of Israel”—and Moses, with his usual dutifulness, was prompt to execute his will. Having obtained the necessary force, he lost no time in inflicting the punishment. Of the punishment itself, we shall do well to note—

I. ITS SEVERITY. Men talk and think very slightly in these days of sins against God's majesty. They profess scepticism, agnosticism, atheism, “with a light heart.” The idea does not occur to them that their conduct is likely to bring upon them any punishment. But “God's thoughts are not as man's thoughts”—God visits such sins with death. Three thousand are slain with the sword on one day because of a few hours of idol-worship. Such is God's award. And the record of it has been “written for our learning, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” It is intended to teach us that God will visit for these things; and, if not in this world, then assuredly in the next.

II. ITS JUSTICE. Idolatry is apostasy. It is a “casting of God behind the back”—a turning away from him, and a deliberate preference to him of something which is not he, and which cannot therefore but be infinitely inferior. The heart witnesses against idolatry; it tells us that we are bound, being God's creatures, to devote our whole existence to him. Idolatry might well be punished with death, if it had never been positively forbidden. But the Israelites had heard it forbidden amid the thunders of Sinai (ch. xx. 4, 5). They had a law against it in “the Book of the Covenant” (ch. xx. 23). They had pledged themselves to obey this law (ch. xxiv. 3). They could not therefore now complain. If all who had taken part in the calf-worship had perished, no injustice would have been done. But God tempers justice with mercy. There were well-nigh six hundred thousand sinners; but the lives of three thousand only were taken.

III. THE METHOD WHEREBY IT WAS ESCAPED. Those escaped who put away their sin as, 1. The Levites, who hastened to repent, and placed themselves on the Lord's side at the first summons made by Moses. This was the best course, and the only safe one. This was “turning to the Lord with all the heart;” and, though no atonement for past sin, was accepted by God through the (coming) atonement of his Son, and obtained from him, not only forgiveness, but a blessing (ver. 29). 2. Those escaped who desisted either when Moses made his first appeal, or even when they saw the swords drawn, and vengeance about to be taken. To draw back from sin is the only way to escape its worst consequences. Even then, all its consequences are not escaped. Their iniquity was still “visited” on those who were now allowed to escape with their lives—“the Lord plagued the people because they made the calf” (ver. 35) at a later date.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 25—30.—*The zeal of Levi.* Panic was in the camp. The idolaters stood as they had been taken in their guilty revels. Their sin had been of too heinous a nature to admit of its being passed over without severe punishment. Law must be vindicated. Vengeance must be taken for the injury offered to the majesty of Jehovah. Stern as the duty is, the mediator does not shrink from immediately addressing himself to the execution of judgment.

I. THE SUMMONS. He stood in the gate of the camp and said, “Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me” (ver. 26). This must be taken to mean, not, “Who is willing to be on the Lord's side now?” but “Who has shown himself on the Lord's side during the recent apostasy?” Note—the Lord's side, though for a time the unpopular one, proves in the end to be the side of honour, of safety, and of comfort. Fidelity has its ultimate reward. Wisdom is justified of her children. (Matt. xi. 19.)

II. THE RESPONSE. “All the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him” (ver. 26). The Levites, as a tribe, would thus appear to have been less implicated in the idolatry than the rest of the people.

“Faithful found
Among the faithless, faithful only he”

This now turns to their honour. The text, however, does not forbid the supposition that *individuals* from the other tribes also came out, and separated themselves at the call of Moses.

III. THE COMMISSION. This was sufficiently sanguinary. It put the fidelity of Levi to a terrible test. "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out," etc. (ver. 27). 1. In the work of executing Jehovah's vengeance, *the Levites were to "consecrate" themselves* (ver. 29). They were to devote themselves. They were to be actuated in what they did by pure zeal for God's glory. They were to obey to the letter the command he had given them. 2. In the doing of this work, *they were sternly to repress all natural impulses*: "every man upon his son, and upon his brother" (ver. 29; cf. Deut. xxxiii. 9). So earthly ties are not to be permitted to stand between us and duty to Christ (Matt. viii. 21, 22; x. 27).

IV. THE EXECUTION OF THE MANDATE. 1. *The Levites showed unflinching zeal in the work entrusted to them.* By their zeal on this, and on other occasions (Deut. xxxiii. 8), they reversed the curse which lay upon their tribe, and won for themselves great honour and blessing. In particular, they won the privilege of serving in the sanctuary. 2. *They slew three thousand of the people* (ver. 28). "Terrible surgery this," as Carlyle says of the storming of Drogheda; "but is it surgery, and judgment, or atrocious murder merely?" The number of the slain was after all small as compared with the whole body of the people. Probably only the ringleaders and chief instigators of the revolt were put to death, with those who still showed the disposition to resist. Note, that notwithstanding their great zeal on this occasion, the Levites were among those afterwards excluded from Canaan for unbelief. This is a striking circumstance. It shows how those that think they stand need to take heed lest they fall (1 Cor. x. 12). It reminds us that one heroic act of service is not enough to win for us the kingdom of God. "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence fast unto the end" (Heb. iii. 14). It may suggest to us also, that many of the Israelites who failed under the later trial, and so were excluded from Canaan, thus forfeiting the earthly inheritance, may yet have had the root of the matter in them, and so, spiritually, were saved.—J. O.

Ver. 26.—"Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me." The following points suggest a practical treatment of the passage—

I. IN THE WARFARE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL, THERE IS NEED FOR TAKING SIDES. Some side we *must* take. We cannot remain neutral. Not to be on the Lord's side, is to be on the side of his enemies. It is our duty to choose the Lord's side. (1) He has a claim on our allegiance. (2) It is the side of honour and of duty. (3) It is the side we will ultimately wish we *had* chosen.

II. THE EXAMPLE OF ONE GOOD MAN, IN DECLARING HIMSELF ON THE LORD'S SIDE, AFFORDS A RALLYING-POINT FOR OTHERS. He gathers others around him. His influence decides and emboldens them.

III. THE TEST OF BEING ON THE LORD'S SIDE IS, THAT, WHEN OTHERS ARE APOSTATISING AROUND US, WE REMAIN FAITHFUL. Weak natures will always go with the multitude. Decided piety shows itself in being able to resist the contagion of numbers. It needs courage to be singular.

IV. BEING ON THE LORD'S SIDE CARRIES WITH IT CERTAIN OBLIGATIONS. (1) The obligation of personal consecration. (2) The obligation of renouncing earthly ties, so far as inconsistent with the higher allegiance. (3) The obligation of doing the Lord's work.

V. FIDELITY ON THE LORD'S SIDE WILL MEET WITH AN ULTIMATE REWARD.—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

VERS. 30—35.—MOSES ONCE MORE INTERCEDES WITH GOD FOR THE PEOPLE—GOD ANSWERS HIM. No distinct reply seems to have been given to the previous intercession of Moses (vers. 11—13). He only knew that

the people were not as yet consumed, and therefore that God's wrath was at any rate held in suspense. It might be that the punishment inflicted on the 3000 had appeased God's wrath: or something more

might be needed. In the latter case, Moses was ready to sacrifice himself for his nation (ver. 32). Like St. Paul, he elects to be "accursed from God, for his brethren, his kinsfolk after the flesh" (Rom. ix. 3). But God will not have this sacrifice. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. xviii. 4). He declares, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book" (Ex. xxxii. 33). Moses shall not make himself a victim. Without any such sacrifice, God will so far spare them, that they shall still go on their way towards the promised land, with Moses as their earthly, and an Angel as their heavenly leader. Only, their sin shall still be visited in God's own good time and in his own way. How, is left in obscurity; but the decree is issued—"In the day that I visit, I will visit their sin upon them" (ver. 34). And, writing long years after the event, the author observes—"And God did plague the people because they made the calf which Aaron made" (ver. 35).

Ver. 30.—**On the morrow.** The day must have been well-nigh over when the slaughter of the 3000 was completed: and after that the corpses had to be buried, the signs of carnage to be effaced, and the wounded, of whom there must have been many, cared for. Moses would have had to direct, if not even to superintend, everything, and therefore could not reascend Sinai until the next day. **Moses said unto the people.** Not now to the elders only, as in ch. xxiv. 14, but to all the people, since all had sinned, and each man is held by God individually responsible for his own sin. **Ye have sinned a great sin.** One which combined ingratitude and falseness with impiety. **Peradventure I shall make an atonement.** Moses has formed the design, which he executes (ver. 32); but will not reveal it to the people, from modesty probably.

Ver. 31.—**Gods of gold.** Rather "a god of gold."

Ver. 32.—**If thou wilt forgive their sin.** The ellipsis which follows, is to be supplied by some such words, as "well and good"—"I am content"—"I have no more to say." Similar cases of ellipses will be found in Dan. iii. 5; Luke xiii. 9; xix. 42; John vi. 62; Rom. ix. 22. **And if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book.** Some interpret this as merely equivalent to, "Blot me out of the book of the living," and explain that phrase as meaning simply—"Take my life—kill me instead of them"—but something more seems to be meant. "The book of the living"—"the book of life"—the book of God's writing—is not merely a register of those who happen to be alive at any given time. It "contains

the list of the righteous, and ensures to those whose names are written therein, life before God, first in the earthly kingdom of God, and then eternal life also" (Keil). Thus Moses declared his willingness—nay, his wish—that God would visit on him the guilt of his people, both in this world and the next, so that he would thereupon forgive them. St. Paul has a similar burst of feeling (Rom. ix. 1—3); but it does not involve a formal offer—it is simply the expression of a willingness. Ordinary men are scarcely competent to judge these sayings of great saints. As Bengel says—"It is not easy to estimate the measure of love in a Moses and a Paul; for the narrow boundary of our reasoning powers does not comprehend it, as the little child is unable to comprehend the courage of heroes." Both were willing—*felt* willing, at any rate—to sacrifice their own future for their countrymen—and Moses made the offer. Of all the noble acts in Moses' life it is perhaps the noblest; and no correct estimate of his character can be formed which does not base itself to a large extent on his conduct at this crisis.

Ver. 33.—**Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.** Beyond a doubt, it is the general teaching of Scripture that vicarious punishment will not be accepted. "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son—the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezek. xviii. 20). Man "cannot deliver his brother, or make agreement with God for him; for it cost more to redeem their souls, so that he must let that alone for ever" (Ps. xlix. 7, 8). One only atonement is accepted—that of him who is at once man and God—who has, himself, no sin—and can therefore take the punishment of others.

Ver. 34.—**Lead the people unto the place,** etc. This was a revocation of the sentence of death passed in verse 10. The people was to be spared, and Moses was to conduct them to Palestine. **Mine Angel shall go before thee.** Mine Angel—not I myself (compare ch. xxxiii. 2, 3). Another threatened punishment, which was revoked upon the repentance of the people (ib. 4, 6), and the earnest prayer of Moses (ib. 14—16). **I will visit their sin upon them.** Kalisch thinks that a plague was at once sent, and so understands verse 35. But most commentators regard the day of visitation as that on which it was declared that none of those who had quitted Egypt should enter Canaan (Num. xiv. 35), and regard that sentence as, in fact, provoked by the golden calf idolatry (ib. 22).

Ver. 35.—**The Lord plagued,** or "struck"—i.e., "punished" the people. There is nothing in the expression which requires us to understand the sending of a pestilence.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 30—34.—*Moses as the forerunner of Christ.* "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you *like unto me*," said the great lawgiver, ere he left the earth (Deut. xvii. 15, 18); and the parallelism between Christ and Moses is in many respects most striking. 1. Both were of obscure birth—"the son of a carpenter"—the son of "a man of the house of Levi." 2. Both were in great peril in infancy—their life sought by the civil ruler—Herod—Pharaoh. 3. Both passed their youth and early manhood in obscurity—Christ for thirty, Moses for forty years. 4. Both felt they had a mission, but on coming forward were rejected by their brethren. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John i. 11). "He supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not" (Acts vii. 25). 5. Both showed "signs and wonders," such as have rarely been seen upon earth, and thus made it manifest that their missions were from God. 6. Both were law-givers—promulgators of a new moral code—Moses of an imperfect, Christ of a perfect law—"the perfect law of love". 7. Both were founders of a new community—Moses of the Hebrew state, Christ of the Christian Church. 8. Both were great deliverers and great teachers—Moses delivered his people from Egypt and Pharaoh, and led them through the wilderness to Canaan; Christ delivers his from sin and Satan, and leads them through the wilderness of this life to heaven. 9. Both willing to be a sacrifice for their brethren—God could not accept the one sacrifice (ver. 33), but could and did accept the other.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 31, 32.—*The confession and intercession of Moses.* Notice here—

I. THE AMPLITUDE OF THIS CONFESSION. It is very necessary to contrast the words of Moses in vers. 31 and 32 with his previous words in vers. 11—13. What a difference there is in the ground, elements, and tone of the two appeals! and this difference is fully explained by the experience through which he had been in the interval. It was a bitter and humiliating experience—we may almost say an unexpected one. For, although, before he had gone down from the mount, Jehovah had given him a clear forewarning of what awaited him, somehow he seems not to have taken in the full drift of Jehovah's words. It is not till he gets down into the camp and sees the golden image, and the revelry and riot, and the implication of his own brother in a broken covenant, that he discerns the full extent of the calamity, and the difficulty, almost the impossibility of bringing together again Jehovah and his revolted people. Vain is it to seek for anything like sure conclusions in the details of Moses' conduct on this occasion. The things he did were almost as the expressions of a heart beside itself with holy grief. There is a good deal of obscurity in this portion of the narrative; and our wisest course is to turn to what is clear and certain and most instructive, namely, the great result which came out of this experience. It was truly a result, beyond all estimation, to have been led to the conclusion—"This people have sinned a great sin." That was just the light in which Jehovah looked upon their conduct; and though Moses could not see all that Jehovah saw, we may well believe that he saw all that a brother man could see, one whose own heart's vision was not yet perfectly clear. Blessed is that man who, for himself and for others, can see the reality and magnitude of the human heart's departure from God. It would not, indeed, be hard, from a certain point of view, to frame a very plausible story on behalf of these Israelites; but it is far better to bear in mind that just at this particular juncture this very Moses who at first had expostulated with Jehovah, making not the slightest reference to the people's sin, is now found on account of that sin bending himself in the utmost submission before God. Aaron came to Moses with an excuse (vers. 22—24); he spoke in the spirit of Adam, laying the blame elsewhere. But Moses attempts neither excuse nor extenuation. Nor was any enlargement needed. The brief sentence he spoke, standing in all its naked severity, was quite enough.

II. HOW UNCERTAIN MOSES IS IN HIS EXPECTATIONS. The confession is as full and emphatic as it can be, but the heart is of necessity very doubtful as to what may come out of the confession. The words of Moses here are very consistent with the quick

fluctuations of human nature. From extreme to extreme the pendulum swings. Previously he spoke as almost rebuking Jehovah for thinking to destroy his people; now even when the insulting image is ground to powder, and the ringleaders in transgression destroyed, he makes his way into the Divine presence as one who is fully prepared for the worst. "If thou wilt forgive them." One can imagine the stammering, half-ashamed tones in which these words would issue from the lips of Moses. The man who was so fruitful of reasons before is silent now. Jehovah's past promises and past dealings he cannot urge; for the more he thinks of them, the more by an inevitable consequence, he thinks of the broken covenant. The light of these glorious promises shines for the present, upon a scene of ruin and shame. Then it is noteworthy that Moses had to go up, from the impulse of his own heart. We do not hear as yet of any general confession; it is not the weeping and wailing of a nation returning in penitence that he bears before God. If only the people had sent him to say, "We have sinned a great sin;" if only they had made him feel that he was their chosen spokesman; if only their continued cry of contrition, softened by distance, had reached his ears, as he ventured before God, there might have been something to embolden him. But as yet there was no sign of anything of this sort. He seems to have gone up as a kind of last resort, unencouraged by any indication that the people comprehended the near and dreadful peril. Learn from this that there can be no availing plea and service from our great advocate, except as we look to him for the plea and service, in full consciousness that we cannot do without them. We get no practical good from the advocacy of Jesus, unless as in faith and earnestness, we make him our advocate.

III. HOW COMPLETELY MOSES ASSOCIATES HIMSELF WITH THE FATE OF HIS BRETHREN. He could not but feel the difference there was between his position and theirs; but at the moment there was a feeling which swallowed all others up, and that was the unity of brotherhood. The suggestion to make out of him a new and better covenant people came back to him now, with a startling significance which it lacked before. Israel, as *the people of God*, seemed shut up to destruction now. If God said the covenant could not be renewed; if he said the people must return and be merged and lost in the general mass of human-kind, Moses knew he had no countervailing plea; only this he could pray that he also might be included in their doom. He had no heart to go unless where his people went; and surely it must have a most inspiring and kindling influence to meditate on this great illustration of unselfishness. Moses, we know, had been brought very near to God; what glimpses must have been opened up to him of a glorious future. But then he had only thought of it as being his future along with his people. In the threatenings that God was about to forsake those who had forsaken him, there seemed no longer any brightness even in the favour of God to him as an individual. Apostate in heart and deed as his brethren were, he felt himself a member of the body still; and to be separated from them would be as if the member were torn away. He who had preferred affliction with the people of God rather than the pleasures of sin for a season, now prefers obliteration along with his own people rather than to keep his name on God's great book. It can hardly be said that in this he spurns or depreciates the favour of God; and it is noticeable that God does not rebuke him as if he were preferring human ties to Divine. Jehovah simply responds by stating the general law of what is inevitable in all sinning. He who sins must be blotted out of God's book. God will not in so many words rebuke the pitying heart of his servant; but yet we clearly see that there was no way out by that course which Moses so very deferentially suggests. When first Moses heard of the apostasy of Israel he spoke as if the remedy depended upon Jehovah; now he speaks as if it might be found in his own submission and self-sacrifice; but God would have him understand that whatever chance there may be depends on a much needed change in the hearts of the people, a change of which all sign so far was lacking.—Y.

Vers. 30—35.—*The second intercession.* This second intercession of Moses is even more wonderful than the first. The question raised on that former occasion—Is Moses more merciful than God?—will, indeed, no longer occur. Those who might have been disposed to press that question then will probably not be disposed to press it now. They have since had sufficient evidence of Moses' severity. They have found that, whatever elements of character are lacking to him, he is not wanting in energy of indignation at

patent wickedness. The temptation, on the contrary, may now be to accuse the law-giver of unjustifiable and unholy anger—of reckless disregard of human life. The charge is groundless; but if, for a moment, it should appear natural, the reply to it is found in the study of this second scene upon the mount. Surely, if ever human heart laid bare its intense and yearning love for those whose sin fidelity to duty yet compelled it to reprobate and loathe, it is the heart of Moses in this new, and altogether marvellous, juncture in his history. Consider—

I. THE CONFESSION MADE (vers. 30, 31). Moses makes a full confession of the sin of the people. This confession was—1. *Holy*. He has just views of the demerit of the sin for which he seeks forgiveness. His impressions of its enormity are even stronger than at the time of his first intercession. So heinous does it now appear to him that he is mentally in doubt whether God possibly *can* forgive it. 2. *Perfectly truthful*. Moses fully admits the people's sin. He does not make light of it. He does not seek to minimise it. Not even to secure the salvation of the people over whom he yearns with so intense an affection will he unduly palliate their offence, or feign an excuse where he knows that there is none to offer. Mark how, in both of these respects, Moses answers to the true idea of a mediator. "A mediator is not a mediator of one" (Gal. iii. 20). It is his function, in conducting his mediation, to uphold impartially the interests of *both* of the parties between whom he mediates. Both are represented in his work. He stands for both equally. He must do justice by both. His sympathy with both must be alike perfect. He must favour neither at the expense, or to the disadvantage, of the other. These acts of intercession show in how supreme a degree this qualification of the mediator is found in Moses. He has sympathy with the people, for whose sin he is willing, if need be, even to die; he has also the fullest sympathy with God. He looks at the sin from God's standpoint. He has sympathy with God's wrath against it. He is as jealous for God's honour as he is anxious for the forgiveness of the people. He is thus the true daysman, able to lay his hand upon both. 3. *Vicarious*. He confesses the people's sin *for* them. On the depth to which this element enters into the idea of atonement, and on the place which it holds in the atonement of Jesus, see J. McLeod Campbell's work on *The Nature of the Atonement*.

II. THE ATONEMENT OFFERED (ver. 32). The new and awful impressions Moses had received of the enormity of the people's conduct gave rise in his mind to the feeling of the need of atonement. "Now I will go up to the Lord," he says to them, "peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin" (ver. 30). That the intercessory element entered into Moses' idea of "making an atonement" is not to be denied. But it is not the only one. So intensely evil does the sin of the people now appear to him that he is plainly in doubt whether it can be pardoned without some awful expression of God's punitive justice against it; whether, indeed, it can be pardoned at all. This sense of what is due to justice resolves itself into the proposal in the text—a proposal, probably, in which Moses comes as near anticipating Christ, in his great sacrifice on Calvary, as it is possible for any one, bearing the limitations of humanity, to do (cf. Rom. ix. 3). Observe—1. *The proposal submitted*. It amounts to this, that Moses, filled with an immense love for his people, offers himself as a sacrifice for their sin. If God cannot otherwise pardon their transgression, and if this will avail, or can be accepted, as an atonement for their guilt, let him—Moses—perish instead of them. The precise meaning attached in Moses' mind to the words, "If not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written," must always be a difficulty. Precision, probably, is not to be looked for. Moses' idea of what was involved in the blotting out from God's book could only be that afforded him by the light of his own dispensation, and by his sense of the exceeding greatness of God's wrath. His language is the language of love, not that of dogmatic theology. Infinite things were to be hoped for from God's love; infinite things were to be dreaded from his anger. The general sense of the utterance is, that Moses was willing to die; to be cut off from covenant hope and privilege; to undergo whatever awful doom subjection to God's wrath might imply; if only thereby his people could be saved. It was a stupendous proposal to make; an extraordinary act of self-devotion; a wondrous exponent of his patriotic love for his people; a not less wondrous recognition of what was due to the justice of God ere sin could be forgiven—a glimpse even, struck out from the passionate yearning of his own heart, of the actual method of redemption. A type of Christ has been seen in the youthful Isaac ascending

the hill to be offered on the altar by Abraham his father. A much nearer type is Moses, "setting his face" (cf. Luke ix. 51) to ascend the mount, and bearing in his heart this sublime purpose of devoting himself for the sins of the nation. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv. 13). 2. *The alternative desired.* If the people must perish—this meaning also seems to be conveyed in the words—Moses would wish to perish with them. Not only has the proposal to make of him "a great nation" (Ex. xxxii. 10) no allurements for his mind, but, if the people are to be destroyed, he would prefer to die with them. He desires no life outside of theirs. Patriotic devotion could no further go. Noble Moses! Yet only the type of the nobler than himself, who, devoting himself in the same spirit, has actually achieved the redemption of the world. See in this incident (1) The connection of a feeling of the need of atonement with just views of sin's demerit. (2) The certainty, when just views of sin are entertained, of this feeling of the need of atonement arising. In declining the proposal of Moses, God does not say that atonement is not needed. He does not say that his servant has exaggerated the enormity of the sin, or the difficulties which stand in the way of its forgiveness. He does not say that it is not by means of atonement that these difficulties connected with the forgiveness of sins are ultimately to be removed. On the contrary, the spirit of Moses in this transaction is evidently in the very highest degree pleasing to Jehovah, and so far as atonement is made for the people's sins, it is by Jehovah accepting the *spirit* of his sacrifice, even when rejecting the proposal in its letter. (3) The *naturalness* of this method of salvation. The proposal sprang naturally from the love of Moses. It expressed everything that was grandest in his character. It shadowed forth a way in which, conceivably, a very true satisfaction might be offered to Divine justice, while yet mercy was extended to the sinner. The fulfilment of the prophecy is the Cross.

III. THE REPLY GIVEN. 1. *The atonement is declined in its letter.* God declares that so far as there is to be any blotting from the book of life, it will be confined to those who have sinned. It may be noted, in respect to this declination of the proposal of Moses that, as above remarked, it does not proceed on the idea that atonement is not needed, but (1) Moses could not, even by his immolation, have made the atonement required. (2) God, in his secret counsel, had the true sacrifice provided. (3) Atonement is inadmissible on the basis proposed, viz. that the innocent should be "blotted out from the book of life." Had no means of salvation presented itself but this, the world must have perished. Even to redeem sinners, God could not have consented to the "blotting from his book" of the sinless. The difficulty is solved in the atonement of the Son, who dies, yet rises again, having made an end of sin. No other could have offered this atonement but himself. 2. *While declining the atonement in its letter, God accepts the spirit of it.* In this sense Moses, by the energy of his self-devotion, does make atonement for the sins of Israel. He procures for them a reversal of the sentence. Further intercession is required to make the reconciliation complete. 3. *God makes known his purpose of visiting the people for their sin* (ver. 34). The meaning is—(1) That the sin of the people, though for the present condoned, would be kept in mind in reckoning with them for future transgressions. (2) That such a day of reckoning would come. God, in the certainty of his foreknowledge, sees its approach.—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Vers. 1-6.—THE THREAT OF GOD'S WITHDRAWAL, AND THE HUMILIATION OF THE PEOPLE. The intercession of Moses, and his offer to sacrifice himself for his people had obtained from God some great concessions, viz. —1. That the people's lives should be spared (ch. xxxii. 14); 2. And that they should be led into Palestine (*ibid.* ver. 34). But a char-

had been introduced into the conditions under which the future journeys were to be made, somewhat obscurely indicated in the words—"Behold, mine angel shall go before thee" (*ibid.*)—which was now to be more distinctly set forth. "God's angel" may mean his Presence in the Person of his Son—as it appears to mean in ch. xxiii. 20-23—or it may mean simply one of the created angelic host, which seems to be its sense in ch. xxxii

34. and in ver 2 of this chapter. By vers. 2 and 3 taken in combination it was rendered manifest, both to Moses and to the people (ver. 4), that they were threatened with the loss of God's actual presence and personal protection during the remainder of their wanderings, and would have, instead of it, the mere guidance and help of an angel in the inferior sense of the word. This was felt to be "evil tidings"—and the people consequently "mourned" and "stripped themselves of their ornaments" (ver. 6). Real penitence at last entered their hearts, and led to self-abasement.

Ver. 1.—*The Lord said unto Moses.* In continuation of what he had said in ch. xxxii. 33, 34. but possibly at another time; and with the object of fully explaining what had been meant in ver. 34. *The land which I swore unto Abraham.* See Gen. xii. 7; xiii. 15; xv. 18, etc.

Ver. 2.—*I will send an angel before thee.* Note the change from "*my angel*" (ch. xxxii. 34) to "*an angel*," which, however, would still have been ambiguous, but for what follows in ver. 3. The angel of God's presence is "*an angel*" in ch. xxiii. 20. *I will drive out.* The whole covenant had fallen with Israel's infraction of it, and it was for God to retract or renew his part of it as it pleased him. He here of his free grace renews the promise to drive out the Canaanitish nations. Compare ch. xxiii. 23-31.

Ver. 3.—*Unto a land.* Ver. 2 is parenthetical, and ver. 3 coheres with ver. 1—"Go up hence, thou and the people, unto the land which I swore unto Abraham—unto a land flowing," etc. On the milk and honey of Canaan, see the comment upon ch. iii. 8. *For I will not go up in the midst of thee.* At length there was an end of ambiguity—God's purpose was made plain—the people had shown themselves unfit for his near presence, and he would withdraw himself. So it would be best even for them; since, if they were about to show themselves as perverse in the future as they had in the past, his near presence could only lead to their entire destruc-

tion. Some day they would so provoke him, that he would consume them in the way.

Ver. 4.—*When the people heard.* Moses had communicated to the people what God had said to him. They felt it to be *evil tidings*—they woke up at last to a feeling of the ineffable value of the privileges which they had hitherto enjoyed—his guidance by the pillar of the cloud (ch. xiii. 21)—his counsel, if there were need to ask anything (ch. xv. 25)—his aid in the day of battle (ch. xvii. 8-13)—his near presence, by day and by night, constantly (ch. xiii. 22)—and they dreaded a change, which they felt must involve a loss, and one the extent of which they could not measure. "An angel" is a poor consolation when we are craving for Jehovah! So the people mourned—felt true sorrow—were really troubled in their hearts—and, to show their penitence, ceased to wear their customary ornaments. These may have consisted of armlets, bracelets, and even, perhaps, anklets, all of which were worn by men in Egypt at this period.

Ver. 5.—*For the Lord had said unto Moses, etc.* Rather, "And the Lord said unto M." (so most recent commentators, as Keil, Kalisch, etc.) The message was sent to the people after their repentance, and in reply to it. It was not, however, as our version makes it, a threat of destruction, but only a repetition of the statement made in ver. 2, that, if God went up with them, the probable result would be their destruction. Translate—"Ye are a stiff-necked people; were I for one moment to go up in the midst of thee, I should destroy thee." Put off thy ornaments. The command seems strange, when we had just been told that "no man did put on him his ornaments" (ver 4); but the word translated "put off" probably means "lay aside altogether." The intention was to make their continued disuse of the ornaments a test of their penitence.

Ver. 6.—*The people accepted the test and stripped themselves of their ornaments—i.e., ceased to wear them henceforward. By the Mount Horeb.* Rather, "*from Mount Horeb.*" From and after this occurrence at Horeb (= Sinai), the Israelites wore no ornaments, in token of their continued contrition for their apostasy.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1-6.—*The hiding of God's face from man.* When God hides away his face from his people, it may be—

I. AS A JUDGMENT. It was as a judgment that God separated between himself and man after the Fall, and "drove man forth" from the Garden of Eden (Gen. iii. 24). It was as a judgment that he withdrew from Saul, and "answered him not, neither by dreams, by Urin, nor by prophets" (1 Sam. xxviii. 6). When he "hid his face" from David, and forgot all his misery and trouble, it was because David had offended him by

the grievous sin into which he had fallen. This, again, was a judgment. Of a similar character was his "removal of Israel out of his sight" (2 Kings xvii. 23) in the reign of Hoshea, and his "casting of Jerusalem and Judah out of his sight" (2 Kings xxiv. 20), in the reign of Zedekiah. And so, when, at the present day, he ceases to make his light shine upon us, withdrawing, as it were, behind a cloud, and no longer shedding the brightness of his radiance upon our souls—it may be, it sometimes is, in judgment. Our sins separate between us and him. They raise the barrier which conceals him from us. They constitute the cloud which shuts him out from our sight. And he judges us for them. Or, the withdrawal may be made—

II. AS AN ACT OF MERCY. When Jesus "did not many miracles" at Capernaum "because of their unbelief," it was in mercy. When he retired to Galilee, and "walked no more in Jewry," it was in mercy. When he spake in parables, "that hearing they might not understand," it was in mercy. Our responsibilities are co-ordinate with the light vouchsafed us; and the more God reveals himself to us, the more he makes his presence manifest, the greater the peril which we incur. Unless his near presence purifies us and spiritualises us, it deadens us. Two disciples were the nearest to Jesus—one "lay upon his breast," the other habitually "dipped with him in the dish"—one was "the beloved disciple," the other was "the traitor." In either case, the withdrawal is properly regarded—

III. AS A GROUND FOR SADNESS. "The people mourned when they heard the evil tidings." Justly, for, if it was in mercy, how sad that they should need such a mercy! How sad that to be removed further from God should be a mercy to them! And, if it was in judgment, how much more sad that their conduct should have brought upon them such a judgment—have caused God to withdraw himself—have led him to punish them by banishment from his near presence! What real satisfaction is there in existence except his presence? Whom have we in heaven but him, or who is there upon earth that we can desire in comparison with him? In him is life; "in his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore." If we lose him, we lose all; if we are shut out, even for a time, from him, we lose more than we can express. He is to our spirits more than the sun to all material things. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." Happily for us, while we live, we may recover his favour; we may prevail on him once more to "lift up the light of his countenance upon us." Mourning, self-abasement, real heart-felt sorrow for sin will in every case find acceptance with him for his Son's sake, and obtain for us a restoration of the light of his presence.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 7—11.—THE FIRST ERECTION OF A TABERNACLE. The decision of the matter still hung in suspense. God had not revoked his threat to withdraw himself and leave the host to the conduct of an angel. He had merely reserved his final decision (ver. 5). Moses was anxious to wrestle with him in prayer until he obtained the reversal of this sentence; but he could not be always ascending Sinai, when the camp needed his superintending care, and the camp as yet contained no place of worship, where a man could pray and be secure against disturbance. Moses, under these circumstances, with the tabernacle in his mind, but without leisure to construct it, contrived "for the present distress" a temporary tabernacle or tent. He took, apparently, the tent that had hitherto been his own, and removed it to a position outside the

camp, erecting it there, and at the same time giving it the name of "the tent of meeting" (ver. 7). Hither he decreed that all persons should come who desired communion with God (ver. 7), and hither he resorted himself for the same purpose (ver. 8). It pleased God to approve these arrangements; and to show his approval by a visible token. Whenever Moses entered the "tent of meeting," the pillar of the cloud descended from the top of Sinai, and took up its station at the door of the tent (ver. 9), thus securing Moses from interruption. At the sight the people "worshipped," each at his tent's door, while Moses was privileged to speak with God "face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (ver. 11). Joshua accompanied him on the first occasion, and remained behind, to guard the tent, when Moses left it (*ibid.*)

Ver. 7.—Moses took the tabernacle. The "tabernacle" proper was not yet constructed. (See chs. xxxv.—xl.) And the word used is not that properly rendered "tabernacle"—viz., *mishkán* (ch. xxvi. 1); but the far more common word *óhel*, which means "tent." The proper translation would be, "Moses took the tent." But the question at once arises—What tent? It is suggested that the article may have the force of the possessive pronoun, and indicate that he took "his tent." (Compare Matt. ix. 10, where "the house" undoubtedly means "his house.") Moses took his own tent, probably as the best in the encampment, and converted it to a sacred use, transferring his own abode to another. **Afar off from the camp.** The sacred and the profane must not approach each other too closely—an interval must be set between them. But the distance, evidently, was not great (ver. 10). **The tabernacle of the congregation.** Rather, "the tent of meeting" or "of conference"—i.e., the tent in which he expected to meet and converse with God. See the comment on ch. xxvii. 21. **Every one which sought the Lord went out.** Moses must have commanded this. The "tent" was not to be a mere oratory for himself, but open to all Israelites.

Ver. 8.—When Moses went out . . . all the people rose up. Probably Moses "went out" at a set time, or at set times, each day; and the people watched for his going, and "rose up," as a mark of respect and reverence. They felt that he went to the tent mainly to pray for them.

Ver. 9.—As Moses entered into the tabernacle. Rather, "When Moses was gone into the tent." The cloudy pillar descended. It is not quite clear whether this was done once only, or whether the pillar, during the con-

tinuance of this "tent of meeting," alternated between the top of Sinai and the door of the tent, descending when Moses entered the tent and reascending when he quitted it. The latter supposition is most consonant with the previous statement (ver. 7) that "every one which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle" (tent), for the people were at no time allowed to approach the cloud. **And the Lord talked with Moses.** Literally, "And talked with Moses." The cloudy pillar, in and through which God made his presence felt, is here identified with God, and said to have conversed with Moses.

Ver. 10.—And all the people saw . . . and all the people rose up. This is a literal translation; but it would make the sense clearer to the ordinary reader if the passage were rendered—"And when all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the door of the tent, then all the people rose up," etc. **Worshipped.** Literally, "bowed themselves down"—"made an obeisance," in token that they recognised the presence of God.

Ver. 11.—The Lord spake unto Moses face to face. As one present—not as one at a distance—"mouth to mouth," as we read in Num. xii. 8—but not under any visible form (see vers. 20, 23, and compare Deut. iv. 12, 15). **He turned again.** After each conference, Moses returned to the camp, where, no doubt, he had put up for himself another tent, and where his presence was needed. He left, however, his personal attendant ("minister"), Joshua, to watch and guard the sacred structure during his absence. It is remarkable that the trust was committed to Joshua, rather than to Aaron, or any of the Levites. Probably the reason of this was, that Joshua alone had had no part in the idolatry of the calf. (See ch. xxxii. 17.)

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 9—11.—The mode of recovering God's presence. Moses felt that he could not rest till he had obtained for the people the complete return of God's favour, and the assurance of his perpetual presence. But this was no easy task. The offence given was so grievous that it could not be condoned at once. Even the penitence of the people had produced no more than a promise that God would take the matter into his consideration, and determine later what he would do to the people (ver. 5). Moses sought to hasten a favourable decision. It is well worth noting the means whereto he had recourse. These were—

I. **THE ERECTION OF A HOUSE OF PRAYER.** Moses called it "the tent of meeting"; because he hoped that there God would be met with or would suffer himself to be addressed—would let his people draw nigh to him. He erected it "without the camp," afar off—partly on account of the recent pollution of the camp—partly to separate and sunder it from secular sights and sounds. Intolerant of delay, he thought it better to take the best of existing structures, rather than wait till he could erect a new one. As his own tent was the best in the camp, he gave it, not without some self-sacrifice.

II. **THE RESORT OF THE PEOPLE TO THE HOUSE.** "Every one which sought the Lord went out unto the tent" (ver. 7). Doubtless Moses urged the need of all the people's seeking the Lord, turning to him, besieging him with their prayers, importuning him. There had been, so far as appears, no set times of prayer hitherto, and no set place of

prayer. All had been left to individual feeling or conviction. And the people, we may be sure, had for the most part neglected prayer. In their difficulties they had been content that Moses should pray for them (ch. xiv. 15; xv. 25; xvii. 4, 11, 12, etc.). Now at length they had awoke to the need of personal religion; they had "mourned" and "put off their ornaments"; they—some of them, at any rate—"sought the Lord," and resorted to the "tent of meeting," in the hope of finding him there.

III. HIS OWN FREQUENT RESORT TO IT, AND CONSTANT, EARNEST INTERCESSION. The narrative of verses 8—11 describes a continual practice. Moses made it his habit to go forth from the camp to the "tent of meeting" at a fixed hour each day—possibly more than once a day; and, when there, no doubt prayed to the Lord with all the fervour that we observe in the recorded prayer of the next section (vers. 12—16). "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jam. v. 16). The daily intercession, recorded in verses 8—11, culminated in the "wrestle with God," which obtained the gracious promise—"I will do this thing that thou hast spoken" (ver. 17). The general lesson taught is the might of prayer (1) for oneself; (2) for others. There is a further particular lesson upon the value of a "house of prayer"—most appreciated, through the perversity of human nature, where least readily obtainable, least regarded where closest to men's doors and most accessible.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—12. *A nation in garb of penitence.* On this section consider—

I. THE CONDITIONED PROMISE (vers. 1—4). God has consented to spare the nation. They are to set out forthwith on the journey to Canaan. But his presence is no longer to go with them. He would send an angel. Notice—1. *Everything, in one sense, remains the same.* The people are to be conducted to Canaan. They are to inherit the promises. God will drive out their enemies before them. The land will still flow with milk and honey. It will still be able to be said of them, that there is no nation on earth so favoured as they are. Yet, 2. *Everything, in another sense, is different.* Blessings without God in them are not the same blessings. They want that which gives them their chief value. See below, on ver. 15.

II. THE SUMMONS TO REPENTANCE (vers. 4—7). A command is next given to the people to strip off their ornaments. They are to humble themselves before Jehovah that Jehovah may know what to do with them. This command they obeyed. From this time forward they ceased to wear ornaments. On this observe, 1. *Repentance for sin is an indispensable condition of restoration to God's favour.* It was required of Israel. It is required of us. There can be no salvation without it (Luke xvii. 5). "Cease to do evil; learn to do well" (Is. i. 16, 17). Had Israel not repented, Moses would have interceded in vain. 2. *Repentance, if sincere, must approve itself by appropriate deeds.*—"Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matt. iii. 8). The people put off their ornaments. Ornaments do not become those with whom God is displeased. This act of the people was a first step in obedience. 3. *A very imperfect repentance is sometimes accepted by God as a reason for forbearance with the sinner.* The people mourned; but their repentance, as events showed, did not amount to a real change of heart. They mourned for "the evil tidings." It was the consequences of their sin which distressed them, more than the sin itself. Yet do them justice. The "evil tidings" was not the loss of any material blessings, but, solely, the loss of God's presence. There is still good in a heart which feels the withdrawal of God's presence to be a loss to it. 4. *It is well that the remembrance of great sins should go with us all our days.* Those who have committed them should go softly ever after.

III. THE WITHDRAWAL OF JEHOVAH'S PRESENCE FROM THE CAMP (vers. 7—9). Moses, we are next informed, took a tent, possibly his own, possibly one which had hitherto served as a sanctuary, pitched it "without the camp, afar off from the camp," and called it "the tent of meeting." Thither came out every one that sought the Lord. The act was, 1. A symbol of Jehovah's formal withdrawal from the midst of the people. 2. A token that a final decision had not yet been come to as to how God meant to deal with them. Communications were not wholly broken off. Space was left for repentance. God might still be entreated of them. Learn (1) iniquities separate between man and

God (cf. Is. lix. 2); (2) the withdrawal of God's presence is not necessarily the end of the day of grace. There is an "accepted time" during which, if the sinner repents, he will be forgiven, and God's presence will be restored to him (2 Cor. vi. 2). Meanwhile, even God's keeping back from him has its side of mercy. God's near presence would consume (cf. ver. 5). (3) The day of grace which sinners enjoy is won for them by the intercession of another. Israel's "accepted time" was based on the intercession of Moses. Ours, as the passage above referred to implies, rests on the intercession of Christ. "I have heard thee (Christ) in a time accepted" (cf. Is. xlix. 8)—"Behold, now is the accepted time"—for men (2 Cor. vi. 2). (4) it is our duty to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call on him while he is near (Is. lv. 6).

IV. THE TOKEN OF FAVOUR TO MOSES (vers. 9—12). The cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle. There the Lord talked with Moses, as a man talketh with his friend. This was (1) a mark of favour to Moses himself; (2) an honour put upon him before the people; (3) an encouragement to further intercession.—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 12—17.—THE REVOCATION OF THE THREAT OF WITHDRAWAL. After some days' "wrestling with God" in the "tent of meeting," Moses prayed to know definitely what God had determined on. "Show me thy way," he said (ver. 13)—"Whom wilt thou send with me?" To this demand, God made the gracious reply—"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (ver. 14). This was satisfactory, except that it did not distinctly include the conduct of the people—it might be merely a promise to himself. So Moses (vers. 15, 16) requires a more explicit assurance, and, closely associating the people with himself, declares that he will not move a step further, unless God allows the people to find grace in his sight, and consents to "distinguish" them by "going up" with them. Then at length God yields and gives the assurance—"I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken" (ver. 17)—i.e. "I will go up visibly with the people and *distinguish* them." (See the comment on ver. 16.)

Vers. 12, 13.—*See, thou sayest.* Moses takes advantage of his privilege of speaking as friend with friend, and uses familiar terms—"See," he says, "thou hast told me to conduct the people to Canaan, yet thou hast not made it clear whom thou wilt send with me. If it is to be an angel, *what* angel? Why not the angel of the original promise (ch. xxi. 20—23)? Thou hast distinguished me with thy favour—*Consider* that this nation is *thy* people, and extend thy favour to them. At any rate *show me thy way*—tell me plainly what thou wilt do."

Ver. 14.—*My presence shall go with thee.* Literally, "My presence shall go up"—my own presence, not that of an angel. That for which Moses had been so earnest pleading is, seemingly, granted. God will go up. *I will give thee rest.*—i.e. "bring thee to Canaan." (Compare Deut. iii. 20; Heb. iv. 8.)

Vers. 15, 16.—*And he said.* Still Moses is not quite satisfied. God had said—"I will give thee rest"—not "I will give *you* rest." Moses must see distinctly that the people are associated with him before he desists. So he replies—"If thy presence go not up, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known that *I and thy people* have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us?" The reply in ver. 17 sets his doubt finally at rest.

Ver. 16.—*So shall we be separated.* Rather, "So shall we be *distinguished*." God's presence with them would distinguish them from all the other nations of the earth—place them in a category alone and apart from all others. Angelic guidance would not have done this; for even heathen nations had their protecting angels (Dan. x. 13, 20; xi. 1).

Ver. 17.—*I will do this thing also.* "I will extend my favour to thy people also, and distinguish them, as well as thee, by going up with them. I will do this for thy sake, because thou hast found grace in my sight." Moses' petition is at last fully granted—the threat of withdrawal cancelled—the promise of Divine guidance and protection renewed. *I know thee by name.* It is a supreme favour for God to know us *by name*. It marks "a specifically personal relation to God" (Keil). The expression is perhaps taken from the phraseology of Oriental Courts, where not one in a hundred of the courtiers is known to the monarch by name.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 12—17.—*Effectual importunity.* Our Lord Jesus Christ spake a parable to show "that men ought always to pray and not to faint" (Luke xviii. 1). The present record, as we may be sure, inserted in the Old Testament for the same purpose. God wills to be importuned. Not, however, for his own sake, but for ours. He would have us fervent and persistent in prayer, for the improvement of our characters, the increase of our faith by exercise, the intensifying of our sense of dependence upon him. Especially, he would have us persistent in intercessory prayer, because we are then exercising, not only faith, but love; and by increasing in love, we advance in resemblance to himself. For "God is Love." Note, that, to be importuned effectively, God must be importuned—

I. WITH FERVOUR. Mere repetition will not do. Cold prayers, repeated day after day for blessings on ourselves or others, are a mere *battologia*, no more effectual than the involuntary repetitions of a stammering tongue. God grants nothing to coldness, nothing to mere words, nothing unless it be earnestly desired by a fervid heart. The Buddhists, in many parts of Asia, erect praying-machines, which are turned by a small windmill, believing that in every revolution of the machine a prayer is offered, and that, after so many turns, Buddha is bound to grant it. As well expect God to respect the requests of a praying-machine, as the utterances of many who languidly repeat the prayers of the Church after the clergyman, or say a set form, with small thought and no heart, morning and evening. It is "the fervent prayer of a righteous man"—nay, even of a sinner—that is "effectual."

II. UNSELFISHLY. Moses postponed his now earnest desire to behold for his own satisfaction God's glory, until he had obtained the restitution of the people to favour. His importunity was for them. Let us importune God for the conversion of our relatives and friends, the forgiveness of their sins, the awakening of their consciences, their perseverance in well-doing, and their final entrance into his glory, and we may feel confident of prevailing with him. But, if we importune him for our own worldly advancement, or even if we ask increase of grace for our own sakes solely or mainly, we must not be surprised if our prayers remain unanswered. "Ye ask and obtain not, because ye ask amiss." The spirit of sacrifice is required to sanctify prayer. Those who in a spirit of self-seeking asked to sit on the right hand and left hand of Christ in his kingdom obtained no promise. Our prayers even for our spiritual advancement will scarcely be answered, unless we desire it to promote God's glory, or to help forward the salvation of our fellow-men.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 12—18.—*The third intercession.* Moses on this occasion pleads with God to restore his presence to the people. Very noteworthy are the steps in his entreaty. 1. He veils his request under the form of a desire to know the divine intentions (ver. 12). Will God go up with them or not? God has not yet told him—will he tell him now? What, underneath this form of expression, the heart of Moses really presses for, is, of course, the assurance that God *will* go with them. 2. He urges the friendship God has shown him as a reason for granting his request—"Thou hast said, I know thee by name," etc. (ver. 12). 3. He entreats God to consider that Israel is his own people (ver. 13). He has chosen them; he has redeemed them; he has declared his love for them; can he bring himself now to cast them off? 4. When God at length—reading in his servant's heart the thought which he has not as yet dared openly to express—says, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (ver. 14); Moses eagerly seizes on the promise thus given him, and pleads with God to make it good. "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence" (ver. 15). This, in Moses' view, is the greatest distinction of Israel, that it has God in its midst, and if this distinction is withdrawn, he cares not what else remains (ver. 16). The earnestness of his entreaty secures for him a confirmation of the promise, this time given without reserve. For in the utterance of ver. 14, perhaps, a certain tone of distance is still to be detected. This disappears in ver. 17. View the passage as illustrating—

I. THE PRIVILEGES OF FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD (vers. 12, 13). 1. Friendship with God *gives boldness of approach to him*. It casts out fear (1 John iv. 18). 2. Friendship with God *admits to intimacy with his secrets* (ver. 13). "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him" (Ps. xxv. 14). Cf. God's words concerning Abraham—"Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation," etc. (Gen. xviii. 17); and Christ's words to his disciples—"I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (John xv. 15). 3. The best use we can make of friendship with God *is to intercede for others*. So Abraham for Sodom (Gen. xviii. 23--33). So Moses here. So Daniel (Dan. ix.). So Christ for his disciples (John xvii.).

II. THE BLESSING OF GOD'S PRESENCE (vers. 14, 15). 1. God's presence is the *highest blessing*. Nought else can be compared with it (Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26). 2. It is the blessing which enriches all *other blessings*. It is that which makes earthly blessings truly worth having. They are not the same to us without it as with it. 3. God's presence, going with us, invariably *conducts to rest*.

III. THE POWER OF PERSEVERING PRAYER (vers. 16, 17).—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 18--23.—THE REQUEST TO SEE GOD'S GLORY, AND THE REPLY TO IT. Having obtained the full restoration of the people to God's favour, Moses felt emboldened to ask a boon for himself. He had already been admitted to closer communion with God than any one of the race of man since Adam in Paradise. But what had been granted him, instead of satisfying, only made him desirous of something further, something closer, something than which nothing more close could be imagined. So he asks to see the unveiled glory of God (ver. 18). He asks, that is, to see exactly that which man in the flesh cannot see, or at any rate cannot see and live. But, of course, he does not know this. God, in reply, tells him he shall see all that can be seen of him—more than anything which he has seen before. He shall see "all his goodness"—he shall have another revelation of the name of God (ver. 18); and, further, he shall be so placed as to see as much as mortal man can behold of "his glory"—God will pass by him, and when he has passed, Moses shall be allowed to look *after* him, and see what is here called "his back." This was probably some after-glow or reflection from the Divine glory, which language must have been as inadequate to describe as it was to embody the "unspeakable words" heard by St. Paul in the "third heaven," and declared by him "impossible for a man to utter" (2 Cor. xii. 4).

Ver. 18.—*Show me thy glory*. The glory of God had been seen by Moses to a certain extent, when God "descended in fire" upon

Mount Sinai (ch. xix. 18). It had been seen with more distinctness when he was called up and "went into the midst of the cloud" (ch. xxiv. 18). But he felt, nevertheless, that he had not as yet really beheld it. He longed for that ineffable blessing of the full "beatific vision," which is promised to us after death, if we die in the faith and fear of Christ (1 Cor. xiii. 12). "Increase of appetite doth grow by what it feeds on"—and the veiled splendours that he had been allowed to see only made him hunger the more for the unveiled radiance that he had not seen as yet.

Ver. 19.—*I will make all my goodness pass before thee*. It is not quite clear what this means, or how it was fulfilled—whether the reference is to the revelation of God's goodness in ch. xxxiv. 7, or to the entire experience that Moses would have of God in his later life. It is against the former view, that, if we take it, we can assign to the ensuing clause no distinct and separate sense. *I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee*. See ch. xxxiv. 5, 6. *And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious*—i.e., I am not bound to do all this for thee. It is of my free grace that I do it. I intend, however, to be gracious, and show mercy to thee, because thou hast found favour in my eyes.

Ver. 20.—*No man can see me and live*. The inability proclaimed in these words is not an absolute inability to see God, but an inability to see and survive the sight. Jacob, when he wrestled with the angel, marvelled that he could see God, even in that intermediate way, and live (Gen. xxxii. 30). It may well be that actually to see God, while we are in the flesh, would kill us.

Ver. 21.—*Behold, there is a place by me*. No sufficient indication is given by these words, or by any other words in Scripture, of the exact locality of the manifestation to

Moses. The so-called "traditions" are worthless; and we can only say that the scene was probably some portion of the upper part of the Ras Sufsafeh.

Ver. 22.—*I will put thee in a cliff of the rock.* The "cliff" has been identified with the "cave of Elijah" (1 Kings xix. 9); but the words used are different; and even were they the same, no identity could be established. It is rather in the broader lines of their missions and characters that resemblance is to be sought between Moses and Elijah than in the minuter details of their careers. *Cover thee with my hand*—i.e., "at once conceal thee and protect thee." Without these precautions, it is implied, the nearness of the Divine Presence might have had injurious effects.

Ver. 23.—*Thou shalt see my back parts* Literally, "my back." The anthropomorphisms of the passage are numerous and strong—they must, of course, be regarded as accommodations to human ideas. After the Divine Presence had passed by, Moses was to be permitted to look out, and would see so much of the Divine glory as he would be able to bear; but still something far short of that which he had desired to see. The explanation that "the back of God" means "his works—the consequences of his activity" (Kalisch) is fanciful, and not borne out by the context. *My face cannot be seen.* See above, ver. 20; and compare John i. 18; vi. 46; 1 Tim. i. 17; 1 John iv. 12.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 18.—*The craving for close communion with God*, may be considered—

I. AS BASED ON A NATURAL INSTINCT. Man without God—without the consciousness of being sustained and upheld by an eternal omnipotent being—can have no strength or confidence in the present, no hope in the future. He is a feeble part of the vast mechanism of a great incomprehensible universe—a form which matter has assumed for a time—powerless to shape his future—the sport of circumstance. From this his better nature revolts, and, like some marine organism, throws out tentacles to seek a hold on some firm solid object without him. God is the only such object truly firm and stable; and hence man may be said to have a natural desire for God. As soon as the idea of God is in any way brought before him, he feels that it exactly answers an instinctive craving of his nature. His soul goes out to it—seizes it—appropriates it—rests on it as a sure prop and stay. Intellectually, the idea clears up the riddle of the universe; morally, gives a firm foundation to right and wrong, explains the authority of conscience, and supplies a motive for virtue; even physically it has a value, reducing the infinitude of nature within limits, and furnishing a reasonable origin to nature's laws.

II. AS A TEST OF SPIRITUALITY. Man needs the idea of God, and cannot be satisfied without it; but whether, having got it, he shall thrust it into the background, or ever more and more cling to it, and seek to realise it, depends on his spiritual condition. Adam and Eve, after they had sinned, "hid themselves from the presence of God amongst the trees of the garden" (Gen. iii. 8). The Gergesenes "besought Christ that he would depart out of their coasts" (Matt. viii. 34). The guilty conscience cannot bear the near presence of the Most High, shrinks from the keen inspection of the all-seeing Eye, would fain skulk and hide among the bushes. The worldly heart is indifferent to the thought of God—turns away from it in the present—reserves it for a more convenient season. Only the spiritually minded delight in dwelling on the thought of God—seek him constantly—crave for communion with him. Only they can say with sincerity—"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God" (Ps. xlii. 1, 2). They, however, can, and do say this continually. And the more communion they obtain, the more they desire. It is after Moses had entered into the cloud, and "spoken with God face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (ver. 11), that he beseeches him to "show him his glory." We cannot while on earth obtain the *full* communion for which our spiritual nature craves. We cannot therefore while on earth be satisfied, but must ever be craving for something more, ever crying—"Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!" Only in heaven, if we be found worthy, shall we "see face to face, and know as we are known" (1 Cor. xiii. 12).

Ver. 22.—*Cliffs in the rock.* God has many places of safety—"cliffs in the rock"—where he puts us when trials approach. "As our day is, so is our strength." Bereavement comes upon us, and he elevates us on a pinnacle of faith to which we had never

before mounted. Poverty and disgrace fall on us, and he gives us insensibility to them. Pain comes, and he enables us to see that pain is exactly the chastening we want, and to thank him for it. We do not cry out, with the Stoics, "How sweet!" for "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous" (Heb. xii. 11); yet we have the spiritual strength to cry out to him—"How kind! How gracious!" The best "clift in the rock," is that cleft in the "Rock of Ages," which the soldier's spear made, wherein, if we please, we may lie hidden from every danger that can assail us.

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee!"

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 18—23.—"*Show me thy glory.*" On this incident, remark—

I. THE GOOD MAN THIRSTS FOR EVER FULLER MANIFESTATIONS OF THE DIVINE GLORY. The more he knows of God, the more he would know. The nearer he gets, he presses nearer still. He "longs" to see God's power and glory" (Ps. lxxiii. 2). He prays to see as much of it as may be possible to him on earth. He will only be satisfied when admitted to the full vision of it in heaven (Ps. xvi. 11; xvii. 15; 1 John iii. 2).

II. GOD'S GLORY IS TWOFOLD—ESSENTIAL AND ETHICAL. 1. God's *essential* glory. This is the glory which pertains to his *existence*. It is compared in Scripture to the white dazzling light—"light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. vi. 16). 2. God's *ethical* glory. This is the glory of his *character*. It was revealed when God proclaimed his "name" to Moses (ver. 19; ch. xxxiv. 5—8).

III. MAN, IN HIS PRESENT STATE OF EXISTENCE, CAN RECEIVE THE VISION OF GOD'S ESSENTIAL GLORY ONLY UNDER GREAT LIMITATIONS. The full discovery of it would slay him (ver. 20). Moses beheld it but *partially*, hid in a clift of the rock—saw but its reflection (vers. 21—23). Even thus to perceive it implied an exaltation of the consciousness—an opening of the spiritual eyes—not vouchsafed to ordinary men. A *mediate* revelation is at present all that is possible to us. We have this in the reflection of the Creator's glory in creation (Ps. xix. 1, 2).

IV. GOD'S ETHICAL GLORY ADMITS OF BEING REVEALED WITH MUCH GREATER FULLNESS. 1. No barrier, either to the revelation or the perception of it, exists in physical conditions. It is glory of *character*. It is discerned by the same faculties by which we discern spiritual beauty and goodness in the characters of our fellow-men. 2. God *has* revealed it. We are not straitened in him. *He* has kept nothing back. He has made his goodness pass before us. He has revealed his name. The Divine Son is a *perfect* embodiment of the moral glory of the Father (John i. 14). 3. The sole barrier to the perception of it is the limitation of moral capacity in ourselves. It is in ourselves we are straitened. We lack the purity of heart necessary to give right spiritual discernment. Our perception of the glory of truth, righteousness, holiness, love, and mercy in God, will be in precise proportion to the degree in which these qualities are formed in our own natures.—J. O.

Ver. 19.—*Divine sovereignty.* On this note—

I. GOD IS SOVEREIGN IN THE EXERCISE OF HIS MERCY. He dispenses it to whom he will. He is free and unconstrained in its bestowal. The sinner cannot claim it as a right. He is not entitled to reckon upon it, save as the free promise of God gives him a warrant to do so. He dare not dictate to God what he *shall* do. God is sovereign as respects (1) The objects, (2) The time, (3) The manner, (4) The measure of his mercy. He gives no account of his matters to any one. He allows none to challenge him.

II. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IS BEST STUDIED ON ITS SIDE OF MERCY. This is the easier and more approachable side. It is the least disputable. It does not raise the same dark and knotty problems as the other side—"Whom he will he hardeneth" (Rom. ix. 18). The contemplation of it is purely delightful and consolatory. It is, besides, the side to which the other—the side of judgment—is subordinate. See this sovereignty of God illustrated in the history of Israel—(1) In the initial choice of the nation in Abraham. (2) In the deliverance from Egypt, with its attendant circumstances. (3) In the forming of the covenant at Sinai. (4) In the restoration of the people to favour after the covenant had been broken.

III. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IN THE EXERCISE OF MERCY IS NOT ARBITRARINESS. (See on ch. vi. 14—28.) It has, as there shown, its self-imposed limitations and inherent laws of operation. It is holy, wise, and good. It aims, we may believe, at the ultimate salvation of the largest number possible, consistently with all the interests involved.—J. O.

Vers. 1—32.—*The restoration to Divine favour completed.* This is a chapter which, beginning very gloomily, ends very gloriously. In the beginning Jehovah seems as if bidding farewell to the people for whom he had done so much; but at the close he is seen giving a revelation to Moses their leader, which must have sent him forth to resume his arduous work with greater encouragements than he ever had before. It is therefore very interesting to trace how this change was brought about.

I. WE SEE THE PEOPLE ARE BROUGHT TO A MEASURE OF PENITENCE. We cannot assume that this penitence went very deep, so far as the general apprehension of unworthiness of conduct was concerned. But there was this depth in it, that the people perceived they had done something wrong, something insulting to Jehovah, something very dangerous to their own prospects. And how had this been brought about? Simply by the statement of Jehovah that he would not go up with those who had hitherto been his people. He would not go—the real truth was that he could not go. The sin of the people, their reckless, thoughtless trifling with holy things made his presence among them a peril. Something, indeed, had to be done to get these people from Horeb to Canaan, and settle them in possession; but that could be done by a sort of exercise of physical force. So much Jehovah could do for these Israelites, howsoever idolatrous they became. But his great blessing for them was not in the mere possession of Canaan, with its temporal riches and comforts. The temporal riches of Canaan were no more than those of any other land, save as God himself was in the midst of those who possessed the riches. What a humiliating thing to consider that God had to threaten withdrawal from his people in a sort of exercise of mercy. Suppose for a moment that the people had continued obdurate, what would the end have been? They would, indeed, have gone forward and got Canaan, and then sunk back, so that Israelite would have had no more importance in the history of the world and the development of God's purposes than Amorite, Hittite, or any of the other tribes mentioned in ver. 2.

II. CONSIDER THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SEPARATED TABERNACLE. In all probability this was the tent of Moses, and if so, we see at once a beautiful mingling of grace with necessary severity. Moses was prompted to *separate* from the people, but not to *depart* from them. Jehovah could not come down in the pillar of cloud into the midst of the camp; and for this no reason needs be sought other than the peril to the people flowing from his holiness. Thus there was everything to fill the minds of the people with a suitable mingling of humility and hope. Moses, true type of the greater Mediator yet to come, gave a point where God and the people could meet together. Jehovah will not depart, unless, so to speak, he is driven away. These people could not bear his presence; and yet—apparent contradiction—they could not do without him. Individual Israelites made it plain by their seeking Jehovah that they could not do without him; and he in his never-failing loving-kindness and pity, provided for such. The fate of the nation was trembling in the balance; but ample access and counsel were secured to the individual believer. There was a definite and favoured place for every individual who in his need sought the Lord. National trouble did not eclipse, it rather intensified and aggravated, individual trouble and need.

III. NOTE THE POINTS OF INTEREST IN THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN MOSES AND JEHOVAH WITH WHICH THIS CHAPTER CONCLUDES. 1. There is what we may call the *holy boldness of Moses*. There is an illustration here of the importunity and great confidence with which God's people should persist in their approaches to the throne of the heavenly grace. Only just before God had spoken in great anger; and Moses, when he became aware from his own observation of the extent of the people's transgression, approached Jehovah with the utmost deference. But as time went on, and he was able to take all the elements of the position more and more into consideration, he felt himself shut up to persistent waiting upon God. A return to God's favour and guidance is the only way out of the difficulty; and therefore Moses cannot but be bold and pertinacious in doing his best to secure that way. 2. *He makes the most out of God's favour to him as an individual.* Not only have the people been apostate and

reckless, but their very apostasy and recklessness bring out into stronger relief the clinging obedience of Moses. He has done well, and, more than that, Jehovah has approved him; and now, therefore, he pleads that the approval may not be in word only, but in deed; not in the promise of some future and distant recompense, but in deliverance from a present difficulty near at hand. Moses is not slow to avail himself of every legitimate consideration which he may plead with God. There were times when he would have been the first to allow and indeed affirm his unworthiness before God; but God had counted him worthy, and in his present need he avails himself of God's gracious regard to gain as much as he can for his needy brethren. Thus some slight hint is given to us of the way in which, for Christ's sake, God regards men. God had made it plain to Moses that he regarded him; and in effect Moses says, "If this regard be real, I will try it by large requests for my people." So let us feel that from the undisputed regard of God for the person, obedience, and everything belonging to his well-beloved Son, there will also come a regard to all the intercessions of that Son on behalf of a world so much alienated from God; and yet the more it is alienated, only the more in need of his mercy and deliverance. 3. *The determined manner in which Moses associates himself with his people.* He and Israel were as one. He may not in so many words speak of them as his people; on the contrary, he very emphatically alludes to them, in addressing Jehovah, as "thy people;" but we feel that underneath mere expressions there lies this natural and beautiful resolution, not to be separated from those who were one with him in blood. He felt that if Israel was to be frowned upon, he could not, so far as his consciousness was concerned, be favoured; and so we are led to think of the intimate association of Jesus with the children of men. Human nature is his nature; and however unworthy and polluted human nature often shows itself, however low it may sink in forgetfulness of its original constitution and purpose, the fact remains that the Word of God became flesh, and the consequent kinship and claim must ever be recognised. 4. *The cry to God for a revelation of his glory.* Much intercourse Moses had enjoyed with Jehovah, and often had he heard the voice that gave commandment and guidance. Indeed, as our minds go back over the past experience of Moses, and we consider how much he had been through, this strikes us at first as a somewhat puzzling request:—"I beseech thee show me thy glory." But the puzzle rises rather from unspirituality in our minds than from anything in the circumstances of Moses himself. Consider well the point to which he had attained, the distance which there was between him and his brethren, heart-infected as they still were with image-worship, and there will seem little wonder that in the heart of this lonely servant of God there should rise desires for what strength and satisfaction might come to him from the vision of God. He had asked much for his people, and it was fitting that he should ask something for himself. And he asked something worthy, something pleasing to God, something of highest profit to himself, even as Solomon did later on. He asked that he might no longer have to deal with a voice as behind a veil, but might see the face from which that voice came. The request was right and acceptable; but it could not be fully granted. What a fact to ponder over! What a humbling and yet hope-inspiring fact that sinful man cannot look upon the glory of the Lord and live! What of Divine glory is manifested to us has to be manifested in a way that is safe; and surely this is part of the salvation wherewith we are saved, that by-and-bye, when all pollution is cleansed away, we may be able to bear visions and revelations which, if they were to be attempted now, would only destroy us.—Y.

Vers. 1—11.—*Mercy veiled in judgment.* I. GOD'S SEPARATION FROM THE PEOPLE AND ITS EFFECTS. 1. *The separation.* (1) In wrath he remembers mercy. They will receive the land, but for the fathers' sake and his oath's sake, not because he has delight in them. God's goodness is not always a proof of his being pleased with us, any more than his chastisements prove his anger. The former may be a loud call to repentance. (2) *The reason for God's absence;* his presence would be judgment, not mercy:—"Lest I consume thee in the way." If God's face be hidden, and the sense of his presence and guiding gone from us, his next revelation may be judgment. 2. *Its effects.* (1) The people mourned. It was no satisfaction that God and they were no longer to walk together. (2) Other delights lost their attractiveness:—"No man did put on his ornaments." (3) They were troubled by fear of judgment, for the Lord had said, "I will

come up into the midst of thee in a moment and consume thee." These are the effects of the Spirit's work to-day. The same cry is lifted:—"Flee from the wrath to come."

II. THE SEPARATION OF GOD'S PEOPLE FROM THE MIDST OF SURROUNDING SIN AND ITS RESULTS. 1. Its necessity as a testimony to *God's separation from sin*. This is the duty of the Church to-day:—"Come ye out from among them and be ye separate." The tabernacle of the congregation, meant though it be for all, must be pitched "without the camp." 2. The results. (1) Moses' example led others to declare themselves on God's side (ver. 7). (2) The people "looked after Moses." Yearning for the light of God's face is stirred up in the hearts of men by those who go forth to meet with him. (3) God manifests himself to the separated (ver. 9). A living Church is ever the means of revealing God's reality. (4) The people worshipped "every man in his tent-door." A true Church will send forth a cry for mercy from the homes of the sinful.—U.

Vers. 12-23.—*Intercession and its reward*. I. THE INTERCESSOR'S POWER. 1. God, who had disowned Israel, and refused to go with them, consents to go with *him*:—"My presence shall go with *thee*, and I will give *thee* rest." The first step in successful intercession for others is the receiving of power to serve God among them. This is the dropping which foretells the shower. 2. God is brought back by persistent asking into the midst of Israel:—"I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken" (ver. 17). We must not be content till our whole desire is given us. He can make not only our words a power to others, but also his own presence felt by them.

II. THE INTERCESSOR'S PLEAS. 1. God's love to himself:—"Thou hast said I know thee by name," etc. The realisation of our personal interest in God's love is the basis of intercession for others. It gives confidence that God will hear us. It gives hope. He who has blessed us can also bless them. 2. God's relation to them for whom he entreats:—"Consider that this nation is *thy people*." We can urge on behalf of the vilest that God created them, and gave Christ to die for them. 3. That God's presence and favour are needful to make himself and the people what God desires them to become:—"So shall we be separated." They can be consecrated only by the might of God's revealed love.

III. THE INTERCESSOR'S REWARD: THE VISION OF GOD'S GLORY. 1. "And he said, Show me *thy* glory." The lifting up of availing prayer for others quickens our desire to know more of him with whom we speak. 2. The full vision of God is for the sinless life. The splendour of the Divine purity would slay us. John fell at Christ's feet as one dead. 3. How the fuller vision granted in the present may be had. (1) By listening to the proclamation of the Lord's name in his word. (2) We can see the glory which has passed us. God's deeds reveal him. 4. The place of vision:—"A rock," "by me." Taking our stand upon Christ, the glory of God's words and deeds breaks upon us. 5. The place of safety, "in a cleft of the rock." Only in the riven side of Jesus the vision of God is not to condemnation and death, but to justification and life.—U.

SECTION XVI.—CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE RESTORATION OF THE TWO TABLES, AND RENEWAL OF THE COVENANT.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Vers. 1-4.—THE TWO TABLES RENEWED. The fervent and prolonged intercession of Moses had brought about the pardon of the people; and that, together with their repentance and their prayers (ch. xxxiii. 7), had been accepted as a renewal of the covenant on their part; but it remained for God to renew the covenant on his part. The first step to this was the

restoration of the tables, which were essential to the covenant, as being at once the basis of the law and of the ordained worship. To mark, however, that something is always forfeited by sin, even when forgiven, the new tables were made to lose one glory of the first—they were not shaped by God, as the first were (ch. xxxii. 16), but by Moses.

Ver. 1.—*How these two tables of stone*. Literally, "of stones"—two separate tables,

i.e., made of two separate stones. Moses is required to do this with strict justice, since it was by his act that the former tables were broken (ch. xxxii. 19). **Upon these tables.** Literally, "upon the tables," which has exactly the same force. **The words that were in the first tables.** It is quite true that we have not yet been explicitly told what these words were. (See ch. xxxi. 18; xxxii. 15, 16, 19.) It has been left to our natural intelligence to understand that they must have been the "ten words" uttered in the ears of all the people amid the thunders of Sinai, as recorded in ch. xx. 1-19, which are the evident basis of all the later legislation. We have, however, in ver. 26. and still more plainly in Deut. x. 4, and v. 22. the desired statement. The fiction of a double decalogue, invented by Goethe and supported by Hitzig, and even Ewald, is absolutely without foundation in fact.

Ver. 2.—**Be ready in the morning.** An interval was required for the hewing of the tables. It was made as short as possible. In

the top of the mount. Where he had been with God previously (ch. xix. 20; xxiv. 12, 18).

Ver. 3.—**No man shall come up with thee.** This time, no one, not even Joshua, was to accompany Moses. The new manifestation of the glory of God was to be made to him alone. **Neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount, etc.** Compare the injunctions given in ch. xix. 12, 13. The present orders are even more stringent.

Ver. 4.—Moses obeys all the directions given him to the letter—hews, or causes to be hewn, the two tables, making them as like as he can to the former ones—rises early, and ascends the mountain to the appointed spot—and takes with him the tables, for God to perform his promise (ver. 1) of writing the commandments upon them. It has been questioned whether God did actually write the words upon the second tables; but Kurtz's arguments upon the point are unanswerable. (*History of the Old Covenant*, vol. iii. p. 186, E. T.)

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1-4. —*The second promulgation of the moral law, by the renewal of the two tables, may teach us—*

I. **THAT ALL COVENANT WITH GOD MUST REST ON THE BASIS OF THE MORAL LAW.** Moses had not asked for a renewal of the tables. He had requested the return of God's favour and the renewal of God's share of the covenant. It was God who made the restoration of the tables a condition. God, that is, will not divorce favour from obedience, privilege from the keeping of his law. Man desires the rewards that God has to bestow, but is not anxious to have the rewards tied to a certain course of action. God insists on the combination. He can only enter into covenant with those who accept his law as their rule of life. This is not for his own sake, but for theirs. They can only be fitted to enjoy his favour, and the rewards which he has to bestow on them, by leading a life in accordance with his law and acquiring the character which such a life forms in them.

II. **THAT THE MORAL LAW IS ETERNAL AND UNALTERABLE.** The broken tables must be restored. In restoring them no change must be made. Their very form must resemble as nearly as may be the form of the preceding ones. This, of course, was typical. It foreshadowed the further—not mere resemblance, but—identity of the words that were to be written on the tables. From first to last, "the words were those that were in the first table" (ver. 1). There is no hint of any alteration. Even Christianity changes nothing in the law that is moral. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets," says our Lord; "I am not come to destroy but to fulfil" (Matt. v. 17). No "jot or tittle" of the moral law is to pass away. Even with respect to the Sabbath, which verges upon positive law, nothing is changed but the day of the week, and to a small extent the method of observance. Apostolic writings show us the Decalogue as still binding (Rom. xiii. 9; Eph. vi. 2; James ii. 11; etc.).

III. **THAT BREAKING THE MORAL LAW IMPOSES ON US FRESH OBLIGATIONS.** "Hew thee"—literally, "hew for thyself"—"two tables of stone," said the Lord to Moses; repair the loss caused by thine own action. Repentance is no part of man's original duty to God; but if he once break the moral law, it becomes obligatory on him. Every infraction involves this new duty; some infractions involve more. Fraud involves the duty of restitution; calumny, that of retractation; insult, that of apology; and the like. Each of our sins lays upon us as a new burthen, not only of guilt, but also of labour, to efface it. We had best refrain from evil, even in our own interest, or we may increase our burthen till we sink under it.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*The renewal of God's covenant.* I. THE FIRST EFFECT OF RECONCILIATION IS THE RE-WRITING OF THE LAW. Moses ascends that God may again inscribe his commandments upon the tables of stone; Jesus, that God may write them upon the fleshly tables of the heart. The sprinkling of the blood is “unto obedience.” We are to be “zealous of good works.”

II. THE AWFULNESS OF GOD'S HOLINESS MORE EVIDENT IN THE RESTORATION THAN IN THE FIRST GIVING OF THE LAW. Formerly Moses had been accompanied so far by the elders, and further still by Joshua. Now he must go up alone. No man is to be seen throughout the mount. Neither flocks nor herds are to feed before it. The terrors of Sinai awe the heart less than the cross of him who treads the wine-press alone.

III. THE REDEEMER'S ZEAL. “And Moses rose up early in the morning.” He cannot loiter; for man's life hangs upon the issue; the world's cry rings in his ears. “For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace,” etc. (Isaiah lxii. 1).

IV. THE MEDIATOR MUST MOULD THE HEART TO RECEIVE GOD'S LAW. “He hewed two tables of stone, like unto the first.” The power of Christ's love must cut between us and sin, and give again the form man wore when he came from the hands of God. We must experience the circumcision of Christ. Christ's work may be measured by the heart's tender receptivity for the re-writing of God's law.

V. THERE MUST BE UNION BY FAITH WITH CHRIST IN HIS RISEN LIFE. He “took in his hand the two tables of stone.” We pass up with Jesus into the presence of God. That the law may be written upon the heart, our life must be hid with Christ in God.—U.

Vers. 1—4.—*The second set of tables.* Jehovah graciously answered the supplications of Moses (xxxiii. 12—23) so far as it was possible to answer them. Supplications may be very importunate, and, therefore, so far well pleasing to God, and yet at the same time they may be faulty in two respects: first, they may ask for things which it is impossible altogether to grant; and, secondly, they may omit from the field of view, certain other things which form a necessary accompaniment of every Divine gift. In all his supplications, Moses said nothing about these broken tables; it would be too much to say that they were never in his thoughts. But whether in his thoughts or not, they assuredly had to be considered and provided for. Moses had asked for the presence of God to go with Israel; and the presence of God meant for one thing the commandments of God. Furthermore, all the elaborate furniture of the tabernacle had for the centre around which it was gathered, these very tables of stone. When Moses broke them, he broke the holiest thing in all Israel's belongings; these tables, appointed to rest within the ark, and underneath the cherubim. No word of censure indeed is uttered against Moses for having broken them; but it does not therefore follow that he is to be praised for having broken them. The action, so to speak, was one to be regarded neither with praise nor blame, but simply as an inevitable result of Moses' sudden and violent wrath. When Moses broke the tables, he was not in a mood of mind for considering anything but the monstrous transgression before his eyes. What had happened to the fragments we are not told; except this much, that they were no longer available. All that Jehovah does is simply to command from Moses the preparation of new tablets. As Moses prepares them, he may safely be left to his own thoughts. Whatever lesson he needed in respect of self-control, the opportunity was given him to learn. Opportunity was also given to learn the need of being continually on the watch for manifestations of human weakness and instability. If Moses was in so many things the type of Christ in respect of mediatorial office, it was, alas! also true that he was unlike Christ in respect of penetrating insight into human nature. Moses was not like Christ; it could not be said of him that he knew what was in man.—Y.

Vers. 1—10, 28.—*Renewal of the tables, and fourth intercession.* One more mighty effort of intercession, and Moses will bear away the blessing which he seeks. It needs, however, that it be a mighty one. The covenant is not yet restored in its integrity.

The people's sin is not yet perfectly forgiven. God, indeed, has promised to go with them, but he has not said, as of old, "I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God" (Ex. vi. 7). The new relations are not those of perfected friendship. They are moreover, unstable. New transgressions of the people may at any moment upset them. Moses, accordingly, would not only have the covenant renewed—restored in its old completeness and integrity—the last trace of the Divine displeasure wiped away—but would have God give him a pledge of grace beyond anything he has yet received—a pledge that he will show great *forbearance* with the people: that he will not deal summarily with them, or cast them off, on account of backslidings which he now perceives to be inevitable (ver. 9). It was a high thing to ask: too high, Moses may have thought, for him to be able to attain to it. If he did, it could only be as the result of an earnestness, a perseverance, and a sublimity in intercession beyond everything of which he had yet felt himself capable. The strength he needed, however, was not to be withheld from him. He had already, though, probably, without this being present to his mind as a motive, put himself in the way of getting it, by asking for a vision of the Divine glory. From this would flow into his soul a spiritual might which would make "all things possible" to him (cf. Mark ix. 23). By sheer power of prayer, he would obtain what he desired. Jehovah, on his side, was too well pleased with his servant's zeal and devotion, too willing to be entreated of him, too entirely in accord with the object of his supplication, not readily to grant him the opportunity of pressing his request.

I. **JEHOVAH'S "COME UP HITHER" (vers. 1—4).** 1. *The command to hew out tables* (ver. 1). Formerly, it was God himself who furnished the tables on which the law was written (ch. xxxii. 16). Now, the tables are to be provided by Moses. This may have had reference to the facts (1) that it was Moses who had destroyed the former tables (ch. xxxii. 19); and (2), that it was by the mediation of Moses that the covenant was being renewed. It was a suitable reward for his intercession, that God should give him this honour of supplying the tables on which the covenant terms were to be inscribed. View the command to hew out tables as (1) *Retrospective*. God had already promised that his presence should go with Israel (ch. xxxiii. 14). This implied, on the part of the people, return to their obedience. The law is unalterable. God can walk with men only as they are willing to walk with him in the way of his commands. The tables testified to the unchangingness of the obligation. (2) *Anticipative*. It had in view the fact that, through Moses' intercession, the covenant was about to be restored. (3) *Promissory*. It gave Moses encouragement to entreat for its restoration. 2. *The command to ascend the mount* (ver. 2). The summons to ascend the mount was, (1) An answer to prayer—"Shew me thy glory" (ch. xxxiii. 18). (2) A preparation for vision. (3) An opportunity for intercession. 3. *The command to preserve the sanctity of the mount* (ver. 3). This was to be done by keeping man and beast from approaching it. Moses was to ascend alone. The command—a parallel to that in Ex. xix. 12—13—has for its end the warning back of intruders from what, for the time being, is "holy ground" (cf. ch. iii. 5). Other reasons are, that there might be (1) No interruption of communion. (2) No distraction in intercession. (3) No injury done by the manifestation of the Divine glory. "The manifested glory of the Lord would so surely be followed by the destruction of man that even Moses needed to be protected before it" (ch. xxxiii. 21, 22).

II. **THE NAME REVEALED (vers. 4—8).** (1) Jehovah "passed by before him" (ver. 5), *i.e.*, gave him the glimpse of his glory promised in ch. xxxiii. 22, 23. (2) He "proclaimed his name"—*i.e.*, made known to Moses the essence of his character. This was the higher revelation. The other is only alluded to; this is dwelt on and expanded (vers. 6, 7). 1. *The name itself*. Note here in regard to it—(1) It unites mercy and justice. (2) The merciful attributes preponderate. (3) The word which syllables it is "Love." Love is the union of goodness and holiness. The history of revelation has been but the spelling out of this name. Christ is the perfect embodiment of it. 2. *The effects on Moses*. (1) It awed him (ver. 8). (2) It encouraged him. It gave him a new ground of confidence in entreaty (ver. 9). (3) It strengthened him. Cf. the chorus of the archangels in Goethe's "Faust" —

'Though none may fathom thee—thy sight
Upon the angels power bestows,' etc

III. THE COVENANT RESTORED (vers. 9, 27, 28). 1. *The intercession.* This fourth and last intercession presents us with several noteworthy features. (1) It was very prolonged. The account here is summary; but Moses tells us in Deuteronomy (ch. ix. 25), that he "fell down before the Lord forty days and forty nights as at the first," and prayed earnestly that the people might not be destroyed (cf. ver. 28). (2) It included intercession for Aaron (Deut. ix. 20). (3) It is marked by a deep perception of the root of depravity in the people's nature. Moses has no longer the same optimistic views regarding them as when he disputed with God the necessity of giving them further warning about not approaching the mount (ch. xix. 23). Note how, in the first intercession, it is the people's *danger*; in the second, the people's *guilt*; and in the last, the people's *depravity*, which is chiefly before the intercessor's mind. He here pleads the innate tendency as a reason why God should deal mercifully with them (ver. 9). Human nature does not improve on closer inspection. But there is weakness as well as sin in its condition. The Divine ruler may be trusted to make the requisite allowances (cf. Gen. viii. 21). (4) It is marked—and this is the outstanding circumstance in connection with it—by the degree in which Moses is now able to identify himself with the people for whom he intercedes. "Let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us . . . And pardon *our* iniquity and *our* sin, and take us for thine inheritance" (ver. 9). More than ever he feels himself one with his nation. Intercession has perfected sympathy. But not intercession alone. It may be inferred that no act had more to do with this result than the supreme act of self-devotion, already considered, in which he expressed his willingness to die, and, if need be, to be blotted out of God's book, for the salvation of the people. In that amazing act, the last traces of selfishness must have perished. He has given himself for Israel, and is thenceforth one with it. Subsequent intercessions can but develop, and give clearer and fuller expression to the sense of unity with his people born within him in that supreme hour in his experience. Sinful as the people are, accordingly, Moses, in his present entreaty does not shrink from including himself among them. "Our iniquity"—"our sin." The just takes part with the unjust. He makes their sin his, and pleads for its forgiveness. The worse they show themselves, the more earnestly he holds by them, and endeavours to sustain them by his prayers. If sympathy be a qualification for the task of mediation, Moses thus possesses it. His intercession, in this respect, throws striking lights on Christ's. 2. *The success.* The prolonged, fervent, and sympathetic intercession of Moses did not fail of its reward. "The Lord," he tells afterward, "hearkened unto me at that time also" (Deut. ix. 19). Nothing was wanting to the completeness of his success. The last frown had disappeared from the countenance of Jehovah. Covenant relations were perfectly restored. The people were reinstated in privilege. No wonder that the mediator's face "shone" as he descended from the mount! We, too, have an intercessor whom the Father "heareth always" (John xi. 42).—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 5-8.—THE FULFILMENT BY GOD OF HIS PROMISE TO MOSES. This section coheres closely with the last section of the preceding chapter, and must be regarded as the historical account of how God fulfilled the promises there made by him to Moses (ch. xxxiii. 19-23). The promises were mainly two—1. That he would proclaim his name to him afresh; and 2. That he would pass by him, and let him see, after he had passed, what man might see of his glory. The fulfilment of the first promise appears in the long enumeration of attributes contained in vers. 6, 7; the fulfilment of the second is expressed with extreme brevity in the words—"And the Lord passed by before

him" (ver. 6). Probably no further description could be given of that marvellous manifestation beyond those words in which it was promised (ch. xxxiii. 21-23). Its effects were seen in that permanent reflection of God's glory on the face of Moses, which thenceforth compelled him to wear a veil mostly when he showed himself to the people (vers. 33-35).

Ver. 5.—The Lord descended in the cloud. The cloudy pillar, which had stood at the door of the Tent of Meeting (ch. xxxiii. 10), was withdrawn while Moses ascended Sinai, and probably disappeared from men's sight. When Moses reached the top, it descended once more from the sky, and stood with him there. Then a voice from the cloud proclaimed the

name of the Lord in the manner more fully stated in the ensuing verses.

Vers. 6, 7.—**The Lord passed by before him.** God did as he had promised in ch. xxxiii. 22, 23. He made his glory pass by Moses, as he stood in a "clift of the rock," and "covered him with his hand as he passed by," and, when he had passed, "took away his hand," and allowed Moses to look after him, and see a glorious and transcendent vision—a vision so bright and radiant, *and so real*, that the light which streamed from it settled on Moses' face, and remained there (ver. 30). **And proclaimed.** In his passage God proclaimed his name; not however, as in the burning bush, an actual name contained in a single word—but a description in many words of his essential nature—a description setting forth especially his three qualities of mercy, truth, and justice, but dwelling most upon the first of the three—perhaps, as most essential, for "God is love" (1 John iv. 8)—certainly, as most needing to be prominently set forth at the time, when his favour had been justly forfeited, and but for his mercy could not have been restored. Note the accumulation of terms that are nearly synonymous—1. Merciful (or pitiful); 2. Gracious; 3. Long-suffering; 4. Abundant in goodness; 5. Keeping mercy for thousands;

and 6. Forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin—an accumulation for the purpose of emphasis—to assure Moses, and through him mankind at large, of the reality of this attribute, on which the possibility of our salvation depends, and which had never hitherto been set forth with anything like such fulness. **That will by no means clear the guilty.** Some critics take this clause in an entirely different sense, translating "who in destroying will not wholly destroy" (Maimonides, Pool, De Dieu, Patrick), or, "who acquits even him who is not innocent" (Geddes); but the rendering of our translators (which agrees with the LXX.), is approved by Rosenmüller, Gesenius, Kalisch, Keil, and others. It seems to have been also the meaning assigned to the passage by the prophet Nahum, who quotes it (i. 3) when he is threatening Nineveh. **Visiting the iniquity.** See above, ch. xx. 5. While setting forth his attribute of mercy in all its fulness, God will not have his attribute of justice forgotten (ver. 8).

Vers. 8.—**Moses made haste and bowed his head.** Worshipping the glory that had passed by, and accepting the gracious words addressed to him.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 6, 7.—**The second proclamation of God's name.**—God had proclaimed his name to Moses, when he spoke with him out of the burning bush. He had declared it to be JEHOVAH, "the Self-Existent One." Under this name the people of Israel had known him from the time of Moses' return to Egypt from Midian, until that of which he is here speaking. Hitherto it had sufficed for them. It had marked him as, 1. eternal; 2. uncaused; 3. unconditioned; 4. self-sufficient; 5. all-powerful. But it had not revealed his moral nature. Something of that had always been known to man. Something more had become known to Israel through the law already given from Sinai. But in their present state of sorrow and depression (ch. xxxiii. 4—6) something further was needed. God accordingly "proclaimed his name" afresh. Of this second proclamation we may note—

I. THAT IT CANCELS NOTHING, BUT ADDS. The first words of the name are "*Jehovah, Jehovah El*," or "the Self-Existent, the Self-Existent God." What had been revealed before is confirmed; nay, is still put in the fore-front, as the proper foundation of all the rest. For a true knowledge of God, we must, *first and foremost*, have the conviction that there is a self-existent being, eternal, uncaused, the cause of all things, and therefore of our own existence, on whom we are absolutely dependent. It follows, after this, to inquire and learn the moral character of this Eternal One.

II. THAT IT SETS FORTH GOD AS, ABOVE ALL THINGS, MERCIFUL. The Jewish commentators make out thirteen epithets of God in these two verses, and say that all but one are epithets of mercy. This seems to be an overstatement of the actual fact, that the epithets of mercy form a large numerical majority. They are 1. *Rakkum*, "the tender or pitiful one," who is full of kindness and compassion; 2. *Khannun*, "the gracious one," who bestows his benefits out of mere favour, without obligation; 3. *Erek appayim*, "the long-suffering one," who is not easily provoked, but "suffers long and is kind"; 4. *Rab-khesed*, "the great in mercy" which needs no explanation; 5. *Notser-khesed*, "the keeper of mercy," he who does not desert those he loves, but is merciful to them, and their children, from generation to generation; 6. *Nose'avon v'pasha v'ekhlatah*, "the forgiver of iniquity and transgression and sin"—the being who

alone can forgive sin and give peace to the guilty soul. Moses did well to make appeal to this description of himself by God himself, when Israel had a second time provoked God to destroy them (Num. xiv. 17, 18). We shall do well to make our appeal to the same, whenever we have offended our Lord and Master by our faults and shortcomings, our "sins, negligences, and ignorances." Conjured by this "name," God can scarcely refuse to reply, as he replied to Moses, "I have pardoned according to thy word" (Num. xiv. 20).

III. THAT IT FURTHER SETS HIM FORTH AS JUST AND TRUE. God gives it as part of his name, that he "will by no means clear the guilty," or rather perhaps that he will not "always" do so (Kalisch). There is some guilt that he will not, cannot pardon. "There is a sin unto death—I do not say that a man shall pray for it" (1 John v. 16). Unrepented sin cannot be forgiven. "Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost" cannot be forgiven. God's justice is an essential part of his nature, no less than his mercy; and is perhaps, as has been argued, a necessary consequence of his love.* Again, God is true—"abundant in truth" (ver. 6). There can be no trust in any being who is not true. Truth lies at the root of all moral goodness; and the truth of God is pre-supposed in any revealed religion, since without it revelation could have no force or value. Further, both in the Old and the New Testament, God reveals himself as "true," or sometimes as "the truth." "Thy truth reacheth unto the clouds" (Ps. cxviii. 4). "The truth of the Lord endureth for ever" (ib. cxvii. 2). "God is true." "I am the truth." It is essential to a right conception of him that we should believe in his absolute veracity. If we "make him a liar," we ruin our whole idea of him. We might as well make him non-existent.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 5—8.—*The "name."* Consider on this

I. THE CONNECTION WITH THE NAME JEHOVAH. "Proclaimed the name of *Jehovah*" (ver. 5). Observe—1. The name *Jehovah* connotes moral attributes. The absolute being is, at the same time, the most perfect being. His excellence includes all possible perfection. This implies the possession of moral attributes. "That character," says Dean Graves, "from which the acutest reasoners have endeavoured demonstratively to deduce as from their source all the Divine attributes, is SELF-EXISTENCE. Is it not then highly remarkable that it is under this character the divinity is described, on his first manifestation to the Jewish lawgiver?" 2. Former revelations implied moral attributes. The attributes on which, in former revelations, the main stress needed to be laid, were those to be illustrated in the events of the exodus—power, freedom, supremacy, changelessness (cf. on ch. iii. 14; vi. 2, 3). But that moral attributes—the attributes of truth, mercy, goodness, justice, also belonged to *Jehovah* was shown—(1) From the nature of his purpose. (2) From the character of his actings. (3) From the simple fact of his revealing himself. 3. The new revelation declares moral attributes. Formerly, the revelation was in deeds, now it is in words. Formerly, God told Moses what, as *Jehovah*, he would do. Now he declares what, as *Jehovah*, he is. The name was first *spelt*, then *pronounced*. Cf. with law of ordinary historical progress—(1) action; (2) reflection on what has been done, with generalisation of principles. Or of scientific progress—(1) accumulation of facts; (2) generalisation of law. For this announcement of the name, the renewal of the covenant furnished an appropriate historical occasion.

II. TEACHING OF THE NAME. The name exhibits the Divine character. It lays bare to us God's very heart. It reveals his essence. Learn—1. *There is justice in God.* "That will by no means clear the guilty," etc. (ver. 7). (1) This attribute is essential. Without it, God would not be God. Says the poet, "A God all mercy is a God unjust." We go further, and affirm that without justice, there would be no mercy left to exercise. See Homily on ch. xxxii. 10. We have defined love in God as the perfect union of goodness and holiness. Mercy we would define as a mixed feeling of pity and resentment. See this point well illustrated in the chapters on "the Law of

* Dante makes Hell in part the creation of the Primal Love, *Inferno*, Canto iii ll 5, 6

Mercy " in "*Ecce Homo*." (2) Justice cannot be laid aside. God "will by no means clear the guilty." See Homily on ch. xxiii. 21. But if God cannot *clear* the guilty, cannot, i.e. call guilt other than what it is, or refuse to punish it, he can, on the ground of his Son's atonement, which fulfils every condition of a perfect satisfaction to justice, *forgive* the guilty. (3) Manifestation of justice. In his personal dealings with individuals—not clearing the guilty. In his general government of the world—"visiting the iniquity of the fathers," etc. (cf. on ch. xx. 5; Deut. v. 9). 2. *There is mercy in God*. This side of the Divine character is exhibited with much greater fulness than the other. "Merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin" (vers. 6, 7). (1) God delights in mercy; he does not delight in judgment. Judgment is "his work, his strange work" (Is. xxviii. 21). The visitation of sin is viewed as extending only "unto the third and fourth generation"; mercy is kept for "thousands" (cf. Ps. ciii. 17). (2) Mercy is "abundant." Cf. Is. lv. 7—"will abundantly pardon." A wonderful utterance this from the standpoint of the Old Testament. Anticipates Paul—"where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. v. 20). (3) Mercy qualifies judgment. It leads to *forbearance* with the sinner—"long-suffering" (cf. Rom. ii. 4). It secures *pardon* on repentance—"forgiving iniquity," etc. (4) It is yet exercised in strictest harmony with the requirements of justice. The *mode* of the reconciliation of these two sides of the Divine character, however, remains in the Old Testament a partially unsolved problem. 3. Mercy *rules* in the character of God. This is a fair inference (1) from the preponderating place assigned to the attributes of mercy, and (2) from the fact that the attributes of mercy stand *before* the attributes of justice. It is but an earlier expression of the truth which the Gospel has now made a great spiritual certainty to us—"God is love" (1 John iv. 16). Not simply *loves*, but *is* love. But if God is love, and love constitutes his essence, then must love dominate, wield, work through his other perfections, using all for its own purposes, transmuting all into its own nature. There cannot be discord or division in the breast of the Eternal. What God is, he must ever have been, must be at all times, through all ages, in all his works, under all forms of his manifestation. This is a conception so deep and far-reaching as to pass in its length and breadth beyond our grasp. Its lines prolong themselves to infinity. There lie in it possibilities which it is not given to man to fathom.

III. THE NAME AS REVEALED. 1. We *need* a revelation. It is but a dumb, inarticulate revelation of this name which we have in nature. What is revealed relates more to God's justice than to God's love. If there is much in nature which supports, there is also much which seems to discredit, belief in the entire goodness of God. Nature in particular, has no answer to give to the questions—Can God forgive and restore sinners? Can he undo their evil? Can he turn back from its avenging course that terrible law of retribution which holds us in its grasp? 2. We may *expect* a revelation. If God loves men, we may expect him in some way personally to attest his love to them. "Gracious thoughts never revealed are not gracious thoughts at all. It is essential to the being of grace or love that it manifest itself. Love unrevealed is love unreal" (Dr. A. B. Bruce). 3. The revelation has been *given*. (1) In deeds. (2) In words. (3) In the Son.—J. O.

Vers. 5—9.—*The Manifestation of God*. I. GOD'S GLORY VEILED THAT IT MAY BE REVEALED. "The Lord descended in the cloud." The glory of Jesus was veiled by his humanity. There is but one avenue through which the knowledge of God can come—the spirit; it cannot come by the senses. God reveals himself by a word, by one in whom he has put his name, and by the Spirit's unveiling of the word in the heart.

II. GOD'S NAME. 1. Faithfulness: he proclaimed "JEHOVAH." He changes not, his purpose abides, his word is fulfilled. 2. Faithfulness and might. "Jehovah, Elohim." God's power waits upon his unchanging purpose. 3. "Merciful." He will not spurn need. He is moved by, and drawn to, it. 4. "Gracious." God is not merely a just master, bestowing rewards which have been earned. There is favour to be found with him, unmerited and free. 5. "Long-suffering." He is patient with blindness and weakness and sin. He *waits* to be gracious. The great husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth and "hath long patience for it." 6. "Abundant in goodness and truth." The ages have been unveiling their fulness; but the story is not yet told.

Eternity will never know all the length and breadth and depth and height. 7. The largeness of God's mercy (1) toward persons. "Keeping mercy for thousands," (2) toward sins, "forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." 8. The severity of God. (1) He will not always leave sin unpunished. (2) His mercy may save men from sin, but will not acquit them in sin. "Be not deceived." (3) The father's sins are visited upon the children. The inheritance of wrong is accompanied by an inheritance of wrath. What is punishment for the fathers may be mercy for the children.

III. THE FRUITS OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. 1. Adoration. For deep and true worship the soul must know God in the reality of his existence and the glory of his nature. 2. Prayer for himself and his people. To Jesus the vision of God is intercession for his Church and the world. (1) Prayer for God's presence. "Let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us." (2) That God may come in mercy, not in judgment. "Pardon our iniquity." (3) The transforming power of the presence of God. "And (so) take us for thine inheritance."—U.

Vers 6, 7.—*The name of the Lord.* Moses had asked to see the glory of Jehovah, a request which it was possible to grant only in a very modified way. As much as Moses could bear to see he was allowed to see; and for what he was not able to see he received a most abundant and timely compensation in the revelation made to him of the Divine character. For this of course is what the proclamation of the name of Jehovah amounts to. The name of Jehovah is what we should call the character of Jehovah. It is always a great comfort and stay to know that the character of one with whom we have to deal is satisfactory through and through. Nay more, it is well to know character, whether it be good or bad; not to go to a man, uncertain of his disposition and altogether in doubt as to what we may expect. From the proclamation here made we may judge Moses to have been up to this point ignorant of certain fundamental qualities in the character of God. He might have certain guesses, certain inward promptings, which led him into supplication and conduct accordant with the Divine character; but now he is lifted above all guess-work. From God's own lips he gets an account of all that is deepest in the disposition and relations of God toward man. He is made to see that God's recent action towards apostate Israel was based, not on incessant importunity in supplication, but on what was a constant source of the Divine action. God was pleased to see Moses so importunate; importunity we may even say was needful to the occasion; but God had not in him the spirit of the unjust judge, that he should be moved by importunity alone. The character here revealed doubtless gave Moses confidence in all future necessary intercession. Henceforth he knew, and knew from as solemn and authoritative a communication as could be made, what there was in the great Disposer of his movements upon which he could at all times rely. The aspect of Jehovah's character here presented is of course one which it is important for his sinful creature man to know. God does not tell us here all that may be known of him; he singles out that, the knowledge of which we cannot do without in our hours of deepest need, and although there is thus revealed to us only a part of the Divine nature, it is a part which has the harmony of a whole. God is here made known as indescribably considerate of all the needs of men, and yet at the same time inexorably just. His mercy and love are not as human mercy and love too often are. There is a mercy which, while it may soothe present agonies and smooth present difficulties, is yet essentially nothing more than an opiate; it does not go to the root of the trouble and show how it may be entirely swept away. The tender mercies of the wicked, it is said, are cruel; and so in another sense the tender mercies of the thoughtless and the ignorant may be called cruel. Stopping suffering for the immediate present, they may be sowing the seed of suffering a hundred times greater in the future. But God's mercy is so offered and exercised that it needs never to be regretted. It is mercy gloriously allied with great considerations of righteousness. It is mercy for the repentant; for those who confess and forsake their sins; and although from a superficial glance this visitation of suffering upon children and children's children may seem to contradict the mercy of God, we find on further reflection that it is a great warning against human selfishness. What a rebuke to the man who, knowing that his sin will involve posterity in suffering, yet goes on with the sin! Who are we, to indulge in aspersions on the mercy of God, when perhaps at the very moment we are sowing in self-indulgence what others must

reap in pangs which our self-denial and regard for God's wise will might have utterly prevented?—Y.

Vers. 6, 7.—*God is love.* A previous revelation, cf. iii. 14. Then the emphasis was on the *name*, now it is on the *character* of him who bears the name. Moses, in common with the people, longed after some visible manifestation of the glory of the unseen God who spoke to him (xxxiii. 18). His desire is granted; but at the same time God turns his thoughts from the visible to the invisible. "It is not," he seems to say, "what I *appear* to be that man has to trust to; it is what I *am*." Consider—

I. THE CHARACTER REVEALED. 1. *It implies intelligence in the Being who is characterised.* The name Jehovah might, conceivably, be given to "a stream of tendency." Law, irresistible and impersonal, might be described as "the eternal." You cannot, however, speak of law as "merciful and gracious," etc. There must be some one who works through law. A divine heart is the mainspring whence flow all "streams of tendency," the issues of the universal life. 2. *It is not such as man could have imagined.* Men do create their own gods; deifying the exaggerated and distorted shadows cast by their own characters—so the mountaineer is at first awe-struck when confronted by his own gigantic shadow. Here, however, is a character which cannot be traced to such an origin; it is not man's thought about God, it is God's revelation of himself to man. Contrast the character of the shadow, man-created, god, with that of Jehovah. The one is revengeful, arbitrary, cruel, etc.; the other is merciful and gracious, etc. The man-made god is at best kindly with a weak and sentimental kindness; with Jehovah, love is the heart-root of his nature, a love which will by no means clear the guilty. Nature "red in tooth and claw" scarcely suggests such a god as this; man could never have conceived him. The character is a revelation of himself, made here to Moses; made, yet more clearly, later, in the life of "the Word made Flesh."

II. THE CHARACTER AS EXPRESSED IN ACTION. Men are treated by some one or some thing as God says he treats them. The "stream of tendency" makes for righteousness; it is not purposeless, it must be purposed. Though experience was insufficient to suggest the character, it yet helps us to verify the revelation. Notice, specially, the stern side of love. The latter part of the revelation seems at first inconsistent with the first part; they give, however, two aspects of the same homogeneous character. True love is quite distinct from kindness; its brain is wisdom, and justice nerves its right hand. 1. *The action which love will take, must depend upon the circumstances which call for action.* Our own experience shows sufficiently that love does not shrink from giving pain. The parent will *forgive* his child, and yet, at the same time, not "clear" him; he cannot pass over without notice conduct of which he disapproves. Love may wield the surgeon's knife; or the scourge, with a view to *moral* surgery. So long as the child keeps sound and well, physically and morally, love is all sunshine; with illness or danger, physical or moral, love—seeking the good of the beloved object—may strike and pierce like lightning. Apply the general principle and it explains:— 2. *A special case.* Can love visit upon children the sins of their parents? Yes, for children inherit the sinful tendencies of their parents; and it is just this visitation which may best secure them against falling into sin. Sad that the drunkard's child should be an epileptic; yet epilepsy may be a loving visitation if it guard against the confirmed drunkenness which might otherwise have ruined body and soul. A warning for parents; yet consolation for the victims of *their* sins, when it is seen that love has inspired severity (cf. Heb. xii. 11).

Conclusion. Such the God revealed to Moses, and such the God revealed in Christ. Before such a Being what attitude so fitting as that of Moses? (ver. 8; cf. Job xlii. 1—6).—G.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 9—26.—THE RENEWAL OF THE COVENANT. Dazed, as it would seem, by the splendour of the vision which he had beheld. Moses forgot that God had already pledged

himself to renew the covenant, and lead the people in person to Canaan. In his forgetfulness, he once more set himself to intercede with God on their behalf, and besought him.—1. That

he would go up with them; 2. That he would pardon them; and 3. That he would once more take them as his inheritance (ver. 9). Without replying separately to these requests, God formally renews the covenant; promises not only to go up with the people, but to work miracles for them (ver. 10), and to drive out the nations before them when they have arrived (ver. 11); and makes a brief summary of the chief points of positive observance, which he requires of them in addition to the moral law. These points may be reduced to twelve:—1. That no treaty of peace should be made with the Canaanite nations (ver. 12). 2. That all their images, altars, and groves should be destroyed (ver. 13). 3. That no molten image should be made to represent God (ver. 17). 4. That the Passover festival should be observed as previously commanded (ver. 18). 5. That the first-born should be dedicated, or redeemed (vers. 19, 20). 6. That the Sabbath rest should be observed at all times of the year (ver. 21). 7. That the feast of Pentecost (weeks) should be observed regularly (ver. 22). 8. That the feast of tabernacles should also be observed (*ib.*). 9. That at all the three great festivals all the males should appear before God (ver. 23). 10. That no leaven should be used with any sacrifice (ver. 25). 11. That first-fruits of all things should be offered to God (ver. 26). 12. That no kid should be seethed in her mother's milk (ver. 26).

Ver. 9.—**If now I have found grace in thy sight.** The vision vouchsafed him makes Moses feel that he has indeed been received into favour with God. The first use which it occurs to him to make of his position is to intercede anew for his people. He, apparently, forgets that God has already promised to go with them (ch. xxxiii. 17), and prefers exactly the same request which he had made on the preceding day, and which had been granted. To this he adds a prayer for pardon, and a request that God would take Israel for his inheritance. The last phrase is a new one, but expresses perhaps no more than has been implied in such phrases as “thy people, which thou hast purchased” (ch. xv. 16)—“ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me” (ch. xix. 5).

Ver. 10.—**I make a covenant**—i.e., “I lay down afresh the terms of the covenant between me and Israel.” On my part, I will go with them (implied, not expressed), and do miracles for them, and drive out the nations before them (vers. 10, 11), and enlarge their

borders, and not allow their land to be invaded at the festival seasons (ver. 24): on their part, they must “observe that which I command them” (ver. 11). **Marvels such as have not been done in all the earth.** As the drying up of the Jordan (Josh. iii. 16, 17); the falling down of the walls of Jericho (*ib.* vi. 20), the slaughter of the army of the five kings by hailstones (*ib.* x. 11), and the like. **It is a terrible thing that I will do with thee.** Terrible, not to Israel, but to Israel's enemies. Compare Deut. x. 21; Ps. cvi. 22; cxlv. 6, etc.

Ver. 11.—**Observe thou that which I command thee this day.** The precepts expressly given (vers. 12—26) are, as observed above, almost wholly positive. The moral law did not require recapitulation, because it was enjoined on the people afresh by the writing on the two tables (ver. 28). **I drive out before thee.** Compare iii. 8, 17; vi. 4, 8; xiii. 5, 11; xxxiii. 2.

Ver. 12.—**Take heed to thyself lest thou make a covenant.** See above, ch. xxiii. 32 **A snare.** See ch. xxiii. 33.

Ver. 13.—**Ye shall destroy their altars,** etc. This command is more sweeping than the corresponding one in the “Book of the Covenant” (ch. xxiii. 24), which expressly mentions only the “images.” Here the destruction of idol-altars and idol-groves is further commanded. On idol-altars, see Num. xxiii. —, 29; Judg. ii. 2; 1 Kings xvi. 32; xviii. 26, etc. **Groves** are here for the first time mentioned. They appear to have been artificial constructions, either of wood or metal, or both, more or less imitative of trees, and regarded as emblems of the Oriental nature-deities, especially Baal and Astarte or Ashtoreth. The word translated “grove” (*ashêrah*) is a modification of the name Ashtoreth. The well-known “sacred tree” of the Assyrians is probably an *ashêrah*.

Ver. 14.—**For thou shalt worship no other God.** This is a reference to the Second Commandment (ch. xx. 5). The meaning is—“Thou shalt not spare the idolatrous emblems of the Canaanite nations, for thou couldst only do so to worship them, and thou art already forbidden to worship any other god beside me.” The existence of the Decalogue and its binding nature, is assumed throughout this chapter.

Vers. 15, 16.—The probable consequences of making treaties with the Canaanite nations, alluded to in ver. 12, and in ch. xxiii. 33, are here fully set forth. They include—1. Joining in their idol-feasts; 2. Intermarriages; 3. The actual apostasy of those who married idolatrous wives. The event fully justified the warning here given. See Judg. ii. 2, 11—13, 17; vi. 25; x. 6, etc. **They go a whoring.** This expression, so common in the later books, is here used for the first time. It

implies that the relation between man and God is analogous to that of the marriage-bond, so that deserting him for other gods is a species of adultery. Compare the frequent representations in the New Testament of Christ as the "Bridegroom" and the Church as his "Bride."

Ver. 17.—**Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.** An express allusion to the recent sin of the golden calf.

Ver. 18.—**The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep.** See ch. xxiii. 15, and compare chs. xii. 14—20, and xiii. 3—10. **The month Abib.** See the comment on ch. xiii. 4.

Vers. 19, 20.—**All that openeth the matrix is mine,** etc. This is a repetition of the command given in ch. xiii. 12, 13, which had not been inserted in the "Book of the Covenant." It is again enjoined in Lev. xxvii. 26, 27. **None shall appear before me empty.** Repeated from ch. xxiii. 15.

Ver. 21.—**Six days,** etc. This is repeated from the "Book of the Covenant" (ch. xxiii. 12), but with a remarkable addition—in **earring time and in harvest thou shalt rest.** "Earring time" is "ploughing time"—to "ear" being to "plough" in Old English, a word cognate with the Greek *ἀρο* and the Latin *aro*; and the command to rest both then and at harvest time is a command not to break the Sabbath rest at the seasons when it might seem most necessary so to do. The temptation to "save the harvest" is readily intelligible to Englishmen. To appreciate the other temptation, we require to know the peculiar circumstances of the East. It is necessary there to complete the ploughing before the spring rains are over. These last but a short time; and when they are once

past no rain can be looked for till the autumn.

Ver. 22.—**Of the first-fruits.** There is here an unfortunate ambiguity. The English reader naturally supposes that three festivals are mentioned—1. That of weeks; 2. That of the first-fruits of wheat harvest; and 3. That of in-gathering. But in reality the feast of weeks is that of the first-fruits of wheat harvest. See Lev. xxiii. 17; Num. xxviii. 26. The observance of this feast, as well as that of the feast of in-gathering, was commanded in the "Book of the Covenant" (ch. xxiii. 16).

Ver. 23.—**Thrice in the year.** Repeated from ch. xxiii. 17.

Ver. 24.—**I will . . . enlarge thy borders.** The original promise to Abraham was to give to his seed "the land of Canaan" (Gen. xii. 5—7). Afterwards this promise was enlarged, and he was told that the land assigned them was the entire tract between the Nile and the Euphrates (*ib.* xv. 18). And practically, they took possession first of the one, while at a later date their border was enlarged, and they became masters of the other. See 1 Kings iv. 21, 24; 2 Chron. ix. 26. **Neither shall any man desire thy land,** etc. This promise is nowhere else made. It would serve as a great encouragement to the proper observance of the festivals.

Ver. 25.—Repeated from ch. xxiii. 18.

Ver. 26.—Repeated from ch. xxiii. 19. It is remarkable that both legislations terminate with the same, somewhat strange, proviso. There must have been an intention of impressing strongly upon the people the principle of tenderness involved in it. (See the comment on ch. xxiii. 19.)

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 9—26.—*The covenant renewed.* That God should have consented to renew the covenant with Israel after it had been violated so flagrantly is evidence of two things: 1. His faithfulness towards his true followers, which makes him "merciful unto thousands of those that love him," and renders him tender to the children for the sake of the fathers; 2. The value that he sets on intercessory prayer, when offered earnestly by a believer. In the renewal itself we may notice:—

1. THAT THE PROMISES NOW MADE EXCEED ALL THOSE WHICH HAD BEEN MADE TO THE PEOPLE PREVIOUSLY. Leadership had been promised; help in driving out the nation had been promised; the possession of Canaan had been promised. But not "marvels such as had not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation" (ver. 10)—not an enlargement of the nation's boundaries beyond the limits of Canaan (ver. 24)—not security against their land being invaded when they went up to the three great festivals (*ibid.*). These, so far as the people were concerned, were new and additional pledges. God is apt "to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think." He ties himself down to perform certain promises; but he does not tie himself down not to do more than he has promised. He will give to man ultimately, not only more than he is bound to give, but more than "it has entered into the heart of man to conceive."

II. THAT THE PROHIBITIONS ARE IN SOME CASES MORE STRINGENT THAN BEFORE. According to the former covenant, idolatrous images were not to be spared; according to this neither images, nor altars, nor groves (ver. 13); according to that, the Sabbath rest was not to be infringed, as a general rule—according to this, not even on account of the most necessary operations of husbandry (ver. 21); according to that, treaties were not to be made with the Canaanitish nations—according to this, neither treaties nor matrimonial alliances. To balance the greater favours, there were imposed greater obligations, whereby was inculcated the lesson that the two are correlative.

III. THE PRECEPTS REIMPOSED WERE, IN ADDITION TO THE DECALOGUE, CHIEFLY THOSE CONNECTED WITH WORSHIP. It was the attraction of a corrupt worship which had caused Israel to fall away. Their best security against a second similar fall would be careful and constant observance of the pure worship prescribed to them. If they kept properly the Sabbath, the great festivals, the laws of sacrifice, of redemption, of first fruits, and whatever was similar to these, it might well content their religious aspirations, and leave no such vacuum in their lives as they had hoped to fill with their calf-worship. True, that many of the precepts could not be observed until they reached Canaan; but, as a compensation, they would have in the wilderness the daily worship—morning and evening—of the tabernacle, and the near presence of God in the pillar of the cloud, not henceforth to be withdrawn from them. The true spiritual life could be amply sustained on these—it was only a pseudo-spiritualism that the calf-worship would have exercised.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 10.—“*I make a covenant.*” I. A COVENANT RENEWED. Mark how in connection with this there is—(1) A new command to ascend the mount. (2) A new command that the mount shall not be touched. (3) A new manifestation of the Divine glory. Yet how different! (4) A new giving of the law. (5) A new rehearsal (in summary) of the “rights.” (6) A new fast of forty days and forty nights.

II. A COVENANT RENEWED ON THE BASIS OF INTERCESSION. We have even more than this—we have a “shadow of the Cross” (ch. xxxii. 32). Peace made by (1) mediation, (2) atonement, (3) intercession. The bestowal of the blessing on this ground—1. Prevented the people from looking lightly on sin, or from imagining that God looked lightly on it. 2. Conserved the Divine honour. 3. Gave a higher value to the gift. 4. Put honour upon Moses. 5. Taught that blessings can be won from God by intercession.—J. O.

Vers. 10—29.—*Revived obligations.* Former instructions are renewed; only, however, so far as relates to the duties of religion. Renewal of the civil code was not required. Subject to this limit, the new book of the covenant (ver. 27) revives, supplements, expands, and endorses the teachings and precepts of the old one. We have in it—

I. PROMISE (vers. 10, 11). God, as on the former occasion (ch. xxiii. 23—30), pledges himself to drive out all their enemies. The work would be—1. *Wonderful*—“Before all the people will I do marvels,” etc. 2. *Terrible*—“For it is a terrible thing which I will do with thee.” Men have passed the same judgment upon it. God however, called it terrible before they did. They should remember this when they build on it an objection to the Bible. God *can* do terrible things. 3. *Thorough*. The extirpation would be complete.

II. CAUTION (vers. 12—18). The Israelites were to beware of being snared into idolatry. To this end they were—1. *To make no league with the Canaanites*. “Evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Cor. xv. 33). 2. *To destroy all signs of their idolatrous worship*. No good comes of retaining in our midst that which can only be a snare to us. 3. *To avoid intermarriages*. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Cor. vi. 14).

III. COMMAND (vers. 18—27). The command relates to the three feasts. See former Homilies.—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

VERS. 27—35.—FINAL DESCENT OF MOSES FROM SINAI. The covenant having been renewed, Moses prepared to descend, having first however received a command to commit to writing the words of this second covenant (ver. 27). He received back the tables from God, inscribed with the Ten Commandments, and after a stay in Sinai of equal duration with the former one (ver. 28), descended, having the tables in his hands. He was not aware that the skin of his face had become radiant (ver. 29), and first learnt the fact by the rulers being afraid to come near him (ver. 30). After conversing with them and with the people he resolved to "put a veil on his face" ordinarily, only taking it off when he "went in before the Lord" into the "tent of meeting," and when, having received a message from the Lord to the people, he came out to deliver it.

Ver. 27.—Write thou these words. Literally, "write *thee* these words"—i.e., "write them for thyself and for thy people." According to the tenor of these words have I made a covenant. That is, "the covenant on my part is conditional on the observance of these words on the part of Israel." The "words" intended are those of vers. 10—26.

Ver. 28.—He was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights. As on the former occasion (ch. xxiv. 18). The patience and faith of the people was tested by this second long delay. Happily, they stood the test; and on Moses' final descent from Sinai the Israelites were found expectant and obedient (vers. 30—32). **He did neither eat bread nor drink water.** This was so also on the former occasion (Deut. ix. 9), though it is not mentioned in Exodus. The near presence of God sustained the vital powers and made food unnecessary. Moses, Elijah (1 Kings xix. 8), and our Lord have alone accomplished a fast of this duration. Modern parodies are not held by scientific men to belong to the category of established facts. **He wrote upon the tables.** It has been argued from this expression that Moses wrote the words on the second tables; and it would be natural so to understand the passage, had nothing else been said on the subject. But in ver. 1 we are told that "God said, I will write upon these tables:" and the same is repeated in Deut. x. 2. Moreover in Deut. x. 4, it is distinctly declared "He" (i.e. God) "wrote on the tables according to the first writing." We must therefore regard "he" in this passage as meaning "the Lord," which is quite possible according to the Hebrew idiom.

Ver. 29.—The skin of his face shone while

he talked with him. Rather, "through his talking with him." The glory of God, as revealed to Moses on this occasion, caused his face to become henceforth radiant. Compare the effect of the transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 2). The Vulgate wrongly translates *káran*, "to shine," as if it were derived from *keren*, "a horn"—whence the painters of mediæval times commonly represent Moses as horned. St. Paul's words (2 Cor. iii. 7) are conclusive as to the true meaning.

Ver. 30.—They were afraid. They shrank from Moses, as if he were more than man. (Compare Ezek. i. 28; Rev. i. 17.) Perhaps they thought that what they saw was his spirit.

Ver. 31.—Moses called unto them. Moses bade them approach—no doubt assured them that there was no cause for fear (cf. Luke xxiv. 38, 39)—and by his manner and familiar voice dispelled their fears and re-assured them. **Aaron and all the rulers . . . returned unto him.** Apparently, in their alarm they had drawn back. Being re-assured, they "returned."

Ver. 32.—All that the Lord had spoken. "All," i.e., "that the Lord had commanded him to enjoin upon them"—especially the precepts in vers. 10—26—not all that he had heard from God in the space of forty days and forty nights.

Vers. 33—36.—Till Moses had done speaking with them. The Hebrew text will not bear this rendering. All the ancient versions (LXX. Vulg. Syr. etc.) and the Targums agree that the meaning is—"when Moses had done speaking, he put a veil on his face." And this agrees with the plain meaning of vers. 34 and 35, which are to be taken connectedly. Moses first delivered his message with face unveiled, then he veiled himself, and thenceforth he wore a veil at all times except when he sought the Divine presence in the "tent of meeting" or the tabernacle, and when he delivered to the people any message sent them from God by him. He wore the veil ordinarily to prevent them from being dazzled. He took it off when he entered the tabernacle, that the Divine presence might shine fully on him and renew his strength. He kept it off when he returned, if he had any message to the people, until he had delivered it, in order the more fully to authenticate the message and shew to the people that it was from God. Then the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone (ver. 35). Having discharged himself of the message intrusted to him, he once more covered himself, and continued veiled until he again entered the tabernacle. The only objection that can be taken to this exegesis is derived from 2 Cor. iii. 7—16, which has been thought to imply that Moses wore the veil whenever he was in the sight of the people.

But the passage does not really assert any such thing. It is quite enough for the argument, that under the old covenant a veil had been worn to conceal some of its glory. This concealment St. Paul contrasts with the openness

of Christianity (vers. 13, 18): while at the same time he argues that it may be viewed as typical of that blindness and darkness which was characteristic of the Jewish nation of his day.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 29, 30, 35.—*The shining of Moses' face.* This strange phenomenon, one of the distinctive marks which most closely assimilate the Jewish with the Christian law-giver, is well worthy of our attentive consideration.

I. AS TO ITS ORIGIN. Admission to the Divine presence within the cloud had not, on the former occasion, left any such visible trace. It cannot, therefore, be ascribed simply to communion with God for a period of a certain duration. We must endeavour to see how the second sojourn in Sinai was differentiated from the first, if we would discover the real cause of the wonder. Now the difference was mainly this: that Moses in the interval had been severely tried, and had emerged from the trial better, purer, fitter for close intercourse with the Supreme. He had shown zeal, fervour, promptness, in checking the revolt against Jehovah; he had shown a spirit of extraordinary self-sacrifice in refusing to become the sole male progenitor of a people whom God would substitute for the existing Israel (ch. xxxii. 10), and in offering himself as an atonement for the people's sins (*ib.* 32); and he had shown that persistent importunity in kindly intercession for others (ch. xxxiii. 12—16) with which God is especially pleased. Under these circumstances—thus elevated above his former self—he had been admitted, not only to a second conference of forty days' duration, but also to a special vision—never vouchsafed to any but him—of the Divine glory (*ib.* 8—28; ch. xxxiv. 5, 6). The radiance that rested on his face is ascribed especially to his long "talk" with God (ver. 29); but we can scarcely doubt that a portion of it was due to the transcendent vision which passed before him prior to the forty days' conference. The brightness then shed upon his face increased from day to day during the long and close communion—closer now than before, from his greater fitness; and he, "with open face beholding the glory of the Lord, was changed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. iii. 18), until his countenance was such that it could not be steadfastly beheld for long; and he, in mercy to his people, veiled it.

II. AS TO ITS EFFECT. 1. Its immediate effect was to alarm. "Aaron and the elders were afraid to come nigh him." The unknown and unexpected is always fearful to man; and this was a novelty which might well startle. What did the sight portend? Certainly, an increase of supernatural power. Would this power be used to punish and avenge? Would the radiance burn like fire, or scathe like the thunder-bolt? They could not tell. Knowing their own sinfulness, they trembled, conscience making cowards of them, as it does of us all. And they feared to approach—nay, they drew back—perhaps fled. 2. Its after effect was to increase Moses' authority. The glow was a perpetual credential of his Divine mission. Like the moon, it witnessed, whenever seen, to the absent sun. Always beheld, whenever Moses had any new orders to give, it was a sanction to his entire legislation, and caused the laws which were least palatable to be accepted without resistance. Though it did not prevent partial revolts, it kept the bulk of the nation faithful to their leader for forty years. Even when they did not see the brightness, the veil that hid it showed that it was there. Its presence could never be forgotten. Moses was exalted by it into a condition half-Divine, half-human; and was felt to be marked out by Heaven as the supreme chief of the nation.

III. AS TO ITS INTENT. Its intent would seem to have been—1. To strengthen and support Moses in his difficult position as leader of a wayward and "stiff-necked" people. 2. To impress the people, and render them more submissive and obedient. (See the preceding section.) 3. To symbolise the great truth, that by drawing near to God, by communion with him, we become like him—like him and ever more like; changing "from glory to glory," reflecting his attributes, as snow-summits reflect the sunset; receiving from him a real effluence, which shows itself in our lives, in our acts, in our very features. There is in the countenances of God's most advanced servants a brightness, a gladness, a beaming radiance, which can come only of long communion with him, and which is a sensible evidence, to those who "have eyes to see," that they are

indeed his friends, his favoured ones. The best artists—Perugino, Francia, Raffaello sometimes, Fra Angelico, Fra Bartolomeo, Bellini, Luini, Basaiti—express this in their pictures. But it is not a grace that has passed away. The eye that has true spiritual vision may still see among those who walk the earth faces with such an unmistakable glow of true piety upon them as marks their owners for God's friends, Christ's loved ones, souls constant in their communion with him who is "the Light of the world," and "in whose light we shall see light."

Vers. 33—35.—*The symbolism of the veil.* The veil upon Moses' face shrouded the glory of his countenance from Israel, except at such times as he spake to them the commands of God. So God himself shrouds his glory from us ordinarily, and only at rare intervals, when he would impress us most deeply, lifts the veil and lets the brightness flash forth. So Christ, when he came on earth, emptied himself of the glory which he had with the Father, hid it away, and seldom let it be seen. Tenderness and compassion for man's weakness is the cause of the concealment in such case. Human nature, while we are in the flesh, cannot bear the blinding light of Divine glory, any more than the eye can bear to gaze upon the noonday sun. The veil was thus, primarily, a token of Moses' love for Israel; but it was also a token of many other things besides; e.g.—

I. OF THE DARKNESS AND MYSTERY IN WHICH DIVINE TRUTH WAS SHROUDED UNDER THE MOSAICAL DISPENSATION. The Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, Justification, Sanctification, even Immortality—all the great doctrines which constitute the heart and kernel of true religion, though in a certain sense contained in Mossaism, were concealed, hidden away, wrapt in a veil. Men "saw through a glass darkly" fewer or more of these truths—had, that is, some dim conception of them, but saw none of them clearly till they were "brought to light" by the Gospel. "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for *mine eyes have seen thy salvation*," said holy Simeon, when he looked upon the Lord, then first having made plain to him what had been darkness and cloud previously. Much of the Divine scheme of man's salvation had been a mystery even to angels until it was revealed to them by and through the Church (Eph. iii. 4—10). When Christ came, and lived, and preached, "the people which sat in darkness saw great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light sprang up" (Matt. iv. 16). A solemn thought to Christians that this is so; for responsibility is in proportion to the light vouchsafed. "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?" (Heb. x. 28, 29).

II. OF THE BLINDNESS WHICH LIES PERMANENTLY UPON THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF THE JEWS. The veil of obstinate unbelief has so shrouded, and still so shrouds, the intelligence of the race, that, though Moses is read to them every Sabbath day, and the words of the prophets are continually sounded in their ears, they cannot see or understand. Still they remain "fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke xxiv. 25). Like the Ethiopian eunuch, they "understand not what they read" (Acts viii. 31); but, unlike him, they will not accept guidance. "The veil is upon their heart" (2 Cor. iii. 15). Christians should ever pray that the time may come, and come speedily, when "the veil shall be taken away" (ib. 16), and so "all Israel be saved" (Rom. xi. 26). Hopeless as the task seems, Christians should still labour for the conversion of the eight millions of Jews dispersed throughout the world. Christians should beware lest they themselves, by their sinful lives, intensify and prolong the blindness of Israel, pressing the veil down upon the brows that otherwise might have cast it off, and dimming the brightness of the Gospel of Christ that otherwise might have pierced through the veil's folds, and have given sight to the shrouded eyes.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 29—35.—*The shining face.* Consider—

- I. THE SHINING OF MOSES' FACE (vers. 29, 30). (1) A result of personal communion.
- (2) A symbol of the glory of his dispensation (2 Cor. iii. 7). (3) A foreshadowing of the

transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 1—8). (4) Partly a consequence of inward mental exaltation (cf. Acts vi. 15). Communion with God, vision of Jesus, the joy of salvation, fullness of spiritual life, make both face and character to shine (cf. 2 Cor. iii. 18).

II. THE FEAR OF THE PEOPLE (ver. 30). The beauty of the glory had something of terror in it. Symbol of the dispensation—"a ministration of death" (2 Cor. iii. 7). See sermon by Dr. John Ker on Moses and Stephen—"The Old Testament and the New" ("Sermons," p. 170).

III. THE VEIL (vers. 31—33). The notable fact is that Moses did not veil his face during the time when veiling might seem to be most required, viz., while speaking to the people. The commandments were delivered with the face unveiled. When he had "done" speaking, Moses put this screen before it. The act, therefore, must be taken as symbolic. A symbol—1. *Of the veiled character of the dispensation*—types, carnal ordinances, "broken lights," etc. Its "end" was not manifest. 2. *(Of the veiled hearts of the people.* This kept them from perceiving even what might have been seen (cf. 2 Cor. iii. 12—18). The Gospel, in contrast with the law, is an unveiled system (2 Cor. iii. 14). Preachers of the gospel, bearing this in mind, should use "great plainness of speech" (vers. 11, 12). The later system provides further for the removal of the veil from the heart (vers. 16, 17). It ministers "the Spirit."

IV. THE VEIL TAKEN OFF ON ENTERING THE SANCTUARY (vers. 34, 35). "When Moses went in before the Lord," etc. Again symbolic—1. *Of what is necessary for the removal of the veil from the heart.* It must "turn to the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 16). The instant it does so the veil will be taken away (ver. 16). 2. *Of the privilege of Christian believers.* They are admitted to gaze "with unveiled face" on the "glory of the Lord" (ver. 18).

V. RESEMBLANCES AND CONTRASTS. Compare and contrast the privilege of Moses with that now enjoyed by believers in Christ (2 Cor. iii. 18). 1. *Resemblances.* (1) Both have a vision of the divine glory. (2) Both are admitted to gaze upon it with face "unveiled." (3) On both the vision exercises a transforming influence. (4) Both must "go in" to the divine presence in order to obtain it. 2. *Contrasts.* (1) It is a *higher* glory which is revealed in Christ. (2) That, the privilege of *one* man; *this*, the privilege of *all*—"we all." (3) That, an external transfiguration; this, spiritual. (4) That, a transitory glory; this, permanent and progressive. "From glory to glory."—J. O.

Vers. 29—35.—*The shining of Moses' face.* I. THE PHENOMENON ITSELF. The skin of Moses' face shone. As to the precise manner of this shining, it is of course vain to speculate; but we may be tolerably certain it was not anything in the way of a mere reflection from a mirror. It must surely have been the shining out for a little while of some glorious gift which had entered, if one may say so, into the bodily constitution of Moses. There may be some connection of this glory with the miraculous sustaining of his life without the eating of bread, or the drinking of water. Thus we are led to consider what wondrous capabilities there may be in matter, capabilities beyond our present knowledge to conceive. Even with unorganised matter, man himself has been able to do much. And the God of the physical universe has shown us how many wonders, beauties, and enjoyments rise out of matter under the power of vital action. Think of all that is exquisite in form, colour, and fragrance in plant-life. Think of the refinement which distinguishes the face of a cultivated man from that of some embrowned savage. Think of that best of all charms visible in the face of one who is truly good. Then think, on the other side, of the degradations of matter. Think of the physical results of sottishness and sensuality. Think of the putrescence and corruption which seem to dominate a body when its principle of life has passed away. We shall then feel how, beyond anything we can at present conceive, there may be on the one hand an exaltation of matter, and on the other a degradation of it.

II. THE UNCONSCIOUSNESS OF MOSES. He wist not that the skin of his face shone in this way. Of some change within him during the time when he was with God in the mount, he was doubtless conscious. He may have felt himself getting a clearer view of Jehovah's purposes, and a heartier fellow-feeling with respect to them. He may have felt himself conscious of a remarkable approach to inward holiness and purity; but of this outward and visible expression of it he knew nothing at all. That which was

intolerable to his deeply-polluted brethren, so much alienated in heart from God, was utterly unperceived by him. Thus effectually separated from his brethren, the separation came from no pretension of his own, but from an inevitable confession made by those who once and again tried to repudiate him. He who is filled with the spirit of God becomes more glorious than he can imagine. And from those who live near to God, we may be sure there goes out an influence, which, though they themselves be utterly unconscious of it, is yet most mighty in its effect on others. As Moses came down from the mountain, he would be anxiously thinking how he could convey to the people some sense of that which he himself had been privileged to see. He may have despaired of putting into words the impression made on his mind; but now behold God has taken the matter into his own hands. When we take care to keep right *Godwards*, God will take care that we are kept right and powerful *manwards*. Our greatest impression upon men is to be made, not by that which we are labouring to achieve, but by that which we achieve unconsciously, when we become as much as possible mere instruments of the wisdom and power coming from above.

III. THE CONDUCT OF THE PEOPLE. It is not made clear as to whether the people were unable to gaze upon the splendour of Moses' face through the excess of light which radiated thence, or whether they were filled with superstitious terror because one who hitherto had looked but as themselves had become so changed in appearance. Probably the latter way of accounting for their conduct comes nearest to the truth. They were afraid of Moses, much as the disciples were of Jesus when they saw him walking on the lake and thought it was an apparition. Hence we have another instance of how men, whom God made to be so near to him, yet through their alienation from him, and constant immersion in earthly concerns, start back when there is some overwhelming manifestation of the unearthly and the divine. Presence of mind is lost just when presence of mind would be most helpful. Moses put on the veil in necessary toleration of human weakness; but we should always read of such necessities with a feeling of humiliation. In only too many things these ungodly Israelites are our representatives. God, who is our benefactor, cannot reveal himself in all his glory, because of our weakness. When God honoured and enriched the mediator Moses by putting a divine splendour into his countenance, as he came down among men with the laws of a holy and a happy life, this very splendour became a cause of abject terror rather than of confidence and gladness. Yet when the final Mediator came, full of grace and truth, men rushed to the other extreme. They could see no divinity and authority, and in their contempt and presumption, put the Mediator to death. It is very difficult for men to make a right estimate of the outward shows of things.—Y.

Vers. 28—35.—*Fellowship with God and its fruits.* I. COMMUNION WITH GOD.

1. The length of his sojourn—forty days and forty nights. Time sped unmarked in the presence and fellowship of God. The future glory an untiring joy. The redeemed serve him day and night in his temple. 2. Lower wants were forgotten: "he did neither eat bread nor drink water." The need of the body was unfelt in the satisfying of the desires of the spirit. "In thy presence is fulness of joy." To escape from temptation we have only to enter into the presence of God and to let the eye rest upon his glory.

II. MAN GLORIFIED THROUGH COMMUNION. 1. The descent of Moses, radiant with the glory of God, the type of Jesus in his coming again the second time without sin unto salvation. 2. A prophecy of the after glory of them who believe. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." 3. An example of the present glory of those who have fellowship with him who is light. We are "light in the Lord." 4. Its effect upon the worldly and the sinful. They were afraid to come nigh. It awakens conscience. It proves the reality of the Unseen. It reveals the distance between the soul and God.

III. THE VEILING OF MOSES' FACE. He was unconscious of the glory: "he wist not that his face shone." The vision of God is ever accompanied with lowly self-judgment. 2. It was not worn ostentatiously. We may not boast of our nearness to God. Vanity in the Divine life is an impossibility. 3. The glory was veiled in accordance with the dispensation which alone these men were able to receive. The whole law with its types

and shadows was a veiling of the sun of righteousness, and the redemption glory. We must meet men where they are that they may be led to God. The Apostle who spoke "wisdom among them that were perfect" knew how to give milk also to babes in Christ and to speak to the carnal.—U.

Ver. 29.—*Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.*—His face "shone"—literally, "shot out rays"—as we say, was *irradiated*, became *radiant*. Notice: I. THE CAUSE OF THE PHENOMENON. "Talked with him." Self had been forgotten in communion with Jehovah, in hearing him and attending to his utterances. It is from such communion as this that the radiant countenance results. 1. *What the communion is.* God a Spirit. Communion must be spiritual. The fleshly face cannot directly reflect spiritual light, that light "which never was on sea or land." Spirit is kindled by spirit, the human by the Divine, when spirit meets with spirit and realizes the sympathy which exists between them. 2. *What the communion does.* The illuminated spirit, reflecting God, kindled into brilliancy by his light, cannot but shine out through the fleshly envelope which shrouds it. [Illustration: As opaque porcelain shade to lamp, so is the body to the spirit; light the lamp, illuminate the spirit, and the shade, in either case, becomes radiant.] If you would have a happy face, a radiant countenance, you must first have an illuminated spirit. That can only be gained from the Fount of light in and through communion with God.

II. UNCONSCIOUSNESS OF THE SUBJECT OF THE PHENOMENON. "Wist not." His face was radiant, but Moses knew nothing of it. His mind was so full of God that his attention was drawn off from all thought of his appearance. Notice: 1. *All sincerity forgets egotism* (F. W. Robertson). Attention is a fixed quantity; to fix it on God is to draw it off from self [cf. a lock on a river; open the flood-gates of communion and the level of self-love is soon lowered]. 2. *Radiancy cannot be obtained by trying for it.* If aim in prayer is to increase self-glory, it cannot succeed. God first; God all in all; then comes the illumination, and the light flows forth. Self lost in God [cf. wick saturated with oil] before we can ray out the light of God. How many selfish prayers are offered, and the countenances of those who offer them are often anything but radiant! The puritanical cast of countenance repels by its gloom rather than by its brilliancy. The best prayer is that which rises from communion; which seeks first, as in Christ's model prayer, that God's name may be hallowed, and his kingdom come, and his will be done, before going on further to seek satisfaction for personal needs.

Conclusion.—Do you want to have a radiant face? The best way is not to think about it. Lose self, as Moses did, in communion with God; then your face will be radiant, though you know it not.—G.

SECTION XVII.—CHAPTERS XXXV.—XL.

THE CONSTRUCTION AND UPREARING OF THE TABERNACLE.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Vers. 1—3.—ITERATION OF THE LAW CONCERNING THE SABBATH. The work commanded during the time of Moses' first stay upon Sinai (ch. xxv.—xxxi.), and hindered first by the infraction (ch. xxxii.), and then by the renewal (chs. xxxiii., xxxiv.) of the covenant, was now about to commence under the direction of Moses, who alone knew what was to be constructed. Before giving his orders upon the matter, he assembled the people (ver. 1)

and once more recited to them in a solemn manner the law of the sabbath (ver. 2), adding to the general law a special injunction concerning the kindling of fire (ver. 3), which may have been required by some recent breach of the law in this respect. The iteration of a command, already so often enjoined upon the people (ch. xvi. 23—30; xx. 8—11; xxiii. 12; xxxi. 13—17), is best accounted for by the consideration, that a caution was needed, lest the people, in their zeal to hurry on the work of the tabernacle,

and regarding that work as a sacred one, and so exceptional, might be tempted to infractions of the law, or even to an entire neglect of it, while the work was in progress.

Ver. 1.—**All the congregation.** All the Israelites were to be allowed the privilege of making offerings for the tabernacle (ch. xxv. 2—7), and all who were competent might take part in the spinning and the weaving of the materials for the curtains and the holy vestments (chs. xxviii. 3; xxxv. 10, 25; xxxvi. 4, etc.). All therefore had to be summoned, to learn what was required. **These are the words, etc.—i.e.,** “These are the injunctions especially laid upon you at this time.”

Ver. 2 is almost a repetition of ch. xxxi. 15.

Ver. 3.—**Ye shall kindle no fire.** The kindling of fire in early times involved con-

siderable labour. It was ordinarily effected by rubbing two sticks together, or twisting one round rapidly between the two palms in a depression upon a board. Fire only came after a long time. Moreover, as in the warm climate of Arabia and Palestine artificial warmth was not needed, fire could only have been kindled there for cooking purposes, which involved further unnecessary work, and had already been forbidden (ch. xvi. 28). The Karaite Jews still maintain the observance of this precept to the letter, even in cold climates, as in that of the Crimea, and allow neither fire nor light in their houses on the sabbath day; but the Jews generally view the precept as having had only a temporary force, and have lights and fires, like other persons, even in Palestine. Strict Jews, however, still cook no food on the sabbath day.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The sabbath rest not to be broken even for sacred work.* Note here a difference. Some work is rendered necessary by the very nature of that public worship which is especially commanded on the sabbath. “On the sabbath days the priests in the temple,” says our Lord, “profane the sabbath day and are blameless” (Matt. xii. 5). Offering sacrifice was a heavy work—cleansing the altar and its precincts after sacrifice was perhaps a heavier one—reading aloud, teaching, preaching are works, the last-named to many a most exhausting work. Against such kinds of work there is no law. But physical toil, not needed for Divine worship, and so not necessary to be undergone on the sabbath day, stands on a different footing, and was forbidden, at any rate to the Jews. The spinning, weaving, dying, embroidering, carpentering, metallurgy, which occupied hundreds during the rest of the week, were to cease upon the sabbath. Men were not to consider that the fact of the purpose whereto the fabrics were about to be applied so sanctified the making of them as to render that a fit occupation for the “day of holy rest”—of “rest to the Lord.”

Application.—Christians will do well to apply the lesson to themselves, and not allow themselves in occupations, on their “day of holy rest,” which are really secular, because it may be argued that they have, in some respects, a sacred aspect. To play sacred music, for the excitation of devotional feelings in themselves and others, is a fitting Sunday occupation; but to practise Handel as an exercise, for the acquirement of skill in execution, would be no better than to practise Rossini or Auber. To write articles for the press on Sundays, if otherwise wrong, is not justified by the fact that they are written for a “religious” newspaper. To cast up accounts does not become a right act because they are the accounts of a charity. Whatever our rule of Sunday observance, let us beware of evading it under the excuse that our employment has a connection with religion when it is essentially secular in its character.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*The new start.* Moses’ second absence, though, like the first, it lasted forty days and forty nights (ch. xxxiv. 28), was not followed by the same disastrous effects as the former one. The people had meantime had enough of “gods of gold.” They were too frightened at what had happened to think of seeking out any more “inventions” (Eccles. vii. 29). They were penitent and well disposed. When at length the news came that God had forgiven them, no bounds could be set to their zeal for service. Learn—1. How God brings good out of evil. The Divine physician so treated the distemper of the people that it ended, not simply in restored health, but in increased vitality and energy. The lapse into sin was made the means of imparting to the

people the stimulus necessary for the erection of the tabernacle. 2. That revival of religion evinces its reality by the effects which it produces. (1) Willingness to hear. "I will hear what God the Lord will speak" (Ps. lxxxv. 8). Happy would it have been for Israel had it not "turned again to folly." (2) Willingness to give. Liberality in the Lord's service. (3) Willingness to work. The joy of salvation cannot better spend itself than in the doing of the work of the Lord's kingdom. Willing hearts, ready hands. On the injunction to keep the sabbath, see Homily on ch. xxxi. 12—18. —J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 4—20.—THE PEOPLE INVITED TO BRING GIFTS, AND ASSIST IN THE WORK OF THE TABERNACLE. Having warned the Israelites against breaches of the sabbath, Moses proceeded to enumerate the offerings which God had said that they might bring (vers. 4—9), and the works which he had required to be constructed (vers. 10—19). In the former enumeration, he follows exactly the order and wording of the Divine command to himself, as recorded in ch. xxv. 3—7; in the latter, he changes the order, mentioning first the building, with its component parts (ver. 11), then the contents of the building (vers. 12—15), then the court with its contents (vers. 16, 17) together with some details which had been omitted in the former account (ver. 18), and finally the holy garments (ver. 19). After hearing him, the people returned to their several tents (ver. 20).

Vers. 5—10 correspond to vers. 2—7 of ch. xxv., the correspondence in the list of offerings being exact.

Ver. 11.—On the tabernacle, see ch. xxvi. 1—6; on the tent, *ib.* 7—13; on the cover-

ing, *ib.* 14; the boards, *ib.* 15—25; the bars, *ib.* 26—29; the pillars, *ib.* 32—37; and the sockets, *ib.* 19, 21, 25, 32, and 37. The enumeration comprises all the main parts of which the tabernacle consisted.

Ver. 12.—On the ark and the staves thereof, see ch. xxv. 10—15; on the mercy-seat, *ib.* 17—22; on the vail of the covering, see ch. xxvi. 31.

Ver. 13.—On the table and its appurtenances, see ch. xxv. 23—30.

Ver. 14.—For the candlestick, its furniture, and its lamps, compare ch. xxv. 31—39.

Ver. 15.—The incense altar. See ch. xxx. 1—10. His staves. See ch. xxx. 5. The anointing oil is described in the same chapter, vers. 23—25; the sweet incense in vers. 34, 35; the hangings for the door in ch. xxvi. 36.

Ver. 16 is a reference to ch. xxvii. 1—8, ch. xxx. 18—21. Ver. 17 to ch. xxvii. 9—18.

Ver. 18.—The pins of the tabernacle and the court had not been previously mentioned. They must be regarded as tent-pegs, whereto were attached the cords which kept taut the covering of the tent over the tabernacle, and which steadied the pillars whereto the hangings of the court were fastened.

Ver. 19.—The cloths of service. See the comment on ch. xxxi. 10.

HOMILETICS.

On the symbolism of the Tabernacle and its parts, see the Homiletics on ch. xxv. 10—39; ch. xxvi.; ch. xxvii. 1—8; and ch. xxx. 1—10. On the symbolism of the anointing oil and the holy incense, see the Homiletics on ch. xxx. 23—28.

Vers. 5—19.—*The duty and privilege of making offerings to God.* That God allows us to offer to him of his own, and accepts such offerings as free gifts, is one of his many gracious condescensions. It is the part of all ministers to give opportunity for such offerings—to encourage them, suggest them, elicit them. Moses now summoned "all the congregation of the children of Israel," that he might give to all, without partiality or favouritism, the opportunity for a good action, which would obtain its due reward. Doubtless he pointed out that the object was one for the glory of God and the edification of his people—no less an object than the substitution for that poor "tent of meeting," which he had extemporised on the morrow of his first descent from Sinai (ch. xxxiii. 7), of a glorious structure, of the richest materials, designed by God himself, worthy of him, and suited to intensify and spiritualise the devotions of all worshippers. It was fit that the structure should, if possible, be raised by means of the free gifts of the faithful. For this Moses now, like a faithful minister of Christ, made appeal to all. In doing so, he pointed out the two modes in which such offerings may be made.

I. OFFERINGS MAY BE MADE BY THE ASSIGNMENT TO A SACRED USE OF A PORTION OF OUR SUBSTANCE. All who had gold, silver, brass, blue, purple, scarlet, fine linen, goat's

hair, etc., were invited to contribute out of their abundance to the erection of the new sanctuary. It was especially urged that, if they did so, it should be with "a willing heart" (ver. 1)—"not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. ix. 7). Such a mode of offering is open to those only who have property of some kind or other, and is especially suited to the rich and well-to-do classes; and it was no doubt the wealthy who at this time chiefly contributed in this way. But, as God is "no respecter of persons," and regards the poor and needy fully as much as those who are of high estate, some further mode of making him an offering is necessary. Note, in this connection, that—

II. OFFERINGS MAY BE MADE BY THE DEVOTION TO A SACRED USE OF SOME PORTION OF OUR TIME AND LABOUR. "Every wise-hearted among you shall come, and make all that the Lord hath commanded" (ver. 10). All who had sufficient skill were invited to join in the actual work of preparing and making the various fabrics. Carpenters, weavers, dyers, smiths, embroiderers, metallurgists, might contribute their time and work, and so make an offering to God as acceptable as that of the gold or jewels of the wealthy. Even poor women, whose only skill was to spin thread with their hands (ver. 25), might "bring that which they had spun," and were accepted as offering worthily. In this way there were few families that might not have their part in the work, for spinning was a wide-spread accomplishment. And so, in our own day, whenever any good work is taken in hand, it will always be found that every one who wills can have some part in it—can help, by headwork or by handiwork, to effect the end desired. And the value of such participation is quite equal to that rendered by rich contributors, at any rate, in the sight of God. For observe, the women who spun goat's hair are placed side by side with the "rulers" who "brought onyx stones," and costly spices, and jewels to be set in the high-priest's breastplate (vers. 26—28).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 4—ch. xxxvi. 8.—*Gifts and workers*. Learn from this section that the Lord's work requires—

I. **LIBERAL GIVERS**. Almost everything needed for the sanctuary was provided by the free gifts of the people. What was required was readily forthcoming. The only exception to the voluntariness of the givings was the half-shekel of atonement money (chs. xxx. 11—17; xxxviii. 25, 26). These givings, which may well be made the model of our own, were: 1. Willing—"Every one whose heart stirred him up, and whom his spirit made willing" (ver. 21). The Lord "loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. ix. 7). 2. According to ability. Each gave as he was able (vers. 23—29). The princes gave costly gifts. Others brought silver and brass. Others gave wood. Those who could not give anything else gave work (vers. 25, 26). 3. Universal. All classes gave. The princes, the people, young and old, men and women. 4. Overflowing. So zealous was the spirit of the people, and so abundant were their gifts, that they had in the end to be restrained (ch. xxxvi. 5—7). When will a like liberality be manifested in the cause of Christ? Liberal givings are needed. There is still much land to be possessed at home. Heathen lands are opening to the Gospel. 5. It sufficed for the work (ch. xxxvi. 7). Thus would God teach us that it is his will that his work should be supported by the voluntary contributions of his people. 6. The giving was made an act of worship—"Every man that offered, offered an offering (*lit.* a wave-offering) of gold unto the Lord" (ver. 22). "Every one that did offer an offering of silver and brass brought the Lord's offering" (ver. 24). This is the true spirit of religious giving. The humblest offering, thus presented, will not fail of acceptance. Cf. the widow with her two mites (Mark xii. 41—44).

II. **WILLING WORKERS** (ch. xxxvi. 1, 2). The work, like the giving, was hearty. Those only were asked to engage in this work whose hearts stirred them up to do it. God desires no other kind of workers.

III. **DIVERSE GIFTS**. These were needed for the different parts of the work. The man who made the "pin" (ver. 18) was as truly a worker in God's service, as Bezaleel, who drew the plans. He had his own gift and use.

IV. **THE WISDOM OF THE SPIRIT**. "He hath filled him with the spirit of God" (ver. 31). "Them hath he filled with wisdom of heart," etc. (ver. 35).—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 21—29.—THE ZEAL OF THE PEOPLE IN OFFERING. Moses dismissed the people; but they soon began to return, bringing their offerings with them. There was a general, if not a universal, willingness. Men and women alike "brought bracelets (brooches?), and earrings, and rings, and armlets—all articles of gold," and offered them to the Lord (ver. 22). Others brought blue and purple and scarlet and fine linen, and goats' hair and rams' skins dyed red, and badger (or rather, seal) skins (ver. 23). Silver and bronze and shittimwood were contributed by others (ver. 24). The women, who were the only spinners, brought their spun yarn of blue and purple and scarlet and fine linen, and their yarn of goats' hair (vers. 25, 26); while the richest class of all—"the rulers"—gave, as their contribution, the onyx stones for the ephod, the jewels for the high-priest's breastplate, and the oil needed for the light, together with rare spices for the anointing ointment and the incense (vers. 27, 28). Subsequently, we are told that what was contributed was "much more than enough" (ch. xxxvi. 5), and that the people had to be "restrained from bringing" (*ibid.* 6).

Ver. 21.—The Lord's offering—i.e., "their offering to Jehovah." For all his service. The use of "his" for "its" causes an unfortunate ambiguity here. The antecedent to the pronoun is not the Lord, but the tabernacle.

Ver. 22.—They came, both men and women. That among the Hebrews gold ornaments were worn by men, as well as by women, is indicated by ch. iii. 22, and ch. xxxii. 2. The Egyptian men at the time of the Exodus wore armlets, bracelets, and sometimes anklets, but not often earrings. Earrings, however, had been worn by the household of

Jacob (Gen. xxxv. 2). **Bracelets.** Rather, "buckles" or "brooches." Kalisch says, "nose-rings," and so Gesenius and Rosenmüller. **Tablets.** Rather, "armlets" (Furst, Cook), or perhaps "necklaces" (Gesenius, Kalisch, Knobel). **Every man that offered, offered an offering of gold.** It is not meant that every man who offered anything gave with it an offering of gold, but simply that, besides those who brought the articles named there were others who brought gold offerings of some different kind.

Ver. 23.—Red skins of rams. The words are the same as those translated "rams' skins dyed red" in ch. xxv. 5. The earlier rendering is the better one. **Badger skins.** Rather, "seal skins." See the comment on ch. xxv. 5.

Ver. 24.—Every one that did offer an offering of silver. It would seem that silver was offered by some in the way of a free-will offering, in addition to the compulsory half-shekel (ch. xxx. 12—16). Curiously, however, the amount obtained in this way is not given in ch. xxxviii. 24—29.

Ver. 25.—All the women that were wise-hearted—i.e., "skilful." See the comment on ch. xxviii. 3. **Brought that which they had spun, both of blue, etc.** The flax itself was dyed, so that the thread produced was already coloured. **Of fine linen—i.e., "white."** All the threads were flaxen.

Ver. 26.—All the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom. This strong expression seems to imply that *peculiar* skill was required for spinning goats' hair.

Vers. 27, 28.—The rulers are, no doubt, the "elders" of ch. iii. 16; iv. 29; xxiv. 9, etc. Moses had made them "rulers," or rather, "princes" (*sárey*), according to the advice of Jethro (ch. xviii. 25). They brought **onyx stones** for the ephod (ch. xxviii. 9—12) and **stones to be set, i.e., gems** for the breastplate (*ibid.* 17—20); oil of olive for the lamp (ch. xxvii. 20) and the holy ointment (ch. xxix. 24), and **spice** for the same (*ibid.* 23, 24) and for the incense (*ibid.* 34).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 21—29.—Zeal in offering. Appeals are made to men, in all parts of the world, and in all ages, for material contributions towards the erection of structures in which God is to be worshipped. The spirit in which such appeals are met varies. (1) Occasionally, they are met in a scoffing spirit. "What, your God needs a house, and cannot build one for himself! He must beg contributions, put out a subscription list! And for what? To make a huge building, which will be of no practical use—not a school, not a hospital, not a corn-exchange, but a Church! Catch us giving anything!" Or (2) it is met in a grudging spirit. "Why is so much required? What need is there for so large a building, or for such rich ornament, or for such architectural dis-

play?" And the general inclination is to give as little as it is decent to give. Or (3) it is met in a fussy spirit. "Let the matter be well considered—let meetings be held—let a committee be formed—let our advice be taken. If we give, we must be consulted—we must have a voice in the arrangements—we must examine the plans and express our opinion upon them. Then perhaps we may head the subscription-list with something handsome." Very different was the spirit which now animated the Israelites, and which is here held up for our imitation. Their response to the appeal made to them by Moses was—

I. DEVOUT. None objected. None asked why a tabernacle was wanted, or why the tent which Moses had made a place of worship would not suffice. None scoffed at the idea of a "House of God." All seemed to see the propriety of it. All felt that what they brought was "the Lord's offering" (vers. 21, 24)—a real gift to Jehovah. All longed to have a place of worship of a worthy character.

II. UNGRUDGING AND SPONTANEOUS. Their "hearts stirred them up," their "spirits made them willing" (ver. 21). They "brought a willing offering unto the Lord" (ver. 29). The rich brought jewels and precious spices; the men and women of the middle class brought their personal ornaments; the poor men gave brass, or silver, or a ram's skin, or a piece of acacia wood; the poor women gave the labour of their hands, and spun thread for the hangings. There was no murmuring, no complaining, no fabrication of excuses—so far as appears, no open refusing to give, though there was some abstinence.

III. IMMEDIATE. In one verse we read "they departed" (ver. 20), in the next (ver. 21) "they came." There was no delay, no considering, no discussing one with another, no asking "How much do you intend to give?" Each man seemed to be well persuaded of the truth of the adage—"Bis dat qui cito dat," and brought his offering at once.

IV. UNSELFISH AND UNCONDITIONAL. No one wanted to have a *quid pro quo* as the condition of his giving. No one asked to "see the plans." All were willing to leave the ordering of the work to Moses, and put their contributions absolutely in his hands. A spirit of enthusiasm was stirred up, and none thought of anything but how much he could possibly spare for the grand work which they understood Moses to contemplate. The wealth of Easterns is stored chiefly in the form of ornaments, and to denude themselves of these was a great effort of self-sacrifice.

EXPOSITION.

VERS. 30—35.—THE APPOINTMENT OF BEZALEEL AND AHOIAB TO SUPERINTEND THE WORK. Though, in some real sense, "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," still Moses was probably devoid of the technical knowledge requisite for a "superintendent of the works" on the present occasion. At any rate, his other duties imperatively required that he should decline to undertake, in addition to them, so onerous an office. And God had told him whom it would be best for him to set over the work (ch. xxxi. 1—6). Accordingly, he now made known to the people that the construction of the tabernacle and its appurtenances would be committed to two men—Bezaleel, the son of Uri, as principal, and Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, as his assistant—who would "teach" those under them what they were to do (ver. 34)

Ver 30—The Lord hath called. etc See

ch. xxxi. 2:—"I have called by name Bezaleel," etc. Of the tribe of Judah. The descent of Bezaleel from Judah has been already traced. (See the comment on ch. xxxi. 2.)

VERS. 31—33—Correspond almost word for word with vers. 3—5 of ch. xxxi., *q. vide*.

VER. 34.—And he hath put in his heart that he may teach. Rather, "And he hath put it into his heart to teach." He (God) has given him the gift of being able to teach others, and so has enabled him to form a body of workmen competent to carry out his conceptions. Both he and Aholiab. God has given the same gift to Aholiab. On the special talent of Aholiab, see the comment upon ch. xxxi. 6.

VER. 35.—Them hath he filled with wisdom of heart—i.e., "with talent or genius." Of the engraver. Rather, "of the artificer," a general term, under which working in metal, gem-engraving, and wood-carving are included. And of the cunning workman. Rather, "and of the skilful weaver." This clause seems to apply to Aholiab (ch xxxviii

23), the preceding one to Bezaleel. **And of the embroiderer.** This also applies to Aholiab (I.s.c.). **And of the weaver**—i.e., “the ordinary weaver,” who wove a cloth all of one colour. The “skilful weaver” produced a patterned fabric. (See ch. xxvi. 1.) The methods of working here spoken of are, all of them, such as were well known in Egypt at the time, and which, consequently, it would

have been quite natural for some of the Israelites to have learnt. We are not to suppose that God superaturally communicated to Bezaleel and Aholiab the technical knowledge required in their occupations, but only that he gave them genius and artistic skill, so that both their designs, and their execution of them, were of unusual excellence.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 30—35.—MASTER-CRAFTSMEN. The qualities needed for a master-craftsman are fourfold. These are here enumerated (ver. 31) as—

I. WISDOM (Heb. *khâkam*; LXX. *σοφία*; Vulg. *sapientia*), the highest gift of all—the power of original conception, which, if he combines with it the other necessary qualities, makes the true artist, the master-workman, in whatsoever branch of art his work may lie. This is appropriately placed first as the most necessary quality for those who are to direct a great construction of an artistic character.

II. UNDERSTANDING (Heb. *tâban*; LXX. *σύνεσις*; Vulg. *intelligentia*), a desirable, but very inferior quality, consisting in the power of appreciating the work of others, and estimating it aright. This power is needed in master-craftsmen, to qualify them for passing judgment on the work produced by those under their direction.

III. KNOWLEDGE (Heb. *yâdû*; LXX. *ἐπιστήμη*; Vulg. *scientia*), or acquaintance with the laws and facts of science bearing on their art. In the present case, acquaintance with such things as elementary mechanics, the method of cutting hard stones, the process of dyeing, the best mode of working different metals, and the like. An inferior quality this, which the master-craftsman should not lack, but which will avail him little without the higher excellences.

IV. WORKMANSHIP (Heb. *m'lâkah*; LXX. *ἀρχιτεκονία*; Vulg. *doctrina*), or power of execution, next to genius the most necessary quality of the artist, and accepted to a large extent in lieu of genius, as placing a man high in the artistic scale. This excellence does not consist in mere dexterity of hand, but in a happy way of working out designed effects, producing the feeling of complete mastery over the materials. It is by their wonderful execution that the genuine works of great masters are known from copies. Note, that all these qualities were possessed by both of the master-craftsmen in an eminent degree, and that all of them were the gift of “the Spirit of God” (ver. 31), from whom comes down “every good gift and every perfect gift” (Jam. i. 17). Artists should bear this in mind, and sanctify their art by directing it to holy, or at any rate to good ends. What a sad spectacle is genius prostituted to the service of Satan!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 30—35.—Bezaleel and Aholiab. Note—I. **THE FACT THAT THE LORD CHOSE MEN TO DO THE WORK.** It might have been otherwise. As the people were requested of their free-will to provide the materials, so they might have been requested to provide the necessary artificers. But it is easy to see what differences and jealousies might have resulted, all to end in some unsatisfactory compromise. There was no difficulty as long as each one gave of his own decision; and what further difficulty then threatened to come, God immediately removed by himself selecting the men who were to carry out his designs. It is very likely that Bezaleel and Aholiab were not the men whom the people themselves would have chosen. So far as pure artistic originality was concerned they may have been excelled; for the possession in Israel of so much material for artistic and precious work seems to show that there must have been many with the ability requisite for such work. But God had his own principles of choice, his own purposes to serve; and it would appear in due time how wise God was in indicating certain men and not others for what needed to be done.

II. THE QUALIFICATIONS WITH WHICH GOD ENDOWED THEM. God, we may be sure,

to some extent took them for what they were by nature. He always looks at the natural basis on which he proposes to build up some Divine work. But he did not leave them to their natural strength to carry out his designs. He did not leave them to toil onward to impressive results through many attempts which had to be forsaken as failures. Great works of art, which only too many spectators regard with but a glance, are to the artist memorials of weary and tantalising hours. Sir Joshua Reynolds said of one of his completed paintings, "there are ten under it, some better, some worse." Bezaleel and Aholiab were spared all such disappointments, all vain hunts after the unattainable ideal. A variety of words are used with respect to them, as if to signify how eminently and abundantly God had endowed them with all that was necessary for the task. Thus it was to be made plain to the then living generation and their successors that the tabernacle and its contents were in a very important sense the work of God. These things were to be sacred in every way: they were not to be criticised and compared, as if they were the outcome of art and man's device. Perhaps criticism did come, for fault-finders are numerous in every age; but the two chosen artificers needed not to trouble themselves about any complaining. And should we not all find it better if, instead of straining to do work for God in our own strength and wisdom—which must ever be a saddening failure as to spiritual results—we sought to be as tools directed by the wisdom of God? We have no right to complain if keen eyes discover the weak points in what is fashioned by our own skill; but if we are sure that God's Spirit is ruling in all we do for him, then we may meet complaints with a meek indifference.—Y.

Vers. 30—35.—*Bezaleel and Aholiab.* See Homily on chap. xxxi. vers. 1—12.—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Vers. 1—3 and 6—38.—THE PROGRESS OF THE WORK, AND THE SUPERFLUOUS LIBERALITY OF THE PEOPLE—THE LATTER HAS TO BE RESTRAINED (vers. 3—7). Bezaleel and Aholiab felt that the time for action was now come. They at once addressed themselves to their task. Moses delivered into their hands all the various offerings which the people, rich and poor, had brought in (ch. xxxv. 21—29); and skilled workmen were immediately called upon to shape it for the designed uses. The fact of the work being commenced did not stop the inflow of gifts. More and yet more continued to be brought "every morning" (ver. 3). At last it became clear that the supply had exceeded the demand; and the workmen reported so to Moses (vers. 4, 5), who thereupon commanded that the offerings should cease (ver. 6). The progress of the work is then reported in detail, and in the following order:—1. The covering for the tabernacle (vers. 8—13); 2. The goats' hair covering for the tent above the tabernacle (vers. 14—18); 3. The outer coverings of rams' skins and seals' skins (ver. 19); 4. The boards for the walls of the tabernacle (vers. 20—30); 5. The bars for the boards (vers. 31—34); 6. The

veil of the most holy place (vers. 35, 36); 7. The hanging for the entrance to the tabernacle (vers. 37, 38). The chapter, from ver. 8, runs parallel with ch. xxvi., differing from it mainly in describing as made that which in ch. xxvi. is ordered to be made.

Ver. 1.—Then wrought Bezaleel, etc. This is introductory to the entire sub-section, which extends to the end of ch. xxxix. It means—"Then, under the direction of Bezaleel and Aholiab, began the work of constructing that place of meeting for which commandment had been given to Moses in the mount." The master-craftsmen, and those under them, "wrought," and took care that all was done according to all that the Lord had commanded. It is to mark the exactitude of the obedience that chs. xxxvi.—xxxix. follow so closely, and with such minuteness, the wording of chs. xxvi.—xxviii.

Vers. 2, 3.—Moses called Bezaleel, etc. Having received sufficient materials for a beginning, Moses summoned Bezaleel, Aholiab, and their chief assistants, to his presence, and delivered into their hands the various offerings—the wood, the metal, the precious stones, the thread, the goats' hair, the rams' skins, the seals' skins, etc. Upon these materials they proceeded at once to work. They brought yet unto him free offerings every morning. The people still continued to give. Freewill offerings kept continually flowing in. Morn-

ing after morning a fresh supply was brought to Moses, who passed it on to those engaged in the work.

Vers. 4, 5.—At last, remonstrance had to be made. The workmen were cumbered with an overplus of material—an *embarras de richesses*—and came in a body to Moses, to make complaint. All the wise men came, every man from his work, with the cry—“The people bring much more than enough—we are hampered in our work by the too great abundance—let an end be put to it.”

Ver. 6.—Moses accordingly had proclamation made through the camp, and so put a stop to further offerings.

Vers. 8—38.—The remainder of this chapter requires no comment, since it goes over ground already covered. The passage from ver. 8 to ver. 18 corresponds exactly with ch. xxvi. 1—11; that from ver. 19—34 with ch. xxvi. 14—29; that consisting of

vers. 35, 36, with ch. xxvi. 33, 34; and the two concluding vers. with ch. xxvi. 36, 37. Under these circumstances a few mistranslations will alone be noticed.

Ver. 22.—Two tenons, equally distant one from another. Rather, as in ch. xxvi. 17, “two tenons, set in order one against another.”

Ver. 27.—For the sides of the tabernacle westward. Literally correct; but it would be more intelligible to render “for the side,” or “for the back.”

Ver. 32.—For the sides westward. The same alteration should be made.

Ver. 33.—He made the middle bar to shoot through the boards. Rather, as in ch. xxvi. 28, “to reach from end to end of the boards.”

Ver. 37.—For the tabernacle door. Rather, as in ch. xxvi. 36, “for the door of the tent.” Their chapiters and their fillets. Rather “their capitals and their rods.” These had not been previously mentioned.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 3—7. *Superabundant giving*.—Too much is far better than too little. Let a great work be taken in hand, and it is impossible to anticipate the exact quantity of the material that it will require, or the exact cost of work and material together. Care should always be taken to have a margin beyond the supposed necessity. Unless this is done—

I. THE WORK IS APT TO BE SCAMPED AND STINTED TOWARDS THE CLOSE. Fear naturally arises lest the material or the money should not hold out; and economies are practised which detract from the beauty, the finish, the perfection of the construction. Or (which is worse) desirable, even necessary, adjuncts are omitted, given up as impracticable under the circumstances.

II. THE WORK MAY ACTUALLY HAVE TO BE LEFT UNFINISHED. All calculations of cost are uncertain. Prices rise while a work is in progress; material purchased, or presented, turns out to be defective, and has to be replaced by something better. Accidents occur. The actual cost of a work almost always exceeds the estimate—sometimes greatly exceeds it. How often do we hear of there being a debt upon a building! This would occur far less frequently, if gifts and offerings kept flowing in until the authority entrusted with the work cried “Stop.”

Superabundant giving shows a truly liberal spirit in those who give. It is not a very common thing. Cases are rare of its needing to be “restrained.” The example of the Israelites should stir Christians to emulate them. While these poor wanderers in the desert were so generous, how is it that we are, for the most part, so niggardly?

Superabundant giving is a trial to those who receive the gifts. How easy to appropriate what is not required to our own advantage! Moses withstood this temptation. Bezaleel and Aholiab withstood it. It may be doubted whether all Christians have always done so. The gifts that flowed in at the shrine of Becket, at the exhibition of the holy coat of Treves, at the altar of St. Januarius, were intended as offerings for the service of the sanctuary. Were they always used for sacred purposes? Was there not often a superfluity, which men converted to their own benefit? There have certainly been those in modern times who have enriched themselves out of moneys subscribed for charitable purposes, as the records of our assize courts sufficiently show.

Vers. 8—38.—*Exactitude in obedience*. Kalisch observes on this passage, that, “though even literal repetitions of the same occurrence, or the same command, are not unusual in the Biblical style, yet the lengthened and accurate reiteration” which here occurs, is unusual and must have some special meaning. He himself considers that he

has sufficiently accounted for it as intended to draw attention to the importance of the tabernacle in the Mosaic system, and the significance, and especially the symbolical character of the descriptions ('Commentary on Exodus,' pp. 449, 450). To us it seems that there must have been some further reason for the phenomenon; and we are inclined to find it in the importance of the example which Moses here sets of *exactitude in obedience*. If any one might ever be supposed entitled to depart from the strict letter of observance, where the commands of God are concerned, it would be such an one as Moses, who had conversed as friend to friend with God, and had been twice summoned to a conference of forty days' duration. But Moses does not seem to feel that he is so privileged. The exact correspondence of paragraph with paragraph, verse with verse, clause with clause, word with word, seems intended to teach and enforce the lesson that what God commands is to be observed to the letter, down to its minutest point. Certainly, what these five concluding chapters of Exodus especially set forth, is the extreme exactitude which Moses and those under him showed in carrying out all the directions that God had given with regard to the tabernacle. If "fifty taches" were ordered (ch. xxvi. 6), "fifty taches" were made (ch. xxxvi. 13); if "five pillars" were commanded here (ch. xxvi. 37), and "four pillars" there (ib. 32), the five and the four were constructed and set up accordingly (ch. xxxvi. 36, 38); if this curtain was to have a pattern woven into it (ch. xxvi. 31), and that curtain was to be adorned with embroidery (ib. 36), the embroiderer's and the weaver's art were employed upon them as ordered (ib. xxxvi. 35, 37). Nothing commanded was ever neglected; only in one or two cases (notably in verse 38) small additions were made, if not to the orders given, at any rate to the orders recorded. Generally, however, there was an entire effacement of self, a complete restraint of private fancy and private preference. Note—1. The rarity of exact obedience; 2. The difficulty of it; 3. The scant praise which it obtains from men; 4. The certainty that it is approved in God's sight. Examples—1. The obedience of Moses as here set out; 2. The perfect obedience of Christ. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me" (John iv. 34). "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (ib. xvii. 4).

Vers. 8—37.—On Tabernacle symbolism see the Homiletics on ch. xxvi. 1—11.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 8; ch. xxxix. 43.—*The Tabernacle made*. These chapters recount how the tabernacle, etc., was actually made. On the several sections, see the Homiletics and Homilies on chs. xxvi.—xxviii. We have in them—

I. WORK DONE. The point to be observed here is that everything was done precisely according to the Divine directions. The makers turned not aside, either to the right hand or to the left, from what had been commanded them. They attempted no alteration on the plans. They did not try improvements; they added no ornaments. This was their wisdom, and secured for their work the Divine approval. Work for Christ should be done in the same way. We cannot improve upon his Gospel. We are not entitled to add to, or take from, his commands.

II. WORK INSPECTED (ch. xxxix. 33—43). When the work was finished the makers brought it to Moses, who looked upon it and pronounced that all had been done according "as the Lord had commanded" (ver. 43). The day of inspection will come for *our* work also (1 Cor. iii. 14, 15). Happy for us if the same verdict can be passed upon it!

III. WORK BLESSED. "And Moses blessed them" (ver. 43). "If any man's work abide which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward" (1 Cor. iii. 14).—J. O.

Vers. 8—38.—*Jehovah's dwelling-place*. See homily on chap. xxvi.—J. O.

Vers. 1—38.—*The work fails not either for gifts or skill*.

I. MOSES GOES FORWARD IN FAITH. 1. He makes an immediate beginning. He might have doubted the people's liberality (so much was required) or the workmen's ability, and have waited; but it was enough that God had commanded the work. If Christ has commanded us to rear up a tabernacle for God in every land nothing should stay us. He will give offerings and men. 2. He followed the Lord's guiding. He

called the men whom he had named and prepared. There must be obedience as well as faith, not calling those we would choose, but hailing gladly, and honouring, the men whom God has prepared. 3. The materials are committed to them. If we are to be built into God's temple we must obey them who have the rule over us.

II. THE PEOPLE HAVE TO BE RESTRAINED FROM GIVING. 1. The glory of a liberal spirit. There was no need of a second appeal. Though they knew that much had been contributed they still gave. 2. It consecrated the work. (1) It was a joy for the workmen to labour amid that generous liberality. (2) It was a joy to Israel and their children to remember the story of the tabernacle. To labourers in the Lord's vineyard it is a mighty consecration when hearts are yielded on every side and more is thrust upon them than they can well use for the Master; and the remembrance of such times is power and refreshing in after days.

III. THE WORK PROCEEDS; THE SKILL AND LABOUR FAILED NOT. First the framework of the tabernacle is reared and the inner curtains made and placed; then the outer curtains, and lastly the boards, and bars, and veils are set up. The heart is first gained for God, then more and more of light and power is poured upon the outer life till the whole "grows unto an holy temple in the Lord."—U.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

VERS. 1—29.—THE FURTHER PROGRESS OF THE WORK—THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE FURNITURE FOR THE HOLY OF HOLIES (VERS. 1, 9)—AND FOR THE HOLY PLACE (VERS. 10—28)—THE MAKING OF THE HOLY OIL AND OF THE INCENSE (VER. 29). On the history of the construction of the tabernacle follows naturally that of the construction of its furniture. The order of dignity is followed, as in ch. xxv., and the furniture of the holy of holies taken first. Vers. 1—9 correspond to vers. 10—20 of ch. xxv.; vers. 10—16 to vers. 23—29; vers. 17—24 to vers. 31—39 of the same; and vers. 25—28 to vers. 1—5 of ch. xxx. Ver. 29 is an abbreviation of ch. xxx. 23—25, and 34, 35.

Ver. 1.—Bezaleel made the ark. The particular maker of the various parts and contents of the tabernacle is not elsewhere pointed out. Thus this mention of Bezaleel is emphatic, and seems intended to mark the em-

ployment of the highest artistic skill on that which was the most precious of all objects connected with the new construction.

Ver. 7.—*Beaten out of one piece.* Rather, "of beaten work," as the same word is translated in the corresponding passage, ch. xxv. 18.

Ver. 23.—*His snuffera.* Or, "tongs," as in ch. xxv. 38.

Ver. 25.—*The incense altar* here occurs in its right place, among the furniture of the outer chamber of the tabernacle—not, as in ch. xxx. 1—6, out of place.

Ver. 29.—*The holy anointing oil.* For the composition of the oil, see ch. xxx. 23—25; for the uses whereto it was to be applied, *ib.* 26—30. *The pure incense of sweet spices.* The composition of the incense is given in ch. xxx. 34, 35. It is there said to have been "a confection after the art of the apothecary—tempered together, pure and holy." The combination of artistic power with practical knowledge in Bezaleel and Aholiab calls to mind *cinqe-cento* Italy, and the wonderful grasp of art and science possessed by Michael Angelo and Benvenuto Cellini.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*Art's highest efforts should be concentrated on what is most essential to the work in hand.* "Bezaleel made the ark." Bezaleel, "filled with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship" (ch. xxxv. 31), while he entrusted most of the rest of the work to others, reserved to himself the construction of the ark, with the cherubim and mercy seat. The ark was clearly the central object of the newly devised structure, that towards which the eyes of all would be directed, on which the thoughts of all would rest, which, itself unseen, dominated the entire edifice and formed its material basis and *raison d'être*. Shrouded in the holy of holies, shrouded from sight by the veil, never seen but by the high-priest once a-year, yet known to occupy the innermost *penetrals* of the sanctuary, and to lie there in the light of the Divine presence constantly, it challenged the attention of all, and occupied a unique position among the sacred objects which the sanctuary was to contain.

Bezaleel, the master-artist, felt that there was a call on him to construct it. What wealth of loving work he lavished on the construction, with what rich and delicate tracery of fauciful ornament he adorned it, no one can say. The ark never returned from Babylon; and the master-work of the master-artist of these times has been lost to humanity. But his choice asserted some important principles, and deserves imitation through all ages. It pointed out—

I. THAT THE LAW OF ORNAMENT IS NOT ONE OF GENERAL UNIFORM ELABORATION UP TO A CERTAIN HEIGHT, BUT ONE OF SPECIAL CONCENTRATION UPON A POINT OR POINTS. Compare Magdalen Tower with the Houses of Parliament, the western front of the Parthenon with the ordinary porch of a church of the Jesuits, the façade of St. Zeno at Verona with even the front of St. Mark's at Venice, and it will at once be seen how superior is ornament concentrated to ornament dispersed, elaboration of certain parts, set off by the comparative plainness of others, to diffusion generally of equal elaboration everywhere. A sense of heaviness, of over-loading, of weariness, is produced by the one plan, a feeling of unmixed pleasure by the other.

II. THAT THE CONCENTRATION SHOULD BE ON SUCH PARTS OF THE WORK AS ARE MOST ESSENTIAL TO IT. If a *campanile* or bell-tower be the work in hand, the concentration should be towards the chamber in which the bells are hung, as in the great *campanile* of St. Mark's, Venice. If a college, towards the parts common to all, the chapel, hall, library; if a sepulchral monument, towards the tomb; if a palace, towards the state-rooms; and the like. Here, in this case of the tabernacle, the concentration was towards the holy of holies. Most properly. And on the ark: since, of the holy of holies, the ark was the glory.

In Christian churches, according as preaching, or the administration of the sacraments, or the elevation of the thoughts to heaven, are regarded as the main object of sacred buildings, the concentration of artistic effort will naturally be towards the pulpit, or towards font and altar, or towards the roof. Examples of the first are common in Germany and Switzerland, of the second in Roman Catholic churches generally, of the third in English churches of the Tudor period, e.g. Henry the Seventh's Chapel in Westminster Abbey, and the like.

For further Homiletics, see those on chs. xxv. and xxx.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—28.—*The furnishing of the tabernacle.* I. ALL WAS ACCOMPLISHED AS GOD HAD COMMANDED. 1. Successfully. It might have been feared that though the tabernacle was erected there would be some failure in this more delicate and ornate work; but all is perfectly executed even to the smallest details. In the work of him whom God has called by name there will be no failure. His work will be presented faultless, and every word which God has spoken will be fulfilled. 2. Faithfully: as they failed in nothing, so they added nothing. In God's work there must be no alloy of human devices. In worship, ordinances, life, our sole guide must be God's commandment.

II. THE CONTENTS OF THE TABERNACLE: THE FOURFOLD ADORNMENT OF THE BELIEVER'S LIFE. 1. The ark, the meeting-place of righteousness and peace. The heart in which God's law is set, on which the atonement rests, and which is bathed in the glory of the Divine love. There is, in a word, *living faith*. 2. The table of shew-bread: a yielded life, the sacrifice presented before God of body, soul, and spirit. 3. The candlestick: "ye are the light of the world." (1) There is life, which in the measure it exists is, like Christ's, the light of men. It shows the reality and power of God's grace. (2) There is labour in word and doctrine. God's mind and will are understood. 4. The incense altar, the uplifting of holy desire and intercession for all men. Are these things found in us? They may be. It is the work to which Christ has been called, and he is waiting to accomplish it in us.—U.

Vers. 1—25.—*The ark, the table, and the candlestick.* See Homily on ch. xxv. 10—40.—J. O.

Vers. 25—29.—*The altar of incense.* See Homily on ch. xxx. 1—11; 34—38.—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Vers. 1—8.—THE FURTHER PROGRESS OF THE WORK—THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE FURNITURE FOR THE COURT.—Vers. 9—20.—AND OF THE COURT ITSELF. On the completion of the tabernacle, Bezaleel and his assistants turned their attention to the court and its furniture; and constructed, first, the altar of burnt offering (vers. 1—7); secondly, the bronze laver (ver. 8); and thirdly, the hangings, pillars, connecting-rods, hooks and pins for the circuit of the court (vers. 9—20). Vers. 1—7 correspond to vers. 1—8 of ch. xxvii.; ver. 8 corresponds to ver. 18 of ch. xxx.; and vers. 9—20 correspond to vers. 9—19 of ch. xxvii.

Ver. 3.—The pots. This translation is better than that of ch. xxvii. 3, which is “pans.” Buckets or scuttlles to convey the ashes from the altar to the ash-heap (Lev. i. 16) are intended.

Ver. 8.—Of the looking-glasses of the women. This interesting fact has not been previously mentioned. Bronze plates, circular or oval, admitting of a high polish, were used by the Egyptian women as mirrors from a very early date, and may be seen in the Egyptian collection of the British Museum. They have handles like those of our fire-screens, generally also of bronze. It was natural that the Hebrew women should possess similar articles, and should have taken

care to bring them with them out of Egypt. The sacrifice of them for a sacred purpose is rather to be ascribed to their own self-denying piety than to any command issued by Moses (Spencer). Which assembled. Literally, “who came by troops.” Women assembled themselves by troops at the entrance of the “tent of meeting” set up by Moses (ch. xxxiii. 7), as at a later date we find Hannah (1 Sam. i. 9—12) and other women who were less worthy (*ib. ii. 22*) doing. The women who showed this zeal were those that made the sacrifice of their mirrors for God’s service. There is no reason to suppose (with Hengstenberg and others) that they constituted a regular “order.”

Ver. 10.—Their fillets. Rather, “their connecting-rods,” as in ch. xxvii. 10.

Ver. 17.—The overlaying of their chapiters of silver. This is additional to what is recorded in ch. xxvii., and is parallel to what we find related of the tabernacle pillars in ch. xxxvi. 38. Filleted with silver. Rather, “connected with silver rods.” Compare ch. xxvii. 17.

Ver. 18.—The height in the breadth was five cubits. The height of the hangings all round the court was required to be five cubits, or seven and a-half feet (ch. xxvii. 18). It appears by the expression here used—“in the breadth”—that the material was woven of exactly this width.

Ver. 19.—Their chapiters. This again is additional to the directions given. Compare the comment on ver. 17.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 8.—*The triumph of female piety over female vanity.* Hebrew women were, it must be presumed, much like other women in their natural dispositions, and therefore not without their share of personal vanity. The fact, that in all the haste of their sudden departure from Egypt they had not omitted to carry with them their metal mirrors, is indicative of this. The mirror was the most valued of toilet articles, and the most indispensable for effecting that end, at which almost all women aim—the making the best of those advantages of personal appearance which nature has vouchsafed to them. It is difficult to imagine any material sacrifice to which a woman would not more readily have consented than the loss of her mirror. Yet we know that the sacrifice was made by large numbers; for the laver was a vessel of considerable size. Let us consider then, 1. The motive of the act; 2. the antecedent conduct which led up to it; 3. the reward which it obtained.

I. THE MOTIVE OF THE ACT. No other motive can be conceived of than true piety. Piety loves to make offerings to God. Piety does not count the cost. Piety, the gift of grace, can triumph over nature; transform a poor vain worldling into a saint; make no sacrifice seem a hard one. It must have been piety which made these women give their mirrors, either, 1. In addition to their personal ornaments (ch. xxxv. 22), or 2. In default of them. Some after offering their ear-rings, rings, necklaces, bracelets, and the like, may have desired, from pure love of God, to give more, and casting about to consider what more they could give, may have bethought them of their mirrors. Others

may have had no personal ornaments to give; and if unable to spin, may have had nothing else but their mirrors which they could contribute. In either case, piety was at the root of their giving.

II. THE ANTECEDENT CONDUCT WHICH LED UP TO IT. They who contributed their mirrors were women wont to "assemble at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." In other words, they were such as had previously made all the use they could of their religious opportunities. We see that God does not shower down his precious gifts of grace at random—but "helps such as help themselves." He granted the priceless grace of self-denying love to those who were constant in serving him at the place where he had "set his name," and was to be found of them that sought him. Much prayer, much waiting upon God, had gone to form the character of those who now found themselves able to make a willing sacrifice of their vanity.

III. THE REWARD WHICH THEIR ACT OF SACRIFICE OBTAINED FOR THEM. It obtained for them the high reward of special mention in God's holy word—a place in his "Valhalla"—a record in his "Roll of worthies." Of the other offerings we know not, for the most part, whether they were made by men or women—much less by what class of men, or what class of women. Only here, and in ch. xxxv. 25, 26, is the sex specified, and only here the class. Let women take this to heart. Let them be ready to sacrifice to him all their adornments—"braided hair and gold and pearls, and costly array" (1 Tim. ii. 9)—let them be ready to sacrifice even, if need be, their personal charms (as many do in fever or small-pox hospitals), and they will not be forgotten by him—they will not go without a recompense. If their act be not recorded in any other book it will be written in that heavenly record, out of which all will be judged at the last day (Rev. xx. 12).

For other Homiletics on the subjects of this chapter, see those on ch. xxvii.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—21.—*The brazen altar, the laver, and the court.* See Homilies on chs. xxvii. 1—20; xxx. 17—22.—J. O.

Ver. 8.—*The mirrors of the women.* The women assembling at the door of the tabernacle (see Hengstenberg's "Egypt and the Books of Moses,"—"The Institution of Holy Women") gave up their mirrors for the making of the laver. Learn—1. Peculiar devotion to God expresses itself in acts of sacrifice (cf. Mary of Bethany, Matt. xxvi. 6—14). 2. Religion gives power to make sacrifices. 3. It weans the affections from the world. 4. It gives superiority to the motives of personal vanity. The mirror is peculiarly a woman's instrument of self-pleasing. It is her means of pleasing the world. 5. Religion teaches godly women to study simplicity in personal adornment (1 Pet. iii. 1—5). 6. Self-denial in outward adornment is valueless, unless "in the hidden man of the heart," there be the positive inward adornment of holiness (1 Pet. iii. 4). This was taught by the use to which Moses put the offerings—the making of the "laver." Regeneration is the true beautifier.—J. O.

Vers. 1—31.—*The Court and its lessons.* I. THE FURNISHING AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE COURT (1) The altar on which the sacrifice for Israel's sin was laid, and their own offerings accepted. Christ is the foundation and the power of all our service. (2) The laver. It was fashioned from the mirrors of the women. The adornment of the outward was exchanged for inward purity, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. It stood there for the daily use of God's priests. They could pass into God's presence only as their defilement had been washed away. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Are we being washed ere that hour comes when we must appear before him? 2. *The construction of the court.* (1) God's grace makes a separation between the Church and the world. To break down this is to undo God's work. (2) The wall of separation was fine twined linen. It is a separation not only between faith and unbelief, but between righteousness and unrighteousness. (3) The world sees the results only, the means by which they are attained are hid from its view; but the results are a call to come and see. 3. *The order in which they were made.* The altar first, then the

laver, and, last of all, the enclosing of the court. First, Christ and his sacrifice; next, the washing of regeneration by him through the Spirit; and, last of all, the gathering together of the Church. This is the Divine order. The true Church has ever this history. None have a right to be there on whom the work of altar and laver has not first been done.

II. THE MATERIAL. 1. *The record of it is kept.* There is nothing of all that is given for God's service, the history or place of which is forgotten. 2. *The use to which it is applied.* The gold is put to the highest use; the silver—the redemption money—is the foundation of the sanctuary; the brass is used for the altar, the laver, and the court. Each is put to its proper use, and a place is found for all. No gift can be brought to God which he will not employ.—U.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 21—31.—THE SUM OF THE TABERNACLE, OR WEIGHT OF THE METALS EMPLOYED IN IT. Before dismissing the subject of the construction of the tabernacle, Moses places on record the sum of the gold, silver and bronze contributed and consumed in the work. At the same time he informs us who was the accountant by whom the sum was made up (ver. 21), and what were the portions of the work formed of each metal (vers. 24, 27, 28, 30, 31). Incidentally he mentions the number of the congregation at this period (ver. 26), and the weight of the “sockets” or “bases” (ver. 27).

Ver. 21.—This is the sum. Or “numbering” (as in Num. xxvi. 63). The tabernacle of testimony. The tabernacle, i.e., of which the great glory was that it contained “the testimony” or “Two Tables.” Compare ch. xxv. 16. For the service of the Levites. Literally “a service of the Levites by the hand of Ithamar,” etc.—i.e. “a service which was performed by the Levites at the command of Ithamar.” It is somewhat remarkable that the direction of the Levites should be assigned to Ithamar, rather than to Nadab or Abihu.

Ver. 22.—Bezaleel made all. The direction of the whole work by Bezaleel is here asserted more definitely and decidedly than elsewhere. Compare ch. xxxi. 2—6; xxxvi. 1, 2.

Ver. 23.—Aholiab's special gifts are here pointed out. He was 1. An artificer (a general term with no special application); 2. A skilled weaver; and 3. An embroiderer. Altogether, his business was with the textile fabrics—not with the wood-work or the metal-work—of the sanctuary.

Ver. 24.—The gold. The value of the gold has been estimated by Canon Cook at £175,075 13s. 0d. of our money; by Thénius at 877,300 Prussian thalers, or about £131,595. It was certainly under £200,000. De Wette and others have argued that the possession of so large a sum in gold at this time by the

Hebrew nation is inconceivable. But most critics are of a different opinion. Gold was very abundant in Egypt at the period, being imported from Ethiopia, a rich gold-producing country (Herod. iii. 23; Diod. Sic. iii. 11), as well as taken in tribute from the nations of Asia. The wealth of Rhampsinitus (Rameses III.), a little later than the exodus, was enormous (Herod. ii. 121; Rawlinson, *History of Egypt*, vol. ii. pp. 368, 378). According to the preceding narrative (ch. xii. 35, 36) much of the wealth of Egypt had, at the moment of their quitting the country, passed from the Egyptians to the Hebrews. If they numbered two millions of souls, their gold ornaments are likely to have been worth very much more than £200,000 of our money. On the shekel of the sanctuary, see the comment upon ch. xxx. 13.

Ver. 25.—The silver. The silver seems to have amounted to about four times the weight of the gold; but the value of it was very much less, not exceeding £40,000 of our money (Cook). It may seem surprising that this should have been so; but there are grounds for believing that both in Africa and in Asia gold was more plentiful than silver in the early ages. And it is certainly much more suitable for ornaments. Of them that were numbered. See above, ch. xxx. 12—16. The silver for the sanctuary was collected by a compulsory tax, of the nature of a church-rate. This produced the amount here given. No estimate is made of the weight of the silver freewill offerings (ch. xxxv. 24), nor is any account given of their application. It has been suggested that they were returned to the donors as superfluous, which is certainly possible.

Ver. 26.—A bekah for every man. Literally, “for every head.” From twenty years old and upward. Compare Num. i. 3, 22, etc. Six hundred thousand, etc. It is remarkable that this number agrees exactly with the sum total of the numbering in Num. ii. 32, which took place about six months later, and was exclusive of 22,000 Levites. Perhaps the number was lost in this place, and restored from Num.

in 32, without its being recollected that the Levites were not included in that reckoning.

Ver. 27.—*The sockets of the sanctuary and of the veil.* See above, ch. xxxvi. 24, 26, 30, and 36. The numbers given are 40, 40, 16, and 4, making exactly the hundred.

Ver. 28.—*Hooks for the pillars.* See above, vers. 10, 12, 17, and 19. *Chapiters.* See ver. 19. *Filleted them.* Rather, "connected them with rods."

Ver. 29.—*The brass of the offering*—*i.e.*, the bronze which had been brought by the people in answer to the invitation of Moses (ch. xxxv. 24).

Vers. 30, 31.—*The sockets.* See ch. xxxvi. 38. *The brazen altar and the brazen grate.* See vers. 1 and 4. *The vessels.* See ver. 8. *The sockets of the court.* See above, vers. 11, 14, 15, 17, and 19. *The pins of the tabernacle and of the court.* See above, ver. 20.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 24-31.—*Great wealth worthily employed.* I. THE AMOUNT EXPENDED BY THE ISRAELITES WAS GREAT ABSOLUTELY. Although the materials contributed for the construction of the tabernacle are quite within the estimate which would reasonably be formed of the wealth of the Israelites from the general tenor of the narrative, yet they certainly reach altogether to such an amount of value as would constitute a very serious call on the resources of such a people. The worth of the metals alone was not far short of a quarter of a million of our money. (Gold, £175,000; silver, £40,000; bronze (say) £15,000—total, £230,000.) The precious stones, the spices, the wood-work, the raw material for the cloths, the dyed rams' skins and seals' skins, have to be added, and would raise the sum total to at least £250,000. This was contributed by a population of about two millions; which may be regarded as equivalent to 10s. a family, or half-a-crown a head. Now the entire taxation for imperial purposes of each British subject is about £2 a head, of which the amount paid in direct taxation is not more than 5s. a head. So that the Israelite of the 13th or 14th century, B.C., paid at one time for church purposes of his own free will, half as much as the British subject of the present day pays directly for State purposes in the whole course of the year. Thus *the amount was great absolutely*, and showed a noble spirit in those who contributed.

II. THE AMOUNT EXPENDED WAS ALSO GREAT RELATIVELY TO THE PURPOSE OF THE EXPENDITURE. What was required was a structure sixty feet long by thirty, with a skirting for a court or precinct 150 feet long by seventy-five. The main structure, or tabernacle, would be about the size of a small college chapel. The precinct would be smaller than most churchyards. Yet upon these two objects, without making any estimate for labour, a quarter of a million of money was spent. On the first blush, one asks, how was it possible for so enormous an outlay to be made? The answer is, by the lavish use of the precious metals, especially gold. That the structure might be rich, splendid, magnificent, gold and silver were lavished upon it, both externally and internally—scarcely any wood was seen—nothing caught the eye but costly fabrics of rich colour, and masses of silver or gold. A warm, harmonious, rich result was no doubt produced; and nomadic Israel, unable to compete with the settled nations in the size and grandeur of its "holy place," erected for itself a sanctuary, which in its own way was unequalled and unique.

III. THE OBJECT OF THE EXPENDITURE WAS A WORTHY ONE. If a people have temples at all, men will always judge their religious views, more or less, by them. If Israel was to have a place of worship—and it may be doubted whether any race of men will ever be able to do without one—it would certainly be subjected to rough criticism and comparison. The Egyptian temples were magnificent—of vast size, of the most solid construction, of handsome material, elaborately painted and adorned; they delighted those who worshipped in them, and challenged the admiration of extraneous beholders. Israel, in the desert, could not possibly vie with these. But it might construct a work perfect in its kind, of a different class, which would compensate for smallness of size by richness of material and artistic elaboration. It could show in this way its sense that men should give to God of their best. It could secure an extraordinary degree of beauty, finish, and elegance. The nations among which the tabernacle passed—even those who heard an account of it—must have been impressed with the feeling that here was a people which thoroughly believed in its God; which thought nothing too good for him; which

was ready for his sake to submit to much self-sacrifice. And the people itself must also have been impressed by its own work. No such apostasy as the worship of the calf ever took place after the tabernacle had been constructed. It was no longer faith, but sight, which told them, that "God was in the midst of them." The sense of this begat a courage and a confidence, which supported the nation under many trials, and many temptations. They had never to regret the outlay which they had made upon their "tent-temple."

Application.—There has been much church-building in modern times, but in no instance such a lavish outlay as that here held up to our imitation. Germany, indeed, has completed the Dom of Cologne; but not much of the money was subscribed; for the most part, it came out of the general taxation of the country. Glasgow, Edinburgh, Calcutta, have raised cathedrals; but the cost has not been very considerable. The spirit of munificence has been shown rather by individuals than by any nation; and, in England at any rate, the nineteenth century will not, it is to be feared, be signalised among others by the completion of any really first-rate ecclesiastical edifice. New dioceses are formed; but new cathedrals, worthy of taking rank with the masterpieces of former times, do not arise. The prevailing practice is to convert a parish church into a cathedral. May it not be hoped that ere long some new diocese, where wealth abounds, will devote to its cathedral some such amount as the Israelites in the desert contributed towards their tabernacle, and raise an edifice which will prove to the world that Post-Reformation England does not yield to the England of the Middle Ages in the virtue of Christian munificence?

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 21—31.—*The enumeration of the metals used.* This served a useful purpose—1. As an account rendered to the people of what had been done with their gifts. 2. As gratifying a very laudable wish of the contributors to know how much the sum-total of their contributions amounted to. 3. As giving a just idea of the splendour and costliness of the building. 4. As a testimony to the liberality, willingness, and unstinting self-sacrifice of all classes in the congregation. 5. As specially indicating the destination of the atonement-money—the making of the "sockets" on which the tabernacle was reared (ver. 27). 6. As a lesson of exactitude in church finance. A church is not at liberty to deal in a slovenly manner with its receipts and disbursements. Careful accounts should be kept and published. This (1) Gives confidence in the management; (2) is an encouragement to giving; (3) prevents charges of maladministration; (4) is a prevention against waste.—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Vers. 1—31.—**THE FURTHER PROGRESS OF THE WORK—THE MAKING OF THE PRIESTS' DRESSES.** Vers. 32—43.—**THE GENERAL APPROVAL OF THE WORK BY MOSES.** The entire work for the structure of the tabernacle being completed, it only remained for Bezaleel and Aholiab to take in hand the priestly vestments, which had been prescribed with the greatest elaboration in ch. xxviii. 4—40. The present chapter is mainly occupied in relating how the vestments were made, and follows, very nearly, the order of the directions. Vers. 1—7 correspond to vers. 5—14 of ch. xxviii.; vers. 8—21 to vers. 15—38; vers. 22—26 to vers. 31—34; vers. 27—29 to vers. 39, 40;

and vers. 30, 31 to vers. 36, 37. The remainder of the chapter (vers. 32—43) contains a recapitulation of the work done, and a statement that it was all submitted to Moses and approved by him.

Ver. 1.—Of the blue, and purple, and scarlet—i.e., of the blue, purple, and scarlet thread which had been spun by the women, and brought to Moses. See ch. xxxv. 25. The omission of "fine linen" seems to be accidental. Cloths of service. See the comment on ch. xxxi. 10.

Ver. 3.—They did beat the gold into thin plates and out it into wires. This mode of producing gold thread is remarkable, and had not been previously mentioned.

Ver. 9.—For a memorial. Compare ch. xxviii. 12.

Vers. 10—13. —On the probable stones in-

tended, see the comment upon ch. xxviii. 17—20.

Ver. 16.—*Two couches of gold.* Compare ch. xxviii. 13 and 25.

Ver. 24.—*And twined linen.* Rather "twined," i.e., twisted together. There was no direction to use "fine twined linen" in making the pomegranates. See ch. xxviii. 33.

Ver. 27.—*Coats of fine linen of woven work for Aaron and for his sons.* Compare ch. xxviii. 29 and 30.

Ver. 28.—*A mitre . . . and goodly bonnets.* The "mitre" for Aaron (ch. xxviii. 37—39), the "goodly bonnets," or rather "caps" for his sons (ib. 40). The linen breeches, or "drawers," were for both (ib. 42, 43).

Ver. 29.—*A girdle of fine twined linen, etc.* In the directions of ch. xxviii. 39, this is called simply, "A girdle of needlework."

Vers. 30, 31.—*The plate of the holy crown.* See ch. xxix. 6, and compare ch. xxviii. 36.

To fasten it on high. This was not mentioned in the directions, which only ordered that it should be placed in front (ch. xxviii 37).

Vers. 32—43.—Everything was brought to Moses for his approval—not perhaps all things at once, but each as it was finished—and was judged by him "according to the pattern which he had seen upon the mount" (ch. xxv. 40; xxvi. 30, etc.). The order observed in the enumeration is nearly, but not quite, the order in which it has been stated that the various things were made. We must suppose that if Moses disapproved of anything, it was rejected; but no disapproval is mentioned. *Moses did look upon all the work, and behold, they had done it as the Lord commanded.* Accordingly Moses concluded all by "blessing" them; thereby signifying, not his own approval only, but the Divine approval, of their diligence and obedience.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 43.—*A blessing upon obedience.* It is not every kind of obedience that brings down a blessing upon it. To deserve the Divine approval, and obtain the Divine benediction, obedience must be, as was that here recorded—

I. EXACT. "According to all that the Lord commanded, so the children of Israel made the work" (ver. 42). "As the Lord had commanded, even so had they done it" (ver. 43).

II. PROMPT. The work could not have commenced before the sixth or the seventh month, since Sinai was not reached till the third month (ch. xix. 1), and Moses passed in conference with God nearly three months. Yet the whole was finished before the year was out (see ch. xl. 1). Thus it appears that six months sufficed for the completion of everything.

III. INTELLIGENT. There was little misunderstanding—few, if any, mistakes. All comprehended the orders given to them, and each carried out his assigned portion. Unless this had been the case very generally, it is impossible that all would have been ready by the end of the year. The rapid completion of the work proves the intelligence of the workmen. Note what is said of their being "wise-hearted" (ch. xxxvi. 1, 2, 8). Men, for the most part, think to obtain the supreme blessing of eternal life, though their obedience has been 1. Partial and inexact; 2. tardy; 3. marred by misapprehension of the commands given them. They do not seem to imagine that there will be any real inspection of their work, such as that which is here ascribed to Moses. "Moses did look upon all the work" (ver. 43). Yet surely at the last day, man's work will be tested in some real, searching way. Whatever may be meant by the expression—"The fire shall try every man's work" (1 Cor. iii. 13), at any rate, *some* trial there will be. Faithful service to Christ will be rewarded by a blessing exceeding all that we can ask or think; but there will be minute inquiry, whether the service has been indeed faithful.

For further Homiletics on the subjects of this chapter, see those upon ch. xxviii.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—32.—*The garments of the priests.* See Homily on ch. xxviii.—J. O.

Vers. 1—41.—*The Clothes of Service; the work perfected.* I. THE PRIESTS' GARMENTS. 1. Their splendour. They were fashioned of gold and jewels, and blue, and purple, and scarlet. God gives glory to his servants. He makes us kings and priests unto himself.

The spiritual nobleness and beauty given now are but the earnest of the glory which will be hereafter. 2. Their purpose: they were clothes of service. The honour and comeliness which God bestows are for service to him in the midst of our brethren, not to minister to our own spiritual pride and unbrotherly judgment:

II. ALL THE WORK WAS DONE IN STRICT OBEDIENCE TO THE LORD'S COMMANDMENT. "As the Lord commanded Moses" (5, 7, 21, 26, 29, 31). "The children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so did they" (32). "And Moses did look upon all the work; and behold, they had done it as the Lord had commanded, even so had they done it" (43). 1. There was no deficiency: no part of the work was slighted. We may not abate anything of all the Lord has commanded. The ordinances must be observed as they have been delivered to us. The cross which Jesus has called us to take up in his service must not be laid aside. 2. There was no excess. No room was given for the exercise of fancy, or taste, or judgment, as to what might better impress, or improve, the vulgar. There was only one solicitude—to do what the Lord had commanded. He alone is master here. We are merely servants. The things which God had not commanded were as carefully kept out of the worship as the things he had commanded were kept in it. 3. "And Moses blessed them." Serving God thus, the blessing of a greater than Moses will rest upon us. And there awaits us in the eternal light the "Well done! good and faithful servant!"—U.

Vers. 42, 43.—*The commanded work completed and commended.* I. THERE IS A PROFFERED COMPLETION. We know not exactly how long this work took to do. That it could not be done in a few days or even a few weeks is plain; but it is equally plain that however long the time was, the work was done with steadiness and devotion. There is no mention of any hitch or unseemly dispute; all seems to have gone on with holy industry and patience to the end. Looking, then, on this work, for which a special endowment of the Spirit's help was given, and *which was completed*, we are bound also to feel that the work for which God in Christ has given his Spirit to his Church in these latter days will also be accomplished. Hindered and fragmentary is the appearance that it now presents; but it is going on. The wonderful manifestations of Pentecost are the pledge of a work that some day will have *finis* written upon it. Amid all the uncertainties of prophecy; amid all the hapless guesses with respect to the time of events, one thing is clear, that the prophecies point to a consummation. There is a *συντέλεια* to the work of the Church even as to this typical work of Bezaleel and Aholiab.

II. THERE IS A RIGOROUS INSPECTION. Many human observers, we may be sure, had also inspected the work of Bezaleel and Aholiab; some to praise, some also to carp. But it is not those whom men commend who are really praiseworthy, nor those whom men censure who are censurable. Moses looks, and ever as he looks there is the remembrance of his solemn sojourn in the mount. He has in his instructed mind the standard of success and excellence. Let us also, as being invited to become temples of the living God—temple and sacrifice comprised in the varied faculties of one living organism—consider the rigorous demand which is made on us. These sacred articles, fashioned from perishable materials, and by human hands, were yet such that they could be stamped with Divine approval; and thus they are meant to direct us, that we may fashion all our life, in affections, in aims, and in service, according to the pattern given in the mount—that mount in Galilee, where Jesus talked with all who were willing to admit his authority.

III. THERE IS A HEARTY COMMENDATION. "Moses blessed them." There had been so much disobedience and pursuit of selfish aims before, that when an obedience comes like the one mentioned here, it is important to note the way in which God smiles upon it. For the blessing of Moses is as the smile of God. God is as quick to show approval of all compliance with his wishes as he is to frown upon all disregard of them; only, as men will have it, there is more occasion for the frowning than for the favour. This commendation is more fully expressed in ch. xl. 34, where the wrapping of the tabernacle with the glory-cloud signifies that what God did through Moses in the well-understood formula of blessing, he could also do himself by his own miraculous manifestations. The successful work here and the immediate recognition of it serve to show, in a more condemnatory aspect, the subsequent transgression of the people. In the

making of the tabernacle-furniture, they had recognised the claims of God, and God had recognized their ability to meet his claims. He knew that they could not yet be obedient in all things; he only asked that they should be obedient as far as they were able to be obedient. They had shown their ability once; and it was their great blame that they did not show it again and again.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XL.

Vers. 1—33.—THE COMMAND TO SET UP THE TABERNACLE, AND ITS PERFORMANCE. All was now ready. Bezaleel and Aholiab had completed their task. The work for the tabernacle had been given in, and had been approved. Moses did not however at once set it up. He waited for a command from God. After a short interval, the command came. He was ordered to select the first day of the ensuing year—the first day of the first year of freedom—for the operation. Directions were given him, which fixed the order in which the various parts were to be set up, and assigned to the various articles of furniture their proper places (vers. 1—8). When he had arranged the whole as directed, he was to anoint the various parts (vers. 9—11). He was then to wash and dress Aaron, and his sons; to invest them with their robes of office (vers. 12—14), and to anoint them to be priests (ver. 15). The orders given were executed, except (as it would seem) those concerning the investiture of the priests and the anointing, which were deferred. (See Lev. viii. 6—30.) In one day the sanctuary was completely set up (vers. 18—33).

Vers. 1—8.—*The directions to set up the tabernacle.*

Ver. 2.—On the first day of the first month. The first of Abib, or Nisan, the "New Year's Day" of Israel, coinciding nearly with the opening of the vernal equinox, a very suitable day for the inauguration of a place of worship. The tabernacle was to be set up first of all; then the tent was to be placed over it. See vers. 18, 19.

Ver. 3.—The first thing to be placed within the tabernacle was the ark of the testimony, as containing the foundation of the covenant between God and Israel, and being the special token of God's presence with his people. See the comment on ch. xxv. 10. The "two tables" were placed within the ark before it was brought into the tabernacle (vers. 20, 21). Cover the ark with the veil—i.e., "hang up the veil in front of the ark, so as to cover or conceal it."

Ver. 4.—Thou shalt bring in the table—i.e., "the table of shew-bread" (ch. xxv. 23—30; xxxvii. 10—16). And set in order the things, etc. It has been observed with reason that the directions of Lev. xxiv. 5—7 must have been already given, though not recorded till so much later. Bread and frankincense were to be "set in order" on the table in a particular way. The candlestick. The seven-branched candelabrum (ch. xxv. 31—39; ch. xxxvii. 17—24). And thou shalt light the lamps. The lamps would have to be lighted on the first day at even (ch. xxvii. 21; xxx. 8).

Ver. 5.—The altar of gold. See ch. xxx. 1—10; ch. xxxvii. 25—28. Before the ark of the testimony—i.e., "before the veil, opposite the ark of the testimony," not within the veil. See the comment on ch. xxx. 6. The hanging of the door—i.e., "the curtain which closed the front or eastern end of the tabernacle." (See ch. xxvi. 36; ch. xxxvi. 37.)

Ver. 6.—The altar of burnt-offering. See ch. xxvii. 1—8; ch. xxxviii. 1—7. Before the door of the tabernacle. In the court, directly in front of the entrance, but not close to it, since the place of the laver was between the entrance and the altar. See the next verse.

Ver. 7.—The laver. See ch. xxx. 18; ch. xxxviii. 8. Put water therein. The water was required:—1. For the ablution of the priests (ch. xxx. 19—21; xl. 12, 31; Lev. viii. 6), and 2. For washing the victims (Lev. viii. 21).

Ver. 8.—The court. See ch. xxvii. 9—18; ch. xxxviii. 9—20. The hanging at the court gate—i.e., the curtain at the entrance of the court (ch. xxvii. 16; ch. xxxviii. 18).

Vers. 9—16.—*The directions to anoint, etc.*

Vers. 9—16.—It does not appear that these directions were carried out at this time. Probably, there would not have been time to go through all the ceremonies enjoined (ch. xxix. 1—34) on the same day with the erection of the sanctuary. They were consequently deferred, either till the next day, or possibly to a later date. (See Lev. viii.) The anointing of the tabernacle is recorded in ver. 10; of the vessels in ver. 11; of the altar and laver in the same. The washing of Aaron and his sons in ver. 6; their investiture in vers. 7—9; the anointing of Aaron in ver. 12; and a further anointing of Aaron together with his sons in ver. 30.

Ver. 10.—An altar most holy. Not really more holy than the rest of the tabernacle and its contents, which are all pronounced "most holy" in ch. xxx. 29; but requiring more to have its holiness continually borne in mind, since "it was more exposed to contact with the people" than the tabernacle and its vessels (Keil).

Ver. 12.—Unto the door of the tabernacle—i.e., to the place where the laver was situated (ver. 7).

Ver. 14.—Coats. Rather, "tunics." They were to be "of fine linen, woven work" (ch. xxxix. 27).

Ver. 15.—Thou shalt anoint them as thou didst anoint their father. The mode of anointing does not seem to have been identical in the two cases. The oil was first poured upon Aaron's head (Lev. viii. 12; Ps. cxxxiii. 2), and afterwards sprinkled upon him (Lev. viii. 30). It was, apparently, only sprinkled upon the priests (*ib.*). This was a lower form of anointing; and hence the high priest was sometimes called "the anointed priest" (Lev. iv. 5, 16; vi. 22; xvi. 32, etc.). **Their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood.** The Rabbinical commentators maintain that these words apply to the ordinary priests only, and on the strength of them establish a difference between the ordinary priests and the high priests. The latter were in every case to be anointed to their office. A single anointing sufficed for the former. It is scarcely necessary to say that there is no Scriptural ground for this distinction. The natural sense of the words is, rather, that as long as the anointing continued, the priesthood should continue.

Vers. 17—33.—The actual setting up of the tabernacle.

Ver. 17.—On the first day the tabernacle was reared up. Being constructed after the fashion of a tent, it was quite possible to rear up and also to take down, the tabernacle in less than a day.

Ver. 18.—Fastened his sockets. Rather, "placed its sockets." The "sockets" or "bases" appear to have been simply laid on the flat sand of the desert, not "fastened" to it in any way. They were heavy masses of metal and would remain where they were placed. **His pillars.** The pillars that supported the "veil," and also those at the east end, where the entrance was.

Ver. 19.—He spread abroad the tent over the tabernacle. The entire distinctness of the tent (*ôhel*) from the tabernacle (*mishkân*) is here very strongly marked. The "tent" was the goats' hair covering, with the framework of wood that supported it. The covering. The outer covering of rams' skins and seals' skins. (See ch. xxvi. 14.)

Ver. 20.—The testimony—i.e., the two tables of stone containing the Ten Command-

ments (ch. xxv. 16; xxxi. 18). **Set the staves on the ark.** "Put the staves," that is, "into the rings, and left them there" (ch. xxv. 14). **Put the mercy seat above upon the ark.** See ch. xxv. 21.

Ver. 21.—Set up the veil of the covering—i.e., hung the veil on the four pillars between the holy place and the holy of holies, and thus covered—i.e., concealed from sight, the ark of the testimony. (See the comment on ver. 3.)

Ver. 22.—Upon the side of the tabernacle northward. Upon the right hand, as one faced the veil. No direction had been given upon this point, but Moses probably knew the right position from the pattern which he had seen upon the mount.

Ver. 23.—He set the bread in order upon it. Upon the subject of this "order," see Lev. xxiv. 6—8, and compare the comment on ver. 4.

Ver. 24.—Over against the table—i.e., exactly opposite to the table, on the left as one faced the veil.

Ver. 25.—When evening came, he lighted the lamps. (See the comment on ver. 4.) Whatever the priests ordinarily had to do was on this occasion done by Moses.

Ver. 26.—The golden altar, or "altar of incense," was placed before the veil—i.e., outside it, in the holy place, midway between the table of shew-bread and the golden candlestick.

Ver. 28.—He set up the hanging at the door. He hung on the five pillars at the entrance to the tabernacle the "hanging" or "curtain," which had been made for the purpose (ch. xxxvi. 37).

Ver. 29.—He put the altar of burnt-offering by the door of the tabernacle. See the comment on ver. 6. **And offered upon it the burnt-offering and the meat-offering**—i.e., in his priestly character inaugurated the altar by offering upon it the first evening sacrifice. (See ch. xxx. 38—41.)

Ver. 30.—He set the laver. As directed in ver. 7. For the position of the laver, see ch. xxx. 18.

Vers. 31, 32.—Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands. This is not a part of the narrative of what was done at this time, but a parenthetic statement of the purpose to which the laver was subsequently applied. On the importance attached to these ablutions, see ch. xxx. 20, 21.

Ver. 33.—He reared up the court, etc., as directed in ver. 8. So Moses finished the work. With the hanging of the curtain at the entrance to the court, the erection of the tabernacle was complete. It was probably not till after this that Moses performed the acts of worship mentioned in the course of the narrative—put water in the laver (ver. 30), offered sacrifice (ver. 29), lighted the lamps (ver. 25), and burnt incense on the golden altar (ver. 26).

Vers. 1—33.—*The erection of the tabernacle.* At last the work of preparation was over. The work for which God had begun to give instructions more than nine months previously (ch. xxv. 1) was completed. All the parts of the structure, pillars, curtains, boards, sockets, bars, taches, hooks, pins; and all the furniture, ark, altars, table, candlestick, laver, vessels, censers, tongs, ash-pans—were finished and ready. All had been inspected by Moses, and approved (ch. xxxix. 43); they answered to the pattern which had been shown him in the mount (ch. xxv. 40). Still, however, Moses waited until he received from God:—1. The order for erection. 2. Instructions as to details.

I. THE ORDER FOR ERECTION. "On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation" (ver. 2). The order included:—1. *The act.* "Set up the tabernacle." 2. *The agent.* "Thou"—i.e., Moses. 3. *The time.* "The first day of the first month." Concerning the *act* there is nothing to be said. It was implied in the first order given, and lay at the root of every subsequent direction. The tabernacle could only have been devised in order to be set up. But concerning the agent and the time there was room for doubt. As to the *agent*: Bezaleel, the master craftsman, might have been chosen to erect what he had constructed; or Aaron might have been deputed to arrange the temple of which he was to be chief minister; or Moses and Aaron and Bezaleel might have been constituted a commission to carry out the work conjointly. But it pleased God to appoint Moses alone. For every enterprise it is best to have one directing mind, one ultimate authority. Otherwise there will be conflicting views, waste of time and energy, and commonly an inharmonious result. And Moses, who had alone seen "the pattern on the mount," was beyond all doubt the fittest director that could have been selected. As to the *time*: any day that was not a Sabbath would have been fairly suitable; but there seems an especial appropriateness in the selection of the first day of a new year. "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Eccles. vii. 1). A new year should begin with a good work. What better work for such a day than the opening of a Bethel—a house of God—a "tent of meeting," where God himself was to be met? God, who is the first, should have the first. First fruits of all things should be given to him. Thus, New Year's-day is a natural holy day. It opens the year. It is thus the most appropriate for openings.

II. INSTRUCTIONS AS TO DETAILS. A certain order had to be observed. God determined the order. First, the tabernacle itself was to be erected (ver. 2); then the ark was to be brought in and placed in the holy of holies (ver. 3); then the veil was to be hung up (*ib.*). After this the furniture of the holy place was to be brought in—the table of shewbread (ver. 4), the candlestick (*ib.*), and the altar of incense (ver. 5). Next, the hanging at the entrance to the tabernacle was to be put up (*ib.*). Lastly, the outer court and its furniture were to be taken in hand. The laver and altar of burnt offering were to be set in their places (vers. 6, 7); the pillars and hangings which enclosed the court were to be arranged, and the curtain hung at the entrance to it (ver. 8). The general law which pervades the whole is the precedence of the more important over the less important. We do not know what time intervened between the delivery of these instructions to Moses and "the first day of the second year"; but probably the interval was not long. Moses would employ it in selecting a site, and in preparing the artificers and others for the day's proceedings. When the appointed day arrived, he applied himself to the work (ver. 17). First, he stretched, by means of cords and tent-pins, probably on a light wooden framework, the tabernacle cloth of blue and purple and scarlet and fine twined linen (ch. xxvi. 1—6). Then he laid down the "sockets" of silver in their places. fitted the boards into them by means of their "tenons," put in the bars which kept the boards together, and reared up the pillars for the veil (ch. xl. 18). After this he stretched the goats'-hair covering, which constituted the tent, outside and above the tabernacle cloth, and placed over the goats'-hair covering the rams' skins and the seals' skins (ver. 19). So much constituted the erection of the tabernacle proper. Next he proceeded to the furniture; he brought in the ark and mercy seat, and, having placed them in the holy of holies (ver. 21), set up the veil; thus completing it, and isolating it from the holy place. After this, he brought

in the furniture of the holy place—the table, the candlestick, and the golden altar—and arranged it (vers. 22—26). He then, and not till then, according to the direction given to him (ver. 5), put up the hanging which separated the tabernacle from the court (ver. 28). Finally, he proceeded to set in order the court. He put the altar of burnt offering and the laver into their places (vers. 29, 30), carried the hangings alongside the court's four sides, and arranged the curtain at the entrance (ver. 33). So, with a minute observance of the directions given, "Moses finished the work." Note the exactitude with which Moses followed all the directions given him, together with the liberty which he claimed and exercised:—1. To determine the time of their execution. 2. To fill up particulars with respect to which no directions had been given. 1. Of the first, the deferring of the consecration by anointment of the tabernacle and its furniture, and of the consecration of Aaron and his sons (vers. 9—15), is the crucial instance. It has been said that these may have taken place on the same day as the erection of the tabernacle; but the mode in which the narrative of the consecration is introduced in Lev. viii. 1—5, no less than the separation of the narrative from that of the present chapter, implies an interval between the two events. Probably, by the time of the completion of the court, the day was far advanced, and it would have been impossible to perform all the ceremonies commanded (ch. xxix. 1—36) in the remaining space. 2. Of the second, the emplacement of the table and the candlestick (vers. 22, 24), the burning of incense (ver. 27), and the offering upon the altar of burnt offering (ver. 29) are specimens. Evidently Moses considered that "God's instructions were not always to be carried out with literal exactness, but sometimes with an enlightened spiritual freedom."

Vers. 18—33.—*The sanctification of material things.* Objections are raised to the entire idea of a holiness in things. Holiness, it is said, being a personal quality, cannot reside in things, or be communicated to them, or be rightly predicated of them. God is holy; angels are holy; some men are holy; but nothing else. To imagine a holiness in things is superstition. This is to effect a complete severance of matter from spirit—to dig an abyss between them—to regard them as asymptotes, which cannot ever touch one the other. But if God became incarnate, if "the Word was made flesh" (John i. 14), then that matter which constituted the body of Christ, most certainly became holy. And if that matter, why not other matter? Why not the food which he "blessed and brake, and gave to his disciples"? Why not the drink which he called "his blood"? If there is a contact between matter and spirit, and some spirits are holy, then it is readily intelligible that the matter which comes into contact with them may be, in a certain sense, holy also. And this is, beyond all doubt, the language of the Scriptures. We hear of "holy ground" (ch. iii. 5), "holy places" (ch. xxvi. 33), "holy garments" (ch. xxviii. 2), "holy oil" (ch. xxx. 31), "a holy perfume" (ib. 35), etc. Things material may become holy in various ways, e.g.—

I. BY BEING TAKEN INTO GOD. Christ took our nature upon him, joined for ever the Manhood to the Eternal Godhead, and so gave to his own body an eternal sanctification of the highest possible kind, which renders it *most* holy.

II. BY BEING BROUGHT INTO CONTACT WITH HIM. The Cross of Christ, the crown of thorns, the nails, the soldier's spear, the raiment, the vesture, the napkin which was about his head when in the grave, became hallowed by association with him, and must ever be regarded by all Christians as holy. If the garment shown at Trêves were indeed what it professes to be—a garment once worn by Christ—it would well deserve the name, by which it is commonly called, of the "holy coat." As it is, we have no sufficient evidence of any existing piece of matter, that it ever came into contact with our Lord's blessed body; but, if we had, any such piece of matter would be "holy."

III. BY DESIGNATION FOR A HOLY PURPOSE. It is in this way especially that buildings, garments, vessels, cloths, and the like, are "holy." They are intended for and serve a holy purpose—are employed in the worship or service of Almighty God. It is felt on all hands that such things ought to be set apart from secular uses, reserved for the sacred end to which they have been designated, and applied to that only. Now, in cases of this kind, it does not appear to be inappropriate that the designation should be by a material act; and certainly no more significant act than anointing with oil is possible. For oil is symbolical of the Holy Spirit; and as it is by the Holy Spirit that

individuals are sanctified, not only personally but officially, so as to be media of grace to others, so it may well be conceived that even inanimate things may become channels of grace and blessing to men, through an effluence from the same Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not disdain all contact with matter. At the beginning of creation he "moved," or rather brooded, "upon the face of the waters" (Gen. i. 2). At the baptism of Jesus, the Spirit was seen "descending like a dove, and lighting on him" (Matt. iv. 16). At Pentecost he showed himself in the form of "tongues of fire" (Acts ii. 3). In every consecration it is quite possible that he may bear a part, though in general he shrouds himself, and does not let his presence be perceived.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—33.—*The erection of the tabernacle.* I. THE TIME. 1. It reminded them of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage; "this month shall be unto you the beginning of months" (ch. xii. 2). God's dwelling-place is ever erected amid the adoring remembrance of his redemption. "The love of Christ constraineth us." 2. It was a consecration of the year upon which they were entering. It struck the key-note of the after time. The joy of the new year was to rise into the greater joy of the new life. The joy which hallows all time is that of reconciliation to, and union with, God.

II. THE ORDER OF CONSTRUCTION. 1. The tabernacle was first erected in which God was to be served. The duty to serve God is confessed before the power is attained or the way understood. (1) The emblem of the law in its strength and weakness. (2) The story of all the saved. 2. The tabernacle is next furnished, and the altar and laver and outer court set up. The means are given of reconciliation and service. It is not enough to be convinced of duty. God must be waited upon for power. His way must be taken. "No other foundation can any man lay." 3. All things are anointed with the holy oil. The spirit hallows and energizes all the means of grace which God has given. 4. The priests also are anointed; we, too, must be so in order to serve, and we shall be if we come, as they did, into the midst of what God has provided and sanctified for man's redemption.

III. THE ERECTION OF THE TABERNACLE WAS FOLLOWED BY ITS IMMEDIATE USE. So soon as the shew-bread table was placed, the bread was set in order upon it. The lamps were immediately lighted. He burnt sweet incense upon the altar before the veil. On the altar of sacrifice he offered burnt offering and meat offering. At the laver "Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their feet." Belief should follow fast upon the heels of knowledge. God has sent forth his salvation, not to be the subject of intellectual interest and theological speculation, but to touch and change the heart. The bread of life has been given to feed the perishing, not merely to be examined, weighed, analysed.—U.

Ver. 10.—*The altar most holy.* There is a difference at once perceptible between the words of sanctifying in ver. 9, and the words of sanctifying in ver. 10. Whereas the tabernacle and all therein are declared as *holy*, a special sanctity is somehow attached to the altar of burnt offering. "It shall be an altar most holy." The reasonable explanation of this is, not that there was any special sanctity in the altar of burnt offering itself, but that from its exterior position it was in great danger of being treated thoughtlessly, and therefore needed special attention to be called to it. Hence we are led to note the existence of a similar distinction among such things as we are bound to treat in a reverent and careful manner. Certain persons, things, and places are of such a kind as to be their own protection. Perhaps it is still true to some extent, though doubtless it was much more felt in former times, that there is a divinity which doth hedge a king. Men of coarse and scandalous tongues manage to put a check on themselves in the presence of women and children. Some are still alive who remember the horror and indignation excited by the resurrection-men of fifty or sixty years ago, and how little watch-houses were built in some churchyards, and men took it in turns to guard by night the resting-places of their beloved dead. But those who would shrink with loathing from the bare possibility that they could be guilty of such desecration are

nevertheless found treating great realities of holiness with indifference, if not with contempt. Remember with what profaning hands the Holy One of God was abused; he who spake concerning the temple of his body; he who was holy, not by any mere association, not for the purposes of some temporary economy, but essentially holy. Are there not those who, thoughtless enough of all the evil they are doing, crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame? (Heb. vi. 6.) What a fearful outlook is indicated for those who tread underfoot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant, wherewith they are sanctified, an unholy thing, and do despite unto the spirit of grace! (Heb. x. 29.) The very same thing may in one way be hallowed, and in another be desecrated. There is a great semblance of hallowing in the huge family Bibles so often seen in English houses, rich, and not unfrequently tawdry, in their binding and gilding; but after all they may only be there as part of a reputation for respectability. The true hallowing is in the dog's-eared, well-worn book, poorly printed it may be, and on common paper, and with that indefinable appearance about it which tells of constant use. It is only too easy a thing to put superstition in the place of an intelligent, diligent, profound, and practical reverence. Even Christians are strangely negligent concerning the holiness inherent in them if they are really born again. Very unobservant are they of the persistent references in the New Testament to the holiness of a Christian's personality. How much is done, as a matter of course, that is inconsistent, yea, scarcely compatible with being, indeed, a living sacrifice!—Y.

Vers. 1—33.—*The tabernacle set up.* The sanctuary did not take long in making. When hearts are willing, gifts liberal, and hands active, work is soon accomplished. Everything was ready by the first day of the new year after leaving Egypt. The new year was inaugurated by the setting up of the finished dwelling. How suitable an employment for the new year, to consecrate our *hearts* anew as dwelling-places for Jehovah! The section conveys lessons as to—

I. ORDER IN THE SANCTUARY. Every thing was done with order and deliberation. "Set the bread *in order*" (vers. 4, 23). "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. xv. 40).

II. BEAUTY IN THE SANCTUARY. God's house, when completed, was a *beautiful* house. Cf. Is. lx. 13.

III. HOLINESS IN THE SANCTUARY. The place was holy. Moses consecrated it by anointing (vers. 9—12). Those who served in it were to be holy. This is signified by the wearing of "holy garments" (ver. 13), and by washing in the laver (ver. 31). Holiness becomes God's house (Ps. xciii. 5). His servants are to serve him in "beauties of holiness" (Ps. cx. 3).

IV. WORSHIP IN THE SANCTUARY. Moses set the bread in order on the table, lighted the lamps, burnt incense, etc. He offered burnt offerings and meat offerings on the altar (ver. 39). The tabernacle was a picture Gospel.—J. O.

Ver. 33.—*The two finishings.* "So Moses finished the work." Cf. ch. xxxix. 32—"Thus was all the work of the tabernacle finished." View the tabernacle as a type of the spiritual house—the Church. This tabernacle is being *made*. A time is coming when, in a more special sense, it will be *reared*,—the "day of Christ"—the day of "the manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 19. Cf. Rev. xxi. 2, 3).

I. THE TABERNACLE WAS NOT REARED TILL ALL THE LABOURS IN CONNECTION WITH THE MAKING OF IT HAD BEEN FINISHED. 1. The tabernacle was made *with a view* to its being reared. This was the *end*. So the calling, saving, and perfecting of individuals for the kingdom of God has always reference to their ultimate manifestation with Christ in glory (Rom. viii. 17—26; 2 Cor. iv. 15—18; v. 1—11; Eph. v. 25—28; Phil. i. 6, 10; Col. iii. 1—4, etc.). 2. The labours of making were entirely *finished*, before the rearing was begun. The rearing was but the bringing into visibility of an already finished work. (1) All the *parts* of the tabernacle were made. (2) All the *furniture* of the tabernacle was made. (3) The *dress* of the *servants* of the tabernacle was made. Not till all this was done was the command given to rear. So the day of the manifestation of believers will not arrive till all labours preparatory to the setting up of the kingdom of God in glory have been concluded. The Gospel preached through all the world

(Matt. xxiv. 14), the "elect" (ver. 31) gathered in, the last soul saved, believers sanctified, every "living stone" (1 Pet. ii. 4) shaped and fashioned for the place it is ultimately to occupy in the heavenly building, etc. 3. These labours having been concluded, the rearing was proceeded with *without delay*. The rearing included (1) the putting of the parts of the tabernacle together. (2) The arrangement of its furniture. (3) The ordering of its service. So, when once the preparatory labours in connection with the kingdom of God have been finished, no time will be lost in setting it up in its final glory. Christ will appear, and his people will appear with him (Col. iii. 4). He and they will be glorified together (Rom. viii. 17). 4. The rearing of the tabernacle was the setting of it *in visible glory* before the eyes of the Israelites. So will Christ come to be "glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe" (2 Thess. i. 10). 5. The rearing of the tabernacle completed the preparation of it as a *sanctuary for Jehovah*. The same will be true of the glorification of the Church (Rev. xxi. 3, 4).

II. THE TABERNACLE, MADE BY THE PEOPLE, WAS REARED BY MOSES. 1. Christ admits us to be fellow-workers with himself in the *labours* of his Church. These are carried on by human agency (2 Cor. vi. 1). 2. He alone has to do with the *glorification* of his Church.

III. WHEN THE TABERNACLE WAS REARED, IT WAS FOUND THAT NOTHING WAS WANTING TO ITS PERFECTION AS A SANCTUARY. So will the glorification of the Church make manifest the beauty, symmetry, completeness, and perfection of the spiritual structure. It will be found to be "a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. v. 27); complete as a place of habitation for Jehovah; a unity, and a perfect one.—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 34—38.—THE DESCENT OF THE GLORY OF GOD ON THE COMPLETED WORK. The work was finished—the first incense burnt (ver. 27)—the first sacrifice offered (ver. 29). Those who had watched the proceedings, and those who had been engaged in them, were probably about to retire to rest. Even Moses had withdrawn, and left the tabernacle to itself—when suddenly, there was a manifestation of Divine Power. The cloud, which had gone before the Israelites from Succoth onward (ch. xiii. 20—22), and which had recently settled upon the extemporised "Tent of Meeting" (ch. xxxiii. 9), left its place, and "covered" the newly-erected structure externally (ver. 34), while an intensely brilliant light—here called "the glory of God"—filled the whole interior of the tabernacle (*ib.*). Moses, it appears, would fain have re-entered the tabernacle—to see the great sight" (ch. iii. 3); but he could not—the "glory" was too dazzling (ver. 35). Thus a distinct approval was given to all that had been done. God accepted his house, and entered it. The people saw that he had foregone his wrath, and would be content henceforth to dwell among them and journey with them. Henceforth, throughout the wanderings, the cloud and tabernacle were inseparable. If the cloud was lifted a little

off it and moved in front, the tabernacle had to follow (ver. 36)—if it settled down on the roof, the people stopped and remained until it moved again (ver. 37). The appearance was as of a cloud by day, and as of fire by night, so that all could always see where the tabernacle was, and whether it was stationary or in motion (ver. 38). After the first descent, it would seem that "the glory" withdrew into the Holy of Holies, so that both Moses and the priests could enter the holy place, and minister there (Lev. viii. 10; x. 13, etc.).

Ver. 34.—Then a cloud. In the original "the cloud," i.e. the cloud so often spoken of (ch. xiii. 21, 22; xiv. 19, 20, 24; xix. 9; xxiv. 15—18; xxxiii. 9, 10). Covered the tent. Descended on the outer covering and rested there. Filled the tabernacle. Entered inside, and filled both holy place and Holy of Holies.

Ver. 35.—Moses was not able to enter. It is implied that he wished—nay, tried—to enter—but the "glory" prevented him. (Compare 1 Kings viii. 11; 2 Chr. v. 14; vii. 2.) Because the cloud abode thereon. It was not the external "cloud" which prevented Moses from entering, but the internal "glory." But the two are regarded as inseparable.

Vers. 36—38.—And when—i.e. "whenever." The last three verses describe the manner in which the cloud henceforth served

the Israelites as guide—not only directing their course, but determining when they were to move, and how long they were to rest at each encampment. For a further account of the same, see Num. ix. 15—23

Ver. 38.—The cloud . . . was upon the taber-

naole by day and fire was on it by night. Compare ch. xiii. 21, 22; and ch. xiv. 20, 24; Num. ix. 15, 16. The cloud had two aspects—one obscure, the other radiant. It was a dark column by day—a pillar of fire by night. Thus it was always visible.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 34—38.—*The symbols of God's presence.* I. GOD IS SEEN BY THOSE WHO UNFEIGNEDLY LOVE HIM AS PURE LIGHT. "I am the light of the world" (John viii. 12; ix. 5). "In him was life, and the life was the light of men" (*ib.* i. 4). "In him is no darkness at all" (1 John ii. 5). With clear unclouded radiance he shines on those who tread his heavenly courts, which need no other light besides him. "The city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev. xxi. 23). With a radiance not much less bright, he looks upon his saints on earth, cheering them, illumining their paths, making them glad with the light of his countenance. He may veil himself in condescension to their infirmity; but the veil is translucent; it covers without concealing; it tempers the brightness, but only as a thin haze tempers the splendours of the lord of day.

II. GOD SHOWS HIMSELF TO THE GENERALITY OF MEN AS MINGLED LIGHT AND CLOUD. To Abraham he appeared as "a smoking furnace and a burning lamp" (Gen. xv. 17); to the Israelites at Sinai as combined smoke and fire (Ex. xix. 18); to Solomon, dazzled by his glory, he was still one who "dwelt in the thick darkness" (1 Kings viii. 12). When Isaiah beheld him sitting in his temple "the house was filled with smoke" (Is. vi. 1—4); when Ezekiel "saw visions of God," he "looked and behold, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself." Wherever the glory of the Lord is seen, wherever he looks upon men with mercy and compassion, there his proper symbolism is light, though it may be a light partially obscured and mingled with darkness. For darkness symbolises his anger; and in the case of his wayward children, he cannot but be at once compassionate and angry; displeased, yet anxious to forgive. Or the darkness may be the dense cloud of human ignorance which the Divine light can only partially pierce through. Any way, the bulk of men see God as a light amid smoke. "Clouds and darkness are round about him" (Ps. xcvi. 2)—"he makes darkness his secret place, his pavilion round about him with dark waters, and thick clouds to cover him" (*ib.* xviii. 11). Fire flashes out of the clouds occasionally; gleams of light stream forth; "at the brightness of his presence, his clouds remove" (*ib.* 12), and he is seen to be man's "true light."

III. GOD IS TO SOME MERE DARKNESS, A DENSE OPAQUE CLOUD. This he is:—1. To agnostics—to them who know him not, and refuse to believe that he can be known; 2. To them who have never heard of him, but have a dim unconscious feeling that some infinite unknown being exists; 3. To them that have been taught to view him as a remorseless, revengeful being, without pity or mercy; 4. To them that, having known him aright, have cast his words behind their back, thrown off his authority, and placed themselves in determined antagonism to his will and commandments. All is dark in the future to such persons; and in the thought of God is "the blackness of darkness for ever." Because they have not chosen to retain God in their knowledge, God has given them over to a reprobate mind (Rom. i. 28). They "put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." He, in whom is no darkness at all, is to them mere darkness. The God of this world has "blinded their eyes" that they cannot see; and, like a blind man, looking at the sun, the darkness which is in their own vision they ascribe to the object which their dim sight fails to distinguish. God is "the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John i. 9). But "if the light that is within thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matt. vi. 23.)

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 34—38.—*Indwelling and guidance.* I. GOD OWNS THE DWELLING-PLACE SET UP ACCORDING TO HIS COMMANDMENTS. "Then the cloud," etc. "And Moses was not able to enter in," etc.; it was claimed as his own and taken possession of by the Lord. 1. The soul which comes by God's way will be filled with God's glory. 2. The Church which honours God he will glorify. 3. The full glory of the perfected Church, the bride of Christ.

II. WHERE THE LORD DWELLS HE GUIDES. When the cloud was taken up they went onward; when it rested they rested. 1. He is our guide in our onward journey. (1) In providence. We must make sure that we follow him. It will not avail to choose our own way and then ask God to be with us. We are to follow his leading, not he ours. (2) In grace. We may be mourning departed joy. There may be no longer the freshness and power we once felt in the ministration of the word, or in prayer. We have been slumbering and loitering. We have not striven to press through our sins and into fuller light. The cloud has lifted and gone onward, and we must follow after. "This one thing I do." 2. He is our guide into patience. (1) He teaches us to bear and so to overcome. (2) By the resting of faith to possess and to grow.—U.

Vers. 34—38.—*The house filled with glory.* The close of the book of Exodus is worthy of the greatness of its subject. It ends where the history of the world will end, with the descent of Jehovah's glory to dwell with men (Rev. xxi. 3). We have seen Israel in bondage; have beheld its redemption; have followed it through the wilderness; have heard the thunders of the law at Sinai; have been witnesses of the nation's covenant with God; have seen its shameful apostasy; have traced the steps of its reconciliation; have heard the instructions given for the building of this tabernacle; have viewed the tabernacle itself. We see now the symbol of Jehovah's glorious presence in the midst of the people whom he has thus in so many ways made his own. What a wondrous succession of subjects we have thus had before us in the course of our review. The intolerable anguish of oppressed Israel; the birth of the deliverer; the singular providence of his early life; his great choice; the call in Midian; the revelation of the name; the return to Egypt; first failures; the long and tragic contest with Pharaoh; the hardening of Pharaoh's heart; the exodus; the Red Sea; the miracles of the desert; the law; the covenant; the "patterns" shown to Moses in the mount; the sin of the calf; the great intercession; the name of mercy; the preparation of the sanctuary. There remains to complete the series only this final scene of the entrance of Jehovah's glory into the house prepared for his habitation. This was the true consecration of the sanctuary, and the true consecration of the nation. "A cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (ver. 14). In what is related in these verses we have:—

I. A THREEFOLD PRIVILEGE. 1. *Indwelling.* The filling of the tabernacle with the glory was the symbol of Jehovah's taking up his abode in it, and so in Israel (cf. ch. xxv. 8). It testified (1) to the completeness of his reconciliation with the people. Cf. Is. xii. 1—"O Lord, I will praise thee, though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." (2) To his complacency in the beautiful house they had reared for him. Cf. Ps. cxxxii. 14—"This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell; for I have desired it." (3) To his desire to dwell among them. Note—I. The true glory of the Church is God's residence in her midst. This was Israel's highest distinction (ch. xxxiii. 16). 2. We should pray that the time may come when the Church shall be, not only dwelt in by her Lord, but "filled" with the "glory" of his presence (Is. lx.). 2. *Protection.* The glory filled the tabernacle within, while the cloud spread itself above the tent as a protective covering without. So is Jehovah the protection of his Church (Is. iv. 5, 6; Zech. ii. 5). 3. *Guidance* (vers. 36—38). See Homily on ch. xiii. 21, 22.

II. A HINT OF IMPERFECTION. "Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation," etc. (ver. 35). Thus are we reminded that, amidst all these glorious circumstances, that which is perfect is not yet come. 1. Law, not gospel. 2. A material building, not a spiritual house. 3. Earth, not heaven. It was a glory (1) too

great for man to see. Even Moses, who had seen so much of the Divine glory, was not able to look upon it. (2) Too great for such a building—a mere material structure—to contain. Man longs for nearer communion. So great a glory needs a better house to contain it—a spiritual (1 Pet. ii. 5).

III. A FORECAST OF WHAT SHALL BE. That which is perfect is not yet come, but it will come by-and-by. 1. The tabernacle of God will be with men, and he will dwell among them (Rev. xxi. 3, 4). His glory will fill it. "The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev. xxi. 23). 2. This glory will be no longer unapproachable. We shall be able to endure the sight. "His servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face" (Rev. xxii. 3, 4). We shall receive the Vision. 3. This, however, will only be when earthly conditions have been exchanged for heavenly. "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. xv. 53). Till that hour arrives, we must be content to "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. v. 7), seeing only "as through a glass darkly" (1 Cor. xiii. 12).—J. O.

HOMILETICAL INDEX

TO

THE BOOK OF EXODUS.

CHAPTER I.		THEME	PAGE
		THEME	PAGE
The Patriarchal Names	2	The Infancy of Moses	30
Joseph in Egypt	3	By Works was Faith made Perfect ...	32
Joseph in Death with all his Gene- rations	3	A Picture of true Faith	33
Removal to Egypt	4	The Child of the Water	33
The Twelve Foundations	4	Moses as a would-be Deliverer ...	36
An Ending	5	Moses as a Peace-Maker	37
The Prosperity of Israel	6	Moses as a Fugitive	37
Tarry thou the Lord's Leisure ...	7	The Choice of Moses	38
God the Protector of His People ...	12	Unpurified Zeal	40
Joseph Forgotten	12	Moses, the Ardent but Mistaken Patriot	40
The Wisdom of the Wise brought to nought	12	Moses the Hater of all Oppression ...	42
A Multiplying People and a King's Fears	13	Moses " was Grown "	44
The Bondage	14	Mistake in Life's Morning	45
Israel in Egypt	15	Moses a Second Time the Champion of the Oppressed	47
Egypt's Sin	16	Moses as Husband and Father ...	47
Steps in Sin	17	The Long Exile	47
Duty of Opposing Authority when its Commands are against God's Law ...	18	Gershom	49
A King's Edicts	19	Moses in Midian	49
The Policy of Pharaoh	20	Sitting by the Well ; a Suggestive Comparison	50
The Conduct of the Midwives ...	22	Life and its Moods	50
The Way of Sin	23	Death Comes at Last, Even to the Proudest Monarch	52
CHAPTER II.		The Hour of Help	52
The Birth of Moses	25	Moses and Christ	52
The Beauty of Moses	26	A Groaning Israel and an Observant God	52
The Escape of Moses	26	CHAPTER III.	
The Education of Moses	27	The Burning Bush 67, 72, 81, 58, 64	
A Child of Providence	29	The Impulse to Draw Nigh	59

THEME	PAGE
Increased Cruelty...	126
The Increase of Trouble for God's People no Proof of the Failure of His Purpose ...	128
A Blind Obedience to the Commands of Tyrants not Laudable ...	129
Vicarious Suffering ...	129
A Wicked Man's Persistence in Wrong Doing ...	131
Sufferings, even at the hand of Lawful Authorities, not Always Deserved...	132
Unheeded Expostulation ...	132
Pharaoh's first Response; his Answer in Deed ...	133
The Troubled find Consolation in God only ...	134
The Servants of God Liable to Reproach from Friends no less than Enemies	134
Murmuring and Faith ...	135
Thoughtless Smilers of a Brother in Adversity ...	137
The Religious Soul takes its Grievances to God ...	139

CHAPTER VI.

God's Condescension to a Weak Faith	140
God's Names and their Importance ...	141
God a Keeper of Covenants ...	141
A Divine Commentary on a Divine Name ...	141
A Rich Promise ...	143
God Encourages Moses in His Despon- dency ...	143
The Message to Afflict Israel ...	145
The Lord thy God is One God ...	145
The New Commission ...	147
The Pains of the Lower Life Shutting out the Blessings of the Higher One	148
The Servant of God must Labour Unceasingly ...	151
Shaken Faith and an Unshaken Pur- pose ...	151
The Uncircumcised Lips ...	153
The Contagion of Despair ...	154
The Historical Character of Real Reve- lation ...	156
The Genealogy of Moses and Aaron...	157

CHAPTER VII.

God Assigns to each Man his Intellec- tual Grade ...	160
---------------------------------------------------------	-----

THEME	PAGE
The Fierceness of Man turns to God's Praise ...	160
Miracles the Credentials of an Amba- sador from God ...	161
A God to Pharaoh ...	161
Heart Hardening ...	162
God still Glorified amid Human Weakness and Sin ...	165
False Imitations of Things Divine not difficult of Detection ...	166
The Rod turned into a Serpent ...	167
The First Sign to Pharaoh; the Rod becomes a Serpent ...	169
God's Punishments Appropriate and Terrible ...	172
The Nile turned into Blood ...	173
The First Plague; the Water turned into Blood ...	176, 174
The Power of Satan is with all Deceiv- ableness ...	177
God Allows Men to Seek and Obtain Alleviation of his Judgments ...	177
The Great Conflict ...	178
"The Lord He is the God" ...	179

CHAPTER VIII.

God can Scourge Men beyond En- durance with a Whip of Straw ...	181
Three Plagues—Frogs, Lice, Flies ...	181
The Plague of Frogs ...	185, 184
God's Mercy when Men Repent ever so Little ...	187
Double-minded Men, &c. ...	188
Moral Avalanches not easily Arrested &c. ...	189
The Plague of Lice ...	189
The Third Plague—the Gnats, the Finger of God ...	191
God puts Division between the Good and Bad, both Here and Hereafter	193
The Plague of Flies ...	195, 193
The Fourth Plague ...	196
Compromise not Allowable in Religion	198
The Duty of God's Servants to Rebuke the Great of the Earth ...	198

CHAPTER IX.

The Burthen of Man's Sin Presses on the Brute Creation ...	199
The Plague of Murrain of Beasts ...	200

THEME	PAGE
The Fifth Plague...	201
Sin Punished by Physical Suffering, &c. ...	203
The Plague of Boils and Blains	205, 206, 204
The Method of the Divine Rule over Bad Men, &c. ...	209
The Plague of Hail ...	210
The Road to Ruin ...	212
"The Earth is the Lord's," &c. ...	213
"Harden not Your Hearts" ...	215
The Seventh Plague—Hail Mingled with Fire ...	216
Mercy in Judgment ...	218
The Mock Repentance of a Half-Awakened Sinner, &c. ...	220

CHAPTER X.

God's Mercies and Wondrous Works to be Remembered ...	225
God's Long Suffering Towards the Wicked has a Limit ...	226
Man's Interposition with Good Advice may come Too Late ...	227
The Terribleness of God's Severer Judgments ...	227
The Agency of Nature used by God both in Inflicting and Removing Judgments ...	228
A New Message ...	229
A Plague of Locusts ...	232, 237, 230
The Tales of a Grandfather ...	235
God's Judgments on Sin, &c. ...	236
The Children of Darkness have Darkness, &c. ...	238
Compromise, &c. ...	239
Bad Men, &c. ...	241
The Plague of Darkness ...	242, 244, 241

CHAPTER XI.

Crises bring out Men's Characters, &c. ...	246
The Beginning of the End ...	247
How God Justifies the Trust of all who Hope in His Mercy ...	248
The Issues of Life and Death are in the Hand of God ...	249
Righteous Anger ...	250
A Finale ...	251
The Tenth Plague ...	253
Man's Ill-doing causes God's Wonders to be Multiplied ...	256

CHAPTER XII.

THEME	PAGE
The Advantages of the Ecclesiastical Calendar ...	262
The Passover proper ...	263
The Passover contained in the Eucharist... ...	265
The Beginning of Months ...	265
The Passover ...	272, 266
The Institution of the Passover ...	268
The Passover Lamb, a Prophetic Picture of Christ and His Salvation ...	271
Christ His People's Salvation and Strength ...	271
The Passover Feast the Type of the Christian Life ...	272
If One Died for all, then all Died ...	273
No Safety for Man beyond the Limits Protected by the Lamb's Atoning Blood ...	275
The Obligation of Men to Teach the True Meaning of Rites and Ceremonies to their Children... ...	276
Christ our Passover ...	277
"What Mean ye by this Service?" ...	278
The Children's Question in Canaan ...	278
Israel and the Sacrifice for Sin ...	280
The Death of the First-born ...	283, 281
Israel's Going Forth from Egypt a Pattern to Oppressed Churches ...	289, 285
Pharaoh's Prayer ...	286
The Dismissal ...	287
The Exodus as a Fact in History ...	290
The Mixed Multitude ...	291
Egypt's Sorrow: Israel's Joy ...	292
March at Midnight ...	293
God's Discipline of His Chosen Ones ...	294
The Exodus ...	295
Passover Precepts realized in Christian Practice ...	297
The Spirit of the Passover Ordinance ...	298

CHAPTER XIII.

The Dedication and Redemption of the First-born ...	300
The Rightful Use of Church Ordinances ...	301
The Sanctification of the First-born ...	303, 302
"Remember this Day" ...	303
How to Declare God's Salvation ...	304
Remember ...	304

THEME	PAGE	THEME	PAGE
It is the Method of the Divine Action to Accomplish Ends by Circuitous Means	306	The Good Resolutions of the Worldly are Short Lived	321
It is a Christian Duty to Carry with us on the Path of Life the Bones of Our Dead	307	The Pursuit	322
The Way of the Wilderness by the Red Sea	308	Jehovah Hardening Pharaoh's Heart	324
Joseph's Bones	309	Divine Trial a Touchstone to Distinguish Faith from Unfaithfulness ...	329
Israel's Journey the Emblem of the Christian's Pilgrimage	310	The Deliverance	329
God's Guidance of His People	311	Cruel Words out of Cowardly Hearts	331
The Fiery, Cloudy Pillar	312	The Passage of the Red Sea	333
Fire and Cloud	313	The Reward of Faith	335
		Speak with the Children of Israel, &c.	335
		Obedience necessary to Salvation ...	336
		God Completes the Deliverance of the Israelites, &c.	336
		God Protects His Own, but in Strange Ways... ..	340
		Light to the Friend, Darkness to the Foe	342
		The Goodness and Severity of God ...	342
		We Walk by Faith, not by Sight ...	343
		God's Dealings with the Wicked and Impenitent	346
		The Overthrow of the Egyptians ...	346

CHAPTER XIV.

God's Trials of His Faithful Ones ...	315
The Command to Encamp by the Sea	316
Israel Stricken with Terror by Reason of a Deliverance not yet Completed	318
Trial and Judgment	319

VOLUME II.

CHAPTER XV.

The Song of Moses a Pattern Thanksgiving	5
The Aid which Devout Women can render to the Church	6
Moses' Song	17, 6
The Song of Moses and the Lamb ...	15, 8
The Song of Triumph—God Exalted in the Lips of the People	11, 9
Jehovah among the Gods	13
Woman's Part in the Song of Triumph	15
The Sacrifice of Praise	17
The Results of Deliverance to God's People	18
The Trials and Vicissitudes of Life ...	20
Marah and Elim	21
The Want of Water and the Want of Faith... ..	24
"I will Hear what God the Lord will Say"	26
Trial and Blessing	27
The Well of Bitterness	27
Elim	29

CHAPTER XVI.

The Unreasonableness of Discontent	31
Murmurings	32
The Mercy of God in Hearing and Helping an Ungrateful People ...	35
The Gift of Manna	36
God and Nature	40
Bread from Heaven	41
God's Curse upon Ill-gotten Gains ...	42
The Manna of the Body—a Homily on Providence	43
The Manna for the Soul—a Homily on Grace... ..	44
The Provision of the Manna	45
He Nurtured them in the Wilderness	47
Christ the Bread from Heaven	48
The Law of the Manna	57, 50
Daily Provision for Daily Need ...	51
The Institution of the Sabbath ...	53
The Manna and the Sabbath	55, 54
Memorials of Mercies	59
The Pot of Manna	59

CHAPTER XVII.

THEME	PAGE
Water out of the Rock ...	62, 61
"That Rock was Christ" ...	65
Christ our Spring ...	66
The Giving of Water in Rephidim ...	67
They Tempted God in the Desert ...	69
Trial and Failure ...	70
The Uselessness of Fighting against God ...	72
"Diversities of Gifts," but the same Spirit ...	73
God's Mercies need Memorial, and Obtain it in Several Ways ...	74
Christ our Banner ...	75
Amalek ...	79, 76
"Thou hast Given a Banner unto them that Fear Thee" ...	79
The Discomfiture of Amalek in Rephidim ...	80

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Blessedness of Family Re-unions, when Rightly Ordered ...	83
The Visit of Jethro ...	84
The Claims of Home ...	87
The Consolation of those who Suffer Loss for the Kingdom of God ...	88
Friendship in its loftiest Form ...	88
Jethro's Visit—Moses in his Domestic Relations ...	88
"Ye are Come unto Mount Zion" ...	90
The Unwisdom of a Monopoly of Power	93
The necessary Qualifications of such as are to Exercise the Office of Judges	94
The Appointment of Judges ...	95
The Christian in Public Paths ...	97
The Economy of Force ...	97
Good Counsel well taken ...	98
Jethro's Advice ...	98
"The Eye cannot say unto the Hand, I have no Need of Thee" ...	100
Jethro the Model of a Friendly Adviser	102
Jethro's Departure ...	102

CHAPTER XIX.

Localities Shaped to suit God's Moral Purposes ...	104
Arrival and Encampment at Sinai ...	105
God's Promises to such as Keep His Covenant ...	108
The Covenant Proposed ...	109

THEME	PAGE
"My Covenant" ...	111
God's First Message to the People at Sinai ...	113
The Lord and His People ...	115
Covenant before Law ...	115
The Awfulness of God's Presence, &c. ...	115
"The Mount that might be Touched," &c. ...	118
The Manifestation of God's Glory at Sinai ...	120
The Revelation of Jehovah ...	122
God's Various Modes of Manifesting Himself ...	123
Sinai and Sion ...	124
"Prepare to Meet Thy God" ...	126
Only a Voice ...	127
The Priestly Office does not Dispense a Man from Personal Purity, &c. ...	128

CHAPTER XX.

The Ten Commandments Collectively	135
" " " Severally ...	136
The Moral Law—Preliminary ...	139
" " General Survey ...	140
The Ten Commandments—An Introductory Reminder ...	143
The First and Second Commandments: against Polytheism and Image Worship ...	155, 144
The Third Commandment: Profanity Forbidden ...	156, 146
The Fourth Commandment: The Sacred Sabbath ...	156, 148
The Fifth Commandment: The Commandment for Children ...	149
The Individual Israelite considered in his Duties towards his Neighbour ...	150
The Ten Words ...	152
The Soul for God only ...	153
The Commandment with Promise ...	153
Our Threefold Duty to our Neighbour ...	154
Utility of a Course of Teaching on the Commandments ...	154
The Second Table ...	157
A Correspondence between the Two Tables ...	158
The Eighth Commandment ...	159
The Last Commandment of the Second Table ...	161

THEME	PAGE
The Divine Presence at once Attractive and Repellent	162
The Terrors of Sin	163
The Law of the Altar	165
"I will Go unto the Altar of God" ...	165

CHAPTER XXI.

The Slave Laws	171
Laws on Homicide	172
Injuries to Parents	173
The Crime of Man-stealing	173
The Rule of Retaliation	174
The "Judgments"	174
Hebrew Bond Service	175
Murder and Related Capital Offences	180, 177
Bodily Injuries	177
The Servant Dying under Chastisement	178
"An Eye for an Eye"	179
Regulations for the Treatment of Slaves	180
The Requirement of Strict Equivalents in making Compensation for Injuries	182
"Mine Ears hast Thou Opened" ...	183
The Guilt of Neglect	184

CHAPTER XXII.

Punishment Graduated	186
The Law of Love Forbids all Injury to a Neighbour	187
The Sacred Character of Trusts	188
The Duty of Borrowers	189
Restitution	189
The Severity and the Tenderness of God	192
Abominations	195
Jehovah's Dues	195
The Treatment of the Stranger	195
The Treatment of the Widow and the Fatherless	197
The Treatment of the Poor	198

CHAPTER XXIII.

God's Care for the Administration of Justice	203
The Duties which Men owe to their Enemies	204

THEME	PAGE
The Sabbatical Year	204
The Rest of the Sabbath	205
Festival Laws	205
Doing Justice and Loving Mercy ...	207
Sabbaths and Feasts	208
Seeking the Things which make for Justice	209
A Threelfold Cord is not Quickly Broken	210
God's Promises sometimes Absolute, but for the most part Contingent on Obedience	213
Promises and Warnings	214
The Angel Provoked	216
The Angel of the Covenant	218
The Prospect in the Promised Land	219
"Mine Angel shall Go before Thee" ...	221
The Mediatorial Guide	221
The Peril of Idolatry	223

CHAPTER XXIV.

Man's Readiness to Enter into Covenant with God, and Promise Unlimited Obedience	225
The Vision of God for the Selected Few	226
The Terms of the Covenant Accepted "If any Man will do the Will he shall Know of the Doctrine"	228
The Ratification of the Covenant	229
Consecration	231
The Covenant Made	233
The Covenant Meal on Sinai	234
A Vision of God	234
Prolonged Commune with God	237
Moses Ascends the Mount	238
Moses' Sojourn with God a Type of Christ's	238

CHAPTER XXV.

The Law of Acceptable Offerings ...	240
The Materials for the Sanctuary ...	243, 241
"God Loveth a Cheerful Giver" ...	242
The Command to Build a Sanctuary	243
Earthly Sanctuaries typical of the Heavenly Dwelling-place	246
God's Dwelling-place among the People	247
The Symbolism of the Ark of the Covenant	250

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THEME	PAGE
The Hiding of God's Face from Man	348
The Mode of Recovering God's Presence	350
A Nation in Garb of Penitence	361
Effectual Importunity	353
The Third Intercession	353
The Craving for Close Communion with God	355
Clefts in the Rock	355
"Shew Me Thy Glory"	356
Divine Sovereignty	356
The Restoration to Divine Favour Completed	357
Mercy Veiled in Judgment	358
Intercession and its Reward	359

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The Second Promulgation of the Moral Law, &c.	361, 360
Renewal of the Tables and Fourth Intercession	361
The Second Proclamation of God's Name	364
The "Name"	365
The Manifestation of God	366
The Name of the Lord	367
"God is Love"	368
The Covenant Renewed	370
"I Make a Covenant"	371
Revived Obligations	371
The Shining of Moses' Face	375, 377, 373
The Symbolism of the Veil	374
The Shining Face	374
Fellowship with God and its Fruits	376

CHAPTER XXXV.

The Sabbath Rest not to be Broken for Sacred Work	378
The New Start	378

ON THE SYMBOLISM OF THE TABERNACLE AND ITS PARTS, SEE THE HOMILETICS ON CHAPTERS XXV., XXVI., XXVII., XXVIII., AND XXX. ON THE SYMBOLISM OF THE ANOINTING OIL AND THE HOLY INCENSE, SEE HOMILIES ON CHAPTER XXX.

THEME	PAGE
The Duty and Privilege of Making Offerings to God	379
Gifts and Workers	380
Zeal in Offering	381
Master-Craftsmen	383
Bezaleel and Aholiab	383

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Superabundant Giving	385
Exactitude in Obedience	385
The Tabernacle Made	386
The Work Fails not either for Gifts or Skill	386

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Art's Highest Efforts should be Concentrated on what is Most Essential to the Work in Hand	387
The Furnishing of the Tabernacle	388

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The Triumph of Female Piety over Female Vanity	389
The Mirrors of the Women	390
The Court and its Lessons	390
Great Wealth Worthily Employed	392
The Enumeration of the Metals Used	393

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A Blessing upon Obedience	394
The Clothes of Service	394
The Commanded Work Completed and Commended	395

CHAPTER XL.

The Erection of the Tabernacle	400, 401, 398
The Sanctification of Material Things	399
The Altar Most Holy	400
The Two Finishings	401
The Symbols of God's Presence	403
Indwelling and Guidance	401
The House Filled with Glory	404