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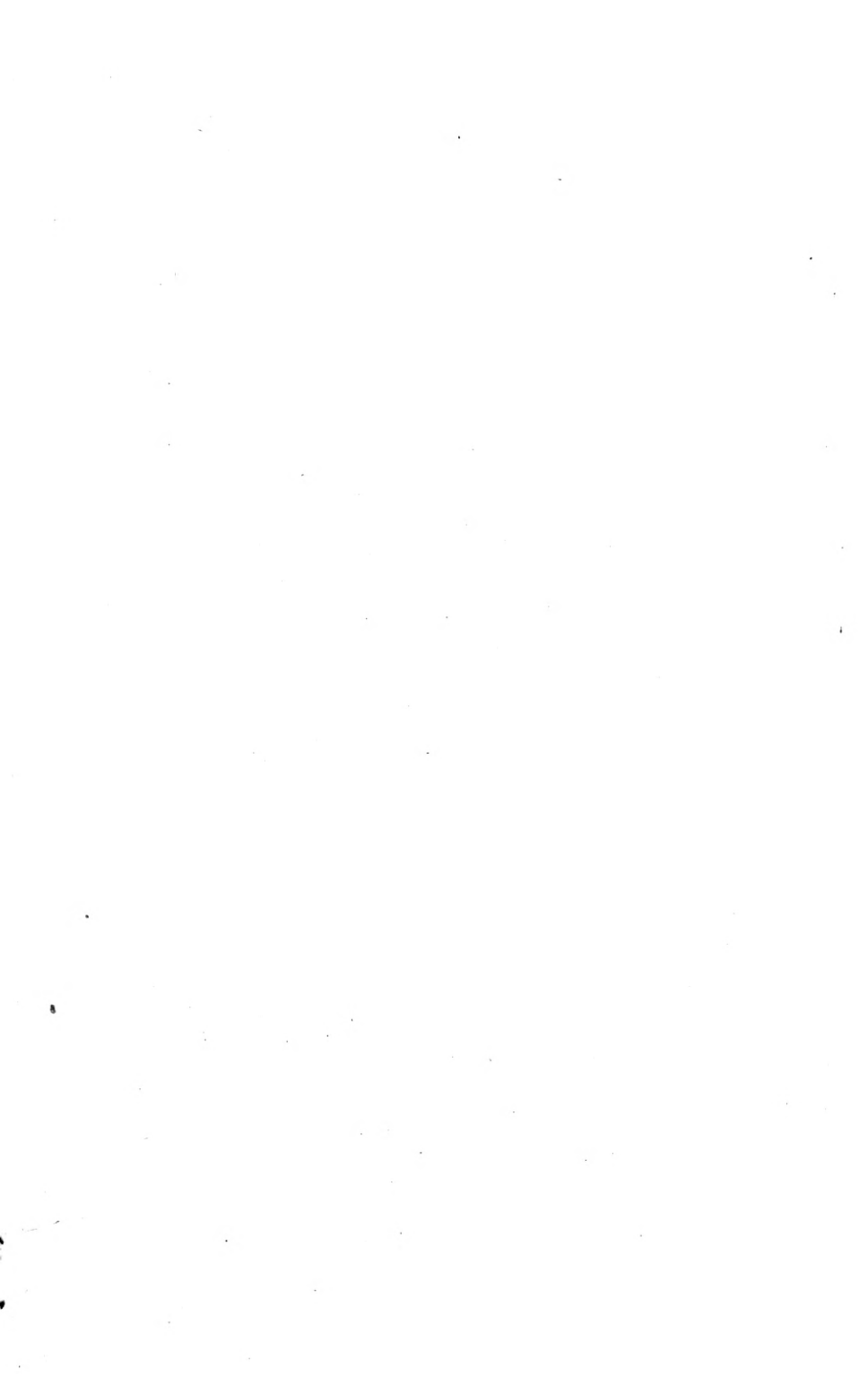
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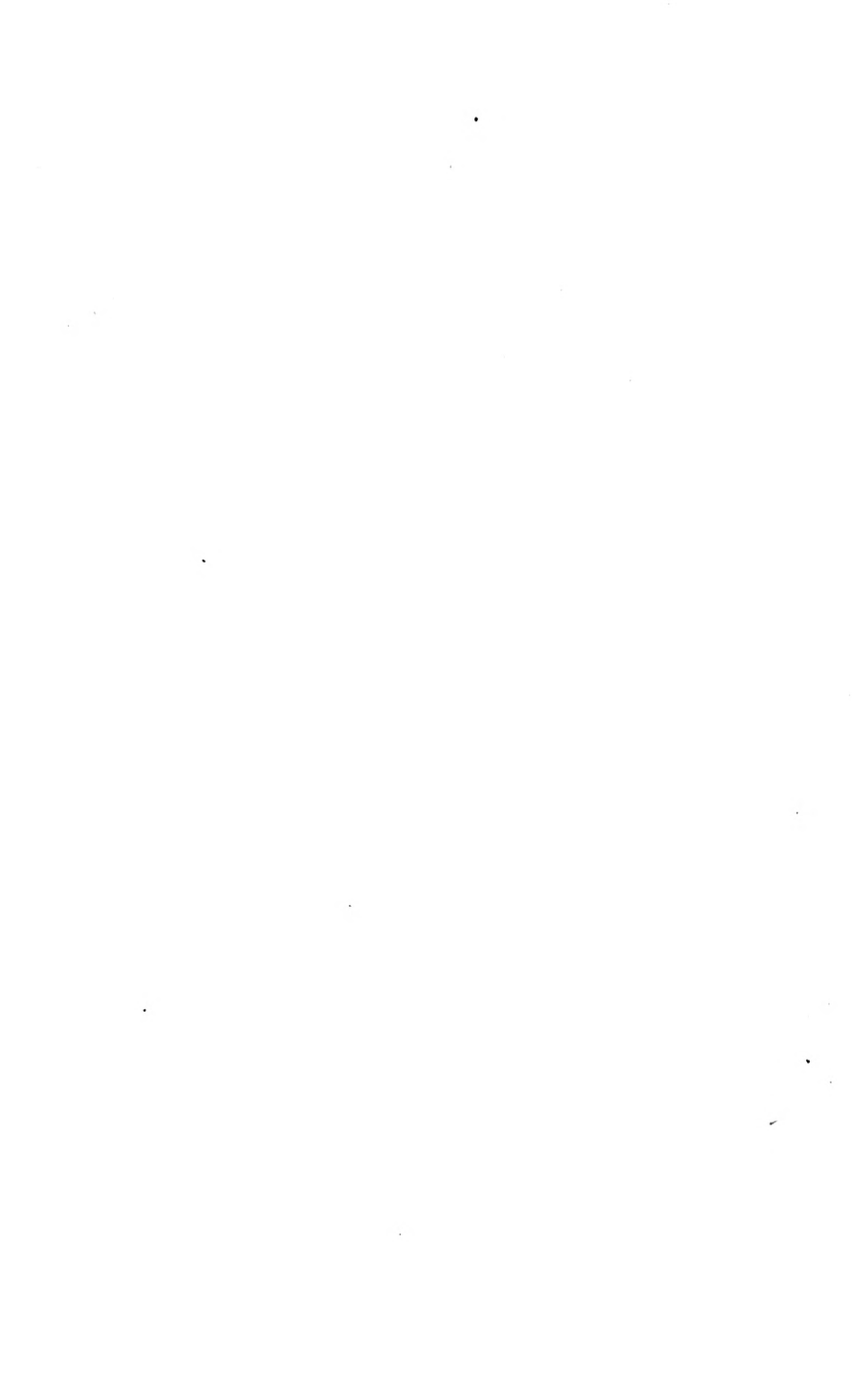
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BY

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

*ISAIAH. Vol. I.*



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## INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH.

**I. THE PROPHET ISAIAH.—1. HIS NAME.—***Isaiah*.—The English name *Isaiah* is an approximate transliteration of the abbreviated form *Yēshā'yāh*, which appears as the title of the prophet's book in the Hebrew canon, and occurs besides as the name of several individuals in post-exilic writings (Ezra viii. 7, 19; Neh. xi. 7; 1 Chron. iii. 21). The full and older form is *Yēshā'yāhū* (Gr. 'Hōsas; Lat., *Esaias* and *Isaias*), by which the prophet himself is always called in the text of his book, and in the historical writings of the Old Testament (2 Kings xix. 2, &c.; 2 Chron. xxvi. 22, xxxii. 20, 32); also other Jews (1 Chron. xxv. 3, 15, xxvi. 25). It means "Jehovah is salvation," and is therefore synonymous with the frequent *Joshua* or *Jeshua* (Jesus), and *Hosea* (cf. the Heb. *Elisha*, "God is," or "God of, salvation"; *Elishua*, *Ishi*, &c.) (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *His original name may have been Meshullam.* (See Prof. Margoliouth's view, p. xxii.)

**2. HIS PERSONAL HISTORY.—**The exact limits which we are led to assign to *Isaiah's* career depend on the conclusions we reach with regard to several disputed portions of his book. Generally speaking, however, we may say that he prophesied from the year in which King *Uzziah* died (740 or 736 B.C.) to the year of the sudden deliverance of Jerusalem from *Sennacherib* (701), and possibly some years after this. *Isaiah* was, therefore, born about 760, was a child when *Amos* appeared at Bethel (c. 755 or 750), and a youth when *Hosea* began to prophesy in N. Israel. *Micah* was his younger contemporary. The chief political events of his life were the ascent of the great soldier *Tiglath-pileser III.* to the throne of Assyria in 745, with a new policy of conquest; the league of *Aram* and N. Israel in 735, and their invasion of Judah, which moved *Ahaz* to call Assyria to his help; *Tiglath-pileser's* capture of *Damascus*, and the captivity of *Gilead* and *Galilee* in 734; the invasion of N. Palestine by *Salmanassar IV.* in 725, with the long siege of *Samaria* which fell to his successor *Sargon* in or about 721; *Sargon's* defeat of *Egypt* on her border at *Raphia* in 719; *Sargon's* invasion of Palestine in 711, with the reduction of *Ashdod*, and his defeat of *Merodach-baladan* and capture of *Babylon* in 709; *Sennacherib's* succession in 705, and invasion of Palestine in 701; his encounter with *Egypt* at *Eltekeh* on the borders of *Philistia* and *Judah*; his capture of *Ekron* and siege of *Jerusalem*, with the pestilence that overtook him between Palestine and *Egypt*; and his retreat from Palestine, with the consequent relief of *Jerusalem*—all in 701. About 695 (some say about 690 or even 685) *Hezekiah* was succeeded by *Manasseh*. Whether *Isaiah* lived into the reign of the latter is very doubtful. We have no prophecies from him later than *Hezekiah's* reign, perhaps none after 701. The *Mishna* says that he was slain by *Manasseh*. The apocryphal work "The Ascension of *Isaiah*," which was written in the beginning of the second Christian century, affirms that *Isaiah's* martyrdom consisted in being sawn asunder, which *Justin Martyr* repeats. Whether this be true, and whether it is alluded to in *Hebrews xi. 37*, we cannot tell. *Isaiah* is called the son of *Amos* (i. 1, ii. 1), who must not be confounded, as he has been by various Christian fathers, with the prophet *Amos*. A Jewish tradition makes *Isaiah* nephew of King

Amaziah; and his royal descent has been inferred from his familiarity with successive monarchs of Judah, and his general political influence. A stronger reason than these might be drawn from the presence in his name of Jehovah, which appears to have been confined at the earlier periods of Israel's history to proper names of the royal houses. But even this is not conclusive, and one really knows nothing of either Isaiah's forefathers or his upbringing. He was married, his wife is called "the prophetess" (viii. 3), and he had two sons to whom he gave names symbolic of those aspects of the nation's history which he enforced in his prophecies: *She'ar-yashub*, "A remnant shall return," who was old enough in 736-735 to be taken by his father when he went to face King Ahaz (vii. 3), and *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*, "Spoil-speeds-booty-hastes," who was born about a year later (viii. 1-4). The legend that Isaiah was twice married has been deduced from the false inference that "the young woman of marriageable age" (vii. 14) was his wife. By this expression the prophet probably did not mean a definite individual. The most certain and significant fact about Isaiah is that he was a citizen, if not a native, of Jerusalem, and had constant access to the court and presence of the king. Jerusalem is Isaiah's immediate and ultimate regard, the centre and return of all his thoughts, the hinge of the history of his time, the summit of those brilliant hopes with which he fills the future. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*)

3. HIS VOCATION.—*A prophet*.—The work of a prophet was the vocation of his life, to which every energy was devoted; even his wife is called the prophetess (chap. viii. 3); his sons bore prophetic names, not enigmatic like those given by Hosea to Gomer's children, but expressing in plain language two fundamental themes of his doctrine. . . . The truths which he proclaimed he sought to make immediately practical in the circle of disciples whom he gathered round him (viii. 16), and through them to prepare the way for national reformation. And in this work he was aided by personal relations within the highest circles of the capital. Uriah, the chief priest of the temple, was his friend, and appears associated with him as witness to a solemn act by which he attested a weighty prophecy at a time when king and people had not yet learned to give credence to his words (viii. 2). His own life seems to have been constantly spent in the capital; but he was not without support in the provinces. (*W. Robertson Smith, LL.D.*) *Relation to the unseen and the seen*.—Never, perhaps, has there been another prophet like Isaiah, who stood with his head in the clouds and his feet on the solid earth, with his heart in the things of eternity and with mouth and hand in the things of time, with his spirit in the eternal counsel of God and his body in a very definite moment of history. (*Valeton.*)

4. HIS COMMANDING INFLUENCE.—*The whole subsequent history of the Hebrew people bears the impress of Isaiah's activity*.—It was through him that the word of prophecy, despised and rejected when it was spoken by Amos and Hosea, became a practical power not only in the State, but in the whole life of the nation. We can readily understand that so great a work could not have been effected by an isolated mission like that of Amos, or by a man like Hosea, who stood apart from all the leaders of his nation, and had neither friend nor disciple to espouse his cause. Isaiah won his commanding position, not by a single stroke, but by long-sustained and patient effort. . . . The countryman Micah, who prophesied in the low country on the Philistine border near the beginning of Hezekiah's reign, was unquestionably influenced by his great contemporary, and, though his conceptions are shaped with the individual freedom characteristic of the true prophet, and by no means fit mechanically into the details of Isaiah's picture of Jehovah's approaching dealings, the essence of his teaching went all to further Isaiah's aims. Thus Isaiah ultimately became the acknowledged head of a great religious movement. It is too little to say that in his later years he was the first man in Judah, practically guiding the helm of the State, and encouraging Jerusalem to hold out against the Assyrian when all besides had lost courage. Even to the political historian, Isaiah is the most notable figure after David in the whole history of Israel. He was the man of a supreme crisis, and he proved himself worthy by guiding his nation through the crisis with no other strength than the prophetic word. (*W. Robertson Smith, LL.D.*) *A comparison with Elisha*.—His commanding influence on the history of his nation naturally suggests comparison with Elisha, the author of the revolution of Jehu, and the soul of the

great struggle with Syria. The comparison illustrates the extraordinary change which little more than a century had wrought in the character and aims of prophecy. Elisha effected his first object—the downfall of the house of Ahab—by entering into the sphere of ordinary political intrigue; Isaiah stood aloof from all political combinations, and his influence was simply that of his commanding character, and of the imperial word of Jehovah preached in season and out of season with unwavering constancy. Elisha in his later years was the inspiring spirit of a heroic conflict, encouraging his people to fight for freedom, and resist the invader by armed force. Isaiah well knew that Judah had no martial strength that could avail for a moment against the power of Assyria. He did not aim at national independence; and, rising above the dreams of vulgar patriotism, he was content to accept the inevitable, and mark out for Judah a course of patient submission to the foreign yoke, in order that the nation might concentrate itself on the task of internal reformation, till Jehovah Himself should remove the scourge appointed for His people's sin. In this conception he seized and united in one practical aim ideas which had appeared separately in the teaching of his predecessors, Amos and Hosea. . . . In the supreme crisis of the Assyrian wars, Isaiah was not less truly the bulwark of his nation than Elisha had been during the Syrian wars. But his heroism was that of patience and faith, and the deliverance came as he had foretold, not by political wisdom or warlike prowess, but by the direct intervention of Jehovah. (*Ibid.*)

5. THE PERIOD OF HIS MINISTRY.—The period of Isaiah's ministry falls into three parts:—(1) The time previous to the Syro-Ephraïtic war, when Judah enjoyed external peace and apparent prosperity. (2) The troubles under the reign of Ahaz, when the land was invaded by Pekah and Rezin, and the Judæan monarch became a vassal of Assyria to obtain the help of Tiglath-pileser. (3) The time of Assyrian suzerainty, when Judah's growing impatience of the yoke at length led the nation to intrigue with Egypt, and exposed it to the vengeance of Sennacherib. The last section of the prophet's life culminates in the great invasion and marvellous deliverance of the year 701 B.C. (*W. Robertson Smith, LL.D.*)

II. THE BOOK BEARING ISAIAH'S NAME.—I. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS.—*Foremost book in prophetic literature*.—The book that bears [Isaiah's] name, in the variety, beauty, and force of its style, and in the sublimity of its contents, takes the foremost place in the prophetic literature. (*Prof. James Robertson, D.D.*) *The greatest classic of Israel*.—With Isaiah sank into the grave the greatest classic of Israel. (*Carl Heinrich Cornill.*) *Isaiah a poet*.—If poetry is “the eloquence of excited emotion, whose chief end is to unite beauty with truth,” then there can be no doubt of the justice of Isaiah's claim to be classed among poets. (*F. Sessions.*) *Isaiah a psalmist*.—It has been said of Burke that he would have been a great poet if he had not been a great orator. It might be said of Isaiah that, if he had not been the chief of the prophets of Israel, he would have been the chief of its psalmists. (*E. H. Plumptre, D.D.*) Chaps. xxviii.—xxxiii. are unexampled for grandeur, music, and the softness of idyllic peace. (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) *Literary characteristics of the acknowledged prophecies of Isaiah*.—The thing of chief importance is, that we are wholly unable to name a special peculiarity and favourite manner of style in the case of Isaiah. He is not the specially lyric, or the specially elegiac, or the specially rhetorical and monitory prophet, as, e.g., Joel, Hosea, Micah, in whose writings a special manner is predominant; but every kind of style and every variation of exposition is at his command to meet the requirements of his subject; and this it is which in respect of style constitutes his greatness, as well as generally one of his most prominent excellences. His fundamental peculiarity is only the exalted majestic repose of style, proceeding from the full and sure command of his subject. This repose by no means requires that the language should never be more violently agitated, and not blaze up where the subject demands it; but even the most extreme agitation is bridled by this repose in the background, and does not pass beyond its proper limits, and soon returns with higher self-mastery to its regular flow, not again to leave it (ii. 9–iii. 1, xxviii. 11–23, xxix. 9–14). (*H. Ewald, D.D.*) *Isaiah's style*.—It would hardly be possible to characterise the style of Isaiah better than by the four notes under which Matthew Arnold has summed up the distinctive qualities of Homer's genius: Plainness of thought, plainness of style, nobleness, and rapidity. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*)

2. PHASES OF ISAIAH'S MINISTRY.—*Reformer, statesman, theologian*.:—In the parts [of the book] which are indubitably his, we can watch him, and, as it were, walk by his side, through all the varied and eventful phases of his forty years' ministry. We can observe him as a reformer, denouncing social abuses, sparing neither high nor low in his fearless and incisive censure. We can follow him as a statesman, devoted patriotically to his country's interests, and advising her political leaders in times of difficulty and danger. We can see him as a theologian, emphasising old truths, developing new ones, bringing fresh ideas to light which were destined to exercise an important influence in the generations which followed. Throughout the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah he is the central figure in Jerusalem, and the position which he there took—his motives, principles, policy, the character of his teaching, the nature and extent of his influence—are all reflected in the collection of his prophecies which we possess. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *The evangelical prophet*.:—Isaiah has received from the Christian Church the title of the evangelical prophet. This was given mainly in the belief that chaps. xl.-lxvi. were also by him. But even in the prophecies which criticism has left to him, we find the elements of the doctrines of grace. God forgives sin, the most heinous and defiling (i. 18). Though He has passed sentence of death upon His people (xxii. 14), their penitence procures for them His pardon and deliverance (xxxvi., xxxvii.). Necessarily severe as His judgment is, cruelly as His providence bears upon sin and folly, His love and pity towards His own never fail (xiv. 32). He is their well-beloved, and has constantly cared for them (v. 1, &c.). He longs to be gracious, and to have mercy even when His people are most given to their own destructive courses; and He waits eagerly for their prayers to Him (xxx. 18, &c.). (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*)

3. THE PLACE OF THE BOOK AMONGST THE PROPHETIC SCRIPTURES.—The canonicity of Isaiah was never questioned by the Jewish Church in later times. There is, however, a curious divergence of tradition with regard to its place amongst the prophetic Scriptures. The order of the E. V., where the book stands first among the "Later Prophets" (the strictly prophetic writings), is that of all printed editions of the Hebrew Bible, as well as of the Masora and the best MSS. In the LXX. it stands first amongst the Major Prophets, but is preceded by the so-called Minor Prophets. A still more peculiar arrangement is given by the Talmudic treatise *Baba bathra* (fol. 14b), where the order is: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, the Twelve (Minor) Prophets. It has been thought by some that this arrangement betrays a dim consciousness of the late authorship of the second part of the book, which is possible, although the Jewish authorities know nothing of it, and explain the traditional order by reasoning of a somewhat nebulous kind. (See Ryle, "Canon of the Old Testament," pp. 273 ff., 281 f.) (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*)

4. THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE BOOK.—*The view of Hengstenberg*, that the prophecies of Isaiah are arranged chronologically, though not without justification, fails to satisfy the requirements of historical interpretation. (*Prof. T. K. Cheyne, D.D.*) *The chronological arrangement in i.-xxxix.* has been disturbed by throwing the prophecies against foreign nations (xv.-xxiii.) together, as in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, with which an oracle against Babylon (xiii., xiv.; cf. xxi. 1-10) and a great prophecy of the general judgment on the world (xxiv.-xxvii.) have been connected, though probably due to later prophets. (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) *Suggested explanations of the uncertain chronology*.:—It is plain that the book, as it stands, is in a somewhat disordered state. Presumably Isaiah himself issued no collected edition of all his prophecies, but only put forth from time to time individual oracles or minor collections, which were gathered together at a later date, and on no plan which we can follow. Some of the prophecies bear a date, or even have brief notes of historical explanation; others begin without any such preface, and their date and occasion can only be inferred from the allusions they contain. We cannot even tell when or by whom the collection was made. The collection of all remains of ancient prophecy, digested into the four books named from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets, was not formed till after the time of Ezra, two hundred and fifty years, at least, after the death of Isaiah. In one of these four books every known fragment of ancient prophecy had to take its place, and no one who knows anything of the collection and transmission of ancient books will think it reasonable to expect that the writings of each separate prophet were carefully gathered out and arranged



together in such a way as to preclude all ambiguity as to their authorship. If every prophecy had had a title from the first, the task of the editor would have been simple; or, if he did not aim at an exact arrangement, we could easily have rearranged the series for ourselves. But there are some prophecies, such as those which occupy the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah, which have no title at all, and in some other cases there is conclusive evidence that the titles are not original, because, in point of fact, they are incorrect. In the absence of precise titles giving names and dates to each separate prophecy, an editor labouring after the time of Ezra would be quite as much at a loss as a modern critic, if he made it his task to give what is now called a critical edition of the remains that lay before him. But ancient editors did not feel the need of an edition digested according to the rules of modern literary workmanship. Their main object was to get together everything that they could find, and arrange their material in volumes convenient for private study or use in the synagogue. In those days one could not plan the number of volumes, the number of letters in a page, and the size and form of the pages, with the freedom to which the printing press has accustomed us; the cumbersome and costly materials of ancient books limited all schemes of editorial disposition. In ancient books the most various treatises are often comprised in one volume; the scribe had a certain number of skins, and he wished to fill them. Thus, even in the minor collections that fell into the hands of the editor of the prophets, a prophecy of Isaiah and one from another source might easily occupy the same roll; copies were not so numerous that it was always possible to tell by comparison of many MSS. what pieces had always stood together, and what had only come together by accident; and so, taking all in all, we need not be surprised that the arrangement is imperfect according to our literary lights, but will rather expect to find much more serious faults of order than the lack of a just chronological disposition. If the present Book of Isaiah has itself been made up from several MSS., a conclusion which the lack of chronological order renders almost inevitable, we must deem it probable that at the end of some of these MSS. prophecies not by Isaiah at all may have been written in to save waste of the costly material; and so, when the several small books came to be joined together, prophecies by other hands would get to be embedded in the text of Isaiah, no longer to be distinguished except by internal evidence. That what thus appears as possible or even probable actually took place is the common opinion of modern critics. (*W. Robertson Smith, LL.D.*)

5. DIVISION OF THE BOOK.—The division of the Book of Isaiah into two parts at the end of chap. xxxix., although indicated by no superscription, is at once suggested by the intervention of the narrative section, chaps. xxxvi.—xxxix., and is fully justified by the character of the last twenty-seven chapters. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*)

6. WAS ISAIAH THE AUTHOR OF THE ENTIRE BOOK?—*A rule of criticism* :—The rules of ordinary criticism require us to accept Isaiah as the author until it be shown that he cannot have been so. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *The critical treatment of Isaiah* began in the following manner. The commencement was made with the second part. Koppe first of all expressed doubt regarding the genuineness of chap. l.; then Döderlein expressed his decided suspicion as to the genuineness of the whole; and Justi, followed by Eichhorn, Paulus, and Bertholdt, raised the suspicion into confident assurance of spuriousness. The result thus attained could not possibly remain without reaction on the first part. Rosenmüller, who was always very dependent upon predecessors, was the first to deny the Isaian origin of the prophecy against Babylon, in chaps. xiii.—xiv. 23, though this is attested by the heading; Justi and Paulus undertook to find further reasons for the opinion. Greater advance was now made. Along with the prophecy against Babylon in chaps. xiii.—xiv. 23, the other, in chap. xxi. 1–10, was likewise condemned, and Rosenmüller could not but be astonished when Gesenius let the former fall, but left the latter standing. There still remained the prophecy against Tyre, in chap. xxiii., which, according as the announced destruction of Tyre was regarded as accomplished by the Assyrians or the Chaldeans, might either be left to Isaiah or attributed to a later prophet unknown. Eichhorn, followed by Rosenmüller, decided that it was spurious; but Gesenius understood the Assyrians as the destroyers, and as the prediction consequently did not extend beyond the horizon of Isaiah, he defended its genuineness. Thus was the Babylonian series

of prophecies set aside. The keen eyes of the critics, however, made still further discoveries. In chaps. xxiv.-xxvii., Eichhorn found plays on words that were unworthy of Isaiah, and Gesenius an allegorical announcement of the fall of Babylon: both accordingly condemned these three chapters, and Ewald transposed them to the time of Cambyses. With chaps. xxxiv., xxxv., on account of their relation to the second part, the procedure was shorter. Rosenmüller at once pronounced them to be "a poem composed during the Babylonian Exile, near its close." Such is the history of the origin of the criticism of Isaiah. Its first attempts were very juvenile. It was Gesenius, but especially Hitzig and Ewald, who first raised it to the eminence of a science. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *Advocates of an exilic date for chaps. xl.-lxvi.* :—Döderlein, in 1775, was the first modern scholar who took up this position. Before then the traditional view does not seem to have been questioned, except by the Jewish commentator, Aben Ezra (†1167 A.D.), who, in very obscure language, appears to hint that the title of the book does not guarantee the authorship of every part of it, any more than in the case of the books of Samuel, of which Samuel himself could only have written the first twenty-four chapters (his death being recorded in 1 Sam. xxv. 1). Döderlein has been followed, among others, by Gesenius, Ewald, Hitzig, Knobel, Umbreit, de Wette, Bleek, Bunsen, Cheyne, Kuenen, Reuss, Duhm, Oehler, A. B. Davidson, Orelli, König, Driver, G. A. Smith, Kirkpatrick, Delitzsch (in the 4th edition of his Commentary, 1890), &c. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Defenders of the Isaianic authorship* :—Amongst these the best-known names are those of Hengstenberg, Hävernick, Drechsler, Delitzsch (down to about 1880), Stier, Rutgers, Kay, Nägelsbach, Douglas, &c. (*Ibid.*) *General view of the question of authorship* :—Part Second (xl.-lxvi.) is broadly distinguished from Part First both in literary form and in subject-matter. It has the appearance of being one sustained composition, rather than a number of spoken addresses; and whereas the situation in the First Part was the Assyrian period in which Isaiah lived, the standpoint here is the time of the Exile, and the tone is mainly that of consolation in the near prospect of deliverance,—the name of Cyrus, who gave the edict permitting the return (536 B.C.), being expressly mentioned (xliv. 28, xlv. 1). We cannot doubt that the deportation of the Ten Tribes, and the ominous threatening of a similar fate for Judah, had accustomed Isaiah to the thought of the Captivity and its ultimate issues. So that, if these chapters are from his hand, we must assume that, in spirit, he placed himself in the Exile, and from that, as a prophetic standpoint, depicted the restoration and the final glory. Most modern critics, however, think that these chapters are an anonymous production of the Exile, which was united to the prophecies of Isaiah. (*Prof. J. Robertson, D.D.*) *The doubtful portions* :—The question relates to xiii. 2-xiv. 23, xxiv.-xxvii., xxxiv., xxxv., and xl.-lxvi. (xxi. 1-10 must henceforth be excluded, on objective, historical grounds, from the list of doubtful prophecies). (*Prof. T. K. Cheyne, D.D.*) *Isaiah of Jerusalem capable of producing the entire book* :—Such a man as Isaiah of Jerusalem is universally acknowledged to have been, with such an unique call as he claims to have received, was at least capable of seeing in open vision the glories of the coming Messianic kingdom, as clearly as he saw the impending ruin of nations laden with iniquity. That he should have written both portions of the great series of prophecies bearing his name is *prima facie* as probable as that John Milton wrote "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained" long after having given to the politicians of the Republic his dry polemic "In Defence of the People"; or that "Sartor Resartus," pantheistic and expressed in Carlylese, was the offspring of the same genius that penned the chaste and simple English of the "Life of Sterling"; or that Dr. Johnson was both the compiler of a dictionary and the author of such a romance as "Rasselas." (*F. Sessions.*) *The language of Isaiah* :—If Prof. Margoliouth is working on a right line, and if the results which he anticipates are established, the conclusion, so far as language is concerned, will be that the whole of Isaiah being written in classical Hebrew, not in what he calls the Middle-Hebrew of the Prophets of the Exile, still less in the New Hebrew, which was the classical language of Jerusalem in the days of Ben-Sira, 200 B.C., belongs to the age of the historic Isaiah of the days of Hezekiah. (*J. Kennedy, D.D.*) *If a composite work, who collected the several parts?*—It is becoming more and more certain that the present form, especially of the prophetic Scriptures, is due to a literary class [the Sôpherim, Scribes or Scripturists], whose principal function was collecting and supplementing the scattered records of prophetic revelation. (*Prof. T. K. Cheyne, D.D.*) Prof. Cheyne's idea of the

work done by the Sopherim editors is utterly baseless. The known writings of inspired prophets were guarded as by a wall of fire. And all classes, whatever their practical unfaithfulness, stood in awe of them then, as they do until this day. (*J. Kennedy, D.D.*) *The later authors Isaiah* :—Isaiah had left his sublime deliverances to fructify in the minds of his disciples. One disciple, separated by three or four generations from the master, but living constantly with his prophecies and nourished upon his spirit, produced at the crisis of Babylon's fall a prophecy of Israel's restoration as immortal as Isaiah's own. This disciple named not himself. Whether he intended the work to become joined with Isaiah's, and to pass among men with the authority of that great name, we cannot know. But his contemporaries joined the disciple's work with the master's, and by Ezra's time the conjunction was established. (*Matthew Arnold.*) These later prophets so closely resemble Isaiah in prophetic vision, that posterity might on that account well identify them with him. They belong, more or less nearly, to those pupils of his to whom he refers (chap. viii. 16). We know of no other prophet belonging to the kingdom of Judah like Isaiah, who was surrounded by a band of younger prophets, and, so to speak, formed a school. Viewed in this light, the Book of Isaiah is the work of his creative spirit and the band of followers. These later prophets are Isaian,—they are Isaiah's disciples ; it is his spirit that continues to operate in them, like the spirit of Elijah in Elisha,—nay, we may say, like the spirit of Jesus in the apostles ; for the words of Isaiah (viii. 18), "Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me," are employed in the Epistle to the Hebrews (ii. 13) as typical of Jesus Christ. In view of this fact, the whole book rightly bears the name of Isaiah, inasmuch as he is, directly and indirectly, the author of all these prophetic discourses ; his name is the correct common-denominator for this collection of prophecies, which, with all their diversity, yet form a unity ; and the second half particularly (chaps. xl.-lxvi.) is the work of a pupil who surpasses the master, though he owes the master everything. Such may possibly be the case. It seems to me even probable, and almost certain, that this may be so ; but indubitably certain it is not, in my opinion, and I shall die without getting over this hesitancy. For very many difficulties arise. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *Why should important portions of the book be anonymous?*—It will always remain a mystery how the name of the great prophet of the Exile, who stood far nearer to the return from Exile than Ezekiel, has fallen into oblivion, and it is a question among how many prophets the Deutero-Isaianic passages should be divided. (*Ibid.*) Orelli ("Commentary on Isaiah") thinks there are reasons for ascribing the book (chaps. xl.-lxvi.) to an exilic author, but says: "Its incorporation with the Book of Isaiah remains a riddle." "One thing remains utterly unexplained—the anonymity of so glorious a book carefully arranged by the author himself. It has been said that he could not mention his name from regard to the Chaldeans ; but what prevented him from coming forward after the victory of Cyrus over Babylon ? In a time when Haggai and Zechariah so carefully dated their prophecies, how could the name be lost of the seer who had unquestionably done most towards the revival of the theocratic spirit and the home-coming of the faithful ones ? The question might be answered if the author appeared pseudonymously under Isaiah's name ; but no trace of such intention is found anywhere. Whereas in Isaiah i. the person of the prophet comes out in different ways, here in Isaiah ii., all name, even all heading, is wanting. Criticism should honestly confess that the special reason of this anonymity remains in utter obscurity." *Explanation of the supposed plural authorship* :—How came the works of five unknown prophets in Babylon to be ascribed to Isaiah, or at any rate inserted in the Book of Isaiah ? . . . These chapters were evidently added at a later period, and most probably, as Eichhorn suggested, with the object of producing a conveniently large volume, nearly equal in size to those of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets. In taking this course the editor might invoke a precedent already familiar to his contemporaries, the Twelve Minor Prophets having been combined into a single "volume" at some unknown period previous to the composition of Ecclesiasticus. (See Ecclus. xlix. 10.) (*Prof. T. K. Cheyne, D.D.*) *The explanation regarded as inadequate* :—We can easily see a reason why these minor prophets—minor in bulk—should be engrossed on one roll for convenience sake. But they are still twelve, not one. More than this. To each of them is carefully prefixed the name of its author, even when, as in the case of Obadiah, his prophecy consists of but a single chapter. Had this "precedent" been followed by the hypothetical editor who added chaps. xl.-lxvi. to chaps. i.-xxxix., he would

have inscribed on each part the name of its author. (*J. Kennedy, D.D.*) *Providential guidance in the form and contents of the book* :—The boldest advocates of even the most “advanced” critical hypothesis will be still obliged to confess that it must have been a wise instinct, to say nothing of Divine inspiration and guidance, that induced the “compilers” of the Book of Isaiah to present it to the world in its existing form. The denunciations of sin by the prophets held to be responsible for the earlier chapters are incomplete and gloomy, with “a darkness that may be felt,” without the addition of the glorious Evangel proclaimed by those who wrote the later ones. The overthrow of the kingdom of Satan is not good enough for the world without the simultaneous establishment of the kingdom of God. A sinner without hope is a sinner lost,—a nation with its golden age behind it, and none before it, is a nation God-forsaken and outcast, given over to despair and reckless of the end. The preaching of the law and its terrors, apart from the proclamation of the Gospel with its regenerative force, never has been, and never can be, accordant with the mind of the All-just and All-merciful Creator. (*F. Sessions.*) The Book of Isaiah comes to us from post-exilic times; on this point there can be no doubt among educated students. It was brought into its present form, not by a committee of lovers of ancient literature, but by men whose great preoccupation was the building up of a righteous, God-fearing people. (*Prof. T. K. Cheyne, D.D.*)

7. CHAPTERS XL.—LXVI.—*Critical difficulties no barrier to an understanding of the prophecy* :—Many persons who would wish to study the second half of Isaiah are discouraged from making the attempt by a feeling that an insurmountable barrier of critical difficulties lies between them and any comprehension of the prophecy. That is, in great measure, a delusion. In spite of the fact that large critical questions rise in connection with these prophecies, there is, perhaps, no part of Scripture to the understanding of which criticism contributes so little. Like the Book of Job, the piece is almost purely theological, and occupied with ideas. It is a structure based upon and built out of the Monotheistic conception, the idea that Jehovah, God of Israel, is the true and only God. It need not be supposed that the author consciously started from this principle and logically deduced his other conclusions from it. This is not the method of Old Testament writers. Nevertheless, to us who read his work now, the effect is the same as if he had done so; and obviously the question at what time or in what circumstances such a theological structure was reared is only of secondary importance, so far as understanding the work itself is concerned. It may be that many of the details of the structure point to a definite historical period; to many minds, indeed, the theological character of the work will be conclusive evidence that it cannot belong to a time anterior to the Exile; but such methods of reasoning show that the meaning of the passage may be learned from itself independently of external aids, and that this meaning may be found to lead to critical conclusions rather than to receive light from them. (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) *The primary critical question—what is it?*—The great critical question agitated in regard to these twenty-seven chapters is, whether the author was a contemporary of the Exile, or was an older prophet, enabled by an extraordinary gift of foresight to transport himself into its circumstances and realise its conditions. The way in which such a question has to be put indicates how far scholars of all opinions are in agreement. It is admitted on all hands that, at whatever time the prophet actually lived and wrote, the Exile is the stage on which his personages move, and on which the great drama which he exhibits is transacted. (*Ibid.*) *A secondary question* :—Another critical question of less magnitude is, How far the prophet of these twenty-seven chapters has adopted fragments from other prophecies, or other writers, into his own work? It is admitted that the bulk of the chapters forms a unity, and is from the hand of one author. But certain passages are thought to betray a different hand; while others, unlike the bulk of the prophecy, seem written from a point of view anterior to the time of the Exile. (*Ibid.*) *A third question* :—Another question less strictly critical, but partly exegetical and of a more internal kind, is the inquiry whether these twenty-seven chapters, admittedly in the main a unity and the work of one hand, have been composed all at one gush, or whether there are not distinct divisions in the composition, points at which the author paused, having rounded off his previous work, and from which he again started in order to give his conceptions a more perfect development. (*Ibid.*) *A threefold division* :—The great prophecy of

Israel's restoration falls naturally into three divisions. 1. Chapters xl.-xlviii. deal mainly with the deliverance of the Jews by Cyrus. 2. Chapters xlix.-lvii. with the future of Israel, and the work of Jehovah's ideal Servant. 3. Chapters lviii.-lxvi. with the glories of the restored Zion, and the difficulties caused by the nation's sin. (*Edward Grubb, M.A.*) The prophecy may be conveniently divided into three nearly equal sections. I. Chaps. xl.-xlviii. The Restoration of Israel through the instrumentality of Cyrus. II. Chaps. xlix.-lv. The work of Jehovah's Servant, and the glorification of Zion. III. Chaps. lvi.-lxvi. The future blessedness of the true Israel contrasted with the doom of the apostates. The third section of the book is less homogeneous in its composition than the two others. In passing from chap. lv. to chap. lvi. the reader is at once sensible of a change of manner and circumstance, which becomes still more manifest as he proceeds. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *The contents*:—It begins with a prophecy putting into the mouth of John the Baptist the theme of his preaching; it concludes with the prophecy of the creation of a new heaven and new earth, beyond which even the last page of the New Testament Apocalypse cannot soar; and in the middle (lii. 13-13ii.), the suffering and exaltation of the Servant of God are announced as plainly as if the prophet had stood beneath the Cross and seen the Risen One. Placing himself at the beginning of New Testament days, he begins like the New Testament Gospels; he describes further the death and new life of God's Servant as completed facts with the clearness of Pauline teaching; he cleaves at last to the higher, heavenly world, like the Johannine apocalypse;—and all this without exceeding the Old Testament limits; but within these he is evangelist, apostle, and apocalypticist in one person. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *The author's wide range*:—The standpoint of the prophet may be the Exile, but his vision ranges from Abraham to Christ. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *Problem before the writer twofold*:—In order to effect some general arrangement and division of Isa. xl.-lxvi. it is necessary to keep in view that the immediate problem which the prophet had before him was twofold. It was political, and it was spiritual. There was, first of all, the deliverance of Israel from Babylon, according to the ancient promises of Jehovah; to this were attached such questions as Jehovah's omnipotence, faithfulness, and grace; the meaning of Cyrus; the condition of the Babylonian Empire. But after their political deliverance from Babylon was assured, there remained the really larger problem of Israel's spiritual readiness for the freedom and the destiny to which God was to lead them, through the opened gates of their prison-house: to this were attached such questions as the original calling and mission of Israel; the mixed and paradoxical character of the people; their need of a Servant from the Lord, since they themselves had failed to be His servant; and the coming of this Servant, His methods and results. (*Ibid.*) *Our Lord's favourite book*:—If it can be said of any prophetic book that it was certainly the favourite book of our Lord, it is this book of the second Isaiah, in which what God's Elect One was to be and do was outlined with studied ideality. Here the ideal stood before Him, the realising of which was His life-task. When He read in this book, the person of the Coming One and the Manifested One met together, the former found its body and the latter its soul. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *The author's theological conceptions*:—He is the first prophet who discerns in the signs of the times a Divine purpose which is from the first a purpose of grace towards Israel. His predecessors had all looked on the world-power as the instrument of Jehovah's chastisement of His people, and had anticipated a happy issue only as a second step, after the earthly instrument had been broken and thrown away. But the writer of these chapters has the word "comfort" constantly on his lips; the whole burden of his message is one of consolation and good tidings; and he views Cyrus as the chosen agent of Jehovah, not merely in crushing obstacles to the execution of His purpose, but as lending active support in the establishment of His kingdom. Like other prophets, too, he sees in the events of the time the immediate precursors of Jehovah's everlasting kingdom of righteousness. The final consummation of God's purposes with humanity lies in germ in the appearance of Cyrus; in the writer's own graphic phrase, it already "sprouts" before men's eyes (xlii. 9, xliii. 19). The prophet is aware, however, that his hearers are not in a mood to be easily cheered. References to their state of mind are numerous, and nowhere do we find any indication of an enthusiastic response to the prophet's joyful proclamation. The prevalent mood was one of utter weariness and despondency (xl. 27, xlix. 14). To counteract this despairing mood, something more was needed

than a bare announcement of deliverance. The first requisite was to revive their consciousness of God, to impress them with a sense of His infinite power and resources, and the immutability of His Word; and also to impart to them a new and inspiring view of their own mission and destiny as a nation. 1. The prophet's doctrine of God is, accordingly, the fundamental element of his teaching. 2. Remarkable as is the prophet's contribution to the Biblical doctrine of God, it is surpassed in importance and originality by his teaching with regard to the mission of Israel. The very grandeur and universality of his conception of Jehovah appears to necessitate a profounder interpretation of Israel's place in history than any previous prophet had explicitly taught. This view of Israel's position among the nations is expressed in the title "Servant of Jehovah," which is applied to the people in passages too numerous to quote. In most, there is no room for doubt as to the subject which the writer has in his mind. It is the historic nation of Israel, represented in the present chiefly by the community of the exiles, but conceived throughout as a moral individual whose life and consciousness are those of the nation. But there is another class of passages where this application of the title "Servant of Jehovah" to the actual Israel does not suffice (xlii. 1-4, xlix. 1-6, l. 4-9, lii. 13-liii. 12). What makes it impossible to suppose that the Servant means Israel simply is not so much the intense personification of the ideal (although that is very remarkable, and weighs with many minds); it is rather the character attributed to the Servant, and the fact that he is distinguished from Israel by having a work to do on behalf of the nation. (1) A large number of expositors hold that the term "Servant of Jehovah" always, in some sense, denotes Israel. (2) Other writers think that the Servant of Jehovah must, in some cases, be an individual yet to arise, who shall embody in himself all the characteristics that belong to the Divine idea of Israel. The value of the conception as a prophetic delineation of the character and work of our Lord is in no way affected by the view we may be led to adopt regarding its inception in the mind of the prophet. All Christian interpreters agree that the ideal has been fulfilled but once in history, in the person of Jesus Christ, in whom all the features of the Divine ideal impressed on Israel have received adequate and final expression. Perhaps we may go further, and say that to us it is clear that the ideal could only be realised in a personal life at once human and Divine; only, we have no right to say that this must have been equally evident to the prophet in his day. The significance of his teaching does not lie in any direct statement that in some future age an individual should arise bearing this image,—a statement which he never makes; it consists in the marvellous degree in which he has been enabled to foreshadow the essential truths concerning the life and mission of the Redeemer. This is a fact which nothing can obscure, and which is attested for us, if it needed attestation, by the application of these passages to Christ in the New Testament. (3) The state of things which follows the redemption of Israel is an age of universal salvation in which all nations share in the blessings that flow from a knowledge of the true God. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *The author as an evangelist* :—The author has been called the evangelist of the Old Testament. All the prophets are evangelists, in the sense that they teach that salvation belongeth unto the Lord, that by grace are we saved through faith, not of ourselves,—it is the gift of God. And in this the prophet of these chapters agrees with his brethren. But while other prophets content themselves with this general doctrine of grace, moving exclusively in the region of Divine efficiency and operation, and suggesting no solution or principle of this operation beyond this, that God pardons sin of His mercy, having by the severe dispensations of His providence brought the sense of sin home to the people's heart, and thus fitted them to receive His mercy, this prophet, in his profound doctrine of the suffering Servant of the Lord, makes an extraordinary movement towards a solution, teaching that the sins of the people as a whole were laid by God upon the innocent Servant, and were atoned by His sufferings, and that thus the people were redeemed. (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) *The Messiah and His kingdom* :—It is only when chaps. xl.-lxvi. are viewed in the light of a great Messianic development—a series of predictions respecting the Person, the work, and the kingdom of Christ—that the earnestness, the protracted length, the fulness, the deep feeling, the holy enthusiasm, the glowing metaphors and similes, and the rich and varied exhibitions of peace and prosperity, can well be accounted for. The writer, in taking such a standpoint, uses the Exile and the return from it as the basis of his comparisons and analogies. It was a rich and deeply interesting source from

which to draw them. Any other solution of the whole phenomena is, to my mind, at least, meagre and unsatisfactory; on no other ground can I account for it that Isaiah, so long beforehand, should have dwelt on an Exile and a return from it which were more than a century distant from him and his contemporaries. (*Moses Stuart*.) "Two Isaiahs":—That the Isaiah who composed chaps. xl.-lxvi., in comparison with the Isaiah of the time of Uzziah till Hezekiah, is one raised far above that time and at a higher stage of insight into God's work in the future, is certain, whether the two Isaiahs are one person or two persons. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *Were there two Isaiahs?*—The author of chaps. xl.-lxvi. is in any case a prophet of the Isaianic type, but of an Isaianic type peculiarly developed. It is scarcely conceivable, although not quite inconceivable, that in a final stage of Isaiah's life reaching into the days of Manasseh, his style of thought and speech may have undergone a modification in breadth and depth which carried it beyond itself. And yet—we ask for this *ultra citoque* the credit of a pure love of truth, conscious of freedom from apologetic prepossession—yet the distinction between an Assyrian and a Babylonian Isaiah involves us in all sorts of difficulties, when we take into view the reciprocal relations of the Isaianic collection of prophecies with the other Old Testament literature known to us. (*Ibid.*) *The traditional view of the authorship*:—The existence of a tradition in the last three centuries B.C. as to the authorship of any book is (to those acquainted with the habits of thought of that age) of but little critical moment;—the Sopherim, or students of Scripture in those times, were simply anxious for the authority of the Scriptures, not for the ascertainment of their precise historical origin. It was of the utmost importance to declare that (especially) Isaiah xl.-lxvi. was a prophetic work of the highest order; this was reason sufficient (in the Sopherim may have had other reasons, such as phraseological affinities in xl.-lxvi., but this was sufficient) for ascribing them to the royal prophet Isaiah. When the view had once obtained currency, it would naturally become a tradition. The question of the Isaianic or non-Isaianic origin of the disputed prophecies (especially xl.-lxvi.) must be decided on grounds of exegesis alone. There are indications among critics, bred in different schools, of a growing perception of this truth. (*Prof. T. K. Cheyne, D.D.*)

**8. REASONS FOR BELIEVING THAT CHAPS. XL.-LXVI. ARE NOT THE WORK OF ISAIAH.**—*The evidence internal*:—Critical writers generally assign them to an anonymous prophet living in the latter part of the Babylonian Exile. The grounds on which this conclusion rests will be found to be all of the nature of what is called internal evidence, being drawn from indications furnished by the book itself of the circumstances in which it was composed. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *The true method of procedure in investigating the evidence*:—The proper course obviously is, first of all, to gain as clear an idea as possible of the prophecy itself, and then to consider what light is thereby thrown on its origin. (*Ibid.*) *Summary of evidence*:—1. The historical background. 2. The phraseology and style. 3. The character of the theology. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *Spoken appeals, not "chamber-prophecy"*:—If any prophet in the Old Testament gives evidence that he speaks in public, and that his desire is to stir and move those whom he addresses, it is the author of these chapters. What meaning have appeals and protestations, such as those in chaps. xl. 21, 26, 28, xliii. 10, xlvi. 8, l. 10 f., li. 6, 12 f., lviii. 3 ff., except as spoken in the very presence of those whose assent the prophet seeks to win? The author's warm and impassioned rhetoric, the personal appeals with which his prophecies abound, show conclusively that he is not writing a literary essay in the retirement of his chamber, but, like a true prophet of his nation, is exerting himself in all earnestness to produce an impression by the force of his own personality upon the hearts of those who hear him. The very first words of the prophecy, "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people," mark a rhetorical peculiarity of the author. The emphatic duplication of a word, significant of the passion and fervour of the speaker, is a characteristic feature of the entire prophecy; in the prophets generally it is rare; in Isaiah the only examples—and those but partly parallel—are viii. 9 b., xxi. 9, xxix. 1. (*Ibid.*) *The historical background*:—1. The allusions to Cyrus in the prophecy make it perfectly certain that the time to which it refers lies between 549 and 538. Cyrus is mentioned as one already well known as a conqueror, and one whose brilliant victories have sent a thrill of excitement through the world. On the other hand, the capture of Babylon is still in the future. The standpoint of the prophecy, therefore, is certainly intermediate

between 549 and 538, and most probably about 540 B.C. 2. In perfect harmony with these references to Cyrus are those to the circumstances of Israel. The nation is in exile, but on the eve of deliverance. The oppressing power is Babylon, the imperial city, still called "the mistress of kingdoms" (xlvii. 5). It is from Babylon that the exiles are summoned to make good their escape (xlviii. 20, cf. lii. 11, &c.). Meanwhile, Palestine is a waste and ruined land (xlix. 8, 19, li. 3, lii. 9). No such calamity as these accumulated allusions imply had ever befallen Israel except in the half-century that followed the destruction of the State by the Chaldeans (586 B.C.). 3. One other fact may be noticed as showing how completely the prophet's point of view is identified with the age of the Exile. Amongst the arguments most frequently adduced for the deity of Jehovah and against idolatry is the appeal to prophecies fulfilled by the appearance of Cyrus (xli. 26, xlii. 9, xliii. 8-10, xlv. 21, xlvi. 10). What prophecies are referred to is a question of some difficulty. Whatever they are, the argument has no force except as addressed to persons for whom the fulfilment was a matter of experience. To the men of an earlier age such an appeal could only appear as confusing and fallacious, being an attempt to illustrate *ignotum per ignotius*; hence, we must conclude that the prophecy was directly intended for the generation of the Exile, and could produce its full effect only on them. It must be observed that neither the appearance of Cyrus nor the captivity of Israel is ever predicted in this prophecy; they are everywhere assumed as facts known to the readers. Predictions do occur of the most definite kind, but they are of events subsequent to those mentioned and lying in advance of the standpoint which the prophet occupies. A distinction is often made by the writer between "former things," which have already come to pass, and "new things" or "coming things" (xli. 22, xlii. 9, xliii. 9, 18, &c., xlv. 7, xlv. 11, xlvi. 9, xlviii. 3-8), and in some cases it seems clear that by "former things" he means the fulfilment of earlier prophecies concerning Cyrus, while the "new things," now first announced, are such events as the triumph of Cyrus, the salvation of Israel, and the conversion of the world to the worship of Jehovah. Even on the supposition that the chapters were written by Isaiah, 150 years before any of these occurrences, it still remains true that he does not formally predict the rise of Cyrus, but addresses himself to those who have witnessed it and only require to be told what developments will result from it in the unfolding of Jehovah's purpose. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*)

*The evidence of language and style*.—When the biblical writings are examined carefully, individualities of style appear as one of their most prominent features. . . . Now, when the prophecies in the Book of Isaiah possessing an evident reference to the events of Isaiah's lifetime are compared with those relating to the restoration of Israel from Babylon, and especially with chaps. xl.-lxvi., many remarkable differences, both of phraseology and conception, disclose themselves. The terms and expressions which, in the former series of prophecies, Isaiah uses, and uses repeatedly, are absent in chaps. xl.-lxvi.; conversely, new terms and expressions appear in chaps. xl.-lxvi. which are without parallel in the first part of the book. Sometimes the expressions used in one part of the book occur never in the other; in other cases, they occur once or twice only in one part of the book, while in the other part they occur frequently, and often with a peculiar *nuance* or shade of meaning. No doubt, if the subject-matter of the two parts varied greatly, it would be natural that to a certain extent different terms should be employed, even though both were by the same author; but, as will be seen, the variations between the two parts of the Book of Isaiah are not to be explained by the difference of subject-matter; they extend, in many instances, to points, such as the form and construction of sentences, which stand in no appreciable relation to the subject treated. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*)

*Theology and thought*.—Of course, the fundamental principles of the Israelitish religion are common to both parts of the Book of Isaiah, as they are to the prophets generally; when we look for features that are distinctive, we at once find that they are different. Isaiah depicts the *majesty* of Jehovah; the author of chaps. xl.-lxvi., His *infinity*. This is a real difference. It would be difficult to establish from Isaiah—not the greatness merely, but—the *infinitude* of the Divine attributes; the author of chaps. xl.-lxvi. exhausts the Hebrew language in the endeavour, if possible, to represent it. Jehovah is the Creator, the Sustainer of the universe, the Life-giver, the Author of history, the First and the Last, the Incomparable One. Where does Isaiah teach such truths as these? Yet it cannot be maintained that opportunities for such assertions of Jehovah's power and Godhead would not have naturally presented themselves to Isaiah whilst he was engaged in defying the armies of Assyria. But the truth is,



the prophet of the Exile moves in a different region of thought from Isaiah. The doctrine of the preservation from judgment of a worthy remnant is characteristic of Isaiah; it appears alike in his first prophecy (vi. 13) and in his last (xxxvii. 31 f.); in chaps. xl.-lxvi., if it appears once or twice by implication (lix 20, lxxv 8 f.), it is not a distinctive element in the author's teaching; it is not expressed in Isaiah's phraseology, and is not more prominent than it is in the writings of many other prophets. Where, in Isaiah, is the destiny of Israel, and the purpose of its call, developed—or even noticed allusively—as it is developed in chaps. xl.-lxvi.? In these chapters, again, the figure of the Messianic king is absent; another figure, intimately connected with the view of Israel's destiny that has just been mentioned—a figure singularly striking and original in its conception—holds a corresponding position. To say that the figure of Jehovah's ideal Servant is an *advance* upon that of the Messianic king is not correct; it starts from a different origin altogether; it is *parallel* to it, not a continuation of it. The mission of Israel to the nations is developed in new directions; the Divine purposes in relation to them are exhibited upon a wider and more comprehensive scale. The prophet moves along lines of thought different from those followed by Isaiah; he apprehends and dwells upon different aspects of truth. . . . Thus, even where there is a point of contact between the two parts of the book, or where the same terms are employed, the ideas attached to them have, in chaps. xl.-lxvi., a wider and fuller import. But this is exactly what would be expected from a later writer expanding and developing, in virtue of the fuller measure of inspiration vouchsafed to him, elements due, perhaps, originally to a predecessor. (*Ibid.*) *The idea of "righteousness" in the two parts of the book:*—This difference between the two parts of the book is summed up in their respective uses of the word "righteousness." In Isaiah i.-xxxix., or at least in such of these chapters as refer to Isaiah's own day, righteousness is man's moral and religious duty, in its contents of piety, purity, justice, and social service. In Isaiah xl.-lxvi., righteousness (except in a few cases) is something which the people expect from God,—their historical vindication by His restoral and reinstatement of them as His people. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*)

9. ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF THE UNITY OF THE AUTHORSHIP.—1. The title of the whole book (chap. i. 1). In the general title of the book, as it has existed from a period centuries before Christ, the claim is made by the book itself for the authorship of the later as well as of the earlier chapters. And the anonymity of the part which contains the later chapters, if not written by Isaiah, is unparalleled in the prophetic writings of the Old Testament. 2. Historical evidence. (1) The Jews of our Lord's time, with Christ Himself and His apostles, believed the whole book which bore the name of Isaiah to be the work of Isaiah. (2) The LXX., begun somewhere about 280 B.C., and made from Hebrew MSS. of that period, contains the whole book as the Book of Isaiah. (3) There is another book, dating from the same period, which contains a distinct assertion of the unity of the authorship of Isaiah. The author of Ecclesiasticus says: "He (Esaias) saw by an excellent spirit what should come to pass at the last, and he comforted them that mourn in Zion; he showed what should come to pass for ever, and secret things or ever they came." According to Prof. Margoliouth, the date of the book cannot be later than 200 B.C. (4) The second part of the book is not known historically to have ever existed in a separate form. And on the hypothesis of its having had a separate existence, dating from the Exile, no rational explanation can be given of its addition to the first part. So far as it can be traced, it always appeared as a part of "The Book of the Prophet Isaiah." In the only translations that have come down to us it thus appears. (5) If ever separate, those who joined the parts believed in their Isaiah authorship. Who was he? or who were they? For answer, we naturally search the history of the period which intervened between the first return of the exiles under Zerubbabel, on the authority of the decree of Cyrus, and the close of the canon by the prophecy of Malachi. The only person known to this history who can be at all supposed to have vouched the sacred books of the prophets is Ezra. It will not be pretended that Ezra could be mistaken in regard to the authorship of the second part of the Book of Isaiah. If it was written by a contemporary, or by a prophet of the immediately preceding age, he must have known. And if he either put the two parts together, or, finding them already together, adopted the book as he found it, it must have been because he believed that both parts rightly bore the name of Isaiah. If for the personal action of Ezra we substitute that of the

traditional "Great Synagogue," the conclusion must be the same. (6) A second Isaiah is unknown to history. The prophets "were not obscure and unknown individuals, but public and official characters, whose credentials had been tested and approved as genuine by the community in which they lived, as well as by those more immediately called upon to judge of such matters." How comes it, then, that no trace can be discovered of this prophet of wonderful personality, of earnest and persistent ministry among the exiles in Babylonia? We are told of Daniel and Ezekiel, of Zechariah and Haggai, of the exile period, but nowhere do we find a trace of this greater than they. We have a history of the return of the exiles to their own land, and of the restoration of their worship and temple, and we know their leaders, Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. But we search in vain for any mention of the unknown prophet to whom the nation owed so much. We have even a long list of the names of those who accompanied Zerubbabel, but not one hint that any of them was a prophet. More than that, the first words of the history of the return are these: "Now, in the first year of Cyrus, King of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled," &c. (Ezra i. 1). Seventy years had gone since Jeremiah foretold the deliverance from Babylon. But only two years had gone, according to Driver, since the unknown prophet who wrote chaps. xliv. and xlv. of the book which bears the name of Isaiah not only foretold the deliverance, but named Cyrus as its author. And yet there is no reference to him! 3. Similarity of religious idea and expression. (1) The prophet's almost uniform designation of God, "the Holy One of Israel." It occurs twenty-three times, ten of these being in the first part of the book, and thirteen in the second. This designation belongs almost exclusively to the Book of Isaiah. It occurs elsewhere in Psalms lxxi., lxxviii., lxxxix.; Jer. l. li. In 2 Kings xix. 22, Isaiah is the speaker. We find the explanation in the remarkable vision in which he received his prophetic commission (chap. vi.). The experience of this vision was never forgotten. It gave colour to his every thought of God. If the later portion of the book was not written by the prophet who heard the seraphim chanting their great song, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts," we can find no explanation of his habitual and exclusive use of the designation which that prophet owed to that vision, and which no other prophet—not forgetting the slight exception in the case of Jeremiah—used before or after. To call the second hypothetical Isaiah a copyist of the first would be to call the greater a copyist of the less. (2) The catholicity of the Divine purpose of grace towards the world. This was no new idea in the days of Isaiah. It may be found implicitly in the first Gospel promise; it is found explicitly in the promise to the father of the Jewish nation—"In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." But, comparing prophet with prophet, we find prominence given to it in Isaiah which we find nowhere else, and in both parts of the book alike. The passages are not isolated texts which might be cut out without causing any sense of want or incompleteness in what remains. They represent the spirit of the book. This becomes significantly obvious if we accept Delitzsch's interpretation of the words of the seraphim, "The whole earth is full of His glory." These words he regards as prophetic. Looking at the ministry which was actually exercised by Isaiah, and which had to do so largely, prophetically, with the recovery of the world to God, through a Divine Servant who was to come in the last days, the most probable explanation of the words is that which finds in them an anticipation of the fulfilment of the Divine purpose. Thus understood, the song of the seraphim is the prelude to the entire ministry of Isaiah, as the song of the angels over the plains of Bethlehem is the prelude to the entire work of Christ in this world. We have found in it a key to the prophet's chosen designation of the God of Israel as "the Holy One," and we now find in it a key to the prominence which he gives to the world-wide purpose of the Divine grace, with the "wonderful" Person, Divine and human (chap. ix.), by whom, and the means by which, the purpose is to be accomplished. This unifying idea of the book of "the prophet Esaias" is confirmed by the statement of the apostle (John. xii. 41), that it was the glory of the Christ who was to come, although that coming was 800 years distant, that Isaiah saw in vision. (3) The personality of the Divine Spirit. Among "the characteristic religious peculiarities of the disputed as opposed to the acknowledged prophecies" of Isaiah, Prof. Cheyne finds the "personality of the Spirit of Jehovah." But we think we may find here, as in former cases, materials for an argument in support of the unity of the book. It is true that there are seven instances in which the per-

sonality of the Spirit is indicated or implied in the second part of the book. But it is true likewise that there are two instances in which it is indicated or implied with equal clearness in the first part of the book (chaps. xi. 2, xxxii. 15). The doctrine is not peculiar to Isaiah (see Psa. li. 11; Mic. ii. 7, iii. 8; Zech. iv. 6). What is special in Isaiah is the more frequent mention and the greater prominence of the work of the Holy Spirit. But there is one point in reference to which this book differs from all the other prophetic books, and it is common to both parts of the book,—it is the endowment of the Messiah by the Holy Spirit (xi. 2, lxi. 1, &c.). We do not argue that this alone proves a common authorship, but it is strikingly corroborative of other evidence to that effect. (4) The Divinity of the coming Christ. “Both parts of Isaiah give us to understand clearly that the agent of Jehovah in the work of government and redemption is Himself Divine” (Cheyne). The absence of a direct assertion of the Divinity of the Messiah in the second part of the book, such as we find in the first (chap. ix.), instead of being a reason for ascribing the second to a different author, seems to me to be the very reverse. Such an assertion would seem to be much more natural if the author were another than the author of the first. But on the assumption of one author, we see a significant continuity running through the whole. The first part casts its light forward on the entire book. The Messiah, once explicitly declared in the first part to be Divine, has functions ascribed to Him in the second part which only a Divine person could fulfil. There is a marked likeness, which should not be overlooked, between the two portions of the book in the way in which Messianic prediction occurs in both. It starts up from the even surface of the prophetic page with an abruptness which there is nothing in the page to account for. Hence the glorious “surprises” of which Dr. Cheyne is conscious as he reads the book. (*J. Kennedy, D.D.*) *Scientific grounds for believing in the unity of Isaiah* :—1. The external evidence, so far as it can be traced, is unanimously in favour of it; and, since the second part of Isaiah has enjoyed exceptional popularity, it is improbable that the name of the author would have been forgotten within 200 years of the time when he wrote, and his work merged in that of a writer of a few scraps of 150 years before. 2. The theory which bisects Isaiah leads, by a logical necessity, to further and further dissection, and so to results which are absurd. 3. The geography of chaps. xl.—lxvi. is earlier than the geography of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and a geographical notice in the last chapter of Isaiah was mistaken by Jeremiah. 4. The idolatrous practices rebuked by the “second Isaiah” are pre-exilian rites, such as we cannot, without anachronism, attribute to the Israelites either during or after the Exile. They can only be explained as relics of a very primitive fetish-worship connected with particular localities. 5. Other crimes rebuked by the “second Isaiah” are identical with crimes rebuked by the “first Isaiah,” and are of a sort which imply the existence of an independent community long established on the soil. 6. The “second Isaiah” gives us some personal details which enable us to identify him with the prophet of chap. vi., and, what is most important, tells us the name borne by the prophet before he took the name Isaiah. 7. The “second Isaiah” employs words only known otherwise to the “first Isaiah,” of which the meaning was lost by Jeremiah’s time. 8. The “second Isaiah” shows himself otherwise possessed of a scientific and technical vocabulary which the “first Isaiah” only shares with him. (*Prof. D. S. Margoliouth, M.A.*) *A touchstone* :—In the case of prophecy we have to deal with a class of literature unrepresented anywhere but in Israel. Therefore, the only analogies that can guide us must be got from Hebrew literature. And, happily, we have one that is amply sufficient to serve as a touchstone for the twenty-Isaiah theory. By the side of the lengthy roll of Isaiah is the less lengthy roll of the Twelve Minor Prophets. Few of these prophets figure in history; and the judgment of mankind on their literary merits places none of them in the first class. They neither thrill as Isaiah thrills, nor have they influenced mankind as Isaiah has influenced it. How comes it, then, if it was really the fashion of the Israelites to lump the oracles of different prophets together, that the works of the whole series are not ascribed to the first? Why are not the prophecies of Haggai ascribed to Hosea? Some of the Minor Prophets have produced one chapter or thereabouts; but the tradition has not forgotten their names. How then comes it that the brilliant authors of the Isaianic oracles are for the most part utterly forgotten and neglected? (*Ibid.*) *The analogy of Ezra and Nehemiah* :—That two authors of stupendous merit might accidentally get bound up together, and so the works of the second get attributed to the first, is exceedingly unlikely,

but not so unlikely as to be impossible; in the case of Isaiah, however, not only is the analogy of the Minor Prophets decidedly against it, but that of Ezra and Nehemiah still more so. Owing to the similarity of the subject of which these authors treat, they appear in several canons under the single head of Ezra; but the Jews, though they probably often bound them up together, never confused them. Still, if the division of Isaiah between two authors gave satisfaction, and further dissection did not immediately follow, this solution would not go so far outside the bounds of experience as to be called uncritical. But the fact that this first dissection leads to innumerable others renders it useless. (*Ibid.*)

*The Cyrus predictions*.—The mention by [the author] of the name of Cyrus (xlv. 4-6) is declared to be a tremendous miracle wrought in order that the whole world from East to West might know that Jehovah was the only God. If the fact was that the prophet of an unimportant and oppressed community mentioned, in the name of his god, a conqueror whose fame was filling the world, what miracle was there in this? The world might as well ring with the fact that Virgil mentioned Augustus. Yet the "second Isaiah" claims foreknowledge so constantly and so emphatically that he has left himself no loophole (xli. 23, xlii. 9, xliii. 9, 10, xlv. 7, 8, xlviii. 3-5). These are not all the passages in which this writer insists on the fact that he, as God's spokesman, has foretold events with certainty, whereas the representatives of other gods have been unable to predict. The author therefore speaks like a man of science, who is aware that the truth can submit itself to tests. . . . If we regard chaps. xl.-lxvi. as the continuation of the first half of Isaiah, the references to the former events which had come about as the prophet had predicted are intelligible; the failure of the invasion of Sennacherib, which his lying annals conceal, is attested by the Greek historian; and we are justified in ascribing that failure to providential interference. That was, doubtless, the most striking of Isaiah's predictions, but in other cases he took the wise precaution of having his oracles properly attested (viii. 2, 16, xxx. 8). Either, then, we are to suppose that the "second Isaiah" had foretold events successfully, but that his predictions attracted so little attention as to be lost; or, we are to suppose that this profession of his is a piece of imposture; or thirdly, there remains the old and traditional theory that the oracles on the fulfilment of which the "second Isaiah" bases his claim to credibility are the oracles of the "first Isaiah." Rejecting the first proposition as absurd, and the second on the ground that a claim so forcibly put forward would certainly have been challenged unless substantiated, we are driven to the third alternative; the "former events" to which the passages quoted allude must be events predicted by the "first Isaiah," and duly realised. Either, then, the "first Isaiah" wrote the work ascribed to the second, or the "second Isaiah" wrote the work ascribed to the first; for the idea that the "second Isaiah" claimed falsely to have produced the oracles which were really by the "first Isaiah" may be excluded. Either the "first Isaiah" was gifted with astounding knowledge of the future, or a false prophet of the time of Cyrus forged a whole series of oracles, some of which corresponded well with past history, in order to attach to them an appendix of oracles referring to events in the then future. This latter supposition may be refuted when any serious writer maintains it. (*Ibid.*)

*The author knew but little of Babylon*.—Out of the oracles of the "first Isaiah" it seems impossible to banish certain leading ideas which perpetually recur. "A remnant shall return" (i. 9, x. 21, xi. 11, xxvii. 12, 13). If, then, the true and genuine message of Isaiah is that a remnant shall return, and yet that remnant is not to return from Assyria, whence is it to return? Chiefly from Babylon, as the historically attested oracle in chap. xxxix. implies; and what is clear is, that the "second Isaiah," like the first, knows little of Babylon but the names Babel and Chasdees; and that, except the name Cyrus, the second possesses no detailed foreknowledge of later events that is not also at the command of the first. (*Ibid.*)

*Geographical considerations*.—There is some geography in these chapters, and there is also some in Jeremiah and in Ezekiel. If the "second Isaiah" wrote in the time of Cyrus, he must have had the works of these two prophets before him, and can scarcely have been less familiar than Ezekiel with the geography of the countries that entered into Babylonian politics. But it is the fact that the "second Isaiah" is ignorant of what was commonplace to Ezekiel. The races Meshech and Tubal, to the Assyrians Muski and Tabali, to the Greeks Moschi and Tibareni, formed a natural couple, like Holland and Belgium, or Norway and Sweden. Ezekiel mentions them together five times (xxvii. 13, xxxii. 26, xxxviii. 2, 3, xxxix. 1), and they are named together in the genealogical tables, which couple

Javan (the Oriental name for Greece) with them. To Ezekiel, therefore, it was well known that Moshech (as Meshech should be corrected) was a proper name, belonging to a nation or country. But Isaiah thought it a Hebrew word meaning "drawer," and he interprets it "drawers of the bow." Thus the verse lxvi. 19 reads: "I will send refugees of them to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, drawers of the bow, Tubal and Javan." But the Hebrew for drawers is *Mosh'che*. If we compare the lists in Ezekiel and in the genealogical tables, it will seem clear that "drawers of the bow" is not an epithet of Lud, but the name of a race, namely, Moshech. Jeremiah had this passage of Isaiah before him, and stumbled over it curiously. In enumerating some warlike tribes (xlvi. 9) he mentions Cush and Put, bearers of shields, and "Ludim, bearers treads of the bow." This variation is highly interesting. The verb *māshach* is so rarely used of "the bow" that the prophet might well doubt whether Isaiah's phrase meant "dragers" of the bow or "pullers" of it; *i.e.*, whether it referred to the carrying of the bow, or to the employment of it in actual warfare. The alternate suggestions, curiously enough, remain side by side in the text; but the reason of the association of the bow with the Lydian lancers is lost. Jeremiah is, however, one step further than Isaiah in that he has the correct form "Put" for the incorrect "Pul." The name Pul is probably due to a reminiscence of the name of an Assyrian king. We see from this passage in the *last chapter* of the "second Isaiah" a proof of priority to Jeremiah and Ezekiel. (For further developments of the geographical argument, see "Expositor," sixth series, vol. i., pp. 254-261.) (*Ibid.*) *Argument from idolatrous practices* :—The abominations described in chapter lvii. include (ver. 5) the worship of *elim* under green trees; the only other place in which this technical term appears is Isaiah i. 29 ("Men shall be ashamed of the *elim* which ye have desired"). The ceremonies rebuked in chapter lxv. include sacrifices in *gannoth* (ver. 3), and the same technical term figures in chapter lxvi. (ver. 17); the only other place in which it is found is also Isaiah i. 29 ("Ye shall be ashamed of the *gannoth* which ye have chosen"). That *gannoth* here does not mean ordinary gardens, but is a technical term, appears from the threat in i. 30, where the votaries of these *gannoth* are told that they shall become like a *garden* that has no water. For this threat evidently derives its suitability from a play on words. . . . If the word *gannoth* were not technical, the play on the words would be pointless; and we may observe that the threat of i. 30 is matched by the promise of lviii. 11: "Thou shalt be like a well-watered garden," where (owing to the absence of any other allusion) the ordinary form of the word for "garden" is used. The worship with which these terms *gannoth* and *elim* are connected was exceedingly elaborate, and therefore characteristic of a period. We learn, therefore, that the authors of Isaiah i. and of Isaiah lvii. and lxv., lxvi. were contemporaries. That the first chapter of a great classic could be attributed to any one but its right author is too wild a surmise to deserve consideration. We start, then, with the remarkable fact that the "first Isaiah" uses two technical terms with which the "second Isaiah" and no other Hebrew author is familiar. And the "second Isaiah" acts as interpreter to the "first Isaiah," by enabling us to locate, and to some extent comprehend, the nature of the cults to which these technical terms belonged. And from this observation a very easy step leads to the identification of the two authors. (*Ibid.*) *Ceremonies alluded to in chapters lvii., lxv., and lxvi.* :—The source of these practices in Palestine must have been ancient and undisturbed custom; they had been brought by the Canaanites with them from Arabia, and the Israelites had learned them from the Canaanites. They were kept alive by attachment to particular mountains and particular rivers, and in part were based on the system which connected and even identified the gods with particular localities. The cultivation of them involved an insult to the temple (lxv. 11), which, therefore, must have been standing at the time of the rebuke. These passages are in consequence so clearly pre-exilian, that even some of those who were in favour of the dissecting theory have been unable to place them any later. While, then, the "first Isaiah" is supposed to be interpolated with post-exilian matter, the "second Isaiah" is supposed to be interpolated with pre-exilian matter. Naturally, a theory that involves so much complication can make little claim to probability. (*Ibid.*) *Anachronisms involved in the supposition of a "second Isaiah"* :—The author of chap. lxv. 8, 9 takes the same view of the purpose of the Exile which is taken throughout the book, and, indeed, throughout the Bible. Attachment to these savage and primitive rites could only be dissolved by removing the worshippers from the soil on which they were practised;

hence, the Exile was not only a punishment but also a corrective. From it there returned those whose progenitors had not bowed the knee to Baal, while those whose interests were far removed from the objects which Israel was destined to accomplish lost their nationality. Those who came back were cured, or rather purified, from this particular form of evil. That they were not faultless we know from the prophets of the Return; but, to attribute to them fetish worship of a primitive sort is a gross anachronism. One might as well accuse the English of the nineteenth century of burning heretics or using ordeals as evidence. . . . Next after the idolatrous rites rebuked by the "second Isaiah," we may consider some other crimes which he condemns. One of the most serious impeachments is to be found in lix. 2-9. The prophet there states that the sins of his countrymen have been a bar between them and God; they have caused God to hide His face, and prevented Him from hearing. This is the same message as that in i. 14, 15, with a slight difference in the tense and the expression. He then proceeds: "for your hands are polluted with blood." This also is identical with the accusation in i. 15, "your hands are full of blood"; or, perhaps, "tainted with blood." Now, this is as grave an accusation as can be made; to what it precisely refers our slight knowledge of Israelitish history does not enable us to say: the prophet may have in mind either judicial murders (such as that in old times of Naboth), or recklessness of human life among loose livers, or . . . infanticide. . . . Whichever of these it be—supposing it does not refer, as many have thought, to a judicial murder in the distant future—the two "remonstrances" must clearly belong to the same period. And that period can only be pre-exilic; the mere notion of such a remonstrance being addressed to the returned exiles seems to involve anachronism. Indeed, the prophet's idea is clearly that the Exile was a sort of sea in which these offences were to be washed out. The terrible impeachment of his contemporaries which follows strongly resembles that contained in chaps. i. and v. It is illustrated by similes taken from natural history, in which words otherwise only used by the "first Isaiah" are employed. Verses 9 and 11 contain a free paraphrase of v. 7; but the play on the words in the earlier chapter is intentionally altered. An imitator would probably have reproduced it. In lvi. 10-12 the impeachment is confined to the rulers; they are accused of drunkenness, corruption, and incompetence, just as they are in v. 22, 23, iii. 12, and ix. 15. That the same impeachment could be made with justice at such different periods as the time of the "first Isaiah" and the close of the Exile or commencement of the Return seems unthinkable; but to deny the authenticity of the early chapters of the book is uncritical. How could such a forgery have remained undetected? In chap. lviii. the people are accused of lip-service; they ask why their punctilious performance of ceremonies is unproductive of results, and are told that it is owing to the fact that their service is not accompanied by a corresponding reform in their conduct. The same is the burden of chap. i. and of xxix. 13. Surely the remonstrances addressed to the Jews before and after the great crisis in their national existence cannot have been so similar. (*Ibid.*) *The "second Isaiah" identical with the prophet of chap. vi.* :—Let us see whether the second half of Isaiah tells us anything about the prophet's person. Ewald seems to have rightly interpreted viii. 18: "Verily, I and the children which the Lord has given me are for signs and tokens in Israel," of the names Isaiah, Shear-yashub, and Maher-shalal-hash-baz. Clearly, the names, "A remnant shall return," and "Hasten the spoil, hurry the plunder," were too full of meaning to escape notice; therefore the prophet's own name, "The salvation of the Lord," must also have been of notable significance; and, indeed, that theme, "the salvation of the Lord," pervades the whole book. But it follows that the prophet must have taken this name himself. Thus only would its significance be forced on the minds of his contemporaries. . . . What, then, was his original name? This appears to be given in xlii. 18-21. The way to translate these verses seems to me the following: "Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, so as to see. Who was blind but My servant, or deaf as My messenger whom I send? Who was blind as Meshullam, and blind as the servant of the Lord? Seeing much without noticing; open-eared without hearing. The Lord was pleased of His grace to make a great and notable example." The name Meshullam is by no means uncommon; it belongs to a root which gives a great number of proper names both in Hebrew and Arabic; they all mean "safe and sound," and are names of good omen. . . . The "great and notable example," then, lay in the fact that he, Meshullam, had been enabled to see; why, then, should not others? Let us compare this with

the most autobiographical chapter in Isaiah—chap. vi. In the first place, the vision there justifies the description of himself in the above passage as “My messenger whom I send” (vi. 8, 9). He was told to go and say to the people, “Hear, but understand not; see, and know not”—the very condition wherein, according to xlii. 20, the messenger himself had been. Then, we see that in ver. 5 he identifies his condition with that of his countrymen until the live coal had touched his lips. The immediate result of that was to be the removal of sin; but assuredly the image is meant to suggest “the scholar’s tongue,” which in l. 4, he says, was given him by the Lord, to utter the words which (as Ben-Sira says) blaze like a fire, and, indeed, however inadequately they are translated, thrill the reader and hearer more, probably, than any other form of utterance. Hence it would seem that the verses xlii. 18–21 give us a very needful supplement to the biographical notice of chap. vi. But is the supposition that Meshullam is a proper name a wild conjecture, or an observation that is likely sooner or later to be generally accepted? I trust the latter, because modern scholars see the necessity of correcting the text, owing to the fact that, taken as a substantive, the word gives no satisfactory meaning. It is only in rare cases that [the correction of the text] is dictated by the canons of science. On the other hand, I can imagine no reason, grammatical or other, which stands in the way of the interpretation given above. And seeing how deeply this prophet is imbued with the feeling that a new condition calls for a new name (cf. lxii. 2), the conjecture of Ewald, that the name Isaiah was meant to mark the prophet’s new condition, seems highly probable. . . . We learn, then, from chap. vi. that the mission undertaken by the prophet was without hope of brilliant success; it was only when Jerusalem was reduced to a ruin that it was to begin to be heard. In l. 6–10 we hear the prophet complain of its ineffectual character; the reception of his message was just what had been promised: it was greeted with contempt and ridicule, with blows and buffets. The consolation that he had was the same as that which nerves all those who are defending the cause of science against tremendous odds, namely, that the truth is permanent, and must slowly approve itself, whereas the opposite is transitory. Naturally, it might be said that this was too often the fate of those who interpreted the purposes or work of God aright for the first time to serve for scientific identification; but then, it must be observed that we have no other justification save this passage for the oracle of chap. vi. . . . The valuable notice in xlii. 19 of the author’s former name, Meshullam, seems intelligible only on the hypothesis stated above. Had it not been known that the author of that chapter bore the name Isaiah, the chapter (and the collection in which it occurred) would be, of course, attributed to Meshullam. Anyone who has ever catalogued MSS. is aware that the first expedient adopted for finding out the name of an author is to search through his book for some proper name that may, from the context, be his. To those with whom classical Hebrew was a living language, a proper name would be as easily distinguishable as to us in reading English; in such a sentence as “who is so pathetic as gray,” the absence of the capital would confuse no intelligent reader; and hence, had not the readers of these oracles from the time they were first issued in a roll been convinced that the author’s name was Isaiah, it would never have occurred to them to render Meshullam as “perfect,” or “requited,” or “devoted.” But since the fact of the prophet having changed his name was only recorded in the allusion of chap. viii. 18, his former name was forgotten. That “who so blind as Meshullam?” meant “who so blind as Isaiah before his mission?” was not perceived by those who only knew of Isaiah. Even in this country, where a change of name is usually preceded by the most important work in a man’s life, the name by which a peer was known before his elevation is constantly forgotten by the majority of the public. But where the change is preceded by no important work, the original name is likely to be lost altogether. How many educated persons could say offhand what was the original name of Voltaire or Neander or Lagarde? (*Ibid.*) *Argument from words common to the “first” and “second Isaiah”*:—A scientific argument can be drawn from the use of words only when they can be dated before or after. By the latter method of dating I mean the case in which we can show that by a certain date the sense of a word had been entirely forgotten in a community; for then, whoever is found using it in the old sense will almost certainly be earlier than that date. The discovery of this scientific principle is the service rendered the world by the Greek critic Aristarchus; let us see whether it will help us to determine the date of the “second Isaiah.” 1. There is a word *nāshath*,

used by Isaiah once in the first half of the book (ix. 5), and once in the second (xli. 17). In both those passages it clearly means "to be dry"; "the waters shall dry up from the Nile," and "their tongue is dry with thirst." It is well to know the etymology of a word before we base any argument upon it; and here the surest source of Hebrew etymology, classical Arabic, does not fail us. The word *nashifa* has, from time immemorial, been used by the Arabs precisely as Isaiah uses this. . . . What, therefore, appears is that the authors of both parts of Isaiah are acquainted with a verb *nashath* or *nasath*, meaning "to be dry," and in all probability identical with a very familiar Arabic verb meaning the same. Now let us examine two passages of Jeremiah. The first is li. 30. "The champions of Babylon have ceased to fight; they sit in their fortresses; their manhood is *nashath*; they have become women" (*nashim*). The second clause is here evidently in explanation of the first; it tells us what *nashath* means, namely, "to become effeminate." The author regards it as a denominative from *nashim*, "women," probably through an abstract *nashûth*, "womanhood." Hence, between the time when Isaiah II. wrote, and the time of the composition of Jer. li. 30, the meaning of the word *nashath* must have been forgotten. Therefore, the author of Isaiah xli. is earlier than the author of Jeremiah li. by some generations. That this observation is correct is shown by Jer. xviii. 14: "Can the cool flowing water be *destroyed*" (*nathash*)? That men do not speak of water being destroyed or plucked up is evident; the author must mean, "Can they dry up?" The phrase, then, is modelled on Isaiah xix. 5; but the later prophet, being no longer familiar with the old verb *nashath*, "to dry up," substitutes by conjecture the more familiar *nathash*. By the time li. 30 is written he has remembered that Isaiah used not *nathash*, but *nashath*, in connection with waters drying; hence he gives it a special application, adding an etymological explanation. The process is very similar to that which was traced in reference to "the Lydians, drawers of the bow." Just as Isaiah utilised the lost Book of Wisdom, so Jeremiah utilises the language of the existing classic, Isaiah. In the case of obsolete phrases, he makes guesses, which, as philology is not the purpose of Holy Scripture, by the fact that they are unfortunate, give us valuable clues of date. 2. In Isaiah x. 18 there occurs a difficult phrase, rendered in our Authorised Version, "as when a standard-bearer fainteth." The meaning of this expression is probably lost; but it must have been known to the author of Isaiah lix. 19, "the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." For the same word (*nôsêes*) is here used, but in an entirely different context. There can, therefore, be no question of imitation; the prophet must have known the meaning of the word, though we do not know it; and the argument is unaffected by the question of the meaning which should be assigned it. These words would appear to be of real importance, because the argument drawn from them is of a sort that science recognises. (*Ibid.*) *The technical vocabulary of Isaiah II. shared by Isaiah I.*—Agriculture and natural history seem clearly to interest the author (or authors) of these oracles very much; and allusions to these subjects lead to the employment of a considerable number of technicalities. Whether a member of the exiled community would have had the opportunity of becoming so familiar with these subjects seems doubtful; but documents illustrating the life of the exiles may some day be discovered, which will enable us to speak positively on this matter. There are some facts about the use of these terms in the two parts of the book which seem to me scarcely explicable on the hypothesis of divided authorship. In the parable of the Vineyard (v. 1-6) there occurs a word for "to hoe" (*adar*, ver. 6), and also a word for "to stone," meaning "to remove stones" (*sikkel*, ver. 2). Both these verbs have other meanings, which are more familiar; but in the case of the vineyard there could be no mistaking their import, whence they are used without any explanation. However, in vii. 25 the prophet has occasion to use the word for "to hoe" in a less technical context, so this time he adds "with the hoe," that there may be no error. The author of lxii. 10 has occasion to use the word for "to stone" of a road, where it would be ambiguous; for "to stone a road" might mean to put stones on it or to remove them from it. Hence he adds "from stones," that there may be no error. Now, either there never was an Isaiah, or the oracles of chaps. v. and vii. are Isaianic. Therefore lxii. is also Isaianic. For it must be remembered that these words, in their technical sense, only occur in these two places. The theory that another author felt the same scruple about the second as Isaiah had felt about the first scarcely commends itself; a later imitator would have thought Isaiah's authority sufficient to justify him in using "to stone" for "to remove stones." In xxxiv. 15, and twice in



lix. 5, a verb (meaning literally "to split") is used of hatching serpents' eggs; it does not occur elsewhere in this sense. In xxxiv. 15 a special verb is used for "to be delivered of," "produce," which only occurs in lxvi. 7 besides. Jeremiah (xvii. 11) is apparently acquainted with part of this scientific vocabulary, but not with the word for "produce." Now, the author of xxxiv. seems on other grounds identical with the "second Isaiah"; the reference to Edom and Bozrah in ver. 6 cannot with any probability be separated from that in lxiii. 1, and the address to the "nations and peoples" in xxxiv. 1 is evidently in the style of the author of xli. 1. The threat in xxxiv. 3 closely resembles that with which the Book of Isaiah closes. Chap. xxxv. also cannot, with any probability, be separated from chaps. xl.-lxvi.; both the thought and the language are closely akin to, and in part identical with, those of the "second Isaiah." On the other hand, it is by no means easy to separate xxxv. from what precedes; ver. 5 takes us back to xxix. 18, and ver. 4 to xxxii. 4. Now, this fact hits the splitting theory very hard. (*Ibid.*)

*Is the standpoint Babylonian?*—The Babylonian standpoint must at least be doubtful, when so great and free a critic as Ewald not only failed to see it, but, while maintaining the exilic date of these chapters, found an entirely different standpoint or historic background in them—an Egyptian. (*J. Kennedy, D.D.*) Professor Cheyne not only admits that there is "a paucity of allusions in these chapters to the special circumstances of Babylon," but admits likewise that there is not a little of Palestinian colouring in them. "Some passages," he says, "of 'second Isaiah' are in variable degrees really favourable to the theory of a Palestinian origin. Thus in lvii. 6 the reference to torrent beds is altogether inapplicable to the alluvial plains of Babylonia; and equally so is that to subterranean holes in xlii. 22. And though, no doubt, Babylonia was more wooded in ancient times than it is at present, it is certain that the trees mentioned in xli. 19 were not, for the most part, natives of that country; while the date-palm, the commonest of all the Babylonian trees, is not once referred to." He admits, at the same time, that there are allusions in the later chapters "which unmistakably point away from the period of the Exile." "They are most numerous," he says, "and striking in chaps. lvi., lvii., lxx., lxxvi. Let us read them by themselves, and I think we shall hardly doubt that the descriptions refer to some period or periods other than the Exile." Isaiah, he further admits, might have learned in Palestine almost as much about Babylon as is mentioned in the second portion of the book, either from travelling merchants or from the ambassadors of Merodach Baladan. "The only possible allusion of this kind (if we may press the letter of the prophecy) distinctly in favour of an exilic date is that of chap. xlvi. 1 to the worship of Bel-Merodach Nebo, which specially characterised the later Babylonian empire. This paucity of Babylonian references would be less surprising (for prophets and apostles were not curious observers) were it not for the very specific allusions to Palestinian circumstances in some of the later chapters": on which the remark is obvious, that with "very specific allusions to Palestinian circumstances," and only "one possible allusion" to what is distinctly Babylonian, we may assume that, so far as local environment is indicated, the standpoint of the author is not Babylonian, but Palestinian. (*Ibid.*) Rev. G. A. Smith says: "While the bulk of chaps. xl. to lxvi. were composed in Babylonia during the Exile of the Jews, there are considerable portions which date from before the Exile and betray a Palestinian origin; and one or two smaller pieces that seem—rather less evidently, however—to take for granted the return after the Exile." As to chaps. xl. to xlvi., Mr. Smith holds very positively that they are to be dated in Babylonia, and that they form a unity, being the work of one author. As to chaps. xlix. to lxvi., the evidence he regards as less conclusive. In chaps. liv., lv., he thinks we are still in exile. "A number of short prophecies now follow till the end of chap. lix. is reached." These, he thinks, make it extremely difficult to believe in the original unity of "second Isaiah." Some of them are undoubtedly of earlier date. Such is chap. lvi. 9 to lvii., which regards the Exile as still to come; while others of these short prophecies are, he says, in the opinion of some critics, post-exilic. Chap. lix., Mr. Smith says, is perhaps the most difficult portion of all; chaps. lxi. and lxii. he holds to be certainly exilic; chap. lxiii. 7 to lxiv. implies a ruined temple (lxiv. 11), but bears no traces of the writer being in exile; chap. lxxv. has been assigned by some to the same date; chap. lxxvi. betrays more evidence of being written after the Return. Mr. Smith considers himself "justified in coming to the provisional conclusion that 'second Isaiah' is not a unity, in so far as it consists of a number of pieces by different men whom God raised up at various times before, during, and after the

Exile, to comfort and exhort amid the shifting circumstances and tempers of the people; but that it is a unity in so far as these pieces have been gathered together by an editor, very soon after the return from exile, in an order as regular both in point of time and subject as the somewhat mixed material would permit." So that "it is rather an editorial than an original unity which is apparent." I submit that in the face of these differences as to what chapters in "second Isaiah" do or do not manifest a Babylonian standpoint, it is impossible to rely on the assumption of such a standpoint as an argument against the authorship of the historic Isaiah. (*Ibid.*) *The value of the arguments from language and style*.—The assumption that we can locate disjointed fragments of Hebrew is to be summarily rejected. (*Prof. D. S. Margoliouth, M.A.*) The diction of the second part of Isaiah is tolerably pure and free from Chaldaisms. (*Samuel Davidson, D.D.*) There cannot be a more false canon of criticism than that a man who has written one work will, when writing a second, introduce no ideas and make use of no modes of expression that are not to be found in the first. On the contrary, a writer may be pronounced very barren indeed if he exhausts all his ideas and expends all his vocabulary on one production. (*G. Salmon, D.D.*) My own opinion is that the peculiar expressions of the latter prophecies are, on the whole, not such as to necessitate a different linguistic stage from the historical Isaiah; and that, consequently, the decision of the critical question will mainly depend on other than purely linguistic considerations. (*Prof. T. K. Cheyne, D.D.*) On the authority of "great Hebraists," with scarcely an exception, there is no linguistic necessity for the theory of a dual or plural authorship. (*J. Kennedy, D.D.*) *A supplementary consideration*.—It is admitted that the man who wrote the second part of the Book of Isaiah, or, at least, the greater part of it, was himself intellectually and morally as great as, or greater than, the historic Isaiah. Our ideal of the prophet Isaiah, on which so much eloquence has been expended, is the ideal rather of the man who wrote the second part than of the man who wrote the first. It is in chaps. xl. to xlvi. especially that we find the origin of our conception of Isaiah as the greatest of the Hebrew poets. (*Ibid.*) *The prophecies respecting Cyrus*.—Josephus ascribes the decree of Cyrus (Ezra i. 1, 2) to his having read the Book of Isaiah, or portions of it. Quoting part of the passage in which Cyrus is named, Josephus says: "This was foretold by Isaiah 140 years before the temple was destroyed. Accordingly, when Cyrus read this, and admired the Divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfil what was so written; so he called for the most eminent Jews that were in Babylon, and said to them, that he gave them leave to go back to their own country, and to rebuild their city Jerusalem and the temple of God" (*Antiq. xi. 1*). From which we gather, at the least, that Josephus had not discovered the grand secret of the Higher Criticism, that the prophecy concerning Cyrus was only two years old when he read it, if ever he did read it at all. (*Ibid.*) The knowledge of the name by the historic Isaiah would, according to Cheyne, "involve the necessity of assuming a suspension of the laws of psychology." But *à priori* objections of this sort must give way before the evidence of facts. What, after all, is meant by a suspension of the laws of psychology? In this case it can only mean that the discovery of the name of Cyrus was something above the operation of the natural laws of the human mind. And this is only saying, in other words, that it was supernatural;—the very thing we maintain concerning this and every other *bona fide* prediction. Suppose we had the prophecy in all respects as it is, but without the name. Instead of Cyrus, let it be only "a king" that shall arise to "perform Jehovah's pleasure." Would all else in the prophecy be discoverable by the human mind? Is there nothing supernatural in it but the name? Or, will it be said that the other contents of the prophecy, though not discoverable by any natural operation of the human mind, would be intelligible when made known? Then we ask, What is there that is unintelligible in the addition of the name? The prophet must have known that it was not of himself that he foresaw the deliverance of his nation by the Persian monarch. The authoritative preface, "Thus saith the Lord," intimates the source of his knowledge. But how the Lord said it to him he does not say,—probably could not say. And the revealing the name of the deliverer to his mind would scarcely be a greater wonder to him than the revealing of the deliverance itself, and of the circumstances in which it should take place. The mention of the name of Cyrus is not without a parallel in an older record (1 Kings xiii. 2). To suppose that "Josiah by name" is an interpolation or gloss that has slipped into the text from the record of its accomplishment (2 Kings xxiii. 15, 16) is an arbitrary assumption. (*Ibid.*) *Did Isaiah form a*

*prophetic school?*—As to this suggestion of a band of younger prophets who formed the school of Isaiah, it is based on a very uncertain foundation, the words in chap. viii. 16, “Bind up the testimony,” &c. Commentators differ in their interpretation of this text, some holding that the words are the Lord’s, some that they are Isaiah’s. Even if we accept them as Isaiah’s, there is no evidence that Isaiah was at the head of a school of the prophets, such as we have in the case of Samuel, and in the story of Elijah and Elisha. And if there were, it would be impossible to connect that school with the origination of a book which was written during the Exile. We should have to suppose that the school of Isaiah survived through the idolatrous and disastrous reigns that followed, going into exile with other captives, and still existing during the Exile period, and having a succession of heads or masters all that time. Such a continuous existence would be a very remarkable phenomenon. And very remarkable, too, is the absence of all historic reference to it. (*Ibid.*) *Did Isaiah leave his prophecies in a fixed form?*—In the Book of Jeremiah we are told that all the words of the prophet were written in a roll, and that when the king cut the roll in pieces the word of the Lord came to the prophet commanding him to have his prophecies rewritten on a new roll or in a new book. And it was done (chap. xxxvi. 4, 23, 28, 32). But as we find no intimation of this sort in Isaiah, we are asked to suppose that his prophecies were not left by him in a fixed form. If this be a correct inference, it follows that no prophet but Jeremiah left his writings in a fixed form, *i.e.*, on a roll or in a book! For in none of them are we told that he did. The true inference from the incident in Jeremiah is, that all the prophets were instructed of the Lord carefully to write in a book such communications as the Divine Inspirer willed to be preserved for permanent use. It is not credible—(1) That Isaiah should take no trouble to certify his own prophecies; and (2) that for 300 years these prophecies should still be uncollected into the unity of a book, thus “not precluding the addition” of writings which were certainly not his. (*Ibid.*)

10. THE HISTORICAL CHAPTERS, XXXVI.—XXXIX.—An historical section, differing (except by the addition of the Song of Hezekiah, xxxviii. 9–20) only verbally from 2 Kings xviii. 13, 17–xx. 19, and narrating certain important events in which Isaiah was concerned. The original place of these narratives was not the Book of Isaiah, but the Book of Kings, whence they were excerpted (with slight abridgments) by the compiler of the Book of Isaiah (as Jer. lii. was excerpted from 2 Kings xxiv. 18 ff. by the compiler of the Book of Jeremiah), on account, no doubt, of the particulars contained in them respecting Isaiah’s prophetic work, and the fulfilment of some of his most remarkable prophecies, the Song of Hezekiah being added by him from an independent source. (With xxxvii. 36 f. compare not only xxxvii. 7, 22, 29, but also x. 33 f., xiv. 25, xvii. 13 f., xviii. 5 f., xxix. 6 f., xxx. 27 ff., xxxi. 8 f., xxxiii. 3, 10–12). (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*)

III. THE DEVOTIONAL READING OF ISAIAH.—First recall some of the general rules given by Thomas à Kempis (Book I. chap. v.). Speaking as one who accepts a good many of the results of modern criticism as most probably true, I should say that the Book of Isaiah remains as helpful to devotion as it ever was. We are now concerned with the contents of the book. These lay before our Lord in the form in which we read them to-day; from these St. Philip preached Christ to the Ethiopian eunuch; in these St. Paul found some of his most fruitful spiritual thoughts. In our devotional reading we will put aside such questions as whether many authors or one wrote the great prophetic book. I do not say that every passage of Isaiah is suitable for devotional use, and when a verse is really obscure in meaning I do not think it is right to give it a fanciful explanation, even if by so doing a devotional use may be made of the verse. Such a proceeding is not quite honest, and, be it remembered, devotion is nothing if it be not honest. Even a cursory reading of Isaiah will bring to our knowledge many passages which are, in the truest sense, helps to devotion. Let me take three such passages as examples—1. The first (Isa. xi. 1–9) may be called a vision of the Kingdom of God. Here we have an ideal picture of the future; how will such a picture help us? By guiding and quickening our devotion. Devotion (in the fullest sense of the word) means giving ourselves to God for one of God’s great ends. Our own devotion, like St. Paul’s (Acts xxii. 10), needs to catch some glimpse of God’s great ends, in order that it may not spend itself in aimless feeling. We have been taught to pray, “Thy kingdom come”; but it is of no avail to use that

petition if we have no notion of that for which we pray. Here Isaiah's vision comes in to help us. 2. I would call the second passage (Isa. lii. 13-liii. 12) a study of Christ's Passion. No one can gainsay the fact that we find here, in a passage written centuries before Christ's coming, the very principles laid down which governed Christ's atoning work on earth. The passage teaches us—(1) To look upon the Passion of our Lord with wonder. The whole is a fathomless mystery of love. (2) To meditate on the Passion with thankfulness and with confession of our sin. (3) The lesson of self-restraint under injury (liiii. 7). The very injuries inflicted upon us become helps, if they lead us to humble ourselves in silence before God. (4) To gather satisfaction and even joy from the story of Christ's death. We learn that, however slow Christ's kingdom may appear to us in its coming, the coming itself is certain (liiii. 11). 3. The third passage (lxiii. 7-lxiv. 12) may be called a model prayer for one in trouble. It contains the pleading of one (the Israelite nation is meant) who has had a rich experience of God's goodness in the past, and is now face to face with crushing affliction. It is a pattern of devotion to us for four reasons—(1) It begins with recognising the past goodness of God, the sun now behind the cloud (lxiii. 9). If we keep God's past goodness fresh in mind we have something solid to meet present trial with. (2) This passage does not merely glance at this goodness, but realises it by tracing it step by step (lxiii. 9-14). So we should not merely confess God's guidance in our past lives in general terms; the true spirit of devotion will say, here and there, and here and there again, in such a year and on such an occasion, God helped me. (3) The prophet gives us an example of steadfastness in devotion. He has not one eye on God and the other on earthly help. God fills his thoughts (lxiii. 16). (4) This passage shows us man's part in the day of affliction, namely, to wait and to work (lxiv. 4, 5). Few books of the Bible offer such variety of devotional help as Isaiah. In it speaks the evangelist, the spiritual guide, the spiritual comforter, in almost every tone of the language of the spiritual life. (*W. Emery Barnes, D.D.*)

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# THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

## ISAIAH.

### CHAPTER I.

**VER. 1.** *The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz.—Isaiah the son of Amoz:—*This is not Amos the inspired herdsman. It is his glory simply that he was the father of Isaiah. Like many another he lives in the reflected glory of his offspring. The next best thing to being a great man is to be the father of one. (*S. Horton.*) *Isaiah's father:—*The rabbis represent his father Amoz as having been a brother of King Amaziah; but, at anyrate, if we may judge from his illustrious son's name, which means "salvation is from Jehovah," he was loyal to the national faith in days clouded by sore troubles, political danger threatening from without, and deep religious decay pervading all classes of the community. (*C. Geikie, LL.D.*) *The vision of Isaiah:—*The word "vision" is used here in the wide sense of a collection of prophetic oracles (*Nah. i. 1; Obad. i.*). As the prophet was called a "seer," and his perception of Divine truth was called "seeing," so his message as a whole is termed a "vision." (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *The time when Isaiah prophesied:—*Why does the Bible tell us so particularly the time when Isaiah prophesied? Does not the thinker belong to all the ages? Does not the poet sing for all time? Why weight the narrative with these chronological details? Because you can only judge either a man or his message by knowing the circumstances of his time. If you take a geologist a new specimen he not only wants to know its genus and species, but the matrix out of which it was hewn. The best men not only help to make their times, but their times help to make them. He who is moulded entirely by his surroundings is a human jelly-fish—of no account. He who is not influenced at all by "the play of popular passion"—the set of public opinion—is an anachronism, a living corpse. (*S. Horton.*) *Isaiah's manly outspokenness:—*It is a living man who speaks to us. This is not an anonymous book. Much value attaches to personal testimony. The true witness is not ashamed of day and date and all the surrounding chronology; we know where to find him, what he sprang from, who he is, and what he wants. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

**Vers. 2–31.** *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken.—*God finds vindication in nature:—I well remember two funerals going out of my house within a few brief months during my residence in London. There were cards sent by post and left at the door, in all kindness; but one dark night when my grief overwhelmed me I looked at some of the cards and could find no vibration of sympathy there. I had not felt the touch of the hand that sent them. I went out into the storm that moaned and raged alternately, and walked round Regent's Park through the very heart of the hurricane. It seemed to soothe me. You say I could not find sympathy there. Perhaps not, but I at least found affinity: the storm without seemed to harmonise with the storm within; and then I remembered that He who sent that storm to sweep over the earth loved the earth still, and then remembered that He who sent the storm to sweep over my soul, and make desolate my home, loved me still. I got comfort there in the darkness, and the wild noise of a storm on an autumn night, which I found not in cards of condolence, sincere as in many instances the sympathy of the senders was. Ah

me! when man not only failed to sympathise, but also forgot all gratitude and rebelled against his Heavenly Father, I can imagine God looking out to His own universe, to the work of His own hand, and seeking vindication, if not sympathy, as He spoke of man, his rebellion and folly. (*D. Davies.*) *The sinful nation* :—

I. THE PRIVILEGES OF THE NATION. It was no mean prerogative to become the chosen people of God, but for what was that choice made? Not because of perfect characters surely; but rather to declare among the nations the messages of God; not a nation holy in character, but with a holy errand. When the ten tribes revolted, leaving only a remnant, that remnant must do the errand appointed. Thus did God speak of them as "My people," "My children." Our privileges cannot save us, and even our blessings may become a curse. God cannot give to us personally what we will not receive. II. THE NATIONAL CORRUPTION. What the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is in the New Testament, that is the first chapter of Isaiah's prophecy in the Old. Deeper degradation than that of Israel it would be hard to find. In Isaiah's time, gold and silver idols glittered on every street of Jerusalem. By royal authority, worship was given to the sun and moon. At the opening of each new season, snow-white horses, stalled in the rooms at the temple entrance, were driven forth harnessed to golden chariots to meet the sun at its rising. Incense ascended to heathen gods from altars built upon the streets. Vice had its impure rites in the temple itself. The valley of Hinnom echoed the dying screams of children offered as sacrifices in the terrible flames of the hideous Moloch. Words fail in depicting the deep corruption. There is the sting of sin in the plain statement of the awful history, "They have forsaken the Lord," &c. III. THE RELATION OF RITUAL TO MORALITY. The more pronounced the ceremonial, the more tenaciously will men cling to it. Thus, in Isaiah's day, they who had swung their incense to the sun and moon; who had worshipped Baal upon the high places and in the groves; who had cast their children into the burning arms of Moloch, turned immediately from these heathenish practices to worship in the temple. Of burnt-offerings and sacrifices there was no end. The purest spiritual worship, like that of Enoch and Abraham and Melchizedek, did not need it; it was given when a nation of slaves, degraded by Egyptian bondage, could appreciate nothing higher, and it was taken away when the true light was come. There was neither perfection nor spirituality in such a ritual; yet in such a system God tried to elevate the nation to spiritual truths they could not yet apprehend. The ritual could not make morality. IV. ANY WORSHIP TO PLEASE GOD MUST BE REASONABLE. The Divine appeal claims the undivided attention of the profoundest thoughts; "Come, now, and let us reason together." (*Sermons by the Monday Club.*) *The sinful nation* :—The message to the "sinful nation" with which the book of Isaiah begins has for ourselves the tremendous force of timeliness as well as truth. I. We are led to consider, that STATE AND NATION ARE INVOLVED TOGETHER. The country is "desolate," the cities are "burned with fire," "and the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city." We remember indeed that the saints have survived in "the dens and caves of the earth." But these victories of truth and righteousness—God's power to overrule wickedness—by no means contradict Isaiah's vision. If it is true that the Founder of the Church can maintain its strength notwithstanding civil turmoil and decay, let us also consider how God magnifies the Church through days of peace and virtue. Jesus Himself waited until the nations were still. And what may be the possibilities for His kingdom of the continued growth and happiness of our own country, it is entrancing to contemplate. The treasures of love, how full they may be! The pastors and teachers for every dark land,—what hosts there may be prepared! II. Aroused to the consideration of such a problem, we readily appreciate the prophet's reference to THE RESPONSIBILITY OF RULERS (ver. 10). Our own happy visions of the future may all be overclouded if there be but one Ahab in authority. The exhortation, therefore, addresses those who as citizens are to be charged with the duty of placing men in power. III. We find the prophet distinctly TRACING THE NATIONAL CALAMITIES TO THE NATION'S WICKEDNESS (vers. 4-8). IV. THE PROPHET'S MESSAGE TO HIS COUNTRYMEN IS PARTICULARLY DIRECTED AGAINST THEIR IMPIETY. They have forms of religion enough, indeed. But out of the people's worship the heart and life have departed. Only the husks remain. Perhaps it will be seen in the end that the Pharisee is not only as bad, but as bad a citizen too, as the glutton and the winebibber. The Pharisaic poison works with a more stealthy force and

makes its attacks upon more vital parts. We are to look not only for a sinful nation's natural decay, but besides for those mighty interpositions of Providence in flood and famine, in pestilence and war, directly for its punishment and overthrow. V. THE VALUE OF A "REMNANT." God has been saving remnants from the beginning—Noah, Abraham, Moses, Nehemiah—and the little companies of which such souls are the centre and the life in every age. God's plans are not spoiled by man's madness. If many rebel against Him, He saves the few and multiplies their power. The leaven leavens the whole lump again. VI. Most impressive, therefore, is THE TENDER AND EMPHATIC PROCLAMATION OF MERCY AND PARDON in this chapter. (*Hanford A. Edson, D.D.*) *The sinful nation*:— I. THE WRITER (ver. 1). II. THE CHARACTER OF THE PEOPLE (vers. 2-6). III. THE FRUITS OF THIS CHARACTER (vers. 7-9). IV. FALSE EFFORTS TO OBTAIN RELIEF (vers. 10-15). Murderers may be found at church, making their attendance a cloak for their iniquity or an atonement for their crime. God cannot become a party to such horrible trading. V. THE TRUE WAY OF DELIVERANCE (vers. 16-18). God not only describes the disease, but provides the remedy. The fountain is provided; sinners must wash in it—must confess, forsake, get the right spirit, and do right. (*J. Sanderson, D.D.*) *Isaiah's sermon*:—The sermon which is contained in this chapter hath in it— I. A HIGH CHARGE exhibited in God's name against the Jewish Church and nation. 1. For their ingratitude (vers. 2, 3). 2. For their incorrigibility (ver. 5). 3. For the universal corruption and degeneracy of the people (vers. 4, 6, 21, 22). 4. For their rulers' perverting of justice (ver. 23). II. A SAD COMPLAINT OF THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD which they had brought upon themselves by their sins, and by which they were brought almost to utter ruin (vers. 7-9). III. A JUST REJECTION OF THOSE SHOWS AND SHADOWS OF RELIGION which they kept up among them, notwithstanding this general defection and apostasy (vers. 10-15). IV. AN EARNEST CALL TO REPENTANCE AND REFORMATION, setting before them life and death (vers. 16-20). V. A THREATENING OF RUIN TO THOSE THAT WOULD NOT BE REFORMED (vers. 24, 28-31). VI. A PROMISE OF A HAPPY REFORMATION AT LAST, and a return to their primitive purity and prosperity (vers. 25-27). And all this is to be applied by us, not only to the communities we are members of, in their public interests, but to the state of our own souls. (*M. Henry.*) *A last appeal*:—The prophets are God's storm signals. This was a crisis in Israel's history. Mercy and judgment had alike failed. The mass of the people had become more hardened. Judgment alone had now become the only real mercy. The prophet was sent to make a last appeal; to warn of judgment. I. THE CHARGE. They have proved unnatural children. Have disowned their Father. Have failed to meet the claims due from them. Have frustrated the purpose of their national existence. Have, as a nation, wholly abandoned themselves to sin. In spite of exceptional privileges, they have lowered themselves beneath the level of the brutes. Nature witnesses against them, and puts them to shame. II. THE DEFENCE. The prophet imagines them to point to their temple services,—so regular, elaborate, costly,—in proof that their natural relations to their Father have been maintained. But this common self-delusion is disallowed, exposed, repelled. Not ritual, not laborious costly worship is required, but sincerity of heart, integrity of purpose, rightness of mind. Acceptable religious observance must be the spontaneous expression of an inward religious life. III. THE OFFER OF MERCY. But the day of grace is not even yet past. One last attempt is yet made to arouse the sleeping spiritual sensibilities of the nation by the offer of pardon. Reconciliation is possible only upon amendment. IV. THE THREAT OF JUDGMENT. Fire alone can now effect the change desired. God cannot be evaded. He is as truly merciful in threatening as in offering pardon. The nation shall be purged, yet not destroyed. Evil shall be consumed. But those who, like gold, can stand the fire and come out purified shall be the nucleus of an ideal society, and remodel the national life. All social amendment has its roots in complete purification of individual hearts. The prophet's dream was never realised. Yet it was not therefore wasted. It was an ideal, an inspiration to the good in after ages. It will one day be realised through the Gospel. (*Lloyd Robinson.*) I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me.—*The Fatherhood of God in relation to Israel*.—Israel is Jehovah's son (Exod. iv. 22, &c.); all the members of the nation are His children (Deut. xiv. 1, xxxii. 20); He is the Father of Israel, whom He has begotten (Deut. xxxii. 6, 18). The existence of Israel as a nation, like that of other nations, is effected, indeed,

by means of natural reproduction, not by spiritual regeneration; but the primary ground of Israel's origin is the supernaturally efficacious word of grace addressed to Abraham (Gen. xvii. 15, &c.); and a series of wonderful dealings in grace has brought the growth and development of Israel to that point which it had attained at the Exodus from Egypt. It is in this sense that Jehovah has begotten Israel. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *Israel's apostasy*:—Two things that ought never to have been conjoined—I. THE GRACIOUS AND FILIAL RELATION OF ISRAEL TO JEHOVAH. II. ISRAEL'S BASE APOSTASY FROM JEHOVAH. (*Ibid.*) *The Fatherhood of God in the Old Testament*:—Sometimes we imagine that the Fatherhood of God is a New Testament revelation; we speak of the prophets as referring to God under titles of resplendent glory and overpowering majesty, and we set forth in contrast the gentler terms by which the Divine Being is designated in the new covenant. How does God describe Himself in this chapter? Here He claims to be Father: I have nourished and brought up sons—not, I have nourished and brought up slaves—or subjects—or creatures—or insects—or beasts of burden—I have nourished and brought up sons: I am the Father of creation, the fountain and origin of the paternal and filial religion. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Ingratitude*:—As the Dead Sea drinks in the river Jordan and is never the sweeter, and the ocean all other rivers and is never the fresher, so we are apt to receive daily mercies from God and still remain insensible to them—unthankful for them. (*Bishop Reynolds.*) *God man's truest Friend*:—We are obliged to speak of the Lord after the manner of men, and in doing so we are clearly authorised to say that He does not look upon human sin merely with the eye of a judge who condemns it, but with the eye of a friend who, while he censures the offender, deeply laments that there should be such faults to condemn. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me," is not merely an exclamation of surprise, or an accusation of injured justice, but it contains a note of grief, as though the Most High represented Himself to us as mourning like an ill-treated parent, and deploring that after having dealt so well with His offspring they had made Him so base a return. God is grieved that man should sin. That thought should encourage every one who is conscious of having offended God to come back to Him. If thou lamentest thy transgression, the Lord laments it too. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The parental grief of God, and its pathetic appeal* (with ver. 3):—I look upon this text as a fragment of Divine autobiography, and as such possessing the greatest significance to us. I. It presents to us in a striking manner THE SOCIAL SIDE OF GOD'S CHARACTER. It is well for us to remember that all that is tender and lovable in our social experience, so far as it is pure and noble, is obtained from God. The revelation which we have of God presents Him to us, not as isolated from all His creatures, but as finding His highest joy in perfect communion with exalted spirits whom He has created. I love to think that man exists because of this exalted social instinct in God. Further, when God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone," methinks I hear but the echo of a Divine, of a God-felt feeling. Among the mysteries of Christ's passion we find an element of suffering which, as God and man, He felt—"Ye shall leave Me alone"; "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Our God is to us an object of supremest interest because He holds with us the most sacred relationship. II. Our text represents GOD ON THE DOMESTIC SIDE OF HIS CHARACTER. It is the parental rather than the paternal that we see here. The word father does not express all that God is to us. The illustrations of this Book are not exhausted with those that refer to His fatherhood: "Can a woman forget her sucking child," &c. (Isa. xlix. 15). All that is tender in motherhood, as well as all that is strong in fatherhood, is to be found in Him. It is as a parent that He speaks here: "I have nourished"—or "given nutriment." In other words, "Out of My rich resources of blessing have I provided for their need; I have nourished and brought up children." Here we have God's grief revealed in the light which can only come through such tender and loving channels as parental patience and wounded love. III. Our text reveals GOD'S CHARACTER IN ITS REPROVING ASPECT. The folly is emphasised by the comparison with two creatures, by no means noted for their intelligence. Yet both are domesticated creatures, and feel the ties of ownership. What is it that domesticates a creature? The creature that recognises man as his master, by that very act becomes domesticated. The higher type of knowledge possessed by the domesticated animal is a direct recognition of its master. The finest creatures possess that. There is a lower



grade of knowledge, but yet one which stamps the creature as domesticated. That is an acknowledgment, not of the master directly, but a recognition of the provision which the master has made for its need. "The ox knoweth his owner." The ass does not do that; but the ass knoweth "his master's crib." The ass knows the stall where it is fed, and it goes and is fed there. By that act it indirectly acknowledges the sovereignty of its owner, because it recognises his protection. IV. The text presents to us THE TENDER AND PATHETIC SIDE OF GOD'S CHARACTER. This is God's version of human sin. His rebukes are full of pathos. With the great mantle of charity that covers over a multitude of sins, and with the Divine pity that puts the best construction upon human rebellion, He puts all down to ignorance and folly. Observe further, that although they have rebelled against Him, He does not withdraw the name He gave them, Israel—"Israel doth not know: My people doth not consider." He does not repudiate them. The last thing that love can do is that. There is something exceedingly pathetic in God here making an appeal to creation relative to His relationship with man. What if it gave a relief to the heart of God to exclaim to His own creation that groaned with Him over human sin, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth!" Am I imagining? Do we not find a Divine as well as human feeling in Christ's going to the wilderness or the mountain top in the hours of His greatest need? There, amid God's creation, He found His Father very near. Here the fact that the child does not know his Heavenly Father is represented as the burden of God's grief. But in this case the ignorance was wilful. This was the burden on the heart of Christ in His prayer (John xvii.). There everything is made to depend upon men knowing God as their Father. That is just why we preach. We seek to make it impossible for you to pass through God's world, and receive from His hands blessings great and boundless, and yet not know Him. We seek to make it impossible for you to look at the Cross and listen to the story of an infinite sacrifice, and yet forget that "God so loved the world," &c. (*D. Davies.*) *The heinousness of rebellion against God's paternal government.*—The criminality of rebellion must, of course, be affected by the nature of the government and administration against which it is exerted. It must be measured by the mildness and propriety of the system whose authority it renounces, and by the patience, lenity, and wisdom with which that system is administered. If the government be despotic in its character, and administered with implacable or ferocious sternness, it can hardly be unlawful, and may be deserving of commendation. If the government be paternal in its character and administered with paternal sensibilities, then criminal to a degree absolutely appalling. I. THE PATERNAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD. This is seen in—1. The object of its precepts. The entire and simple aim of all and every one of His commands, and the motives by which He urges them, appear to be an advancement in knowledge, holiness, and felicity, that we may be fitted for His own presence and intimate communion; for the exalted dignities and interminable bliss of the realms where His honour dwelleth. 2. The length of His forbearance. Who but a father, surpassing all below that have honoured this endearing name, could have borne so long and so meekly, with the thankless, the wayward, the audacious, the provoking! Who but a father, such as Heaven alone can furnish, would return good for evil, and blessing for cursing, hundreds and thousands of years, and then, when any finite experimenter had utterly despaired, resolve to vanquish his enemies, not by terror, wasting and woe, but by the omnipotence of grace and mercy! Who but a GOD, and a paternal GOD, would have closed such a strange and melancholy history as that of Israel, by sending "His Son into the world, not to condemn the world," &c. 3. The nature of His tenderness. The philanthropist commiserates the distresses of his fellow-creatures, and magnanimously resolves to meliorate them. But he is not animated by that lively, that overpowering, self-sacrificing tenderness which prompts the exertions of a father in behalf of his suffering child. No; that tenderness shrinks from no expenditure, falters before no obstacles. And such was the tenderness of God, for it is not said that He so pitied, but that "He so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son," &c. II. IF SIN BE THE RESISTANCE OF THE COMMANDS AND CLAIMS, THE MOTIVES AND EXPOSTULATIONS, THE GRACE AND MERCY OF ONE WHO HAS GIVEN US SUCH ILLUSTRIOUS PROOFS OF HIS PATERNAL REGARD AND GOODNESS—CAN IT BE OTHER THAN REBELLION? Can it be other than rebellion of a most aggravated character? The consideration should silence every whisper of pretension to meritorious virtue, and stir up the sentiments of profound

contrition. It should take every symptom of stubbornness away, and make us self-accusing, lowly, and brokenhearted. (*T. W. Coit.*)

Ver. 3. **The ox knoweth his owner . . . but Israel doth not know.**—*Isaiah's message* :—What does Isaiah teach about God? A prophet of his times had much to do in clearing the minds of the people from the confusion, or something worse, into which, as the history shows, the Jews were only too prone to fall. They were surrounded by idolatrous nations, and there was a danger that they might regard Jehovah as though He were like these gods of the nations. Even when they did not sink to this level they were prone to regard Him as their national God, not as the God of all the earth. I. What the prophet sought to do was to communicate to them something of that view of the **MAJESTY OF HIS GLORY AND THE BEAUTY OF HIS HOLINESS** which had impressed itself so deeply on his own mind. He had seen God, and he would fain have them see Him also. And where can we search for more sublime conceptions of the spirituality, the holiness, the majesty of God than those which we find in this book? II. But the teaching of the prophet includes another conception of God which we should be still less prepared to find in the Old Testament. If the lofty conceptions of the Divine spirituality surprise, still more are we impressed with the revelation of the **DIVINE TENDERNESS AND THOUGHT FOR MAN**. This is the basis of all those urgent appeals addressed by Isaiah to his own generation. The first chapter strikes the keynote. Here is not a distant God so absorbed in the care of His vast empire that He has no remembrance of His poor children here, and so far removed that between Him and them there can be no sympathy. The prevailing note is that for which we are least prepared—that of Love. There is no dallying with the sin. The apostasy of the people is set forth in its darkest aspects, and the enormity of the rebellion only serves to make more conspicuous the glory of the grace which is proclaimed to these sinners. All their iniquity, their ingratitude, their pride of heart, their forgetfulness of God have not turned the heart of their God from them. Surely these are wondrous teachings to find in this old world record. Isaiah had them from God Himself. (*J. G. Rogers, B.A.*) *The inconsiderateness of mankind towards God* :—I. A **SERIOUS FAULT**, common, yea, universal. "Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider." 1. Men are most inconsiderate towards God. One would pardon them if they forgot many minor things, and neglected many inferior persons, but to be inconsiderate to their Creator, to their Preserver, to Him in whose hand their everlasting destiny is placed, this is a strange folly as well as a great sin. If it were only because He is so great, and therefore we are so dependent upon Him, one would have thought that a rational man would have acquainted himself with God and been at peace; but when we reflect that God is supremely good, kind, tender and gracious, as well as great, the marvel of man's thoughtlessness is much increased. 2. Then, again, man is inconsiderate towards himself in reference to his best interests. 3. Thoughtless man is inconsiderate of the claims of justice and of gratitude, and this makes him appear base as well as foolish. The text says, "Israel doth not know." Now, Israel is a name of nobility, it signifies a prince; and there are some here whose position in society, whose condition amongst their fellow-men, should oblige them to the service of God. That motto is true, "*noblesse oblige*,"—nobility has its obligations; and where the Lord elevates a man into a position of wealth and influence, he ought to feel that he is under peculiar bonds to serve the Lord. I speak also to those who have been trained in the fear of God. To you more is given, and therefore of you more is required. 4. One sad point about this inconsiderateness is, that man lives without consideration upon a matter where nothing but consideration will avail. 5. This inconsideration, also, occurs upon a subject where, by the testimony of tens of thousands, consideration would be abundantly remunerative, and would yield the happiest results. II. **AGGRAVATIONS WHICH ATTEND IT**, in many cases. 1. And first, remember that some of these careless persons have had their attention earnestly directed to the topics which still they neglect. Observe in this passage that these people had been summoned by God to consider. The heavens and the earth were called to bear witness that they had been nourished and brought up by the good Father, and in the fourth verse they are rebuked because they continue to be so unmindful of their God. Now, if a person should for a while forget an important thing, we should not be surprised, for the memory is not perfect; but when attention is called to it again and again, when consideration is requested kindly, tenderly, earnestly, and when because the warning is

neglected, that attention is demanded with authority, and possibly with a degree of sharpness, one feels that a man who is still unmindful is altogether without excuse, and must be negligent of set purpose and with determined design.

2. The prophet then mentions the second aggravation, namely, that in addition to being called and admonished, these people had been chastened. They had been chastised, indeed, so often and so severely that the Lord wearied of it. He saw no use in smiting them any more. Their whole body was covered with bruises, they had been so sorely smitten. The nation as a nation had been so invaded and trodden down by its enemies that it was utterly desolate, and the Lord says, "Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more." I may be addressing some one whose life of late has been a series of sorrows. Know you not that all these are sent to wean you from the world? Will you still cling to it? Must the Lord strike again and again, and again and again, before you will hear Him? 3. It was an additional piece of guiltiness that these people were all the while that they would not consider, very zealous in an outward religion. 4. Yet further, there was an aggravation to Israel's forgetfulness of God, because she was most earnestly and affectionately invited to turn to God by gracious promises. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." A man might say, "Why should I think of God? He is my enemy." O man, you know better. 5. As a last aggravation, note that these very people had ability enough to consider other things, for we find that they considered how to get bribes, and were very shrewd in following after rewards; yet they did not know and did not consider their God. Oh, how quick are some men in the ways of evil, and yet, if you talk to them about religion they say it is mysterious, and beyond their power of apprehension. Those same persons will discuss with you the knottiest points of politics, or unravel the abstrusities of science, and yet they pretend they cannot understand the simplicities of revelation. "I am a poor man," saith one, "and you cannot expect me to know much"; yet, if anybody were to meet that same "poor man" in the street and tell him he was a fool, he would be indignant at such an accusation, and would zealously prove that he was not inferior in common sense. "I cannot," says one, "vex my brain about such things as these"; yet that very man wears his brain far more in pursuit of wealth or pleasure. If a man has an understanding, and can exercise it well upon minor matters, how shall we apologise for his neglect of his God? III. THE SECRET CAUSES of human indifference to topics so important. 1. In the case of many thoughtless persons we must lay the blame to the sheer frivolity of their nature. 2. I have no doubt that in every case, however, the bottom reason is opposition to God Himself. 3. Upon some minds the tendency to delay operates fearfully. 4. Some make an excuse for themselves for not considering eternity, because they are such eminently practical men. I only wish that those who profess to be practical were more truly so, for a practical man always takes more care of his body than of his coat, certainly; then should he not take more care of his soul than of the body, which is but the garment of it? A practical man will be sure to consider matters in due proportion; he will not give all his mind to a cricket match and neglect his business. And yet how often your practical man still more greatly errs; he devotes all his time to money making, and not a minute to the salvation of his soul and its preparation for eternity! 5. I have no doubt with a great many their reason for not thinking about soul matters, is prejudice. They are prejudiced because some Christian professor has not lived up to his profession, or they have heard something which is said to be the doctrine of the Gospel, which they cannot approve of. 6. In most cases men do not like to trouble themselves, and they have an uncomfortable suspicion that if they were to look too narrowly into their affairs they would find things far from healthy. They are like the bankrupt before the court the other day who did not keep books; he did not like his books, for his books did not like him. He was going to the bad, and he therefore tried to forget it. They say of the silly ostrich that when she hides her head in the sand and does not see her pursuers she thinks she is safe; that is the policy of many men. IV. A few words of EXPOSTULATION. Is not your inconsiderateness very unjustifiable? Can you excuse it in any way? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Instinct compared with reason in its recognition of persons*:—Adam, previously to his fall, instinctively recognised the relations in which he stood to God, to his only existing fellow-creature, and to the beasts of the field. He recognised God as his

Creator and Preserver; Eve as partaker of the same nature and the same sympathies with himself,—as one therefore to whom he owed a debt of benevolence and support; the inferior animals as vassals put under his feet. But no sooner did he fall, than his natural acknowledgment of these several relations forsook him. The relations, indeed, themselves existed still; but he lost all sense (or nearly all sense) of the obligations grounded upon them. Of all the three ruptures which took place at the fall, the first was—not only far the most serious, but also—the most total and complete. We do not assert that the natural man has lost all sense of obligation to his fellow-creatures and to the beasts of the field. We do not desire to derogate from this amiability, this considerateness, this benevolence;—let them pass for what they are worth. At the same time it should be remembered that such traits of character, however pleasing in themselves, rather aggravate than extenuate the fact of the man's godlessness. What shall we say to man's acknowledgment of his family and dependants, but that it gives point to the insult of withholding acknowledgment from God? Nor, although the brute creation revolted from man in the hour of his fall, and became intractable, was this breach of separation total and complete. "The ox knoweth his owner." Even those animals whose instinct is less keen, whose very name has passed into a proverb of stupidity and stubbornness, do not fail to recognise the place in which, and the hand from which, they are in the habit of receiving their daily sustenance. "The ass knoweth his master's crib." (*Dean Goulburn.*)

*Man in his relation to God:—I. COMPARE THE RELATIONS SUBSISTING BETWEEN AN INFERIOR AND A SUPERIOR CREATURE WITH THOSE SUBSISTING BETWEEN A SUPERIOR AND THE CREATOR.* And it will at once suggest itself that, though these relations may be susceptible of comparison, yet there is an insufficiency in the lower relation to type out the higher. The distance, in point of faculties, between man and the inferior creatures, if great, is at least measurable. Man has the superiority over the brutes in respect of his reason,—but in respect of our mortal bodies, the subjects of infirmity and decay, we are both entirely on a par. Whereas the distance between finite man and the Infinite God is, of course, incalculable. This inadequacy of the comparison suggested in our text will become more evident, as we enter into a consideration of its details. The dumb creature recognises the master, whose property he is. "The ox knoweth his owner." What constitutes man's right of ownership to the ox? Simply the fact that he has given in exchange for it an equivalent in the gold that perisheth. It was not he who created the ox. If he supports its life, it is only by providing it with a due supply of food, not by ministering to it momentarily the breath which it draws. So much for man's ownership of the ox. Turn we now to God's ownership of man. What constitutes God's right of ownership in us, His intelligent creatures? 1. The fact that we are the work of His hands. This constitutes a claim to our services, a property in all our faculties, whether bodily or mental, which no one creature can have in the faculties of another. 2. But creation is not the only ground on which God's ownership of man rests. Of all things which we may be said to own, our property is most entire, in those things which, having been once deprived of them by fraud or violence, we have subsequently paid a price to recover. That claim, grounded originally upon the fact of creation, has been confirmed, and extended by the fact of redemption. "Ye are not your own," says the apostle Paul; "for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Where, in the whole realm of nature, shall we seek a claim so overwhelmingly powerful as this, upon the unreserved devotion of our hearts,—of all that we are and all that we have? 3. But our text suggests to us another detail of the claims which our heavenly Owner has upon our allegiance. "The ass knoweth his master's crib." He knows the hand that feeds him and the manger at which he is fed. It asks no scintillation of intelligence, no high effort of an almost rational instinct, to recognise this claim. If man seems to ignore those claims of God which are established by creation and redemption, it might haply be pleaded in his behalf that he is a creature of the senses, and that the facts of creation and redemption are not cognisable by the senses. These stupendous facts are transacted and past, and as far as our animal life is concerned, we do not seem to derive any present benefit from them. But is not even this paltry justification entirely cut off by the fact here implied, that man is indebted to his God for his daily maintenance, for the comfort and the continuance even of his animal life? Our every period of refreshment and repose, of ease and relaxation from toil, is from

the unseen hand of our heavenly Owner. It is not, then, the brute creation in a savage state, whose relations towards man are here drawn into comparison with the relations of man towards God. The inspired writer has chosen, as best adapted to illustrate his argument, instances from the domestic animals, who are domiciliated with man, who share his daily toils, and live as his dependants in the immediate neighbourhood of his home. He mentions not the wild and untamed buffalo, which ranges in the distant prairie, but the patient ox and ass, accustomed from early youth to the restraints of the yoke, and familiarised by long habit with their master's abode and ways of life. Neither, on the other hand, in drawing out the contrast, does he mention mankind generally; the charge of ingratitude is here brought against a specific portion of the human race. "Israel doth not know—My people doth not consider." It were, in some measure, excusable that the Gentiles should refuse acknowledgment to the living God. They possess no revelation of His will. If Israel entertain a secret distaste for the things of God, it is not that such things are strange to him,—jar with his old prejudices or grate upon his early associations. And that which enhances so peculiarly the guilt of Israel enhances yet more the guilt of that Gentile who, by the reception of the first sacrament of the Gospel, has become a fellow-citizen with the saints and of the household of God. We might reasonably expect, then, that the baptized at least, whatever others may do, will yield to their Creator, Redeemer, Benefactor, and adopted Father some heartfelt tribute of acknowledgment.

**II. A CONTRAST IS DRAWN BETWEEN THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT MADE BY DUMB ANIMALS OF THEIR RELATION TO THEIR OWNERS, AND ISRAEL'S REFUSAL OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT TO HIS GOD.** 1. And first of the dumb animal's acknowledgment of his owner. "The ox knoweth his owner." I understand the term "know" in the ordinary sense of recognising. The cattle recognise the voice of their owner. A word, either of menace or of caress, if addressed to them in the well-known accents of their lord, has an instantaneous effect. Not so the menaces or caresses of strangers. What a cutting proof upon the insensibility of God's people! 2. "Israel doth not know." The professing members of God's household, the Church, heed not the calls which He is daily addressing to them by the dealings of His providence without, and the pleadings of His Spirit within them. (1) They recognise not God in His warnings, whether those warnings be addressed to themselves as individuals, or to the nation of which they are members. Some of them have been stretched upon a sick-bed, where death and judgment and eternity have come very nigh unto them. (2) But, finally, can we allege in his behalf that he habitually acknowledges God in His mercies? God's blessings of nature and providence are accepted by the great body of His professing people as a matter of course. "The ass knoweth his master's crib"; but Israel, more senseless than the dumb creature, recognises not the hand which confers his blessings. "He doth not consider." Want of consideration is the root and reason of this strange insensibility. It is not that he lacks the faculty of apprehending God, but he will not be at the pains to exercise that faculty. It is not that he lacks a speculative knowledge of the truths we have set forth, but that he does not lay to heart that knowledge, nor allow it its due weight. The want of impressibility proceeds from deliberate and wilful thoughtlessness. (*Ibid.*) *The distinction between knowledge and consideration*:—It would appear, from this verse, that the children of Israel neither knew nor considered—but still there is a distinction suggested by it between these two things. And in the Book of Malachi, we have a similar distinction, when the Lord says to the priests, "If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart." It is, in fact, possible for a man to do one of these things, and not to do the other. He may know the truth, and yet he may not consider it. He may hear, and yet not lay it to heart. And thus it is that we may gather the difference which there is between knowledge and wisdom. The one is a speculative acquirement. The other is a practical faculty or habit. By the latter, we turn to its profitable use the former. Thus it is that there may be great folly along with great scholarship; and, on the other hand, may an unlettered mind be illustrious in wisdom. You have perhaps seen when there was great wealth, and yet, from the want of judicious management, great want of comfort in a family; and what stands in beautiful contrast with this, you may have witnessed the union of very humble means, with such consideration in the guidance of them, as to have yielded a respectable appearance, and a decent hospitality, and the sufficiency of a full provision. And so, with the treasures of intellect, the acquisitions of the mind, whereof one may be rich,

being possessed of most ample materials in all knowledge, and yet have an ill-conditioned mind notwithstanding; and another destitute of all but the most elementary truths, may yet, by a wise application of them, have attained to the true light and harmony of the soul, and be in sound preparation both for the duties of time and for the delights of eternity. All have so learned to number their days as to know the extreme limit of human life upon earth; yet all have not so learned to number their days as to apply their hearts unto wisdom. (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*) *Knowledge and wisdom*:—I. This distinction between knowledge and wisdom is abundantly realised even on THE FIELD OF EARTHLY AND OF SENSIBLE EXPERIENCE. The man of dissipation may have his eyes open to the ruin of character and of fortune that awaits him, yet the tyranny of his evil desires constrains him to a perseverance in the ways of wretchedness. The man of indolence may foresee the coming bankruptcy that will ensue on the slovenly management of his affairs, yet there is a lethargy within that weighs him down to fatal inactivity. The man of headlong irritation may be able to discern the accumulating mischief that he raises against himself, and yet continue as before to be hurried away by the onward violence that seizes him. In all these instances there is no want of knowledge in possession. But there is a want of knowledge in use, or in application. The unhappy man has received the truth, but he does not give heed unto the truth. II. But what we have affirmed, even of those events and consequences that take place along the journey of this world, is still more strikingly apparent of THAT GREAT EVENT WHICH MARKS ITS TERMINATION. There is not a human creature of most ordinary mind, and who hath overstepped the limits of infancy, that does not know of death, and with whom it does not rank among the most undoubted of the certainties that await him. And it is not only that of which he is most thoroughly assured, but it is that of which, in the course of observation and history, he is most constantly reminded. But how is it truly and experimentally? That death of which we all know so well, is scarcely ever in our thoughts. The momentary touch of grief and of seriousness, wherewith we are at times visited, speedily goeth into utter dissipation. It seems not to work the slightest abatement in the eagerness of man after this world's interests. It needs no impetuous appetite to overbear the thought of death; for in the calm equanimity of many a sober and aged citizen, you will find him as profoundly asleep to the feeling of his own mortality as he is to any of the feelings or instigations of licentiousness. Death is the stepping-stone between the two worlds; and so it somewhat combines the palpable of matter, with the shadowy and the evanescent of spirit. It is the gateway to a land of mystery and of silence, and seems to gather upon it something of the visionary character which the things of faith have to the eye of the senses. And so, amid all the varieties of temperament in our species, there is a universal heedlessness of death. It seems against the tendency of nature to think of it. The thing is known, but it is not considered. This might serve to convince us how unavailing is the mere knowledge, even of important truth, if not accompanied by the feeling, or the practical remembrance of it. The knowledge in this case only serves to aggravate our folly. Thus, the irreligion of the world is due not to the want of a satisfying demonstration on God's part, for this might have excused us; but to the want of right consideration on ours, and this is inexcusable. III. Let us now pass onwards to THE INVISIBLES OF FAITH—to those things which do not, like death, stand upon the confines of the spiritual region, but are wholly within that region, and which man hath not seen by his eye, or heard by his ear—to the awful realities that will abide in deep and mysterious concealment from us, so long as we are in the body. This character of unseen and spiritual is not confined to things future. There are things present which are spiritual also. There is a present Deity, who dwelleth in light, it is true; but it is light inaccessible. And yet, even of this great Spirit we may be said, in one sense, to know, however little it is that we may consider Him. There are averments about God which we have long recognised and ranked among our admitted propositions, though we seldom recur to them in thought, and are never adequately impressed by them. We know, or think we know, that God is; and that all other existence is suspended upon His will; and that He is a God of inviolable sacredness, in whose presence evil cannot dwell. Now, as a proof how distinct this knowledge of God is from the consideration of Him, we will venture to say that even the first and simplest of all these propositions is, by many, unthought of for days and weeks together. In the work that you prosecute,

and the comforts that you enjoy, and even the obligations of which you acquit yourselves to relatives and to friends, is there any fear of God before your eyes?—and is not the fear of disgrace from men a far more powerful check upon your licentiousness, than the fear of damnation from Him who is the judge and the discerner of men? This emptiness of a man's heart as to the recognition of God runs throughout the whole of his history. He is engrossed with what is visible and secondary and he thinks no farther. When he enjoys, it is without gratitude. When he labours, it is without the impulse of an obedient loyalty. When he admires, it is without carrying the sentiment upwardly unto heaven. Now, this is God's controversy with man in the text. He there complains of our heedlessness. And this inconsideration of ours is matter of blame, just because it is a matter of wilfulness. Man has a voluntary control over his thoughts.

IV. But the distinction between those who only know and those who also consider, is never more strongly marked than in THE PECULIAR DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL. And fearful is the hazard lest knowledge and it alone should satisfy the possessor. The very quantity of debate and of argument that has been expended on theology, leads to a most hurtful misconceiving of this matter. The design of argument is to carry you onward to a set of accurate convictions. And yet, the whole amount of your acquisition may be a mere rational Christianity. There are no topics on which there has been so much of controversy, or that have given rise to so many an elaborate dissertation, as the person and offices of Christ. Yet, let it not be disguised that the knowledge of all these *credenda* is one thing, and the practical consideration of them is another. First, He is the Apostle of our profession, or we profess Him to be our Apostle. Let us bethink ourselves of all which this title implies. It means one who is sent. How it ought to move us with awe at the approach of such a messenger when we think of the glory and the sacredness of His former habitation! And what ought to fasten upon Him a still more intense regard, He comes with a message to our world—He comes straight from the Divinity Himself, and charged by Him with a special communication. By your daily indifference to the word that is written, you inherit all the guilt, and will come under the very reckoning of those, who, in the days of the Saviour, treated with neglect the word that was spoken. There is one topic which stands connected with the apostleship of Christ, and that stamps a most peculiar interest on the visit which He made to us from on high. He is God manifest in the flesh. In the character of a man hath He pictured forth to us the attributes of the Divinity. And we, by considering this Apostle, learn of God. But this leads us to another topic of consideration, the priesthood of Christ. The atonement that He made for sin has a foremost place in orthodoxy. But, a truth may be acquired, and then,—cast, as it were, into some hidden corner of the mind,—may lie forgotten, as in a dormitory. And therefore would we again bid you consider Him who is the High Priest of your profession. We call upon you, ever and anon, to think of His sacrifice; and to ward off the legality of nature from your spirits, by a constant habit of recurrence, upon your part, to the atonement that He hath made, and to the everlasting righteousness that He hath brought in. Without this, the mind is ever lapsing anon into alienation and distrust. (*Ibid.*) *Inconsiderateness* :—It is not a charge brought against the human family in general. The terms are special, “My people doth not consider.” If, then, the chiefs and leaders of society have fallen into inconsiderateness, what wonder that the nameless multitude should be giddy? The salt has lost its savour and the high city has concealed its beauty. It was not left for unbelievers and scoffers to bring the severest accusations against the Church; God Himself has marked her shortcomings and loudly charged her with sin! Never has He been the special pleader of His people; He never sought to make out a case for them in spite of facts or even appearances; with solemn fidelity and poignant grief He has shown the Church her corruptness and made her ashamed in the presence of her enemies. We shall dwell on the subject of Inconsiderateness as it bears upon the Church and upon men generally. There are two noticeable points common to both. Why do not men consider? 1. Not for want of opportunity. There are the great heavens which David considered; there are the lilies which Jesus Christ charged men to consider; there are the signs of the times, full of significance; a thousand objects, indeed, daily challenge our thoughtfulness. 2. Not for want of reproof or encouragement. Failures, disappointments, blunders, beyond numbering, have shown us the mischief of inconsiderateness. On the other hand, consideration has always rewarded us

with the quietness of a good conscience; yet again and again we cease to be thoughtful. Let us look upon inconsiderateness—I. IN ITS REASONS. 1. Inconsiderateness saves intellectual trouble. Men do not like to think deeply. They prefer to skim the surface, and instead of working steadily for results, they choose to snatch at anything which may serve them for the passing moment. A decline of thoughtfulness is also a decline of moral strength! The Church thinks but little. Nearly all its propositions have been accepted on trust. Observe! Jesus Christ always challenged the thought of those who heard Him. He never discouraged honest and devout inquiry. He never said a word in praise of ignorance. No authority of His can be quoted for intellectual indolence. Christianity vivifies the intellect. 2. Inconsiderateness mitigates moral compunction. It does this by concealing a man from himself. Men, in many instances, dare not consider themselves. One look at their own hearts would affright them! We may think well of ourselves simply because we do not know ourselves. Pain comes with self-knowledge; but if pain drive men to the Healer, it will be to them as the angel of God. 3. Inconsiderateness escapes social obligation. There is ignorance to be taught; but we don't go into the question! There is misery to be alleviated; but we think nothing about it! There is a man dying in the road; but we pass by on the other side! (Prov. xxiv. 12.) II. IN ITS RESULTS. 1. Practical atheism. God is acknowledged with the lips, but He hath no place in the heart. Things are viewed from the outside, and secondary causes are looked upon as primary and original. 2. Spiritual feebleness. Without consideration no man can be strong. He has no abiding convictions. There is nothing about him or within him which he is unprepared to cast off under pressure. 3. Needless alarm. The man who has spent no time in quiet thinking mistakes the bearing of unusual circumstances. A shadow frightens him. He has no grasp of history. Having eyes, he sees not. 4. Self-deprivation. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Fatal inconsideration* :—I shall treat of the charge here brought against the ancient Jews in a double view—I. AS IT MORE ESPECIALLY CONCERNS IMPENITENT SINNERS. It is the proper character of all the impenitent, that they do not and will not consider. This is the ground of their guilt, and the fatal cause of their ruin. Consideration is the same as attentively applying the mind to things, according to their respective nature and importance, in order to our having the clearer apprehension of them, and knowing how we ought to act in relation to them. And, forasmuch as the things of religion are of the highest nature, and the utmost conceivable importance, our considering these things must imply our looking into them, and pondering them with the greatest care, and seriousness, and impartiality; and this with a view of our being able to form a truer and more distinct judgment concerning them, and concerning the manner in which they ought to influence our actions; to the end we may be effectually led and determined to act as we ought, and as the nature and importance of the things should persuade us to do. We must attend carefully, examine impartially, think and reflect seriously, that we may judge, and resolve, and act rightly. I shall—1. Instance some particulars in which it is manifest the persons I am now speaking of do not consider. (1) They do not consider what their own reason and the Holy Scripture would instruct them in concerning God, His being and providence, His attributes and works. "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts" (Psa. x. 4). (2) They do not consider the end for which they were made, and what is their true interest and highest happiness. This is a most important question, of absolute necessity to regulate human life; for as our end is, such will the course of our actions be in pursuance of it. (3) They do not consider the infinite obligations they are under to that God whose commands they disobey. This is the particular ground and instance of the allegation against the people of Judah. (4) They do not consider the vast importance of salvation and what the indispensable terms of it are. (5) The same persons do not consider the nature and tendency of their present course of life. They do not reflect upon their actions and weigh and ponder their steps. They have not the caution of common travellers, to think whether they are right or wrong. (6) They do not consider the uncertainty of life. (7) Or, the certainty of a world to come. 2. Set before you the deplorable consequences of this neglect of serious consideration. (1) Men do not consider, and therefore do not know. (2) Men do not consider, and therefore are without all awakening apprehensions of the guilt and misery of a vicious course of life. (3) Persons engaged in a vicious course do not consider,



and are therefore little solicitous to make their peace with God, and to secure an interest in the Saviour, and the salvation proposed to them in the Gospel. (4) They do not consider, and therefore resign themselves to the conduct of appetite and lust and passion. (5) Men do not consider, and for that reason it is the temptations to sin are so invincible. (6) Men will not consider, and therefore support themselves with false and dangerous props, such as these: God is merciful; Christ died for sinners; and it will be time to repent hereafter. Application—(1) How inexcusable must all those appear who perish in their sins! They perish because they will not consider. (2) Here you see, in case you have any purposes of leading a holy life, where you must begin. You must sit down and consider. "I thought on my ways," &c. (Psa. cxix. 59). (3) Let me therefore exhort you to practise a duty so necessary and of such infinite advantage. II. AS IN A LESSER DEGREE IT TOO FREQUENTLY AFFECTS PERSONS OF SINCERE PIETY. All that consideration which is necessary to the essence of virtue and piety, they practise; but not always that which is requisite to a state of greater perfection. There are several things which too plainly prove their want of consideration. 1. The errors and failings of which they are too often guilty. I do not mean those which are so incident to human nature in the present state, that it is next to impossible to preserve ourselves entirely free from them; but those which, with due care and circumspection, we might easily enough avoid. 2. Sloth and inactivity in a virtuous and religious course of life is another argument of a defective consideration, even in good men. Akin to this is—3. That indevotion in the exercises of religious worship, which Christians are too apt to slide into, and which too visibly argues their disuse of that consideration which would be of admirable service to fan the sacred fire, when it began to grow dull and languid. "While I was musing," saith the Psalmist, "the fire burned." 4. The love of the world, which has too much the ascendant over some pious minds, and their being so greatly moved, if not unhinged, by the shocks and changes of it, must often be ascribed to the same cause. 5. A misplaced and misconducted zeal; a zeal for opinions and practices we know not why, and this zeal under so little government, as to occasion bitter strife and animosity among Christians, and raise such disturbances in the Church of God, as hinder its flourishing state; this likewise shews that men do not consider. 6. It is many times because they do not consider that they who are religious do not enjoy their religion. (*H. Grove, M.A.*) *Reasons for consideration*:—1. Consideration is the proper character of reasonable beings: this faculty is the main distinction of the man from the beast; and the exercise of it, of the wise man from the fool. 2. We show that we can consider in the things of this life; and why not then in the things of religion? 3. Do your part, and God will not withhold His grace, by which you shall be enabled to do all required of you. 4. By time and use this exercise, however ungrateful at first, will become more easy and pleasant. 5. Consideration is further recommended by its most blessed effects. As, to mention only two of a more general nature: the first, our being converted from the error of our ways; the other, our constant perseverance in the practice of holiness. 6. Were there nothing else but this one motive to engage you to consider, this one should be irresistible, that it is absolutely necessary: it cannot be dispensed with; the consequence of neglecting it is fatal, and never to be retrieved. (*Ibid.*) *Man shamed by the lower animals*:—A fine pass man is come to when he is shamed even in knowledge and understanding by these silly animals; and is not only sent to school to them (Prov. vi. 6, 7), but set in a form below them (Jer. viii. 7); "taught more than the beasts of the earth" (Job xxxv. 11), and yet knowing less. (*M. Henry.*) *Inconsideration of what we do know is as great an enemy to us in religion as ignorance of what we should know.* (*Ibid.*) *God's grief because His children do not know Him*:—An ancestor of mine was once imprisoned for righteousness' sake, and among the tenderest traditions which have been handed down to me is this, that when that strong man entered gaol not a nerve quivered, and not a look of sorrow was seen upon his countenance. Again, when he was released and met his friends, he bore up heroically; the joy of deliverance did not break him down: but when he entered his home, and when the little child on the mother's knee, that a month or so before had known its father, did not know him, but turned away from him, the strong man wept as a child. He burst into tears and sobs. The grief of God here is that His own children did not know Him. (*David Davies.*)

Ver. 4. Ah, sinful nation.—*God's indignation against sin*.—The word "ah" is not an interjection, indicating a mere sighing of pity or regret; the word should not be spelt as it is here, the letters should be reversed, it should be "ha," and pronounced as expressive of indignation. God does not merely sigh over human iniquity, looking upon it as a lapse, an unhappy thing, a circumstance that ought to have been otherwise; His tone is poignant, judicial, indignant, for not only is His heart wounded, but His righteousness is outraged, and the security of His universe is threatened,—for the universe stands in plumb-line, in strict geometry, and whoever trifles with the plumb, with the uprightness, tampers with the security of the universe. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *A sinning nation*.—The original words used in reference to God's ancient people are "a sinning nation," which denotes a nation sinning habitually. There are three ways in which a nation becomes sinful. I. WHEN THE GREAT BODY OF THE PEOPLE CONSENT TO OR APPROVE OF THE SINS OF FORMER GENERATIONS. Thus Christ said to the Jews, "Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers." II. WHEN THE GREAT BODY OF THE PEOPLE CONSENT TO THE SINS OF THEIR RULERS. Thus the Jews were a sinful nation, because they approved of the deeds of their rulers in killing the prophets and in crucifying Christ, and these sins are expressly charged against them, and were visited upon them nationally. III. WHEN THE GENERALITY OF THE PEOPLE ARE LIVING IN SIN IN THEIR OWN PERSONS. Such was the state of the Jews when Isaiah charged them with contempt of God, hypocrisy and manifold habitual transgressions. (*Original Secession Magazine.*) *Savonarola and Florence*.—Florence, in the days of Lorenzo the Magnificent, had become practically a pagan city. She had fallen from Christ as Jerusalem from Jehovah. One of her historians descants upon her as being "hopeless morally, full of debauchery, cruelty, and corruption, violating oaths, betraying trusts, believing in nothing but Greek manuscripts, coins and statues, and caring for nothing but pleasures." It was into such a city, to which Isaiah's prelude would almost literally apply, that Savonarola came. Seeing, as he expressed it, "the world turned upside down," he traversed the streets and wandered along the banks of the Arno, musing and weeping over the great misery of the world, and the iniquities of men, and the enormous wickedness of the people of Italy. Then, after a time of probation at the convent of San Marco, he burst upon the Florentines as a prophet of fiery eloquence and uncompromising virtue, of a fearless character, and with Divine insight akin to that of his great prototype, Isaiah of Jerusalem. Through internal troubles, and assaults from without, he warned the people and their rulers, endeavouring to turn their hearts to God, and to stay them upon Him. To the priests he said, that the false and lukewarm among them, the dumb dogs that could not bark, had perverted the people, and prejudiced them against the truth. "Before all, the wicked priests and servants of the Church are the guilty causes of this corruption, as also of the coming calamities." He cried aloud to the populace, "Thou knowest, thou knowest, O Florence, that I would have thee a spiritual State. I have always shown thee clearly that a kingdom is only strong in proportion as it is spiritual, by being more closely related to God." Thus faithfully and boldly spoke out Savonarola what was in him from the Holy Spirit. (*F. Sessions.*) *Corrupters*.—"Corrupters":—Sons that are as cankerworms; sons that throw poison into pellucid water streams; sons that suggest evil thoughts to opening minds. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The force of example*.—Have fellowship with the lame, and you will learn to limp. (*Latin adage.*) *The corrupt are corrupters*.—One rotten apple will infect the store; the putrid grape corrupts the whole cluster. (*F. Jacox.*) *Companionship in evil*.—Men love not to be found singular, especially where the singularity lies in the rugged and severe paths of virtue: company causes confidence, and gives both credit and defence, credit to the crime, and defence to the criminal. (*R. South, D.D.*) *The contagion of character*.—"Do you see," said Dr. Arnold to an assistant-master who had recently come to Rugby, "those two boys walking together? I never saw them together before; you should make an especial point of observing the company they keep;—nothing so tells the changes in a boy's character." (*F. Jacox.*) *Bad company injurious*.—He that lies down with dogs shall rise up with fleas. (*Spanish proverb.*) *Leading others astray*.—A father bade his son set up some bricks endways, in regular line a short distance apart. "Now," said he, "knock down the first brick." The boy obeyed, and all the others fell with it. "Now," said the father, "raise the last brick and

see if the others will rise with it." But no, once down, they must be raised singly. Said the father, "I have given you this object lesson to teach you how easy it is for one to lead others astray, but how difficult for him to restore them, however sincere his repentance may be." (*Sunday School Chronicle.*) **They have forsaken the Lord.**—*A specific and terrible indictment*:—What have they done? They have done three things. It is no general accusation that is lodged against Judah and Jerusalem, and through them against all the nations of the earth; it is a specific indictment, glittering with detail. I. "THEY HAVE FORSAKEN THE LORD." By so much their action is negative; they have ceased to attend the altar; they have neglected to read the holy writing; they have turned their backs upon that towards which they once looked with open face and radiant eye. II. "THEY HAVE PROVOKED THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL UNTO ANGER." Observe how the intensity increases, how the aggravation deepens and blackens; they have grown bold in sin; they have thrown challenges in the face of God; they have defied Him to hurl His thunderbolts and His lightnings upon them. III. "THEY ARE GONE AWAY BACKWARD." They forsook, they provoked, they apostatised. Sin has its logical course as well as holiness. Men do not stand still at the point of forsaking God: having for a little while forsaken Him, they will find it almost necessary to provoke Him, that they may justify themselves to themselves and to others, saying, Even provocation cannot awaken the judgment of heaven with any sign of impatience; and having provoked the Holy One of Israel, the next point will be universal apostasy, a thorough off-casting of the last traces and semblances of religion. See if this be not so in the history of the individual mind. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Moral gravitation*:—There is a law of gravitation, spiritual as well as physical, and now the man who has begun by forsaking will end by going backward, his whole life thrown out of order, decentralised; and he perpetrates the irony of walking backwards, and his crab-like action will bring him to the pit. (*Ibid.*) **The Holy One of Israel.**—*The Holy One of Israel*:—That is, "He who shows Himself holy in Israel." (*Prof. T. K. Cheyne.*)

Vers. 5, 6. **Why should ye be stricken any more?**—*The power of evil habits*:—There are no passages in Holy Writ more affecting than those in which God seems to represent Himself as actually at a loss, not knowing what further steps to take in order to bring men to repentance and faith (Isa. v. 4; Hos. vi. 4). Of course, the chastisements may be continued, but the experience of the past attests but a strong likelihood that further afflictions would effect no reform. God, therefore, can only ask, and the question is full of the most pathetic remonstrance—"Why should ye be stricken any more?" I. Now, observe that it was a long course of misdoing that had brought the people into such a morally hopeless condition. It was the habit of committing sin, the habit of resisting the admonitions and the chastisements of God that had at last exhausted the resources of Divine wisdom. The words in which Jeremiah states the tremendous power of habit are very striking—"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Yet our text, probably, puts it in a yet more affecting point of view—the considering wherefore it is that men who have long been accustomed to do evil, thereby bring themselves morally into such a condition, that God, as if in despair, is forced to exclaim "Why should ye be stricken any more? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." Now, they can know very little of their moral constitution, and of the tendency of their nature, who are not thoroughly aware how, as a general rule, the doing a thing twice facilitates the doing it again. We have no right to complain of there being such a law, for it is of universal application, and will therefore be every jot as beneficial to us if we aim at doing good, as detrimental if we allow ourselves to do evil. The man who has yielded to a temptation will undoubtedly find himself less able to resist when that temptation assails him again. But if he have overcome, he will as undoubtedly find himself better able to withstand. The inveterate habit and the seared conscience are so far necessary companions, that when we wish to induce a man to abandon a long-cherished practice, we do not reckon on any such keenness of the moral sense, as will make it second our remonstrance, or give point to our advice; and this it is which renders almost desperate the case of those who have been long living in any known sin. Such men must have won that most disastrous of victories—the victory over con-

science. Therefore, we hardly know under what form to shape our attack. Our position takes for granted that there is an internal monitor, so that the voice from without, answered from the voice from within, may force for itself an audience, and cause a present conviction, if not a permanent resolution; but now the internal monitor is wanting; the voice from without calling forth no voice from within, would seem to have no organ to which to address itself, and therefore our words will be as much wasted as though spoken to the air. Hence it is we are so urgent with the young that they put not off to a later day the duties of religion. The young seem to imagine that the question between us and them is simply a question as to the probabilities of life; and that if they could ensure themselves a certain number of years, they should run no risk in delaying for a time the giving heed to religion. Thus they take no account of the inevitable result of a continuance in sin, namely, that there will be generated a habit of sin, so that when the time shall be reached which they themselves may have fixed as suited to repentance, they will be widely different beings from what they are when resolved to delay—beings tied and bound with fetters forged and fastened by themselves, and wanting in the principle which might urge them to the breaking loose from the self-imposed bondage. It is this which makes the aged sinner so unpromising a subject for the ministrations of the Word—not his being old in years, but his being old in sin. This is the first evidence which we advance as to the truth of that fearful fact which we derive from our text—the fact that habitual sin brings even God Himself into a perplexity as to how to deal with the sinner; makes it difficult for Him to employ further means for recovering that sinner from wickedness. 2. There is a yet worse thing to be said. The man who persists in sinning, till to sin has become habit, alienates from him that Holy Spirit of God whose special office it is to lead us to repentance, and renew our fallen nature. It is not by an occasional act of sin that a man may “quench” the Spirit; though his every transgression may “grieve” that Spirit. You will observe what a correspondence there is between quenching the Spirit and quenching the conscience. So connected, if not identified, are conscience and the Holy Spirit, so actually is the one an engine through which the other works, that in proportion as man succeeds in deadening his conscience, he advances towards quenching the Spirit. Why wonder then at the expression of our text? 3. Our text implies a great difficulty rather than an impossibility, and it ought not therefore to be without some measure of hope that the minister addresses even those who are the slaves of bad habits. The Spirit, it may be, does not so depart as to determine that He will not return. We may rather regard Him as hovering over the transgressor who has so pertinaciously grieved and withstood Him; and let there be only the least intimation of a wish for His presence, and He may descend, and take up His abode in the soul which He has been forced to forsake. And, if conscience were but roused, there may be a desire for the return of the Spirit. Whilst we do not shut the door even against habitual sinners, our great effort must be that of persuading men against the forming bad habits. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The power of evil habit*:—If a man be a confirmed drunkard or gambler, it has almost passed into a proverb, that there is but little hope of reform, and you regard it as little short of miracle if he be brought to abandon the wine or the dice. In such instances, the habit forces itself on your notice in all its fearful tyranny. The efforts to break away are made, in a certain sense, in public, and whether they fail or succeed, you are able to observe. But if these be the more notorious cases of striving against the power of an evil habit, you are not to think that the power may not be as actually, or as injuriously exerted in cases where there is little or nothing of manifest tyranny. There may be habits of mental or moral indulgence; habits of self-indulgence; habits of covetousness; habits of indifference to serious things; habits of delaying the season of repentance—these may be, and often are found in one and the same person; and though, unquestionably, no one of these can be parallel to the habit by which the drunkard or the gambler is enthralled, yet they resemble so many lesser cords tying down a man in place of one massive chain; and the endeavour to break loose will be equally likely to be unsuccessful. (*Ibid.*) *The deceitfulness of sin*:—In this, and in the like cases, it is especially by and through its deceitfulness, that sin produces final obduracy, making “the whole head sick, and the whole heart faint.” The man is blinded to the fact, that he is being hardened; it is all done underhand; and while there is the rapid formation of an inveterate habit of indulgence, a

depraved inclination, or a habit of covetousness, or a habit of selfishness, or a habit of procrastination, there may be great ease and satisfaction, and a feeling of cordial commiseration for those slaves of their passions who may be said hardly to put forth exertion, and to be led captive by Satan at his will. Away then with the limiting the power of evil habits to persons who live in the practice of gross sins. (*Ibid.*) *Sin not self-reformatory*:—It might seem, if sin can be called unnatural and monstrous, that nature could shake it off, and return to her own law. It might seem also that the results of sin would cure the sinner of his evil tendencies, and send him back on the path of wisdom. We grant that a man in a state of sin may be led to abandon some sin, or some excess of sin, from considerations of prudence. We grant also that affliction softens many characters which it fails to lead to sincere repentance, by lowering their pride, or by sobering their views of life. We have no doubt that the seeds of a better life are sown amid the storms and floods of calamity. And for the Christian it is certain that sorrow is a principal means of growth in holiness. Nay, it may even happen that a sin committed by a Christian may, in the end, make him a better man, as Peter, after his denial of Christ. We admit, also, that a life of sin, being a life of unrest and disappointment, cannot fail of being felt to be such, so that a sense of inward want, a longing for redemption, enters into the feelings of many hearts that are not willing to confess it. But all this does not oppose the view which we take of sin, that it contains within itself no radical cure, no real reformation. Man is not led by sin into holiness. The means of recovery lie outside of the region of sin, beyond the reach of experience,—they lie in the free grace of God, which sin very often opposes and rejects, when it comes with its healing medicines and its assurances of deliverance. The most which prudence can do, acting in view of the experienced consequences of sin, is to plaster over the exterior, to avoid dangerous habits, to choose deep-seated sins in lieu of such as lie on the surface. (*T. D. Woolesey, D.D.*) *Sin not self-reformatory*:—That sin by no process, direct or indirect, can purify the character, will appear—I. FROM THE SELF-PROPAGATING NATURE OF SIN. If sin has the nature to spread and strengthen its power, if by repetition habits are formed which are hard to be broken, if the blindness of mind which supervenes adds to the ease of sinning, if sin spreading from one person to another increases the evil of society, and therefore reduces the power of each one of its members to rise above the general corruption, do not all these considerations show that sin provides no cure for itself, that there is, without Divine intervention, no remedy for it at all? Can any one show that there is any maximum of strength in sin, so that after some length of continuance, after the round of experiences is run over, after wisdom is gained, its force abates, and the soul enters on a work of self-restoration? II. FROM THE FACT, THAT THE MASS OF THE PERSONS WHO ARE TRULY RECOVERED FROM SIN, ASCRIBE THEIR CURE TO SOME EXTERNAL CAUSE,—nay, I should say to some extraordinary cause, which sin had nothing to do with bringing into existence. Ask any one who seems to you to have a sincere principle of godliness, what it was that wrought the change in his case, by which he forsook his old sins. Will he tell you that it was sin leading him round, by the experience of its baneful effects, to a life of holiness? Will he even refer it to a sense of obligation awakened by the law of God? Or, will he not rather ascribe it to the perception of God's love in pardoning sinners through His Son? Nor will he stop there; he will go beyond the outward motive of truth to the inward operation of a Divine Spirit. You cannot make those who have spent the most thought about sin, and had the deepest experience of its quality, admit that spiritual death of itself works a spiritual resurrection. Moreover, were it so, you could not admit the necessity of the Gospel. What is the use of medicine, if the disease, after running its course, strengthens the constitution, so as to secure it against maladies in the future? Can truth, with all its motives, do as much? To this it may be added, that the prescriptions of the Gospel themselves often fail to cure the soul; not half of those who are brought up under the Gospel are truly Christians. This again shows how hard the cure of sin is. III. WE DO NOT FIND THAT INORDINATE DESIRE IS RENDERED MODERATE BY THE EXPERIENCE THAT IT FAILS TO SATISFY THE SOUL. A most important class of sins are those of excited desire, or, as the Scriptures call them, of lust. The extravagance of our desires—the fact that they grow into undue strength, and reach after wrong objects, is owing to our state of sin itself, to the want of a regulative principle of godliness. But no such gratification can fill the soul. How is it now with the soul which has

thus pampered its earthly desires, and starved its heavenly? Does it cure itself of its misplaced affections? If it could, all the warnings and contemplations of the moral philosophers might be thrown to the winds, and we should only need to preach intemperance in order to secure temperance; to feed the fire of excess, that it might the more speedily burn out. But who would risk such an experiment? Does the aged miser relax his hold on his money-bags, and settle down on the lees of benevolence? **IV. THE PAIN OR LOSS, ENDURED AS A FRUIT OF SIN, IS NOT, OF ITSELF, REFORMATORY.** I have already said that under the Gospel such wages of sin are often made use of by the Divine Spirit to sober, subdue, and renovate the character. But even under the Gospel, how many, instead of being reformed by the punishment of their sins, are hardened, embittered, filled with complaints against Divine justice and human law! We find continual complaints on the part of the prophets that the people remained hardened through all the discipline of God, although it was fatherly chastisement, which held out hope of restoration to the Divine favour. Such was a large experience of the efficacy of punishment under the Jewish economy. Turn now to a state of things where the Divine clemency is wholly unknown or seen only in its feeblest glimmerings. Will naked law, will pure justice work a reform to which Divine clemency is unequal? **V. REMORSE OF CONSCIENCE IS NOT REFORMATORY.** Remorse, in its design, was put into the soul as a safeguard against sin. But in the present state of man remorse has no such power for the following reasons—

1. It is dependent for its power, and even for its existence, on the truth of which the mind is in possession. Of itself it teaches nothing; it rather obeys the truth which is before the mind at the time. If now the mind lies within the reach of any means by which it can ward off the force of truth, or put falsehood in the place of truth, sin will get the better of remorse,—the dread of remorse will cease to set the soul upon its guard.
2. Every sinner has such means of warding off the force of truth, and so of weakening the power of self-condemnation, at his command. The sophistries which a sinful soul plays off upon itself, the excuses which palliate, if they do not justify transgression, are innumerable.
3. Remorse, according to the operation of the law of habit, is a sentiment which loses its strength as the sinner continues to sin.
4. But, once more, suppose that all this benumbing of conscience is temporary, as indeed it may well be; suppose that through these years of sinning it has silently gathered its electric power, but, when the soul is hackneyed in sin and life is in the dregs, will give a terrible shock—will this work reform? Will there be courage to undertake a work then for which the best hopes, the greatest strength of resolution, and the help of God are wanted? No! discouragement then must prevent reform. The sorrow of the world worketh death.

**VI. THE EXPERIENCE OF SIN BRINGS THE SOUL NO NEARER TO RELIGIOUS TRUTH.** For sin, amongst other of its effects, makes us more afraid of God or more indifferent to Him. The first inward change wrought by sin is to beget a feeling of separation from God. To this we may add that a habit of scepticism is contracted in a course of sinning, which it is exceedingly hard to lay aside. It became necessary in order to palliate sin and render self-reproach less bitter to devise excuses for the indulgence of wrong desires. Is then such a habit easy to be shaken off? Is it easy, when habits of sin have brought on habits of scepticism, to become perfectly candid, and to throw aside the doubts of a lifetime, which are often specious and in a certain sense honestly entertained? The blindness of the mind is the best security against reformation.

1. From the course of thought in this discourse it appears that our present life shows no favour to the opinion that sin is a necessary stage in the development of character towards perfection. The tendency of sin, as life shows, is to grow blinder, more insensible, less open to truth, less capable of goodness.
2. And, again, the experience of this world throws light, or, I should rather say, darkness, on the condition of the sinner who dies impenitent. There is no tendency in the experience of his whole life towards reform. How can it be shown that there will be hereafter?
3. Our subject points, as with a finger that can be seen, to the best time for getting rid of sin. All we have said is but a commentary on that text, "Exhort one another daily while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Sin is now shapening your character; he is adding stroke after stroke for the final countenance and form. If you wait all will be fixed; his work will be done. (*T. D. Woolesey, D.D.*)

*Isaiah a physician as well as a seer* :—He says, you are vitally wrong, organically out of health: the whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint: the chief members of your constitution are wrong. It is a question of the head and

the heart. Not, the foot has gone astray, and the hand has been playing an evil game, or some inferior member of the body has given hint of restlessness and treason; but, the head, where the mind abides, is sick; the heart, continually keeping the life-current in action, is faint and cannot do its work. Until you see the seriousness of the case you cannot apply the right remedies. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *What is human nature?*—Do not consult the sanguine poet, for he takes a roseate view of everything: he sees in leprosy only the beauty of its snowiness; he looks upon the green mantling pool, and sees nothing there but some hint of verdure. Do not consult the gloomy pessimist, for at mid-day he sees nothing but a variety of midnight, and in all the loveliness of summer he sees nothing but an attempt to escape from the dreariness of winter. But consult the line of reason and solid fact, or undeniable experience, and what is this human nature? Can it be more perfectly, more exquisitely described than in the terms used by the prophet in the fifth and sixth verses of this chapter? Do the poor only fill our courts of law? Are our courts of justice only a variety of our ragged schools? Is sin but the trick of ignorance or the luxury of poverty? Or the question may be started from the other point: Are only they who are born to high degree guilty of doing wrong? Read the history of crime, read human history in all its breadth, and then say if there be not something in human nature corresponding to this description. (*Ibid.*)

**Ver. 8. A cottage in a vineyard.—A lodge in a garden.**—The true point of the comparison will not appear until the crop is over, and the lodge forsaken by the keeper. Then the poles fall down or lean every way, and those green boughs with which it is shaded will have been scattered by the wind, leaving only a ragged, sprawling wreck,—a most affecting type of utter desolation—"as Sodom, and like unto Gomorrah." (*Thomson's "The Land and the Book."*)

**Ver. 9. Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant.**—*The influence of good men.*—1. God's greatness in the universe. The "Lord of hosts," or Jehovah of hosts. Who are His "hosts"? Angels. Who shall count the number of these troops? He is their Creator and Sustainer. 2. God's authority over good men. He is here represented as having "left a very small remnant." Whilst all existences are absolutely His, He has a special interest in the good. He keeps good men here as long as He thinks fit. He removes them at His pleasure. I. THEIR INFLUENCE IS HIGHLY BENEFICENT. From what evil did this remnant deliver the country? The answer will come out with potency by replying to two other questions. 1. What was the moral condition of Sodom and Gomorrah? Their sin was "very grievous" (Gen. xviii. 20). 2. What was their doom? (Gen. xix. 24, 25.) Now, it was from this moral corruption and terrible doom these good people, it is said in our text, delivered others. "Ye are the salt of the earth." History abounds with examples of moral declination, and all hearts are conscious of this gravitating force. What is the counteractive? The life of Christ in man. That life flashes a light upon the corrupt heart of society, and makes it blush. But few will dare to sin in the presence of living holiness. Vice cowers under the radiant eye of virtue. II. Their influence is highly beneficent, HOWEVER FEW THEIR NUMBER. "A very small remnant." A little goodness on this earth goes a great way. Even one man like Moses, Elijah, Paul, Luther, Whitefield, Wesley, may stop the flow of depravity and turn the destinies of an age. Conclusion—1. The criminal ignorance of nations in relation to their true benefactors. 2. The supreme value of Christianity. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Beneficial influence of goodness.*—On a hot summer's day, some years ago, I was sailing with a friend in a tiny boat on a miniature lake enclosed like a cup within a circle of steep, bare Scottish hills. On the shoulder of the brown sunburnt mountain, and full in sight, was a well with a crystal stream trickling over its lip, and making its way down towards the lake. Around the well's mouth and along the course of the rivulet a belt of green stood out in strong contrast with the iron surface of the rocks all around. We soon agreed as to what should be made of it. There it was, a legend clearly printed by the finger of God on the side of these silent hills, teaching the passer-by how needful a good man is, and how useful he may be in a desert world. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *The Lord of hosts.*—Jehovah of hosts, or of armies, is a favourite expression of the Hebrew writers, and especially of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah and Malachi, by which they recognise Him as the universal governor of heaven

and earth, "who has ordained and constituted the services of men and angels in a wonderful order," and who employs His kingly and almighty power to rule the nations in righteousness, and, as now, both to punish and to save His chosen people. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*)

**Ver. 10. Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom.**—*The true prophet deals with the needs of the present*:—It is a very miserable thing for a preacher when he lives wholly either in the past or in the future, and so allows either the one or the other to divert him from the duty he owes to God in the present. What is more pitiful, more unlike the idea of a true prophet, than to find one whose work is to preach to men of the twentieth century occupying his time in discoursing of the sins of the Jews centuries before Christ, or even of those sinners of Jerusalem who crucified the Lord, unless his first care be to warn them lest they fall after the same example of unbelief? And Isaiah would have done a very poor service to the Jews at that time if, instead of holding out to them light for their present guidance and wisdom to direct them in the emergencies of the terrible crisis through which they were passing, he had simply been for ever inviting them to contemplate the glories of a future into which they would never enter. He was there to tell men what God's will was in relation to themselves, to deal with their own difficulties, to answer the problems by which their hearts were agitated, to cheer them under the reverses by which they were disheartened, to rebuke them for the evil which was separating them from God, and warn them of the judgment which God would bring upon them; but, at the same time, to assure them of His infinite pity and compassion. (*J. G. Rogers, B.A.*) *Plain speaking*:—This is plain speaking; but God never sends velvet-tongued men as His messengers. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Corrupt rulers*:—The fish stinks first at the head. (*Turkish proverb.*)

**Vers. 11-15. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the Lord.**—*Hypocrisy and partiality in religion*:—These words are not to be understood absolutely but comparatively, and with respect to the manners of these men. For—I. GOD COULD NOT ABSOLUTELY REJECT SACRIFICES, because they were of His own appointing, as we are abundantly certified in the Books of Exodus and Leviticus. And they were instituted for very good purposes. 1. As federal rites between God and His people, that by eating of what was offered upon His altar they might profess their union and communion with Him, that they were of His family, He their Father, and they His children. And this is what made idolatry so odious to Him, and for which He declares Himself a jealous God, that when they sacrificed to idols they made the same acknowledgments to them. 2. Sacrifices were instituted to expiate sins of ignorance and trespasses of an inferior nature. It is true, St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews affirms, that it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should purify the conscience, so as to wash away the guilt of sin, which only can be atoned for by the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world. But yet they availed to the purifying of the flesh, and were accepted of God in lieu of temporal punishments. 3. Sacrifices were designed to teach men that without shedding of blood there could be no remission of sins. They were hereby led to consider that infinite justice properly required the life of the offender, but that infinite mercy accepted of a vicarious life. 4. Peace-offerings, or sacrifices of gratitude were offered to God in hope of obtaining some favour, or as a thanksgiving for having received some signal mercy from Him. 5. Sacrifices were instituted for types and representatives of that final sacrifice of the Son of God in whom they all centred and were consummated. (*Psa. xl. 6; Heb. x. 5, 6.*) "He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second," *i.e.*, the sacrifice of Himself; and consequently Paul calls the law our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, and Christ the end of the law, because it was ended in Him and by Him. In this sense it is that our Lord affirms that He came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them. He fulfilled the moral law by His perfect holiness and virtue, and the law of sacrifices by His death and passion. From all this I infer that God does not reject sacrifices as such, and therefore we must conclude that—II. HIS AVERSION TO THEM WAS OCCASIONED BY THE ILL MANNERS OF THOSE THAT OFFERED THEM, who had no concern to accomplish the good ends which were intended by them, nor considered that by these sacraments they laid themselves under renewed obligations to be sensible of their own demerits,



to repent and reform whatever they found amiss in their lives, and to abound in the love of God, and the fruits of His Holy Spirit. It appears from the characters of these men, especially in their latter and worst times, that they satisfied themselves with the *opus operatum*, the external duties of religion, and had no regard to the renovation of their hearts and minds. (*W. Reading, M.A.*) *Religiousness*:—The common man's commonest refuge from conscience. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *Sin offensive to God*:—1. The Scripture for our understanding ascribes senses to God, and here we find every sense displeased with their sins. (1) They were offensive to His tasting; for their burnt-offerings of rams, with the fat of lambs, &c., He could not relish—they delighted Him not, they were sour to His palate. (2) They were offensive to His smelling; for He tells them that their incense was an abomination unto Him—that precious perfume, which was made with so many sweet spices and pure frankincense (Exod. xxx. 34, 35), did stink in His nostrils, the scent thereof He could not abide. (3) They were offensive to His feeling; for their new moons and appointed feasts were a burden unto Him, He was weary to bear them. And though He be not weary of bearing the whole world, yet He is weary of this burden; so heavy is it to His sense, that He complains He is “pressed under it, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves” (Amos ii. 13). (4) They were offensive to His seeing; and therefore He tells them, though they spread forth their hands, He will hide His eyes. His pure eyes “cannot behold evil,” nor endure to look upon iniquity, and therefore He must turn away His face from them. (5) They were offensive to His hearing; for when they make many prayers He will not hear. Their prayers were as jarring in His ears as if divers distracted musicians should play upon divers bad instruments so many several tunes at one time. 2. Neither were their sins only displeasing to His senses, but also grievous to His mind, and therefore He tells them, their new moons and appointed feasts His soul did hate; which is an emphatical speech, and an argument of God's hearty detestation. (*N. Rogers.*) *Dissembled piety* is double iniquity. (*M. Henry.*) *Moral whitewash*:—God is not mocked, and even man is not long imposed upon by a vain show of devotion. We once heard Father Taylor, a noted preacher to sailors in America, pray that men who thought themselves good, and were not, might be undeceived; and he cried, “Lord, take off the whitewash!” (*D. Fraser, D.D.*) *Religious hypocrisy*: *Dukes Orleans and Burgundy*:—On the 20th of November 1407, the two cousins heard mass, and partook of the holy sacrament together at the church of the Augustins. Never was there a blacker instance of sacrilegious hypocrisy. At the very moment when he thus profaned the most solemn rite of Christianity, Jean sans Peur had deliberately doomed his enemy to a bloody and violent death. (*Student's France.*) *Formal religion*:—Dickens describes how in Genoa he once witnessed “a great festa on the hill behind the house, when the people alternately danced under tents in the open air and rushed to say a prayer or two in an adjoining church bright with red and gold and blue and silver: so many minutes of dancing and of praying in regular turns of each.” (*H. O. Mackey.*) *Inconsistency*:—Writing of Lorenzo de Medici, Mr. Howells says: “After giving his whole mind and soul to the destruction of the last remnant of liberty, after pronouncing some fresh sentence of ruin or death, he entered the Platonic Academy, and ardently discussed virtue and the immortality of the soul; then sallying forth to mingle with the dissolute youth of the city, he sang his carnival songs, and abandoned himself to debauchery; returning home with Pulci and Politian, he recited verses and talked of poetry; and to each of these occupations he gave himself up as wholly as if it were the sole occupation of his life.” (*Ibid.*) “*Holiness becometh Thine house*”:—When Ruskin was making explorations about Venice, in the Church of St. James, he discovered, engraved on a stone, these words, “Around the temple let the merchant's weights be true, his measures just, and his contracts without guile.” (*Sunday School Chronicle.*) The Paris *Figaro* mentions that a curious discovery was made recently when the famous robber-gang of Papakoritzopoulo was broken up. In the pocket of this most notorious of European brigands was found a small Bible, neatly bound and wrapped in a clean silk handkerchief, a prayer-book, holy relics in tiny boxes, a cross, and other religious objects. *Inconsistency*:—The son of Sirach asks of him that washeth himself after the touching of a dead body, and then touches it again, what availeth his washing? “So is it with a man that fasteth for his sins, and goeth again, and doeth the same: who will hear his prayer? or what doth his humbling profit him?” (*F. Jacob, B.A.*) *Audacious*

*hypocrisy* :—When Pope Hadrian II. consented at last to admit Lothair to the holy communion he warned him, "But if thou thinkest in thine heart to return to wallow in lust, beware of receiving this sacrament, lest thou provoke the terrible judgment of God." And the king shuddered, but did not draw back. (*Ibid.*)

*Detestable worship* :—Dr. South says of him who, by hypothesis, comes to church with an ill intention, that he comes to God's house upon the devil's errand, and the whole act is thereby rendered evil and detestable before God. The prayers of a wicked man are by Jeremy Taylor likened to "the breath of corrupted lungs: God turns away from such unwholesome breathings." (*Ibid.*)

*Smuggler and preacher too* :—The letters of Robert Louis Stevenson tell an astonishing story of smuggling in the Shetlands. The revenue official had great trouble with a man known as Preaching Peter, who, whenever he returned with his spoils, sent round handbills to announce his coming, and went about the country preaching. After he had much prayed and much preached, he gave the benediction, and this was the signal for all who knew him to crowd round. "How many gallons shall I give you?" "How many do you want?" Such was the conversation; and so he sold his smuggled spirits and improved the people's souls while he filled his own purse.

*Worship and wickedness* :—A famous brigand in Sicily was constantly robbing and sometimes murdering. But he would never go forth on his expeditions without first kneeling at a little shrine in his cave, where he kept an image of the Virgin. (*Christian Commonwealth.*)

*Pew-holding* :—Emerson, in an essay, refers to "what is called religion, but is, perhaps, pew-holding."

*A red-handed religionist* :—There is no name in Scottish history round which darker or grimmer or bloodier associations gather than the name of John Graham of Claverhouse. He hunted and harried the men of the Covenant. He shot some of them with his own hand. He brought misery and weeping, widowhood and orphanhood, to many a lowly and godly home. Yet he was scrupulous in the observance of all religious ordinances. Let me beware of this double life. (*A. Smellie, M.A.*)

Ver. 13. The calling of assemblies, I cannot away with.—*Service not services* :—1. Many think religion flourishes if services are well attended. But, unless we are "willing and obedient" our "fat things" will not make us fat. They will rather harm us. Paul says, "Ye serve the Lord Christ." Your vocation is the main part of your service for Him, provided you are in the place where He would have you be. If you are not clear about that point, be sure and inquire of Him. In a well-ordered house there are many servants, and, if one tried to do another's work, there would be confusion. Do your work and do it faithfully. If God has special and occasional service, beyond this, He will direct you to it. 2. Again, remember what the apostle says about service, "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord"—fervent, that is, quite hot, boiling. You might as well run a locomotive without steam as try and serve the Lord without fervour. How shall you get it? You can get it in a measure from the influence of those who themselves are warm in God's service. Catch fire from such as Samuel Rutherford, whose volume reminds me of a contrivance they had before matches were invented. It was a kind of bottle, containing some mixture, into which you dipped the match, and it immediately took fire. These letters of Rutherford's are just like that. When you feel dull, lukewarm, read one or two of those letters, and, provided your heart is sincere, see if it does not set you on fire. But we have better than that. We have Rutherford's Master. The central source of holy zeal, of burning love, is there. 3. Again, be willing to do what is humble, what seems useless, if He so direct. It is a great trial of patience. Moses tended sheep forty years. God's chief difficulty with us is, not filling, but emptying us; not edifying or building up, as it is pulling us down. Look at the history of the Church, and you will see that most, if not all, of those whom God has employed in a signal manner for His glory, have been, in one way or another, among the most afflicted of men either in heart or in body, sometimes in both. Therefore, do not be afraid of suffering; it helps service. The work of God is mostly hidden work, fully known to Him, known partly to those who are the immediate objects of it, scarcely known to ourselves. I am afraid, nowadays, there is a great deal too much speaking about the work done or doing. I have sometimes thought how well the apostles got on without newspapers—and the work was done all the same! 4. If we are thus doing God's work fervently, humbly, patiently, though obscurely, looking to Him alone, we, like our Master,

will finish the work that He has given us to do. Only as we abide in Christ, can we be able to complete our work. Mere machinery and outward activity are of no account without this daily dwelling in, and drawing from, Him. (*T. Monod.*) *Acceptable worship*.—To adore God for His goodness, and to pray to Him to make us good, is the sum and substance of all wholesome worship. Then is a man fit to come to church, sins and all, if he carry his sins into church not to carry them out again safely and carefully, as we are all too apt to do, but to cast them down at the foot of Christ's Cross, in the hope (and no man ever hoped that hope in vain) that he will be lightened of that burden, and leave some of them, at least, behind him. (*C. Kingsley, M.A.*)

**Ver. 14. I am weary to bear them.**—*God oppressed*.—Wonderful expression this! It suggests the idea that the Almighty is oppressed with the weight of human sins. I. THE EXQUISITE MORAL SENSIBILITY OF GOD. God is not mere force or intellect, He is heart, He is infinite sensibility. All events and actions vibrate on His nature—He is feelingly alive to all. II. THE AMAZING PATIENCE OF GOD. If He is "weary" why does He "bear" it? Why does He not quench in the midnight of eternal extinction all the authors of sin? III. THE REMEDIAL AGENCY OF GOD. Because sin is so abhorrent, and the sinner so dear, He sent His "only begotten Son" into the world, in order to "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." (*Homilist.*)

**Ver. 16. Wash you, make you clean.**—*Repentance necessary and possible*.—Two things are necessarily to be acknowledged to encourage endeavours after piety. 1. To be assured that God will not be wanting to afford the assistance of His grace and Spirit. 2. That by this assistance we are enabled to do our duty. There are two things which no wise man doth submit to his care or thought, namely, necessities and impossibles. For things necessary, he needs not to charge himself with them, for they will be done of course; and for things impossible, it is a vain thing for him to undertake. We are not to consider ourselves to be in a state of impossibility, therefore we must suppose that God is with us by His grace and assistance; and while God is with us that we are able to do those things that He requires of us—to wash and make us clean, &c., which words are to be considered according to their form and according to their matter. 1. According to their form, they are an exhortation, and so it is not in vain that we are exhorted to duty. 2. In respect of their matter, they afford these two observations—(1) That sin is in itself a thing of defilement and pollution. (2) That religion is a motion of restoration. Ill habits do strangely bias our faculties; but though they do this, yet they do not absolutely determine our faculties or sink them, for these faculties are of the essence of the soul. It is with much difficulty they are overcome (*Jer. xiii. 23*); but the faculty is free notwithstanding any habit acquired; otherwise it were impossible ever to recover any habitual sinner. I. GOD DOTH PRIMARILY DESIRE THE GOOD OF ALL HIS CREATURES (*1 Tim. ii. 4*; *Isa. v. 4*). II. GOD DOTH NOT DESIRE MAN'S SALVATION WITHOUT HIS RETURN. For it is impossible that any man should be happy in a way of obstinacy and rebellion against God. III. GOD DOTH NOT DESIRE MAN'S RETURN WITHOUT HIS OWN CONSENT. For if He should desire this, He should desire that which cannot be: for being intelligent and voluntary agents, we cannot truly be said to do that which we do against our minds. For to a human act two things are necessary; that there be the judgment of reason in the understanding, and the choice of the will. If the mind do not consent, it is not a free act; and if not done freely, and of choice, it cannot be an act of virtue; and if not an act of virtue, it cannot be of any moral consideration. It is no less an act of the will, though a man be at the first attempt unwilling and averse; yea, though he suffer great difficulty to bring himself to it. For this man hath brought himself to it by reason, consideration, and argument, and so his consent is the better grounded. Application—1. We ought to be thankful to God, and to acknowledge Him for the gracious assistance that He doth afford unto us. 2. We ought to make use of and employ this Divine assistance, which is in the apostle's language, not to receive the grace of God in vain (*2 Cor. vi. 1*). (*B. Whichcote, D.D.*) *Moral abluion*.—I. THAT SIN CAN BE SEPARATED FROM MAN'S NATURE. Sin is no more a part of human nature than a stain is of a garment. 1. Human nature has existed without ever having been touched by sin. Christ through all His life could say, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me."

2. Human nature does exist after having been cleansed from sin. It does so in heaven. II. THAT SIN SHOULD BE SEPARATED FROM MAN'S NATURE. There are three obvious reasons for this command—1. Because your pollution conceals the moral image of Himself which your Maker has impressed upon your nature. Sin is such a besmearment of the moral mirror of man's being, that scarcely a Divine ray is seen reflected. 2. Because your pollution enfeebles your moral health. Physical pollution is inimical to physical health. Sin renders a man powerless for good. 3. Because your pollution injures society. (*Homilist.*) *Practical regeneration.*—The call is made to the class that are usually given up. Two questions come up in connection with this subject. 1. When a man is wrong in his life, is wicked on account of the strength of constitutional peculiarities, and is organised with such passion, such will, such temper, such pride and avarice, that that organisation compels as well as controls him, is it possible for him to change that organisation and its fruits? 2. Whatever may have been the proportions in which a man's faculties are given to him, if he has been cast in the midst of temptations, is it in his power, if he be an average man, to break away, to assert his own sovereignty, and recover himself? Can a man control, first, himself inwardly, and second, himself outwardly? Did not Peter wrestle successfully with his constitutional organisation? There is an example which is still more remarkable in some respects. The account which Paul gives of himself is most striking. Here we have a precisionist, a narrow and intense bigot, a man whose conscience was logical, and who therefore followed his conscience without scruple and without the restraint of any meliorating principle. Not only was he a man of the most malign feeling in the service of religion, but he was a man of the utmost firmness of purpose. Nothing could stop him on sea or on land. He was a man of the most sensitive pride. Now, turn to the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, and see what the fruit of Paul's change was. It may be said to be a record of his experience. Then, as to the other question, Can men control their circumstances? If a man can overrule a constitutional peculiarity, how much easier can he control that which is not of himself, but is exterior to himself! The experiences of the Gospel for thousands of years show that men can be reclaimed from all forms of vice. Men can break through and rescue themselves from the power of wickedness when it takes on an external and social form. That is the voice of the Old Testament. Is it a false proclamation, based upon a false view of life and possibility? Pre-eminently it is the voice of the New Testament. The invisible things of God are more and mightier than the visible. If a man treats himself simply as a physical organisation, and believes in nothing but what he can see and handle, it may seem to him as though this world were simply a gigantic crushing machine, irresistible in its impulses, and as though the best way for him were to submit himself to it, and let it take him whither it will; but we are taught, and we believe that the whole heaven is full of powers which are mightier than any which are seen. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Renewing forces are silent and gentle.*—Nature itself gives us an illustration of it. When the spring draws the sap out of the ground into the trees the actual force which is exerted is greater than that of all human machines put together. Never was there an engine built that could for one single moment compare with the development of actual physical power in an oak tree standing in a field, acre-broad, every spring. Yet you see nothing and hear nothing. But it has been measured and estimated. There is in the silent influence of the seasons more power than in all the storms that ever swept over the earth since creation. The invisible forces of nature are mightier than the visible. Look into a household. The bustling husband who drives the children here and there, and will have order, has nothing but disorder; while the mother sits still, and loves, rules over every child in the family, and secures perfect obedience. The silence of love is mightier than all the physical or moral force of boisterous strength. Now, this truth, which we discern even in the lowest forms of matter, and which grows more and more striking as you ascend along the line of human society, meets the great declaration of the Divine Word, that God has given the Holy Spirit, and that this invisible and silent force in the universe is such that more are they that are for a man who wants to turn than are they that are against him. The whole heaven is God's apparatus for helping men to unharness their faults, to lay aside their habits, to change mightily their whole internal economy, yea, to so revolutionise themselves that, whereas before the animal, the physical, was in the ascendancy, now the angel, the spiritual, is. Is there, then, such an influence existing in every community? Yes, in every community. (*Ibid.*)

*In regeneration man must co-operate with God's Spirit*.—If men would have the help of the sun they must not sulk in caves; if men would set the sun to bringing forth vines and corn and other grains they must employ it according to the sun's laws and methods. If they do this they shall have the benefit of its might. All the power that is in nature is mine if I but study natural law and obey it. Now, the invisible influences in the Divine nature, we are taught very abundantly in the Word of God, are to be sought as men seek the seasons. If the power that is in God is to come to the help of a man there should be at least as much seeking as men give to the laws of nature when they seek them. How do men attempt to renovate their spiritual nature? With what dalliance, what carelessness, what facile discouragement, what intermissions, what associations that neutralise or blur that which is bright in us do men seek to bring the Divine influence to bear upon their constitutional peculiarities! Are you proud? You know how to extract the roots of the mightiest tree that ever grew; you know how to attack it and draw it forth; and yet the influences by which a man may extract by the roots all the evil influences within him are a hundred times greater, if men had some conception of the necessity. A man can overmaster his pride. Paul did it. Can a man change his basilar passions so that they shall be held in abeyance? Certainly he can. Something can be done for every man by physiological methods. A man of violent temper, easily excited, an excessively meat-eating man, or a man addicted to the use of stimulating drinks, can hardly expect to overcome the animal in himself while he is gorging him, and is building fires under the very caldrons which he would cool off. If a man choose to go through the necessary practice, he certainly can change; but if a man say to himself, "I do not believe in religion; I will change by and by; it is not convenient now; I do not understand this great change, and I do not like to go into anything which my reason does not comprehend," I say to him, Do you insist, when you are sick, and you send for your physician, upon entering into an argument with him? Do you say to him, "What is the matter with me?" and when he prescribes for you do you say, "Sit down and tell me the whole history of this medicine, who invented it, what its use is, who has employed it, and what right the man had to compose it or mix it"? You do not act so. A man under such circumstances instantly makes a practical matter of it, and takes certain practical steps. On the other side, no man can tear himself away from surrounding temptations and evil influences without an adaptation of his life and will to the peculiar work which is required. Shall a man attempt to change himself from evil to good, and do it easily and thoughtlessly and carelessly? Such a change never comes by accident nor by a little striving. Here is the simple fact of this whole subject: both philosophy and example teach that in our strife for virtue the passions and appetites, the infelicities of our organisation, can be overmastered; that we can take ourselves out of our constitutional faults, and that if we have fallen under temptations, it is possible for us to break the net and escape from them. When Jesus came, one of the most matchless and eloquent of all His utterances was that He had come to open the prison doors, to break the shackles, to give the prisoners liberty, and to let those that were bound go free. (*Ibid.*)

**Vers. 16, 17. Cease to do evil; learn to do well.—An inoffensive life:**—The order in which these words are placed, was evidently designed to teach us, that the foundation of acting right is avoiding everything wrong. Several other parts of Scripture lay down the same rule in almost the same terms (Psa. xxxiv. 14, xxxvii. 27; Amos v. 15; Rom. xii. 9; 1 Pet. iii. 11); and many express or imply the same doctrine, putting repentance before faith and obedience (Matt. xxi. 32; Mark i. 15; Acts xx. 21; Tit. ii. 12, 13). Even heathen authors, in very distant ages and countries, have given the like direction. And indeed every one must own the justness of it: but still very few appear to perceive or attend sufficiently to its importance: which, therefore, I shall endeavour to shew you—I. IN RESPECT OF OUR CONDUCT IN GENERAL. It is plainly the natural and rational method to begin with removing what else will obstruct our progress, and to make unity within our own breasts our earnest care. He who hath only consistent pursuits may follow them with a prospect of success: but a mind, distracted between contrary principles of action, can hope for nothing but to be drawn backward and forward by them continually, as they chance to prevail in their turns. Things, indeed, that do but accidentally give some little hindrance to each other now and then, may be prosecuted together, and

the due preference, when they interfere, be adjusted well enough. But sin and duty are so essentially opposite, that their interests can never be reconciled. They flow from different motives, proceed by different means, aim at different ends, and thwart one another perpetually. And it is to men's overlooking this obvious truth, that the miscarriage of their good intentions, the irresolution of their lives, the incoherence of their characters, in a great measure, owes its rise. Every one of us knows, in the main, what he ought to do: every one feels an approbation of it; and so far, at least, a disposition to it. But then he feels also dispositions quite adverse: and though he sees them to be unwarrantable, yet it is painful to root them out, and not pleasing even to take notice of them. So, to avoid trouble, both sorts are allowed to grow up together as they can; and, which will thrive faster, soon appears. Perhaps but one or two sorts of wickedness were intended to be indulged: but these have unforeseen connections with others, and those with more. Or, had they none, when men have once yielded to do but a single thing amiss, they have no firm ground to stand upon in refusing to do a second, and a third: so gradually they lose their strength, God withdraws His help, and they fall from bad to worse. II. IN RESPECT OF OUR BEHAVIOUR TO EACH OTHER. It is a remarkable thing in the constitution of this world, that we have much more power of producing misery in it than happiness. Every one, down to the most insignificant, is capable of giving disquiet, nay, grievous pain and affliction to others, and often to great numbers, without the least difficulty; while even those of superior abilities in every way, can hardly discover the means, unless it be within a very narrow compass now and then, of doing any great good, or communicating any considerable pleasure. Besides, the effects of kindnesses may always be entirely lost: but those of injuries too frequently can never be remedied. And therefore we ought to watch over ourselves with perpetual care, examine the tendency of all our words and actions, and, not contented with meaning no harm, be solicitous to do none. The harm that we do through heedlessness is certainly not so criminal, as if it were purposely contrived: but may be almost, if not quite, as severely felt notwithstanding: or though it were but slightly, why should we be so inadvertent, as unnecessarily to cause but an hour's, nay, a moment's vexation or grief to one of our brethren; or deprive him of the smallest of those innocent gratifications, that help to alleviate the sorrows of life, and make the passage through it comfortable? (*T. Secker, LL.D.*) *The Bible art of reforming men*:—I. Its primary principle is, that REFORMATION SHOULD BEGIN AT THE SOURCE OF HUMAN CONDUCT. Change the springs of all action and you change every element of conduct. Ye must be born again. Out of the heart proceed all evils. 1. It does not set aside all forms of outward help—society, industry, family, church, but these are auxiliaries to the central endeavour of the human will. 2. It recognises, too, that the complete work is by stages, gradual—though the purpose, may be immediate. II. Not only is the central element of reformation clearly established, but what may be called the WORKING-PLAN OF REFORMATION FROM EVIL IS LAID DOWN. (*Dan. iii. 27.* Compare that with *Matt. iii. 8-10.*) 1. Right-doing is the way to cease wrong-doing. *Eph. iv. 28*—not enough to stop getting by stealing, but must do that by learning how to get by working! The way to cure evil, is to set a current of contrary action. 2. The illustration of the inward government of mind—how feelings of one class rise or fall in answer to the excitement or somnolency of another. 3. The two faulty forms. (1) Forming a purpose, without taking practical steps—empty resolves—by repentance—leaves only; no fruit. (2) Reformation by external regulation—mechanical. III. THE DIFFICULTIES OF VICE, OF HABIT, WHEN THEY ARE SIMPLY WATCHED AGAINST. 1. They leave men lonesome—unhappy. 2. The soul develops power to overturn evil only by inspiration of opposite virtues. IV. THE REASON WHY SO MANY PEOPLE BECOME NEGATIVE, FEEBLE, AND UNINTERESTING WHEN THEY BECOME RELIGIOUS. V. THE REASON WHY SO MANY ARE STRONG, NOBLE, AS WORLDLY MEN IN BUSINESS, BUT WITHOUT FORCE IN SPIRITUALS. They let loose their whole selves in the one case. They tie up the strong elements in the other, for fear of mischief—and do not let out any other. (*Prov. iii. 13-18; also viii. 11, &c.*) VI. WHEN MEN TURN FROM EVIL LET THEM GO CLEAR OVER TO RELIGION! (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The men for the times*:—Men are wanted who are prepared to march in the van of the army of national, civic, and personal reformers,—men with the one thought dominating them that God the Father lives, and loves with an everlasting love every member of the human race,—men who,

influenced by this irresistible intuition, seek to purge and purify politics and trade, society and the Church, law and custom, speech and practice, of all things that oppress and injure, and which in any way retard the triumph of the kingdom of God. The watchword still is, "Cease to do evil," &c. (*F. Sessions.*) *The prophetic temper in James Russell Lowell*:—The temper that was in James Russell Lowell is the temper we seek for in all our public men—in all leaders of thought in Church or State, of local or general following. "He sang of the wrongs of the poor and the slave; the emptiness of life without conviction; of the nullity of poetry without purpose; the rapidness of preaching without piety; the shame of law without justice; the blank horror of a world without God." (*Ibid.*) *Holding on to a sin*:—A little child was one day playing with a very valuable vase, when he put his hand into it and could not withdraw it. His father, too, tried his best to get it out, but all in vain. They were talking of breaking the vase, when the father said, "Now, my son, make one more try; open your hand and hold your fingers out straight, as you see me doing, and then pull." To their astonishment the little fellow said, "Oh, no, pa. I couldn't put out my fingers like that, for if I did I would drop my penny." He had been holding on to a penny all the time! No wonder he could not withdraw his hand. (*J. McNeill.*) *The first principle*:—There is no religion—or if there is, I do not know it—which does not say, "Do good; avoid evil." There is none which does not contain what Rabbi Hillel called the quintessence of all religions, the simple warning, "Be good, my boy." "Be good, my boy," may seem a very short catechism; but let us add to it, "Be good, my boy, for God's sake," and we have in it very nearly the whole of the Law and the Prophets. (*Max Müller.*) *What repentance is*:—Suppose I am to go down to Boston to-night, and I go down to the Union station, and say to a man I see there, "Can you tell me, is this train going to Boston?" and the man says "Yes." I go and get on board the train, and the superintendent comes along and says, "Where are you going?" I say, "I am going to Boston," and he says, "Well, you are in the wrong train, that train is going to Albany." "But I am quite sure I am right; I asked a railroad man here, and he told me this was the train." And the superintendent says, "Moody, I know all about these trains; I have lived here forty years, and see these trains go up and down here every day." And at last he convinces me that I am on the wrong train. That is conviction, not conversion. But if I don't remain on that train, but just get into the other train, that is repentance. Just to change trains—that is repentance. (*D. L. Moody.*) *Evil to be supplanted by good*:—Sin is to be overcome, not so much by maintaining a direct opposition to it, as by cultivating opposite principles. Would you kill the weeds in your garden, plant it with good seed: if the ground be well occupied there will be less need of the labour of the hoe. If a man wished to quench fire, he might fight it with his hands till he was burnt to death; the only way is to apply an opposite element. (*Andrew Fuller.*) *Learn to do well*.—*The highest education*:—We hear much about various grades of education—primary, secondary, and higher education; by the text we are reminded of that highest education which concerns all, and which it is the main end of life to secure. Moral culture is even more imperative than intellectual development. **I. THE NECESSITY FOR MORAL LEARNING.** Numerous definitions have been given of man, but he might justly be defined as the being who learns. Other creatures can scarcely be said to learn; whatever pertains to their species they do instinctively, immediately, perfectly. A lark builds its first nest as skilfully as its last, a spider's first embroidery is as exquisite as anything it spins in adult life, a bee constructs its first cell and compounds its first honey with an efficiency that leaves nothing to be desired. We know that naturalists are not altogether agreed on this point, but we may conclude that substantially instinct dispenses with that laborious process which we know as learning. It is altogether different with the human creature. If we are "to do well," taking that phrase in its noblest sense, we must "learn" to do it, acquiring the splendid power through attention, repeated endeavour, and manifold sacrifice. Take, *e.g.*, the virtue of contentment. We are persuaded of the reasonableness of contentment with the dispensations of Divine Providence; yet the folly of the soul is subdued only through much failure and discipline. Or, take the virtue of sincerity. This virtue, if it be not rather of the essence of all virtues, we all, to some extent, require to learn, some, however, finding in the learning of it the chief task of life. It seems paradoxical to say so, but some men are naturally theatrical; the temptation is always to

act a part. Through repeated and bitter castigations of the soul do we master this passion for masquerading, and attain sincerity, simplicity, and thoroughness of life. Take the virtue of veracity. We have much to learn here—to speak the truth, to act the truth, to live the truth. Take the virtue of temper. There is a faculty of wrath in nature, and a faculty of wrath becomes noble men—but to harmonise this faculty with reason, and to be at once high-spirited and gentle, is a problem that may demand years for its solution. Or, take the virtue of kindness. We pass through much self-reproach, scourging, and shame in striving to reach the beauteous ideal. St. Paul bears witness of himself, “I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” Let us remember in the training of our children that virtue is acquired much as intellectual life is.

**II. CONSIDER THE METHOD OF THIS MORAL CULTURE.** Three things are essential to the liberal education of the soul.

1. A pattern. “Looking unto Jesus.” He is the supreme Pattern. Said an American artist, “I would give everything I have to see Velasquez paint for one week, one day.” But the splendid privilege is given to us to behold the Lord Jesus live through years! “Learn of Me,” says the Master, and a loving, thoughtful glance into the New Testament every day is a lifelong vision of perfection. Let us learn of Him in joy and sorrow, in work and leisure, in strength and weariness, in popularity and neglect, in success and failure, in life and death. He best teaches the art of life.
2. Power. We can never become holy except as we have a genius for holiness, and this genius in an adequate degree only the Spirit of God can impart. Let us in prayer seek for more inward vision, receptivity, and energy, more of the Spirit that worketh mightily in fully surrendered souls, and all things will become possible.
3. Practice. We learn to do well through doing well. (*W. L. Watkinson.*)

*Life's great lesson:*—

**I. THERE IS NO ROYAL ROAD TO RENOWN.** “You envy me, do you?” said a marshal (Lefevre) of France, to a friend complimenting him on his possessions and good fortune. “Well, you shall have these things at a better bargain than I had. Come into the courtyard; I'll fire at you with a gun twenty times at thirty paces, and if I don't kill you, all shall be your own. What, you will not come! Very well; recollect, then, that I have been shot at more than a thousand times, and much nearer than thirty paces, before I arrived at the state in which you now find me!” The marshal's friend saw only the success attained; he forgot the toil, the suffering and peril through which it had been achieved. The traveller with ardent love of beauty climbs the rugged hill whence his view, he fancies, will be unobstructed and complete; but the first ascent made, behold, another hill overshadowing him; and that surmounted, behold, still another frowns upon him higher yet. So with the hill of life. One arduous ascent made, one difficulty overcome, another presents itself, another, and still another. It is ever “Excelsior!” We would not have it otherwise. Without difficulty, there were no display of energy. Without temptation, there were no self-discipline. Without trial and suffering, there were no fortitude and resignation.

**II. OBSERVE THE ENFORCEMENT OF THIS LESSON ON THE PART OF NATURE IN THE VERY BEGINNINGS OF LIFE.** We begin life as “strangers in a strange land.” We bring nothing with us into the world, either of wealth, knowledge, or experience. What we possess, we receive, acquire, or learn. We find the conditions of life already existing. We must “accept the situation”; meet it as best we may, and each go on to act his part. Beginning to learn, we find nature and her laws fixed, inexorable, demanding recognition and obedience. Observe these laws, heed nature's warnings, and she is a gentle mistress, a kind benefactress; but disregard them, disobey them, and she becomes a terrible avenger. The penalty she never fails to inflict. If not in youth, then in manhood; if not in manhood, then in old age. Though her voice be silent, still nature speaks. And this is her word: Whatever and wherever your place in life's arena act well your part—“learn to do well.” For the sake of your physical well-being; for the sake of your temporal happiness; for the sake of those to come after you—observe my commandments to do them!

**III. CONSIDER THE UTILITY OF THIS LESSON AS TAUGHT BY SOCIETY AND EMPHASISED IN EVERY SPHERE OF LIFE.** The household, the school, the college, the counting-room tuitions, the business apprenticeships, civil and political laws and institutions—whatever factors enter in to develop and improve society—are but the outgrowth and exemplification of the precept of “learning to do well.” They are nature's assistants, teaching us how to do well in life. What is self-denial? It is but another word for “learning to do well”; that is, learning to forego the lesser for the sake of the higher good; denying the present



moment for the sake of the moment that is to come—all which involves difficulty, cost, pain, persistent effort. Persistent effort in the mastering of difficulties lies at the basis of true advancement and success. Wisdom, skill, mastery in hall of trade or science, in field of politics or war, come not by wishing. IV. BUT, ALONG WITH SELF-DENIAL, "LEARNING TO DO WELL" INVOLVES SUBMISSION TO HIGHER AUTHORITY. Who could expect to become an able soldier without first submitting to a tactician's guidance? There must be days, weeks, months of weary taxation of eye and ear, nerve and muscle; there must be continued restraint of body and mind; there must be submission to another's will—obedience to a master's command. But—there it comes again—obedience, self-restraint, is difficult. And what is all this struggle with difficulty for? Why, simply for the sake of "learning to do well"—to drill well; for the sake of becoming a good soldier! V. But the Bible declares that this life is a period of trial, on the issue of which turns the destiny of our future being. If, then, whatever is worth the having in this present life comes not without conflict with difficulties, IS IT REASONABLE TO SUPPOSE THAT THE ADVANTAGES OF THE FUTURE LIFE WILL ACCRUE TO US WITHOUT LIKE CONFLICT WITH DIFFICULTIES? Do nothing, and still inherit eternal life? It is not so cheap a thing as that. VI. Beyond this, THE BIBLE NOT ONLY POINTS OUT THE DIFFICULTIES THAT OPPOSE US—IT SHOWS HOW THE DIFFICULTIES ARE TO BE MET. In the lives of its heroes the Bible individualises every virtue, but in no one of them does every virtue appear till we come to the perfect man, Christ Jesus. He is the Master of goodness. And He says, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." If the way seem too full of obstructions, and old sins hedge us in, and our weakness is very great, He yet kindly says to us as to the apostle Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee," &c. (C. P. H. Nason, M.A.) *The struggle between good and evil in the human soul*:—We see what the author has produced, but we do not see what he has destroyed. The book comes out in fair copy, and we, looking upon the surface only, say, How well done! Who can tell what that "fair copy" cost? We see the picture hung upon the wall for exhibition, but we do not see how much canvas was thrown away, or how many outlines were discarded, or how many efforts were pronounced unworthy. We only see the last or best. So much is to be done in private with regard to learning to do well. We do not live our whole life in public. We make an effort in solitude: it is a failure; we throw it away; we acknowledge its existence to no one: still, we are acquiring skill—practice makes perfect—and when we do our first act of virtue in the public sight people may suppose that we are all but prodigies and miracles, so well was the deed done. Only God's eye saw the process which led up to it. This is a characteristic of Divine grace, that it sets down every attempt as a success, it marks every failure honestly done as a victory already crowned. So we are losing nothing even on the road. The very learning is itself an education; the very attempt to do, though we fail of doing, itself gives strength, and encouragement, and confidence. In learning to do well we assist the negative work of ceasing to do evil. (J. Parker, D.D.) "Learn to do well":—1. We must be doing; not cease to do evil, and then stand idle. 2. We must be doing good; the good which the Lord our God requires, and which will turn to a good account. 3. We must do it well, in a right manner, and for a right end. 4. We must learn to do well, we must take pains to get the knowledge of our duty, be inquisitive concerning it, in care about it; and accustom ourselves to it, that we may readily turn our hands to our work, and become masters of this holy art of doing well. (M. Henry.)

Ver. 18. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord.—*Further reasoning useless*:—"You have nothing more to say; all that you have already said has no value; reasoning has done its work; if reasoning is to rule, the case must go against you—there can be no other issue; but if yielding to the force of My reasoning, admitting it is true and fair, you confess yourselves convicted and condemned, then My mercy shall have its free, triumphant exercise upon you; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (W. Perkins.) *Reform and pardon*:—"Cease to do evil," &c. "Come now," &c. As early as the time of Isaiah we find the doctrine of the reformation of character dependent on forgiveness of sin distinctly taught. God's remedy for sin is the same in all ages. More prominence perhaps was given to the observance of the law in the

olden times, but not to the exclusion of grace; while in the New Testament grace appears the more prominent, but surely not to the exclusion of law. Neither in the one nor in the other was the law the condition of life. Both represent rather two different stages in the same covenant of grace—the one preparatory to the other. I. THE DEMAND HERE MADE. 1. The nature of the demand. It is for reformation of practice. "Wash you, make you clean," &c. This is the one Divine call to fallen man. In it everything is summed up. Made in sundry times and in divers manners, it ever remains substantially the same. The essence of moral beauty is goodness. Now goodness is not a quality deposited in the heart and there shut up; nor yet a something to put on as a garment at will. Rather it is the fruit of well-doing—the outgrowth of a righteous life. This is what God requires. This is to be the outcome of His redeeming love. But it cannot be accomplished without the co-operating activity of the human will. While the hands are besmeared with blood—the token of an immoral life—all natural refinements are of very little value in His sight. God is uncompromising here. Our greatest happiness is to do good. By doing good we shall find the highest good. This then is the great lesson of life—"Cease to do evil; learn to do well." 2. The word "learn" suggests a further thought, namely, the ground of this demand for reform. Man is evil and does evil. Even those who take the most sanguine view of human nature admit that there is something wrong in man's moral constitution. 3. To estimate rightly, however, this cause, we must consider the justice of the demand. It is God who makes it. But He could not have made it unless it were just to do so; nor would He have made it unless it were possible for man to meet it. II. HOW TO MEET GOD'S DEMAND. Where is the power to come from? Two answers only are possible: either it is inherent in man—this is the answer of nature; or it is supplied from without—this is the answer of grace. 1. The answer of nature. The belief in the ability of man to reform himself is founded either on ignorance of the real nature of his moral condition, as was the case in the pagan world, or on a deliberate refusal to recognise the truth when it is presented concerning that condition, as was the case in Judaism, and is the case at the present day with those who persuade themselves to a belief in the infinite intrinsic capability of human nature. Such is the pride of man, that he is ever slow to admit his own weakness. No, says the modern enthusiast: I regret the new light, for the demands it makes upon me are far too humiliating; I see no reason why a man, given the necessary favourable environments, should not, by a little effort, become perfectly good. Neither the religion of the pagan world, nor the philosophy of the Greeks, nor the power and civilisation of the Romans afford much ground for this belief in human nature. Wisdom then, under the most favourable circumstances, has failed to supply the necessary power to reform the world. Neither the enactments of a Roman senate, nor the Acts of a modern Parliament, nor any power of law, can make man good or even moral. Justice by itself, no more than wisdom, can remove the evil. But nowhere is the inadequacy of wisdom and of law to draw forth the power there is in man to reform his own character, better illustrated than in the case of the chosen people of Israel. They could boast of a wisdom more divine than that of the Greeks, a system of law superior to that of the Romans; while in virtue of their peculiar privileges as a nation they were in an incomparably more advantageous position than any other people, to succeed in their own strength, since they had a will to it. The very possession of their superior privileges, when they abused them, brought upon them a severer punishment. 2. The answer of grace. A power from without is absolutely necessary to enable man to meet the demand for reform. This power is God's forgiveness. "Come now, let us reason together," or better, "let us end the dispute": "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Although the demand precedes the offer of forgiveness, we are not to suppose that the work of reforming is to precede the enjoyment of the Divine gift. That indeed were impossible. As every duty of man is summed up in the command to reform, so all the riches of grace are summed up in the gift of pardon. But what peculiar virtue or power does pardon possess for producing a change of life? (1) It is an inducement to repentance, which is the first step in the reformation of character. It induces the resolution to reform, then becomes a power in the penitent man to help him to carry out his resolution. Pardon thus bridges the chasm which exists between a knowledge of duty and

the doing of it. (2) Another function of pardon, and, perhaps, the most important of all in the reformation of character, is that it removes, or rather is itself, as its name implies, the removal of sin. Pardon will convert the criminal into a saint. The pagan world knew nothing of this. It is "the power of God unto salvation." (*R. E. Morris, B.A.*) *God reasoning with man*.—The gracious promise that God will make us clean follows immediately on a most distinct commandment that we make ourselves clean. Does this seem to you inconsistent? The Jews are here exhorted to make themselves clean, by putting away from them the evil of their doings—ceasing to do evil, learning to do well. In fact, they are spoken to just as though it had wholly rested with themselves to acquire moral purity. 1. But I dare say they were ready with their objections: they would plead that it was really of no service to decry and exhort them in one and the same breath. "Of what use," they seem to say, "is it for us to make any effort, unable as we confessedly are to keep the law of God? And even were we able to obey for the future, is there not past disobedience for which we have yet to be reckoned with?" It is much in this way that men still receive exhortations to repentance and amendment; for such exhortations belong to the Gospel as much as to the law. And what do men say in reply? "The minister, teaching as he does the doctrine of human corruption and helplessness, it is absurd that he should tell men to repent. Is he not contradicting himself?" It was, we may believe, in the face of such arguments as these, that God challenged the Jews to controversy in the words of our text. "Is this the way," the Almighty seems to exclaim, "in which you treat My urgent admonitions to amendment? Come now, let us reason together!" But with what sort of reasoning are the objectors met? Perhaps you look for some subtle and ingenious argument. Yet you have no argument at all; you have only the promise—a most free and gracious one, but still only a promise—"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." But how does the promise do away with the objection? Only thus,—God states this to be His appointed way; He designs to save men in this manner, and therefore is this manner prescribed. The parties to whom He will impart additional grace are those who, in obedience to His call, are straining every nerve to forsake evil ways. It is not that they are able of themselves to work out a moral amendment; but it is that God intends to bestow on them the ability whilst they are making the effort. 2. And, perhaps, the Jews raised more general objections. They may have murmured at God's dealings, without selecting this or that particular instance, just as men are now disposed to arraign the appointments of Heaven as severe or unjust. The chapter in which our text occurs is full of indignant rebuke, and vehement threatenings, and it may not be imagined that a haughty people would fail to resent being so sternly addressed, and deny the equity of the judgments which the prophet foretold. If this be supposed, then God invites men to reason with Him on the goodness of His dealings. Come, let us clear the scene for the controversy. Come, all of you who think you are in any way hardly dealt with by God—that His dispensations are not such as might have been looked for—"Come, let us reason together." You need not, therefore, hesitate to utter plainly what you think, and to make statement of your grievances. Well, what have you to say? You urge, it may be, that your lot is one of poverty, that troubles are multiplied beyond your power of endurance, and temptations beyond your power of resistance. Some of you, perhaps, plead that, born as you are with corrupt tendencies, and placed where there is everything to incite and strengthen them, you have really no chance of keeping out of vice; that you are summoned to duties which are manifestly too arduous, and threatened, if you fail, with punishments which are manifestly excessive. You expect that God will take your complaints one by one, and either show them to be groundless, or, if He admit certain evils, show them more than counterpoised by blessings. Or, again, you expect that, as far as you have dwelt on trials peculiar to yourselves, God will patiently weigh them, prove them not excessive, or trace out beneficial results which they are calculated to produce. Well, this is very natural; I think it is just what would be, if the debate were with a mere human reasoner. But you will hearken in vain if you expect from God this careful exposure of the fallacy or falseness of your statements. There is heard nothing but the beautiful promise: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The right use of reason*:—The occurrence of the word "reason" warrants my speaking to you on the

right use of reason, and warning you against mistakes into which some are apt to fall. 1. If you hear some objections to Christianity which you are not able to answer, do not on that account conclude that they cannot be answered,—have the modesty to believe that others may be able to explain what is too hard for you. There is one evidence which I can promise you: if you read the Bible carefully and prayerfully the Bible will speak for itself. 2. And, besides the evidences of Christianity, reason has a great part to perform in regard to the doctrines. It would be as great a fallacy as could be alleged against the Gospel were it to be said that it does not commend itself to man as exactly what he needs, so that when he receives it it must be on the strength of external testimony and not at all in the consciousness of its meeting his necessities. I do not say that reason can trace in every point the connection between the death of Christ and the pardon of sin; but, at all events, reason can clearly make out that, because God's honour is provided for by the sacrifice of Calvary, and that this sacrifice must have been of so stupendous a value as to render possible the salvation of every human being,—there is, therefore, nothing to shrink from in the challenge of our text. I am jealous for reason; I will not, indeed, burn an idolatrous incense before reason; as though I held it sufficient for man's guidance, wanderer as he is in a darkened world; but let reason keep her right province, and in place of jostling with revelation, she will put revelation on a throne, and then reverently and submissively prostrate herself before it. For it is quite wretched to think how many a man loses his soul because he will not humble his reason. The directions are very plain; do not puzzle yourselves with any difficulties; the directions are—"Cease to do evil, learn to do well." Make a beginning. Many a man loses his soul by neglecting to act at once on some truth which has been brought home to his conscience. (*Ibid.*) *Religion rational*:—I. Take that basal truth which lies at the bottom of all reasonable religion—**THE BEING OF GOD**. The doctrine of the existence of God is reasonable. To believe that there is no self-conscious power behind the world to account for it, is irrational. It argues nothing that all minds do not see God behind nature; all minds do not see the beauty of art; all ears are not ravished with music. II. Again, we are living under a **MORAL GOVERNMENT** that is reasonable, one that can be defended and rested in. A moral government is here, which brings evil to its doom, and makes right safe and successful in the long run. It is rational, and can be defended, as it can be understood. All sin is irrational and utterly indefensible. III. Take again some of the **FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS OF SUPERNATURAL RELIGION**. 1. The doctrine of the incarnation is reasonable. Whether the incarnation is or is not reasonable depends upon your conception of God. If He is like men generally, a sort of incarnate selfishness, out of sympathy with suffering, indifferent to the miseries of the world, then the incarnation is unreasonable. But if God is love, and loves His children as we love ours, then the incarnation is reasonable, it is inevitable. 2. Then again His life in the flesh is rational. The Gospels narrate just what we might expect God to do if He came here. 3. Then it was reasonable that He should die. The principle was in the heart of God from all eternity. The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. Sacrifice was not foreign to the nature of God and suddenly invoked for a specific occasion or emergency; it was eternal with Him. The atonement is the most rational of all rational truths. The principle at its heart is at the heart of nature; it is at the heart of humanity. It is the condition on which rests the world's best life. 4. And the same can be claimed for the resurrection. The resurrection of Christ is a rational doctrine. It is the fitting climax to the life behind it, to the mission upon which He came. It was not fitting in the nature of things that death should hold in its grip such a life. It was due to the majesty of truth and virtue that such vindication should be appealed to. IV. Turn now to some of the **PRACTICAL REQUIREMENTS** of the Biblical religion. 1. Take that initial requirement of faith. Faith is reasonable. The best things are out of sight. We rise toward our highest possibilities only as we live by the unseen. 2. Repentance is a reasonable demand. 3. Closely connected with faith and repentance is confession. Confession of sin is rational, but so is the confession of Jesus Christ. 4. The duties of Christianity are reasonable. Prayer is a rational exercise of the soul. If we have a Father in heaven it is reasonable that we should come into touch with Him. And so of the means of grace in their entirety. The use of the means of grace is reasonable and right. Effects come through well-defined causes always and everywhere. The use of the Church to the utmost of its power to serve us

is a rational procedure. We have no great saints among those who ignore the Church of Jesus Christ. There is one conclusion: a set of opinions and beliefs that will not bear the test of reason had better be abandoned. A life that you cannot defend and justify had better be given up. We had better put our life on a basis that can be justified at every point. (*S. H. Howe.*) *God's argument with man*:—It has been pointed out to us that in the opening verses of Isaiah's book we seem to be present in a Law Court, at some Assize, and it is a Crown case that is on. And the Crown is present in person to argue and plead its own cause. God and His people Israel are the parties concerned, and God is heard in argument establishing the charge He makes, sweeping away utterly the pleas and excuses that are offered, until in this verse He seems to sum up the position, and the case comes to a most wonderful and unexpected and Divine conclusion. The people are brought in guilty on every count. Any attempt at justifying their conduct but makes it worse, and covers them with darker guilt. The case has gone so clearly against them, their arguments have proved so utterly worthless, the verdict is so certain, that we are almost waiting in silence for the dread sentence to be uttered. But lo! instead of the sentence of condemnation and punishment, pardon, perfect and complete, is offered. I have given you the case of God *versus* Israel, but it is a typical one repeated from age to age. It is equally the case of God *versus* man, God *versus* the sinner. It is a case in which we are not spectators, we are ourselves the defendants. God is here in argument with us, in argument against us, and He sums up the whole by the gracious declaration, "Admit the force of My reasoning, yield yourselves to it, confess yourselves convicted and condemned, and My mercy shall have its free and triumphant exercise upon you." (*W. Perkins.*) *The reasoning God*:—God reasons with man—that is the first article of religion with Isaiah. God addresses man's mind, intelligence, conscience. There are two great falsehoods in the world about God. I. That He is too great to reason with man; that He never gives any reason for anything He commands or does. 2. That God Himself is not a reasonable Being at all. It is a falsehood not openly declared in so many words, but a practice adopted in the lives of men. Men act as though they believe they could impose upon God. Let us try to follow God's reasoning in this chapter. There is a threefold basis of reasoning laid down. I. God reasons with man on THE BASIS OF MAN'S WHOLE LIFE. God said to man, "Come, let us reason together." "Very well," says man, "let this be the ground of our reasoning. Look at my life as it lies within the circle of its religious action and exercises, the sacrifices I bring to you, the incense I offer, the fasts I make. Let us reason on that basis, let us take our stand there." And as you will see in this chapter, God utterly rejects reasoning like this, and says, "No, no; I must deal with you on the basis of your whole life, not any limited and selected part of it which you choose to present and urge." Now there is great significance in this connection in the opening words of this chapter. God cries out to earth and heaven, and says, "These are the only limits of man's life I can recognise—the earth on which he walks, on the surface of which everything is done, the heavens over his head, which look down upon every transaction of his life; that is the basis of My reasoning, and that alone." It is well for us to remember this, for to-day men are trying continually to reason with God on some narrow chosen ground of their own. II. God reasons with men on THE BASIS OF HIS OWN FATHERHOOD. You will see how in this chapter He reminds all men of it, gives men proofs of it, tells men He has fulfilled it in relation to them. "Admit," He says, "My Fatherhood, and what does your life look like in the light of it? How unnatural and base it becomes. You sink below the brute." This is God's reasoning, and who of us can stand against it? III. God reasons with man on THE BASIS OF SIN'S RESULTS. He says, "You have rebelled against Me. Has it justified itself in its success?" And God gives the answer in searching and terrible words. "Why should ye be stricken any more?" &c. (vers. 5-8). He points them to the terrible and pitiful results which have come to pass for the individual and the nation through their disobedience towards God; and He challenges them, and says, "Now, look at it as I have reasoned it out with you." This is God's argument still. If we would listen, we might hear His voice in His Word, and in our consciences, saying, "Tell me, O men and women who are living without Me and in sin, what good has your sin ever done you?" There is no answer. And so we are led to the crisis of my text. We seem to be in the presence of a great dilemma. Either God must abate His claims, lower

His righteousness, repeal His law, make terms with the rebels and condone their rebellion, or else logic must rule, justice must have its way. The first of these we know God cannot do. It would wreck His universe if God declined from the absolute right, it would bring ruin and shame wherever created and finite beings are found. If that be impossible, what remains? Oh, there seems to be an awful moment between that first clause of the text and what follows. "Come now, let us bring our reasoning to an end. There is nothing more to be said. The case has gone against you; all your arguments have fallen to the ground." What remains? We wait to hear, and instead of the dread sentence of wrath and judgment come the words of mercy: "Though your sins be as scarlet," &c. Right in between the eternal and infinite righteousness and the sinner's doom mercy breaks in, pardon perfect and complete. So great the change that when a man feels the pardon in his heart, he can turn his face and address himself hopefully to that great ideal of life which the law of God presents. "Wash you, make you clean," &c. And then, the soul within us rises up and asks, "Why is this, if God be infinitely reasonable, if He reasons with such force and conclusion, why does He not follow out His reasoning to its logical conclusion? Why does He spare and pardon the sinner taken red-handed in his sin?" Why, simply because there is something more scarlet than the scarlet of a sinner's sin, that covers the sinner's sin, and makes God's pardon a just and rightful thing. "There is a fountain filled with blood," &c. (*Ibid.*) *Men invited to reason with God*:—1. God is a moral agent. That He has moral character is sufficiently manifest from the revealed fact that man is made in His image. 2. God is also a good Being—not only moral, but holy and wise. He always acts upon good and sufficient reasons, and never irrationally and without reasons for His conduct. 3. God is always influenced by good reasons. Good reasons are more sure to have their due and full weight on His mind than on the mind of any other being in the universe. I. WHAT IS THAT TO WHICH THIS TEXT INVITES US? "Come now, and let us reason together." But what are we to "reason" about? The passage proceeds to say, "Though your sins be as scarlet," &c. In the previous context God makes grievous charges against men. Now, He comes down to look into their case and see if there be any hope of repentance, and proceeds to make a proposal—"Come," &c. Produce your strong reasons why your God should forgive your great sin. II. The invitation, coupled with the promises annexed, implies that THERE ARE GOOD AND SUFFICIENT REASONS WHY GOD SHOULD FORGIVE THE PENITENT. Sinners may so present their reasons before God as to ensure success. III. The nature of the case shows that WE ARE TO ADDRESS OUR REASONS AND MAKE OUR APPEAL, NOT TO JUSTICE BUT TO MERCY. We are to present reasons which will sanction the exercise of mercy. (*C. G. Finney.*) *Reasons for pardon and sanctification*:—I. THE REASONS WHICH MAY BE OFFERED WHY GOD SHOULD PARDON OUR SIN. 1. You may plead that you entirely justify God in all His course. You must certainly take this position, for He cannot forgive you so long as you persist in self-justification. You know beyond all question that all the wrong is on your side and all the right on God's side. You might and should know also that you must confess this. You need not expect God to forgive you till you do. 2. You may come to God and acknowledge that you have no apology whatever to make for your sin. 3. You must also be ready to renounce all sin, and be able in all honesty to say this before God. 4. You must unconditionally submit to His discretion. Nothing less than this is the fitting moral position for a sinner towards God. 5. You may plead the life and death of Jesus Christ as sufficient to honour the law and justify God in showing mercy. Pardon must not put in peril the holiness or justice of Jehovah. The utmost expression He could make, or needs to make, of His holiness and justice, as touching the sins of man, is already made in the death of Christ, "whom God did Himself set forth to be a propitiation," &c. 6. You may also urge His professed love for sinners. 7. He has also invited you to come and reason with Him. Therefore He has fully opened the way for the freest and fullest communion on this point. You may also plead His honour; that, seeing He is under oath, and stands committed before the universe, you may ask Him what He will do for His great name if He refuse to forgive a repentant and believing sinner. You may plead all the relations and work of Christ. You may say to Him, Lord, will it not induce other sinners to come to Thee? Will it not encourage Thy Church to labour and pray more for salvation? Will not Thy mercy shown to me prove a blessing to thousands? You

may urge the influence of refusing to do so. You may suggest that His refusal is liable to be greatly misapprehended; that it may be a scandal to many; and that the wicked will be emboldened to say that God has made no such exceeding great and precious promises. You may urge that there is joy in heaven, and on earth also, over every sinner pardoned and saved. You may urge, that, since God loves to make saints happy in this world, He surely will not be averse to giving you His Spirit and putting away your sins—it will cause such joy in the hearts of His dear people. You may also plead the great abhorrence you have of living in sin, as you surely will unless He forgives you. Tell Him, moreover, how wretched you are, and must be in your sins, if you cannot find salvation, and what mischief you will be likely to do everywhere, on earth and in hell, if you are not forgiven and renewed in holiness.

II. THE REASONS WHICH MAY BE URGED BY THE PARDONED SINNER WHO PLEADS FOR ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION.

1. You may plead your present justification. 2. You may plead your relation to Him, to the Church, and to the world—that, having now been justified and adopted into His family, you are known as a Christian and a child of God, and it therefore becomes of the utmost consequence that you should have grace to live so as to adorn your profession, and honour the name by which you are called. You may also plead your great responsibilities, and the weight of those interests that are depending upon your spiritual progress. Plead the desire you feel to be completely delivered from sin. Ask Him if He has not given you this very desire Himself, and inquire if He intends to sharpen your thirst and yet withhold the waters of life. Plead also His expressed will. Appeal to His great love to you, as manifested in what Christ has done, &c. Tell Him how you have stumbled many by your falls into sin, and have given great occasion of reproach to the cause you love; tell Him you cannot live so. Tell Him of your willingness to make any sacrifice; that you are willing to forego your good name, and to lay your reputation wholly upon His altar. Be sure to remind Him that you intend to be wholly disinterested and unselfish in this matter; you ask these things not for your own present selfish interest; you are aware that a really holy life may subject you to much persecution. You want to represent Him truly. Then tell Him of your great weakness, and how you entirely distrust yourself. Tell Him you shall go away greatly disappointed if you do not receive the grace you ask and need. Remarks—1. Whenever we have considered the reasons for God's actions till they have really moved and persuaded us, they will surely move Him. God is not slow—never slower than we, to see the reasons for showing mercy and for leading us to holiness. 2. Many fail in coming to God because they do not treat Him as a rational being. 3. Many do not present these reasons, because in honesty they cannot. 4. When we want anything of God, we should always consider whether we can present good reasons why it should be granted. 5. All who are in any want are invited to come and bring forward their strong reasons. 6. Of all beings, God is most easily influenced to save. He is by His very nature disposed to save the lost. (*Ibid.*)

*The cultivation of the reason* :—“What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god!” In this well-known panegyric on man the great dramatist puts the reason foremost: “How noble in reason!” and, perhaps, the reason is the prime dignity of man. It is by it, more than ought else, that man is separated from the inferior animals. It is by it that he rules over them. It is by the development of reason that one race outstrips another in the course of progress, and this is the accepted standard by which we measure greatness between man and man. Therefore the cultivation of the reason must be a subject of supreme and even religious interest to all who wish to attain to a noble and well-developed manhood. (*J. Stalker, D.D.*) *The reason* :—I. THE WORK OF THE REASON. 1. The reason is the faculty by which, from things already known, we advance to conclusions which these imply, but which, till the act of reason is performed, are unknown; so the work of the reason is a kind of creative work, and do you not think there is an inkling of that in the kind of exultation with which we complete any difficult act of reasoning, or even hear a speaker completing it? I think every school-boy feels a touch of this exultation when he sees a sum at which he is working coming right, and every housewife feels it when she sees that the two sides of her accounts are about to balance exactly. In a court of law, at the conclusion of the evidence the facts often appear to the jury a confused mass, pointing in

particular direction ; but when a skilful advocate rises, and taking hold of the evidence, separating one thing from another, and laying this beside that, shows that from the confused mass there emerges a necessary, irresistible conclusion, how delightful it is to listen to that. The whole science of mathematics is deduced from a few simple axioms. To these an ordinary mind might give assent, without observing that anything might be implied ; but the practised intellect deducts from them, step by step, a magnificent system of truth. Thus, the reason, bringing its forces to bear on the raw materials of knowledge supplied by the lower faculties, infers from them a more advanced and lofty knowledge of its own.

2. But now, I would like to give a clearer and simpler explanation of what its work is. The reason may be called the faculty of comparison, or the faculty by which we perceive the connections or relations of things. These relations between things with which the reason has to deal are of different kinds, but of whatever kind they are, the reason has to deal with them. (1) One of them is that of means and ends. Something requires to be done, but how ? It is the work of the reason to find that out. (2) Another relation between things which is still more important for the reason, is that of cause and effect. The word "why" is a great word of the reason, and its sister word is "because." Wherever "why" and "because" are coming into speech, there reason is at work. (3) But this process can be turned the other way. Instead of looking at phenomena, and asking how they come there, we can say, "Given certain things, what will be the consequence ? Suppose there are certain conditions, what will follow from them ?" If fire and gunpowder are brought into contact, we know what will follow. If people live in a polluted atmosphere, we know what the result will be to their bodies. But we cannot deal much with such relations without this question arising, How do these relations come to subsist between things ? (4) One of the greatest triumphs of the reason is to find out the laws of nature, *e.g.*, the law of gravitation. Newton discovered that law, and applied it first to some trivial things ; then he and others applied it to more distant and sublime things, until we now know it to be a law prevailing in the whole system of things, and among the bodies that roll in space ; but how comes it that all the bodies in earth and heaven are directed by this law ? As the mind thus moves through nature it finds that it cannot go arbitrarily. The divisions which it makes are in nature before it finds them. In short, nature is intelligent—aye, and it is moral, because nature is seen to be so arranged as to encourage certain lines of action, and to discourage certain other lines of action. The stars in their courses, so to speak, fight against evil and on the side of righteousness. And does not that look as if behind nature there were some One who is intelligent, and who, because He orders nature so as to make for righteousness, is good ?

II. THE CULTIVATION OF THE REASON. This faculty is bestowed on different individuals in very different degrees. To those intended by the Creator to be leaders of their fellows, it is given in liberal measure. There are multitudes of others whose ideas are habitually vague and feeble. Reason may be given in different forms, some of which are more conscious, and some more unconscious. Reason in the unconscious form, we call by such names as tact, or common sense. The science of logic has for its aim the making visible to the eye the process through which the mind passes in reasoning, whether it is conscious of this process or not, and at the same time it makes visible, so as to show their absurdity, the different kinds of fallacious reasoning ; and there can be no doubt that the study of that science is one of the best means of cultivating the mind.

III. THE RELIGIOUS USE OF REASON. The marks of God are on all things that He has made, and by collecting these from all places where they can be seen, the reason apprehends His eternal power and Godhead, and never is the reason of man so nobly employed as when thus it is collecting the indications of God, so as to convert them into a correct and impressive conception of what He is, or when it is vindicating His existence and His character against the attacks of unbelief. Our text says, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord," and one of the commonest complaints of the Bible is that people will not reason. "Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider." That is the complaint all through the prophets. It is always taken for granted that if people only would think, they would love and obey God. One of the commonest names in the Bible for sin is folly. At the present time we have need of a reasoned Christianity, because Christianity is tending far too much to sentimentalism and sensationalism. Christian work is becoming so absorbing that men have not leisure to think, and if Christians do not think, Christianity will before long suffer



the consequences, and they will be hard to bear. (*Ibid.*) *The Gospel of pardoning mercy as preached by the prophets of the kingdom* :—Analyse carefully the picture of the sins which the prophet sets before his people, as preliminary to his glorious, full and free offer of mercy. 1. A marked feature of the portraiture, here drawn, is that they are sinners under the light of Jehovah's special revelations and appointed ordinances. 2. These sinners are such in face of every obligation of love and gratitude to Jehovah, arising out of peculiar blessings and privileges. 3. Yet in the midst of all these mercies, sin everywhere abounds. The public men and the people alike are corrupt. 4. All this wickedness clothes itself in the garb of religion. Having considered to whom he speaks, let us consider what it is the prophet says to all such. It embraces three points chiefly. I. A PROPOSITION TO STOP AND REASON THE MATTER WITH JEHOVAH. The proposition is very suggestive; both of the cause why men continue to live in sin; and of the means and process whereby Jehovah would bring them back to Himself. The grand cause of the continuance in sin is that men will not reason of the matter. It is not that they do not know enough; but they do not reason concerning what they do know. II. THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF THE PARLEY—sin and its consequences. III. THE REMEDY FOR SIN—its effectiveness, certainty, and readiness. (*S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Pardon for aggravated sin* :—“Though your sins be as scarlet, and red like crimson.” The critics tell us that one of the terms here refers to the outward appearance, glaring, attracting and fixing the attention; the other, from a root signifying double-dipped, refers to the ineffaceable stain of sin upon the soul; a stain that no rain, nor sunshine, nor dew can ever wash out, or bleach. The meaning is, however aggravated your sins may be. What, then, are some of the circumstances that aggravate sin? Sins are aggravated—1. When committed against special light and knowledge. 2. When committed against special obligations of gratitude. 3. From the social position of those who sin, or their relative position towards others, or their peculiar gifts and endowments which give them influence over others. 4. As committed against special covenants and vows. (*Ibid.*) *God reasoning with man* :—This text strikes at the root of the wicked notion that man is under an arbitrary government, that he is a mere slave, or a mere machine, and that he is controlled a part from principles that are moral. He is addressed almost as the equal of the Almighty. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *God reasoning with man* :—The proposition comes from God. It does not arise from the human side at all. 1. God having made this proposition proceeds upon the assumption that He knows Himself to be right in this case. The man who knows himself to be in the right is always the first to make the noblest propositions, and to offer as many concessions as are possible without impairing the law of absolute right, truth, and propriety. If amongst ourselves we do so, it is in an infinitely higher degree true in the case of Almighty God. He makes the proposition to His rebel. This proposition is not only the proof of the grace of God; but that grace itself is the vindication of His righteousness. He knows He is right in the court of reason; that if the case be fully stated the criminal will convict himself, he will burn with shame, and cry out for the judgment that is just. We are not wrong partially, not wrong here and there, with little spots of light and blue between the errors, but we are wrong altogether,—shamefully, infamously wrong! 2. Yet God knowing this, asks us to reason the case with Him. Showing us, in the next place, that God proceeds upon the assumption that man ought to be prepared to vindicate his conduct by reasons. God says, “Why do you do this? Let Me know your reasons for having done so. Will you state your case to Me? I give you the opportunity of stating your own case in your own terms.” Observe how wonderfully influential, when rightly accepted, is a proposition of this kind. If men would think more they would sin less. Logic is against you as well as theology. Common sense is against you as well as spiritual revelation. This is the strength and the majesty of the Christian faith, that it challenges men by the first principles of reasoning to defend themselves, as sinners, before the Almighty. 3. But there is something to be remembered at this point. If God could trifle with righteousness in making a case up with us, His own throne would be insecure, His own heaven would not be worth having. In taking care of righteousness He is taking care of us. Herein do men greatly err. Talking upon religious questions, they say, “Why does not God come down and forgive us all?” That is precisely what God Himself wants to do. Only even God cannot forgive, until we ourselves want to be forgiven. 4. With all this before me I am driven to this conclusion, that now the sinner is left absolutely without excuse. (*Ibid.*) *God reasoning*

*with man* :—I. THE PARTIES INVITED. Who are these? They are those of whom it is said, "their sins are as scarlet, and red like crimson"—terms which clearly convey the idea that there are no sins so heinous that they may not be forgiven, and no men so wicked that they may not be saved. These terms designate bright, glowing, easily-seen colours, teaching most explicitly, in their present connection, that sin, though so large as to fill the public eye, nevertheless may be pardoned. Indeed, I cannot help thinking that the language of the prophet here has also a symbolical meaning, and that as crimson is the colour of the blood, there is set before us the thought that not merely the flagrant transgressor, but the atrocious criminal—the man whose hands have been imbued in the blood of his fellow-man—is declared to be within the reach of the Divine mercy. And I am fortified in this persuasion by the words of the Master, "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." II. THE INVITATION GIVEN THEM. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord." What forcibly impresses us in this statement is not only the all-embracing sweep of the Divine mercy, but the singular way in which this mercy is offered. The usual manner in which a superior makes known his will to an inferior is by a command. The master gives his orders to his servant. The parent commands his child, and the language of royal personages is never the language of solicitation. But we have here the King of kings, and Lord of lords, very unlike man, not employing force, authority, command, but condescending to reason with His creatures, and trying, as it were, by argument and persuasion, to induce them to accept His grace. III. THE AUTHORITY ON WHICH THE INVITATION RESTS. When good news is brought to us we sometimes hesitate about receiving it. And why? Because we think it too good to be true, and are not satisfied of the entire truthfulness and fidelity to fact of the person who brings it. When it was told Jacob that Joseph, his beloved son, whom he had long mourned as dead, was alive and well, and governor of Egypt, his heart fainted, "for he believed them not." But here, the authority is as unassailable as the invitation is cordial, and it is issued on the authority of God Himself. IV. THE PERIOD WHEN THE INVITATION IS GIVEN. All privileges urged upon your acceptance in the Bible are strictly applicable and limited to the very time when they are offered to you. That mental and moral inaction, so fatal to our spiritual prospects, gets no countenance from the Word of God. On the contrary, it is always denounced as fraught with the greatest dangers to our souls. (*J. Imrie, M.A.*) *Reasoning with God* :—From this passage we infer—I. THAT MAN, THOUGH DEPRAVED, HAS STILL A FACULTY TO REASON WITH GOD. 1. This power exists as an unquestionable fact. It is a fact—(1) Involved in the existence of a revelation. Would Infinite Reason appeal to us unless we had the power of appreciation? (2) Implied in the considerations addressed to our reason. The Bible abounds in considerations addressed to us as to the wisdom and the folly, the right and the wrong, of our conduct. (3) Attested by the universal consciousness of humanity. 2. This power exists as the chief glory of human nature. What is the chief glory of human nature in itself considered? Not its faculties of contrivance and logical investigation, as you see them developed in the arts and sciences. But man's power to reason with the Infinite—to take the thoughts of God and to feel their power. 3. This power exists, notwithstanding the devastations of depravity. II. THAT MAN, THOUGH DEPRAVED, HAS NOW AN OPPORTUNITY OF REASONING WITH GOD. Whilst all sinners for ever will have the power of moral reasoning, only now on earth are they invited to a merciful conference with God. This invitation implies—1. The existence of an extraordinary principle in the Divine government of God. Antecedent reasoning would lead us to conclude that whenever a creature rebelled against the righteous government of his Creator, banishment from His holy presence would be the result. "The angels that kept not their first estate," &c. God governs humanity through the mediation of Christ. 2. It denotes the astonishing condescension of God. III. THAT MAN, THOUGH DEPRAVED, BY RIGHTLY AVAILING HIMSELF OF THIS OPPORTUNITY, MAY BE ENTIRELY OLEANSSED OF HIS SINS. "Though your sins be as scarlet," &c. Notice—1. That sin has taken a very fast hold on human nature. How closely and firmly attached to human nature is sin! It has coloured not only the complexion, but the vital current, of man's life. Every thought, feeling, and expression, is tinged with the stain of sin. 2. That though it has taken this fast hold, it can be separated. The scarlet is not a part of the texture. So of sin. Though closely identified with human nature, it is not

of it. Human nature can exist without it, has existed without it, will exist without it. There is a moral chemistry that can take the scarlet and the crimson from the texture of human nature. 3. That right attention to God's reasoning will certainly and effectually remove the stain of sin. (*Homilist.*) *Desperate characters*:—I. I have to PUBLISH THE LORD'S INVITATION TO DESPERATE CHARACTERS. The invitation is to those whose sins are double-dyed scarlet and crimson in colour. 1. You have had pious parents. 2. You were once a member of a Christian congregation or Church. 3. I have to give the invitation to those whose sins have made them worse than beasts. 4. And to those who are "laden with iniquity." 5. And to those who are "corrupters" of others. 6. This all-embracing invitation is to those who have "forsaken the Lord." II. I am to give REASONS WHY DESPERATE CHARACTERS SHOULD ACCEPT THE INVITATION. 1. You say, "It is impossible for me to accept of it because my heart is perfectly hardened." Impossible! If your heart is hard, come and accept the invitation, because God has promised to take away the stony heart and to give you one of flesh. 2. Again, you say, "I cannot accept it, because I am so wicked." If you feel wicked it is God's Spirit showing His light in your soul in order that you may be led to the Cross of Jesus and have your sins washed as white as snow. 3. Then somebody else answers, "Well, I would accept it, but I have always failed." Though you have failed, yet come again, for our heavenly Father is noted for receiving sinners. 4. But another says, "Before I came to-night I said I would not be converted." Two men were bidden to do their lord's will. One of them said, "I will do it"; but he went away, and did it not. And the other was angry and exclaimed, "I will not do thy will," but after he had gone away he repented and went and did it. Copy the example of the latter. 5. Perhaps, somebody still answers, "You have not put your hand on me, for I am sunk in sin." The Bible tells me that no man can be sunk lower than the reach of the everlasting arms of God. Though you have lost your character, your honour, and your self-control, yet God invites you to be saved. III. AN EARNEST ENTREATY FOR YOU TO COME AT ONCE. (*W. Birch.*) *The Lord reasoning with sinners*:—Let us regard these words— I. AS ADDRESSED TO THOSE WHO ARE LIVING IN SIN. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord." Sinner, bring forth thy strong reasons; then hear the reasons of God. What plea will you make for not turning to God? 1. You say, perhaps, "This world is all I desire. I am well content with what it gives. Its gains and pleasures suit me well. I wish for nothing beyond. Why not leave me to follow my own way?" What says God in reply? "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof." 2. Or, wilt thou reason thus: "I have years yet before me. At a more convenient season I will seek God"? What does God answer? "Thou fool, this night, it may be, thy soul shall be required of thee." 3. Or, dost thou say in thine heart—"I hate the knowledge of God's ways. Religion is a weariness to me. I will go on as I am, and take the consequences"? Dost thou know the end of the terrors of the Lord? 4. Or, is it in thy thought to say to God, "Wherein have I sinned so much against Thee?" Behold, He answers thee: "I made thee, O man, and every power thou hast should be devoted to Me—thy life, thy health and strength, thy body and soul. Have these been devoted to Me? Has thy body been kept in soberness, temperance, and chastity? Hast thou always been led by My Spirit?" II. But the text is addressed, in its latter part more particularly, TO THOSE WHO KNOW THAT THEY HAVE DEEPLY SINNED AGAINST GOD, AND WOULD WILLINGLY, IF THEY DARED, RETURN TO HIM. What is the feeling of such? It may be, you are tempted to say, "There is no hope. My sin is too great to be forgiven." God's answer is, "Come now, and let us reason together," &c. Is it not well suited to your case? III. THE TEXT IS NOT WITHOUT ADMONITION AND COMFORT TO THE BELIEVING CHRISTIAN. (*E. Blencowe, M.A.*) *Forgiveness of sin*:—I. THE GRACIOUS CONDESCENSION AND BOUNDLESS LOVE OF GOD, IN ADDRESSING THIS INVITATION TO SINNERS. Even among friends, the offended party does not first display a disposition to be reconciled. He usually deems that the first overture should proceed from the offender. But behold the infinite condescension and compassion of the most high God toward sinful man. He does not wait till men come to a sense of their delinquencies. II. THE IMPORT OF THE INVITATION. What is this to which God calls you? He says, "Let us reason together." It seems to be an expression borrowed from courts of justice, and is tantamount to saying, "Let us hear the cause of the defendants." 1. The sinner must listen to the charge—to the grand indictment, that he may know both the extent of his guilt

and feel the hopelessness of his case. This charge is indeed heavy, but it must be heard. The law is holy. Let it operate on you as it did on Saul of Tarsus.

2. Observe, God is willing to hear your defence, if you can make one honestly and truly; but if not He will hear your confession. Which shall it be? III. GOD MAY BE CONSIDERED AS ADDRESSING THOSE WHO, WITH A CONVINCED AND BROKEN HEART, ARE AFRAID TO VENTURE BEFORE HIM, and who have the sentence of condemnation and death in themselves. IV. Let us complete the whole of this glorious theme of salvation, by calling upon you to observe, and admire, the great principle established by this text, that, **WHATEVER THE MAGNITUDE OF OUR SINS MAY BE, THEY DO NOT EXCLUDE US FROM THE BENEFITS OF THE DIVINE MERCY.** (*The Evangelist.*) *Pardoning mercy.*—The pardon of sin has been justly called “the life-blood of religion.” It is this which runs through all parts of the Scripture, like the blood in our veins, and is the foremost object in the glorious Gospel.

I. The first thing in the text is a **CHARGE IMPLIED**, and more particularly expressed, in the former verses of this chapter. The charge is sin—sin the most aggravated. Scarlet and crimson are colours far remote from white, which is the emblem of innocence, or righteousness. (Rev. xix. 8.) But here sinners are represented as in garments stained with blood. The bloody, murderous, destructive nature of sin may be intended. Sin has slain its millions. (Rom. v. 12.) Some understand by the word “scarlet,” double-dyed; as deeply tintured by sin as possible; as when any garment has been twice dyed, first in the wool, and again in the thread or piece. So great sinners are twice dyed, first in their corrupt nature, and then again in the long confirmed habits of actual transgression. It is absolutely necessary that each of us should personally know that this is his own case. II. **THE INVITATION.** True religion is the most reasonable thing in the world. 1. Is not self-preservation highly reasonable? We account it the first law of nature, and should blame the man who neglects it. Is a house on fire? Let the inhabitant escape for his life. 2. Is it not reasonable for a man to do well for himself? Yes; “Men will praise thee when thou doest well for thyself.” We commend the honest, ingenious, industrious tradesman. Is it reasonable for a man to mind his own business? Well, “one thing is needful”; the care of thy soul is the business of life (Luke x. 42). Is it reasonable to improve opportunities for business, as fairs and markets? Redeem then the time, and catch the golden opportunities of gain to thy soul. Is it reasonable to make a good bargain? The Christian makes the best in the world. Is it reasonable to cultivate friendship with the wise, the good, and the great? Oh, how wise to make Christ our Friend. 3. Is it not reasonable to believe the God of truth? The Word of God has every confirmation we could wish. 4. Is not love to God and man perfectly reasonable? This is the whole of our religion. Is it reasonable or not to love the Best of beings better than all other beings? III. **THE GRACIOUS PROMISE.** “Though your sins,” &c. The pardon of sin is the first thing in religion. It was the great business of Christ upon earth to procure it. The pardon of sin originates in the free mercy and sovereign grace of God, without respect to anything good in the creature. But we are not to expect pardon from an absolute God. Pardon is an act of justice as well as of mercy. Mercy on God’s part, but justice on account of Christ. Another thing is, that it is by faith alone we are made partakers of pardoning mercy. Notice, too, the perfection of pardon, which is expressed by making scarlet as snow, and crimson like wool. We are to understand this of the sinner, not of his sins. Pardon does not alter the nature, or lessen the evil of sin. (*G. Burder, D.D.*) *The reasonableness of the offers and terms of the Gospel.*—

I. **THE OFFERS OF THE GOSPEL.** The Almighty here proposes completely to take away the guilt of sin, and consequently to remit the punishment due to it. There are various kinds and degrees of sin; sins of different colours and complexions, more or less aggravated, more or less strengthened by habit and indulgence. But the offer of pardon extends to all alike. Is not this a blessing peculiarly adapted to our need? Nothing but a gratuitous remission of sin can suit our case. God deals with us in the most reasonable manner, and leaves us without excuse, if we attend not to His offer. II. **THE TERMS OF THE GOSPEL.** 1. With respect to faith. Is not this a perfectly reasonable requisition? Since God has provided a salvation for you, has He not a right to stipulate the means by which you shall apply to yourself the benefit of that salvation? And what easier, simpler way could He have devised? 2. As to repentance. Is there anything unreasonable in this requisition? Can it be considered as a hard condition that we should relinquish those practices which cost the Son of God His life; and which, if He

had not died for them, would have cost us our souls? If religion be in itself so reasonable a service, how can you act so unreasonably as not to choose and follow it? (*E. Cooper.*) *Self-scrutiny in God's presence*.—I. THE DUTY OF EXAMINING OUR MORAL CHARACTER AND CONDUCT ALONG WITH GOD. There are always two beings who are concerned with sin—the being who commits it, and the Being against whom it is committed. Such a joint examination as this produces a very keen sense of the evil and guilt of sin. When the soul is shut up with the Holy One of Israel there are great searchings of heart. Another effect is to render our views discriminating. Objects are seen in their true proportions and meanings.

II. THERE IS FORGIVENESS WITH GOD. We deduce the following practical directions. 1. In all states of religious anxiety, we should betake ourselves instantly and directly to God. 2. We should make a full and plain statement of everything to God. (*W. G. T. Shedd, D.D.*) *Forgiveness*.—In this passage—

I. THERE IS ASSUMED THE EXISTENCE OF ENORMOUS GUILT. The aggravations of sin are to be found in their highest form where there are instituted powerful means to deter from its perpetration, and where yet it is committed in spite of restraints eminently calculated to direct the soul to goodness. We turn at once to the country in which we dwell, to find the sins which are as the “scarlet” or the “crimson” dye. Ours is a country, signally favoured with means the best adapted to lead from transgression, and excite to obedience.

II. THERE IS PROMISED THE BESTOWMENT OF PARDONING MERCY. 1. It might indeed have been imagined, that, after such repeated accusations of iniquity, there would succeed only a threatening of doom. Is God not just? Is He not jealous of His glory? 2. Such a promise as this is made in perfect consistency with the immutable justice and holiness of the Divine nature. 3. It will be proper to observe the manner in which the promised blessing is bestowed. God communicates forgiveness through the atoning sacrifice of His Son. 4. In order to secure the personal application of the sacrifice of Christ, there must be, in ourselves, the production of certain emotions and principles, by the operation of the Spirit of God. 5. Let us further observe, the sufficiency by which this promised blessing of forgiveness is characterised.

III. THERE IS DESIRED THE EXERCISE OF WISE CONSIDERATION. (*James Parsons.*) *Divine expostulation*.—I. THE CHARACTERS WHO ARE HERE ADDRESSED. We see the Jews charged—1. With a gross departure from God. 2. With carrying their abominations into the religious services of the sanctuary. II. THE CHARACTER IN WHICH GOD IS HERE REPRESENTED BY THE PROPHET—that, namely, of the most amazing condescension. Various are the methods in which God may be said to reason with us. 1. By family afflictions. 2. By personal inflictions. 3. By awful providences. 4. Through the ministry of His Word. For what does God condescend to reason with us? For the bestowment of pardon. Your reason, in its highest powers, is challenged. (*J. Gaskin, M.A.*) *The silver trumpet*.—I. Our text is addressed to SINNERS OF THE DEEPEST DYE. 1. In the second verse you will perceive that the text was addressed to senseless sinners—so senseless that God Himself would not address them in expostulation, but called upon the heavens and the earth to hear His complaints. 2. The text is given to ungrateful sinners. “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me.” Oh, how many of us come under this description! 3. By reading in the third verse, you will perceive again that the text is addressed to men who are worse than beasts. None of us would keep a horse for twenty years, if it never worked but only sought to injure us; and yet there are men whom God has kept these forty and fifty years, put the breath into their nostrils, the bread into their mouths, and the clothes upon their backs, and they have done nothing but curse at Him, speak ill of His service, and do despite to His laws. 4. They were a people “laden with iniquity.” 5. They were not only loaded with sin themselves, but they were teachers in transgressions. “Children that are corrupters.” 6. The blessed text we have on hand is addressed to men upon whom all manner of afflictions had been lost and thrown away. It is a great aggravation of our sin when we sin under the rod. 7. The invitation is sent to men who appeared to have been totally depraved from the sole of the foot even to the head. II. The text presents us with REASONING OF THE MOST PREVALENT POWER. III. The words of this text contain a PROMISE OF PARDON OF THE FULLEST FORCE. “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; and though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” These colours are selected because of their exceeding brilliancy. Now some sins are striking, glaring sins; you

cannot help seeing them; and the sinner himself is compelled to confess them. But the Hebrew word conveys the idea of doubly dyed—what we call ingrained colours—when the wool has lain so long in the dye that it cannot be got out; though you wash or wear it as long as you please, you must destroy the fabric before you can destroy the colour. Yet here is the promise of full pardon for glaring and for ingrained lusts. And note how the pardon is put—“they shall be as snow”—pure white virgin snow. But snow soon loses its whiteness, and therefore it is compared to the whiteness of the wool washed and prepared by the busy housewife for her fair white linen. You shall be so cleansed, that not the shadow of a spot, nor the sign of a sin, shall be left upon you. When a man believes in Christ, he is in that moment, in God’s sight, as though he had never sinned in all his life. **IV. THE TIME** mentioned in the text, which is of the **MOST SOLEMN SIGNIFICANCE**. “Now.” (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Reasons for parting with sin*:—It is the great joy of our heart that we do not labour in vain, nor spend our strength for nought. Still, there is a bass to this music: there are some, and these not a few, who remain unblest where others are saved. It is obvious that something hinders. What can it be? The real reason why men who have an earnest desire to be saved, and have sincere religiousness of a certain sort, do not find peace, is this, because they are in love with sin. “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord.” Let us have this matter out, and hear what is to be urged in favour of God’s demands. **I. IT IS A REASONABLE THING THAT SIN SHOULD BE RENOUNCED.** 1. Because it is most inconsistent to suppose that pardon can be given while we continue in sin. How could the Judge of all the earth thus wink at iniquity? Only fancy what the effect would be upon our country if a proclamation were issued, that henceforth all manner of offences against the law would be immediately forgiven, and men might continue still to perpetrate them. And what would be the effect upon the sinner himself if such could be the case? Say to a man—you are not to be punished for your sin, and yet you may live in it still, and what worse turn could you do him? Here is a bleeding wound in my arm; the surgeon says he will allow it still to bleed, but he will remove my sense of faintness and pain. I would decline to have it so. It is unreasonable that you should expect that God will allow you to remain impenitent, and yet give you the kiss of forgiving love. It would be neither honourable to God, nor good to your fellow-men, nor really beneficial to yourself. 2. Is it not reasonable, too, that we should part with sin, because sin is so grievous to God? 3. Should it not be given up because of the mischief it has already done to man? 4. Remember, also, that unless sin is repented of and forsaken no act of yours, nor ceremony of religion, nor hearing, nor praying can possibly save you. **II. Let me now go further, and declare that IT IS MOST REASONABLE THAT MAN SHOULD SEEK PURITY OF HEART.** You ask for forgiveness, and in return God says to you, “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow.” Is there not reason in this command? You practically say, “Lord, enter into amity and peace with me.” The Lord replies, “There is no peace to the wicked: only as you become renewed in nature can there be any peace between us.” Do you dare to ask God to commune with you while you are a lover of sin? **III. IF THE SINNER REMAIN IMPENITENT IT IS MOST UNREASONABLE FOR HIM TO LAY THE BLAME OF HIS NOT BEING FORGIVEN UPON THE CHARACTER OF GOD, FOR GOD IS READY TO FORGIVE.** **IV. IT IS A REASONABLE THING THAT GOD SHOULD DEMAND WITH THIS PARDON OBEDIENCE TO HIS COMMAND.** And what is that command? It is, “If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel the sword shall devour you.” Obedient to what? Obedient to all Gospel precepts. (*Ibid.*) *Scarlet sinners pardoned and purified*:—It is a wonderful instance of Divine compassion that God should be willing to hold a conference with man. Of course, the first person to ask for such a conference ought to have been the offending party. But, instead of man seeking God, and pleading, with bitter tears, “Lord, pitifully hear me; graciously listen to me, and forgive me”; it is God who comes seeking man. Surely it should be a great joy to a man to hear that God invites him to a conference; he should take heart of hope from that fact. God meets man in two ways: first, by the perfect pardon of sin, and, next, by a clean deliverance from the power of sin. **I. First, I will suppose that I have before me someone who says, “MY SINS ARE AS GLARING AS SCARLET.” How can I ever be the friend of God as my sins are so prominent?**

Some people's sins are of a drab colour, you might not notice them ; other people's sins are a sort of whitey-brown, you would scarcely perceive them ; but my sins are scarlet, that is a colour that is at once observed. What sort of sins may be called scarlet ? 1. The filthier vices. 2. The universally condemned sins, those sins which are offences against the State, and against the well-being and social order of the community, such as dishonesty, theft, speculation in all its forms, knavery, cheating, lying. 3. The louder defiances of God. Some men dare to contradict Scripture, to express their disbelief in it, nay, to contradict God Himself, even to express their disbelief in His existence; and, disbelieving in God, they dare to cavil at His providence, to judge His words, and to utter criticisms and sarcasms about the acts of the Most High. 4. Scarlet sins may consist, again, in long-continued dissipations. 5. In repeated transgressions. 6. In any act of sin which is distinctly deliberate. Do you want to know how this can be done ? It is through the great atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. II. But there is a second difficulty. The man of whom I first spoke also says, "MY TENDENCY TO SIN IS DEEPLY INGRAINED." He says, "If all my scarlet sins were forgiven, yet I am afraid I should not be all right even then." Why not ? "Because I feel impulses within me towards evil which, I think, are stronger than in anybody else." Well, I will take you on your own ground ; I do believe that there are some persons who have a greater hereditary tendency to some sins than others have. Still, though your sins be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. God knows how to effect this transformation by the working of the Holy Spirit. "Oh !" says another, "I should not mind about hereditary tendencies ; but my difficulty is that I have been habitually committing sin." The Holy Spirit will help you to break off every sinful habit at once. You know that scarlet and crimson are colours very hard to get out of any fabric. Neither the dew, nor the rain, nor any ordinary processes of bleaching, will get out the scarlet. But God knows how, without destroying the fabric, to take out a fifty years' crimson habit, and not leave a stain behind. I heard a third person say, "The trouble with me is that I have such feeble mental resistance to evil, I am so weak, such a poor fool." Well, you are not much of a fool if you know you are ; the biggest fools are those who never know that they are fools. Still, there are people of this kind. Now, if you will come and reason with God, and yield yourself to the power of the Holy Spirit, He will put a backbone into you. Still, perhaps, I have not quite hit the nail on the head with all of you. Some are entangled by their circumstances. But God's grace can deliver you. There is nothing like making up your mind that you are coming right straight out from everything that is wrong, let it cost whatever it may. "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ?" The ship is going down, and if your little boat is tied to it, you will go down too. Up with the axe, and cut the rope ! I think I hear another say, "But I am a man of such strong passions." They must be got rid of ; and I do not know of any surgical operation that can do it ; you will have to be born again, that is the only real cure. (*Ibid.*) *Dyeing and bleaching* :—All men can dye their souls, but, as saith a quaint divine, only God can bleach them. It is in our power to dye ourselves into all colours, but only God can make us white. The idea is that there is no human condition too desperate for Divine treatment. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The theology of colours* :—There is a philosophy of colours ; there is a theology of hues ; and it hath pleased God to represent purity by whiteness. The saints above are robed in white ; they who love God are clothed in white raiment now, and it is the harlot of the earth that is scarletted and that lives in her significant redness. (*Ibid.*) *Scarlet and crimson sins* :—Sins are here likened to scarlet and crimson dye, and with good reason, indeed. For, first of all, scarlet and crimson are the most glaring and haunting of colours ; and sin is the most audacious as well as self-delusive appearance, under which man affronts the majesty of God in the sight of heaven and earth. Scarlet and crimson, also, are the blush of shame. And what so shameful as sin, or rather what can be shameful but sin ? Scarlet and crimson are also the colour of blood ; and blood is on the head of every sinner, as St. Paul told the unbelieving Jews when they refused to be converted from their sins : "Your blood be upon your own heads." And scarlet and crimson were (whatever they may be now) colours which it was beyond all men's power and skill to discharge from the cloth which had been once dyed with them. And is it not equally beyond all man's power to cleanse his own soul from the dye of sin ? (*R. W. Evans, B.D.*) *God Almighty's white* :—A preacher admired the whiteness of a washerwoman's clothes.

There they hung upon the line, beautifully white, as compared with the dark slates of the roof of the house behind them. But after a snow-storm had come on, which covered the roofs and streets with a mantle of unsullied purity, they seemed to have lost all their whiteness. And when he said to her, "The clothes do not look quite so white as they did," she replied, "Ah, sir! the clothes are as white as they were, but what can stand against God Almighty's white?" (*Life of Faith.*) *Come now* :—"Do you know, that as I live," wrote James Smetham, "I become more and more impressed by one word, and that word is *Now!*" "*Scarlet*" sins :—"We have some little difficulty," said a scientific lecturer, "with the iron dyes; but the most troublesome of all are Turkey red rags. You see I have dipped this into my solution; its red is paler, but it is still strong. If I steep it long enough to efface the colour entirely the fibre will be destroyed; it will be useless for our manufacture. How, then, are we to dispose of our red rags? We leave their indelible dye as it is, and make them into red blotting paper. Perhaps you have wondered why our blotting pad is red; now you know the reason." What a striking illustration of the fitness and force of this figure of God's Word, and of the power of "the precious blood of Jesus" to change and cleanse is furnished by the above explanation! The Spirit of God led the prophet Isaiah to write, not "though your sins be as blue as the sky, or as green as the olive leaf, or as black as night." He chose the very colour which modern science, with all its appliances, finds to be indestructible—"though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." *Roses speaking of sin and forgiveness* :—One night in June, a few years ago, Sister Margaret was going home from her work in the streets, sad at heart because of the sin and misery about her, and somewhat disappointed at what seemed a night of fruitless toil. She had taken with her a bunch of flowers, and now they were all withered except two roses that had kept their freshness—the one a deep red, the other a pure white. As she looked at them, the words occurred to her mind, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Suddenly looking up, she saw in the shadow of a doorway in Piccadilly a young girl, a picture of utter despair. The sister came to her and held out the roses; but the girl's face at once hardened scornfully, and she turned away. Quietly the sister followed her, when the girl turned and said angrily, "Why do you come to me with flowers? Do you want to torment me?" "Do you know what these roses seemed to say to me—this white and this red rose?" said the sister, kindly. "The message they spoke was this: 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.'" "Yes," said the girl, "that is all very well for you, but I am not fit to touch them." "Oh, but the message is meant for you as much as for me," and again the sister held out the flowers. Then the girl burst into tears. "I will take them and keep them for my mother's sake. She sent me two roses in her last letter. I have got them now in the Bible she gave me when I left home to come to London." It was an easy thing now to urge the message of love. That night the girl left her life of sin and came simply to the Saviour. She was soon restored to her home in the country, and her new life has been a blessing to many. Frequently there comes from her a box of flowers to Sister Margaret, with the message: "Give these to the girls; a flower saved me. It may do as much for somebody else." (*M. Guy Pearse.*)

Vers. 19, 20. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.—*The obligation of all who have received the revealed will of God to conform thereto* :—The text, involving the great truth which is evidently implied therein, is the sanction with which the whole of the chapter is enforced. I. IT IS THE BOUNDEN OBLIGATION OF ALL WHO HAVE RECEIVED THE REVEALED WILL OF GOD, WHETHER NATIONS OR INDIVIDUALS, TO ABIDE BY THAT WILL,—as well in the regulation of their faith and practice, as in the order and management of their affairs, in the formation and execution of their laws; and to admit of no other principle, nor to walk by any other rule whatsoever. Consider—1. Whose revelation it is for a devout and universal conformity to which we plead. 2. For what purpose God has been pleased to make known His mind and will to us. 3. The wonderful adaptation of this heavenly will to all our wants and circumstances. 4. The deplorable condition of man without such a light from heaven. 5. It is by God's revealed will we shall all be judged at last. II. THE CONSEQUENCES of adhering to, or swerving from, that Divine revelation, in either respect. We



can never suppose that God will permit any nation or individual to disbelieve or disregard His Word with impunity; nor can we imagine that He will suffer any nation or individual, obeying His voice, to go without His blessing. III. SOME OBJECTIONS WHICH MAY BE URGED. 1. All this applies to Israel of old, as a peculiar nation, raised up in a particular manner, for a special purpose. But is not He, who was their God, the God of all the families of the earth? 2. But does the Old Testament equally apply to us as the New? Undoubtedly. 3. Do we meet with any intimation of this kind in the New Testament? Certainly. (Matt. v. 17, 18; Rom. xv. 4; 1 Cor. x. 11.) 4. How is it possible, amidst a mixed description of character, to bring about such a state of things? Try and leave the issue with God. 5. But would you have everything to be based upon the Divine Word? Yes, everything. I would wish to see the whole nation living in the fear of God, and striving to promote His glory. (*R. Shittler.*) *Sincere obedience accepted*:—He doth not say, If you be perfectly obedient, but willingly so; for if there be a willing mind it is accepted. (*M. Henry.*) *Guilt embitters creature-comforts*:—If sin be pardoned, creature-comforts become comforts indeed. (*Ibid.*) *Mis-taken economy*:—Close to Port Arthur in the Canadian Dominion there is a little island named Silver Island. It was known that silver was there, and a few Canadian gentlemen united in explorations. Most of them, however, objected to the necessary outlay on works, and sold their claims to an American Company. The Americans began to dig, and found silver not only in rich veins, but also in thick, solid sheets. The Canadians bitterly lamented their folly in not spending the money which would have secured the treasure, but it was too late. There are those who, though called to enrich themselves both for time and eternity, are unwilling to give up the sins they find so pleasant. They will not pay the preliminary price, and discover when too late how much they have missed. Others have paid the price; they have secured the treasure, but when regrets are un-availing, the lovers of the present world see what a fatal mistake they have made, and have a dark eternity in which to meditate on their folly. (*Gates of Imagery.*) **The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.**—*The infallibility of Scripture*:—What Isaiah said was, therefore, spoken by Jehovah. All Scripture, being inspired of the Spirit, is spoken by the mouth of God. The like valuation of the Word of the Lord is seen in our Lord's apostles; for they treated the ancient Scriptures as supreme in authority, and supported their statements with passages from Holy Writ. I. THIS IS OUR WARRANT FOR TEACHING SCRIPTURAL TRUTH. It would not be worth our while to speak what Isaiah had spoken, if in it there was nothing more than Isaiah's thought; neither should we care to meditate hour after hour upon the writings of Paul, if there was nothing more than Paul in them. We feel no imperative call to expound and to enforce what has been spoken by men; but, since "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," it is woe unto us if we preach not the Gospel! 1. The true preacher, the man whom God has commissioned, delivers his message with awe and trembling, because "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." He bears the burden of the Lord and bows under it. They called George Fox a Quaker, because when he spoke he would quake exceedingly through the force of the truth which he so thoroughly apprehended. Martin Luther, who never feared the face of man, yet declared that when he stood up to preach he often felt his knees knock together under a sense of his great responsibility. Woe unto us if we dare to speak the Word of the Lord with less than our whole heart and soul and strength! Woe unto us if we handle the Word as if it were an occasion for display! 2. Because the mouth of the Lord hath spoken the truth of God, we therefore endeavour to preach it with absolute fidelity. It is not ours to correct the Divine revelation, but simply to echo it. 3. Again, as "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," we speak the Divine truth with courage and full assurance. Modesty is a virtue; but hesitancy, when we are speaking for the Lord, is a great fault. Those who fling aside our Master's authority may very well reject our testimony: we are content they should do so. But, if we speak that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken, those who hear His Word and refuse it, do so at their own peril. We are urged to be charitable. We are charitable; but it is with our own money. We have no right to give away what is put into our trust and is not at our disposal. When we have to do with the truth of God we are stewards, and must deal with our Lord's exchequer, not on the lines of charity to human opinions, but by the rule of fidelity to the God of truth. 4. Because "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," we feel bound to speak His Word with diligence, as often as ever we

can, and with perseverance, as long as ever we live. Surely, it would be a blessed thing to die in the pulpit; spending one's last breath in acting as the Lord's mouth. Dumb Sabbaths are fierce trials to true preachers. Remember how John Newton, when he was quite unfit to preach, and even wandered a bit by reason of his infirmities and age, yet persisted in preaching; and when they dissuaded him, he answered with warmth, "What! Shall the old African blasphemer leave off preaching Jesus Christ while there is breath in his body?" So they helped the old man into the pulpit again, that he might once more speak of free grace and dying love. 5. If we get a right apprehension concerning Gospel truth—that "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it"—it will move us to tell it out with great ardour and zeal. How can you keep back the heavenly news? Whisper it in the ear of the sick; shout it in the corner of the streets; write it on your tablets; send it forth from the press; but everywhere let this be your great motive and warrant—you preach the Gospel because "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." II. THIS IS THE CLAIM OF GOD'S WORD UPON YOUR ATTENTION. 1. Every word which God has given us in this Book claims our attention, because of the infinite majesty of Him that spake it. 2. God's claim to be heard lies also in the condescension which has led Him to speak to us. 3. God's Word should win your ear because of its intrinsic importance. "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it"—then it is no trifle. God never speaks vanity. No line of His writing treats of the frivolous themes of a day. Concerning eternal realities He speaks to thee. 4. Depend upon it, if "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," there is an urgent, pressing necessity. God breaks not silence to say that which might as well have remained unsaid. His voice indicates great urgency. III. THIS GIVES TO GOD'S WORD A VERY SPECIAL CHARACTER. 1. In the Word of God the teaching has unique dignity. This Book is inspired as no other book is inspired, and it is time that all Christians avowed this conviction. I do not know whether you have seen Mr. Smiles' life of our late friend, George Moore; but in it we read that, at a certain dinner-party, a learned man remarked that it would not be easy to find a person of intelligence who believed in the inspiration of the Bible. In an instant George Moore's voice was heard across the table, saying boldly, "I do, for one." Nothing more was said. Let us not be backward to take the old-fashioned and unpopular side, and say outright, "I do, for one." Where are we if our Bibles are gone? Where are we if we are taught to distrust them? It is better to believe what comes out of God's mouth, and be called a fool, than to believe what comes out of the mouth of philosophers, and be, therefore, esteemed a wise man. 2. There is also about that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken an absolute certainty. What man has said is unsubstantial, even when true. But with God's Word you have something to grip at, something to have and to hold. 3. Again, if "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," we have in this utterance the special character of immutable fixedness. Once spoken by God, not only is it so now, but it always must be so. One said to his minister, "My dear sir, surely you ought to adjust your beliefs to the progress of science." "Yes," said he, "but I have not had time to do it to-day, for I have not yet read the morning papers." One would have need to read the morning papers and take in every new edition to know whereabouts scientific theology now stands; for it is always chopping and changing. 4. Here let me add that there is something unique about God's Word, because of the Almighty power which attends it. "Where the word of a king is, there is power"; where the Word of a God is, there is omnipotence. IV. THIS MAKES GOD'S WORD A GROUND OF GREAT ALARM TO MANY. Shall I read you the whole verse? "But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." God has never yet spoken a threatening that has fallen to the ground. It is of no avail to sit down, and draw inferences from the nature of God, and to argue, "God is love, and therefore He will not execute the sentence upon the penitent." He knows what He will do better than you can infer; He has not left us to inferences, for He has spoken pointedly and plainly. V. THIS MAKES THE WORD OF THE LORD THE REASON AND REST OF OUR FAITH. "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," is the foundation of our confidence. There is forgiveness; for God has said it. I think I hear some child of God saying, "God has said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' but I am in great trouble; all the circumstances of my life seem to contradict the promise": yet, "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," and the promise must stand. Believe God in the teeth of circumstances. By and by we shall come to die. Oh, that then, like the grand old German emperor,

we may say, "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation," and, "He hath helped me with His name." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 21. How is the faithful city become an harlot.—*The faithful city a harlot* :—A dirge in dirge metre over Jerusalem. "Harlot" is unfaithful wife. In Isaiah "unfaithfulness" is declension from social and civil righteousness. (*A. B. Davidson, LL.D.*) *Spiritual harlotry* :—It is not merely gross outward idolatry, that makes the Church of God a "harlot," but the defection of the heart, however this may, at any time, express itself; for which reason Jesus also could call the generation of His time *γενεά μοιχαλίσ*, in spite of the strict worship of Jehovah carried on in the Pharisaic spirit. For, as shown by the verse before us, the basis of that marriage-relation was justice and righteousness in the widest sense. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *An aggravation of guilt* :—It is a great aggravation of the wickedness of any family or people that their ancestors were famed for virtue and probity; and commonly those that thus degenerate prove the most wicked of all other. "Corruptio optimi est pessima"—that which was originally the best becomes, when corrupted, the worst (Luke xi. 26; Eccles. iii. 16; Jer. xxii. 15-17). (*M. Henry.*) *Righteousness lodged in it* :—*Jerusalem, the righteous city* :—Righteousness was not merely like a passing guest in the city, but she who came down from above had there fixed her permanent abode; there she used to tarry day and night, as if it were her home. When the prophet refers to former days, he has in his mind the times of David and Solomon, but especially those of Jehoshaphat, who (about 150 years before Isaiah appeared) restored the administration of justice which had fallen into neglect since the latter years of Solomon and the days of Rehoboam and Abijah,—a point to which the reformation of Asa had not extended,—and who reorganised all in the spirit of the law. (*F. Delitzsch.*)

Vers. 22, 23. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water.—*Silver* :—The silver represents the princes and lords, viewed with reference to the nobility of mind associated with their nobility of birth and rank; for silver—sterling silver—is a symbol of all that is noble and pure, and it is the purity of light which shows itself in it, as in the pure white of byssus and of the lily. The princes and lords formerly possessed the virtues which together are in Latin called *candor animi*,—the virtues of magnanimity, courtesy, impartiality, and freedom from the influence of bribes; now, this silver has become dross, such base metals as are separated or thrown aside. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *Diluted wine* :—In a second figure, the leading men of Jerusalem in former days are compared to "choice wine," such as drinkers like. This pure, strong, and costly wine is now adulterated with water, or weakened; i.e., through this addition, its strength and flavour are diminished. The present is but the dregs and the shadow of the past. (*Ibid.*) *Impaired* :—The essential idea seems to be that of impairing strength. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *The possible degeneracy of valuable things* :—There are many valuable and good things in the world that through varied causes are rendered comparatively useless. I. THE SILVER OF THY CHARACTER HAS BECOME DROSS BECAUSE OF LITTLE FAILINGS. II. THE SILVER OF THY SERVICE HAS BECOME DROSS BECAUSE OF UNHOLY MOTIVES. III. THE SILVER OF THY MONEY HAS BECOME DROSS BECAUSE OF SELFISHNESS. IV. THE SILVER OF THY TALENTS HAS BECOME DROSS BECAUSE OF INDOLENCE. Silver is bright when kept in use. Talents are valuable when active. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) *Sinful compromise and its results* :—"Thy wine is mixed with water"—that sounds like a compromise. Thy wine diluted; it is the corruption of the ideal. "Thy princes are rebellious"—that is the corruption of government. "Every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards"—that is the corruption of justice. "They judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them"—that is the corruption of the tenderest ties of the heart. Do you see where you begin? You begin by mixing wine and water, you begin by illicit compromise, by lowering and corrupting the ideal, and you end in cruelty, you forget God, then the ideal is forgotten, then yourself is forgotten, you forget your neighbour, and the cause of the widow makes no appeal to you. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*)

Ver. 23. Thy princes are rebellious . . . every one loveth gifts.—*Rebellious princes* :—Instead of suppressing rebellion, they were rebels themselves.

(*J. A. Alexander.*) *The rebellious princes*:—I. THE PROFIT OF THEIR PLACES IS ALL THEIR AIM. They love gifts, and follow after rewards; they set their hearts upon their salary, the fees and perquisites of their offices, and are greedy of them, and never think they can get enough. Presents and gratuities will blind their eyes at any time, and make them pervert judgment (Hos. iv. 18). II. THE DUTY OF THEIR PLACES IS NONE OF THEIR CARE. They ought to protect those that are injured, and take cognisance of the appeals made to them; why else were they preferred? But “they judge not the fatherless,” take no care to guard the orphans, “nor doth the cause of the widow come unto them,” because the poor widow has no bribe to give. Those will have a great deal to answer for, who when they should be the patrons of the oppressed are their greatest oppressors. (*M. Henry.*) *Audacious corruption*:—Catiline, being prosecuted for some great offence, corrupted the judges. When they had given their verdict, though he was acquitted only by a majority of two, he said he had put himself to a needless expense in bribing one of those judges, for it would have been sufficient to have had a majority of one. (*Plutarch.*) *Political corruption in England*:—The machinery of both sides [Whig and Tory] was unlimited bribery. The degradation of the briber was as great as that of the bribed. Berkeley writes in 1721:—“This corruption has become a national crime, having infected the lowest as well as the highest amongst us.” (*Knight's England.*) *Francis Bacon*:—He was charged by the Commons before the Lords, with twenty-two acts of bribery and corruption. He attempted no defence. He made a distinct confession in writing of the charges brought against him. And when a deputation of peers asked if that confession was his own voluntary act, he replied: “It is my act, my hand, my heart. O my lords, spare a broken reed.” (*Ibid.*) *Corruption in the reign of James I.*:—It was an age of universal abuses. Local magistrates were influenced by the pettiest gifts, and were called “basket-justices.” (*Ibid.*) *Corruption checked by Act of Parliament*:—[In 1275 Parliament enacted] that no king's officer should take any reward to do his office, such enactment being one of the many proofs of the inefficiency of law to restrain corruption; for within fourteen years there were only two judges out of fifteen who were not found guilty of the grossest extortions. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 24. Ah, I will ease Me of Mine adversaries.—*God's enemies and His treatment of them*:—I. WICKED PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY WICKED RULERS THAT ARE CRUEL AND OPPRESSIVE, ARE GOD'S ENEMIES. II. THEY ARE A BURDEN TO THE GOD OF HEAVEN. This is implied in His easing Himself of them. III. GOD WILL FIND OUT TIME AND WAY TO EASE HIMSELF OF THIS BURDEN. (*M. Henry.*) *Salvation through judgment* is still and ever the only means of reproof and preserving the congregation that takes its name from Jerusalem. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*)

Vers. 25-27. And I will turn My hand upon thee.—*True reformation the work of God*:—I. THE REFORMATION OF A PEOPLE IS GOD'S OWN WORK. II. HE DOTHT IT BY BLESSING THEM WITH GOOD MAGISTRATES AND GOOD MINISTERS OF STATE (ver. 26). III. HE DOTHT IT BY RESTORING JUDGMENT AND RIGHTEOUSNESS AMONG THEM (ver. 27). IV. THE REFORMATION OF A PEOPLE WILL BE THEIR REDEMPTION. Sin is the worst captivity, the worst slavery. V. THE REVIVING OF A PEOPLE'S VIRTUE IS THE RESTORING OF THEIR HONOUR. “Afterward thou shalt be called, the city of righteousness, the faithful city.” (*Matthew Henry.*) And purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin.—*Purging away dross*:—“Purely”; R.V. “thoroughly”; lit. “as with lye,” i.e., potash, which was used as a flux to facilitate the separation of the metals. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Dross and alloy*:—Notice the imagery. Here is a community, an individual, that knows and belongs to God; redeemed of the Lord; His own. Yet into life, and into work, and into testimony and service, there has come that which He compares to dross and to alloy in metal. The two words in the imagery (dross and alloy) are not precisely the same in idea. Dross suggests to us that which is repulsive, as well as worthless—the glaring inconsistency, crude, and ugly. In the alloy or tin, which looks so much like silver, and yet is different, we see rather the ore, specious and subtle ingredients of evil that enter into the Christian's work and life—not crying inconsistencies so much as the more interior and hidden evil of silent self-complicity; of a tacit search for our own glory under colour of the Lord's; things which the soul has never fairly traced out, but which it may plainly trace if it will firmly use God's tests. And these are the things of which

we read: "I will turn my hand upon them and thoroughly purge them." (*Bp. H. C. G. Moule, D.D.*) *Dross and alloy* :—"I will purge away thy dross." What is the dross? That which is openly flagrant in the life. It is different from the metal, and is comparatively easily separated from it. But God goes further. He says, "I will take away all thy alloy." This is far more wonderful, because the alloy is something which enters into the nature of the metal, as it were, and it requires a chemical process to separate them. God says that He will deal not only with the outcrop of sin in act, but He will deal with the sin of which the act is the outcrop. (*G. H. C. Macgregor, M.A.*) *Moral dross* :—"What is the dross which God sees in our heart and life? Lack of truthfulness, showing itself in simple lying, in exaggeration, in fraud, in deceit, in slander, in gossiping, in prevarication, in equivocation, in guile, in evil speaking. Lack of justice and due regard to the rights of others, showing itself in a spiteful temper, in unwillingness to give up our own way to others, in incivility, in rudeness, in disregard of the comfort of others, in thoughtlessness, in ingratitude, in unthankfulness. Lack of wisdom, showing itself in the misuse of the opportunities God gives us, in our ignorance, in our thoughtlessness, in our stupidity, in our blindness to the things of God. Lack of love, showing itself in our pride, in envy, in malice, in hate, in unwillingness to forgive, in unwillingness to apologise for evils which we have done. Lack of self-control, showing itself in our avarice, in covetousness, in sloth, in lethargy, in laziness, in sleepiness, in lust, in sensuality, in gluttony, in self-indulgence in all sorts of ways. What shall we say about our sins against God, our want of prayerfulness, our want of knowledge of God's Word, our want of trust in God, showing itself in our worry; our want of love to God, showing itself in our shameful hankering after the things of this world? The case is indeed desperate, and calls for the Divine interference. I should go mad at the sight of my own heart if I did not believe in the power of God to cleanse that heart. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 26. And I will restore thy judges as at the first.—*A grand ideal* :—Two things are noteworthy in this passage. 1. The ideal is political. The salvation of Israel is secured when all public offices are filled with good men. "Judges" and "counsellors." 2. The ideal will be realised by a restoration of the best days of the past. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Social regeneration* :—**I. ALL THE ARRANGEMENTS OF SOCIETY ARE ABSOLUTELY IN GOD'S HANDS.** "I will restore," &c. No man can overturn, or build up, but by His permission. **II. ALL INTERRUPTIONS OF SOCIAL ORDER ARE UNDER THE CONTROL OF GOD.** **III. NO SOCIAL STATE CAN BE PURIFIED BUT BY RELIGIOUS PROCESSES.** There are many philanthropic and political projects which have for their aim national regeneration, but they are all foredoomed to come to nought, because they lack the religious element. **IV. THE GREAT NAME WILL FOLLOW THE TRUE REGENERATION.** "Afterward thou shalt be called," &c. Not first the exalted title, but the illustrative character; not first the splendid renown, but the glorious achievement! (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *National revivification* :—The imperishable kernel that remains becomes the centre to which all elements of excellence are attracted. (*F. Delitzsch.*) "*The city of righteousness*" :—With Isaiah, the giving of a name is the perception and recognition of the real existence of what has come into outward manifestation. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 27. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment.—*Evil in the Church* :—**I. WHAT ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND BY ZION.** The word signifies a heap of stones—a monument—a sepulchre. This figuratively describes the literal Zion; and spiritually sets forth the visible and mystical Church. The true members of the Church of Christ are as lively stones, built up a spiritual house; and for their security God Himself has laid a foundation. (*Isa. xxviii. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 5.*) Every stone of this sacred building is hewn out of nature's quarry, and when prepared by the transforming power of God the Holy Ghost is placed in that part of the spiritual edifice which it is appointed to occupy. And the building thus formed is, indeed, as the word Zion signifies, a monument—an everlasting monument of God's grace; whilst a mere professing, but not a confessing, protesting, and believing Church may very properly be compared to a sepulchre. Hence Zion of old contained a church within a church; those who were circumcised outwardly in the flesh, and those whose circumcision was that of the heart. According to the New Testament we understand by Zion

the Church visible and the Church mystical. II. WHAT MAY BE CONSIDERED ZION'S TRANSGRESSION. If we look at Zion of old, we behold formality manifestly pervading the Church, and the most lofty and presumptuous hypocrisy characterising the outward worship of God. Now, turn your attention to the Church of God in her present state. Such an examination will bring to light many evils, which are serious hindrances to the spread of evangelical truth, and afford ground for sarcasm and opposition, to the enemies of the Church. 1. Pride. 2. Laodicean lukewarmness. 3. Abuse of doctrine and discipline. III. ZION'S VISITATIONS AND CHASTISEMENTS. The history of the Church, as well as of nations, affords the most impressive evidence of the truth of that often fulfilled declaration, "Be sure your sin will find you out." (Rom. xi. 19-22; Ezek. xxxiv. 2-5, 9, 10; Rev. ii. 15, iii. 1-3, 14-20.) IV. ZION'S DELIVERANCE. In the exercise of justice, in the overthrow of the enemies of His Church and deliverance of His people, as well as by the faithful performance of His promises, God has engaged that Zion shall be redeemed with judgment and her converts (or those that return of her) "with righteousness." (*J. F. Witty.*) *Redeemed with judgment*:—Jesus lived to die. It was a voluntary necessity. We are redeemed with "judgment." The Judge has pronounced the sentence over the sacrifice: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The converted soul is redeemed with "righteousness." "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood," &c. (*T. Davies, M.A.*)

Ver. 28. *They that forsake the Lord shall be consumed.*—*Forsaking the Lord*:—I. THE GUILT OF FORSAKING THE SERVICE OF THE LORD. 1. Man is bound by the law of his nature to obey that Almighty Being by whom he was made an intelligent and immortal creature. 2. Many in forsaking the Lord violate their own express and solemn engagements. (Heb. x. 29.) II. THE FOLLY OF FORSAKING THE SERVICE OF THE LORD. If we do so we shall—1. Incur the reproaches of our own mind. 2. Forfeit the esteem and confidence of all good men. 3. Forfeit the favour and incur the wrath of God. And for what are all those tremendous sacrifices made? For "the pleasures of sin," which are but "for a season"! III. THE DANGER OF FORSAKING THE SERVICE OF THE LORD. "Shall be consumed." The threatened doom is—1. Awful. 2. Certain. (*J. H. Hobart, D.D.*)

Vers. 29, 30. *They shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired.*—*God's judgment of destruction*:—"For they shall be ashamed of the terebinths in which ye delighted, and ye must blush because of the gardens in which ye had pleasure" (ver. 29). The terebinths and gardens are not referred to as objects of luxury (as Hitzig and Drechsler suppose), but as unlawful places of worship (Deut. xvi. 21), and objects of worship; both of them are frequently mentioned by the prophets with this meaning (lvii. 5, lxv. 3, lxvi. 17). (*F. Delitzsch.*) *Terebinth*:—"Ye shall be like a terebinth with withered leaves, and like a garden in which there is no water" (ver. 30). Their prosperity is being destroyed, and they are thus like a terebinth which is withered in its foliage; their sources of help are dried up, and thus they resemble a garden that has no water and is therefore waste. The terebinth (turpentine-pistacia), a native of southern and eastern Palestine, casts its leaves (which are small, and resemble those of the walnut-nut) in the autumn. In this dry and parched condition terebinth and garden, to which the idolaters are compared, are readily inflammable. There is but needed a spark to kindle, and then they are consumed in the flame. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 31. *And the strong shall be as tow.*—*The tinder and the spark*:—"The strong shall become tow, and his work a spark, and both shall burn together"—a vivid picture of the doom of transgressors, since the mighty man is made combustible, and his own act is that which kindles the flame. (*T. W. Chambers, D.D.*) *The fire of judgment* that consumes sinners does not need to come from without; sin carries within itself the fire of wrath. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *The tow and the spark*:—These terrible words of warning are not levelled—1. Against low and vile people (vers. 23-26). Nor—2. Against the avowedly irreligious. The people addressed performed a multitude of sacrifices (ver. 11), were punctilious in their attendance on the house of God (vers. 12-14), were full of apparent devotion (ver. 15). Nor—3. Do they refer to the grosser forms of sin. These would, of course, come under the same condemnation. But

spiritual sins, though more refined to our perception, are more fatal even than sensual sins. It is pre-eminently a spiritual sin in root, however sensual in fruit, that is here arrived at. It is all summed up in the one evil, "forsaking the Lord" (ver. 28). Consider.—I. THE RADICAL CHANGE SIN WORKS IN THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SINNER. Sin, the prophet says in effect, has a disintegrating, deteriorating, degrading influence upon the man's nature who yields to it. "Tow" is the coarse, broken part of flax or hemp—waste, refuse. It is used here in contrast to that which is strong—also as a pattern of what is inflammable. 1. Sin lowers the tone and tenor of our nature. 2. Sin, depraving and degrading the type and tenor of our nature, enfeebles our powers of resistance to the assaults of external evil. Sin is weakness as well as wickedness; weakness as the result of wickedness. 3. Sin imparts to us an increased susceptibility to evil—makes us more inflammable. II. THE WAY IN WHICH THE SINNER AND HIS SIN CO-OPERATE FOR THEIR COMMON DESTRUCTION. Sin is ever multiplying itself between the sinner and his sinful deed. And the issue is irremediable ruin. "They shall both burn together, and none shall quench them." The moral is, that if we would keep out of hell, we must keep out of sin. (*W. Roberts, B.A.*) *Sin weakens the strong*:—The Earl of Breadalbane planned the massacre of Glencoe, and carried it out in the most cruel and dastardly manner. Macaulay, speaking of the effects produced upon the mind of the perpetrator of this atrocious deed, says that "Breadalbane, hardened as he was, felt the stings of conscience, or the dread of retribution. He did his best to assume an air of unconcern. He made his appearance in the most fashionable coffee-house at Edinburgh, and talked loudly and self-complacently about the important services in which he had been engaged among the mountains. Some of his soldiers, however, who observed him closely, whispered that all this bravery was put on. He was not the man that he had been before that night. The form of his countenance was changed. In all places, at all hours, whether he waked or slept, Glencoe was ever before him." (*Tools for Teachers.*)

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## CHAPTER II.

VER. 1. The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.—*Heading to a small collection* (chaps. ii.-iv.), the contents of which are—1. (ii. 1-4) All nations shall yet acknowledge the God of Israel. 2. (ii. 5-iv. 1) Through great judgments shall both Israel and the nations be brought to the knowledge of Jehovah. 3. (iv. 2-6) When these judgments are overpast, all Zion's citizens shall be holy. (*A. B. Davidson, LL.D.*) *A general view of the chapter*:—The verses 2-4, it should be premised, recur with slight variations in the fourth chapter of Micah, and are supposed by many to have been borrowed by both writers from some older source. The prophet appears before an assembly of the people, perhaps on a Sabbath, and recites this passage, depicting in beautiful and effective imagery the spiritual pre-eminence to be accorded in the future to the religion of Zion. He would dwell upon the subject further; but scarcely has he begun to speak when the disheartening spectacle meets his eye of a crowd of soothsayers, of gold and silver ornaments and finery, of horses and idols; his tone immediately changes, and he bursts into a diatribe against the foreign and idolatrous fashions, the devotion to wealth and glitter, which he sees about him, and which extorts from him in the end the terrible wish, "Therefore forgive them not" (vers. 5-9). And then, in one of his stateliest periods, Isaiah declares the judgment about to fall upon all that is "tall and lofty," upon Uzziah's towers and fortified walls, upon the great merchant ships at Elath, upon every object of human satisfaction and pride, when wealth and rank will be impotent to save, when idols will be cast despairingly aside, and when all classes alike will be glad to find a hiding-place, as in the old days of Midianite invasion or Philistine oppression (Judg. vi. 2; 1 Sam. xiii. 6), in the clefts and caves of the rocks. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *Isaiah's citizenship in Jerusalem* colours all his prophecy. More than Athens to Demosthenes, Rome to Juvenal, Florence to Dante, is Jerusalem to Isaiah. She is his immediate and ultimate regard, the centre and return of all his thoughts, the hinge of the history of his time, the one thing worth preserving amidst its disasters, the summit of those brilliant hopes with

which he fills the future. He has traced for us the main features of her position and some of the lines of her construction, many of the great figures of her streets, the fashions of her women, the arrival of embassies, the effect of rumours. He has painted her aspect in triumph, in siege, in famine, and in earthquake; war filling her valleys with chariots, and again nature rolling tides of fruitfulness up to her gates; her moods of worship and panic and profligacy—till we see them all as clearly as the shadow following the sunshine and the breeze across the corn-fields of our own summers. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *Judah and Jerusalem* :—There is little about Judah in these chapters: the country forms but a fringe to the capital. (*Ibid.*) *The Word of the Lord "seen"* :—Though the spirit of man has neither eyes nor ears, yet when enabled to perceive the supersensuous, it is altogether eye. (*F. Delitzsch.*)

Vers. 2-4. And it shall come to pass in the last days.—*Isaiah's description of the last days* :—The description of "the last days"—which in the Hebrew begins, "And it hath come to pass . . . the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established," &c.—is an instance of the use of the perfect tense to express the certain future. Its explanation seems to be that the structure of such a passage as that before us is imaginative, not logical—a picture, not a statement. The speaker completely projects himself into "the last days"; he is there, he finds them come; he looks about him to see what is actually going on, and sees that the mountain of Jehovah's house is about to be—still in process of being—established at the head of the mountains; he looks again, and the nations have already arrived at the place prepared for them, yet so freshly that they are still calling one another on; and as they come up they find that the King they seek is already there, and has effected some of His judgments and decisions before they arrive for their turn. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *An epitome of Isaiah's vision* (vers. 2-4) :—Isaiah, "rapt into future times," sees the throne of the Lord of Israel established in sovereignty over all the nations of the earth, and they becoming willing subjects to Him, and friendly citizens to each other. The nations attain to true liberty, for they come to submit themselves to the righteous laws and institutions, and to the wise and gracious word and direction of that King whose service is perfect freedom; and to true brotherhood, for they leave their old enmities and conflicts, and make the same Lord their Judge and Empire and Reconciler. And all this, not by some newly invented device of the nations, some new result of their own civilisation, but by the carrying out of the old original purpose and plan of God, that His chosen people of the Jews should be the ministers of these good things, and that in them should all nations of the earth be blessed,—that "out of Zion should go forth the law, and the Word of Jehovah from Jerusalem." This is the vocation of the Hebrew people. This, says the prophet, is the key to all our duties as a nation, this is the master-light to guide us to right action. (*Ibid.*) *The supremacy of Mount Zion* :—Transport yourselves for a moment to the foot of Mount Zion. As you stand there, you observe that it is but a very little hill. Bashan is far loftier, and Carmel and Sharon outvie it. As for Lebanon, Zion is but a little hillock compared with it. If you think for a moment of the Alps, or of the loftier Andes, or of the yet mightier Himalayas, this Mount Zion seems to be a very little hill, a mere mole-hill, insignificant, despicable, and obscure. Stand there for a moment, until the Spirit of God touches your eye, and you shall see this hill begin to grow. Up it mounts, with the temple on its summit, till it outreaches Tabor. Onward it grows, till Carmel, with its perpetual green, is left behind, and Salmon, with its everlasting snow sinks before it. Onward still it grows, till the snowy peaks of Lebanon are eclipsed. Still onward mounts the hill, drawing with its mighty roots other mountains and hills into its fabric; and onward it rises, till piercing the clouds it reaches above the Alps; and onwards still, till the Himalayas seem to be sucked into its bowels, and the greatest mountains of the earth appear to be but as the roots that strike out from the side of the eternal hill; and there it rises till you can scarcely see the top, as infinitely above all the higher mountains of the world as they are above the valleys. Have you caught the idea, and do you see there afar off upon the lofty top, not everlasting snows, but a pure crystal table-land, crowned with a gorgeous city, the metropolis of God, the royal palace of Jesus the King? The sun is eclipsed by the light which shines from the top of this mountain; the moon ceases from her brightness, for there is now no night: but this one hill, lifted up on high, illuminates the atmosphere, and the nations



of them that are saved are walking in the light thereof. The hill of Zion hath now outsoared all others, and all the mountains and hills of the earth are become as nothing before her. This is the magnificent picture of the text. I do not know that in all the compass of poetry there is an idea so massive and stupendous as this—a mountain heaving, expanding, swelling, growing, till all the high hills become absorbed, and that which was but a little rising ground before, becomes a hill the top whereof reacheth to the seventh heavens. Now we have here a picture of what the Church is to be. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *A vision of the latter day glories*:—Of old, the Church was like Mount Zion, a very little hill. What saw the nations of the earth when they looked upon it? A humble Man with twelve disciples. But that little hill grew, and some thousands were baptized in the name of Christ; it grew again and became mighty. But still, compared with the colossal systems of idolatry, she is but small. The Hindoo and the Chinese turn to our religion, and say, "It is an infant of yesterday; ours is the religion of ages." The Easterns compare Christianity to some miasma that creeps along the fenny lowlands, but their systems they imagine to be like the Alps, outsoaring the heavens in height. Ah, but we reply to this, "Your mountain crumbles and your hill dissolves, but our hill of Zion has been growing, and strange to say, it has life within its bowels, and grow on it shall, grow on it must, till all the systems of idolatry shall become less than nothing before it." Such is the destiny of our Church, she is to be an all-conquering Church, rising above every competitor. The Church will be like a high mountain, for she will be—1. Pre-eminently conspicuous. 2. Awful and venerable in her grandeur. 3. The day is coming when the Church of God shall have absolute supremacy. The Church of Christ now has to fight for her existence; but the day shall come when she shall be so mighty that there shall be nought left to compete with her. How is this to be done? There are three things which will ensure the growth of the Church. 1. The individual exertion of every Christian. 2. We may expect more. The fact is, that the Church, though a mountain, is a volcano—not one that spouts fire, but that hath fire within her; and this inward fire of living truth, and living grace, expands her side, and lifts her crest, and upwards she must tower, for truth is mighty, and it must prevail—grace is mighty, and must conquer—Christ is mighty, and He must be King of kings. Thus there is something more than the individual exertions of the Church; there is a something within her that must make her grow, till she overtops the highest mountains. 3. But the great hope of the Church is the second advent of Christ. When He shall come, then shall the mountain of the Lord's house be exalted above the hills. We must fight on day by day and hour by hour; and when we think the battle is almost decided against us, He shall come, the Prince of the kings of the earth. (*Ibid.*) "*All nations shall flow unto it*" :—Observe the figure. It does not say they shall come to it, but they shall "*flow* unto it." 1. It implies, first, their number. Now it is but the pouring out of water from the bucket; then it shall be as the rolling of the cataract from the hillside. 2. Their spontaneity. They are to come willingly to Christ; not to be driven, not to be pumped up, not to be forced to it, but to be brought up by the Word of the Lord, to pay Him willing homage. Just as the river naturally flows down-hill by no other force than that which is its nature, so shall the grace of God be so mightily given to the sons of men, that no acts of parliament, no state churches, no armies will be used to make a forced conversion. 3. But yet again, this represents the power of the work of conversion. They "*shall flow to it*." Imagine an idiot endeavouring to stop the river Thames. The secularist may rise up and say, "Oh, why be converted to this fanatical religion? Look to the things of time." (*Ibid.*) *The mountain of the Lord's house* :—The text calls our attention—**I. TO A PERIOD OF TIME WHEN THE EVENTS OF WHICH IT SPEAKS ARE TO OCCUR.** "The last days." The phrase means, generally, the age of the Messiah; and is thus understood by both Jewish and Christian commentators. The apostle has put this meaning beyond all doubt. "God, who spake in times past unto the fathers, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." 1. The expression intimates, that the dispensations in which the prophets of the Old Testament lived, were but preparatory to one of complete perfection. To the future all these ancient holy men were ever looking. The patriarchal was succeeded by the Mosaic age. Prophet came after prophet; but all were looking forward. All things around them, and before them, were typical and shadowy. 2. The emphasis with which the prophets speak of "the last days," intimates, also, the views they had of the complete efficiency of that

religious system which the Messiah was to introduce. On that age all their hopes of the recovery of a world they saw sinking around them rested; and in the contemplation of this efficient plan of redeeming love, they mitigated their sorrows. They felt that the world needed a more efficient system, and they saw it descend with Messiah from heaven. 3. The days of the Messiah were regarded by the ancient Church as "the last days," because in them all the great purposes of God were to be developed and completed. II. TO THE STATE OF THE GENERAL CHURCH OF GOD IN THE LAST DAYS. "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." Some have considered this as a prediction of the actual rebuilding of the temple, and the restoration of the political and church-state of the Jews, in the close of the latter days of the times of the Messiah. Such an interpretation, if allowed, would not at all interfere with that in which all agree, that, whatever else the prediction may signify, it sets forth, under figures taken from the Levitical institutions, the future state of the general Church of Christ. For the principle which leads to such an interpretation, we have no less authority than that of the apostle Paul, who uniformly considers the temple, its priests, and its ritual, as types of heavenly things; and in one well-known passage, makes use of them to characterise the true Church of Christ. "But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." The mountain of the Lord's house is no longer covered with ruins, but established in the top of the hills. We learn from it—1. That the Church shall be restored to evangelical order and beauty: it shall be as Mount Zion. (1) Zion was the place of sacrifice. And in the last days the true sacrifice shall be exhibited here. (2) Mount Zion was the throne of majesty. And in coming to the evangelical Zion we come to God as the universal Sovereign and Judge. In the latter days Gospel law will shine there as brightly as Gospel grace. (3) Zion was the mountain of holiness. And in these glorious days holy shall all they be who name the name of Christ. (4) Zion was the special residence of God. On the day of Pentecost He took possession of the Church; but in the latter days there shall be special manifestations of His presence in richer displays of vital power. To this state we are ever to labour to bring the Church, avoiding, ourselves, all that is inconsistent with truth in doctrine and holiness in life. For the richer effusions of grace we are earnestly to pray. 2. In this state the Church shall be distinguished by its zeal. "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem." So it was in the best estate of the Jewish Church. The Gospel is to be preached in all nations; and till you send forth the law they will not say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord." We thus see the connection between the best state of the Church and this holy zeal. All history proves it. III. TO CERTAIN SPECIAL OPERATIONS OF GOD BY WHICH THE EFFORTS OF HIS RESTORED CHURCH TO BLESS AND SAVE THE WORLD SHALL BE RENDERED EFFECTUAL. Without God, not all the efforts of the Church, even in her best state, can be effectual. 1. He shall judge among the nations. The word "judge" is not always used in its purely judicial sense, but in that of government,—the exercise of regal power both in mercy and judgment; and in this sense we here take it. He shall so order the affairs of the world, that opportunities shall be afforded to His Church to exert herself for its benefit. And thus is He judging among the nations in our own day. 2. It is a part of the regal office to show mercy; and thus, too, shall He "judge among the nations." This He shall do by taking off those judicial deserts which, as a punishment for unfaithfulness, He has inflicted. "He shall judge among the nations." He shall do this judicially, yet not for destruction, but correction. There are two sorts of judgments; judgments of wrath, and judgments of mercy. When grace is given with judgments, then do they become corrective and salutary. 3. It is, therefore, added, "and shall rebuke many people"; or, according to Lowth's translation, "work conviction among them." And may we not hope that this is approaching? Even while waiting for the glorious period described and promised in the preceding prophecy, the Church is called to "walk in the light of the Lord" (ver. 5). 1. Walk by this light of truth yourselves. 2. Set the glory of these splendid scenes before you, and let them encourage you to increasing exertions for the spread of truth, holiness, and love throughout the earth. (Richard Watson.) *The glorious exaltation and enlargement of the Church.*—I. THE GLORY AND EXALTATION. "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established," &c. II. THE ENLARGEMENT. "All nations shall flow

unto it." III. THE PROSPERITY of the Church begins to be described in ver. 4. (*J. Mede, B.D.*) *The Church's visibility and glory*:—There are—I. TIMES WHEN THE CHURCH IS VISIBLE BUT NOT GLORIOUS. II. TIMES WHEN IT IS NEITHER VISIBLE NOR GLORIOUS. III. TIMES WHEN IT IS TO BE BOTH VISIBLE AND GLORIOUS. (*Ibid.*) *The mountain of the Lord's house*:—I. THE PERIOD REFERRED TO. The reference is not to the Gospel era as a whole, but to an advanced period of it, even the time of the great millennial prosperity. The golden age of the Greeks and Romans was the past, but our golden age is yet to come. II. THE CHEERING TRUTH DECLARED. "The mountain," &c. Often has Zion languished, but she is to become a praise in the whole earth. In this striking figure two things are embraced—1. Elevated position. 2. Permanent duration. III. THE GENERAL INTEREST AWAKENED. We have here—1. The invitation given. "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob." 2. The considerations by which it is enforced. "And He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem." It is the seat of Divine instruction on the one hand, and the centre of holy influence on the other. IV. THE HAPPY RESULTS DECLARED (ver. 4). This is—1. A consummation most devoutly to be desired. 2. Absolutely certain in its realisation. "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares." 3. The means whereby it will be accomplished. By God judging or ruling among the nations, and rebuking or working conviction among them. (*Anon.*) *The future glory and amplitude of the Church*:—1. The Gospel dispensation was designed to supersede that which was given by the hand of Moses; it was to be exalted above this hill. 2. The Gospel also was destined to triumph over all those corrupt systems of religion which have ever been received among men. 3. The assertion before us is also understood as a prophecy relative to the fulness of the Church when the Jews shall be called in. This important event is foretold by the sacred writers. (*S. Ramsey, M.A.*) *Isaiah's wideness of view*:—Consider what that prediction meant in Isaiah's time. He lived within well-defined boundaries and limitations: the Jew was not a great man in the sense of including within his personal aspirations all classes, conditions, and estates of men; left to himself he could allow the Gentiles to die by thousands daily without shedding a tear upon their fallen bodies; he lived amongst his own people; it was enough for him that the Jews were happy, for the Gentiles were but dogs. Here is a new view of human nature, a great enlargement of spiritual boundaries. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The Church of the future—Goethe and Isaiah*:—It is quite the fashion in these days for those who do not believe in the Christian religion to bestow on it their patronage. The Bible is full of delusion and falsehood, but they regard it, on the whole, as a book that deserves notice; parts of it are almost as good as the Rig-Veda. The Church has been the handmaid of bigotry and superstition, yet they find in the history of the Church some passages that are inspiring. Jesus of Nazareth was a teacher in whose doctrine they find many things to set right; yet, so rich were His contributions to ethical science that they feel themselves justified in bestowing on Him a qualified approval. This fashion of patronising Christianity may have been set by Goethe. Into that temple of the future which he describes in his Tale, the little hut of the fisherman, by which he symbolises Christianity, was graciously admitted. "This little hut had, indeed, been wonderfully transfigured. By virtue of the Lamp locked up in it [the light of reason] the hut had been converted from the inside to the outside into solid silver. Ere long, too, its form changed; for the noble metal shook aside the accidental shape of planks, posts and beams, and stretched itself out into a noble case of beaten, ornamented workmanship. Thus a fair little temple stood erected in the middle of the large one; or, if you will, an altar worthy of the temple." This is Goethe's view of the Church of the future. He has been magnanimous enough to provide a niche for it in the perfected temple of the Great Hereafter; it is to serve as a pretty decoration of that grand structure, as a dainty bit of bric-a-brac. About twenty-five centuries before Goethe's day another poet, dwelling somewhere in the fastnesses of Syria, had visions of the future in form and colour quite unlike this of the German philosopher. In Isaiah's sight of the latter day, the Church of God is not merely a feature—it furnishes the outline, it fills the whole field of vision. It is not merely a trait of the picture—it is the picture. Instead of putting the Church into a niche in the temple of the future, to be kept there as a kind of heir-

loom—a well-preserved antique curiosity—Isaiah insists that the Church is the temple, and that all stores and forces of good are to be gathered into it, to celebrate its empire and to decorate its triumph. The mountain of the Lord's house, the typical Zion on which the spiritual Church is builded, is to be exalted above all other eminences. Toward that all eyes shall turn; toward that all paths shall lead; toward that shall journey with joy all pilgrim feet. For the heralds of its progress, for the missionaries of its glad tidings it shall have many nations; it shall give to all the world the ruling law and the informing word. This is Isaiah's view of the Church of the future. When twenty-five centuries more shall have passed it will be easier to tell whether the Hebrew or the German was the better seer. (*Washington Gladden, D.D.*) *The Church of the future* :—Isaiah shows us the Church of the future only in outline; the great fact which he gives us is that in the last days the spiritual Jerusalem shall gather into itself all the kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them. It may be possible for us in some indistinct way to fill in this outline; to imagine, if we cannot prophesy, what the scope and character of the future Church shall be. **I. WILL IT HAVE A CREED?** A creed is only a statement, more or less elaborate, of the facts and principles of religion accepted by those who adhere to it. Religion is not wholly an affair of the emotions; it involves the apprehension of truth. In the future, as in the past, this truth must be stated, in order to be apprehended. A man's creed is what he believes; and there must be creeds as long as there are believers. It is probable, however, that the creeds may be considerably modified as the years pass. Certainly they have been undergoing modifications, continually, through the centuries gone by. It must be remembered, however, that the changes through which theological science has been passing have been changes of spirit rather than of substance, of form more than of fact. The essential truth remains. The great changes in theology are moral changes. Theology is constantly becoming less materialistic and more ethical. This progress will continue through the future. The creed of the future will contain, I have no doubt, the same essential truth that is found in the creeds of the present; but there may be considerable difference in the phrasing of it, and in the point of view from which it is approached. 1. Men will believe in the future in an infinite personal God, the Creator, the Ruler, the Father of men. The abstract, impersonal Force to which Agnosticism leads us has no relation to that which is deepest in man, and can have none. Christ bade us love the Lord our God with all our heart and mind and soul. Can any man ever be perfectly happy until he has found some Being whom he can love in this way? Must not the Being who is worthy to be loved in this way be both perfect and infinite? And is it possible for a man to love with heart and mind and soul, any being, however vast or powerful, that has neither heart nor mind nor soul? 2. Concerning the mode of the Divine existence, men will learn in the future to speak more modestly than they have spoken in the past. It will become more and more evident that it is not possible to put the infinite into terms of the finite. There is the doctrine of the Trinity; there is truth in it, or under it; but can any one put that truth into propositions that shall be definite and not contradictory? 3. If one may judge the future by the past there is no reason to fear that the person of Jesus Christ will be less commanding in the Church of the future than it is in the Church of the present. 4. The fact of sin will not be denied by the Church of the future. Doubtless organisation and circumstance will be taken into the account in estimating human conduct; but the power of the human will to control the natural tendencies, to release itself from entangling circumstances, and to lay hold on the Divine grace by which it may overcome sin, will also be clearly understood. The supremacy of the moral nature will be vindicated. 5. Punishment, as conceived and represented by the Church of the future, will not be an arbitrary infliction of suffering, but the natural and inevitable consequence of disobedience to law. It will be discovered that the moral law is incorporated into the natural order, and that its sanctions are found in that order; while, in the work of redemption, God interposes by His personal and supernatural grace to save men from the consequences of their own disobedience and folly. Law is natural; grace is supernatural. Transgressors will be made to see, what they now so dimly apprehend, that no effect can be more closely joined to its cause than penalty to sin. 6. Whatever the creed of the future may be, however, it will not be put to the kind of use which the creed of the present is made to serve. It will not be laid down as the doctrinal

plank over which everybody must walk who comes into the communion of the Church. The Church, like every other organism, has an organic idea, and that is simple loyalty to Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. There will be but one door into that Church—Christ will be the door. II. **WHAT WILL BE THE POLITY OF THE FUTURE CHURCH?** It is likely that, of the various sorts of ecclesiastical machinery, each of the several religious bodies will freely choose that which it likes best. Doubtless the Church will have some form of government: it will not be a holy mob; lawlessness will not be regarded as the supreme good, in Church or in State. In whatever ecclesiastical mould the Church of the future may be cast, there will be no mean sectarianism in existence then. The various families of Christians will dwell as happily together as well-bred families now do in society. Though there be diversities of form in the future, there will be real and thorough intercommunion and co-operation among Christians of all names, and nothing will be permitted to hold apart those who follow the same Leader and travel the same road. III. **WHAT KIND OF WORK WILL BE DONE BY THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE?** It will have many ways of working that the Church of the present has not dreamed of. "The field is the world," Christ has told us; and in that better day the Church will have learned to occupy the field. 1. Paul said that as a preacher of the Gospel he magnified his office. There is no office more honourable. But it must not be inferred that there is no other way of preaching the Gospel except the formal utterance of religious truth, in the presence of a congregation. The truth will be disseminated, in that time, in many other ways. For though the living voice is the best instrument for the proclamation of the truth, so far as it will reach, it cannot reach very far. The art of printing has been given to the world since that day; and by that invention the whole business of instructing and influencing men has been revolutionised. The Church has already appropriated this agency; and it is doubtless true that it will be employed in the future more effectively than in the past. Neither will the range of teaching be so narrow as it has sometimes been in the past. To apply the ethical rule of the New Testament to the conduct of individuals, and to the relations of men in society, will be the constant obligation of the pulpit. Out of Zion must go forth the law by which parents, children, neighbours, citizens, workmen, masters, teachers, pupils, benefactors, beneficiaries, shall guide their behaviour. Science, long the nightmare of the theologians, will no more trouble their dreams; it will be understood that there can be no conflict between truths; that physical science has its facts and laws, and spiritual science its facts and laws; that these are diverse but not contradictory, and that the one is just as positive and knowable as the other. The unfriendliness now existing between the scientists and the theologians will exist no longer, because both parties will have learned wisdom. 2. But the work of teaching will not be the only work to which the Church of the future will address itself. Large and wise enterprises for the welfare of men will be set on foot; many of the instrumentalities now in use will continue to be employed, under modified forms, and many new ones will be devised. It will be understood that the law of the Church is simply this, "Let us do good to all men as we have opportunity." (*Ibid.*) *The magnet which draws the nations*.—The Church is established on the top of the mountain, and all nations are flowing unto it. Yes, flowing up hill! Yes, up the mountain side! When I was a boy I said, "That is false rhetoric, a mistake—flowing to the top of the mountain; it cannot be." I went to the workshop of a friend, and I saw in the dust a parcel of steel filings. And he had a magnet, and, as he drew it near to the steel filings, they were attracted to it and kissed the magnet. Then I said, Give me a magnet large enough, place it on the mountain top, and it will draw all the nations unto it. That magnet is the Lord Jesus Christ, for He said, "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto Me." (*Bp. M. Simpson, D.D.*)

Ver. 3. Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord.—"Many people":—For "people" read "peoples." So ver. 4. (*A. B. Davidson, LL.D.*) *Desire for spiritual instruction*.—What I intend is to make use of the words as they express a sincere desire in many people of being better informed in the mind and will of God, by some particular revelation from Himself, than they could be by the mere natural light of their own minds, reflecting only upon the general works of creation and providence. I. EVERY RATIONAL MAN, WHO BELIEVES A GOD AND A PROVIDENCE GOVERNING THE WORLD, IS UNDER A NATURAL

OBLIGATION TO INQUIRE WHETHER GOD HAS MADE ANY PARTICULAR REVELATION OF HIS WILL TO MEN, WHICH THEY ARE ANY WAY CONCERNED TO TAKE NOTICE OF.

II. WHOEVER SERIOUSLY MAKES THIS INQUIRY, WILL FIND IT REASONABLE TO CONCLUDE THAT SOME REVELATION MAY JUSTLY BE EXPECTED FROM GOD, CONSIDERING THE GENERAL STATE OF MANKIND. 1. In the nature of things, there is no impossibility that God should make a particular revelation of His will to men. That God should communicate His will to men in a particular manner, implies nothing contradictory, either to the nature of man or God. For if we believe that God is the Maker of mankind, and that from Him they received their reason and understanding, then it is unreasonable to suppose that the mind of man is incapable of receiving any impression of revelation or instruction from the Supreme mind, only because that Supreme mind is of an invisible nature. And it is yet much more unreasonable to suppose any incapacity in the Divine Being, of making such discovery of His will to the mind of man, as His wisdom sees fit; for this would, in effect, be to deny the perfection of His nature, and to make him a Being not acting freely but by necessity, without liberty or choice: and this in the end comes to the same thing as denying His Being altogether.

2. Considering our natural notions of the goodness of God, there is no reason to think it incredible that He should at some time or other make such discovery of His will. 3. Considering the general condition of mankind, such revelation is by no means unnecessary. (1) It is evident, that there is a surprising corruption in human nature; that the generality of men have hardly ever attended duly, at any time, to the natural dictates of their own reason. But much the greater part have shewn themselves more prone to extinguish than to improve the light of reason. (2) Suppose they had really known the true state of their own case, yet the true cure for it was more than human power or skill could effect. Some of them had recourse to philosophy. But the disease was too inveterate and epidemical to be cured by so weak a medicine. (3) Supposing the philosophers had been really designed to reform the morals and religion of mankind, they were not sufficiently qualified for such an undertaking, because they themselves were ignorant of many things necessary for it. As they knew not the first cause of the corruption of human nature, so they could know nothing of God's design in suffering it, nor of the scheme and order of His providence, by which He designed to conduct mankind out of it, into a more perfect and happy state than that from which they had fallen. (4) In matters of religion, which, naturally, have the greatest influence over the mind of man, and which therefore ought to be under the best and truest direction of all others, they were still more deficient than in anything else. When mankind had once generally fallen from the worship of the one true God, they sunk, by degrees, into the most brutal superstition and idolatry. (5) Divers of the wisest philosophers did themselves confess that they wanted a Divine revelation to set them right, even in matters which were of the utmost consequence. (6) Such men as now think that no revelation was ever necessary, but that the want of it might always have been sufficiently supplied by the use of human reason alone, do not state the matter fairly; because they confound part of that light which we insensibly receive by the revelation of the Gospel, with that light of nature which men had before it: that is, they do not distinguish between those notions which the mere heathen world were in possession of before, and those which they attained to after the preaching of the Gospel.

III. IF THIS BE SO, THEN IT IS EVERY MAN'S DUTY TO USE ALL THE PROPER MEANS HE CAN TO FIND OUT WHAT IS TRUE REVELATION, AND WHAT IS ONLY PRETENDED. (R. Boyle.) "Let us go up":—Those that are entering into covenant and communion with God themselves should bring as many as they can along with them. (M. Henry.) He will teach us of His ways.—*The ways of God*:—By the ways of God may be meant—1. His purposes and counsels, so far as are proper and necessary for His servants to be acquainted with, in order to promote their happiness and salvation. 2. His providential dispensations, so far as is consistent with their duty and interest to know them, that they may understand the loving-kindness of the Lord. 3. The ministration of His Spirit and the way of salvation, by which the manifold wisdom of Jehovah is admirably displayed. These are, with great propriety, called the ways of God, as He points them out to us in His Word, and as they are intended to conduct to the enjoyment of Him in the land of everlasting uprightness. (R. Macculloch.) And we will walk in His paths.—*Walking in God's paths*:—The resolution before us—1. Plainly implies a free choice of the

precepts of the Gospel, in preference to all other ways, and in opposition to every kind of compulsion whatever. 2. It includes a fixed purpose of heart, a firm determination, to cleave unto the Lord, notwithstanding every difficulty and discouragement that may lie in the way. 3. And as walking is an uniform, progressive motion, it comprehends a constant, persevering progress in the good ways of the Lord, wherein they are instructed. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 4. **And He shall judge among the nations . . . neither shall they learn war any more.**—*Christ's kingdom upon earth* :—1. When it is said that He should “judge among the nations,” we must observe that the term is continually used in the Old Testament of the rule of a chief magistrate. Under the theocracy those who ruled the nation, as we read in Judges ii., and in many other places, were termed “judges.” Of one of these it is said—“The Spirit of the Lord came upon Othniel, and he judged Israel, and went out to war,”—acted as their supreme ruler. And the same language is employed continually of those who ruled in Israel, under God their King. The prediction is very nearly parallel to one in the seventy-second Psalm respecting the Messiah: “He shall judge”—or rule—“the people with righteousness, and the poor with judgment.” Accordingly, in our text it is declared that the Messiah should be a Ruler “among the nations.” This rule was to take place, according to the language of prophecy, when the Redeemer came into this world. Hence when our Lord was upon earth, He Himself proclaimed that “the kingdom of heaven was at hand.” He directed His disciples to preach the same truth. And we know that a time is to come, when “the kingdoms of the world are to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.” When our Saviour was upon earth He allowed the expression used by Nathaniel—“Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel.” When He came in triumph into Jerusalem, and the people shouted out—“Hosannah! blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord,” our Lord did not repress the exultation. All believers, then, have already become subjects of His Kingdom, and He is stated in Scripture to be their King. He has a dominion, indeed, far more extensive than that of the Church; He has “all power given Him in heaven and earth.” But the passage before us does not refer to this universal dominion, which He exercises in providence, but it speaks of the dominion of grace, His dominion limited to His Church—because it is a dominion that was to result from the promulgation of His Word out of Zion, and a dominion to be co-extensive with the exaltation of His Church of Zion. “Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations.” (1) Since this dominion was to be established by the promulgation of the Word of God we may learn that no other ways are legitimate for the extension and establishment of Christ's Kingdom than this weapon of truth. (2) Till He establishes His dominion over any man's heart that man is not a Christian. (3) Christ has a right to rule. (Rom. xiv. 9.) But it is here said, not merely that He shall judge among multitudes, among His universal Church, but, “He shall judge among the nations,” by which we learn that He means still to multiply the numbers of His people, till nations are born in a day, and irreligion and rebellion against Christ on this earth shall be as rare as they are now general. 2. It was added, as a contemporaneous act of His sovereignty, “He shall rebuke many people.” By that word “rebuke” is evidently meant, He shall reprove them for their sinfulness. (1) Wherever He sets up His dominion over any heart He first makes that heart to feel bowed down by the load of its guilt. (2) Nations shall also be rebuked for their sinfulness. The Gospel tends to rebuke all abuses and evils among mankind—in Churches, governments, &c. 3. The effect of the Saviour's reign is further described; it is to be universal peace. “They shall beat,” &c. (*B. W. Noel, M.A.*) *Anomalies in the history of Christendom* :—An obvious reflection which occurs to us, when reading this prediction—or at least which is likely to occur to any one not well acquainted with Scripture—is, that the effect of the Gospel, going forth from Zion and from Jerusalem, seemed from the very first to be quite the opposite of this prediction. How can it be said that the effect of the Gospel has been to introduce a universal peace, when it seems man fest from history that it has introduced universal disturbance and confusion? Our Lord Himself, when on earth, by His ministry and life, only led to a universal conspiracy against Him; and when He ascended to His glory, and His disciples began to preach in His name, it was the signal for general confusion. As that Gospel advanced, it was the signal for more savage

opposition, till every part of the Roman empire was stained with the blood of Christ's followers, till everywhere there was a universal warfare among men—between those who were the advocates of the old system, and those who proclaimed the new. At length, when the empire was conquered, it was only to be the occasion of still wider and more sanguinary disturbances. Many as had perished through popular fury, or by legal interference, during the three first centuries, multitudes more perished, as the indirect consequence of the Gospel in after ages. When the Roman empire was shivered by the shock of barbarian invaders, and the feudal kingdoms of Europe rose in its place, in each of those kingdoms the castle of the noble frowned defiance upon the castle of every good and great man; the wars between neighbouring nations became interminable; and when at last the monarchies were consolidated, and the great modern monarchies rose out of that confusion, it was only to see in every page of history an interminable warfare between Christian nations. So that, for instance, in our own frontiers, the Border warfare between Scotland and England was almost interminable; and yet these were Christian nations; and the Christian nations of France and England were termed hereditary foes, and there was not a monarch of Europe that did not join in some sanguinary strife, to please a minister, or to gratify his own ambition, or for some vain pretence, as corrupt as it was often false. But this has not been the only way in which this prediction appears to have been perpetually frustrated—for there have actually been sanguinary wars that have arisen from no other cause than religion. The wars of Bohemia and the Low Countries, and the civil wars of France and many other countries, which long raged in the hearts of nations, for no other cause than a difference in Christian doctrine, seem to be a contradiction of the prophecy in our text, beyond all apology. And even when the disturbances of nations have not risen to actual warfare, how lamentable have been the cruelties exercised over a profession of belief in Christianity! See the dukes of Savoy soaking the valleys of Piedmont with the blood of their best subjects; see the rage of the Roman Catholic persecutors exhibiting itself in the massacre of St. Bartholomew; view the remorseless Dragonades in the south of France; see the many enormities which were perpetrated in our own country during the reigns of Henry the Seventh and Eighth, and Charles the First and Second. Carry your views to the northern parts of this island, and there see Claverhouse and his companions reeking with the blood of the guiltless Covenanters; cross the Channel, and see the Roman Catholics of Ireland massacring thousands of Protestants because they were Protestants, and the equally bloody return secured to them by the iron-hearted and relentless soldiers of Oliver Cromwell. So that everywhere massacre and misery have followed the introduction of the Gospel. Is this the fulfilment of the promise—“They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more”? 1. Let us first notice, that the Gospel is not responsible for the acts of its enemies,—and in all the cases I have named its friends might still be like sheep in the midst of wolves. They might be “wise as serpents, harmless as doves,” and yet all this slaughter might take place under the name of religion. They have been the enemies of the Gospel, and not its friends, who have thus manifested such savage cruelty and unprincipled cupidity towards their fellow-men. 2. And let us notice, in the next place, that the prediction in our text was manifestly not to be fulfilled immediately; it was to take place “in the last days”—and those “last days” have not yet transpired. (*Ibid.*) *War during the Christian centuries, though peace predicted*.—It may be said, that however guiltless the Gospel may have been of these sanguinary results, yet they are facts of history. The prediction was, universal peace to follow from the Gospel, and the experience has been universal war. Does not this seem to contradict the prediction? Nothing is more conclusive than the answer which may be given to this objection. 1. The Gospel was declared to be of a pacific tendency. It forbids all the causes of war in the world—pride, passion, cupidity, &c. It bids all who become the subjects of Christ's dominion to be mild and meek and patient as their Master was. 2. There must be the same pacific tendency among nations that are in any degree Christianised. 3. This tendency has not been and could not be wholly counteracted. It is true there have been these shameful wars; but it is no less true that under even the partial influence of the Gospel wars have in our day assumed a humanity which they never before manifested. 4. The influence of each individual Christian and the tendency of Christian institutions combine



to secure the fulfilment of these prospects. And if so, may we not reasonably exult in this blessed doctrine of Christ? And if we look back with shame and pain on the history of the nations that call themselves Christian, let us seek ourselves to manifest a better spirit and be men of peace. (*Ibid.*) *God the Arbitrator* :—Here is a prediction of arbitration in case of war. "He . . . shall rebuke many people." Read the word "rebuke"—He shall arbitrate amongst many people; He shall hear their cause; He shall redress their grievances; He shall determine their controversies, and men shall accept His award as final. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Learning war no more* :—Not learning war is something more than not continuing to practise it (Calvin), and signifies their ceasing to know how to practise it. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *War* :—I. THE MISERIES AND CRIMES OF WAR. II. THE SOURCES OF WAR. Many will imagine that the first place ought to be given to malignity and hatred. But justice to human nature requires that we ascribe to national animosities a more limited operation than is usually assigned to them in the production of war. 1. One of the great springs of war is the strong and general propensity of human nature towards the love of excitement, of emotion, of strong interest. 2. Another powerful principle of our nature, which is a spring of war, is the passion for superiority, for triumph, for power. 3. Another powerful spring of war is the admiration of the brilliant qualities displayed in war. 4. Another cause of war is false patriotism. 5. Another spring of war, the impression (and false views of war) we receive in early life. These principal causes of war are of a moral nature. They may be resolved into wrong views of human glory, and into excesses of passions and desires, which, by right direction, would promote the best interests of humanity. From these causes we learn that this savage custom is to be repressed by moral means, by salutary influences on the sentiments and principles of mankind. III. THE REMEDIES OF WAR. Without taking an extreme position, we ought to assail war, by assailing the principles and passions which gave it birth, and by improving and exalting the moral sentiments of mankind. 1. Important service may be rendered to the cause of peace by communicating and enforcing just and elevated sentiments in relation to the true honour of rulers. 2. To these instructions should be added just sentiments as to the glory of nations. 3. Another most important method of promoting the cause of peace is to turn men's admiration from military courage to qualities of real nobleness and dignity. 4. Let Christian ministers exhibit, with greater clearness, the pacific and benevolent spirit of Christianity. (*W. E. Channing, D.D.*) *Private war abolished* :—There was a time, not very long ago, when private war was even more universal than public or international war is to-day. City against city! Baron against baron! Even private persons were entitled to settle their differences by judicial combat if they preferred. Right of trial by combat still survives in some European countries in the form of duelling. But with that solitary exception, private war has now been entirely abolished throughout the civilised world. How has this immense improvement been achieved? The fact to be specially remembered is that the barons of the Middle Ages submitted very reluctantly and slowly to the substitution of judicial arbitration for private war. Kings had not the power to compel, and the barons continually defied the kings. Gradually a more enlightened and moral public opinion grew up in favour of the rational and Christian method of settling disputes. At last the supremacy of law and of courts of justice became established. Private war is now impossible, so absolute is the triumph of Christianity in the internal affairs of the nation. Now, a precisely similar slow and intermittent change is evolving better order in international life. Barbarous and heathen governments still defy the dictates of reason and of conscience as the cities and barons of the Middle Ages did. But slowly and intermittently their ferocity is being overcome. Arbitration has already been substituted for war in a large number of important cases which, in any previous period of human history, would inevitably have deluged the world with blood. (*H. P. Hughes, M.A.*) *War* :—I. THE TERRIBLE EVILS OF WAR. There are many evils we have to endure in this life that we cannot avoid. They are unforeseen, indirect, irresistible. Disease, domestic sorrows, adversity, and other evils befall men; but none can equal war. II. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SETTLE NATIONAL DISPUTES BY WAR. No argument is necessary to prove that physical force can never settle the right or wrong of any question. The most powerful battalions are not always on the side of the just cause. And when a war is over, who accepts it as a final settlement of the question in dispute? Often a bloody war is followed

by conferences and treaties, and after a vast expenditure of treasure and life, after the entrance of sorrow into many homes, the measures which should have been resorted to at first are the measures which decide the question. How often one side accepts peace simply because, for the present, it can no longer prosecute war. The only true method of settling quarrels is by reason, the furnishing of explanations, the granting of concessions, the manifestation of a desire and purpose to agree. Two nations may thus settle their misunderstandings without calling in a third party, or they may call in others to arbitrate between them and agree to abide by their decision. A high court of arbitration is in full agreement with enlightened reason and Christian teaching; it seems in the highest degree practicable, and it would prove, in its operations and results, one of the greatest blessings to the nations of the earth. III. ONE OF THE MOST PRESSING DUTIES OF CHRISTIAN MEN IS TO EMPLOY ALL POSSIBLE MEANS FOR THE EXTINCTION OF WAR. We should steadfastly set ourselves against the maintenance of large standing armies. We should leaven public opinion with the principles of peace—by the press, in social intercourse, and by using our power as citizens in seeking to purge our Legislature as much as possible from warlike influences. There is no cause in which woman's influence may be more appropriately exercised or can have greater weight. Preachers of the Gospel should preach peace. (*W. Walters.*) *Universal peace*.—Let me attempt to do away a delusion which exists on the subject of prophecy. Its fulfilments are all certain, say many, and we have therefore nothing to do but to wait for them in passive and indolent expectation. Now, it is very true, that the Divinity will do His work in His own way, but if He choose to tell us that that way is not without the instrumentality of men, might not this sitting down into the mere attitude of spectators turn out to be a most perverse and disobedient conclusion? The prophecy of a peace as universal as the spread of the human race, and as enduring as the moon in the firmament, will meet its accomplishment; but it will be brought about by the activity of men—by the philanthropy of intelligent Christians. I. THE EVILS OF WAR. The mere existence of this prophecy is a sentence of condemnation upon war. So soon as Christianity shall gain a full ascendancy in the world, war is to disappear. We have heard that there is something noble in the art of war; that there is something generous in the ardour of that fine chivalric spirit which kindles in the hour of alarm, and rushes with delight among the thickest scenes of danger and of enterprise; that expunge war, and you expunge some of the brightest names in the catalogue of human virtue, and demolish that theatre on which have been displayed some of the sublimest energies of the human character. One might almost be reconciled to the whole train of its calamities and its horrors, did he not believe his Bible, and learn that in the days of perfect righteousness, there will be no war;—that so soon as the character of man has had the last finish of Christian principle thrown over it, all the instruments of war will be thrown aside, and all its lessons forgotten. But apart altogether from this testimony to the evil of war, let us take a direct look at it, and see whether we can find its character engraven on the aspect it bears to the eye of an attentive observer. Were the man who stands before you in the full energy of health, to be in another moment laid by some deadly aim a lifeless corpse at your feet, there is not one of you who would not prove how strong are the relenings of nature at a spectacle so hideous as death. But generally the death of violence is not instantaneous, and there is often a sad and dreary interval between its final consummation, and the infliction of the blow which causes it. A soldier may be a Christian, and from the bloody field on which his body is laid, his soul may wing its way to the shores of a peaceful eternity. But when I think that the Christians form but a little flock, and that an army is not a propitious soil for the growth of Christian principle; when I follow them to the field of battle, and further think, that on both sides of an exasperated contest the gentleness of Christianity can have no place in almost any bosom, but that nearly every heart is lighted up with fury, and breathes a vindictive purpose against a brother of the species, I cannot but reckon it among the most fearful of the calamities of war, that while the work of death is thickening along its ranks, so many disembodied spirits should pass into the presence of Him who sitteth upon the throne, in such a posture, and with such a preparation. II. Let me direct your attention to THOSE OBSTACLES WHICH STAND IN THE WAY OF THE EXTINCTION OF WAR, and which threaten to retard, for a time, the accomplishment of this prophecy. 1. The first great obstacle is the way in which the heart of man is carried off from

its barbarities and its horrors, by the splendour of its deceitful accompaniments. There is a feeling of the sublime in contemplating the shock of armies, just as there is in contemplating the devouring energy of a tempest; and this so elevates and engrosses the whole man, that his eye is blind to the tears of bereaved parents, and his ear is deaf to the piteous moan of the dying, and the shriek of their desolated families. There is a gracefulness in the picture of a youthful warrior burning for distinction on the field, and lured by this generous aspiration to the deepest of the animated throng, where, in the fell work of death, the opposing sons of valour struggle for a remembrance and a name; and this side of the picture is so much the exclusive object of our regard, as to disguise from our view the mangled carcases of the fallen, and the writhing agonies of the hundred and the hundreds more who have been laid on the cold ground, where they are left to languish and die. On every side of me I see causes at work which go to spread a most delusive colouring over war, and to remove its shocking barbarities to the background of our contemplations altogether. I see it in the history which tells me of the superb appearance of the troops and the brilliancy of their successive charges. I see it in the poetry which lends the magic of its numbers to the narrative of blood, and transports its many admirers, as by its images and figures and its nodding plumes of chivalry it throws its treacherous embellishments over a scene of legalised slaughter.

2. But another obstacle to the extinction of war is the sentiment that the rules and promises of the Gospel which apply to a single individual, do not apply to a nation of individuals. If forbearance be the virtue of an individual, forbearance is also the virtue of a nation. If it be the glory of a man to defer his anger, and to pass over a transgression, that nation mistakes its glory which is so feelingly alive to the slightest insult, and musters up its threats and its armaments upon the faintest shadow of a provocation. If it be the magnanimity of an injured man to abstain from vengeance, and if by so doing, he heap coals of fire upon the head of his enemy, then that is the magnanimous nation, which, recoiling from violence and from blood, will do no more than send its Christian embassy, and prefer its mild and impressive remonstrance; and that is the disgraced nation which will refuse the impressiveness of the moral appeal that has been made to it.

III. IT IS ONLY BY THE EXTENSION OF CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE AMONG THE PEOPLE OF THE EARTH, THAT THE ATROCITIES OF WAR WILL AT LENGTH BE SWEEPED AWAY FROM IT. (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*) *The world's deliverance from war*.—Ever since the fall, our world has exhibited much of degradation and misery; and it is lamentably true, that a vast amount of its wretchedness has been produced by the active agency of its own inhabitants. Man has hated and oppressed his fellow-man. But how delightful is it to think that we have been assured by the word of Divine inspiration, that it is the design of the great Creator of all things, to reclaim our earth from its state of degradation and wickedness and misery, and to make it again the scene of holiness and harmony and happiness!

I. THE NATURE OF THE EVIL TO BE REMOVED. This evil is represented to consist in the lifting up of the sword, and in the learning of the art of war.

II. THE CHARACTER OF THE CHANGE TO BE PRODUCED. "They shall beat," &c. The period is to arrive, in the history of our world, in which the operation of those unholy passions by which so much destruction and misery has been produced, shall be subdued; and in which the principle of love to God and to men shall be delightfully predominant within the human bosom.

III. THE MEANS BY WHICH THE HAPPY TRANSITION IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED. Swords are to be beaten "into ploughshares, and spears into pruninghooks," and war is no more to be learned, when many people shall go and say, "Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, for He will teach us of His ways." Hence, it appears that the change is to be produced by the agency of the Gospel. There may be other instrumentalities of a subordinate nature brought into operation, such as the commercial intercourse of nations with each other, and the knowledge which they may acquire of their mutual interests and dependencies; but the religion of Jesus is to be the principal cause of the termination of hostilities in our world, and the introduction of the reign of universal peace and felicity. The Gospel of Christ informs us of the source whence all our enmities and contentions proceed, even from the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of our hearts. The Gospel of Christ first of all reconciles man to his God, and then works within him the dispositions which lead him to be reconciled to his fellow-man, and to "love him with a pure heart fervently." The Gospel of Christ inculcates those principles

of peace and goodwill, the recognition of which composes differences, softens down resentments, inspires with forgiving and kindly feelings, and prompts to deeds of beneficence. It is the testimony of experience, moreover, that nothing but the Gospel of Christ has ever opposed the system of war, and diminished in any degree the amount of the evil which it occasions. The ancient philosophy dignified with the name of virtues the unholy passions from which it arose, and the poets of the olden times made it the theme of their highest admiration, and of their sweetest praise. The classical heathenism of Greece and of Rome had its god and goddess of war, and represented its deities as mingling in the fray and delighting in the carnage of the battlefield. But Jesus appeared in our world as the Prince of Peace; and one of the most delightful precepts of His meek and gentle faith is, "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." What was it but the spirit of Christianity which put an end to the cruel gladiatorships of the amphitheatre of Rome? What was it but the spirit of Christianity which subdued the fierceness of the Huns, the Goths, and the Vandals of former times, and made so many of them the soldiers of the Cross and the followers of the Captain of our salvation? (*W. M'Kerrow.*) *The cessation of war an effect of the prevalence of Christianity* :—Notwithstanding any accompanying references, we cannot hesitate to take this for a prediction of times yet to come. Evidently, it has never yet been fulfilled. 1. It is as conjoined with very nearly the beginning of our race, that we have to look upon this direful phenomenon. But how strange, for a creature, come fresh, living, and pure, from the beneficent Creator's hands! The least that we can think of that original state of man is, that there must have been in his soul the principle of all kind affections,—a state of feeling that would have been struck with horror at the thought of inflicting suffering. And, from the creature thus originally constituted, all the race was to descend. Can such a nature ever rage with malignity and revenge, and riot in suffering and destruction? Yet, in this original family, in the very first degree of the descent, war and slaughter began. While we think of the deadly conflicts of those early ages, the idea may occur to us of the peculiar atrocity of destroying a life which might, in the course of nature, have lasted so long. Living beings cloven down or mortally pierced or poisoned or burnt that might have lived seven or eight centuries, for improvement, for serving God, for usefulness, for whatever happiness there might have been in this world or preparation for another! 2. The world began anew in the person and family of a selected patriarch, whom alone "the Lord had seen righteous in that generation." Now, then, for a better race,—if the human nature were intrinsically good, or corrigible by the most awful dispensations. But all in vain! The flood could not cleanse the nature of man; nor the awful memory and memorials of it repress the coming forth of selfishness, pride, ambition, anger, and revenge. 3. The sacred history, after just recounting some successions of names in the different branches of the new race, limits its narrative to the origin and progress of what became the Jewish people—Abraham and his posterity. Their history, however, in proceeding downward, involves much of that of the surrounding nations. And some of the profane histories go far back into the period subsequent to the deluge. And what is so conspicuous over all the view, as wars and devastations? There is one portion of this tragical exhibition which we are to take out of the account of ordinary war, namely, the war of extirpation against the Canaanites. But, setting this portion of the history aside, think of the long course of sanguinary conflicts within the boundary of the selected nation itself, between Israel and Judah. Besides the slaughters, of battle and massacre, within each separately, of these two divisions of that people, add, all their wars with Syria and Egypt, with the Babylonian, Grecian, and Roman powers, closed finally, in that most awful catastrophe, the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. 4. Then glance a moment over the wider view of the whole ancient world; as far abroad and as high up in time as history has made it visible. The human race is exhibited, in some regions, in the form of numerous small states. But their smallness of size and strength was not the measure of their passions. What we are certain to read of them is, that they attacked and fought one another with the ferocity of wild beasts. By some ambitious "conquering hero" a great number of these were subdued and moulded together into a great kingdom, on one large space of the earth, and the same on another. And then with a tremendous clash, these empires came into conflict. 5. But now if we could take one grand compass of view over the earth, and down through time from that period to this! What a

vision of destruction! And to complete the account—as if the whole solid earth were not wide enough—the sea has been coloured with blood, and received into its dark gulf myriads of slain, as if it could not destroy enough by its tempests and wrecks! Reflections—(1) What a state of the spirit of mankind, of their heart and intellect is here disclosed before us! (2) What a state of their social constitution, and of their national situation, that the mass and strength of nations should, over the greatest part of the world, be at the absolute disposal of a few individuals, for this very business of war! (3) What a state of the moral sense, that there should be whole hosts of men, leaders and followers, capable of holding themselves totally divested of all personal responsibility for right and wrong, in the zealous prosecution of such achievements! (4) What a state of Christianity, as to any real, vital prevalence of it among the nations denominated Christian! (*John Foster.*)

*War.*—I. SOME OF THE LEADING FEATURES OF WAR, AS RECORDED IN GOD'S WORD. 1. The cause of war (James iv. 1, 2). From this passage, we see that just as in domestic broils, just as in strifes between sects and parties, so in strifes between nation and nation—they all proceed from the lusts of men, and from that carnal mind which is enmity against God. 2. We learn from God's Word that war is a tremendous evil. What horror filled the soul of the prophet Jeremiah, when he heard the rumour of war—"My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war" (Jer. iv. 19). See again Jeremiah xlvii. 2, 3, how the prophet describes the distress and anguish of the Philistines at the approach of an invading army—an anguish so great and so terrible, as to lead them even to forget the common ties of humanity. See again Deuteronomy xxviii. 50, 51, how Moses speaks of the devastating force of an invading army; and Joel ii. 2, where the prophet describes the day of the Lord as compared to an invading army. 3. God's Word shows us that war is one of God's scourges, by which He punishes guilty nations for their wickedness. In Ezekiel xiv. 21, the sword is distinctly spoken of as one of God's four sore judgments. 4. God's Word shows us that it is He alone who can bring war to an end. (Psa. xli. 9.) In every war God has a special design of His own to fulfil—a purpose into which the eye of mortality can never pierce—but until that purpose is executed the war can never end. (Jer. xlvii. 6, 7.) 5. God's Word shows that war is to be the immediate precursor of the terrors of the latter days. (Joel iii. 9, &c.; Matt. xxiv. 6.) 6. God's Word declares that there is a time approaching when wars will for ever cease.

II. PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. What is our present duty? 2. The necessity of being prepared for the things that are coming upon the earth. 3. The awfulness of being overtaken unprepared. You will be speechless. (*A. W. Snape, M.A.*)

*The means by which this prophecy is to be fulfilled.*—I. A PROPER ESTIMATE OF THE MISERIES OF WAR must prepare the way for universal peace.

II. THE DISSEMINATION OF THE WORD OF GOD. Nothing but the Word of God can effect the cure of this moral distemper—nothing but the Spirit of God can subdue the native principles of the heart—nothing but the salvation of the Gospel can remove the evil we deplore. There is no other remedy can reach the core of the malady.

III. THE PRAYERS OF CHRISTIANS must accompany the other means used for the establishment of peace. (*J. Gray, M.A.*)

*War to cease.*—I. HUMAN INDUSTRY IS A FEATURE IN THE BRIGHT PICTURE OF FUTURE HAPPINESS. The inhabitants of the earth throughout the millennium, when the globe is to be covered with its first beauty, are not to subsist without some measure of labour. They are to use the ploughshare and the pruninghook; and this use is sufficient to show that the ground will not then yield its fruits, except in return for the toil of the husbandman. It seems to indicate how accurately the world will be put back into its condition before defiled by sin—that a necessity for toiling should be alleged or implied; though all that is painful or exhausting in labour must be supposed to have ceased. We are greatly struck by the carefulness displayed throughout the Bible, to put honour on industry, and to represent labour as in the largest sense an appointment of God. The too common supposition is, that labour was a curse which disobedience provoked, whereas labour was appointed unto man while yet in the full enjoyment of the favour of his God. We are so constituted, that labour is indispensable to our happiness, to the strengthening of our faculties, and to the preservation of a wholesome tone in our spirits. We know not whether the going to the armouries, and ransacking them for the materials of the implements of agriculture, may not mark such an

increase in the number of the inhabitants of the world, as would require continued effort on the part of the husbandman to keep pace with the growing demand, so that ploughshares and pruninghooks are not furnished fast enough, and swords and spears must be made to do their office. But we now proceed to consider what seems given as the reason for this conversion of the instruments of war into the implements of husbandry. II. THERE WILL CERTAINLY BE NO FURTHER USE FOR THE ARMS OF WAR—"Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." It is Isaiah's assertion, that the cessation of war is to result from the general diffusion of Christian principles. And there is no difficulty in tracing the necessary connection between the sovereignty of Christ and the extinction of war; for the tendency of the religion of Jesus is to bind the whole world in brotherhood. III. WAR SHALL NOT ONLY CEASE AS AN EMPLOYMENT, BUT ALSO AS A SCIENCE—"Neither shall they learn war any more." They shall not only enjoy the liberty of peace—for peace may be, and too commonly is a season in which war is studied, and preparations are made for future battles; they shall be so secure of peace being permanent, that the arts of attack and defence will fall into oblivion, and the whole array of military tactics pass from the world like the science of the necromancer, or any other exploded and reprobated study. We find no hint in Scripture, but altogether the reverse, that the profession of a soldier cannot harmonise with godliness. The angel sent to the Roman centurion bore no message as to the unlawfulness of his calling. But these admissions are quite in harmony with what we have stated as to the condemnation of war, which is wound up in the sentence that war is a science. That men should not merely have been roused by sudden passion into the doing violence to one another, but that they should actually have studied how best to effect the butchery of thousands, having their schools and establishments in which numbers may be trained in the art of destruction—this, of itself, presents such a picture of human depravity as would serve for the painter who might desire to exhibit it in the darkest possible colours. There is a great difference between a prophecy which should assert the termination of war as an employment, and another which affirms its termination as a science; since the former might only show the existence of a restraining power, whereas the latter indicates such a forgetfulness or renunciation of everything military as requires the supposing the human race universally changed, and all the elements of discord eradicated from every bosom. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *William Penn*.:—The King of England strongly urged William Penn (the founder of Pennsylvania), out of the king's great respect for his father, Admiral Penn, as he was going out with many followers amongst known savages, to take out with him sufficient troops which should be placed at his service. It was averred that William Penn and his followers would speedily be placed in the war-kettle of the untutored Indians, if he did not go out well armed to protect himself and his large colony. In the spirit of his Master, the Prince of Peace, he declined to take any soldiers; he went open-handed and unarmed to the red-men! When the Council of State was held, the red-men believed in William Penn's professions of amity, and they always thereafter lived in peace! When the Indians disagreed amongst their several tribes they frequently took their differences to be settled "justly" by William Penn, or their "Father Onas," as they became accustomed to call him. (*James Withers.*) *War sometimes justifiable*.:—A war undertaken in self-defence is natural and right, and under the rights of self-defence must be included the protection of our countrymen in distant lands and of our interests in the future as well as in the present. It must be carried on with a serious mind, with a consistent purpose, and not without the hope of benefiting other nations as well as ourselves; it can only be justified by the event whether it leaves the world better off than it found it. There are many evils for which war provides the only remedy, and we cannot say that centuries of oppression are better than a struggle for independence. The religion of Christ gives no sanction or encouragement to war. The conscience of mankind acknowledges that while wars continue there is something not altogether right in the world; and yet under given circumstances it may be the duty of a nation to strike the blow; the greatest safety may be the willingness to meet the greatest danger. (*Prof. B. Jowett, D.D.*) *The evils of war—loss of life*.:—What a fearful loss of human life it entails! It is computed that Alexander and Cæsar caused, each of them, the death of two millions of the human race. Bonaparte's campaign in Russia carried death to five hundred thousand human beings, and in the vast majority of that number

death was accompanied by the most awful sufferings. At Borodino in one day eighty thousand were sacrificed amid the most horrid cruelties. The next day it was found that a surface of about nine squares miles was covered with the killed and wounded; the latter lying one upon another, destitute of assistance, weltering in their blood, uttering fearful groans, and beseeching any who passed by to put an end to their excruciating torments. During the burning of Moscow, twelve thousand wounded were in the hospitals; and almost all perished in the flames. No tongue or pen can describe the horrors of the retreat. "Multitudes of these desolate fugitives," says Sir R. K. Porter, in his *Narrative of the Campaign in Russia*, "lost their speech, others were seized with frenzy, and many were so maddened by the extremes of pain and hunger that they tore the dead bodies of their comrades into pieces, and feasted on the remains." The last Russian war cost this country a hundred thousand human lives. Hundreds of thousands fell victims during the Franco-German war. In one sortie from Metz four hundred wives were made widows, and upwards of a thousand children fatherless, out of a single Prussian regiment in the course of an hour. What barbarities are practised! What disastrous results follow! What desolation to fertile and flourishing districts of country! What a blight shed on commerce! What an increase of taxation! What corruption to public morals! It is impossible to exaggerate, in conception or statement, the evils of war. (*W. Walters.*)

*The enormous cost of war* :—When Napoleon's army marched up towards Moscow, they burned every house for one hundred and fifty miles. Our Revolutionary war cost the English Government six hundred and eighty millions of dollars. The wars growing out of the French Revolution cost England three thousand millions of dollars. Christendom—or, as I might mispronounce it in order to make the fact more appalling, Christ-en-dom—has paid in twenty-two years fifteen thousand million dollars for battle. Those were the twenty-two years, I think, ending in 1820 or thereabout. Edmund Burke estimated that the nations of this world had expended thirty-five thousand million dollars in war; but he did his ciphering before our great American and European wars were plunged. He never dreamed that in this land, in the latter part of this century, in four years, we should expend in battle three thousand million dollars. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*)

*Enormous sacrifice of human life through war* :—In one battle, under Julius Cæsar, four hundred thousand fell. Under Xerxes, in one campaign, five millions were slain. Under Jengispham, at Herat, one million six hundred thousand were slain. At Nishar, one million seven hundred and forty-seven thousand were slain. At the siege of Ostend, one hundred and twenty thousand. At Acre three hundred thousand. At the siege of Troy, one million eight hundred and sixteen thousand fell. The Tartar and African wars cost one hundred and eighty million lives. The wars against the Turks and the Saracens cost one hundred and eighty million lives. Added to all these, the million who fell in our own conflict. Then take the fact that thirty-five times the present population of the earth have fallen in battle. (*Ibid.*)

*The greatest peace can only be secured by the entire extinction, as speedily as possible, of the false Gospels of Materialism and Force. Empires built on Force have never persisted. Military kingdoms must pass away. No nation was ever more military than Rome; it was armed from head to foot; it was a great fighting empire, and though it lasted long it had to go. The seven Oriental empires that preceded Rome were military; they, too, have disappeared. Permanence of empire depends on peace, social justice, liberty, and brotherhood. (J. Clifford, D.D.)*

*Christian soldier and war* :—There is no reason why a Christian soldier should not as vehemently denounce war as a medical man attacks disease, as a minister does sin. Success would mean in either case an end of their work, but that in either case were a consummation devoutly to be wished. The sooner the profession of arms becomes unnecessary and impossible, the better for everybody. (*H. P. Hughes, M.A.*)

Ver. 5. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.—*Mutual encouragement* :—I. SYMPATHETIC FELLOW-FEELING. All who are anxious for their own welfare, desire the welfare of others. II. MUTUAL PROGRESS. Two together are stronger than two apart. "Let us." A weak brother at our side will not only get help but will afford us assistance. III. APPRECIATIVE KNOWLEDGE. "Let us walk in the light of the Lord." The light is the place for safety. Light is life, darkness is death. IV. UNFAILING PROVISION. "The light of the Lord." God is the only source of light, but He is an all-efficient

source. He never can fail. God is light. (*Homilist.*) *An invitation to repentance*:—I. THIS IS ISALAH'S INVITATION TO HIS COUNTRYMEN TO REPENT. To feel the full force of his appeal we must notice the connection of the text with its context. 1. The prophet commences by quoting (vers. 2-4) what is probably an ancient prediction, quoted also by Micah (iv. 1-3). The people would doubtless look eagerly for the fulfilment of this prophecy, so agreeable to their national hopes. But no sign of its accomplishment was to be seen. They were indeed enjoying in the reign of Uzziah a season of secular prosperity, but they were far from being "established in the top of the mountains"; they were surrounded by watchful foes, and certainly there were no signs of the long foretold reign of peace. 2. The light of worldly prosperity had not brought them the fulfilment of the prophecy of peace. Isaiah then bids them "walk in the light of the Lord"; for, as he goes on to show, God had forsaken His people on account of those sins which their prosperity had engendered. Therefore it was that this prophecy was not fulfilled to them. Their very prosperity kept them back from greater prosperity (vers. 6-9). 3. But this state of things could not continue. If they refuse to walk in the light of the Lord, He will not only withdraw the promised blessings, but will humble them by taking away the prosperity they already enjoyed (vers. 10-21). II. THE SITUATION OF THE CHURCH OF GOD THUS DESCRIBED BY ISALAH REMAINS ALMOST UNCHANGED TO THE PRESENT DAY. 1. We still look for the time when "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains," and the promised "peace on earth" shall be realised; but we see no sign of its immediate approach. The Church still continues beset with foes, unable to stem the rising tide of rationalism and unbelief; and certainly these are no signs of the long-foretold reign of peace. 2. If we inquire why this is so, the answer is the same as it was in the days of Isaiah. We do not, with a single eye, walk in the light of the Lord. We enjoy a large measure of worldly prosperity. Science and secular knowledge and useful arts make rapid progress, and in their light we walk, too often forgetting that it is but a reflected radiance, borrowed from the one source of all true light. If the Church makes some impression upon the world, the world also makes great inroads upon the Church. 3. But this state of things cannot last for ever. Isaiah of old spake of the day of the Lord, which would surely overtake His people if they continued to follow their own inventions and to neglect God. A yet greater and more terrible day of the Lord is at hand. In that day all the pride of our modern civilisation, its wisdom and knowledge, will aid us no more than the idols of silver and gold, unless withal we are found walking in the light of the Lord. (*A. K. Cherrill, M.A.*) *Walking in the light of the Lord*:—"Walk in the light of the Lord" implies—I. THAT WE AVAIL OURSELVES OF HIS REVELATION OF TRUTH. II. THAT WE ORDER THE COURSE OF OUR LIVES ACCORDING TO HIS EXAMPLE AND THE GUIDANCE OF HIS WORD AND SPIRIT (*Jer. x. 23*). III. PROGRESS. It supposes that we leave behind our former darkness and sin, our slothfulness and error, and march every day some distance on our road to eternal life. IV. LIGHT INSPIRES CHEERFULNESS AND JOY; and if we "walk in the light of the Lord," we must have the only true happiness and peace. The truth of the Gospel is enough to cause constant exultation. (*Homilist.*) *Walking in the light of the Lord*:—I. THE IMPORT OF THE WORDS, "the light of the Lord." There appears here to be an allusion to that striking token of special guardianship which was vouchsafed to the Israelites in the Shechinah as it appeared to the Church in the wilderness; which, while it was the recognised token of special favour from God, indicated also their course of movement. The expression "to walk in the light of the Lord," we regard—1. As indicative of a cordial reception of His truth. Light is the general emblem of knowledge; and there are many striking points of analogy between religious knowledge and light. The phrase is applicable to the whole body of Divine revelation, which may be viewed as the light of God, that breaks forth, as it were, from His countenance: His countenance, which is the emblem of His immaculate purity, as well as His infinite intelligence. He is said "to dwell in the light which no man can approach unto." And this is also significant of the glory of revealed truth—it is the very light in which the perfections of God stand manifested; the light that develops to us His secret counsels, His plans of government, especially His plan of saving mercy; the light, in allusion to which the prophet elsewhere speaks when he says, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come," &c. (1) This expression is applicable to the law—that law which embodied the principles of the truth, indeed the only



authenticated truth which then existed in the world. It was the purpose of God that His Church should walk in this light under that preparatory dispensation; that the Church should travel onward to meet the superior splendours of the Gospel dispensation, the dispensation of the Sun of Righteousness. (2) To the Gospel, especially, the expression "the light of the Lord" is exceedingly applicable. This is that great light which shines in the midst of the darkness of the world. This is the glory of the Lord which is "revealed." And this Gospel also threw its light on the future; it abolished death; it proclaimed a resurrection. The Gospel showed, also, the principles on which God governs the world, both moral and providential; that the whole world is under mediatorial government; and that everything is moved for religious purposes—to support the Church, to diffuse the truth. To "walk," then, "in the light of the Lord" with respect to the Jews, was to retain the faith which had been handed down to the Church; to retain it free from all Gentile delusion, from all pagan intermixture, from all rabbinical subtleties. 2. To "walk in the light of the Lord," seems to imply the full reception of all the blessings which the light revealed. And there is this idea suggested in this view of the phrase, "the light of the Lord," that there is an inseparable connection between the truth of God and the favour of God. Whilst the truth creates piety, the piety of the Church is to react on the Church and preserve it from decline. 3. To "walk in the light of the Lord" implies the zealous prosecution of all those duties which the light unfolds. (1) It seems to imply that the Church is bound to avow herself, not to put her light under a bushel. (2) Also that there is to be an aggressive spirit in the Church, arising from those views of evil which the light will give, and which while they concern the purity of the Church, are thrown on the mass of darkness which surrounds the Church. (3) To "walk in the light of the Lord," is to direct the spirit of enterprise in the Church. The ancient Church itself had an office to perform to the world. That Church had to preserve the primitive theology, to protest against the corruptions of paganism: to show, in the connection of religion with public as well as personal happiness, the folly of Gentile paganism, and to show the absolute necessity of submission to the spiritual government of Almighty God. (Ver. 3.) The Church in her purest ages walked in this light of evangelical enterprise; and her achievements were noble—in beneficence most splendid, in its results the most excellent of the world. And there are in modern times the same decisive evidences of the Divine will as it respects the Church. 4. To "walk in the light of the Lord" is to walk in the calm contemplation of the final fulfilment of prophecy. II. THE MOTIVES OR PRINCIPLES WHICH ENFORCE THIS EXHORTATION. 1. There is moral obligation, for what is moral obligation but submission to the will of God—and to Him who is the Sovereign, we being the subjects? Therefore it is incumbent on us to submit to, and to recognise His will, to love His law, to mark His rule, and to feel all the force of the sanctions appended to that rule. This may be very appropriately illustrated by the very phrase itself: it is "the light of the Lord"—the light of Jehovah, sovereign light; the light dispensed by Him for special purposes; and the natural light does not more clearly indicate its office than the moral light indicates the special intentions of the God of heaven. This light is given for a special purpose; it is directing light; and saving light; it regulates the degree of personal as well as collective responsibility. 2. Then there is also obligation specially induced by conviction of privilege. Privilege exists wherever light exists. There was nothing in the Jewish Church which bore any comparison to the gift of religious truth to that nation. Any nation that has the light of the Lord and the ability to use it, is signally privileged, and attains the very altitude of human glory. All this is not given us for vain glory; it is conferred that we might preach Christ and bring the world under His government. 3. The blessings attendant on walking in the light of the Lord. There is personal salvation, for instance, diffused to the very greatest possible extent. Then, if you look at the subject simply in reference to Churches, there is a very powerful motive; for, to "walk in the light of the Lord" is the sole condition for retaining the light. (*G. Steward.*) *Walk in the light.*—From looking into the future Isaiah comes back to his work of trying to amend the present. He neither wastes time in singing funeral dirges over Israel's decay, nor spends his life in useless reveries about the future. He saw the sad present, and wept; he saw the bright future, and rejoiced; and then set to work with heart and tongue to arouse the nation, crying, "O house of Jacob," &c. So let us all act. I. THE SECRET CAUSE

OF THIS PEOPLE'S GUILT—moral and spiritual gloom. By implication, at least, we learn from this text that moral darkness is the fruitful mother of every species of iniquity. One master-stroke of Paul's pen gives the secret of the sins of Rome in his day—"their foolish heart was darkened." "The way of the wicked," says Solomon, "is as darkness." 1. Let us dwell upon the natural darkness of men. (1) Observe that sin blinds men as to its own nature. Its solicitations to our first parents were such as to hide from their innocent, unsuspecting minds all knowledge of its own hideous features; and not until it was too late did they know what an evil and bitter thing it was to sin against the Lord. Not till sin has done its work does it allow itself to be seen and known. It is in the mouth honey, but when eaten a deadly poison. It changes its shape like Proteus, and its colours like the chameleon. It has the fascinating voice of a siren, luring to destruction. (2) Sin also deceives men as to their own moral condition. (Isa. v. 20.) (3) Sin, moreover, hides from man the deep spirituality of the Divine law. He is in the dark as to its inner meaning and far-reaching influence. If he observes the letter of the law he thinks he has done well. He altogether overlooks the fact that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." (4) Sin also darkens the mind and heart of man as to the Divine character. This must be so, because it is only the pure in heart who can see God. 2. This darkness is wilfully and wickedly incurred. If the "house of Jacob" were ignorant of the character of God, this was their own fault, for God had revealed Himself in manifold and marvellous ways. And if they had sufficient light who dwelt in the dim dawn of revelation, what shall be said of us who have the accumulated light of intervening centuries? II. We have THE ONE REMEDY DECLARED. "Walk in the light of the Lord." Like all Divine remedies it is striking in its simplicity. 1. Get into the light. Conversion is the passing of the soul "out of darkness into His marvellous light." What is this light? (1) The people to whom this exhortation was first addressed would, I think, understand by it the light of the Divine Word. To Israel the words of the prophet meant, "Study the law of the Lord, and so come into the light of that law." To us they mean, "Search the Scriptures," and so come into the light of Divine truth. Bible-reading of itself will not save, but it reveals the Saviour who can and will. (2) Isaiah also meant by this exhortation that they should get into the light of communion with God. They had sought fellowship with idols, but now Isaiah calls them to return to fellowship with Jehovah. Every blessing is born of communion. The diamond which sparkles and flashes out rays of light was once but a piece of black coal. It had no inherent light. It is as if by some mysterious process the light has become absorbed until it has transformed that black substance into the likeness of its own essence. Thus the nature of the sinner, black and dark through sin, becomes, in communion with the eternal, pure and beautiful with the light of God. 2. Make progress in the light. "Walk in the light." Both the Old Testament and the New speak of the daily life of the godly man as a walk, suggesting that it is to be a progressive life. 3. Associate with the children of light. "Let us walk in the light of the Lord," says Isaiah. He will not walk in the light alone, but will seek the company of those like-minded with himself. He will use his influence to induce others to walk in the light with him. (*W. Williams.*) *The gentle strength of light*:—I have seen the sun with a little ray of distant light challenge all the powers of darkness, and without violence and noise, climbing up the hill, hath made night so retire that its memory was lost in the joys and sprightliness of the morning. If physical light hath such gentle strength, how much more hath spiritual. (*Bp. Taylor.*) *Walking in the light ensures ever-increasing revelation*:—That is the only preparation for further revelation. Walking in the light, we shall receive increase of illumination; thankful for the morning dawn, we shall see the noontide splendour; faithful in a little, we shall be entrusted with much; honest children of the twilight, we shall yet see things in their largest and grandest reality. If we do the will, we shall know the doctrine. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Nations prosper as they walk in the light of the Lord*:—There is inscribed upon the pedestal of the statue of Samuel Morley, late M.P. for Bristol, this sentence, quoted from a speech of his, that tallies with the experience of every country, ancient or modern: "I believe that the power of England is to be reckoned, not by her wealth or armies, but the purity and virtue of the great mass of her population." (*F. Sessions.*) *National religion*:—Religious ideas alone have power to transform a nation's tendencies and actions. The

religious idea is the very breath of humanity,—its life, soul, conscience, and manifestation. (*Mazzini.*) *The light cure*:—Lately we have discovered a new method by which a terrible disease can be cured. It is called the light method, and the cure is wrought by concentrating upon the scarred and diseased form a powerful and peculiar light. The effect of the light is so great that in time the disease is arrested and the skin becomes healthy and natural. (*Sunday School Chronicle.*) *Best things seen in God's light*:—Dr. Charles Berry said, in the last pastoral letter he wrote, "There are some things—the best things—that can only be seen when the lights of life are turned low, and the light of God is left to shine alone." *The limitations of earthly light*:—Clear and brilliant light often brings out exquisite colours, as happens among the Alps and also in the north frigid zone, where the humble little plants called lichens and mosses are in many cases dyed of the most brilliant hues, purple and gold predominating. Warmth, in like manner, will stimulate vegetable growth in the most astonishing manner, but it is growth not necessarily accompanied by the secretion of valuable substances, such as give quality and real importance to the plant. In English hot-houses, for example, we have plenty of spice-trees, those generous plants that yield cinnamon and cassia, the nutmeg and the clove; but although healthy and blossoming freely, they never mature their aromatic secretions. Though they have artificial heat equal to that of their native islands, which burn beneath the sun of the Indian Ocean, we cannot supply them with similar and proportionate solar light. Our cloudy skies shut us in from the full and direct radiance of the sunshine, and wanting this, heat alone will not avail. (*Scientific Illustrations and Symbols.*)

**Vers. 6-9. Therefore Thou hast forsaken Thy people.—God never forsakes without good reason**:—"Therefore Thou hast forsaken Thy people." The term is logical. God never forsakes His people in any whimsical way: He is not a man, or a son of man, that He should treat His creatures arbitrarily, moodily,—now full of sunshine in relation to them, and now covered with great clouds, without giving any reason for the change. It is a most noticeable feature in Biblical revelation that when God forsakes men He gives the reason for abandoning them. The reason is always moral. God never leaves man because he is little, or weak, or self-distrustful, or friendless, or homeless, or broken-hearted; when God forsakes man it is because man has first forsaken Him, broken His laws, defied His sword, challenged His judgment, forsaken with ungrateful abandonment the altar at which the life has received its richest blessing. So, never let us neglect the word "therefore" in reading concerning Divine judgments. God will never forsake the life that trusts Him. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *A forsaken people*:—Read: "for Thou hast cast off . . . they strike hands" (make alliances) "with the children of strangers." (*A. B. Davidson, LL.D.*) *God claims the sole sovereignty of the life*:—When we are forsaken it is because we have forsaken God. Is God to be the companion of idols? Is the Lord to be invited into darkened rooms, that He may be one of the deities of the universe, and take His place in order of seniority or of nominal superiority? Is He to be invited to compete with the fancies of the human brain for the sovereignty of human mind and the arbitrament of human destiny? Herein He is a jealous God. "The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." If we make gods we must be content with the manufactures which we produce; but we never can persuade the eternal God to sit down with our wooden deities, and hold counsel with the inventions and fictions of a diseased imagination. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." "If Baal be God, serve him; if the Lord, serve Him." (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *God had forsaken them as their Father and Friend*, but He comes to call them to account as their Judge. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *A sad sequence: money leading to idolatry*:—Observe how the sequence runs: money in abundance: money will buy horses, and horses stand for power: horses will need chariots, and chariots mean dash, speed, ostentation—money, horses, chariots, can men end there? They cannot; and given money, horses, chariots, without a corresponding sanctification, without the inworking of that spirit of self-control which expresses the action of the Holy Ghost, and you compel men to go farther and to fill their land with idols. The sequence cannot be broken. Men may have money, horses, chariots, and the true God; but when men have money, horses, chariots, and no god that is true, they will make gods for themselves, for they must eke out their ostentation by

some sort of nominal piety. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Spiritual idolatry* :—Men will build churches; men must have religious rites and ceremonies; and what can suit the worldly man better than an idol that takes no notice of him, a wooden deity that never troubles him with its disciplinary obligations? (*Ibid.*) *An honoured yet God-forsaken people* :—I. The house of Jacob is here honoured with the character of THE PEOPLE OF GOD. They were His in a special manner, in consequence of His choosing them for His peculiar people; redeeming them with a strong hand and stretched out arm; and entering into covenant with them, so that they became His property, were called by His name, and professedly devoted to His service. II. Notwithstanding this intimate connection, GOD HAD FORSAKEN THEM. He took off the restraining influence of His providence, whereby He prevented their enemies from executing their destruction; He removed the hedge of His kind protection, by which they enjoyed the most agreeable safety. He withheld from them His gracious direction, which had attended them in all their fortunes. The Most High hid counsel from them, so that they groped at noon day. He withdrew from them His Divine favour, which had long compassed them as a shield; He denied them His gracious presence and Holy Spirit, which was the beauty and glory of their assemblies, having in reserve for them the most awful temporal calamities. (*R. Macculloch.*)

Ver. 7. *Their land also is full of silver and gold.*—*An up-to-date inventory* :—There is something startlingly modern about this chapter; if you sit down to analyse it, you will feel that there is something startlingly up-to-date about the inventory. What did this proud people make their boast about? 1. The abundance of their treasure; “their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures.” 2. Their shipping and their active commerce; “all the ships of Tarshish.” 3. Their military equipment; “their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots.” 4. Their natural defences; “all the high mountains, all the hills that are lifted up.” 5. Their artificial defences; “every high tower, every fenced wall.” 6. The wealth of their timber; “all the cedars of Lebanon, all the oaks of Bashan.” 7. They boasted even of the treasures of their art; “all pleasant pictures.” (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *Gold may shut out the vision of God* :—An old proverb runs, “The sixpence in the man’s eye prevented him from seeing the sovereign at the end of his nose.” And some men allow the passion for money to become so all-absorbing that the coin fills all their vision and shuts out God and His heaven. (*W. C. Bonner.*)

Ver. 8. *Their land also is full of idols.*—*Idols* :—The philosophic theory of polytheism is “one centre, many emanations.” Iamblicus and Porphyry defend it on this line against the monotheism of early Christianity. Hermes Trismegistus, according to St. Augustine, says the Egyptians regarded images as being merely the bodies of the gods. In India there may be seen any day of the week the ceremony of praying a spirit of Vishnu or of Shiva into a statue, or into a symbolic stone, by the Brahmin priest. The priestly theory is one of “consubstantiation,” like the Lutheran theory of the Eucharist, the difference being between the spiritual indwelling in material bread and material wine in the one case, and material wood and stone in the other. The gods, thus made visible to the common people, are endowed, by the popular consent, with human passions and human prejudices. Each represents one or more of these human propensities. Some are emblems of the reproductive powers of nature—fertilizers of the flocks and fields. Their worship, pure at the first possibly, became beyond all telling, licentious and abominable. (*F. Sessions.*)

Ver. 9. *The mean man.*—*The mean man* :—“Mean” there does not mean selfish or stingy, but the man between two extremes, the mean, average, ordinary man. The mean man and the great man are both bowing—what are they bowing to? Something beneath them; they have lost the sense of their dignity, and they have forgotten that they are kings, and now they are bowing down to things that they ought to control. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*)

Ver. 10. *Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust.*—*The sinner’s ignominy before the manifestation of God’s glory* :—No other course is now

left open for them but to follow the sarcastic command of the prophet: "Creep into the rock, and bury thyself in the dust, before the dread look of Jehovah, and before the glory of His majesty!" The nation that was supposed to be a glorious one shall and must creep away and hide itself ignominiously, when the glory of God which it had rejected, but which alone is true glory, is judicially manifested. It must conceal itself in holes of the rocks as if from a host of foes (Judg. vi. 2; 1 Sam. xiii. 6, xiv. 11), and bury themselves with their faces in the sand, as from the deadly simoom of the desert, that they may but avoid the necessity of enduring this intolerable sight. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*)

Ver. 11. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled . . . the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.—*Man humbled and Christ exalted*:—The day may be very properly applied to any of those days when the Lord abases the pride of guilty man, or when He makes His presence felt by the power of His Spirit upon the heart; for it is then the lofty looks of man are humbled; it is then the haughtiness of man is bowed down, and the Lord is exalted in the heart. What other than this is God's object in the Gospel? It is definitely that self may be humbled, and Christ exalted. I. Let us look at some points on which MEN ARE APT TO BE LIFTED UP and to bolster themselves up in their pride and self-sufficiency. 1. They hold that they have natural ability to understand the Word of God. What saith the Scripture upon this point? (1 Cor. ii. 11, &c.) How many take up the Word of God to read it just as they would any other book, forgetting its character—forgetting its object! They read it merely to know, not in order to be. Whereas the value of the Book is, that it is to tell upon man's character. It is to make him altogether a new creature in Christ Jesus. 2. Another point of deep importance is the opinion which men have with respect to their power to save themselves. It is not that they think that they can actually blot out their sins, or that they can perfectly keep God's law; but they, in imagination, strike a kind of balance between their good and bad deeds. They think that there is something good in what they do, and that what they fail in Christ will make up; and the consequence is, there is no real humiliation before God while this idea lasts. 3. The foolish thoughts men have of the character of God, as if He were such an one as themselves. You will often hear men speak of what they conceive the justice of God to be, without attending in the smallest degree to the declarations which He makes of Himself in His Holy Word. They speak as though they thought the difference between themselves and God, who is holy, is one of degree merely, and not of nature. They put on one side altogether the fact that God is a Spirit, and that they themselves are carnal, and they speak as if morality would fit a man for heaven, utterly ignoring the words of the Lord, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Men, indeed, form their own opinions; but remember the way in which God speaks of it; "Thou thoughtest that I was such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee." II. Now, all these mistaken views are so many sources of pride in men; but when the Holy Spirit comes into the heart in power, they ARE BOWED DOWN AND HUMBLD BEFORE GOD. One of the effects produced by the Holy Spirit, when He comes upon a man's heart, is to make him consider his ways. He looks to himself and sees nothing but sin; that there is not one single ground of hope; and when the Holy Spirit has graciously brought him to this point, then He shows him the salvation of Christ. And then in this exaltation of the Lord Jesus comes the true abasement of the man himself. Lessons.—1. The object of all God's dispensations is to humble us, and to bring us down to the feet of Christ. 2. The nature of true faith. It is humility; it is dependence; it is coming down from all self-confidence; it is resting upon another, and that Christ alone. (*J. W. Reeve, M.A.*) *God exalted*:—1. By entertaining elevating apprehensions of His infinite majesty, and exercising suitable affections towards Him—fearing Him who pours contempt upon princes, trusting in Him in whom is everlasting strength, and loving Him in whose favour there is life. 2. By celebrating the praises of His Divine excellencies with gratitude and joy. 3. By such conduct as may give the most sensible and lively representation of God—beginning, carrying on, and ending all their businesses in Him; making His love the principle, His law the rule, and His glory the end of all their actions. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Humility*:—Life is a long lesson in humility. (*J. M. Barrie.*)

Vers. 12-17. **The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty.**—*Scepticism discomfited by Christ's advent*:—I. Among the CAUSES OF THE SPIRIT OF RELIGIOUS SCEPTICISM there are—1. An early habit of spiritual negligence. 2. A state of exaggerated and credulous belief. II. Consider the INSEPARABLE CONSEQUENCES OF SUCH A STATE, whatever be the peculiar causes out of which it springs. 1. He who is in suspense about the truth of the Gospel cannot pray. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is." He who feels that he has sinned, and that God is holy, knows that he needs a mediator; and he that would trust in a mediator must believe that He is. 2. He cannot resist sin. He who is in suspense about the truth of Christ's Gospel is as weak as he who denies it, yea, weaker. For the other knows that he is thrown upon the resources of his own unaided strength, and he summons them all together for his support. But the man who doubts is a divided man. He has cast off his other armour; and this, the armour of God, he cannot take, for he has not proved it. III. THINK WHAT THE ADVENT WILL BE TO SUCH A MIND. The day of the Lord of hosts will be "upon" it, and will bring it low. We inquired whether there was a day coming; and behold, it is come. While we inquired and reasoned and speculated, He of whom we doubted was carrying on His judgment upon us. (C. J. Vaughan, D.D.) *The day of the Lord*:—The flood, the destruction of Sodom, the invasion of Judæa in the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah, the taking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar or by Titus, were held by the Jewish prophets and preachers—as the like national crises in ancient and in modern history have ever been held by Christian philosophers and historians—to be "days of the Lord," in which He has come to judge the earth; and partial anticipations of the last judgment of the world. (Sir E. Strachey, Bart.) *The day of the Lord and the majestic beauty of nature* (vers. 13, 14):—Has this language a merely figurative meaning? . . . In order to understand the prophet we must bear in mind what sacred Scripture assumes throughout, that all nature is joined with man to form one common history; that man and the whole world of nature are inseparably connected as centre and circumference; that this circumference likewise is under the influence of the sin which proceeds from man, as well as under the wrath and the grace which proceed from God to man; that the judgments of God, as proved by the history of nations, bring a share of suffering to the subject creation, and that this participation of the lower creation in the corruption and the glory of man will come into special prominence at the close of this world's history, as it did at the beginning; and lastly, the world in its present form, in order to become an object of the unmixed good pleasure of God, stands as much in need of a regeneration (*παλιγγενεσία*) as the corporeal part of man himself. In accordance with this fundamental view of the Scriptures, therefore, we cannot wonder that, when the judgment of God goes forth upon Israel, it extends to the land of Israel, and, along with the false glory of the nation, overthrows everything glorious in surrounding nature which has been forced to minister to the national pride and love of display, and to which the national sin adhered in many ways. What the prophet predicts was already actually beginning to be fulfilled in the military inroads of the Assyrians. The cedar forest of Lebanon was being unsparingly shorn; the hills and vales of the country were trodden down and laid waste, and, during the period of the world's history, beginning with Tiglath-pileser, the holy land was being reduced to a shadow of its former predicted beauty. (F. Delitzsch.) *The Lord of hosts*:—All the creatures in the universe are the hosts or armies of Jehovah; angels, who excel in strength; the sun, the moon, and the stars; the thunder and the lightning; the wind, the hail, and the rain; the storm and the tempest; the most insignificant insects, such as the flies and the caterpillars; yea, the sand of the sea and the dust of the earth. (R. Macculloch.) *The day of the Lord upon the proud and lofty*:—Is it personal strength, vigour, and firmness of constitution with which he is elated? Though he be among the sons of the mighty, strong as the children of Anak, the weakness of God is stronger than men; before the Almighty, he is only as a grasshopper, and is easily crushed as the moth. Is it courage and fortitude which hath rendered him valiant, and made his heart as the heart of a lion? He who saith to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, can quickly deprive him of his courage, and render him timorous and faint-hearted, so as to tremble at the shaking of a leaf. Is it riches which are reckoned a strong tower, a defence, and the sinews of strength? The day of the Lord shall blow upon them, and they shall pass away as the flower of the field, or an eagle flying toward heaven. Is

it honour and renown that hath lift him up to the pinnacle of earthly glory? God, who overthroweth the mighty, shall bring down all that dignity, on account of which he highly valued himself, and reduce him to the most humiliating condition. History, sacred and profane, confirms the truth of this prediction. (*Ibid.*) *Man humiliated*:—Zedekiah, King of Judah, deprived of his royal dignity, of his sons, who were slain before his eyes, and then of his eyesight, was bound in fetters of brass, and carried to Babylon. Bajazet, the Emperor of Turkey, was bound with fetters of gold, by the victorious Tamerlane, and carried along with him in his march through Asia, in an iron cage, as an object of ridicule. Henry V., Emperor of Germany, was reduced to such poverty, that he went to the great church which he himself had built at Spire, begging the place of a chorister, to keep him from starving. (*Ibid.*) *Ships of Tarshish* are deep sea ships. Possibly Tartessus, west of the straits of Gibraltar. (*A. B. Davidson, LL.D.*)

Ver. 16. *Pleasant pictures*.—*The proper use of art*:—Sir Joshua Reynolds wisely stated the canon for artists when, referring to the choice of subjects, he said, "No subject can be proper that is not generally interesting. It ought to be either some eminent instance of heroic action or heroic suffering. There must be something, either in the action or in the object, in which men are universally concerned, and which publicly strikes upon the public sympathy." They who are not content to copy what is ignoble, or reproduce what is insignificant—who use art to expound and apply the teaching of God in nature and revelation—who design to address the heart, and so elevate the imaginations and judgments of men, are benefactors of their race—ministers at the altar of truth and righteousness. The work of such artists can be regarded as eminently sacred. (*J. H. Hitchens, D.D.*) *The far-reaching influence of art*:—The preacher's voice must be occasionally silenced by weariness, and ultimately hushed by death; but the artist's pictures continue to tell their own tale, and enforce their own lessons to all spectators, night and day, so long as they may be preserved. The author's book, upon the loftiest possible theme, can be read only by those who are familiar with the language in which it is written, and among the would-be readers will be some who, being unaccustomed to the laws of thought, will lay the book aside as uninteresting; but pictures are biographies, histories, homilies, poems which, without words, can be studied at a glance. (*Ibid.*) *Pictures* are by some relegated to the realm of the trivial, accidental, sentimental, or worldly, but the text shows that God scrutinises pictures, and whether they are good or bad, whether used for right or wrong purposes, is a matter of Divine observation and judgment. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *The prostitution of art*:—That the artist's pencil and the engraver's knife have sometimes been made subservient to the kingdom of evil is frankly admitted. After the ashes and scoriæ were removed from Herculaneum and Pompeii the walls of those cities discovered to the explorers a degradation in art which cannot be exaggerated. Satan and all his imps have always wanted the fingering of the easel; they would rather have possession of that than the art of printing, for types are not so potent and quick for evil as pictures. (*Ibid.*) *Bad pictures should be avoided*:—Pliny the elder lost his life by going near enough to see the eruption of Vesuvius, and the further you can stand off from the burning crater of sin, the better. Never till the books of the Last Day are opened shall we know what has been the dire harvest of evil pictorials and unbecoming art galleries. Despoil a man's imagination and he becomes a moral carcase. The show windows of English and American cities in which have sometimes hung long lines of brazen actors and actresses in style insulting to all propriety, have made a broad path to death for multitudes of people. (*Ibid.*) *The value of Bible pictures*:—I refer to your memory and mine when I ask if your knowledge of the Holy Scriptures has not been mightily augmented by the woodcuts or engravings in the old family Bible, which father and mother read out of, and laid on the table in the old homestead when you were boys and girls. The Bible scenes which we all carry in our minds were not gotten from the Bible typology, but from the Bible pictures. To prove the truth of it in my own case, the other day I took up the old family Bible which I inherited. Sure enough, what I have carried in my mind of Jacob's ladder was exactly the Bible engraving of Jacob's ladder; and so with Samson carrying off the gates of Gaza; Elisha restoring the Shunammite's son; the massacre of the innocents; Christ blessing little children; the Crucifixion, and the Last Judgment. My idea of all these is that of the old Bible engravings which I scanned before I could read

a word. (*Ibid.*) *Gustave Doré's pictures* :—In 1833 forth from Strassburg, Germany, there came a child that was to eclipse in speed and boldness and grandeur anything and everything that the world had seen since the first colour appeared on the sky at the creation, Paul Gustave Doré. At eleven years of age he published marvellous lithographs of his own. Saying nothing of what he did for Milton's *Paradise Lost*, emblazoning it on the attention of the world, he takes up the Book of books, the monarch of literature, the Bible, and in his pictures "The Creation of Light," "The Trial of Abraham's Faith," "The Burial of Sarah," "Joseph Sold by his Brethren," "The Brazen Serpent," "Boaz and Ruth," "David and Goliath," "The Transfiguration," "The Marriage in Cana," "Babylon Fallen,"—two hundred and five Scriptural scenes in all,—and that with a boldness and grasp and almost supernatural afflatus that make the heart throb, and the brain reel, and the tears start, and the cheeks blanch, and the entire nature quake with the tremendous things of God and eternity and the dead. I actually staggered down the steps of the London Art Gallery under the power of Doré's "Christ Leaving the Prætorium." Profess you to be a Christian man or woman, and see no Divine mission in art, and acknowledge you no obligation either in thanks to God or man? (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 18. **And the idols He shall utterly abolish.**—*The cessation of idolatry* :—In heathen systems of religion, God and nature are not kept distinct. His personality, also, is confounded. The fears and hopes of idolaters are projected into deities. Two things are necessary to destroy idolatry in this its grossest form. I. THE PREVALENCE OF THE WORD OF GOD. 1. Within its pages God and nature are carefully distinguished and separated. 2. Here His personality is clearly presented. 3. Here commands against idolatry are fully and solemnly promulgated. 4. Here the true God is set forth in all the glorious attributes that constitute His character, allegiance is commanded, service demanded, and every soul held to a strict accountability. II. THE PREVALENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN CIVILISATION. 1. The Bible is indispensable. Heathen science is insufficient to deliver men from idolatry, as witness Rome and Greece. 2. Mere science is in danger of becoming materialistic or agnostic. 3. Science needs to be vitalised by the Bible, the moral law, and conscience. Reflections—1. Science is the handmaid of the Bible. 2. There can be no contradiction between the work of God and the Word of God. 3. It is the duty of every Christian to assist in the circulation of the Bible, to the end that every idol on the face of the earth may be speedily destroyed. (*Homiletic Review.*) *The evils of idolatry and the means of its abolition* :—The progress of Christianity in the world has already been so great and wonderful as to carry evidence of its Divine original, and of its promised final triumph over every false religion. I. THE EVIL TO BE ABOLISHED. Idolatry. It has been commonly and very properly distinguished as of two kinds, literal and spiritual. Spiritual idolatry is an evil which, by the apostasy of our nature, attaches to all mankind, whether inhabiting Christian or pagan regions, except those individuals whose hearts have experienced a renovation by the Spirit of God. It is to literal idolatry that the prophet refers in the text—this the connection shows, where mention is made of those idols of silver and gold which the converted idolaters would cast away. The progress of Christianity was, from the first, marked by the cessation of idol worship. There are two principal points of view in which we may regard the evil nature and effects of idolatry—its aspect toward God and its aspect toward man. In the former aspect, it appears as a crime; in the latter as a calamity: thus contemplated, it appears as an evil destructive equally to the Divine glory and to human happiness. Man naturally tends to this evil; and one generation after another gradually accumulated the follies of superstition, till it reached the monstrous extreme of gross idolatry. 1. The Word of God everywhere reprobates idolatry as an abominable thing which the soul of God abhors. To provide against it was the principal object in the political and municipal department of the Mosaic law. It is expressly prohibited by the first and second commandments of the moral law. The golden calf was intended as a representative of the God of Israel; and the calves set up by Jeroboam were the same: yet the worship of the golden calf occasioned the slaughter, by the Divine command, of three thousand persons; and the executioners of Divine vengeance were extolled for having forgotten the feelings of nature toward their nearest kindred: every man was commanded to slay his brother or his son, and so to consecrate himself to the Lord. Where



the honour of God was so deeply concerned, men were to lose sight of common humanity. When the Israelites were tempted by the artifices of Balaam to commit idolatry at Baal Peor, twenty-four thousand were slain at once; the memory of Phinehas was immortalised on account of the holy zeal he displayed in the destruction of certain conspicuous offenders; and the Moabites were devoted to extermination, because, in this respect, they had proved a snare to Israel. Idolatry is, with respect to the government of God, what treason or rebellion is with respect to civil government. It is the setting up of an idol in the place of the supreme Power; an affront offered to that Majesty, in which all order and authority is combined and centred, and which is the fountain of all social blessings. Idolatry is an evil which taints every apparent virtue; because it destroys the soul of duty, which is conformity to the Divine command.

2. But we turn to contemplate idolatry on another side; in its aspect toward man, its influence on society. The apostle Paul informs us (Rom. i. 19-25) that God hath shown to men what may be known concerning Himself; that His invisible Being, His eternal power and Godhead, may be clearly seen and understood by the works of creation; so that those are without excuse who have changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image in the likeness of corruptible man, of birds and beasts and reptiles. They are without excuse; their conduct admits of no apology. The origin of all the atrocities they committed is to be found in aversion to God; dislike of the spirituality and purity of His character; a desire, like Cain, to retire from the presence of their Maker; a wish to forget a Being whose character they knew to be utterly uncongenial with their own. This disposition originally led men to substitute idols for God. Those idols would, of course, be conceived of a character unlike that of God.

II. We must now advert to a brighter scene, presented by the prophet, when he assures us that JESUS CHRIST (of whom he is speaking) WILL UTTERLY ABOLISH IDOLATRY, and sweep it from the face of the earth with the "besom of destruction." In sending the Gospel to the heathen, you offer, as it were, the holy incense, like Moses, when he interposed between God and the perishing Israelites: you stand, like him, between the dead and the living,—the dead and the living for eternity!—and you stay the plague! No sooner did Christianity appear, than its formidable power, as the opponent of idolatry, was felt and manifested. Preaching, an instrument so unpromising in the view of carnal reason, has been the chief instrument employed in producing these moral revolutions. (*Robt. Hall.*)

*The downfall of idolatry:*—I wish to invite your attention to some of the reasons which induce me to believe that the heathen kingdoms of this world are to become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ.

I. Consider, in the first place, the LIGHT IN WHICH IDOLATRY IS REGARDED BY GOD. I am sometimes asked, "Why do you unsettle the religious convictions of a highly-civilised people like the Chinese? Is not the Supreme Governor of the universe pleased with the homage of His rational creatures when proceeding from sincere devotion, whether according to the one mode or the other, of the various religions which He has permitted to be published?" Lord Macartney, the first ambassador to China, in writing to the Chinese emperor, gave this as a reason why the English never attempted to dispute or disturb the worship of others. But in whatever light idolatry is regarded by man, we know that it is a thing on which God cannot look with indifference. When we see idolatry associated with immorality and inhumanity, our instincts are naturally shocked, but where such is not the case, even the missionary finds it difficult to think and feel rightly in regard to it. The spiritual idolatry within us has so distorted our intellectual vision and perverted our spiritual taste that it requires an effort to see the literal idolatry in all its hideous deformity and feel towards it as we ought. The whole of heathendom is under the dominion of the prince of this world, and he and his angels are the powers worshipped by the heathen, however little they themselves may be aware of the fact. The whole fabric of heathenism has been reared under the inspiration of the spirit of darkness, and it is he that sits as God in that vast temple, calling himself God, and receiving oblations, sacrifice, and adoration from his deluded votaries. God sees in idolatry not weakness only, but also sin, positive sin, in its nature God-opposing and soul-destroying. It is an attempt to rob Him of that glory, which is peculiarly His own, and to confer it on the creature. But if this is the light in which God regards idolatry, we may rationally infer that the abomination will not be permitted to pollute the world for ever.

II. My faith in THE FINAL TRIUMPH OF TRUTH in the progress of the race tends to produce this

conviction in my mind. At the commencement of the Christian era the Sun of Righteousness began to scatter the thick darkness with His beams. For some time it rose higher and higher, and thousands were rejoicing in the Divine light which promised speedily to fill the whole earth with life and gladness. But these hopes were no sooner raised than dashed to the ground. Two dark clouds rose between the nations and the sun, which, lowering and spreading, enveloped them in more than Egyptian darkness. These were the Papacy and Mohammedanism. It is estimated that more than eight hundred millions, or about two-thirds of the human family, are idolaters to-day. But matters shall not remain in this state for ever. The light is greater than the darkness; the truth of heaven is mightier than the falsehood of hell, and God is infinitely stronger than the devil. There may be occasionally something like a retrograde movement; the retrogression is only in appearance. The onward course of the race has been compared to that of a ship making way against the breeze; it consists of a series of movements, each of which seems to bear her away from the true direction, yet, in fact, brings her nearer and nearer to the destined haven. But if the race is progressing, and is ultimately to realise the object of its existence, idolatry must pass away. You cannot conceive of such a thing as the progress of the race along with the existence of idolatry. (*Griffith John.*) *The gods and goddesses of mythology*:—Homer, the first who appears to have composed a regular picture of idolatry, paints his Jupiter, or supreme deity, as deficient in every Divine attribute; in omnipotence, in justice, and even in domestic peace. He paints Juno as the victim of eternal jealousy; and with good reason for her jealousy, when the earth was peopled, according to Homer, with the illegitimate progeny of Jupiter, to whom almost every hero traced his pedigree. Mars was the personification of rage and violence; Mercury, the patron of artifice and theft. How far such a mythology influenced the character of its votaries, it is perhaps impossible for us to know: nothing could be more curious than to look into the mind of a heathen. But it is certain that the mind must have been exceedingly corrupted by the influence of such a creed: and probably each individual idolater would be influenced by the deity whose character happened to be most accommodated to his own peculiar passions. Achilles would emulate Mars in ferocity and deeds of blood; Ulysses would be like Mercury in craft and stratagem; while the ambitious mind of Alexander or Julius Cæsar would aspire to act a Jupiter on earth. What a state of society must that be, in which no vice, no crime could be perpetrated that was not sanctioned by the very objects of religious worship! What a religion that which exerted an antagonist force against conscience itself!—a religion which silenced or perverted the dictates of the moral sense, the thoughts that should either accuse or excuse us within! The temples of Venus, we are informed, were crowded by a thousand prostitutes, as servants and representatives of that licentious goddess; the very places of their worship were the scenes of their vices, and seemed as if they were designed to consecrate the worst part of their conduct! (*Robt. Hall.*) *Destroying an idol*:—Two young men owned and supported a Hindu temple in a village named Rammakal Cooke. Both, becoming Christians, determined after much prayer to destroy the idol which had previously been worshipped in the temple. When they went to carry out their intention, a vast concourse assembled to hinder them. One of them brought out the idol, and lifting it up, asked if any one would maintain its cause. The bold words awed the crowd, and then was heard the voice of a woman, saying, "Victory, victory to Jesus Christ." Others took up the cry. The idol was broken, the temple destroyed. (*J. Vaughan.*) *J. G. Paton's success among idol-worshippers*:—After the sinking of the well by Paton on Aniwa, and the discovery of water in answer to prayer, the chief, Namakei, in a striking address, declared for Jehovah. That very afternoon he and several others brought their idols to the mission house. Intense excitement followed. For weeks, company after company came, and, with tears, sobs, or shouts, laid down their cherished idols in heaps, again and again repeating, "Jehovah!" (*Sunday School Chronicle.*)

Ver. 19. *And they shall go into the holes of the rocks.*—*No escape from the judgments of God*:—They shall vainly seek to escape, as unarmed peasants or women fly into the nearest cave or hole when they hear the hoofs of some plundering tribe of Edom or Ishmael from the desert; but the judgment of Jehovah shall reach them, as the earthquake (then, as now, not uncommon in Judæa) would bring down the rock on him who sought refuge in it. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*)

**For fear of the Lord.**—*The fear of the Lord.*—1. It is some alleviation of a man's misfortune, if he knows the worst of it. For the apprehension of evil is sometimes worse than the evil itself. But this rule holds good only in temporal evils. 2. In the present state of things, men can harden their hearts against all the threatenings and terrors of the Lord: and have so accustomed themselves to dispute and disbelieve everything which is supernatural, that the concerns of another world make but faint impressions upon them. 3. The great foundation, therefore, on which the substance of our religion is built, is the belief of that day when God shall call men to an account for all the works which they have done in this life, and shall deal with them according to the promises and threatenings of His own word. 4. The way not to be afraid of the wrath of God then, is to stand in awe of it now. 5. He hath declared that He hath an extraordinary indignation at proud men, *i.e.*, such as have no regard for His laws, and that He will one day effectually humble them. 6. When we fear God as a merciful and gracious Father, we live easy in His family, and rejoice in His presence; but a guilty fear causes us to fly from Him like our first parent, dreading Him as justly provoked to be angry with us, and ready to execute His threatened judgments upon us. 7. "The fear of the Lord," says Solomon, "is the beginning of wisdom"; and I will venture to add, that it is the end of it too: for a man can never be denominated wise without this fear; whenever he lays it aside, he certainly plays the fool. 8. There is no man who, by daily reading and hearing of God's Word, keeps the rule of his life in his eye, but must see that he has manifold reasons to be humbled for not acting up to it. 9. And as horrible fear, so shall shame and confusion of face be the portion of all those who will not now be restrained by a virtuous modesty from offending against God. 10. Let us, then, wisely make choice of these restraints in due season, and keep up their influence so strong in our minds, that no sinful temptation, even in the closest retirement and most secret corner, may ever be able to prevail against them. (*W. Reading, M.A.*)

**Ver. 20. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver.**—*The return to God: idols cast away.*—The most beautiful sight on God's earth is a man turning home again to God. What will happen when he comes back? "They shall fling their idols to the bats and to the moles." Blind as a mole, blind as a bat, and the idols have to go to them. The man discovers that the thing by which he has been led is itself a blind thing, and he flings it to blind things, to the moles and the bats. He sees that the thing is blind: which means that he has recovered his own sight, and therefore Malachi says, "They shall return and discern." When they come back they shall see—see what things are, and what things are not, and no longer shall they be seduced. Their lands shall still be full of silver and gold. I have no wish for my country to be poor. But, when we have said that, we shall be able to alter the other phrase. No longer shall we say, "The land is full of silver and gold, the land is full of idols"; but this shall be the refrain, "The land is full of silver and gold, the glory of the Lord filleth the land as the waters cover the sea." (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*)

**Ver. 22. Cease ye from man.**—*The Septuagint omits this verse. (R.V. margin.) Man's insignificance and God's supremacy.*—Two things are indispensable to undisturbed tranquillity of mind, namely, humble and distrustful views of ourselves, and supreme and unfaltering reliance on God. So long as a man depends on his own wisdom, power, and goodness, he must be disquieted and unhappy. We can attain to substantial quiet only when we feel that our dependence is on a Being omnipotent, independent, and supreme, as well as abundant in truth and love (chap. xxvi. 3). To produce in us this twofold feeling is the constant aim of Holy Scripture. The grand scheme of redemption is founded on the principle here laid down. Man is sinful, ignorant, impotent to good, and of himself inclined only to evil, and that continually. God, in His infinite mercy, wisdom, and power, hath provided the only means by which he can be restored to holiness, to the favour of his God, and to life everlasting. But while there is in all religiously instructed people a readiness to concede to Christ the merit of salvation, there is too much disposition to rely upon ourselves and our own arrangements for success in temporal and physical things, and to claim the merit of it if we do succeed. There are various things that have a tendency to produce within us a feeling of self-dependence, and lead to the ignoring of the Divine power

and efficiency. There is in us too often an idolatry of human agency and natural or artificial instrumentalities, and too often these occupy in our souls the place of God. In the order of nature causes produce their legitimate effects, so that if we can secure certain antecedents we feel confident of corresponding results. To use all wisdom and discretion in the use of means is a plain duty. But the difficulty with us is, that in our reliance on secondary agencies we too often leave God out of the account. We forget that He is above all means, that He can work without them, or He can frustrate all our means and all our best-concerted plans. There is nothing that men are more disposed to confide in than superiority of intellect. Yet God has given us reasons sufficient to abate our idolatry of human talent. For—1. The largest capacity of man is really very small. Knowledge with all men is very limited, even in those that know the most. 2. Men of great capacity and uncommon attainments seldom, perhaps never, bear to be examined very closely. If one excel in one thing he is deficient in another. Sir Isaac Newton, great as he was in science and philosophy, failed in the common affairs of life. Laplace, whose extensive range of thought took in the whole mechanism of the planetary universe, did not at all justify the high opinion formed of him by Napoleon, when he, at the emperor's invitation, undertook the business of the statesman. 3. Men of the largest pretensions to mind have been and are still guilty of the puerile, the absurd, the degrading crime of idolatry. *E.g.*, Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, modern Hindoos. 4. The comparatively few specimens of unsullied, religious character. 5. We see in the record which God has given of His dealings with our race, a series of illustrations of man's inefficiency and God's supremacy. He has seldom used the means to accomplish an end that man would have selected or supposed. Egypt saved from perishing by a seven years' famine by a young, falsely accused slave, wrongfully cast into prison. Naaman. Deliverance of Israel from the Midianites (Judg. vii.). Destruction of Spanish Armada, Waterloo, &c. Lessons—(1) Because means sometimes fail, that is no good reason why we should expect the end without them. God ordinarily works by means. (2) We should not rely on the means as being effectual in and of themselves. (3) After having used all the agencies and all the discretion which wisdom and sagacity prescribe, we must still rely upon God for the issue. (4) Apply the same rule to spiritual things. We are to use all prescribed and prudent means; frequent the means of grace, &c. But these are only the means which bring us to God. (*J. Holdich, D.D.*)

*Ceasing from man.*—I. CEASE YE FROM EXPECTING TOO GREAT PERFECTION IN MAN. Many are sadly mistaken on this point. They have higher ideas of the excellency of human nature than the Word of God warrants. It is sad that our experience of life should chill its generous sympathies, and that the heart should become cold and selfish as our knowledge of mankind increases. We ought so to live that the more we become acquainted with human wickedness, the more our compassionate feelings should be enlarged; and that person has a Christian spirit whose experience of man's depravity and love for man have increased in the same ratio. II. THE RULE OF OUR TEXT WILL APPLY ALSO TO CHRISTIANS. Cease from expecting perfection in them. 1. The Bible teaches us to regard a Christian as different from others only as the man recovering from disease differs from one who is still under its full power, not as one in perfect health and strength. 2. As Christians we may learn to cease from expecting too much from our fellow-Christians. 3. We should cease, too, from making any fellow-Christian our model, or measuring our faith by his faithfulness. 4. And let us cease from expecting too much from Christian friendship. Christ was forsaken by the twelve, and at St. Paul's first answer before the Roman emperor, no man stood with him, but all forsook him. III. CEASE YE FROM THE FEAR OF MAN is another appropriate application of the text. 1. The Word of God warns us against this. Who can say that he pursues just that path which conscience approves without being drawn aside by the fear of man? And how strong is the antidote to such a fear which the text presents! His breath is in his nostrils! 2. We should be careful, however, that our ceasing from man be not attended with evil feelings towards him. If a poor man is fearless in the presence of the rich because he scorns them, that is wrong. If we go forward in the path of duty, undeterred by the opinion of the world, because we are self-opinionated, and care nothing for any conclusions except our own, that is wrong. IV. CEASE YE FROM MAN AS A SOURCE OF HAPPINESS. We build our enjoyments on relatives and friends. We gather around us those who are worthy of our love; our hearts begin to knit with theirs, and

we say, This is comfort, here is happiness. But one touch of death crumbles all to the dust, and leaves us to mourn over our disappointed expectations. (*W. H. Lewis, D.D.*) *God, man's only dependence*:—Our text speaks in a twofold manner: there is in it warning pointedly expressed; also instruction indirectly conveyed—I. REGARDING THE CONDITION OF MAN. II. REGARDING MAN'S DELIVERANCE AND SALVATION. III. REGARDING THE CONVERSION OF EVERY SAVED SINNER. Man cannot save you, whatever he may pretend to do. IV. REGARDING THE CHARACTER OF THE GOSPEL. Such is man that he will hold the truth with the head, and think he can be saved whilst his heart is in the world. V. REGARDING THE MAINTENANCE AND PROMULGATION OF DIVINE TRUTH IN THE EARTH. How frequently the necessity of this warning is seen in missionary enterprises! "Oh," say some, "you have got the right missionaries now; their heads are full of learning; they have very strong bodies, able to stand any climate; there is plenty of money in the missionary exchequer"; and away they go. Ah, "let not the rich man glory in his riches; let not the strong man glory in his strength; let not the wise man glory in his wisdom; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, saith the Lord God Almighty." And then, there is not only work to do abroad, but at home too. If you speak to some men about the infidelity and superstition at home, they will say, the government should do so and so, and make such and such an act of parliament. Do you think that men can be converted by acts of parliament? Oh! "cease ye from man." The text does not mean—1. That any unconverted person is to say, I will wait till God thinks proper to convert me. 2. That there is no necessity for men to preach the Gospel. Preaching is necessary, because God has ordained it. 3. That it is wrong for rulers or governments to give their legitimate aid to God's truth. Finally, we are taught the great duty of prayer to God. (*Hugh Allen, M.A.*) *Ceasing from man*:—I. WHAT THE EXHORTATION DOES NOT IMPLY. 1. That God wills our seclusion from the society of man. 2. That we are not to give any confidence to man. 3. That we are to withdraw from the appointed means of grace as being superior to them, or standing in no need of them. II. WHAT THE EXHORTATION DOES IMPLY. 1. That we should cease from all that vain admiration of the external appearance in the character and condition of men in which we are so prone to indulge. 2. That we should not indulge the desire of applause from man. 3. That we should not envy man—his popularity, prosperity, &c. 4. That we should cease from all such confidence in man as would supersede confidence in God. 5. That we should cease from the fear of man. 6. That we should cease from all expectations of perfection in the character of men, even of those who profess religion. 7. That we should cease from all inordinate attachment to creatures. III. THE ARGUMENT BY WHICH THIS EXHORTATION IS ENFORCED. Cease from man—1. Because he is a depraved creature, subject to violent and dangerous passions. 2. Because he is a deceitful creature, often deceiving himself as well as others. 3. Because he is a fickle and changeable creature. 4. Because he is a weak and helpless creature. 5. Because he is a dying creature. (*E. Parsons.*) *Man, "soul and soil"*:—Man is made up, as the old writers used to say, of soul and soil. Alas, the soil terribly soils his soul! "My soul cleaveth to the dust" might be the confession of every man in one sense or another. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Man, whose breath is in his nostrils*:—One consequence of the prevailing materialism of our corrupt nature is our craving for something tangible, audible, visible, as the object of our confidence. Man is, by nature, an idolater. The people of Isaiah's day were like the rest of their race: they showed their unspiritualness and their inability to walk in the light of the Lord by making their own wealth their chief confidence (ver. 7). Nations also, like the Israelitish people, are apt to idolise power; even power in the form of brute force. We read: "Their land also is full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots." These people, in the heat of their idolatry, set up many idols. Idolatry is common even here. May we not easily make idols of ourselves? There is nothing more absurd in the history of human nature than the fact that man is apt to trust in man. The sin is none the less accused because of its commonness. I. Our first inquiry is, WHAT IS MAN? This question is asked many times in Scripture, and it has been frequently answered with a copiousness of instruction. 1. What is man? He is assuredly a very feeble creature. He must be weak, for "his breath is in his nostrils." We measure the strength of a chain by its weakest link. See, then, how weak man

is, for he is weakness itself in a vital point. 2. Man, moreover, is a frail creature. It seems as though his life in his breath stood at the gates, ready to be gone, since it is in his nostrils. 3. Man is also a dying creature. Contemplate the dead! What think you now of your idol? 4. The text also reminds us that man is a very fickle creature. His breath is in his "nostrils." As his breath is affected by his health, so is he changed. To-day he loves, and to-morrow he hates; he promises fair, but he forgets his words. 5. If you read the chapter through, you will also find that man is a trembling creature, a cowardly creature, a creature, indeed, who, if he were not cowardly, yet has abundant reason to fear. (Read from ver. 19.) "They shall go into the holes of the rocks," &c. Think of the days of Divine wrath, and especially of the last dread day of Judgment, and of the dismay which will then seize upon many of the proud and great. Are you going to make these your confidants? II. WHAT IS TO BE OUR RELATION TO MAN, or what does the text mean when it says, "Cease ye from man"? It implies, that we very probably have too much to do with this poor creature man already. We may even require to reverse our present conduct, break up unions, cancel alliances, and alter the whole tenor of our conduct. 1. "Cease ye from man" means, first, cease to idolise him in your love. It is very common to idolise children. A mother who had lost her babe fretted and rebelled about it. She happened to be in a meeting of the Society of Friends, and there was nothing spoken that morning except this word by one female Friend who was moved, I doubt not, by the Spirit of God to say, "Verily, I perceive that children are idols." She did not know the condition of that mourner's mind, but it was the right word, and she to whom God applied it knew how true it was. She submitted her rebellious will, and at once was comforted. Cease ye from these little men and women; for their breath is in their nostrils, and indeed it is but feebly there in childhood. A proper and right love of children should be cultivated; but to carry this beyond its due measure is to grieve the Spirit of God. You can idolise a minister, you can idolise a poet, you can idolise a patron; but in so doing you break the first and greatest of the commandments, and you anger the Most High. 2. "Cease ye from man": cease to idolise him in your trust. 3. Cease to idolise any man by giving him undue honour. "Honour all men." A measure of courtesy and respect is to be paid to every person, and peculiarly to those whose offices demand it; therefore is it written, "Honour the king." Some also, by their character, deserve much respect from their fellow-men; but there is a limit to this, or we shall become sycophants and slaves, and, what is worse, idolaters. It grieves one to see how certain persons dare not even think, much less speak, till they have asked how other people think. The bulk of people are like a flock of sheep; there is a gap, and if one sheep goes through, all will follow. God's people should scorn such grovelling. If the Son shall make you free, you will be free indeed. 4. Equally does the text bid us cease from the fear of man. 5. Once more, cease from being worried about men. We ought to do all we can for our fellow-men to set them right and keep them right, both by teaching and by example; but certain folks think that everything must go according to their wishes, and if we cannot see eye to eye with them, they worry themselves and us. Let us not be unduly cast down if we cannot set everybody right. The body politic, common society, and especially the Church, may cause us great anxiety; but still the Lord reigneth, and we are not to let ourselves die of grief. He only requires of us what He enables us to do. 6. "But they say." What do they say? Let them say. It will not hurt you if you can only gird up the loins of your mind, and cease from man. "Oh, but they have accused me of this and that." Is it true? "No, sir, it is not true, and that is why it grieves me." If it were true it ought to trouble you; but if it is not true let it alone. Nine times out of ten if a boy makes a blot in his copy-book and borrows a knife to take it out, he makes the mess ten times worse; and as in your case there is no blot after all, you need not make one by attempting to remove what is not there. All the dirt that falls upon a good man will brush off when it is dry: but let him wait till it is dry, and not dirty his hands with wet mud. Let us think more of God and less of man. Come, let the Lord our God fill the whole horizon of our thoughts. Let our love go forth to Him; let us delight ourselves in Him. Let us trust in Him that liveth for ever, in Him whose promise never faileth. Cease ye from man because you have come to know the best of men, who is more than man, even the Lord Jesus Christ, and He has so fully become the beloved of your souls, that none can compare with Him.

Rest also in the great Father as to your providential cares: why rest in men when He careth for you? Rest in the Holy Spirit as to your spiritual needs; why need to depend on man? Yea, throw yourself entirely upon the God all-sufficient, El Shaddai, as Scripture calls Him. III. WHY ARE WE TO CEASE FROM MAN? The answer is, because he is nothing to be accounted of. Every man must cease from himself first, and then from all men, as his hope and his trust, because neither ourselves nor others are worthy of such confidence. "Wherein is he to be accounted of?" Compared with God man is less than nothing and vanity. Reckon him so, and act upon the reckoning. (*Ibid.*) *God, the Verity of verities*:—Care nothing for the vanity of vanities, but trust in the Verity of verities. (*Ibid.*) *Man's mortality*:—"His breath is in his nostrils," puffed out every moment, soon gone for good and all. Man is a dying creature, and may die quickly; our nostrils, in which our breath is, are of the outward parts of the body; what is there is like one standing at the door ready to depart. Nay, the doors of the nostrils are always open; the breath in them may slip away, ere we are aware, in a moment; wherein then is man to be accounted of? Alas, no reckoning is to be made of him; for he is not what he seems to be,—what he pretends to be, what we fancy him to be. (*M. Henry.*) *Insignificance of men*:—A Sultan, amusing himself with walking, observed a dervish sitting with a human skull in his lap, and appearing to be in a profound reverie. His attitude and manner surprised the Sultan, who demanded the cause of his being so deeply engaged in reflection. "Sire," said the dervish, "this skull was presented to me this morning, and I have from that moment been endeavouring, in vain, to discover whether it is the skull of a powerful monarch like your Majesty, or of a poor dervish like myself." (*Baxendale's Anecdotes.*) *Folly of man*:—It was once remarked to Lord Chesterfield that man is the only creature endowed with the power of laughter. "True," said the peer; "and you may add, perhaps, that he is the only creature that deserves to be laughed at." (*Timbs.*)

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### CHAPTER III.

*Outline of chapter*:—The first part opens with a general prediction of the loss of what they trusted in, beginning with the necessary means of subsistence (ver. 1). We have then an enumeration of the public men who were about to be removed, including civil, military, and religious functionaries, with the practitioners of certain arts (vers. 2, 3). As the effect of this removal, the government falls into incompetent hands (ver. 4). This is followed by insubordination and confusion (ver. 5). At length, no one is willing to accept public office, the people are wretched, and the commonwealth a ruin (vers. 6, 7). This ruin is declared to be the consequence of sin, and the people represented as their own destroyers (vers. 8, 9). God's judgments, it is true, are not indiscriminate. The innocent shall not perish with the guilty, but the guilty must suffer (vers. 10, 11). Incompetent and faithless rulers must especially be punished, who instead of being the guardians are the spoilers of the vineyard, instead of protectors the oppressors of the poor (vers. 12–15). As a principal cause of these prevailing evils, the prophet now denounces female luxury, and threatens it with condign punishment, privation, and disgrace (vers. 16, 17). This general denunciation is then amplified at great length, in a detailed enumeration of the ornaments which were about to be taken from them and succeeded by the badges of captivity and mourning (vers. 18–24). The agency to be employed in this retribution is a disastrous war, by which the men are to be swept off, and the country left desolate (vers. 25, 26). The extent of this calamity is represented by a lively exhibition of the disproportion between the male survivors and the other sex, suggesting at the time the forlorn condition of the widows of the slain (chap. iv. 1). (*J. A. Alexander.*)

**Vers. 1–3. For behold the Lord . . . doth take away . . . the mighty man.—National leaders removed**:—The Jewish nation, at this time, may be considered as represented by an old building, ready to fall into ruin, to prevent which many props had been added. These supports, on which it leaned, that were derived from the authority, the prudence and fortitude of its leading men, God threatens

to remove; in consequence of which the State should as certainly become ruinous as a decayed building, when the props on which it rested are taken away. (*R. Macculloch.*) *The death of the renowned*:—There is a tendency to trust in the arm of flesh. It would be most wicked if we were ungrateful for our great deliverers, raised up by that God to whom the shield of the earth belongeth; but, at the same time, it must be sinful to trust in them as if they were the authors of all, and, therefore, deserved all the glory. 1. We need the admonition which precedes this text—"Cease ye from man (whether prince or senator, soldier or orator, counsellor or captain), whose breath (whatever his strength or genius, talent or fame) is in his nostrils." 2. There is no such thing as chance; whether it be a hair which falls to the ground, or a sparrow that drops in its weary way across the field, or a prince smitten from his throne, or a dynasty broken—God is in them, giving, permitting, overruling, and sanctifying; it is not the shot or shell, the wave or wind, incident or accident, but God that "takes away," and those things which we suppose to have played the principal part, are merely servants sent out by God to lead the soldier from his duty in the field, to receive the crown of glory and war no more. 3. But not only is it the Lord, but He has right and jurisdiction to do so. He not only reigns, but He rules. Unsanctified interpositions of God are the darkest judgments; whilst therefore, we recognise His hand in giving, let us recognise His hand in taking away. A father and his child walk. They pick up a stone with a green substance, which appears worthless, and fit only to be cast away; but they apply the microscope, and this green substance on the stone he finds to be a magnificent though tiny forest. So it is with any fact that occurs. Man looks at it with his own eyes, sees it uninteresting; but when seen in the light of God's truth, he finds in it what is instructive and suggestive. 4. When God removes from a nation its props, pillars, and supports, He does so to lead that nation to see Himself more clearly and to lean on Him more entirely. 5. The Lord thus "takes away" in order to teach men impressively this lesson which man is very slow to learn—that death must come upon all. Death enters the cabinets of princes and statesmen, the camp of the hero, and the hut of the peasant, without paying the least respect to rank or royalty. (*J. Cumming, D.D.*) *The death of statesmen*:—I. Learn from the death of a great statesman THE WEIGHT OF GOVERNMENT IN A FALLEN WORLD. For when we see the mightiest minds that our country has produced, a Fox, a Pitt, a Liverpool, a Canning, one after another taking the weight of government upon them, and dropping under its weight into the arms of death—can we avoid thinking of the mighty mass of care that has pressed them down? II. We are taught THE WEAKNESS OF THE SHOULDERS OF MORTAL MEN. However mighty his shoulders may be, he must be a bold man that would venture to take up a burden that has crushed so many: and yet there are many that will venture on it; for there are those who delight in danger, who sport with difficulties, and who delight in doing what no one else can do. And it is well for society that there are men of moral courage. If all preferred the comfort and quiet of domestic life, how could the affairs of government go on? Yet there are some burdens, the weight of which will crush any mind, for the sons of Anak are not omnipotent. And how knows any man how near he is to this point, when he shall be overwhelmed with his own duties, distracted with his own cares, become a prey to the very thing in which he delighted? III. THE UNCERTAINTY OF ALL HUMAN AFFAIRS. We need to be taught this with a strong hand, for this warm piece of moving clay that is bustling about the earth, ready to drop to pieces every moment, is so swollen with vanity that it would fain fancy it is made of adamant. Therefore God supplies us with strong reasons, at certain seasons, to teach us the contrary. IV. OUR ABSOLUTE DEPENDENCE ON THE SUPREME GOVERNOR. When we behold the profound counsellor and the mighty orator, and are entranced with their talents and execution, we grow idolatrous, and think these men are more than mortal, and that society could not go on without them; little thinking that He who made them as they are, to be employed as He pleases, and to be laid aside when He pleases, can raise others equally fitted as they are. (*Exod. iv. 11.*) V. Another lesson which we should learn is, THE SACRED DUTY OF PRAYER FOR KINGS AND ALL IN AUTHORITY OVER US. We should make our supplications that councils may be assisted, that the cares of government may not overwhelm and destroy, that there may be a reasonable spirit prevalent in the public, so that it may be rendered less oppressive. VI. IN YOUR SUPPLICATIONS ESPECIALLY REMEMBER ZION, THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD. The Church has been compared to a building, and the world to a scaffold



placed around it in order to assist in rearing the edifice. **VII. Learn to PREPARE FOR OUR OWN DEATH.** (*J. Bennett, D.D.*) *The death of the renowned excites special attention and interest*:—In the humble cottage on some mountain slope, in some shaded valley or distant forest, or in the living wilderness of some great city, are the young and the old, the brave and the fair, passing away in unbroken procession to the dust of the sepulchre, and to the destinies of the life to come. But the great world without does not regard it. Like the leaves of autumn that strew our pathway, they sink into the grave, and their death is crowded from recollection by the never-ending succession of new events. But when the tall and graceful trees of the forest—the monarchs whose heads towered above the general altitude—are brought down by some resistless blow, their fall is attended with a louder crash, and the earth itself trembles beneath the shock: so, when the men who walk upon the loftier heights of place and power, when those whose intellectual stature as they move along the paths of science, of history, of literature, and of art, renders them pre-eminent above the general mass, are laid prostrate by the stroke of death, the event impresses itself more vividly upon the minds of men, and calls out from its hidden springs in the heart a profounder sentiment of sorrow. (*J. A. Todd.*) *The perils of greatness*:—Every state is set in the midst of danger, as all trees are set in the wind; but the tallest endure the greatest violence of the tempest. (*Bishop J. Taylor, D.D.*)

**Vers. 4-8. I will give children to be their princes.**—*Puerile government*:—Probably an abstract term used for a concrete—puerilities or childishnesses for childish persons. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *Juvenile government a curse*:—If it is in itself generally a misfortune when the king of a country is a lad (*Eccles. x. 16*), it is doubly so when the princes or magnates surrounding and advising him are also youths or youngsters in the bad sense of the term. . . . Varying humour, utterly unregulated and unrestrained, rules supreme. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *A foolish ruler: Justinian II. (of Constantinople)*:—The name of a triumphant lawgiver was dishonoured by the vices of a boy, who imitated his namesake only in the expensive luxury of building. His passions were strong; his understanding was feeble; and he was intoxicated with a foolish pride that his birth had given him the command of millions, of whom the smallest community would not have chosen him for their local magistrate. His favourite ministers were two beings the least susceptible of human sympathy, a eunuch and a monk; to the one he abandoned the palace, to the other the finances; the former corrected the emperor's mother with a scourge, the latter suspended the insolvent tributaries, with their heads downward, over a slow and smoky fire. (*Gibbon's Rome.*)

**Ver. 5. And the people shall be oppressed.**—*Tyranny*:—The dissolution of good order and political confusion. Oppression and pride everywhere prevail. (*R. Macculloch.*) *State-chaos*:—There is a natural relation of classes. Whilst all that is purely mechanical and arbitrary is to be viewed with suspicion, yet there is a natural sequence in things; there is, indeed, what is called a fitness or harmony of things; and when society is rightly inspired the base man knows that he is base, and his baseness is his weakness, and his weakness defines his position; and the child knows himself to be but a child, and therefore he behaves himself with discretion, and is limited by circumstances which he cannot control. Once let the moral centre be lost, and then you have lost all arithmetical counting, all geometrical relationship, all figure and form and mechanism and security, and the foursquare is thrown out of its parallel, and that which was right is numbered with that which is forbidden. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *An evil spirit in the nation*:—It is here threatened that God would send an evil spirit among them (*Judg. ix. 23*), which would make them—1. Injurious and unneighbourly one towards another. "The people shall be oppressed every one by his neighbour," and their princes, being children, take no care to restrain the oppressors, or relieve the oppressed. Nor is it to any purpose to appeal to them. 2. Insolent and disorderly towards their superiors. It is as ill an omen to a people as can be, when the rising generation among them is generally untractable, rude, and ungovernable, when "the child behaves himself proudly against the ancient"; whereas he should "rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man" (*Lev. xix. 32*). When young people are conceited and pert, and carry it scornfully towards their superiors, it is not only a reproach to themselves, but of ill consequence to the public; it slackens the reins of govern-

ment, and weakens the hands that hold them. It is likewise ill with a people when persons of honour cannot support their authority, but are affronted by the base and beggarly; when judges are insulted by the mob, and their power set at defiance. (*M. Henry.*) *A lamentable state of society*:—*Homo homini lupus*—man becomes a wolf to man; *jusque datum sceleri*—wickedness receives the stamp of law; *nec hospes ab hospite tutus*—the guest and the host are in danger from each other. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 6, 7. **A man shall take hold of his brother.**—*Seeking to transfer rulership*:—Here we have the law of primogeniture. By the law of the State it was right that the eldest son should take a certain definite and ruling position. But he was naked; he had not one rag with which to cover his nudity; and seeing one of his younger brethren with a coat on, with a garment on, he sprang upon him and said, By that coat I ask thee to take my place: thou hast at least so much, and I have nothing; come, be head of the family and be prince of the tribe. But the younger son scorned the proffered dignity. The moral base had gone, and therefore the mechanical dignity was of no account; the pedestal of righteousness had been struck away, and the statue of nominal dignity fell into the dust. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) "*Let this ruin be under thy hand*":—Or, according to a various reading, making a very good sense, "Take into thy hand our ruinous state." Endeavour, if possible, to retrieve our affairs, now in sad disorder, prognosticating our destruction as a people: deliver, if possible, from injustice and oppression, from foreign enemies and domestic troubles; and, in the prosecution of these great and important purposes, we will act as thy dutiful subjects. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Government going a-begging*:—Here—1. It is taken for granted that there is no way of redressing all these grievances and bringing things into order again, but by good magistrates, that shall be invested with power by common consent, and shall exert that power for the good of the community. And it is probable this was in many places the true origin of government. Men found it necessary to unite in a subjection to one who was thought fit for such a trust, in order to the welfare and safety of them all, being aware that they must be either ruled or ruined. 2. The case is represented as very deplorable, and things come to a sad pass; for—(1) Children being their princes, every man will think himself fit to prescribe who shall be a magistrate, and will be for preferring his own relations. (2) Men will find themselves under a necessity even of forcing power into the hands of those that are thought to be fit for it. Nay, a man shall urge it upon his brother; whereas, commonly, men are not willing that their equals should be their superiors; witness the envy of Joseph's brethren. 3. It will be looked upon as ground sufficient for the preferring a man to be a ruler, that he hath clothing better than his neighbours; a very poor qualification to recommend a man to a place of trust in the government. It was a sign the country was much impoverished, when it was a rare thing to find a man that had good clothes, or that could afford to buy himself an alderman's gown, or a judge's robes; and that the people were very unthinking, when they had so much respect to a man in gay clothing with a gold ring (*James ii. 2, 3*), that for the sake thereof they would make him their ruler. It had been some sense to have said, Thou hast wisdom, integrity, experience, be thou our ruler; but it was a jest to say, Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler. A poor, wise man, though in vile raiment, delivered a city (*Eccles. ix. 15*). (*Matthew Henry.*) "*I will not be an healer*":—"I do not want to be a surgeon"—he does not like to be a binder, namely, of the broken arms and legs and ribs of the ruined State (*xxx. 26, i. 6, lxi. 1*). (*F. Delitzsch.*) *A reason for refusing rulership*:—"In my house is neither bread nor clothing." If he saith true, it was a sign men's estates were sadly ruined; if he do not speak truth, it was a sign men's consciences were sadly debauched, when, to avoid the expense of an office, they would load themselves with the guilt of perjury. (*M. Henry.*) *Clothing in the East*:—It was customary in Eastern countries, where fashions did not vary as among us, to collect immense quantities of clothes and provisions, not only for the person's own use, and that of his family, but for presents upon proper occasions. This appears plainly, from the sacred writings, to have been the practice among the Jews. This, as a celebrated writer observes, explains the meaning of the excuse made by him that is desired to undertake the government. He alleges he hath not wherewithal to support the dignity of that station by such acts of liberality and hospitality as the law and custom required of persons in high rank. (*R. Macculloch.*)

Ver. 8. For Jerusalem is ruined. — “*Jerusalem is ruined!*” — *forfeited privilege*. — What a verse is the eighth! We cannot even now read it without quailing under the awful representation — “*For Jerusalem is ruined.*” We thought Jerusalem never could be ruined: the mountains were round about her, and to the old psalmists those mountains signified the security of the righteous. Is beauty no protection? is ancient history of no account? will not the dead kings of Judah speak for her in the time of her trial? We cannot live upon our past, upon our forefathers, upon our vanished glories; morality must be as fresh as the dew of the morning; our righteousness must be as clear, personal, and definite as the action which we perform at the living moment. A man cannot lay up a character and fall back upon it if his present conduct is out of keeping with it; he himself takes the juice and sap out of the character which he once lived. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) “*The eyes of His glory*”: — The glory of God is that eternal manifestation of His holy nature in its splendour which man pictures to himself anthropomorphically, because he cannot conceive of anything more sublime than the human form. It is in this glorious form that Jehovah looks upon His people. In this is mirrored His condescending yet jealous love, His holy love, which breaks forth into wrath against all who requite His love with hate. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *The fall of the Campanile at St. Mark's, Venice*: — Latterly it had been ignobly used as an office for the State lotteries which are demoralising Italy. In cutting the wall for the purposes of that office, the whole building had been weakened. The event spoke as a parable whose meaning could not be missed. That great, stately tower, with its history of a thousand years, fell, because of the little lottery office which cut into it and weakened it. There is an application of the parable to our own national life. Is it possible that a great empire like ours can fall through the gambling habit — the lowest and meanest of the vices — insidiously spreading through all classes of the community? Is it possible to conceive that such a vice should so undermine the character of the people, that the stately structure, built by heroic men in the past, shall crash down in swift ruin at the end? (*R. F. Horton, D.D.*) *Ruinous effects of sin*: — It is just like what happens sometimes in a forest. In a calm day, when all else is silent, something crashes heavily through the branches, and we know a tree has fallen. No axe was lifted, no white lightning streamed, there was only a passing breeze. The wind that did but gently sway the little flower, shook down that towering tree, because long before the catastrophe, its vital progress had been disturbed, and millions of foul insects had entered it, which, leaving its bark untouched, and its boughs unshorn of their glory, had slowly, silently, withered its strong fibres and hollowed its core. (*C. Stanford.*)

Ver. 9. The shew of their countenance doth witness against them. — *Character revealed in the countenance*: — What is meant is the insolent look which their sinfulness is stamping upon their faces, without the self-condemnation which in others takes the form of dread to commit sin. (*F. Delitzsch.*) “*Woe unto their soul!*” — 1. The condition of sinners is woeful and very deplorable. 2. It is the soul that is damaged and endangered by sin. Sinners may prosper in their outward estates, and yet there may be a woe to their souls. 3. Whatever evil befalls sinners, it is of their own procuring (*Jer. ii. 19.*) (*M. Henry.*)

Vers. 10, 11. Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him. — *Retribution of the righteous and the wicked*: — In this passage the Sovereign of the universe proclaims to all the subjects of His moral government the great sanctions of His law. Two powerful principles of action in our nature are addressed, namely, hope and fear. By the one we are allured to love and pursue that which is right; by the other, we are restrained from that which is wrong. The combined influence of both of these principles is, in most cases, necessary to the production and security of human virtue. God has established a natural and intimate connection between virtue and happiness, and between sin and misery, and in consequence of this connection, it must necessarily happen that it will be, on the whole, well with the righteous and ill with the wicked. I. Let us inquire what confirmation this doctrine receives from what we know of the present constitution of things, and from what we find to be THE USUAL COURSE OF GOD'S MORAL GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD. If we consult the structure and operations of our own souls, we shall find many striking intimations of this doctrine there. The Author of our nature has made us rational, free, moral, and accountable beings. For the direction and government of our conduct, He has

implanted within us a principle, which we call conscience, which distinguishes actions as good or bad, and which always urges us to perform the one and to avoid the other. He has, moreover, enforced the authority of this principle, by annexing present pleasure to obedience to its dictates, and present pain to a violation of them. The passions of hope and fear ever attend on conscience; the one to encourage and reward faithful adherence to its commands; the other to restrain and punish a wilful transgression of them. Now, all this takes place in consequence of that moral constitution which God has given us, and of that intimate connection which He Himself has established between virtue and happiness and between sin and misery. So long, therefore, as the moral constitution of our nature continues the same, and so long as God continues to be the same infinitely wise, holy, and good Being, so long must it necessarily happen that, on the whole, it will be well with the righteous and ill with the wicked. II. This doctrine receives additional confirmation from THE UNIVERSAL CONSENT OF MANKIND. In consequence of that moral nature which God has given us, by which we cannot but approve that which we know to be right, and condemn that which we know to be wrong, all men are agreed that vice (as far as they know it to be such) should be restrained and punished, and that virtue should be encouraged and rewarded. Hence, in all governments, laws are enacted against wickedness and for the protection and encouragement of the righteous. III. A further confirmation of this doctrine is derived from what appear to be THE PRINCIPLES UPON WHICH GOD'S PRESENT MORAL GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD IS CONDUCTED. We find that, in most cases, present good is connected by Him with virtuous dispositions and habits; and present evil, with sinful tempers and practices. And although this connection is not always so intimate and inseparable, as that punishment immediately follows transgression, and reward instantly attends obedience, yet the natural retributions or effects of virtue and vice are exhibited with sufficient frequency, to show us in what light God regards them. With certain vices, we find that God has connected terrible physical evils, as their proper consequences. Intemperance, in most instances, induces disease, excruciating pains and premature death. It impairs the mind, and is generally attended with the loss of property, and invariably with the loss of reputation. With some other of the vices of sensuality are connected the most loathsome and destructive maladies, in the endurance of which the victim suffers a dreadful retribution. And with regard to other vices, it not unfrequently happens that the events of providence are so ordered in reference to the perpetrators of them that the wicked man becomes miserable, notwithstanding all his worldly possessions and honours, and all that he has can give him neither joy nor quietude. On the contrary, God has connected with temperance and industry, health, cheerfulness, and competency. To the godly there is the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. This promise we see fulfilled, in part, in the general esteem and love in which the virtuous are held, and in the usual prosperity of their affairs. If they have not abundance, they have a competency; or, if they are abridged in that respect, they have friends and a contented mind. Besides, the events of providence are, in general, so ordered with regard to them, that they find "all things working together for their good." Upon these principles does the course of God's moral government of mankind appear now to be conducted. And from what is now known of the principles of His government, we may confidently infer that, during the whole of man's continuance in being, it will always be well with the righteous and ill with the wicked. (*J. Bartlett.*) *Objections to God's moral government:*—

1. "Good and evil are often so promiscuously distributed in the present life, that we cannot with certainty infer what are the principles upon which God's government of mankind is conducted. The fraudulent and wicked are frequently prosperous and rich and flattered, while the righteous are often poor, neglected, oppressed, and despised." This is frequently the fact, and were the present the only state in which mankind were to exist, and were worldly riches and honours the only and the proper reward of virtue, and were they, in themselves, that real good which mankind fancy them to be, then, this fact alone would render this whole doctrine suspicious, and the arguments adduced in support of it inconclusive. But it must first be proved that the present is the only state in which mankind are to exist; a position, which few will pretend to sustain, and against which innumerable arguments array themselves, suggested by the structure and operations of our own minds; the desires and hopes which are ever springing up within us; by our capacity of knowledge, goodness, and happiness, which here are only

imperfectly attained, and also by that very unequal distribution of good and evil, in the present life, which has been objected to. 2. It is objected that "the miseries attending upon wickedness in this world are punishment enough for the vicious, and therefore they will be exempted from further suffering hereafter." It is true that, in the present life, there is much misery attending upon wickedness; but this furnishes not the least ground for the supposition that misery will ever cease to be connected with sin, as its natural and necessary consequence. On the contrary, it affords a very strong proof that this connection will ever exist, and that so long as men are wicked, so long will they be miserable. It is agreeable to the nature of things that it should be so. In the natural world, we find that fruit corresponds to the nature of the tree that bears it; the grain that is reaped to the seed that was sown. 3. "It is inconsistent with the Divine mercy that the wicked should ever experience any more suffering than what they endure in this world." It savours not a little of presumption for creatures of such limited, weak, and erring minds as ours to undertake to decide, with regard to the various measures of the Divine government, what is and what is not consistent with God's mercy. No one thinks to arraign the Divine government for connecting with sin, in the present life, distress of mind, disgrace, and suffering. And were our stay on earth prolonged to millions of years it would still be thought just and right, and entirely consistent with the mercy of God, that the same evils should attend the wicked, and the same good should attend the righteous. It is an error, common to many, that they look upon the evils which attend upon sin in this life, as a punishment vindictively appointed by God, to be endured by the transgressor, as a penalty for having violated His law, and that after he has endured it, he has paid the price of his transgression; the sin for which he has suffered is expiated, and therefore he thinks it would be unjust that he should be subjected to any more suffering, although his disposition be not changed in the least. There is hardly a sentiment that can be named, more injurious in its influence than this, where it is fully entertained. This error proceeds from misapprehension of the design of God in connecting evil with sin. The miseries which are consequent upon sin are not appointed vindictively, as a punishment; but benevolently, as preventives of it. Our Maker has kindly placed at the entrance of every path of vice, pain, disgrace, and suffering, to deter us from entering therein; or if we have entered, to make us retrace our steps. Every onward step we take in a sinful course, these evils assail us. (*Ibid.*) *The righteous and the wicked, their reward and their woe*:—"Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." Plainly do we see this exemplified in the history of God's once favoured people, the Jews. I. THE REWARD OF THE RIGHTEOUS. 1. We must, before we contemplate their reward, inquire who are meant by the righteous. The Bible elsewhere tells us, "There is none righteous, no, not one." All our powers and faculties are represented as disordered and depraved. After the Holy Spirit has convinced any one of sin, humbled his heart, and won his affections to Christ, that man is "accounted righteous"—"righteousness is imputed unto him also," as it was unto faithful Abraham. And "as a refiner's fire" will the Holy Spirit gradually purify all those powers and faculties of the now justified sinner that were once prostituted to the debasing service of the flesh, the world, and Satan. 2. And now we are prepared to notice his reward. We cannot, indeed, imagine that an infinitely glorious Creator can ever become obligated to reward a creature's faith and service: nevertheless, there is a "reward of grace." (1) It shall be well with him in life. Is he young? He shall, in the Spirit of adoption, and through a Saviour's mediation, cry unto the eternal God, "My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth." Is he engaged in the necessary cares and businesses of the world? He shall be "kept in the hour of temptation." Is he "small and of no reputation"? Angels shall minister unto him. Is he poor? "God hath chosen the poor of this world"; riches of grace below, and riches of glory in reversion, far outweigh in excellence and value every earthly good whatever. Is he "in sorrow, need, pain, sickness, or any other adversity"? "The high and lofty One" will "make for him all his bed in his sickness." (2) It shall be well with him also in death. That which to nature is commonly terrible and affrighting, is to the regenerate man—if not always desirable, at least, often so, and never otherwise than safe and happy. (3) It shall be well with him in eternity. II. THE WOE OF THE WICKED. 1. And, as before we inquired, Who were meant by the righteous? so here we must ask, Whom are we to understand by the wicked? Although, in a general way, people allow themselves to

be sinners, yet even whilst making this admission, there is evidently no consciousness of sin, no apprehension of its adequate desert, no sorrow for it, no hatred to it. 2. Their woe. Here the woe of the wicked is called their "reward"; and a reward it is: for while "eternal life" is bestowed as a "gift through Jesus Christ," upon the righteous, the "woe" of the wicked is paid to them as "wages" earned. (1) It shall be ill with the wicked in life. The wicked may, as the Scripture says, "bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst"; but "the anger of the Lord and His jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this Book shall lie upon him." The life of the wicked is one "woeful day," nor is there a period of it, however marked either by prosperous or adverse circumstances, wherein it is not "ill" with him. (2) And can it be otherwise in death? "I am not afraid to die," says many a careless man: "I heartily wish you were so," is the mental answer of the pious minister. The stupid insensibility of the unhumiliated, unawakened sinner, even death itself can scarcely appal. The same self-delusion prevails in the expiring moments as marked the days of life and vigour. (3) It shall be ill with the wicked for ever. (*W. Mudge, M.A.*) *Cheering words and solemn warnings*:—The Book of God speaks but little of upper and lower classes; it says but little concerning the various ranks into which civil and political institutions have divided the race of man; but from its first page to its last it is taken up with this grand division, the righteous and the wicked. The line of nature and the line of grace run on the same as ever; the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent contend with each other still. A crimson line runs between the righteous and the wicked, the line of atoning sacrifice; faith crosses that line, but nothing else can. There is a sharp line of division between the righteous and the wicked, as clear as that which divides death from life. There are no "betweenites"; no amphibious dwellers in grace and out of grace; no monstrous nondescripts, who are neither sinners nor saints.

I. THE WELL-BEING OF THE RIGHTEOUS. 1. Observe the fact mentioned. "It shall be well with him"; that is the whole of the declaration; but the very fewness of the words reveals a depth of meaning. (1) We may gather from the fact that the text is without descriptive limits; that it is well with the righteous always. It shall be well with the righteous, especially, in futurity. Well, upon Divine authority. (2) It is well, we may rest assured again, with our best selves. The text does not say it is always well with our bodies, but our bodies are not ourselves,—they are but the casket of our nobler natures. (3) When I looked at the text, I thought, "Yes, and if God says it is well, He means it is well emphatically." (4) It is so well with him that God wants him to know it. He would have His saints happy, and therefore He says to His prophets, "Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him." It is not wise sometimes to remind a man of his wealth, and rank, and prospects, for pride is so readily stirred up in us. But it is not dangerous to assure the Christian that it is well with him. (5) It is no wonder that it is well with the believer when you consider that his greatest trouble is past. His greatest trouble was the guilt of sin. (6) Then, your next greatest trouble is doomed—indwelling sin. (7) With regard to the Christian, he knows that his best things are safe. As for his worst things, they only work his good. (8) It must be well with the Christian, because God has put within him many graces, which help to make all things well. Has he difficulties? Faith laughs at them, and overcomes them. Has he trials? Love accepts them, seeing the Father's hand in them all. Has he sicknesses? Patience kisses the rod. Is he weary? Hope expects a rest to come. The sparkling graces which God has put within the man's soul qualify him to overcome in all conflicts, and to make this world subject to his power in every battle; I mean that he getteth good out of the worst ill, or throweth that ill aside by the majesty of the life that is in him. (9) Then mark how the Christian has, beside what is put within him by the Holy Spirit, this to comfort him, namely, that day by day God the Holy Ghost visits him with fresh life and fresh power. (10) Let me run over a few things which the Christian has, from each of which it may be inferred it must be well with him. He has a bank that never breaks, the glorious throne of grace; and he has only to apply on bended knee to get what he will. He has ever near him a most sweet companion, whose loving converse is so delightful that the roughest roads grow smooth, and the darkest nights glow with brightness. The believer has an arm to lean upon also, an arm that is never weary, never feeble, never never withdrawn; so that if he hath to climb along a rugged way, the more rough the road the more heavily

he leans, and the more graciously he is sustained. Moreover, he is favoured with a perpetual Comforter. It is well with the righteous when he comes to die. It is well with the righteous after death. 2. The ground upon which it is well with the righteous. "They shall eat the fruit of their doings." That is the only terms upon which the old covenant can promise that it shall be well with us; but this is not the ground upon which you and I stand under the Gospel dispensation. Absolutely to eat the fruit of all our doings would be even to us, if judgment were brought to the line and righteousness to the plummet, a very dreadful thing. Yet there is a limited sense in which the righteous man will do this. I prefer, however, to remark that there is One whose doings for us are the grounds of our dependence, and, blessed be God, we shall eat the fruit of His doings. He, the Lord Jesus, stood for us, and you know what a harvest of joy He sowed for us in His life and death. II. THE MISERY OF THE WICKED. "Woe," &c. You have only to negative all that I have already said about the righteous. But why is it ill with the wicked? It must be ill with him; he is out of joint with all the world. The man has an enemy who is omnipotent, whose power cannot be resisted; an enemy who is all goodness, and yet this man opposes Him. How can it be well with the stubble that fighteth with the flame, or with the wax that striveth with the fire? An insect fighting with a giant, how should it overcome? And thou, poor nothingness, contending with the everlasting God, how can it be anything but ill with thee? It is ill with thee, sinner, because thy joys all hang upon a thread. It is ill with you, because when these joys are over you have no more to come. It shall be ill with the wicked, and let no present appearance lead you to doubt it. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The happiness of the righteous in all circumstances illustrated*.—I. WHO ARE THE RIGHTEOUS, AND IN WHAT SENSE IT SHALL BE WELL WITH THEM. 1. In this mixed state, when men are neither perfectly good nor bad, the exact boundaries are not so easily fixed, especially when an application is made of these characters to particular persons, and we judge concerning ourselves, in which case prejudice and self-partiality often mislead men; and superstition, a very prevailing error among mankind, contributes to these errors by leading them to imagine that there is righteousness and religion in those things which have really nothing to do with it. In general the righteous is he in whose heart the morally good or pious, virtuous and pure affections rule, and whose practice is habitually conducted by their direction; the man who loves God above all things; not the person who is altogether free from any infirmities, which, strictly speaking, may be called sinful, and who never, through the whole course of his life, has by ignorance or surprise been drawn into those indeliberate actions, which upon a review he cannot justify. If this were the sense of righteousness, who could pretend to it? 2. In what sense it shall be well with him. The meaning certainly is not that he shall possess all external advantages in this world, whereby his condition shall be rendered more easy and prosperous than that of the wicked. That is contrary to fact and experience, as well as to many plain declarations of Scripture. The stable uniform desire of the good man, is, that God may "lift on him the light of His countenance," or grant him His "favour, which is better than life." Nor is it to be thought that Divine providence will always interpose to rescue the righteous from those calamities that come upon the world of the ungodly in which they live; it was not the intention of the prophet to assure them, that they should be preserved from the ruin of Jerusalem, and the common fall of Judah, which was to be expected because of their crying national sins, in which the righteous had no share; but that in all events they should be happy, even though they were involved in the common desolation, and perished with the multitude of sinners. We must, therefore, in order to understand fully how it shall be well with the righteous, enlarge our notion of the state of man; we must consider him in the whole of his being, his soul as well as his body, and in every condition and period of his existence. It is thus we judge concerning our state within the compass of the present life, and its affairs. A man may be easy and prosperous in the main, when his principal interests are flourishing, although he meets with various disappointments in things which are of lesser moment. In like manner we may justly say, it is well with good men when their souls prosper; they enjoy inward peace and satisfaction, and their future happiness is secured, though they are liable to sufferings in this present time. II. UPON WHAT EVIDENCE THE PROPHET'S ASSERTION RESTS, or how it appears that there is a connection between righteousness and felicity. 1. Consider the state and constitution of human nature as in fact we find it, abstracting from any inquiry concerning the

Author of it and His designs and conduct towards us. Scarcely is there any man not conscious, in some measure, of the satisfaction which arises from morally good dispositions; and that this is stronger and more intense than the enjoyments which any sensible object can yield appears from this consideration, that the latter are frequently sacrificed to the other. Who doth not know, on the other hand, the pangs of a self-accusing heart? 2. Consider righteousness not merely as the glory of the human mind, and the naturally felicitating exercise and attainment of its powers, but further, as it is approved and recommended to mankind by the Deity, their rightful and supreme Ruler. We have the clearest evidence that He approves the good actions of men, and disapproves the bad; whence we infer that one part of His own character is moral rectitude, which is a perfection that necessarily appears to our minds amiable, and every way worthy of the most excellent nature; and since He is our natural Governor, by whose will we exist, are preserved, and all the circumstances of our condition are determined, here is a sufficient intimation of the rule, according to which He doth, and will always proceed, in His dispensations towards us, making us happy or unhappy. (*J. Abernethy, M.A.*) *All well with the righteous*:—I. WHO THESE RIGHTEOUS ARE. 1. A "righteous" man before God is made so by the imputation of Christ's holy obedience, put to his account. 2. He has a righteous kingdom implanted and set up in his soul. A righteous man has proof of his being such. 3. He can feed upon nothing but God's righteous provision. He cannot feed upon his own obedience, or upon the mere letter of the word, or upon his mere judgment. He must have "precious faith" to "eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man." 4. He loves righteous fruits—a holy walk in all godliness and fear. II. THE VERY ENCOURAGING LANGUAGE SPOKEN RESPECTING THEM. It shall be well with them. 1. In providence. 2. In spiritual things. All thy temptations, all thy darkness, all thy perplexities, all thy disquietudes, all thy wanderings, God will overrule. There shall never be a night, but morning shall come; never a day of adversity, but a day of prosperity shall follow; never an emptying, but there shall be a filling; never a bringing down, but He will raise thee up again. (*J. Warburton.*) *The happiness of the righteous*:—I. WHO ARE THE RIGHTEOUS? 1. Negatively. (1) Not the self-righteous, who have a high opinion of themselves. It cannot be well with them, for they deny the sacrifice of Christ by which sinners are constituted righteous. (2) Not those who deny the necessity and importance of good works (Rom. vi. 1, 2). 2. Positively. This leads to a very affecting truth, namely, that all by sin are unrighteous. Observe—(1) Every true believer is righteous according to the covenant of grace (Rom. v. 1, iv. 3, 23-25, v. 18, 19). (2) They have an inherent righteousness wrought in them by the Holy Spirit. They are "born again"—"renewed in the spirit of their minds," and are new creatures in Christ Jesus. (3) They declare by their conduct that they are righteous. "They love mercy, do justly," &c. They "have their fruit unto holiness," &c. II. WHAT IS THEIR HAPPINESS? "It shall be well with him." 1. Their present state of justification, &c., already described, proves this: they are free from guilt and condemnation. "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven," &c. This freedom gives hope and is the precursor of blessedness to come. 2. They have a good conscience (Heb. ix. 14, x. 21, 22; 2 Cor. i. 12). 3. They enjoy all the pleasures of true religion, arising from the possession of Christian graces—the enjoyment of Christian privileges—and the performance of Christian duties. 4. It shall be well with them in all adverse circumstances. 5. In death, the period when the presence of God is most needed. 6. At the resurrection. "They that have done good shall come forth to the resurrection of life." 7. At the judgment day (Mal. iii. 17). 8. For ever in heaven. They shall be "with Christ." (*Homilist.*) *It is well with the righteous*:—I. IN EVERY PERIOD OF LIFE. II. IN EVERY RELATION IN LIFE. III. IN EVERY CONDITION OF LIFE. IV. IN DEATH. V. IN ETERNITY. (*H. Woodcock.*) *The end of Christian life*:—"God hangs great weights on slender wires." Thus He has made Eternity to depend on Time, and our state in heaven or in hell to be decided by our character on earth. Our whole history, in like manner, often hangs upon a trifle; and that which moulds our character, upon an incident which we hardly notice. Hence even the least actions in themselves and in their connection with others, in leading to results, forming habits and moulding character, are of the highest importance to us, and demand our most thoughtful reflection. I. THEIR CONNECTION WITH ONE ANOTHER. No action stands alone; each is a link in a chain stretching out to eternity. Take the case of an intemperate and unchaste



man; his habits are neither without a cause preceding nor an effect to follow. It is quite possible that several generations backward, some ancestor of his, through some so-called trivial accident, some casual meeting, first gave way to drunkenness. Now look onwards a few steps; we will suppose ourselves in a hospital a generation or two hence: as we pass from ward to ward we come to a descendant of the man before us—a poor creature, more miserable than any we have seen dying of some miserable disease. The cause of his suffering is to be found in the intemperance and incontinency of those who have gone before him. Step by step it may be traced back to the trifle which led his forefather to his first night of revelling and drunkenness. Take an instance on the brighter side—the thought which first hit on the art of printing. This too arose from some so-called trivial accident. We do not know what preceded it; but we may be sure it did not come without some connection in its author's mind. Every great result strikes its roots deep into the past. But what has followed? has it stood alone, unconnected, the act of one isolated mind? is not the world rather full of its consequences, one of which, perhaps the most blessed, is that men of all kindreds and nations may now read in their own tongues the wonderful works of God? Both good and evil actions fructify, and reproduce themselves in various forms. Whither their roots shall extend, and when shoot up again, whither their seed may be carried, where it may fall, and what it shall produce, who can tell? Sometimes the least promising seed will produce the most abundant return of fruit. So that we may not pronounce upon the importance of an action, for we do not see its connection; neither may we think any action trivial, for it may, I had almost said it must, lead to consequences of importance throughout eternity.

II. THE EFFECT OF OUR ACTIONS ON OURSELVES AND ON OTHERS. 1. On ourselves. Every step we take not only brings us forward, but leaves a foot-print behind. Every thought, word, action, all we suffer and all we do, not only has its own importance, and leads us forward in the march of life, but also leaves its impression, its foot-print upon us, and tends to form, confirm, or change our character. There is a memorable instance in point, illustrating both the weakness of yielding and the nobleness of holding fast to one's convictions, in the visit of Henry III. of France to Bernard de Palissy in the dungeons of the Bastille. The King desired to give the celebrated potter his liberty, asking as the price of his pardon the easy condition of giving up his Protestant faith; "My worthy friend," said the monarch, "you have now been forty-five years in the service of my mother and myself; we have suffered you to retain your religion amidst fire and slaughter; I am now so pressed by the Guises and my people, that I find myself compelled to deliver you into the hands of your enemies, and to-morrow you will be burnt unless you are converted." The old man bowed, touched by the goodness of the King, humbled by his weakness, but inflexible in the faith of his fathers. "Sire," he answered, "I am ready to give up the remainder of my life for the honour of God; you have told me several times that you pity me, and now in my turn I pity you, who have used the words 'I am compelled'; it was not spoken like a king, Sire, and they are words which neither you, nor the Guises, nor the people shall ever make me utter: Sire, I can die." By continually yielding, the monarch had become a slave; by continually acting up to his convictions, the potter had become more than a king. "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city." 2. Look next at the effect of our actions upon others. Not only our children, friends, servants, but all we have any intercourse with, are more or less affected by us. Every one knows the force of example, the impulse we have to imitate. Every one must have noticed the contagion, as it were, of opinion, which from house to house influences a whole circle of acquaintanceship. How often have you felt the devotion or the carelessness of the person kneeling by your side in church! How frequently must you have noticed the way in which you catch the habits and manners of those you live with; the way in which you too are watched, and observed, and copied by others. So that, if you did nothing directly to influence others, the effect of your indirect influence is yet incalculable. But you have direct influence also to exercise and give account of. Every one does act directly upon others. Every one does hinder or encourage, lead into sin, sin with, or lead away from sin, and walk godly with, others. And where is this to stop? You ruin or, under God, save others. This goes on; their influence ruins or saves others, and so on and on for ever. Solemn, indeed, are the words of our Saviour on this subject. (Luke xvii. 1, 2.) On the other hand, it is equally encouraging to know that no virtuous effort is ever lost. It

has been said that every pulsation made in the air by the feeblest human effort produces a change in the whole atmosphere ; so that the " air is one vast library, on whose pages are for ever written all that man has ever said or woman uttered." Is it not equally true, that the feeblest effort made for God has an influence on some heart, and that on others onwards and onwards throughout all generations ? that, as the air is one vast library of whatever has moved it from eternity, so the hearts and consciences of men are a vast register of every effort made, every word spoken, every influence exerted upon them for God and for His Christ from the beginning to the end of time ; a register to be read out on the last great day. (*F. Morse, M.A.*) *An old man's hallelujah* :—When Dr. Adam Clarke was an old man he wrote : " I have enjoyed the spring of life ; I have enjoyed the toils of its summer ; I have culled the fruits of its autumn ; I am now passing through the rigours of its winter, and I am neither forsaken of God nor abandoned by man. I see at no great distance the dawn of a new day, the first of a spring which shall be eternal. It is advancing to meet me ! I run to embrace it ! Welcome, eternal spring ! Hallelujah !" *A Christian gardener's hope* :—An old gardener said, " I trust I cannot be wrong in believing that year by year, as I grow older, I draw nearer to a garden of perfect beauty and eternal rest,—a garden more glorious than that which Adam lost, the Eden and the paradise of God." (*Gates of Imagery.*) *Heaven, the outcome of godly living* :—When John Bunyan was once asked about heaven, and the glories of heaven, he answered : " If you want to know more about it, you must live a godly life, and go and see for yourselves." (*D. J. S. Hunt.*)

**Ver. 11. Woe unto the wicked!**—*All things conspire for evil to the sinner* :—As all events are to be made public under God's moral government, it is for His own interest, as well as for the interest of His creatures, that He should apprise them fully of His character and of the principles of His government. As all events are to be made known, both for the vindication of God's character and for the instruction of all moral agents, it follows that the destruction of the wicked will be aggravated by every accession of light to their minds. Every new revelation of God's works or ways which is made to them must conspire, (1) to enlighten their minds, and, (2) by consequence, to deepen their guilt and enhance and aggravate their doom. 1. Men will be held responsible for mercies abused. Hence those things which most please sinners, and which they call their good things, are charged to their account, and they must be held to the strictest accountability for their use or abuse of all their good things. 2. If these are facts, then sinners are getting deeply in debt. Everything, therefore, that now pleases the sinner so much will swell the mass of things that shall agonise him at the judgment day, and throughout his eternal existence. 3. The same principle applies to the entire course of God's discipline towards you, embracing the various rebukes of His providence. All these are measures taken for your good, but if you will not improve them, they will only work out your deeper ruin. How marvellous that wicked men should suppose that these light afflictions are the proper punishment of sin ! No ; these are only God's means of discipline, employed here in this life for the good of men's souls. Instead of being themselves the retribution due for sin, they are only the guarantees sent on beforehand by the great King, involving His pledge that He will punish sin unless He can secure repentance. 4. All your infirmities and all your sins ; also the sins of those who live near you so that you can see the course of God's dealings with them ; indeed, the whole history of sin in the universe so far as known to you,—all conspire to heighten your responsibility and aggravate the guilt of your sin. For all these things serve to show you the real evil and wrong of sin ; they serve to reveal God's hatred of sin, and to assure you that He must and will punish it. Remarks :—(1) All things work together for good to the Christian, and ultimately, when he comes to see how all things have had this result, he will regret nothing he has ever done, although he may greatly blame himself for all his sins. It is often the case that Christians here learn lessons of deep experience under their sins. They are deeply affected when they see how God overrules even their sins for good to themselves and to others. But nothing of this sort happens to sinners. They are not of those that love God, and they have no reason to expect that God will make all things work together for their good. Hence they must both blame themselves and also regret everything they have ever done. (2) Sinners have never any good reasons for joy. (3) Sinners procure this result to themselves. God gave

your voluntary powers, that, on your own responsibility, you might use them for your own welfare. He gave you His Son, and in Him an offered salvation, that you might lay hold of everlasting life. He gave you a Bible, that you might read it and become wise unto salvation. He gave you these and a thousand other blessings, that they might be improved, and if you will not improve them, you have no right to complain of God. (4) Sinners need not be stumbled by any calamities whatever which befall God's real children. Let them not trouble themselves about this matter. The Lord knoweth them that are His, and they shall never lack His constant care. (5) All events that transpire in this world or the next will only make the great gulf fixed between saints and sinners the deeper and the broader—will only make the saints more holy and more happy, the sinners more sinful and more wretched. (6) What an infinite folly is it to judge of things only by their relations to this life! (7) God's conduct in all this is just and righteous altogether. (*C. G. Finney.*) *The wicked man digs his own hell*.—We must not think of hell as a Divine invention; may we not say it reverently? it is an invention totally human. All evil digs and eats its own perdition; all evil chokes its throat with brimstone of its own finding. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Presumptuous disobedience*.—Steel-headed hammers are not allowed to be used inside powder mills, copper ones being used instead, there being no fear of drawing fires with them. Two carpenters, going into a powder mill to do some repairs, though fully acquainted with the regulations, persisted in using a steel hammer, with the result that a spark flew from the hammer-head, and in a moment, with a dull, heavy roar, the mill and the men were blown to atoms. Their presumptuous disobedience brought upon them an awful punishment. (*Sunday School Chronicle.*)

Ver. 12. As for My people.—*A protest against the influence of women and children, concubines and minions (what we should call the harem-influence) in the king's counsels. (E. H. Plumptre, D.D.) The rule of corrupt women*.—The celebrated Aspasia, first the mistress and afterward the wife of Pericles, had from her extraordinary talents a great ascendancy over his mind, and was supposed frequently to have dictated his counsels in the most important concerns of the State. She was believed to have formed a society of courtesans, whose influence over their gallants, young men of consideration in the republic, she thus rendered subservient to the political views of Pericles. . . . Such were the powers of her mind and the fascinating charms of her conversation, that even before her marriage, and while exercising the trade of a courtesan, her house was the frequent resort of the gravest and most respectable of the Athenian citizens; among the rest, of the virtuous Socrates. (*Tyler's History.*) **O My people, they which lead thee cause thee to err.**—*The character of rulers to be proved from the principles they inculcate and the policy they pursue*.—The Divine compassion is not only exercised towards men in reference to the danger of their immortal souls; it is also most strikingly to be witnessed with regard to their temporal miseries. The Lord is lamenting, in this chapter, the miseries which were coming upon His professed people as the fruit of their doings; and as the consequence of that course of procedure which He would be constrained to adopt as the only means, devised by infinite wisdom, which could either work for their good, or be consistent with His character and glory. That order of dealing would, in many respects, be exceedingly mortifying and painful. How lamentable must be the condition of any nation or people when the words of the text are literally fulfilled in them! **I. IT IS OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE THAT THEY WHO ARE ENTRUSTED WITH THE RULE AND GUIDANCE OF OTHERS SHOULD THEMSELVES BE RULED AND GUIDED BY THE FEAR AND WORD OF THE LORD.** The text is not the only passage in which the Lord speaks of the misery and ruin brought on the people by the errors, vices, and mismanagement of their rulers (chap. ix.). Here you see, not only who the leaders of this people are, and how they are led astray by them, but what are the consequences of being under such an erring influence. The leaders are the "head and the tail; the ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail." Under this twofold guidance, the people are led astray; and the result is, "they that are led of them are destroyed." Advert again to the case before us. How came "the paths" of the people to be "destroyed" in the days of the prophet? "They that led them, caused them to err." Now, could this have taken place if their lying prophets and wicked rulers themselves had been governed in the fear, and guided

by the Word, of God? (Psa. lxxxi. 13-16.) Now, does not the same truth apply with equal force to ourselves, to our own rulers and our own people? Should any one be disposed to object to this statement and say, May not a line of policy be good although not founded upon this principle? or, May not a man be a good ruler who follows no other guidance than his own wisdom or will?—we deny the assertion altogether. We deem nothing to be good which is not done in the fear, or according to the truth, of God. Now, can any one rule in that fear who does not live under its influence? Can any one lead others in the right way, who is not himself walking in it? Can any one enforce on others the maxims and precepts of the Divine Word—the only standard of truth and error, and the only test of good and evil—unless that Word be made the light of his own feet, and the lamp of his own path? Morally speaking, the thing is impossible. Or, if he were to attempt to do so, would not indecision, ignorance, uncertainty, and error characterise all his proceedings? II. IT IS NO DIFFICULT THING TO ASCERTAIN THE REAL CHARACTER OF SUCH PERSONS, ESPECIALLY IN THEIR PUBLIC CAPACITY, WHETHER THEY ARE UNDER SUCH AN INFLUENCE OR GUIDED BY SUCH A RULE, OR NOT. How are we to ascertain whether they who are entrusted with the rule and guidance of others are men to be confided in, as being themselves under the rule and guidance of the fear and Word of the Lord? We may ask in return, By what means are we to ascertain the true character of any other person or thing, so far as man is authorised and able to judge, which is brought under our notice, and whose real state and condition it may be of importance to determine? By whatever standard we are directed in the one case, by the same should we be guided in the other. We must be guided in our decision by the conduct and actions which are constantly exhibited before our eyes, and not merely by any fair professions which are totally contradicted, or, at least, exceedingly weakened, and continually to be called in question, by the life and conversation. III. THE MANNER IN WHICH SUCH RULERS AND GUIDES GENERALLY MISLEAD OTHERS IS NOT ONLY PERNICIOUS IN ITSELF, BUT IS OPEN AND MANIFEST TO ALL BEHOLDERS.

1. By the inculcation of dangerous and pernicious principles. A man is what his principles are; and his actions and life will, of necessity, be according to the principles by which he is governed. But how are we to ascertain the real character of principles? By the same test as we try men and actions. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them."
2. By the introduction of a crooked and perverse course of policy. Principles and policy in the affairs of nations, like faith and works in the things of God, will always go hand in hand together; or, at least, they will be so intimately blended with each other that they can never remain far asunder, because, in fact, as the one is the fruitful cause, so the other is the native effect produced.
3. By the exhibition of a wicked and contagious example.
4. By an unwarrantable abuse of their power, and by the countenance afforded to unworthy characters, and sanction given to wicked measures. Here, then, is a loud call—(1) To survey and ponder the imminent peril to which we are exposed. (2) To be humbled for our sins, and to sue to God for His mercy. (3) And how does the subject speak to all those who lead the people astray, and destroy the way of their paths! How great must be their guilt! How heavy will be their condemnation! (*R. Shittler.*) *Ungodly national leaders to be deprecated:*—Surely it ought to be for a lamentation, when the present and eternal interests of any nation or people are committed to persons who know not the Lord, and are determined not to walk in His paths! If any spark of proper feeling were in exercise, we should grieve over a family placed under the care of such parents! we should mourn over a parish or diocese entrusted to the hands of such a shepherd! we should lament the fate of the crew of that vessel, which, instead of being steered amidst the perils of the storm, by an experienced and careful pilot, into the harbour for safety, should by some rash and unskilful hand be conducted into the quicksands or dashed upon the rock! We should feel the risings of national indignation, if the admirals of our fleets, or the commanders of our armies, instead of resisting an opposing foe, should sully their character, disobey their orders, disregard their king and their country, and, either from incompetency, or fear, or cowardice, or treason, should play into the enemy's hand, betray the honour of the nation, abuse the confidence of their prince, and with reckless indifference sacrifice the lives of their men! Every one would cry out, and that justly, against them. What then ought to be our feelings—how ought we to be affected—when such a dishonour is cast upon the Majesty of heaven; when His fear is disregarded;

when His Word is set at nought; when His authority is despised; and the present and eternal welfare of millions is sacrificed by the wickedness or weakness of those who reject the only rule of all safe guidance—who lead a whole nation into sin, and bring down the wrath of God upon a guilty land! (*Ibid.*)

**Vers. 13-15. The Lord standeth up to plead.**—*God's controversy*.—The management of this controversy. I. GOD HIMSELF IS THE PROSECUTOR. II. THE INDICTMENT IS PROVED BY THE NOTORIOUS EVIDENCE OF THE FACT (ver. 15). III. THE CONTROVERSY IS ALREADY BEGUN IN THE CHANGE OF THE MINISTRY. To punish those that had abused their power to ill purposes, God sets those over them that had not sense to use it to any good purposes (ver. 12). (*M. Henry.*)

**Ver. 14. The Lord will enter into judgment.**—*God, the Friend of the poor*.—Whoever abandons the sanctuary, the poor should never go away; whoever closes the Bible, the poor man should keep it lying widely open; he should always have a Bible that opens easily, not stiffly, because it is well handled, and is the continual defence of men who cannot defend themselves. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Isaiah's solemn reproof*.—Returning into the city he silently hovers in and out of the courts of revelry and feasting that open on to the narrow thoroughfares, watching the judges and honourable men of wealth, who had just come in from their ceremonial worship at the temple, to eat, to drink, to talk lewdly, and to amuse themselves with soothsayers and necromancers, and the haughty women, with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, and gay and sumptuous dresses, paid for with the money wrung from the impoverished tenantry of their spouses. As he watches and muses, the fire within his bones flames up, and he reminds them as he passes into the darkness, "the spoil of the poor is in your houses!" (*F. Sessions.*)

**Vers. 16-24. The daughters of Zion are haughty.**—*Wanton eyes* ("twinkling with the eyes") :—Compare the Talmudic witticism, "God did not create the woman out of Adam's ear, lest she might become an eavesdropper; nor out of Adam's eye, lest she might become a winker." (*F. Delitzsch.*) The "wanton" eyes of A.V., or the "ogling" eyes of others, introduces an idea foreign to the connection. There seems no reference to immorality. It is the pride of beauty and attire, which has no mind for the Ruler above, which is punished with all that makes loathsome. (*A. B. Davidson, LL.D.*) *A mincing gait*.—The rendering should rather be "tripping"; for only such little steps can they take, owing to their pace-chains, which join together the costly foot-rings that were placed above the ankle. With these pace-chains, which perhaps even then as now, were sometimes provided with little bells, they make a tinkling sound, clinking the ankle-ornaments, by placing the feet in such a way as to make these ankle-rings strike one another. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *Pride of beauty and attire reproved*.—The prophet's business was to show all sorts of people what they had contributed to the national guilt, and what share they must expect in the national judgments that were coming. Here he reproves and warns the daughters of Zion, tells the ladies of their faults. I. THE SIN CHARGED UPON THE DAUGHTERS OF ZION. The prophet expressly voucheth God's authority for what he said, lest it should be thought it was unbecoming him to take notice of such things, and should be ill resented by the ladies. The Lord saith it. Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, let them know that God takes notice of, and is much displeased with, the folly and vanity of proud women; and His law takes cognisance even of their dress. Such a nice affected mien is not only a force upon that which is natural, and ridiculous before men of sense, but, as it is an evidence of a vain mind, it is offensive to God. And two things aggravated it here—1. That these were the daughters of Zion—the holy mountain—who should have carried themselves with the gravity that becomes women professing godliness. 2. That it should seem by the connection they were the wives and daughters of the princes who spoiled and oppressed the poor (vers. 14, 15), that they might maintain this pride and luxury of their families. II. THE PUNISHMENTS THREATENED FOR THIS SIN, and they answer the sin as face answers to face in a glass (vers. 17, 18). 1. They "walked with stretched forth necks." But God "will smite with a scab the crown of their head," which shall lower their crests, and make them ashamed to show their heads, being obliged by it to cut off their hair. 2. They cared not what they laid out in furnishing themselves

with great variety of fine clothes; but God will reduce them to such poverty and distress that they should not have clothes sufficient to cover their nakedness. 3. They were extremely fond and proud of their ornaments; but God will strip them of those ornaments, when their houses shall be plundered, their treasures rifled, and they themselves led into captivity. 4. They were very nice and curious about their clothes, but God would make those bodies of theirs a reproach and burden to them (ver. 24). 5. They designed by these ornaments to charm the gentlemen, and win their affections, but there shall be none to be charmed by them (ver. 25). (*Matthew Henry.*) *A Jerusalem fashion-plate*:—This is a Jerusalem fashion-plate. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *Comely clothing natural*:—That we should all be clad is proved by the opening of the first wardrobe in Paradise, with its apparel of dark green. That we should all as far as our means allow us be beautifully and gracefully apparelled is proved by the fact that God never made a wave but He gilded it with golden sunbeams, or a tree but He garlanded it with blossoms, or a sky but He studded it with stars, or allowed even the smoke of a furnace to ascend but He columned, and turreted, and doled, and scrolled it into outlines of indescribable gracefulness. When I see the apple-orchards of the spring, and the pageantry of the autumnal forests, I come to the conclusion that if Nature ever does join the Church, while she may be a Quaker in the silence of her worship, she never will be a Quaker in the style of her dress. Why the notches of a fern leaf or the stamen of a water lily? Why, when the day departs, does it let the folding doors of heaven stay open so long, when it might go in so quickly? (*Ibid.*) *Costume and morals*:—1. Much of the worldly costume of our time is the cause of the temporal and eternal ruin of a multitude of men. 2. Extravagant costume is the foe of all Christian almsgiving. 3. Is distraction to public worship. 4. Belittles the intellect. Our minds are enlarged, or they dwindle just in proportion to the importance of the subject on which they constantly dwell. 5. It shuts a great multitude out of heaven. You will have to choose between the goddess of fashion and the Christian God. (*Ibid.*) *God-defying extravagance of modern society*:—1. This wholesale extravagance accounts for a great deal of depression in national finances. Aggregates are made up of units, and so long as one-half of the people of this country are in debt to the other half, you cannot have a healthy financial condition. 2. The widespread extravagance accounts for much of the crime. It is the source of many abscondings, bankruptcies, defalcations, and knaveries. 3. It also accounts for much of the pauperism in the country. Who are the individuals and the families who are thrown on your charity? Who has sinned against them so that they suffer? It is often the case that their parents, or their grandparents, had all luxuries, lived everything up, more than lived everything up, and then died, leaving their families in want. (*Ibid.*)

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#### CHAPTER IV.

**VER. 1. And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man.—The climax of Zion's ruin**:—This verse should be part of the preceding chapter, the very climax, indeed, of the ruin which Zion has brought upon herself. (Read chap. iii. 25, 26.) In this verse the course of nature is inverted. This is the ruin which sin always works. The picture is that of a country desolated by war, and when the census comes to be taken it is found that there are seven women to one man. The men are murdered, the strong have been taken away, the mighty men have gone down in the shock of war. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Social anarchy*:—A companion picture to chap. iii. 6;—the male population are in search of a ruler; the women in search of a husband. (*R. Weir.*)

**Vers. 2-6. In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious.—The first personal reference in Isaiah to the Messiah**:—If this is a reference to Christ, critics are agreed that it is the first personal reference to the Messiah which Isaiah has yet given. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *A pleasing contrast*:—What so beautiful as that a "branch" should appear in this wilderness of lava? Blessed are they who can turn away from the desert and look at the garden. (*Ibid.*) *A branch*:—Then the fountains of life and energy are not dried up. (*Ibid.*) *A*

**branch** :—That is to say, fruitfulness, beauty, sufficiency, energy, summer. This is what the Son of God came to be and to do—to fill the earth with fruitfulness, to drive away the ghastly, all-devouring famine, and to feed the world with the fruit of heaven. (*Ibid.*) *The Branch of the Lord* :—I. THE GENERAL MEANING OF THE PASSAGE. The time spoken of by the prophet is clearly the time of the Christian dispensation, called “the last days” (ch. ii.). And we need not stop to prove that “the Branch of the Lord” is a name or title of the Messiah. We have, therefore, a prophecy of the glory of Christ’s kingdom. II. THE INNER MEANING OF THE PASSAGE. (1) Why is it said “In that day,” specifying a particular time, “the Branch of the Lord shall be glorious”? And (2) what is the special force or meaning of the title, “the Branch of the Lord”? 1. The glory of Christ is surely the glory which He had with the Father from the beginning. How then can it be said of Him that at any assigned time He is glorious, rather than at another? The word glory, when spoken of God or Christ, cannot have precisely the same sense as when spoken of a man. A man may gain glory by some act above the average of human nature. But starting from infinite perfection, nothing greater or nobler can be conceived. Glory, therefore, with reference to God is not the gaining of any higher excellence, but the manifestation of excellence which existed already. The creation was the first manifestation of the glory of God. And if the glory of God was made manifest in creation, it is yet more fully revealed in those mysteries of redemption which angels desired to look into. 2. But why in this connection is the Saviour called the Branch of the Lord? If the appropriateness of the figure does not at once appear, it will at least remind us of—“I am the Vine, ye are the branches.” The expression thus sets Christ before us in His character as the Mediator—Himself the Branch of the Lord, and His people branches of that true Vine. Thus we are enabled further to connect the title with the glory spoken of. The glory and beauty of the vine is in its fruit (John xv. 8). (*A. K. Cherrill, M.A.*) *God’s perpetual presence with His people* :—I. THE PREPARATION FOR THE PROMISE. In the earlier verses of the chapter you will find that two things are presented as antecedent to the gifts of blessing—that is, the coming of the Divine Saviour, and His discipline for holiness within His Church. 1. The transition from the gloomy judgment to the grandeur of deliverance is abrupt and striking, as if from a savage wilderness one were to emerge suddenly into green pastures and among gay flowers. And surely this is a true representation of the change which passes upon human destinies when Christ the Lord comes down. We are naturally heirs of judgment. There is not a family, there is not a heart, upon which the curse has not descended in disastrous entail; there is a stain upon the birth, there is a feebleness in the nature of us all. But there comes a sound of help and of deliverance, for a Saviour has been provided—a Saviour who, in the mysterious union of natures, combines perfection of sympathy and almightiness of power. 2. It would at once correct our estimate and restrain our pride if we could remember always that with God the greatest thing is holiness. And then, further, we are told that to work this holiness in His people, God subjects them to discipline, and, if necessary, to the spirit of judgment and to the spirit of burning. Mark the exquisite fitness and the exquisite kindness of the discipline. There are some stains that water can wash away. If the water will avail, there is no need of the fire. There are some stains so deep and foul and crimson that the fire must purge them. II. THE PROMISE ITSELF (ver. 5). As we read these words, we are translated to a former scene of deliverance. We go back to the older ages; and there, in the fierce wilderness, where no groves of palm-trees wave with shade, a vast host marching steadily, now in their van for guidance, now in their rear for protection, there rises by day a pillar of cloud and by night a pillar of flame; and, as we gaze, we listen to the snatches of their song: “Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.” This was the vision prominent in the mind of the prophet when he symbolised by it God’s presence and protection to His chosen Church. 1. The central thought is the presence of God. Then, there are right-hand and left-hand thoughts or aspects in which that presence manifests itself. 2. The presence of God for counsel. 3. The presence of God for defence. (*W. M. Punshon.*) *God’s promise to the remnant* :—I. THE PERSONS INTENDED. The remnant, the escaping, the “evasion of Israel,” as the word signifies (ver. 2); they that are left, that remain (ver. 3), who escape the great desolation that was to come on the body of the people, the furnace they were to pass through. Only in the close of that verse, they have a further description added of them, from the

purpose of God concerning their grace and glory—they are written among the living, or rather, written unto life; “Every one that is written,” *i.e.*, designed unto life in Jerusalem. II. THE CONDITION WHEREIN THEY WERE. This is laid down in figurative expressions concerning the smallness of this remnant, or the paucity of them that should escape, and the greatness of the extremities they should be exercised withal. III. THE PROMISES HERE MADE TO THIS PEOPLE are of two sorts: Original, or fundamental; and then consequential thereon. 1. There is the great spring, or fountain promise, from which all others, as lesser streams, do flow; and that is the promise of Christ Himself unto them, and amongst them; He is that Branch of Jehovah, and that fruit of the earth, which is there promised (ver. 2). He is the foundation, the fountain of all the good that is or shall be communicated unto us; all other promises are but rivulets from that unsearchable ocean of grace and love that is in the promise of Christ. 2. The promises that flow from hence—(1) Of beauty and glory (ver. 2). (2) Of holiness and purity (vers. 3, 4). (3) Of preservation and safety (vers. 5, 6). (*J. Owen, D.D.*)

**Ver. 3. He that is left in Zion.**—*The holy remnant*:—“Holy” means what is separated from the world and superior to it; the congregation of the saints, or holy ones, who now inhabit Jerusalem, are what remain after a smelting; their holiness is the consequence of a washing. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *God has never yet left the world without a nucleus of heaven*:—He has drowned the world, but left a seed to build an altar; He has burned the Gomorrachs of the world, but He has allowed the faithful to escape, and to become the beginning of a new progeny. There is always a remnant, the one left, the true heart, the faithful among the faithless found. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Holiness becomes the Christian*:—We are told that the little creature called the ermine is so sensitive to its own cleanliness that it becomes paralysed and powerless at the slightest touch of defilement upon its snow-white fur. A like sensibility should belong to the Christian, who should abstain from the very appearance of evil. (*Sunday School Chronicle.*)

**Ver. 5. A cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night.**—*The pillar-cloud of Israel*—*Christ, the Leader of His Church* (with *Exod. xiii. 21, 22*):—It was good for the Israelites that they were so long in the wilderness. There the most impressive intimations of a present Deity followed their every step. Miracles were wrought to feed them when hungry, and to satisfy their thirsty souls. Jesus was in the manna—“I am the living Bread which came down from heaven.” There, in the form of a vast column of mingled fire and smoke, is the mysterious yet faithful guide of the Lord’s people. When it is stationary, they rest; when it advances, they journey. The pillar-cloud was typical of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ ever liveth as the Church’s Prophet, Priest, and King. “And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion,” &c. If the pillar-cloud was the shadow of good things to come, Jesus Christ is the glorious substance; and we shall endeavour to show in what manner the Redeemer leads His Church. I. JESUS LEADS THE CHURCH BY HIS WORD. Not more certainly was there one pillar-cloud than there is one Bible. The Word stands alone in its authority. It is the sole director of our faith; it is the sole regulator of our walk. The Word is the sole standard in all matters pertaining to the worship of God, and if human opinions or imperial statutes should oppose its high demands, “we must obey God rather than men.” II. JESUS LEADS THE CHURCH BY HIS SPIRIT. How precious the promise which He made to His disciples: “The Comforter, who is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” The Word is a lamp to the feet and a light to the path; but what if the hands of men are so feeble that they cannot hold the heaven-sent lamp? What if the darkness which shrouds their minds is so dense that all the rays shining from the Word serve only to render the darkness visible? In such circumstances, how desirable to have a living guide to expound the infallible directory! The cloud which was in the tabernacle by day, and the fire by night, formed a guiding pillar, but for which the people of Israel must have wandered and lost their way in the desert. Yet there was an imperfection arising from its very nature. The fiery pillar taught seeing men where to go; but it could not give sight to the blind. It pointed to the direction in which the pilgrims were to advance; but it could not make the lame man leap as an hart. We do not say that the Spirit of Christ



did not impart inward light, saving knowledge, in the days of Moses. Wherever holiness adorned any character, He, the Sanctifier, was its source. The crowning excellence of the New Testament economy is, that it is the dispensation of the Spirit. While it does not dispense with forms, it specially inculcates the power of godliness. While it commends the Word, it holds the Word to be powerless without the Spirit of God. III. JESUS LEADS THE CHURCH BY HIS PROVIDENCE. The Saviour whom we adore, is Ruler of all worlds. Supreme in heaven, He is not less so on earth. The Author of salvation, He is the regulator of all the complicated wheels of providence. Providence is a volume which is often hard to be understood. And the reason why we put providence after the Word and Spirit of Christ is, that no man is able to explain providence aright until he has studied the Word, and been taught by the Spirit of the Lord. (*J. Patrick, M.A.*) *Israel's guide and guard* :—I. It refers to the Church of God IN ITS PRIVATE AND DOMESTIC CHARACTER. These are denoted by the expression—"every dwelling-place of Mount Zion." It is one among the many beautiful descriptions of the true Christian, with which the Bible abounds, not simply that he does approach to God, but that he takes delight in doing so; and having "tasted that the Lord is gracious," he will strive to realise, in his own parental character, the exalted qualities, which God ascribed to Abraham, and which doubtless were even then in the course of development, though "as yet he had no child." Happy is that parent, happy is that child, with respect to whom it can be truly said, "The fathers to the children shall make known Thy truth." II. The second aspect, under which the Church of God is here presented to us, is IN ITS SOCIAL AND COLLECTIVE CHARACTER. This is indicated by the expression—"her assemblies." The expression refers to the union of the servants of God in public worship: corresponding exactly to that of which our Saviour spoke, when He said—"Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." There can be no doubt, that from the very earliest ages of the Church, the rest of the holy Sabbath was observed; and the more the spirit of genuine religion diffused itself, the more did men of similar tastes and feelings seek pious association with each other. (*G. Weight, M.A.*) *The glory of Christ's Church* :—1. Experience has amply shown the true glory of a Church does not consist in outward pomp or splendour. Even Solomon confessed that the magnificence which adorned his temple in all its untarnished glory was unworthy to become a residence, or to receive the manifested tokens of Jehovah's presence. In rich and stately decorations even the heathen may enshrine his lifeless idol, and outvie the splendour of the ancient Jewish sanctuary. On the other hand, the patriarchs in their wandering, and the persecuted Christians, convened in woods and caves and retired chambers, have beheld the manifested light of God's countenance, and have seen His power and glory as graciously displayed as in the most splendid sanctuary. 2. The true and essential glory of the Church principally consists in the spirituality, holiness, and unity of its members. 3. The doctrine of the restoration of the image of God in the soul of man, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, challenges for the Church which prominently exhibits it, the title of a glorious Church. 4. Of the varied glories of the Church, none in its early days was more conspicuous than that of unity in government, discipline, worship, and spirit. Long has Satan prevailed in his endeavours to divide and conquer. (*G. Almond.*) *God in His sanctuary* :—I. RELIGIOUS WORSHIP, WHETHER IN THE FAMILY OR THE SANCTUARY, IS PARTICULARLY REGARDED BY GOD. II. GOD WILL EXPRESS HIS APPROVAL BY MANIFESTATIONS OF HIS PRESENCE. The benefits of the Jews from the Shechinah were a type of the benefits of Jesus among us. What were these? 1. The manifestation of truth—the Urim and Thummim. Jesus Christ is the only medium through which we can have knowledge of God, redemption, and the way of worship. 2. The display of holiness. Wherever the Shechinah appeared there was an impression of holiness. Moses and the bush. The Holy of Holies. So in the Gospel, we have not only a display of truth, but of holiness also. 3. Communication of comfort. The cloud covered Israel in a heated atmosphere; it dropped dew, and they were baptized in the cloud. Is not this the end of the spiritual manifestation? The Holy Ghost is called the Comforter. III. THESE MANIFESTATIONS OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE CONSTITUTE THE GLORY OF THE CHURCH. What was the temple without it? And how is this house filled with glory? It is not in the altar, the shewbread, the ark, or the manna, but in Jesus' presence walking among the candlesticks. (*J. Summerfeld, M.A.*) Upon all the glory shall be a defence.—*A Gospel profes-*

*sion the glory of a nation* :—These words are a recapitulation of the whole verse, and are a Gospel promise given out in law terms, or a New Testament mercy under Old Testament expressions. 1. What is here expressed as to the type and figure. For the glory and defence two pairs of things seem to be intended : the ark and the mercy-seat ; the tabernacle and the pillar of fire. (1) The ark is oftentimes called the glory of God (Psa. lxxviii. 61 ; 1 Sam. iv. 21). The word which we have rendered “a defence,” properly signifies “a covering” ; as was the mercy-seat the covering of the ark. So that “upon the glory shall be a defence,” is as much as, unto you the “mercy-seat shall be on the ark,” or you shall have the mercy represented and intimated thereby. (2) The tabernacle and cloud, or pillar of fire, are also called to mind ; so the words are expressive of that figure of God’s gracious presence with His people, which we have recounted (Exod. xl. 34). “Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.” 2. What is here intended, as to the substance of the mercy promised. All those things were typical of Christ. Apply, then, this promise to Gospel times, and the substance of it is comprehended in these two propositions: I. THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST WITH ANY PEOPLE IS THE GLORY OF ANY PEOPLE. This is the glory here spoken of, as is evident to any one that will but read verse 2, and consider its influence unto these words. This is their glory, or they have none. Is it in their number, that they are great, many, and populous ? God thinks not so (Deut. vii. 7 ; Psa. cv. 12). You know what it cost David in being seduced by Satan into the contrary opinion. There is nothing more common in the Scripture than for the Lord to speak contempt of the multitude of any people, as a thing of nought. Is it in their wisdom and counsel, their understanding for the ordering of their affairs ? Is that their glory ? Why, see how God derides the prince of Tyrus, who was lifted up with an apprehension hereof ; and counted himself as God, upon that account (Ezek. xxvii. ; Jer. ix. 23, 24). 1. Now, Christ may be said to be present with a people two ways. (1) In respect of the dispensation of His Gospel amongst them, the profession of it and subjection to the ordinances thereof. (2) In and by His Spirit, dwelling in their hearts by faith, uniting them to Himself. 2. This is the glory of any people upon a threefold account. (1) This alone makes them honourable and precious before God. (2) This presence of Christ makes men comely and excellent in themselves (Psa. xvi. 3) (3) This alone makes any truly useful unto others. Here lies the preservation of any nation from ruin. Prosperity is from hence also. (Mic. v. 7.) If you desire the glory of the nation, labour to promote the interest of Christ in the nation. Value, encourage and close with them in and with whom is the presence of Christ. II. THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN SPECIAL PROVIDENCE OVER A PEOPLE ATTENDS THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN GRACE WITH A PEOPLE. (*J. Owen, D.D.*) *Christ the Defence of His people* :—I. A DEFENDER OF THE HOME. It is “upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion” that there shall be “the cloud and smoke by day,” and the “pillar of fire by night.” What is a house without Christ ? II. A DEFENDER OF THE CHURCH. Upon “all her assemblies,” as well as in every “dwelling-place,” rose the symbols of His presence. Eli trembled for the ark of God, and men now tremble for the safety of the Church in this wilderness world. But it is safe as the children of Israel under the cloud and the pillar. III. A DEFENDER OF THE PERSON. We need personal protection. A “shade in the heat of calamity ; a tent in the storm of adversity. This Christ is to His people. 1. In temporal matters. 2. In the interests of the soul. (*J. S. H.*)

**Ver. 6. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow.**—*A substantial shadow amid the insubstantial* :—The tabernacles of the Old Testament typify the abiding glory of that true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man. They were taken down. This abideth evermore. The dissolving process of death only developed the capacity of the Divine Redeemer to become a universal tabernacle. Isaiah saw the Divine King in all His beauty and in all His adaptedness for the world’s deep needs when he declared, “And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat.” The word shadow is not always attractively employed. Job, in mournful imagery, describes the traveller going to the land of darkness, and the shadow of death. And cheering ideas are not always suggested by the proverb which affirms that coming events cast their shadows before them. But the sublime tabernacle spoken of by Isaiah is a shadow that always attracts. It never hides any sunlight which may be needful for the ripening of celestial fruits. I. This tabernacle is a COOLING SHADOW. The

heats of this world will not be so oppressive to him who dwells in this tabernacle. For the soul finds adequate provisions for the wants and aspirations of its large capacities in this substantial shadow. II. This tabernacle is a **LIFE-GIVING AND PRESERVING SHADOW**. The summer heat of Judæa is intense. Some of the rivers are dried up, and become lanes of burning sand. Near Mount Tabor many of the soldiers of Baldwin IV. died through the oppressive heat; and at this very place of Shunem, the son of the Shunammite was struck in the head by the sun's rays as he went up to his father to the reapers, and he died. A shadow to impart and preserve life as well as to give a cooling place of resort. The spirit of man dies in consequence of unforgiven transgression, but life is found in the true tabernacle. III. This tabernacle is a **DELIGHTFUL SHADOW**. Delightful, not only in protecting from evils, but in the direct impartation of pleasure. If there is any delightful state in this world, it is where and when the soul sits down under the shadows of the Beloved and holds sublime communion with the Infinite. IV. This shadow is an **ABIDING SHADOW**. Unlike that afforded by Jonah's gourd. God blasts our cherished gourds in order to lead us out of all narrow and selfish policies. Earth's protecting shadows flee away to teach us to abide more constantly and believably beneath the one perfect and ever-abiding shadow. (*W. Burrows, B.A.*)

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## CHAPTER V.

**VERS. 1-7.** Now will I sing to my well-beloved.—*Hopes concerning the vineyard*:—The Lord's hopes and disappointment with His vineyard. (*A. B. Davidson, LL.D.*) *Truth to be presented in varied form*:—Aaron's bells must be wisely rung. Sometimes the treble of mercy sounds well, at other times the tenor of judgment, or counter-tenor of reproof, sounds better: and it often happens that the mean of exhortation sounds best of all. It is wisdom to observe circumstances, and know how to curse as well as bless, chide as well as comfort, and speak war to a rebel as well as peace to a friend. And herein, indeed, lies the wisdom and faithfulness of a teacher. (*N. Rogers.*) *Who was the speaker?*—It is an interesting question, and one to which the answer is not altogether obvious. And who is the well-beloved to whom these words are addressed? Only two answers seem possible. Either it must be the prophet who speaks, and his God that he is addressing; or else it must be the eternal Father that is addressing His co-eternal Son. 1. If we adopt, as most commentators seem to do, the former explanation, we have to face two very serious difficulties, neither of which can I meet. (1) The prophet here uses a term of endearment which would be strangely inconsistent with his usual style of addressing God, and such a use of the Hebrew term here employed occurs nowhere else in Scripture. It is a term of endearment of the strongest kind, answering very closely to our English word "darling"; and it is easy to see that there is something very repugnant to our ideas of seemliness and reverence in the application of such a term to that God with whose majesty Isaiah was himself so profoundly impressed. In every other case in which this word is used as a term of endearment, it is addressed by the stronger to the weaker, by the superior to the inferior. Thus Benjamin is spoken of as the beloved of the Lord in the blessings of Deuteronomy, the thought suggested being, that as Benjamin himself was Jacob's favourite, the darling of his heart, so the tribe was to be specially dear to the great Father of the race. But obviously, while Benjamin might justly be called the darling of Jacob's heart, it would have been, to say the least, somewhat incongruous to speak of Jacob as Benjamin's darling. The term would have been wholly out of place here; and not less, but even more, out of place must it needs be in the lips of an Isaiah addressing his God. (2) Yet another difficulty has to be faced if we make the prophet the singer; for in that case, his song clearly ends at the close of the second verse, whereas on this hypothesis it must be assumed that there is an abrupt transition from the speech of the prophet to the speech of God. But it seems clear that the whole passage, down to the end of the seventh verse, constitutes the song referred to in the first verse, and it is all spoken of as a song sung to the beloved. 2. Let us adopt the other explanation of the passage, and all at once becomes straightforward and self-consistent, the only difficulty

involved being that we have here a marvellously explicit reference to a great theological verity, that was not fully revealed to the world till the Christian epoch—the doctrine of the distinction of Persons (as we are obliged to express it for lack of better terms) in the Divine Unity. This great truth is, however, implied in many other passages of Old Testament Scripture, and therefore its occurrence here need not trouble us. According to this second interpretation, it is the eternal Father that is here addressing His well-beloved Son, the Angel of the Covenant, to whose tutelage the ancient Theocracy was delivered, just as at a subsequent period He became, in the flesh, the Founder and Head of the Christian Church. Here the expression used is just what might be expected, and we are reminded of the voice which fell from heaven in New Testament times: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” In this exegesis the identity of the singer and the unity of the song is preserved throughout. There is no abrupt transition from the utterance of one person to that of another; for He who sings and He to whom the song is sung are one. The Father does Himself that which He does through the Divine Word, and hence the passage from the third person to the first in the third verse ceases to be embarrassing; nay, additional force is added to the Divine expostulation; for the Father is jealous with a holy jealousy for the Person and work of His Son. He knows how well that work has been done, and has all the more reason to complain of its having been denied its proper results and its merited reward. There is something infinitely pathetic in the idea of this song of lamentation, poured forth from the great Father’s heart of love into the sympathetic ear of His well-beloved Son, and in this enumeration of all that He, the well-beloved of the Father, had wrought for favoured Israel. When man was created, he was created as the result of the decree of a Divine council: “Let us make man in our own image.” And now when, after years of trial, man has proved himself a miserable failure, the Divine Father and the co-eternal Son are represented as conferring over the disastrous issue. (*W. Hay Aiken, M.A.*)

*The vineyard song*:—There are plaintive songs, mournful songs, as well as songs expressive of joy and delight. I. THE APPELLATIVE ADDRESS. “My well-beloved.” Can you call Jesus so? “If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed at the coming of the Lord.” II. THE SONG. Observe, that whilst this vineyard is the choice of “my well-beloved,” and His own hand plants it, He has a right to the fruits. Take care and do not rob Him. Do not tell me anything about a sandy and barren Christianity. It is not worth twopence an acre, if you go by the measurement. Do not tell me of a tree in the Lord’s vineyard that brings forth no fruit; tell me rather of the post in the street. I look for the fruits of the Spirit, that He may be glorified in and by you. III. THE KNOWLEDGE WHICH IS REQUISITE FOR THE SINGERS. (*J. Irons.*) *Unfruitfulness reproved*:—1. It is natural to ask, Who is this that says, “I will sing a song to my Beloved”? I take these words to be spoken, not in the person of Isaiah, but of God the Father to His Son our Lord, who in the evangelical style is called, “the beloved Son of God, in whom He is well pleased.” But how can the Church of those times be called the vineyard of the Son? I answer, Because as the Father created all things by Him, so by Him He has always governed all things, and more especially His Church. 2. The Church of God is styled a vineyard, which is a very pertinent resemblance of it. For as a vineyard is a plot of ground separated from common field and pasture, in order to be improved with such cultivation as that the vines and grapes it produces may supply the owner with generous wines: so God’s Church consists of a people chosen by Him out of the rest of the world, that they may worship Him by the laws and rules of His own revealing, and so exercise a purer religion, and abound in the fruits of good living, above other men, who have not the light of the same revelation, nor direction of the same laws. This similitude of a vine, or vineyard, for the justness of the resemblance, is several times used to denote the Church. (*Psa. lxxx.*) 3. This vineyard is said to be situate in a very fruitful hill, alluding to the land of Canaan, which was a high-raised, and a very fertile soil, agreeable to the character which Moses gives of it (*Deut. xxxii. 13*). 4. God made a fence round about it, i.e., He distinguished His people from all other nations by peculiar laws, statutes, and observances, not only in religion, but even in civil life, in their very diet and conversation, so that it was impossible for them to remain Jews, and to accompany freely with the rest of the world. He also fenced them with a miraculous protection from the invasions of their adversaries, which bordered upon them on every side. 5. God cleared the soil of this vineyard from stones; not indeed in the literal sense,

for this country pretty much abounds with rocks and flints, which are so far from being always prejudicial, that they are serviceable, not only for walls and buildings, but even for some parts of agriculture. But this is a proper continuation of the allegory, that as stones should be cast out of a vineyard, so God cast out the ancient inhabitants of Canaan, to make room for the children of Israel. And with them He cast out their idols, made of wood and stone, and demolished the temples dedicated to idolatry, that His own people might have no stumbling-blocks left in their way, but might be wholly turned to His service. 6. He planted it with the choicest vine, the true religion, and form of government both ecclesiastical and civil, which He had revealed from heaven. He made excellent provision for the instruction of His people, and the promulgation of His will and pleasure among them. 7. After much cultivation of His vineyard and choice of His vine, He justly expected a plentiful product of the best kind of grapes; but was recompensed for all His pains with no better than the fruits of wild, uncultivated nature; "grapes of Sodom, and clusters of Gomorrah," as He complains (Deut. xxxii.). And He gives us a sample and taste of them in some of the following words. "He looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry." The great increase of their fields and flocks, wherewith He had blessed them, afforded them sufficient means of rendering those dues to religion, and loving-kindness to their neighbours, especially to the more indigent sort, which by many sacred laws and serious exhortations He had enjoined. But instead of being led by the Divine beneficence to works of liberality and charity, they only studied how to sacrifice to their insatiable lusts and lewd affections. 8. Therefore with good reason God tells them and appeals to themselves for the justice of it, that He would take away the hedge of His vineyard, and lay it open to be wasted and trodden under foot. The proper application of all this to ourselves, is briefly hinted by St. Paul (Rom. xi. 21). "If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee." (*W. Reading, M.A.*) *Britain highly favoured of God*.—The natural advantages of Great Britain have been deemed extremely great; an island (says an early historian) "whose valleys are as Eshcol, whose forests are as Carmel, whose hills as Lebanon, and whose defence is the ocean." But our country has to enumerate advantages of a still higher order,—both of a civil and of a religious nature. Our civil constitution is a fabric, which, on account of its symmetry and grandeur, has even called forth the admiration of foreigners. Respecting this invaluable constitution, the late Dr. Claudius Buchanan asks, "Was it the peculiar wisdom of the Danes which constructed it? or of the Saxons, or of the Normans, or of the natives of the island? What is the name of the great legislator who conceived the mighty plan? Was it created by chance, or by design? . . . We know well by whose counsel and providence our happy government hath been begun and finished. Our constitution is the gift of God, and we have to acknowledge His goodness for this blessing, as we thank Him for life, and breath, and all things." But should we be less grateful for the benefits of a religious description, which have been conferred in past years upon our ancestors, and so copiously upon ourselves? We have reason to believe that the holy light of Christian truth was introduced amongst the Britons in the apostolic age, and during the captivity of Caractacus; and that numerous churches being gradually formed, the sanguinary rites of the Druids, practised in the dark recesses of their forests, were exchanged for the pure worship of the Gospel. In the sixth century, Christianity, though too much tinged with the superstition of the age, was introduced amongst the idolatrous Saxons. It was a benefit to many of our ancestors that the dawn of a reformation also appeared, when the doctrines of the Waldenses were brought from France; and when the intrepid Wicliffe—whose writings were of no small advantage to the revival of religion, both in his own country and in Bohemia—protested against the reigning errors. This reformation, though soon crushed, was renewed within about a century afterwards, and established under the auspices of a young monarch whose name should be remembered with the warmest gratitude,—the sixth Edward. The protestant Church was in the next reign greatly oppressed, and many were added to the noble army of martyrs; but in the following reign it acquired a stability unknown before; and notwithstanding the various difficulties with which it has struggled has flourished to this day. (*T. Sims, M.A.*) *Man under the culturing care of Heaven*.—The Eternal employs fiction, as well as fact, in the revelation of His great thoughts to man. Hence we have in the Bible, fable, allegory, parable. Fiction, used in the way which the Bible employs it, is a valuable servant of truth.

It is always pure, brief, attractive, and strikingly apt. The Divine idea flashes from it at once, as the sunbeam from the diamond. The text is one of the oldest parables, and is run in a poetic mould. It is fiction set to music. "I will sing to my beloved a song touching his vineyard." Isaiah's heart, as all hearts should be, is in loving transports with the absolutely Good One, and by the law of strong affections he expresses himself in the language of bold metaphor and the music of lofty verse. Love is evermore the soul of poetry and song. This parabolic song is not only a song of love, but a song of sadness, for it expresses in stirring imagery how the Almighty had wrought in mercy to cultivate the Hebrew people into goodness, how unsuccessful He had been in all His gracious endeavours, and how terrible the judgment that would descend from His throne in consequence of their unfruitfulness. We have man under Divine culture here set before us in three aspects. I. RECEIVING THE UTMOST ATTENTION. So much had the Eternal done for the Hebrew race in order to make them good, that He appeals to the men of Jerusalem and Judah in these remarkable words: "What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?" What has the great moral Husbandman done towards our moral culture? 1. Look at nature. There is an intelligence, a goodness, a calm, fatherly tenderness, animating, beautifying, and brightening all nature, which is, in truth, its moral soul, that silently works evermore to fashion the heart of humanity for God. 2. Look at history. There is running through all history, as its very life, an Eternal Spirit of inexorable justice and compassionating mercy, whose grand mission it is to turn the souls of men from the hideousness of crime to the beauties of virtue, from confidence in man, "whose breath is in his nostrils," to trust in Him who liveth for ever, from the temporary pleasures of earth to the spiritual joys of immortality. 3. What are the events of our individual life? Why is our life, from the cradle to the grave, one perpetual change of scene and state? Why the unceasing alternation of adversity and prosperity, friendship and bereavement, sorrow and joy? Rightly regarded, they are God's implements of spiritual culture. 4. Look at mediation. Why did God send His only-begotten Son into the world? We are expressly told that it "was to redeem men from all iniquity." 5. Look at the Gospel ministry. Why does the great God ordain and qualify men in every age to expound the doctrines, offer the provisions, and enforce the precepts of the Gospel of His Son? Is it not to enlighten, renovate, purify, and morally save the souls of men? II. BECOMING WORSE THAN FRUITLESS. "He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes." The idea is that the Jewish people, under the culturing care of God, produced instead of good fruit the fetid, noxious fruit of the wild vine. And truly their history demonstrates this lamentable fact. From age to age they grew more and more corrupt, morally offensive, and pernicious. Thus they went on until the days of Christ. Unfruitfulness is bad enough, but pernicious fruitfulness is worse. The history of the world shows that it is a common thing for men to grow in evil under the culturing care of God. Pharaoh's heart was hardened under the ministry of Moses; Saul advanced in depravity under the ministry of Samuel; and Judas became a devil under the ministry of Christ Himself. Man growing in evil under the culturing agency of God indicates two facts in human nature. 1. The spontaneity of man's action. What stronger proof can there be that our Maker has endowed us with a sovereign power of freedom than the fact that we act contrary to His purpose regarding us, and neutralise His culturing efforts? 2. The perversity of man's heart. The disposition to run counter to Heaven, which is coeval with unregenerate souls, is the root of the world's upas. How came it? It does not belong to human nature as a constitutional element. It is our own creation, and for it eternal justice holds us responsible. III. SINKING INTO UTTER DESOLATION (vers. 5, 6). These words threaten a threefold curse. 1. The withdrawal of Divine protection. "I will take away the hedge thereof," &c. The meaning is, that He will withdraw His guardianship from the Hebrew people. This threat was fulfilled in their experience. Heaven withdrew its ægis, and the Romans entered and wrought their ruin. What thus occurred to the Jew is only a faint symbol of what must inevitably occur in the experience of all who continue to grow in evil under the culturing agency of God. 2. A cessation of culturing effort. "It shall not be pruned nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns." The idea is that He would put forth no more effort to improve their condition, that He would cease to send them visions and prophets. The

time must come in the case of all the unregenerate, when God will cease His endeavours to improve. His Spirit will not "always strive with man." 3. The withholding of fertilising elements. "I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it." However protected the vineyard might be, and however enriched the soil, and skilfully pruned the branches, if no rain come, the whole will soon be ruined. What a terrible picture of a soul is this!—here is a soul from which its great Father has withdrawn all protection, ceased all culturing efforts, and withholds all fertilising influences! Here is hell. This subject starts many solemn reflections, and has many practical uses. (1) It unfolds the mercifulness of God. How infinite His condescending love in taking this little world under His culturing care. (2) It reveals the morality of life. Man is a moral being, and everything here connected with his life has a moral purpose, and a moral bearing. (3) It explains all human improvement. God, as the great Husbandman, is here "building fences," "digging and pruning," and thus helping on the world to moral fruitfulness. (4) It urges self-scrutiny. In what state is our vineyard? (5) It suggests the grand finale of the world's history. There is a harvest marching up the "steeps of time." (*Homilist.*) *Great opportunities*.—I. AS ABUNDANTLY POSSESSED. The vineyard here is represented—1. As in a salubrious position. "In a very fruitful hill." 2. As subject to culturing care. Canaan was the fruitful hill; the theocratic government was the fence built around it. What rare opportunities has every man amongst us! Bibles in our houses, churches near our dwellings, preachers of every type of mind, class of thought, and oratoric power. II. AS SHAMEFULLY ABUSED. "When I looked that it should bring forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes." III. AS UTTERLY LOST. (*Ibid.*) *A history of the Jews*.—We have in this parable a summing up of the history of God's chosen people. I. GOD'S CARE FOR THEM—their privileges. II. GOD'S GRIEF OVER THEM—their sin and unfaithfulness. III. GOD'S SENTENCE UPON THEM—their punishment. (*C. J. Ridgeway.*) *Human life in parable*.—I. Here is human life PLACED IN A GOOD SITUATION. "In a very fruitful hill." II. Here is human life AS THE SUBJECT OF DETAILED CARE (ver. 2). He stood back and waited like a husbandman. The vineyard was upon a hill, and therefore could not be ploughed. How blessed are those vineyards that are cultivated by the hand! There is a magnetism in the hand of love that you cannot have in an iron plough. He gathered out the stones thereof one by one . . . He fenced . . . He built . . . He made a wine-press. It is hand-made. There is a peculiar delight in rightly accepting the handling of God. We are not cultivated by the great ploughs of the constellations and the laws of nature; we are handled by the Living One, our names are engraven on the palms of His hands: "The right hand of the Lord doeth gloriously." Human life, then, is the subject of detailed care; everything, how minute soever, is done as if it were the only thing to be done; every man feels that there is a care directed to him which might belong to an only son. III. Human life is next regarded AS THE OBJECT OF A JUST EXPECTATION. "He looked that it should bring forth grapes." Had He not a right to do so? Is there not a sequence of events? When men sow certain seed, have they not a right to look for a certain crop? When they pass through certain processes in education, or in commerce, or in statesmanship, have they not a right to expect that the end should correspond with the beginning? Who likes to lose all his care? IV. Human life AS THE OCCASION OF A BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT. "It brought forth wild grapes." (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *Life given for culture*.—It is not the best at the first; it has to be fenced, and the stones are to be taken out, and the choice vine is to be planted, and the tower is to be set in the midst of it, and the wine-press is to be built therein. The child is but the beginning; the man should be the cultivated result. Culture is bestowed for fruit. Culture is not given for mere decoration, ornamentation, or for the purpose of exciting attention, and invoking and securing applause; the meaning of culture, ploughing, digging, sowing is—fruit, good fruit, usable fruit, fruit for the healing of the nations. The fruit for which culture is bestowed is moral. God looked for judgment and for righteousness. (*Ibid.*) *God's expectation of fruit*.—I. THE MOTIVES OR REASONS INDUCING US TO FRUITFULNESS. 1. Every creature in its kind is fruitful. The poorest creature God hath made is enabled, with some gift, to imitate the goodness and bounty of the Creator, and to yield something from itself to the use and benefit of others. Shall not every creature be a witness against man, and rise up in judgment to condemn him, if he be fruitless? 2. The fruitfulness

of a Christian is the groundwork of all true prosperity. 3. If we be fruitful, bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, there is no law against us (Gal. v. 22, 23). 4. The circumstance of time calls upon us to bring forth the fruits of obedience. Forasmuch as the Lord hath year by year, for so long succession of years, sought for fruit of us and found none, it is now high time to bring forth plenty. 5. If all this will not serve to make us fruitful, that which our Saviour saith in John xv. 2, 6, should awaken us. II. SOME PROFITABLE MEANS THAT MUST BE USED TO MAKE US GROW MORE FRUITFUL. 1. See thou be removed out of thy natural soil, and be engrafted into another stock. 2. See thou plant thyself by the running brooks. 3. See thou labour for humility and tenderness of heart. The ground which is hard and strong is unfit for fruit. 4. Beware of overshadowing thy heart by any sinful lust, whereby the warm beams of the Sun of Righteousness are kept from it. 5. A special care must be had to the root that that grow well. Faith is the radical grace. 6. We must be earnest with the Lord, that He would make us fruitful. III. THE NATURE AND QUALITY OF THAT FRUIT WHICH WE MUST BRING FORTH. 1. Proper. It must be thy own. 2. Kindly, resembling the Author, who is the Spirit of grace. 3. Timely and seasonable (Psa. i. 3). 4. Ripe. 5. A fifth property of good fruit is universalities. Fruits of the first and second table, of holiness towards God and righteousness towards man. Fruits inward and outward. 6. Constant. (N. Rogers.)

**Ver. 2. It brought forth wild grapes.**—*Wild grapes* :—The history of the Jewish nation is written for our warning, and the lessons taught by this parable are sadly needed by the England of to-day. There is not one word of this description of the vineyard at its best which is not true of this highly favoured land. This, too, is a very fruitful hill. Under the soil, what unheard-of mineral riches, mines of wealth! Above the soil and in it what fertility, what productive power! Around us, from port and bay and harbour, our merchant fleets take and fetch and gather the riches of the earth! Here, too, is planted a chosen and favoured vine. Here God has planted the Anglo-Saxon race, so blended with some other tribal blood that, even our enemies being judges, we have been unequalled in hardy daring, conquering energy, splendid enterprise, and universal stretch of power. We, too, have been strangely "fenced in" by the providence of God. Our iron coasts, compassed by the inviolate sea, have largely made and kept us separate and safe. Out of this land have also been gathered the stones of idolatry, barbarism, despotism, bigotry, slavery. Here, too, the Husbandman hath built His tower and made His wine-press. "The temples of His grace, how beautiful they stand!" Surely the Lord hath not dealt so with any people! To us He says, as well as to Israel of old, "What more could I do to My vineyard, that I have not done? Why, then, when I looked for grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" Is not this indictment true? Wild grapes, offensive to God, mischievous to others, and ruinous to us, are being produced on every hand. The Husbandman describes some of them. 1. The excessive greed of gain (ver. 8). The sin lies not in the mere addition of house to house, by fair and lawful means, or a moderate gathering together of earthly good; but in that mad rush and scramble, that strife and struggle to lay hold of all the hand can grasp. Never was Nebuchadnezzar's golden god worshipped with half the eager frenzy of to-day. Utterly reckless of Naboth's honest claim to his little vineyard—regardless of the right of poorer neighbours to gain a livelihood, a powerful purse shall buy them out; huge estates shall be enclosed in an ever-expanding ring fence; rampant speculators shall starve the spinner and weaver by the cunning of a "cotton-corner." It is a moral wrong; it is a national calamity; it is a wild grape which wins a "woe" from God. The one gleam of hope lies in the fact that the monster will be its own destroyer. "Of a truth, many such houses, great and fair, shall be without inhabitant." 2. Another wild grape is the crying sin of intemperance (ver. 11). 3. Another wild grape is the headstrong rush after pleasure; the follies and frivolities of the tens of thousands whose whole time and tastes and talents are wickedly laid on the shrine of sensual delights. A perpetual round of feasting, junketing, dancing, sightseeing, and sensational enjoyments is the be-all and end-all of their existence (ver. 12). 4. Another wild grape is sensuality in its grosser and fouler shapes. "Woe unto them which draw iniquity with cords, and sin as with a cart-ropes." In this case the silken threads which bound them to the gilded chariot of pleasure have been woven by the force of habit into strong cords and cables, and they are drawn by the baser passions into



bestial sensuality, and within the veil of secrecy, and under the curtains of night, uncleanness reigns. 5. Another wild grape is infidelity. "Woe unto them that regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operations of His hands." They deny His creating power, they question His existence, and as for the operation of His providence, not God but law and nature is the cause of all! And all this in England! 6. Another wild grape here mentioned is fraud and falsehood; and still another is dishonesty. "Woe to them who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter," and so on. Again, "Woe unto them which justify wickedness for reward!" Tricks of trade, scamped handiwork, adulterated goods, lying puffs and advertisements, commercial frauds, haphazard speculations—oh, 'tis a sickening list! What shall be the end of it? Must England, like Israel, perish, forsaken of her God? No nation that forgets God shall prosper: look on the ruins of Babylon, of Greece, of Israel, of Rome. No city that forgets God shall prosper: read the sad records of Nineveh, of Tyre, of Jerusalem, of Sardis, of Laodicea. No man that forgets God shall prosper: look at the graves of Pharaoh, of Ahab, of Saul, of Herod, of Napoleon. If England lives on, and grows in lustre as she lives, it must be because the King Emmanuel is undisputed Monarch of the national heart, uncontrolled Director of the national policy and the national will. (*J. J. Wray, M.A.*) *Isaiah an embodied conscience*:—Isaiah was speaking in the first years of the reign of Ahaz, who, by his luxury and effeminacy, was beginning to imperil the splendid results of the reigns of Uzziah and Jotham. Like most men who are embodied consciences, the prophet was looked upon as a busybody. Those are usually most hated who do that which is most needed. Having attracted attention by his parable of the vineyard and the grapes, Isaiah became a remorseless and terrible voice. The man seemed to have disappeared, while the voice spoke the retributions of the Almighty. This embodied conscience was terribly faithful. It is useless to attempt argument with a conscience. It can never be argued with—it must be heard. It utters its imperative, and you are heedless at your peril. Some things may be reasoned about; a matter of conscience, never. Furthermore, conscience is always and of necessity prophetic. Whenever conscience tells you that you are wrong, it tells you more than that—it tells you that you must turn or you will be punished. That is what makes it a terror. Not only does it point the finger of shame; it also points the finger of doom. So is it with the national conscience; it, too, is prophetic, and always speaks of judgment. Isaiah was the conscience of Judah speaking its imperative, as Wendell Phillips and William Lloyd Garrison were our national conscience in the days when the Republic protected slavery. Judah had grown rich; she was getting careless; she was trusting in her riches. Judah had been sadly disciplined. There had been earthquakes, loss of territory, defeat, and now there was approaching the spectre of an Assyrian invasion. For all this she boasted of her riches and neglected God. (*Amory H. Bradford, D.D.*) *Old foes with new faces*:—1. As soon as a people become rich, they usually begin to subvert the natural and Divine order to their own selfishness. The tendency of riches is to lead people to do wrong. That may be why it is so hard for a rich man to get into heaven. He makes the mistake of thinking he can buy his way anywhere, and finds at last that character, not gold, is the currency he needs. 2. The sternness of the prophet continues. Those who have grown rich have also grown luxurious. They have learned the pleasures of the wine-cup; they tarry long at the wine. The land question is an old one; the liquor question is equally old. Again I ask, Who shall tell why, as soon as men begin to prosper, they begin to do what is worst for themselves and worst for the world? Read that fifth chapter from verse 12 to 17. How true to life! "The mean man is bowed down, and the great man is humbled." The low-bred fellow drinks his fiery liquor and wallows in the gutter; the high-bred and rich say that they can mind their own business, and go to the same disgusting squalor. But Isaiah was speaking of the nation rather than to individuals. It was a national shame that such things were tolerated then; it is a disgrace that such things are tolerated now. If Isaiah were alive to-day, or, better, if Jesus Christ could have your attention for a moment, He would say, How can you justify yourselves in giving so much time to purely economic questions and so little to the devising of means for the abolition of what ruins the finest of our boys, blights homes that would otherwise be beautiful and full of love, and makes so many of our rulers more like swine than the sovereigns they were intended to be? These two old foes are still alive, with new faces—

the land question and the liquor question. The lesson which we have to learn is the one which the prophet sought to impress in his time—that both individuals and nations are responsible to God; that responsibility is real; and that there is a judgment-seat before which men and nations must stand. “For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still.” Let us not forget that we—our community, our state, our nation—are in the moral order of God; that everything we do is making ourselves and all others better or worse; that we are all called to fellowship with the prophets and apostles and faithful souls in all ages, to do something toward bringing in the time when the good things of the world shall belong to all people. (*Ibid.*) *A reasonable expectation*:—God expects vineyard fruit from those that enjoy vineyard privileges. (*M. Henry.*)

**Ver. 3. Judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard.**—*The unfruitful vineyard*.—I. The way in which the inspired penman is guided to put the question in the text seems to lead us to ONE OF THE SUBTLEST WEAKNESSES OF HUMAN NATURE,—I mean the power which men possess of perceiving general truth without at the same time perceiving its particular bearing on themselves. Often and often are we, all unconsciously, judging between God and His vineyard, and we know it not. There is no general denunciation of the Bible which does not meet with our full assent; but we are too often unable to see that we ourselves come under its terms. And this is one of the dangers attendant on listening to preaching. II. The portion of Scripture under consideration has A MOST DIRECT REFERENCE TO OUR OWN PROBATION. 1. As members of the Church. 2. As individual souls. (*W. Alexander.*)

**Vers. 4-6. What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?**—*Human responsibility and Divine grace*.—I. In any attempt at the interpretation of the story and the exhibition of its moral and religious uses, its NATIONAL APPLICATION should be considered first. (Ver. 7.) 1. There is a sense in which it may almost be said that Israel was Jehovah’s vineyard as no other race or nation has ever been. Selected from an ancient stock which certainly does not seem to have greatly distinguished itself before, it had been preserved and cherished century after century; and in its most marvellous history are to be found the purest revelations of God in antiquity, leading up to the “unspeakable gift” in which men have life. That history proves that the nation had enjoyed every condition of blessedness, every opportunity of fruitfulness and service. 2. The kind of career it chose is sufficiently indicated in this fifth chapter, in the latter part of which the vices seem almost to run riot. But it is even more significant of the state of the nation, that these lurid paragraphs are not perhaps quite an adequate representation. For, threatened with an attack from an alliance of the neighbouring tribes, Abaz sought the aid of the King of Assyria; and to secure it, he actually consented to govern his country as an Assyrian province. Then followed one of the most dismal periods of Jewish history. The weak king became infatuated with his oppressor, and nothing would satisfy him except the introduction of Assyrian manners and morals and worship into Jerusalem. The example of the court infected the nobles and the priests; and at length, in the beautiful valley of Hinnom, amongst the groves that were kept green by the fountains of Siloah, an altar to Moloch was erected. That was the sort of “wild grape” this choice vine was yielding,—idolatry of the most cruel and savage kind, varied with sensuality and the oppression of the poor. 3. That such a result should disappoint the Owner of the vineyard was only natural; and accordingly this little story represents Him next as trying to find out the cause, or rather, as appealing to the men of Judah to acknowledge what He and they well knew. He sets them up for the moment as judges, and confronts reason and conscience with the question, “What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?” Everything that could be done and yet leave them free to sin and capable of righteousness had been done. 4. A nation convicted and self-convicted of the most gross offences against God and against morals, offences the entire responsibility of which rests upon itself—what will become of that nation? There are other parts of the Bible, not quite so stern as this, which indicate that further opportunities may be given it, and the final punishment withheld for a time. But it is also true that, in regard of nations as well as of men, the patience of God may be exhausted. We have accordingly, in this song and story, the outline of the history of Judah. God’s consideration, first of all,

with every kind of gracious help and opportunity,—all wasted through the neglect or wilfulness of the nation itself, until it became fruitless and hopelessly corrupt; and then the fulfilment of the Divine words: "Go to; I will tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it." Judah, in its origins and early career, is a sufficient illustration of the preliminary stages: Judah, in its dispersion and miseries, is a standing witness to the certainty with which national calamity overtakes national contempt of God. A nation that ignores its past, and just surrenders itself to sin, is manifestly good for nothing, filling no worthy function, but cumbering the earth.

II. BUT NO NATIONAL INTERPRETATION OF THIS PARABLE SEEMS QUITE SUFFICIENT. The way in which the Bible insists upon the truth that national responsibility does not obliterate but only gathers together and, as it were, organises personal responsibility, has some important bearings upon current modes of speech and thought. There is a disposition sometimes to speak of the conscience of a nation, to imagine that the phrase stands for something that is entirely separate and apart from ourselves, and to regard it as a power outside of a man, to which he may add or from which he may withhold his own influence. At times it has proved a convenient generalisation; but it is well that an exact meaning should be given it. It must denote, not something apart from any man, but either the average personal conscience, or the aggregate of all the consciences; and an average or an aggregate is a figure upon which every unit tells. All morality, indeed, must always be, in its essence and in its appeals, personal, lifting up a nation by lifting up the individuals that constitute it; exposing it to the wrath of God because the individuals expose themselves. The most effective social movements are found to be accordingly those which address themselves in the name of God to individuals, and persuade them one by one to aim more resolutely at the fulfilment of righteousness.

1. If then this passage be taken personally, no one who recalls his past life, and remembers the way in which God has dealt with him, is likely to object to its symbolism. Every one of us has been and is a vineyard of the Lord; and He does for us all that a God can do.

2. What has been the result of it all? Wild grapes in abundance—weakness and bad temper and almost every kind of fault we can show, but little else.

3. The reason of such failure is not far to seek. That God can be blamed for it, is impossible; for there has been no defect of grace or help on His part. Temperament and circumstance might be pleaded, aptitudes we have inherited, and hindrances amidst which we have found ourselves, but for the obvious reply that, whilst these things may involve effort and strain, they never involve defeat. The man who is most embarrassed by his own disposition and surroundings, but for his own fault might be a better man than he is.

4. The consequences of continuing in fruitlessness are shown by the passage to be fatal and hopeless. To waste Divine grace is to run the risk of losing it altogether. That point, however, has not been reached by any one who retains any aspiration after God, or any desire to be a better man. In Christ there is power for all to shake off every habit of sin, to reverse tendencies to neglect and waste, to evolve in righteousness and peace. (*R. Waddy Moss.*)

*God and men:—I. THE DEALINGS OF GOD WITH US. II. OUR CONDUCT TOWARDS HIM. (A. Roberts, M.A.)*

*Divine disappointment:—*It may seem irreverent to speak of a Divine disappointment, but this is by no means the only passage of Scripture which in its obvious meaning conveys this idea. Perhaps we may have to leave the explanation of such words till we obtain fuller light in higher worlds upon the great mystery of the relation of Divine foreknowledge to human freedom; but clearly such words are spoken to us after the manner of men, in order that we may the better discern the intensity of desire and the warmth of loving interest with which the God from whom we all proceed seeks to raise us to our true functions and our proper place in His universe, and the sorrow and regret with which He witnesses the failure of His gracious purposes concerning us. (*W. Hay Aitken, M.A.*)

*The moral limits of the Divine resources:—*1. Perhaps it may occur to you to object, Why this lamentation and apparent disappointment? Surely, this is a confession of impotence on the part of the Omnipotent. If God be really what we call Him—Almighty—why should He waste words in futile expostulations? Surely, He who makes the vine put forth her tender grapes, and prepares the autumn vintage the wide world over, could, if He pleased, by the mere exercise of His superior power, constrain men to bring forth the fruit that He desires to

see brought forth. Why did He not increase the pressure of His power on Israel until He had constrained the disobedient nation to become obedient, and had practically forced them to bring forth their fruit? Our answer to this very natural difficulty is simply this—that the suggestion involves a contradiction. This will be sufficiently obvious as soon as we begin to ask, What is the special fruit that God seeks at the hand of man? The proper fruit of humanity, the fruit that God seeks in human character and life, is the reproduction of the Divine nature. God's purpose in man is answered when He sees in man His own moral likeness formed. But now, inasmuch as God is a free agent, it is only by the possession of a similar moral faculty, and of the capacity of exercising it, and only by its exercise in the highest and best manner, that man can ever be conformed into the Divine image; for no two things are more essentially unlike than an automaton and a free agent. Indeed, I think we might venture to say that even a free agent who uses his freedom badly is morally more like God, just because he is free, than the most perfect automaton—perfect, I mean, in every other particular you can name—could ever hope to become, seeing that he is not, and can never hope to be, free. No doubt God could have arranged that man should be a very different being, and bring forth very different fruit; but then in doing so He would have had to abandon the specific purpose emphatically announced when man was just about to be called into existence—"Let us make man in our image, after our own likeness." St. Paul teaches us that the "gifts and calling of God are without repentance," and we see this illustrated all through the natural world. God does not alter the functions of particular organisms, and make them produce something totally distinct from their own proper type. Were He to do so He would be admitting failure and inconsistency. And as in the material so in the spiritual world. Man has been originally designed to occupy a certain unique position there, and to exercise certain definite functions, and to bring forth a particular kind of fruit to the glory of God, and therefore we may be quite sure that God will not transform him into a being of another order altogether, just to make him do and be what he in his free manhood wills not to do or to be. 2. But it might still be urged, Would not God be acting a kinder part if He withdrew this faculty of free-will which has caused us so much trouble, and sin and sorrow—if He were so completely to override it by His own superior power, and so control it that it should be able to exercise no appreciable influence in our conduct, but that He Himself should always have His way? To this we answer, God loves man too much to do anything of the kind. Man's capacity of rising to his proper destiny is involved in his possession and exercise of this faculty of volition. Take it away, and we must needs turn our backs for ever upon the thought of rising to the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus; for it is by the use of these wills of ours, and by their voluntary subordination, that we are to be trained, and developed, and educated, and fitted for enjoying that wondrous relation to the Son of God which is spoken of as the spiritual Bridal and Union of Christ and His Church. No; man must remain free, or else his own proper fruit can never be brought forth; and hence there is really and actually a moral limit to the Divine resources. 3. Bearing in mind, then, these necessary limitations of the Divine resources, let us each face the inquiry, What more would we have God do for us than He has actually done? I do not say that all are equally privileged, and I can believe that some, in answer to such a challenge, might demand the enjoyment of higher privileges such as others possess. But don't you see that, whatever privileges might thus be secured, the necessity for the action of the will would not and could not be evaded? And so long as this were so, what guarantee would you have that your increased privileges might not mean only enhanced condemnation? Others, who occupy the very position of privilege that you might demand, have only turned their privileges into a curse by sinning against them; and who shall say that it would not be the same with you? Nay, is it not even more than probable that it would be so; for does not our Lord Himself teach us that "he that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much"? Here we have laid down one of the great laws of the moral world. (*Ibid.*) *God employs various means in dealing with men.*—He does not exhaust all the means that He is capable of employing without any inconsistency all at once. Just as He dealt in different ways with Israel of old, sometimes sending a miracle-working prophet like Elijah, and sometimes a man of mighty eloquence such as Isaiah; sometimes raising up a saintly hierarch like Samuel, and some-

times a philosophic moralist like Solomon; sometimes speaking in pestilence, defeat, disaster, and sometimes in prosperity and deliverance, even so He employs first one means and then another in dealing with us. But each of these, when it fails to bring about the end for which it was designed, represents the exhaustion of yet another resource; and when the last which the Holy Ghost can righteously and consistently have recourse to has been exhausted, the soul is lost. (*Ibid.*) *Thankfulness for past mercies the way to obtain future blessings*:—I. THE FORM AND MANNER OF THE COMPLAINT. It runs in a pathetic interrogatory exclamation; which way of expression naturally and amongst men importing in it surprise and a kind of confusion in the thoughts of him who utters it, must needs be grounded upon that which is the foundation of all surprise, which I conceive is reducible to these two heads—1. The strangeness; 2. The indignity of anything, when it first occurs to our apprehensions. II. THE COMPLAINT ITSELF; for which there are these things to be considered. 1. The Person complaining, who was God Himself. 2. The persons complained of, which were His peculiar church and people. 3. The ground of this complaint; which was their unworthy and unsuitable returns made to the dealings of God with them. 4. The issue and consequent of it; which was the confusion and destruction of the persons so graciously dealt with and so justly complained of. (*R. South, D.D.*) *God's vineyard*:—With ill men nothing is more common than to accuse Almighty God of partiality and injustice, as if it were in His nature to be austere and cruel, and expect more than can reasonably be done by them in their circumstances. When the earth is unprofitable, and its productions are fit only to be burned in the fire, the fault is neither in the sun nor yet in the clouds, but in those whose business it is to prepare the earth for the influences of the heavens. In like manner, and with equal justice, may God appeal to His people: and this is the purport of the question, "What could have been done more for My vineyard, that I have not done in it?" 1. The vineyard, with all the circumstances relating to it, is thus described by the prophet (vers. 1-4). 2. If Christians should at last fall away, the justice of God may then appeal to them, "What could have been done more for My vineyard, that I have not done in it?" 3. As true religion brings with it the blessing of God upon any nation, and this blessing is the source of inward peace, wisdom, health, plenty, and prosperity; so the decay of Christianity must bring such evils upon us as were brought on the impenitent Jews. (*W. Jones, M.A.*) *The impenitent inexcusable*:—There is something very affecting, very startling, in the assertion that as much had been done as could be done in order to produce from the ancient Church the "fruits of righteousness." And, if you only ponder the arrangements of the Gospel, you will feel forced to assent to the reproachful truth which is conveyed in the question of the text. There is a wonderful variety in the arguments and appeals which are addressed in Scripture to the thoughtless and obdurate. At one time they are attacked with terrors, at another acted upon by the loving-kindness of God, and allured by the free mercies of the Gospel. In our text there is nothing alleged but the greatness of what God has done for us—a greatness such that nothing more can be done, consistently, at least, with that moral accountableness which must regulate the amount of influence which God brings to bear upon man. Of course, if this be so, then, if we are not convinced and renewed under the existing instrumentality, there is nothing that can avert from us utter destruction. I. This is the first way of vindicating the question of our text—atheism has a far better apology for resisting the evidences of a God which are spread over creation, than worldly-mindedness for manifesting insensibility to redemption through Christ. It is not, we think, too bold a thing to say, that in redeeming us, God exhausted Himself. He gave Himself; what greater gift could remain unbested? Therefore it is the fact that nothing more could have been done for the vineyard, which proves the utter ruin which must follow neglect of the proffered salvation. Having shown yourselves too hard to be softened by that into which Deity has thrown all His strength, too proud to be humbled by that which involved the humiliation of God, too grovelling to be attracted by that which unites the human and the Divine, too cold to be warmed by that which burns with all the compassions of that Infinite One, whose very essence is love,—may we not argue that you thus prove to yourselves that there is no possible arrangement by which you could be saved? II. Consider more in detail what has been done for the vineyard, in order to bring out, in all its reproachfulness, the question before us. 1. As much has been done as could have been done because of the agency

through which redemption was effected. The Author of our redemption was none other than the eternal Son of God, who had covenanted from all eternity to become the surety and substitute for the fallen. So far as we have the power of ascertaining, no being but a Divine taking to Himself flesh, could have satisfied justice in the stead of fallen man. But this is precisely the arrangement which has been made on our behalf. 2. As much has been done as could have been done for the "vineyard," regard being had to the completeness and fulness of the work as well as to the greatness of its Author. The sins of the whole race were laid upon Christ; and such was the value which the Divinity gave to the endurance of the humanity, that the whole race might be pardoned if the whole race would put faith in the Mediator as punished in their stead. The scheme of redemption not only provides for our pardon, so that punishment may be avoided; it provides also for our acceptance, so that happiness may be obtained. Not only is there full provision for every want, but there is the Holy Spirit to apply the provision, and make it effectual in the individual case. 3. There is yet one more method of showing that so much has been done for the "vineyard" that there remains nothing more which the Owner can do. In the teachings of the Redeemer we have such clear information as to our living under a retributive government,—a government whose recompenses shall be accurately dealt out in another state of being,—that ignorance can be no man's excuse if he live as though God took no note of human actions. And we reckon that much of what has been done for the "vineyard" consists in the greatness of the reward which the Gospel proposes to righteousness, and the greatness of the punishment which it denounces on impenitence. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The Lord's vineyard* :—

**I. THE ADVANTAGES. II. THE SINS. III. THE PUNISHMENT of the elder Church.** (*G. J. Cornish, M.A.*) *Christmas thoughts* :—I. The solemnity of the present season calls upon us to commemorate in an especial manner THE MERCIES OF GOD IN THE REDEMPTION OF THE WORLD, the last and most gracious of all His dispensations. The preceding vouchsafements were preparatory to this, which is therefore to be considered as the completion of the others. Wherefore, if those other dispensations had so much grace in them as to warrant the prophet's expostulation in the text and context, the argument will be so much the stronger, and our obligation so much the greater, as the grace in which we stand is more abounding and the advantage of our situation more favourable and auspicious to us. This whole matter will appear in a stronger light to us if we turn our thoughts to those three great periods of religion under one or other of which the Church of God and His Christ hath all along subsisted. In each of these we shall have occasion to reflect upon the merciful care of providence and the shameful negligence and ingratitude of mankind in their returns to it. 1. The patriarchal; 2. The Jewish; 3. The Christian, marked by the personal appearance of Christ, our blessed Mediator, who had all along transacted the great affairs of the Church under the two preceding economies. The two main ends which were here consulted were—(1) The atonement of past offences. (2) The prevention of future offences. **II. THE RETURNS WHICH HAVE BEEN MADE** to all this tender indulgence of our merciful Father. (*N. Marshall, D.D.*) *National wickedness in danger of provoking national judgments* :—**I. WHAT GOD HATH DONE FOR US, AND WHAT RETURNS WE HAVE MADE.** 1. In early ages, when we were overrun with heathenism and idolatry, it pleased God to plant the Christian religion among us; a religion every way worthy of the Divine dispensation, and suited to the exigencies of mankind. When this religion had flourished many centuries in its unalloyed purity, in a very dark age it became adulterated with impure doctrines, and quite overgrown with a heap of monstrous absurdities: but it pleased God, by the ministry of His faithful servants, to re-enlighten this land with the beams of truth; to restore Christianity to its original simplicity and sincerity. 2. A thorough disregard to Christianity has prevailed. **II. WHAT WE MAY EXPECT AS THE CONSEQUENCE OF OUR INGRATITUDE AND IMPIETY.** Vice, when diffused through a kingdom, must have a fatal influence over the whole community, and at last accomplish the destruction of it. In its universal progress it must be attended with idleness and immoderate expense, the natural parents of poverty. Honest poverty would cast about for honest and unthought-of expedients for supporting itself and bettering its condition, but poverty, contracted by the profligate courses of drunkenness, lewdness, and debauchery, takes quite another turn, and preys upon the little industry that is left to the nation, and thereby gives a check to that very industry; for the less secure men grow in their properties the less will

they labour to improve them. Hence will it come to pass that among those of higher condition, self-interest will be made the ruling principle. And among the meanest of the people what power can we suppose will the voice of human laws have against the louder calls of poverty, set free from the barrier of conscience, and thereby at liberty to relieve itself by all the methods that wickedness can suggest? In proportion as the hands of the government grow weak will the hearts of its enemies be strengthened, and greater force must still be provided for its support, and the maintenance of that must again fall on the public; and general burdens of that kind, should they ever be felt, would be followed by a general discontent. And this will give a great temptation to our foreign enemies to take the advantage of such fatal opportunities and try to make us no more a nation. In the ordinary course of things then, vice, when it becomes epidemical, is not only the reproach, but bids fair for the ruin of any people. National wickedness never failed, sooner or later, to provoke the Almighty to a national vengeance.

III. THE PROPER MEANS WHEREBY WE MAY HOPE TO AVERT GOD'S DISPLEASURE. (Jer. xviii. 7, 8.) As we make a part of the nation, our sins must make a part of the national guilt; and consequently none of us can think ourselves unconcerned in the important work of a national reformation. (*J. Seed, M.A.*)

Vers. 8-10. **Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field.**—*The selfish landowner*:—Selfishness, or the making self the centre to which all things are to tend, is the great sin in all ages and peoples. As soon as national institutions have awakened the sense of personality and the feeling of self-respect, the desire of accumulating wealth grows with them. And in no form is it more liable to abuse than in connection with the possession of land. Men desire, by an almost universal instinct, to possess property in land, with its healthy occupations and interests, so varied and multiplied by the living powers of nature, and with its important political and social rights which grow up with the duties which are specially connected with it; for this kind of property demands the fulfilment of more, and more obvious duties than any other, while it confers corresponding rights and powers by bringing a man into more complete personal relationship with his neighbours than is possible in the crowd of cities and the whirl of city trades. Yet, since the land cannot be increased in quantity, its possession by one man is the exclusion of another, and the Hebrew laws endeavoured to meet this difficulty by special provisions, the breach or evasion of which the prophet now denounces in his first "woe" on the selfish landowner. He who can join house to house and lay field to field when he knows, and long has known, face to face, the very man, wife and child whom he has dispossessed, and can drive out by his own simple act his fellow-men to be desolate in their poverty, in order that he may be alone in his riches, may expect a punishment proportioned to his crime. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *Nemesis*:—The prophet heard, ringing in his ears, the declaration of Jehovah, the King of the land, that the great and fair palaces should become as desolate as the peasants' and yeomen's cottages which had made place for them—the vineyard of ten acres shall yield but eight gallons of wine, and the corn-field shall give back but a tenth part of the seed sown in it. (*Ibid.*) *The Mosaic legislation*:—Moses directed as equal a division of the land as possible, in the first instance, among the 600,000 families who originally formed the nation; and provided against the permanent alienation of any estate by giving a right of repurchase to the seller and his relations, and of repossession without purchase at the Jubilee. (*Ibid.*) *Land laws*:—In the Channel Islands the acreage to be owned by one individual is limited. In Norway the law provides that the heirs of any one who has parted with his property may buy that property back at sale price within a term of five years. (*F. Sessions.*) *Hebrew land-laws*:—The Hebrew legislation further prevented the exhaustion of the soil and the fruit trees, by enforcing fallow and rest during every seventh year. The offerings of first-fruits really constituted a kind of land tax, payable to Jehovah as Over-Lord, and tending to prevent the conversion of folk-land into "thane's land," or king's land. The legislation placed Jehovah's tenants under a poor-law, which compelled cultivators to leave the gleanings of the crops, and all that the fallows of the seventh year Sabbaths produced spontaneously in those prolific fields, for the support of the needy. By the limitations of the right of private ownership,—a right that was not denied, and was frequently exercised,—every man was taught his responsibilities to his fellows. The theory was, as some one has written: "Brotherhood

in the enjoyment of a Father's bounty." (*Ibid.*) "Land-grabbing" and "evictions" may be new terms, but they are century-old sins. (*Ibid.*) *The land question* is as old as history. The Hebrews were hardly out of the wilderness before laws were enacted to prevent the strong from getting more land than any one ought to possess. The land laws of Moses occupy a large place in his legislation. The prevention of monopoly in land was clearly in the mind of the Hebrew law-giver. In Isaiah's time the nation had recovered from poverty and grown rich, and the wealthy and ruling classes had begun to grasp the earth. They would have tried to fence in the air and pack the sunlight in barrels, if they could have done so. The spirit that would monopolise land would monopolise light if it could. Against this awful wrong the voice of the Lord rings its condemnation. Four things belong to man as man, and any one who tries to prevent their being used for the service of humanity is a sinner against the universe and against God. Those four things are: the earth, the air, the water, and the light. Every man has a right to live, and no one can live as he ought without free access to earth, air, water, and light. Isaiah brought the people to this one point—this land belongs to God, and you are using it as if it were yours to do with as you please. And that is all that need be said to-day. The land, like the air, belongs to God; and if to God, then to humanity; and it is our business to find out, as all easily can if they will, how the great Owner of all the earth would have men use that which must be the home of all His creatures. Of one thing, however, we may be sure. He never intended that a few big lions should get possession of all the forests, so that there should be no comfortable places left for the rabbits, the sheep, and the cattle, except in holes in the ground; and He never intended that a few strong men should get possession of all the fertile, healthful, and beautiful portions of earth, so that the rest of humanity—the artists, the artisans, the literary men, and those who work with their hands—should be obliged to live in cellars and attics, and hardly know what is meant by that great and dear word, home. (*Amory H. Bradford, D.D.*) *A woe on monopolists*.—I. THE SIN. Their fault is—1. That they are inordinate in their desires to enrich themselves, and make it their whole care and business to raise an estate, as if they had nothing to mind, nothing to seek, nothing to do in this world but that. They never know when they have enough, but the more they have the more they would have. They cannot enjoy what they have, nor do good with it, for contriving and studying to make it more. They must have variety of houses, a winter house and a summer house; and if another man's house or field lie convenient to theirs, as Naboth's vineyard to Ahab's, they must have that too, or they cannot be easy. 2. They are herein careless of others; nay, and injurious to them. They would live so as to let nobody live but themselves. They would swell so big as to fill all space, and yet are still unsatisfied (*Eccles. v. 10*). II. THE PUNISHMENT. That which is threatened as the punishment of this sin is—1. That the houses they were so fond of should be untenanted, should stand long empty, and so should yield them no rent, and go out of repair. Men's projects are often frustrated, and what they frame answers not the intention. 2. That the fields they were so fond of should be unfruitful. (*M. Henry.*) *Unpatriotic monopolies*.—In 1650, while Cromwell was prosecuting his campaign against Charles II. in Scotland, he wrote the Speaker of the Parliament, urging the reformation of many abuses, and added, "If there be any one that makes many poor to make a few rich, that suits not a commonwealth." (*C. Knight's England.*) *Greed pauperises the soul*.—A farmer said "he should like to have all the land that joined his own." Bonaparte, who had the same appetite, endeavoured to make the Mediterranean a French lake. Czar Alexander was more expansive, and wished to call the Pacific "my ocean"; and the Americans were obliged to resist his attempts to make it a close sea. But if he had the earth for his pasture, and the sea for his pond, he would be a pauper still. He only is rich who owns the day. (*R. W. Emerson.*) *Covetous persons are like sponges, which greedily drink in water, but return very little, until they are squeezed. A covetous person wants what he has, as well as what he has not, because he is never satisfied with it.* (*G. S. Bowes.*) *Folly of covetousness*.—If you should see a man that had a large pond of water yet living in continual thirst, not suffering himself to drink half a draught for fear of lessening his pond; if you should see him wasting his time and strength in fetching more water to his pond, always thirsty, yet always carrying a bucket of water in his hand, watching early and late to catch the drops of rain, gaping after every cloud, and running greedily into every mire and mud in hopes of water, and always studying how to



make every ditch empty itself into the pond; if you should see him grow grey in these anxious labours, and at last end a careful thirsty life by falling into his own pond, would you not say that such a one was not only the author of his own disquiet, but was foolish enough to be reckoned among madmen? But foolish and absurd as this character is, it does not represent half the follies and absurd disquiets of the covetous man. (*Law's Serious Call.*)

Ver. 9. **Many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant.—Empty houses** (To children):—Empty houses! We all know what they look like. From afar we can see the bills in the windows—"This house to let," or "To be let," or, still more curtly, "To let"; and when we come nearer, the black windows, without blinds or curtains, gape and yawn at us. In the garden the long matted grass has overrun the lawn, and covered nearly all the beds. The door creaks on its hinges as we enter, as though it had been asleep and did not wish to be wakened. There are other houses that are not quite empty. They are comfortably furnished; but the family has gone to the seaside. A servant or an old lady has been kept in the house as caretaker, and as she usually lives in the back part of the house she is often not seen from one week's end to the other. I. This world is like a house comfortably and beautifully furnished, and in which we men and women have been placed "to dress it and to keep it." But **THE WORLD WITHOUT GOD IS LIKE AN EMPTY HOUSE.** God is the builder of this house; and He is the tenant too. Cowper, in his "Task," speaks of some men who "untenant the Creator of His universe." There are some who say that God made this house, and put us in it as caretakers, and then went to live in His own grand mansion in heaven; and there He sits, receiving our letters, which are our prayers, and sending His servants to do His commands. But we believe that God always lives in this house. He is in every room, in England, and in the Continent, and in Africa, and in America. It is God's name that is woven into the beautiful carpet of grass and flowers, that is carved into the rocks, and worked into the mossy couches, and painted in the beautiful landscape pictures, and reflected in the mirror-like lakes and ponds and rivers. If God were not in the world it would be like a desolate house, though great and fair. II. But there is another kind of house that is sometimes found to be empty. Life is like a house. Its length, however, is measured, not by feet and yards, but by days and months and years. Some lives are long and some are very short. Its breadth is measured by its sympathy and influence. Sometimes the tenant is not a good one. A selfish purpose takes possession, and then the house is like the house of a miser, long, and narrow, and low. And sometimes the house is like a house of feasting, from which there comes the sound of music and dancing, and the clink of glasses and of plates. That is when the desire for pleasure becomes a tenant. But there are some of these houses that are without an inhabitant. For **A LIFE WITHOUT A PURPOSE IS LIKE AN EMPTY HOUSE.** Some people do not know why they live. They eat and drink and sleep; but they have no great aims, no noble purposes. Their lives are like empty houses. Take Christ with you into your life. And then your life will grow up like a grand temple, upon which there will be inscribed: "Holiness unto the Lord"; in which there will be perpetual peace and happiness; and from which there will ever come the sound of holy chant and psalm. III. And then there is another house of which I thought. It was a small house, but large enough to accommodate one man. It was built in the face of a rock, and a great stone door was placed before it. It belonged to a man named Joseph; but another tenant was put in. He did not remain there long: it was too dark, and cold, and dreary. That house was the tomb of Jesus. And **A TOMB WITHOUT A SAVIOUR IS LIKE AN EMPTY HOUSE.** There are many houses of that kind built in these days; and they are all full. But a time is coming when a trumpet shall sound, and the doors of these dreary houses shall be opened, and the tenants shall all come out. And then their houses shall be empty like the tomb of Jesus. (*W. V. Robinson, B.A.*)

Vers. 11, 12. **Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink.—The fruits of drunkenness:**—I. In reference to the INDIVIDUAL HIMSELF, who is its victim. It may, perhaps, be made a question by some, When may a man be regarded as intoxicated, and what may be the number of offences which would entitle him to the character and name of drunkard? Intoxication essentially consists in the obscuration of the light of reason, so that it is no longer

able fully to exercise its functions; and, therefore, the moment this light has become even partially eclipsed, and the moment, perhaps, that that exhilaration begins, which always urges onwards and craves for more—at that moment we may say, that as the individual is in a state of alarming danger, so the process of intoxication has commenced; and, therefore, many a man may be strictly and truly said to be intoxicated, though he does not “reel and stagger like a drunken man.” No man ever became a drunkard all at once, *i.e.*, in ordinary cases; for some have become so instantaneously through the pressure of affliction, and from the impulse of despair. It is not the intoxicating beverage that allures at first (for, in general, the natural taste rejects it), but the “harp and the viol, and the tabret and the pipe,” that are in the drunkard’s feasts—that hilarity which, innocent perhaps in itself, brings at that time a snare, and that good companionship which, while it dispenses its joys, spits its venom. By and by, however, they come to like the beverage, not on account of the company it brings together, but for itself; and remembering its exciting and exhilarating qualities, have recourse to it at other seasons, first along with others, and then in private by themselves—finding on each occasion some excuse to silence conscience, and to keep themselves up in their self-esteem; till, at last, going on in their downward career, their drink becomes as necessary as their daily food, and they live with an appetite always craving, and an intellect seldom clear. And what are the invariable accompaniments and consequences? 1. The intemperate man is brought into contact with the most worthless companions, who have no fear of God before their eyes, and who lead him on, step by step, till they plunge him into irremediable ruin. 2. Indulgence in strong drink tends to the eclipse of intellect. This effect may not be exhibited at first. On the contrary, in the first stages of the sin, the opposite result may appear. Have you never seen these same faculties, which the exhilarating draught awakened for more powerful efforts, by the very same influence, deprived of all their wakeful energy, and steeped in an oblivion the most complete and the most melancholy; so that far from being capable of bursting forth with more than common brilliancy, they become incapacitated for the performance even of their common functions? 3. Look at the effects resulting, when the orb of reason has undergone this dread eclipse. Then is an inlet afforded for all wickedness, and every crime may find a perpetrator. The strong man of the house being bound, the passions arise like robbers, and rifle his goods. The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, are all permitted to riot in unchecked fury. The monarch of the soul being, for the time, dethroned, the subjects spend themselves in the work of anarchy. 4. No one can sin with impunity; and even in this life, we often see transgression closely tracked by its attendant punishment. But of all sins, that of drunkenness seems to be peculiarly visited with retribution here; for the loss of reputation invariably follows indulgence in the habits of intemperance.

II. Glance at its results as far as THE DRUNKARD’S FAMILY is concerned. No ruin can be conceived more tremendous than when the roof-tree of a man’s domestic happiness falls in, and leaves him a home, but without its joys. He is an enemy indeed who casts a brand into that temple, and envelops that altar in destructive flames. But this intemperance does. No one can express the hopes or the joys of a mother, when she sees her son walking in the ways of virtue. But, in proportion is her sorrow, when she sees the son that she has borne and nursed, becoming a worthless profligate, an outcast, and a drunkard. Intemperance is silently but too surely sapping the very foundations of society. Who, then, that has any regard either for the glory of God, or for the welfare of his country, would not gird on his armour to meet the enemy in the gate? (*P. M’Morland.*)

*The degradation and ruin of intemperance.*—I. THE SIN, WITH ITS CONCOMITANTS AND CONNECTIONS, DESCRIBED IN THE TEXT. 1. The prophet refers to intemperance and its associate habits of festivity and dissipation. The corrupt condition of social life, springing from the depravity of the heart, has in every age encouraged those stimulants to evil adverted to in this passage, and which are alike felt by the high and the low. The wine mentioned is the date or palm wine, which possessed an inebriating quality; but, whatever be the particular drink—the wine of the wealthy or the beer of the poor—the accompaniments of the festival, metropolitan or rural, are frequently similar both in kind and effect, and tend to evil. Our Lord, it is true, was at a feast of Cana in Galilee; and music, “the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe,” may minister to an innocent recreation or gratify a judicious taste; but we need scarcely adduce the trite distinction between the

use and abuse of a thing, to show wherein lies, in the present case, the moral danger. The sin of excess, both in eating and drinking, in the forms of gluttony and intoxication, is peculiarly odious. (1) Intemperance is both bad in principle and degrading in character. Chrysostom and Augustine call it "a spontaneous fury"; and Basil, with greater vehemence of expression, says it is "a voluntary devil, a chosen madness." (2) But while this is the case, it has a greater tendency than almost any other crime to destroy the feeling of shame and to harden conscience. (3) It leads to other great sins. Its name is legion; for, in reality, there is scarcely any vice or folly that it does not either originate or encourage. It is said by Eustathius that "the nurses of Bacchus were painted with snakes and daggers in their hands, to show that drunkards were beastly and bloody." (4) Intemperance is dangerous to the peace of society, and puts to hazard the lives of men. Vulgar quarrelling in low life, and polite duelling in high, disturb, separate, and destroy families. How many have been the murderers of others in seasons of intemperate festivity. Ammon was slain by his brother Absalom when indulging in wine. Simon the high priest, and two of his sons, were sacrificed to the inebriation of their brother. Judith slew Holofernes, when the latter was in a state of intoxication. Alexander the Great killed Clitus at a feast, and inflicted upon himself a vain repentance. 2. The prophet points out the connection between intemperance and unhallowed festivity, and an infidel disregard of the works and ways of Deity. Thus are body and soul at once degraded and ruined. Under the influence of intemperance men are led to disregard "the operations of His hands," not only undervaluing the works of God, but unmindful of His providential and gracious dispensations. His judgments do not alarm, His mercies do not conciliate them; they despise the one, and disown the other. II. THE WOE DENOUNCED BY THE PROPHET UPON THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF INTEMPERANCE. The "woe" is to be plainly traced in the conscious unhappiness of the delinquent, even though he seem gay and smiling—in the general and almost certain loss of health, that first of earthly blessings—in the diminution and probable loss of property, and of every resource—in the dereliction of friends worth having—in the terrors of an unprepared-for death, or the even more horrible condition of a moral death unfelt, and a natural death unheeded—and, lastly, in the quenchless burnings of the bottomless pit. Habits of intemperance are progressively formed, and therefore require the exercise of extreme carefulness, self-discipline, and prayer. Beware of the first step—of the first temptation—of the first immoderate indulgence. I conclude by presenting you with three short maxims of human wisdom, and one precept of Divine inspiration. He that will not fear, shall feel the wrath of heaven. He that lives in the kingdom of sense, shall die into the kingdom of sorrow. He shall never truly enjoy his present hour, who never thinks on his last. "Be not filled with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." (*F. A. Cox, D.D., LL.D.*) *Following strong drink* :—1. The Almighty has set His face solemnly and strongly against the sin denounced in the text. 2. Unquestionably, the surest way of stopping the ravages of strong drink will be by means of total abstinence. The fear of ridicule, the force of habit, the consideration of health, the charge of inhospitality, or the appearance of unsociableness, one or other of these arguments prevail with the vast multitude to induce them to stand aloof from the total abstinence movement. 3. Certain precautions which are within the compass of those who are not prepared to give their adhesion to total abstinence. (1) We may be careful about ourselves and the example we set. (2) We should be very careful of the influence we exercise on those around and connected with us. If we are careful of the example we set, it must be on account of the influence which that example may exert. (3) Let us be exceeding jealous of leading any one into temptation. (4) Let us be on our guard against making drunkenness a subject of wit, drollery, and fun. (5) Be careful how you yield to the opinion of those friends who would urge you to increase the quantity of stimulant you are in the habit of taking in the course of the day. (6) In all cases within your knowledge, in which persons cannot use without abusing strong drink, exert all your influence to induce them to become total abstainers. (*J. Mould, M.A.*) *The drunkard's doom* :—I. THE SIGN OF THE DRUNKARD'S CAPTIVITY. In every vice there is a stage beyond which, humanly speaking, recovery is impossible. A time comes when the jaws of the trap snap together and the victim is caught. In intemperance this point is reached imperceptibly, and the victim is ignorant long after others see his danger. II. THE HELPLESSNESS OF THE CAPTIVE DRUNKARD. Isaiah describes him as following strong drink.

As the obedient dog at his master's heels, or as the moth after the light, so the drunkard follows strong drink. At first he thinks he does so for the pleasure he derives from it, but he soon recognises that he is helpless in so doing. As a man swept down towards the rapids looks longingly towards those on the bank who can render no help, so the drinker yearns after virtues and peace which can never more be his. No tyrant was ever more exacting. Though he be prostrate in the morning, yet he must rise at his captor's bidding, and by forced marches hasten to his doom. III. THE DOOM THAT AWAITS THE DRUNKARD. 1. Moral insensibility. They regard not the work of the Lord. They call good, evil; and evil, good. Drink so blunts the sensibilities that the victim under its influence can commit crimes from which at other times he would shrink. More crimes are committed "in drink" than out of it. 2. Shamelessness. After obliterating the distinction between right and wrong he turns and defies God and glories in sin. When the prophet warns him that God will visit him, he dares Him to do His worst. "Let Him make speed, and hasten His work, that we may see it." 3. Hell. The drinker tempts the devil, for even hell has to enlarge its appetite to receive him. When the destroyer would be satisfied, the drinker stimulates his satiated desire, determining to be lost. So he ends his course with the drunkard's grave and the drunkard's hell. (*R. C. Ford, M.A.*) *Isaiah's testimony to the licentiousness and degeneracy of his age*:—1. Contrary to modern and superficial notions, which confine intemperance to northern climes, and exclude it from vine-growing countries, the people of Israel, following the example of their chief men, were addicted to the grossest indulgence in intoxicating liquors. The juice of the grape (*yayin*) and the juice of other fruits (*shakar*) were drunk in their fermented state; and probably both, certainly the latter, were mixed with pungent and heavy drugs (ver. 22) in order to gratify a base and insatiable appetite. Men rose up early and sat up late to prosecute these vicious indulgences, and they boasted of themselves as "mighty" and "valiant" (ver. 22) in proportion as they were able to gulp down large quantities of these compounds and to "carry their drink well." 2. The attendant and in no small measure the consequential evils were of the most aggravated kind. The Divine works were disregarded (ver. 12), ignorance reigned (ver. 13), sin abounded (ver. 18), men's moral conceptions were the opposite of the truth (ver. 20), self-conceit grew luxuriantly (ver. 21), bribery and injustice were rampant (ver. 23). The vengeance of God was awakening against them and would take the triple form of famine, pestilence, and invasion, so that their supplies of drink would be cut off (vers. 6, 7, 10), the pest-stricken would lie in the streets (ver. 25), and hostile nations would ravage the land (vers. 26-30). (*Temperance Bible Commentary.*) *Musical merriment silencing conscience*:—"And the harp," &c. Better, And guitar and harp, tambourine and flute, and wine constitute their banquet;—as if to drown the voice of conscience and destroy the sense of Jehovah's presence and working in their midst. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Edison's testimony to the value of abstinence*:—I once asked the greatest of inventors, Thomas A. Edison, if he were a total abstainer; and when he told me that he was, I said, "May I inquire whether it was home influence that made you so?" and he replied, "No, I think it was because I always felt that I had a better use for my head." Who can measure the loss to the world if that wonderful instrument of thought that has given us so much of light and leading in the practical mechanism of life had become sodden with drink, instead of electric with original ideas? (*Frances E. Willard.*)

Ver. 12. They regard not the work of the Lord.—*The providence of God*:—A neglect of God, and a disregard of His wonder-working providence, constitutes the character of man under the influence of his natural corruption of heart. It formed the character of the Jewish Church, notwithstanding its outward privileges and its appointed means of religious improvement. It forms the character of nominal Christians. Covetousness and sensuality are the two great causes of man's neglect of God (vers. 8, 11, 12). I. TAKE A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF THE PROVIDENCE OF OUR HEAVENLY FATHER. God's "never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and in earth." This providence is—1. Divine. 2. Universal. 3. Tender. 4. Watchful. II. POINTS OF PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION. 1. This doctrine is quite consistent with your free agency. 2. Think not that your Lord forgets you in the immensity of His works. "Sanctified afflictions," says an old writer, "are good promotions." 3. Pray that God would by His

providence "put away from you all hurtful things," and "give you those things which be profitable for you," and remember that the welfare of your souls is concerned in all the actions and undertakings of every day and hour. (*W. M. Harte.*) *Sensuality essentially atheistic*.—The sensual reveller simply disregards God's constitution and government of society. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*)

**Ver. 13. My people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge.**—*A sermon for Trinity Sunday*.—1. "My people." The Almighty has a people of His own; a people with special privileges and a special work to do. In the Old Testament and the New this is clearly written. "My people," says Isaiah; "My flock," says Jesus Christ. That is the method of grace. God acts upon some of us that they may act upon the rest. In the days of a school the young influence one another. In a town, in a nation, it is the same. And a whole country has its mission for the world as the Hebrews had. Now, in the text that nation is complained of. Why? Because they had no knowledge. 2. "My people" is a term which shows us God's character. The inferences which arise from it should be dear to Christians. God will not be without a people, because He is a God of love. He must have around Him children to love. But it is a quality inherent in love to love its like. Children may be helpless, or wayward: we can bear with them, love them, not less, perhaps more, for their weakness and dependence; but they must not be reprobate. There must be some affinity of feeling, something lovable in them, or at last we shall not love, or at any rate love will be in abeyance. God, we believe, has not, and never will, disinherit Israel finally. Why did he go so wrong and choose so badly? "Therefore My people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge." They had knowledge enough in their head no doubt, but they had not taken it to their heart. 3. Now, as regards ourselves, we are God's people—not exclusively, but among other Christian nations of this later time. God has given us great knowledge of His truth. He has even revealed to us deep secrets of His own nature: even the mystery of the Holy Trinity itself. Since God has given knowledge to us, it should be kept by us not in a passive but in a living active state. (2 Tim. i. 13; Tit. i. 13, ii. 1; 2 Cor. xiii. 5; Jude 3.) And this knowledge is so efficient and operative a force that it is all-important to keep it "whole and undefiled." This doctrine of the Holy Trinity is "no speculative thing, but it is closely interwoven with the principles of Christian life." (*T. F. Crosse, D.C.L.*) "*They have no knowledge*":—How should they, when by their excessive drinking they make sots and fools of themselves? They set up for wits; but because they regard not God's controversy with them, nor take any care as to their peace with Him, they may truly be said to have no knowledge; and the reason is, because they will have none; inconsiderate and wilful, and therefore "destroyed for lack of knowledge." (*M. Henry.*) *Inconsideration and ignorance*.—1. Ignorance is the certain consequence of inconsideration. 2. Inconsideration is the natural effect of luxury and dissipation, which arise from gratified avarice and ambition. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Records of the past*.—The great stone-book of nature reveals many strange records of the past. In the red sandstone there are found in some places marks which are clearly the impressions of showers of rain, and these so perfect that it can even be determined in which direction the shower inclined, and from what quarter it proceeded; and this ages ago! So sin leaves its track behind it, and God keeps a faithful record of all our sins. (*G. H. Morrison, M.A.*)

**Vers. 14–16. Hell hath enlarged herself . . . the Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment.**—*The grave*.—"Hell," here, stands not for future punishment. The word "Sheol" in Hebrew, "Hades" in Greek, and "Hell" in this verse, represent the place of the dead—the grave. This place of the dead is spoken of in the Bible as a very deep place (Deut. xxxii. 22; Job xi. 8; Psa. cxxxix. 7, 8). As a very dark place (Job x. 21, 22). And as a place having gates into it (Isa. xxxviii. 10). **I. THE GROWING POWER OF THE GRAVE.** The grave is here represented as having "enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure." The words refer, undoubtedly, to a period when, through famine, pestilence, or war, mortality was on the increase. This increase of mortality teaches us—1. The fruitlessness of all human efforts to avert death. Men have been struggling against death for six thousand years, and his dominion is wider to-day than ever. 2. How soon we shall be in the grave-world. The mouth is opening for us; it

is yawning at our feet. II. THE LEVELLING POWER OF THE GRAVE. "And their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it. And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled." Learn from this—1. How foolish it is to be proud of adventitious distinctions. They are only as flowers of the field, evanescent forms, and hues that variegates the common grass. 2. How important to seek an alliance with the eternally great and good. Seek "a city which hath foundations," a kingdom that cannot be shaken. III. THE ETERNAL SOVEREIGN OF THE GRAVE. "But the Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness." 1. He survives all dissolutions. 2. He will be increasingly honoured. "The Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment." (*Homilist.*) *God's judgments on the Jews*:—This judgment began to come upon the men whom Isaiah addressed, in the reign of Ahaz, soon after the delivery of the warning; but in order fully to understand it, we must (as in the case of all other prophecies) look at it in the light of the whole subsequent history of the Jews and of Christendom. In the final destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, Christ and His apostles saw the selfish and carnal nation brought to its last trial and righteously condemned, and the sentence carried into execution by that Man whom God had appointed to judge the world. They declared, and the event, spread over successive centuries, has proved the truth of the declaration, that God was bringing down the mean man and the mighty man alike throughout the world and exalting Himself and His Son, setting His name up in the world, and causing it to triumph over all opposition. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *God the righteous Judge*:—Though men may slavishly dread an arbitrary will, they can never feel for it that salutary fear which is the beginning of wisdom; and unless we believe that God's judgments are righteous—that they are a part of the steady administration of a polity—as well as good in their effects, it will be impossible for us to keep long from superstition, or its opposite, scepticism. And, therefore, we may see the germ of a true historical and political philosophy in the prophet's repeated assertion, that God is exalted in executing justice and sanctified in righteousness. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 18, 19. **Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity.**—*Frivolity and profanity*:—Frivolity, he says, is the herald and handmaid of guilt. The cords are cords of vanity bound about us in mere thoughtlessness in the unguarded hours of recreation, in the giddy whirl of society, when talk is gay and free, and no man weighs his words; the cords of vanity bind us on subtly but surely to the calamitous burden of sin. I submit to you that the prophet in thus linking together frivolity and iniquity, commends himself to us as a close and just observer of human society. Profanity is the last term of a series; it is a stage we reach by the unmarked way of frivolous habit, and that unmarked way is the broad way of the general life. Society itself is unfavourable to thought and gravity and depth of character. It makes us of necessity superficial, light, shallow. At best it ministers to the gracious externals of a man's conduct, and too often it does this at the cost of his character; for the philosopher said truly that custom is the principal magistrate of a man's life; and if, by the ceaseless iteration of frivolous speech and action, we bind upon ourselves the chain of frivolous habit, be sure the mischief penetrates into the very citadel of character. (*Canon H. Hensley Henson, B.D.*) *God's woes* are better than the devil's welcomes. When we get a woe in this book of blessings it is sent as a warning, that we may escape from woe. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Disguises and defiances*:—Society, for its self-preservation and well-being, provides that virtue should be in the ascendant, should sit on the throne, should hold the empire and make the laws of the world. There have been times when vice has ostentatiously unmasked itself in high places, and with a triumphant audacity has made itself the fashion and the social law. Such was the epoch of the decadence of the old Roman civilisation. Such were the times of the restoration of the English monarchy under Charles II. The moral collapse at the Restoration was the inevitable unbending of the bow after the rigours of the Puritan régime. England was tired of unmelodious psalm-singing and endless homilies on the sin of eating Christmas pies and dancing around May-poles. It welcomed with a strange alacrity and a strange forgetfulness the exiled prince, whose morals, none too good to begin with, had been debauched in foreign courts, and who brought back to the palace of his fathers nothing of royalty, except enchanting manners, graceful wit, and an insatiable

thirst for pleasure. But the enthronement of vice was only for a day. Men on the morrow smote it on the face, and hurled it from the seat which gave it power and lustre. This is the history of fashionable and jewelled vice in every age. When those who inherit wealth and polite culture and the accumulated embellishments of life conspicuously trample on the laws of righteousness the insulted world calls them to account, and in self-defence consigns them to social outlawry. So plainly is Virtue the eldest-born and the fairest of the daughters of God. If our Lord uttered woe on the heartless and pretentious morality of His day, the prophet uttered woe on the confessed and ostentatious immorality of his time. Isaiah's words, as well as Christ's, have a bearing on our modern life: "Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart-ropes." Men hate hypocrisy. A profitable virtue that is not real, or a formal virtue that is not large and loving, moves us to scorn or pity. But, strange to say, the hatred of hypocrisy is not always in the interests of virtue. "I will not be a hypocrite," says one, and in his horror of hypocrisy he rushes into an open and shameless evil life. This is what the prophet means in his graphic picture, "Woe unto them that draw iniquity," &c. He depicts a class of men who have deliberately harnessed themselves to evil, as a horse or mule is harnessed to a loaded waggon. There are forms of iniquity which are difficult and laborious. Those who get over any ground with them must pull them with a cart-ropes. It is grievous business, but some men choose it, and take more trouble to be bad than actually is necessary to be good. And they prosecute ostentatiously the business that they have chosen. They take no care to conceal the evil industry of their life. It is the instinct of sin to disguise itself. It usually skulks behind an assumed goodness. It takes to itself virtuous names. It puts on masks to hide itself, not only from the eyes of men, but also from the eyes of conscience. But the man who drags sin with a cart-ropes boasts only one virtue, and that is a real one: he is no hypocrite. He has thrown appearances to the winds. He drags his iniquity conspicuously on the highway, in the daylight. He does not care to conceal the coat of arms on the carriage, or the livery of the driver who holds the reins and snaps over him the whip. Perhaps no one ever fully commits himself to this sort of life until he has, or thinks that he has, arrived at the conclusion that all goodness in the world is a sham; that the virtue to which men sing praises is simply a convenient fiction, which they affect to believe, and pretend to possess; that, as there is no real righteousness on the earth, so there is no sovereign righteousness in the heavens; that God is simply a dumb force, without moral quality, and indifferent to the moral quality of His creatures. Hence the prophet makes such a one say, in presumptuous taunt and irony: "Let Him make speed," &c. Is this rude picture, culled from the page of the old Hebrew prophet, unsuited to these smooth times and this Christianised civilisation? Do none of you ever say: "I know it is wrong. It is an offence against God, against myself, against my neighbour. It is an unquestionable violation of what is pure and honest. I can see the harm that it works; but I do not disguise it. I do not pretend to be other than I am. I am at least frank. I do not affect a virtue which I do not possess"? Well, this is one alternative to hypocrisy. Did you ever think that there is another,—to recognise the evil in your nature and the sin in your life; to look at it with keen, brave eyes, illumined by the study of God's law; to guard against it, day by day and moment by moment; and resolutely to fight it, in its first impulses, in its fiercest assaults, by the help of God's grace? Is not this a possible alternative? It is not demanded of you that you be sinless; but you need not be the liveried slave of sin. It is not required of you that you be perfect; but you can enlist and do battle on the side of right. (*W. W. Battershall, D.D.*)

*Cords and cart-ropes*.—I. EXPLAIN THE SINGULAR DESCRIPTION. Here are persons harnessed to the waggon of sin—harnessed to it by many cords, all light as vanity and yet strong as cart-ropes. I. Let me give you a picture. Here is a man who, as a young man, heard the Gospel and grew up under the influence of it. He is an intelligent man, a Bible reader, and somewhat of a theologian. He attended a Bible class, was an apt pupil, and could explain much of Scripture, but he took to lightness and frothiness. He made an amusement of religion and a sport of serious things. He came under the bond of this religious trifling, but it was a cord of vanity small as a packthread. Years ago he began to be bound to his sin by this kind of trifling, and at the present moment I am not sure that he ever cares to go and hear the Gospel or to read the

Word of God, for he has grown to despise that which he sported with. The wanton witling has degenerated into a malicious scoffer: his cord has become a cart-ropes. His life is all trifling now. 2. I have seen the same thing take another shape, and then it appeared as captious questioning. How can he believe in Christ when he requires Him, first of all, to be put through a catechism and to be made to answer cavils? Oh, take heed of tying up your soul with cart-ropes of scepticism. 3. Some have a natural dislike to religious things and cannot be brought to attend to them. Let me qualify the statement. They are quite prepared to attend a place of worship and to hear sermons, and occasionally to read the Scriptures, and to give their money to help on some benevolent cause; but this is the point at which they draw the line—they do not want to think, to pray, to repent, to believe, or to make heart-work of the matter. If you indulge in demurs and delays and prejudices in the first days of your conviction, the time may come when those little packthreads will be so intertwined with each other that they will make a great cart-ropes, and you will become an opposer of everything that is good, determined to abide for ever harnessed to the great Juggernaut car of your iniquities, and so to perish. 4. I have known some men get harnessed to that car in another way, and that is by deference to companions. There is no doubt that many people go to hell for the love of being respectable. It is not to be doubted that multitudes pawn their souls, and lose their God and heaven, merely for the sake of standing well in the estimation of a profligate. He that would be free for ever must break the cords ere yet they harden into chains. 5. Some men are getting into bondage in another way; they are forming gradual habits of evil. 6. I fear that not a few are under the delusive notion that they are safe as they are. Carnal security is made up of cords of vanity. II. THERE IS A WOE ABOUT REMAINING HARNESSSED TO THE CART OF SIN, and that woe is expressed in our text. 1. It has been hard work already to tug at sin's load. 2. But, if you remain harnessed to this car of sin, the weight increases. You are like a horse that has to go a journey, and pick up parcels at every quarter of a mile: you are increasing the heavy luggage and baggage that you have to drag behind you. 3. Further, I want you to notice that as the load grows heavier, so the road becomes worse, the ruts are deeper, the hills are steeper, and the sloughs are more full of mire. An old man with his bones filled with the sin of his youth is a dreadful sight to look upon; he is a curse to others, and a burden to himself. 4. The day will come when the load will crush the horse. 5. I am sure that there is nobody here who desires to be eternally a sinner: let him then beware, for each hour of sin brings its hardness and its difficulty of change. When the moral brakes are taken off, and the engine is on the down-grade, and must run on at a perpetually quickening rate for ever, then is the soul lost indeed. III. Now I want to offer some ENCOURAGEMENT FOR BREAKING LOOSE. 1. There is hope for every harnessed slave of Satan. Jesus Christ has come into the world to rescue those who are bound with chains. 2. You are bound with the cords of sin, and in order that all this sin of yours might effectually be put away, the Lord Jesus, the Son of the Highest, was Himself bound. 3. There is in this world a mysterious Being whom thou knowest not, but whom some of us know, who is able to work thy liberty. Wherever there is a soul that would be free from sin this free Spirit waits to help him. 4. Our experience should be a great encouragement to you. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Spiritual cart-ropes*.—Cart-ropes are composed of several small cords firmly twisted together, which serve to connect the beasts of burden with the draught they pull after them. These represent a complication of means closely united, whereby a people here described continue to join themselves to the most wearisome of all burdens. They consist of false reasonings, foolish pretexts, and corrupt maxims, by which obstinate transgressors become firmly united to their sins, and persist in dragging after them their iniquities. Of this sort the following are a few specimens: God is merciful, and His goodness will not suffer any of His creatures to be completely and everlastingly miserable. Others, as well as they, are transgressors. Repentance will be time enough upon a death-bed or in old age. The greatest of sinners often pass unpunished. A future state of retribution is uncertain. Unite these, and suchlike cords, and, I suppose, you have the cart-ropes whereby the persons mentioned draw after them much sin and iniquity. All these pretexts, however, are light as vanity. (*R. Macculloch.*) *The cord of sin*.—These words are at all times, and among every people, of especial interest, were it only on two accounts—(1) The easy thoughtlessness with which men begin their acquaintance with sin, and (2) The



hardness of heart in which they are confirmed by its habits. These are represented under a very lively figure in the former of these two verses; and the desperate rebelliousness of spirit to which they are brought, so as to utter defiance against the judgment of the Almighty, is expressed to the life in the latter. I. THE FIGURE under which the sinner is represented in the former of these verses is that of a rope-maker. He begins with a slight slender thread of flax or hemp, which he can break almost with as much ease as a spider's web; but the end of his work is a cart-rope, thick and strong enough to bind the strongest man or beast upon earth. So a man begins and ends with sin. He begins with drawing iniquity with cords of vanity. The iniquity upon which he is tempted to enter seems to him a mere trifle at first, to which, if not good, he thinks that he gives a hard name to call it downright bad; and if it even do smite his conscience with some evil signs of its real nature, which he can hardly mistake, he is vain enough, in the notion of his own strength, to think, that when he has gone into it, he can as easily come out of it again. It is but as flax or tow (he says); it is but a cord of vanity and not of substance. He needs not to go on spinning and drawing it out (he thinks); but he will stop short as soon as he has gone as far as he wants, and that is not far. Alas! how many can fix the beginning of their ruin in this world, and imminent peril of the judgment of the next, on the day when they said in foolish security, and in face of a warning conscience, "It is but for this once!" Alas! they never said so again. It proved to them to be "now and for ever." II. The text informs us in the next verse that these men, who, beginning with drawing iniquity with cords of vanity, had ended with drawing sin, as it were, with a cart-rope, WENT ON TO MOCK AT JUDGMENT TO COME. The thoughts of judgment to come, of course, very unpleasant to him who knows that he shall have to suffer from it when it does come. His sin, therefore, hardens him into a disbelief of it. (*R. W. Evans, B.D.*) *The growth of sin*.—Sin grows as naturally and as fast as the fire, which lays a city in ruins, comes out of a single spark in some solitary obscure corner; as surely as the rains, which bury a whole country in a flood, begin with a few sprinkled drops, which were not worth talking about; as surely as the river, which must be crossed with ships, begins with a well which you might empty almost with the scoop of your hand; as certainly as the strong thick cart-rope begins with a few weak flaxen or hempen threads. (*Ibid.*) *Strength of habit*.—The surgeon of a regiment in India relates the following incident: "A soldier rushed into the tent, to inform me that one of his comrades was drowning in a pond close by, and nobody could attempt to save him in consequence of the dense weeds which covered the surface. On repairing to the spot, we found the poor fellow in his last struggle, manfully attempting to extricate himself from the meshes of rope-like grass that encircled his body; but, to all appearance, the more he laboured to escape, the more firmly they became coiled round his limbs. At last he sank, and the floating plants closed in, and left not a trace of the disaster. After some delay, a raft was made, and we put off to the spot, and sinking a pole some twelve feet, a native dived, holding on by the stake, and brought the body to the surface. I shall never forget the expression of the dead man's face—the clenched teeth, and fearful distortion of the countenance, while coils of long trailing weeds clung round his body and limbs, the muscles of which stood out stiff and rigid, whilst his hands grasped thick masses, showing how bravely he had struggled for life." This heart-rending picture is a terribly accurate representation of a man with a conscience alarmed by remorse, struggling with his sinful habits, but finding them too strong for him. Divine grace can save the wretch from his unhappy condition, but if he be destitute of that, his remorseful agonies will but make him more hopelessly the slave of his passions. Laocoon, in vain endeavouring to tear off the serpents' coils from himself and children, aptly portrays the long-enslaved sinner contending with sin in his own strength. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Insidious nature of sin*.—In the gardens of Hampton Court you will see many trees entirely vanquished and well-nigh strangled by huge coils of ivy, which are wound about them like the snakes around the unhappy Laocoon: there is no untwisting the folds, they are too giant-like, and fast fixed, and every hour the rootlets of the climber are sucking the life out of the unhappy tree. Yet there was a day when the ivy was a tiny aspirant, only asking a little aid in climbing; had it been denied then, the tree had never become its victim, but by degrees the humble weakling grew in strength and arrogance, and at last it assumed the mastery, and the tall tree became the prey of the creeping, insinuating destroyer. (*Ibid.*) *Moral slavery*.—James II. on his death-bed

thus addressed his son, "There is no slavery like sin, and no liberty like God's service." (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Ver. 20. **Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil.**—*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil*:—There is a customary mode of talking, in which familiar formulas of praise and censure, as to moral objects, are employed as if by rote, involving the admission of important principles, and recognising in its full extent the grand distinction between moral good and evil. Such men will speak familiarly of other men and of their acts as right or wrong, as virtuous or vicious; in a manner which implies not only preference of judgment, but of inclination; so that if we draw conclusions from their language merely, we should certainly infer that they not only understood the principles of sound morality, but loved them and obeyed them. The latter conclusion would, in too many instances, be found to be erroneous, not because the person, in his talk, was guilty of deliberate hypocrisy, or even intended to deceive at all, but because his words conveyed more than he meant, especially when phrases used of course, and by a sort of habit, came to be subjected to the rules of a strict interpretation. In all such cases it will soon be found, upon a little observation, that the dialect in question, however near it may approach to that of evangelical morality, is still distinguished from it by indubitable marks. 1. Any one who thus indulges in the use of such conventional expressions as imply a recognition of those principles of morals which are laid down in the Bible, but whose conduct repudiates and nullifies them, avoids, as if instinctively, those terms of censure and of approbation which belong distinctively to Scripture, and confines himself to those which are common to the Bible and the heathen moralists, to Christian ethics and the code of honour. He will speak of an act, or a course of acts, as wrong, perhaps as vicious,—it may even be as wicked, but not as sinful. The difference between the terms, as viewed by such a person, seems to be that vice and crime are referable merely to an abstract standard, and perhaps a variable one; while sin brings into view the legislative and judicial character of God. Sin, too, is associated in most minds with the humiliating doctrine of a natural depravity, while vice and crime suggest the idea of a voluntary aberration on the part of one by nature free from taint, and abundantly able to stand fast in his own strength. By tracing such diversities, however slight and trivial they seem to be when in themselves considered, we may soon learn to distinguish the characteristic dialect of worldly moralists from that of evangelical religion. 2. It will also be found that in the use of terms employed by both, there is a difference of sense, it may be unintentional, denoting no small difference in point of principle. Especially is this the case in reference to those important principles of morals which bear most directly upon the ordinary business of life, and come most frequently into collision with the selfish interests and inclinations of ungodly men. Two men, for instance, shall converse together upon truth and falsehood, upon honesty and fraud, employing the same words and phrases, and, perhaps, aware of no diversity of meaning in their application. And yet, when you come to ascertain the sense in which they severally use the terms employed by both, you shall find that while the one adopts the rigorous and simple rule of truth and falsehood which is laid down in the Bible and by common sense, the other holds it with so many qualifications and exceptions, as almost to render it a rule more honoured in the breach than the observance. There can be no doubt that this diversity in the use of language exerts a constant and extensive influence on human intercourse, and leads to many of those misconceptions which are tending daily to increase the mutual distrust of men in one another's candour and sincerity. 3. Who pretends to think that men are often, I might almost say ever, better in the bent of their affections and their moral dispositions than in the general drift of their discourse? Who does not know that they are often worse, and that where any marked diversity exists, the difference is commonly in favour of his words at the expense of his thoughts and feelings? Nothing, however, could be more unjust or utterly subversive of impartial judgment in this matter, than to choose as tests or symptoms mere occasional expressions. 4. It must not be forgotten that a rational nature is incapable of loving evil, simply viewed as evil, or of hating good, when simply viewed as good. Whatever thing you love, you thereby recognise as good; and what you abhor, you thereby recognise as evil. When, therefore, men profess to look upon that as excellent which in their hearts and lives they treat as hateful, and to regard as evil that which they are seeking after, and which they delight in, they are not expressing

their own feelings, but assenting to the judgment of others. They are measuring the object by a borrowed standard, while their own is wholly different. And if they are really so far enlightened as to think sincerely that the objects of their passionate attachment are evil, this is only admitting that their own affections are disordered and at variance with reason. So the sinner may believe on God's authority or man's that sin is evil and that holiness is good, but as a matter of affection and of inclination, his corrupted taste will still reject the sweet as bitter, and receive the bitter as sweet; his diseased eye will still confound light with darkness, and his lips, whenever they express the feelings of his heart, will continue to call good evil and evil good. 5. The text does not teach us merely that punishment awaits those who choose evil in preference to good, but that an outward mark of those who hate God, and whom God designs to punish, is their confounding moral distinctions in their conversation. 6. When one who admits in words the great first principles of morals, takes away so much on one hand and grants so much on the other, as to obliterate the practical distinction between right and wrong; when with one breath he asserts the inviolable sanctity of truth, but with the next makes provision for benevolent, professional, jocose, or thoughtless falsehood; when he admits the paramount importance of religious duties in general, but in detail dissects away the vital parts as superstition, sanctimony, or fanaticism, and leaves a mere abstraction or an outward form behind; when he approves the requisitions of the law and the provisions of the Gospel in so far as they apply to other people, but repudiates them as applying to himself;—I ask, whatever his professions or his creed may be, whether he does not virtually, actually, call evil good and good evil? 7. Again, I ask, whether he who in the general admits the turpitude of fraud, impurity, intemperance, malignity, and other vicious dispositions with their practical effects, and thus appears to be an advocate for purity of morals, but when insulated cases or specific acts of vice are made the subjects of discussion, treats them all as peccadilloes, inadvertencies, absurdities, indiscretions, or, perhaps, as virtues modestly disguised, can be protected by the mere assertion of a few general principles from the fatal charge of calling evil good? And, as the counterpart of this, I ask whether he who praises and admires all goodness, not embodied in the life of living men or women, but detests it when thus realised in concrete excellence, does not really and practically call good evil? 8. And I ask, lastly, whether he who, in relation to the self-same acts, performed by men of opposite descriptions, has a judgment suited to the case of each, but who is all compassion to the wilful transgressions of the wicked, and all inexorable sternness to the innocent infirmities of godly men; he who strains at a gnat in the behaviour of the meek and conscientious Christian, but can swallow a camel in the conduct of the self-indulgent votary of pleasure; he who lauds religion as exhibited in those who give him no uneasiness by their example, but maligns and disparages it when, from its peculiar strength and brightness, it reflects a glare of painful and intolerable light upon his own corruptions,—let his maxims of moral philosophy be what they will,—does not, to all intents and purposes, incur the woe pronounced on those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter? (*J. A. Alexander, D.D.*) *The guilt of establishing unscriptural principles of conduct.*—I. Among the most prominent illustrations of the present subject we may produce **THOSE PERSONS, WHO REPRESENT ENTHUSIASM AS RELIGION.** By enthusiasm, as applied with a reference to religion, I understand the subjection of the judgment, in points of religious faith or practice, to the influence of the imagination. II. Let us now turn our eyes to the opposite quarter; to **MEN WHO DENOMINATE RELIGION ENTHUSIASM.** Enthusiasm is on principle busy and loquacious. Lukewarmness, though capable of being roused to a turbulent defence of forms and of its own conduct, is by nature silent and supine. Hence enthusiasm, in proportion to the relative number of its adherents, raises a much louder stir, and attracts far more extensive notice, than lukewarmness. But let the torpid conviction of the lukewarm be contrasted with the illusion of the enthusiast, and the former will prove itself not less dangerous, and generally more deliberately criminal, than the latter. III. Another illustration of the text is furnished by **PERSONS WHO REPRESENT A PARTIAL CONFORMITY TO THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD AS MERITING THE APPELLATION OF RELIGION:** and thus also by implication **STIGMATISE THE TRUE CHRISTIAN AS "RIGHTEOUS OVER-MUCH."** IV. We may in the next place produce as illustrative of the general proposition before us **THOSE WHO REPRESENT THE PALLIATION OF SIN AS CHARITY; AND BRAND**

WITH THE CHARACTER OF CENSORIOUSNESS ALL OPINIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF GUILT CONFORMABLE TO THE SCRIPTURES. From the mouth of these apologisers no sin receives its appropriate denomination. Some lighter phrase is ever on the lips to cloke its enormity, perhaps to transform it into a virtue. Is profaneness noticed? It is an idle habit by which nothing is intended. Is extravagance named? It is a generous disregard of money. Is luxury mentioned? It is a hospitable desire to see our friends happy. What is worldly-mindedness? It is prudence. What is pride? It is proper spirit, a due attention to our own dignity. What is ambition? A laudable desire of distinction and pre-eminence; a just sense of our own excellence and desert. What is servility? It is skill in making our way to advancement. What are intemperance and sins of impurity? They are indecorums, irregularities, human frailties, customary indiscretions, the natural and venial consequences of cheerfulness, company, and temptation; the unguarded ebullitions of youth, which in a little time will satiate and cure themselves. Now all this is candour: all this is charity. If a reference be made to religion, these men immediately enlarge on the mercy of God. V. There yet remains to be specified an exemplification of the guilt menaced with vengeance by the prophet: A PERVERSION OF PRINCIPLE which, while the lower ranks are happily too little refined to be infected with it, taints with a greater or a less degree of its deceitful influence the bulk of the middle and higher classes of the community. By what criterion are applause and censure apportioned? By the rule of honour. "Honour" reigns, because multitudes "love the praise of men more than the praise of God." It reigns, because "they receive honour one of another; and seek not that honour which cometh from God only." What is this idol, which men worship in the place of the living God? The votary of honour may delude himself with the idea that, whatever be the ordinary expressions of his lips, his heart is dedicated to religion. But his heart is fixed on his idol, human applause. In the place of the love and the fear of God he substitutes the love of praise and the fear of shame. In the place of conscience he substitutes pride. For the dread of guilt he substitutes the apprehension of disgrace. (*T. Gisborne, M.A.*) *The unchangeable difference of good and evil*:—Moral good and evil are as truly and as widely different in their own nature as the perceptions of the outward senses; and God has endued us with faculties of the soul as well fitted to distinguish them, as the bodily senses are to discern corporeal objects. If any man, notwithstanding this, will obstinately call evil good and good evil, and will deny all distinctions between virtue and vice, he must as much have laid aside the use of his natural reason and understanding as he that would confound light and darkness must contradict his senses and deny the evidence of his clearest sight. And when such a person falls finally into the just punishment of sin, he will no more deserve pity than one who falls down a precipice because he would not open his eyes to discern that light which should have guided him in his way.

I. THERE IS ORIGINALLY IN THE VERY NATURE OF THINGS A NECESSARY AND ETERNAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL, BETWEEN VIRTUE AND VICE, WHICH THE REASON OF THINGS DOES ITSELF OBLIGE MEN TO HAVE CONSTANT REGARD TO. This is supposed in the text by the prophet's comparing the difference between good and evil to that most obvious and sensible difference of light and darkness.

II. GOD HAS, MOREOVER, BY HIS SUPREME AND ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY, AND BY EXPRESS DECLARATION OF HIS WILL IN HOLY SCRIPTURE, ESTABLISHED AND CONFIRMED THIS ORIGINAL DIFFERENCE OF THINGS, AND WILL SUPPORT AND MAINTAIN IT BY HIS IMMEDIATE POWER AND GOVERNMENT IN THE WORLD. "Woe unto them," &c.

III. OBSERVATIONS WHICH MAY BE OF USE TO US IN PRACTICE.

1. Religion and virtue are truly most agreeable to nature, and vice and wickedness are of all things the most contrary to it. 2. Knowledge of the most important and fundamental doctrines of religion must be very easy to be attained, and gross ignorance of our duty can by no means be innocent or excusable, our minds being as naturally fitted to understand the most necessary parts of it as our eyes are to judge of colours or our palate of tastes. 3. The judgments of God upon impenitent sinners, who obstinately disobey the most reasonable and necessary laws in the world, are true and just and righteous judgments. 4. Whatever doctrine is contrary to the nature and attributes of God, whatever is plainly unwise or wicked, whatever tends to confound the essential and eternal differences of good and evil, must necessarily be false. 5. Every person or doctrine which would separate religion from a holy life, and make it to consist merely in such speculative opinions as may be defended by an ill liver, or in such outward

solemnities of worship as may be performed by a vicious and corrupt man, does greatly corrupt religion. (*S. Clarke, D.D.*) *Good and evil* :—The difference of good and evil is a subject of the highest concern, since upon it is founded the truth of religion, the obligation to virtue, and the peace and satisfaction of our minds. Upon it is founded the knowledge which we can attain of God's moral perfections; for we cannot prove that God is good, unless we have antecedent notions of goodness considered in itself, and separated from all law, will, or appointment, Divine or human. I shall, therefore, now proceed to prove the different natures of our actions as to moral good and evil—I. FROM THE HISTORY OF THE MOST ANCIENT TIMES AS RECORDED IN THE SACRED BOOKS. From the whole dispensation of providence, as set forth in the Old Testament, it may be collected that the distinctions of right and wrong, good and evil, just and unjust, might always have been evident to those who would make a proper use of their senses and faculties. But that we may not carry this point too far, it is to be observed, that men being frail and fallible, surrounded with temptations, and having passions as well as reason, God did not totally leave them to discover their duty by their own natural abilities. Certain religious traditions were, without question, delivered down by Adam and his sons, and some prophets and pious teachers were raised up in the earliest ages from time to time by the Divine Providence to instruct and correct the world, and to enforce the laws of nature and the moral duties, by declaring that God required the observance of them, and that He would be the rewarder of the good and the punisher of the wicked. Such an one was Enoch, and such was Noah, prophets and righteous men, and preachers of righteousness in their generations. II. FROM OUR RELATION TO GOD. That there is a Maker and Governor of the world, who is endued with all perfections, is evident from His works. Without any instructor, besides our own understanding, we know that we are, and that we did not make ourselves, and that we owe our being to a superior cause; and then we proceed to the discovery of a First Cause of us and of all other things; and thence we also discern our duty towards Him. It is absurd to suppose that God should have supreme power, and we not be bound to revere Him; that He should have perfect goodness, and we not be bound to love Him. He who gives life and the comforts of life to His creatures, hath a right to their gratitude and to their best services: and if it be absurd not to think ourselves obliged to obey Him, it is right and fit to obey Him, and to conform our will to His. So that, with respect to God, there must be moral good or moral evil in our behaviour. As the foundations of religion are thus fixed and unchangeable, so the continual practice of religion is necessary through the whole course of our lives. They who seem to have little or no value for religion yet will often tell you that they have a great regard for virtue, for honour, for justice, and for gratitude to friends and benefactors. If they would reason consistently, they would find the same obligations in a higher manner to serve God, who is both their Master and their Father. III. Another way to find out the differences of good and evil is FROM THE CONSIDERATION OF THE PECULIAR FRAME OF HUMAN NATURE. The beasts, though so much our inferiors, fulfil the designs of providence by pursuing the ends for which they were made. But they are no patterns for us whom God hath endued with faculties above sense, and who are able to control and subdue the inclinations which we have in common with brutes. Nature hath limited and determined their appetites within certain bounds, which they have no desire to transgress. Nature hath not so dealt with mankind; for our desires are impetuous and boundless: but then God hath implanted in us understanding and reason to direct them, and to judge what is right and wrong. And thus, as man by the help of reason and reflection, and by moral motives, becomes vastly superior to the brutes; so by vice, and particularly by intemperance and sensuality, he sinks as much beneath them, and runs into excesses which are not to be found in them. Hence the real and moral differences of good and evil may be proved; for the superior faculties in man must have a superior good agreeable to them. And as the inferior faculties, namely, the bodily senses, have always external objects suitable to them, or unsuitable; so it is with those nobler powers of the mind, thinking, reflecting, inquiring, judging, refusing, and choosing. The proper objects of these powers are moral or religious good and evil. No faculty creates its own object, but only discerns it. In like manner, truth and falsehood, right and wrong, are the objects of the understanding; and no man surely is so absurd or stupid as to think that we can make a thing true by believing it, or false by disbelieving it. So virtue or goodness is the

proper object of our unprejudiced and reasonable desires. Every one would infallibly choose it, if he acted according to his nature, to pure and undefiled reason, and were not seduced by sensual motives and temporary views. IV. We may also judge of good and evil BY THE COMMON INTEREST AND SENSE OF MANKIND. And here we are not to be determined so much by the opinion of this or that person, though eminent perhaps in some respects, as by the general consent of men in approving things praiseworthy and conducing to the common advantage. Some things are so universally esteemed, that even they who do not practise them must approve them; and this shows their intrinsic and invariable excellence. For men are very partial to their own conduct, and therefore when they approve virtue in others, though themselves be vicious, there must be an overbearing evidence in favour of it. The common and public interest cannot be supported by any measures contrary to virtue and goodness. V. FROM THE WILL OF GOD AS DISCOVERABLE BY REASON, AND AS DISCOVERED TO US BY REVELATION. (*J. Jortin, D.D.*) *Confusion in men's notions of good and evil.*—Whence comes it to pass that men should lose the notions of good and evil so far as to stand in need of a Divine law to reinforce them, whilst yet they never lose the notion of things pleasing or hurtful to their senses? We may answer—1. That sense hath usually nothing to corrupt its judgment; but it is not so with the determinations which the mind passeth upon well-doing and evil-doing; for there is often an inclination one way more than another, and this inclination is towards the wrong way, arising from various causes internal and external; so that serious consideration and caution are necessary to go before the judgment. 2. The reasons of good and evil are not usually understood in their whole extent by the bulk of mankind. It is generally agreed that there are some right and some wrong actions; but accurate notions of right and wrong have seldom been found where revelation hath not been received; which should teach us to set a just value upon the Gospel. 3. Great examples have greatly tended to corrupt men's notions of good and evil. Many there are who judge not for themselves, but take up with the judgment of others; and seeing men of knowledge, rank, and figure, practising iniquity without fear or remorse, they think they may do the same, and follow their leaders. 4. The prevalence of any vice in any country or society takes away men's apprehensions of the evil of it. When a vice is uncommon, men stare at it as at a monster; but when it is generally practised, they are insensibly reconciled to it. (*Ibid.*) *Good and evil.*—1. Give some general account of the nature of good and evil, and of the reasons upon which they are founded. 2. Show that the way by which good and evil commonly operate upon the mind of man, is by those respective names and appellations, by which they are notified and conveyed to the mind. 3. Show the mischief which directly, naturally, and unavoidably follows, from the misapplication and confusion of these names. 4. Show the grand and principal instances in which the abuse or misapplication of those names has such a fatal and pernicious effect. (*R. South, D.D.*) *The misapplication of words and names.*—I. IN RELIGION. Religion is certainly in itself the best thing in the world; and it is as certain that, as it has been managed by some, it has had the worst effects: such being the nature, or rather the fate of the best things, to be transcendently the worst upon corruption. II. IN CIVIL GOVERNMENT, or politics. III. TO THE PRIVATE INTERESTS OF INDIVIDUALS. 1. An outrageous, ungoverned insolence and revenge, frequently passes by the name of sense of honour. 2. Bodily abstinence, joined with a demure, affected countenance, is often called piety and mortification. 3. Some have found a way to smooth over an implacable, unalterable spleen and malice, by dignifying it with the name of constancy. 4. A staunch, resolved temper of mind, not suffering a man to sneak, fawn, cringe, and accommodate himself to all humours, though never so absurd and unreasonable, is commonly branded with and exposed under the character of pride, morosity and ill-nature. 5. Some would needs have a pragmatism prying into and meddling with other men's matters, a fitness for business, forsooth, and accordingly call and account none but such persons men of business. (*Ibid.*) *An essential difference between virtue and vice in the nature of things.*—I. I shall first EXPLAIN THE MEANING, AND THEN CONFIRM THE TRUTH OF THIS OBSERVATION. Every thing has a nature which is peculiar to itself, and which is essential to its very existence. Light has a nature by which it is distinguished from darkness. Sweet has a nature by which it is distinguished from bitter. Animals have a nature by which they are distinguished from men. Men have a nature by which they

are distinguished from angels. Angels have a nature by which they are distinguished from God. And God has a nature by which He is distinguished from all other beings. Now such different natures lay a foundation for different obligations; and different obligations lay a foundation for virtue and vice in all their different degrees. As virtue and vice, therefore, take their origin from the nature of things, so the difference between moral good and moral evil is as immutable as the nature of things from which it results. The truth of this assertion will appear if we consider—1. That the essential difference between virtue and vice may be known by those who are wholly ignorant of God. The barbarians, who saw the viper on Paul's hand, knew the nature and ill-desert of murder. The pagans, who were in the ship with Jonah, knew the difference between natural and moral evil, and considered the former as a proper and just punishment of the latter. And even little children know the nature of virtue and vice. But how would children and heathens discover the essential difference between moral good and evil, if this difference were not founded in the nature of things? 2. Men are capable of judging what is right or wrong in respect to the Divine character and conduct. This God implicitly allows, by appealing to their own judgment, whether He has not treated them according to perfect rectitude. In the context, He solemnly calls upon His people to judge of the propriety and benignity of His conduct towards them (vers. 3, 4; also Jer. ii. 5; Ezek. xviii. 25, 29; Mic. vi. 1-5). In these solemn appeals to the consciences of men, God does not require them to believe that His character is good because it is His character; nor that His laws are good because they are His laws; nor that His conduct is good because it is His conduct. But He allows them to judge of His character, His laws and His conduct, according to the immutable difference between right and wrong, in the nature of things; which is the infallible rule by which to judge of the moral conduct of all moral beings. 3. God cannot destroy this difference without destroying the nature of things. 4. The Deity cannot alter the nature of things so as to destroy the essential distinction between virtue and vice. We can conceive that God should make great alterations in us, and in the objects about us; but we cannot conceive that He should make any alterations in us, and in the objects about us, which should transform virtue into vice, or vice into virtue, or which should destroy their essential difference. II. TAKE NOTICE OF ONE OR TWO OBJECTIONS which may be made against what has been said. 1. To suppose that the difference between virtue and vice results from the nature of things, is derogatory and injurious to the character of God. For, on this supposition, there is a standard of right and wrong superior to the will of the Deity, to which He is absolutely bound to submit. To say that the difference between right and wrong does not depend upon the will of God, but upon the nature of things, is no more injurious to His character than to say that it does not depend upon His will whether two and two shall be equal to four; whether a circle and square shall be different figures; whether the whole shall be greater than a part; or whether a thing shall exist and not exist at the same time. These things do not depend upon the will of God, because they cannot depend upon His will. So the difference between virtue and vice does not depend upon the will of God, because His will cannot make or destroy this immutable difference. And it is more to the honour of God to suppose that He cannot, than that He can, perform impossibilities. But if the eternal rule of right must necessarily result from the nature of things, then it is no reproach to the Deity to suppose that He is morally obliged to conform to it. To set God above the law of rectitude, is not to exalt, but to debase His character. It is the glory of any moral agent to conform to moral obligation. The supreme excellency of the Deity consists, not in always doing what He pleases, but in always pleasing to do what is fit and proper in the nature of things. 2. There is no other difference between virtue and vice than what arises from custom, education, or caprice. Different nations judge differently upon moral subjects. This objection is more specious than solid. For—(1) It is certain that all nations do feel and acknowledge the essential distinction between virtue and vice. They all have words to express this distinction. Besides, all nations have some penal laws, which are made to punish those who are guilty of criminal actions. (2) No nation ever did deny the distinction between virtue and vice. Though the Spartans allowed their children to take things from others without their knowledge and consent, yet they did not mean to allow them to steal, in order to increase their wealth, and gratify a sordid, avaricious spirit. They meant to distinguish between taking and stealing. The former they con-

sidered as a mere act, which was suited to teach their children skill and dexterity in their lawful pursuits, but the latter they detested and punished as an infamous crime. So when the Chinese expose their useless children, or their useless parents, they mean to do it as an act of kindness both to their friends and to the public. These, and all other mistakes of the same nature, are to be ascribed to the corruption of the human heart, which blinds and stupefies the conscience, and prevents it from doing its proper office. III. It now remains to MAKE A NUMBER OF DEDUCTIONS FROM THE IMPORTANT TRUTH WHICH WE HAVE EXPLAINED AND ESTABLISHED.

1. If there be an immutable difference between virtue and vice, right and wrong, then there is a propriety in every man's judging for himself in matters of morality and religion. 2. If there be a standard of right and wrong in the nature of things, then it is not impossible to arrive at absolute certainty in our moral and religious sentiments. 3. If right and wrong are founded in the nature of things, then it is impossible for any man to become a thorough sceptic in morality and religion. 4. If right and wrong, truth and falsehood, be founded in the nature of things, then it is not a matter of indifference what moral and religious sentiments mankind imbibe and maintain. 5. If right and wrong, truth and falsehood, be founded in the nature of things, then there appears to be a great propriety in God's appointing a day of judgment. 6. All who go to heaven will go there by the unanimous voice of the whole universe. 7. All who are excluded from heaven will be excluded from it by the unanimous voice of all moral beings. It will appear clearly to the view of the universe, that all who are condemned ought to be condemned and punished for ever. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *Perverting the right ways of the Lord.*—I. NATURE OF THE PRACTICE. 1. Not a mere error or defect of judgment, but a habit, practice or system of perverting right and wrong.

2. Examples of "calling evil good, and good evil" (*Psa. x. 3; Mal. ii. 17, iii. 15; Luke xvi. 15; 2 Pet. ii. 19.*) Putting bondage to sin for liberty, and counting Christian freedom to be servitude. 3. Examples of "putting darkness for light, and light for darkness." The traditions of men for doctrines of God. Oppositions of science, falsely so called, for truths of Holy Writ. 4. Examples of "putting bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." "Pleasures of sin" counted sweet; the joy of the Lord despised. (*Prov. ix. 17*) "Stolen waters (i.e., sins) are sweet." (*Prov. v. 4*) "Her end is bitter as wormwood." (*Prov. xx. 17.*)

II. ORIGIN OF THE PRACTICE. 1. Satan the first on record who thus acted. (*Gen. iii. 1-5.*) It is an old device. 2. As he did, so do his children and dupes (*John viii. 44; 2 Cor. xi. 13-15.*) 3. Men perverted become perverters, "deceiving and being deceived." 4. The practice is easy, and seems to be a source of malicious pleasure to those who so do. III. EFFECTS OF THE PRACTICE. 1. The practice is, to a mournful extent, successful, because of our weak and perverted fallen nature. 2. It discredits God's words and ways. 3. It distresses the righteous (*Ezek. xiii. 22.*) 4. It deceives the young and unstable. 5. It destroys both the perverters and the perverted. IV. JUDGMENT ON THESE PERVERTERS. "Woe unto them" (*Prov. xvii. 15.*) 1. By these perversions the perverters become such as described in *Eph. iv. 18, 19; 1 Tim. iv. 2.* 2. It is too true that men may come at length to say, "Evil, be thou my good." 3. They who have done the works of the devil in perverting and confusing right and wrong, will share the devil's judgment. V. PRESERVATION FROM PERVERSION. 1. How to be kept from sharing with such perverters, and from being seduced or deceived by them; most important to know this. 2. See the example of Jesus in His temptation. Prayer, and keeping close to Holy Scripture. 3. Copy His example. 4. Gospel "light," "good," "sweet," here set forth, showing the way of salvation by faith in Christ. 5. Pray that the Spirit may "guide you into all the truth," and "give you a right judgment in all things." 6. Hereafter good and evil, light and darkness, sweet and bitter, will be known, seen, and tasted, without the confusion and perversion which now prevail. (*Flavel Cook, B.A.*)

*Sinful nomenclature* :—Reproof and denunciation, distasteful as they ever must be, have their office. The Word of God is something more than a pleasant song. It is sometimes a fire to scathe, a hammer to dash in pieces, a sword to divide the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow; and therefore it is a great sin to try to blunt the edge of the sword of the Spirit by calling evil good and good evil. I. IT IS A GREAT SIN to disregard or even to underrate in the least degree the eternal distinctions of right and wrong, to view things in their wrong aspects and to call things by their wrong names. "He that saith to the wicked, 'Thou art righteous,'" says Solomon, "him shall the people curse." And Paul tells



us there are some things that ought not to be so much as named among those who live holy lives. The evil word is a long step beyond the evil thought. Speak of sin in its true terms and you strip it of its seductiveness. Call a vice by its real name and you rob it of half its danger by exposing its grossness. The very guiltiest of sinners is he who paints the gates of hell with the colours of Paradise, and gives names of clear disparagement and dislike to scrupulous honour and stainless purity.

II. THE CAUSE OF THIS SIN is due to a fading appreciation of moral evil, to a tampering with it, and to a destruction of that healthy instinct which revolts at it. This is illustrated in the third chapter of Genesis. Light words and careless thoughts are not indifferent things. Character is not cut in marble; it may become diseased as our bodies do. Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good.

III. THE PUNISHMENT OF THIS SIN is the failure of all life, the waste, the loss, the shipwreck of the human soul. The rose is a glorious flower, but it withers sometimes and produces nothing but mouldering and loathly buds, because there is some poison in the sap or some canker at the root. Careers that might have been prosperous and happy are sometimes cut short, blighted with disgrace, the conscience seared, the distinction between right and wrong lost. They are mortified to painlessness, and this is death. This is the worst woe that can befall those who miscall things which God has stamped with His own signet. (*Dean Farrar, D.D.*)

*The sin of confounding good and evil*:—I. Consider the particular species of crime against which we have the warning of the text AS IT RELATES TO THE INDIVIDUAL WHO IS GUILTY OF IT.

1. There is scarcely one of us who does not think himself sufficiently religious; and yet, to what does the religion of many a man amount?
2. If we can be successful enough to persuade men to believe that the slight notion which they have of religion is insufficient, we then find them flying to another subterfuge to screen them from its duties, by affixing the name of evil to what we pronounce to be good, and calling our representation of religion morose and gloomy.
3. Religion being once rendered so slight in the mind, once esteemed so gloomy and unworthy a pursuit, its restraints are neglected, its principles evaded, and the wavering deceitfulness of men's hearts made the standard of men's actions.
4. To these notions of indifference concerning religion, we may add those arising from misguided zeal in it. Divisions, persecutions, &c.

II. Consider those who are not imposing on themselves by believing things to be good, which are really evil, but who wilfully and maliciously endeavour to destroy a true belief in others, by false representations of sin and duty.

1. How artfully and speciously vice is often portrayed in those numerous works which find the easiest admission to the closets of the young! Into the character of the frail and guilty is thrown a variety of qualities of seeming liberality, honour, and the like; the reader, with an ingenuous tenderness, without deliberation, pities and forgives; and begins to think the crime no indiscretion, or at least no crime at all!
2. You have witnessed the effect of similar principles conveyed, not in books, but conversation.
3. We find many a villain pouring forth his artful tale of constancy and honour, calling all "good evil, and all evil good," ridiculing marriage as a useless human ceremony, decrying religion as an idle state-invention, painting human nature, its passions and the indulgence of them, in every glowing colour, till he has broken a parent's heart, and brought his child to ruin in time and in eternity! (*G. Mathews, M.A.*)

*The perversion of right and wrong*:—Nothing tends more to remove the just distinctions of virtue and vice, or to blend the nature of good and evil, than the giving plausible and specious names to what are really great and substantial crimes.

1. The boldest attacks of infidelity are often couched under the plausible name of "a spirit of free inquiry."
2. An indifference to all religious worship is often concealed under the specious term of "a truly religious spirit of universal toleration."
3. The duel is converted into an "honourable deed."
4. Shameless and lawless adultery is denominated gallantry.
5. Is not a certain profusion and expense, which causes a breach of common justice in squandering what men are not able to pay, often described as an enlarged and generous mode of living?
6. If the libertine who indulges in every sensual appetite without control, happen to possess a certain share of vivacity and good humour, or be a man of boundless profusion and indiscriminate liberality, his vices are swallowed up in the supposed good qualities of his heart; and the worst title perhaps that is bestowed on his worst actions, is that of a thoughtless ease and good-nature, which is too apt to be led astray by the example and vices of others. (*C. Moore, M.A.*)

*Calling evil good, and good evil*.—The real horror of this passage consists in the fact that we have here one of the greatest sins that can be conceived, and, at the same time, one of the most common. To call evil good is practical atheism. To call good evil is practical blasphemy. The words of the passage supply a certain vision of the order of the process. 1. To “call evil good” is the sin especially of the young and careless—the giddy and wanton in their way. 2. The calling good evil is the sin especially of the earnest and professedly religious—whether or not their religion be of the kind called Christian. This was the great crime of the Pharisees against Christ. This has been the crime of all the persecutors of the Church of Christ from the Roman emperors to the Romish priests. Also, of many theologians of all sides in controversy; and of politicians. 3. Before our eyes the evil and the good are mingled, in characters and acts and institutions, till it is often beyond our power to extricate. And what are we to do? Let us call on the name of the Lord, confessing we are helpless often in the matter, remembering also this, that although it be in ignorance, our error may be great, like the crucifying of Christ. Let the Church be improved from within, seeking rather the resources of the heavenly grace to replenish her heart with charity—its native and original virtue. Let her turn from all the tumult without to Him who is “the glory in the midst of her.” Let her learn her liberality at the feet of Jesus. For evil rolls into the light of Christ and is detected and abhorred. The good that is in evil is caught by that light and gladly hailed. The love of Christ is the best of teaching here. (*J. Cunningham, M.A.*)

*The danger of depraving the moral sense*.—1. The current conventional standard of society around them is even in this Christian land the main principle by which the great mass of the better sort of people regulate their conduct. For one who refers truly to the law of God, hundreds may be found who act upon the common maxims of society. This, therefore, it becomes us especially to bear in mind: never can we live for ourselves alone. 2. It is one especial part of their punishment who are thus engaged in lowering the moral standard of society around them, that they must be, in a still greater measure, injuring themselves. How “shall a man touch pitch and not be defiled”? We have no other way of transmitting moral evil than by contagion; we must, in the first place, be ourselves the victims of that which we convey to others. (1) There is within each of us a power or faculty by which we judge of good or evil, and which we call conscience or the moral sense. Although we cannot by a direct act of the reason alter, or at our immediate volition, silence, the decision and the voice of moral consciousness, we may, by a course of actions, altogether debase, and even for the time extinguish it. (2) It is of great moment to observe how from this it follows that there is a necessary tendency in any one allowed form of evil to prepare the soil for receiving others. (3) After vicious practice, there is nothing of which they who would preserve their moral sense unclouded should more cautiously beware, than a needless acquaintance with sin. The first and evident form in which this danger meets us is from the company of evil men. There are some remarkable provisions by which the Christian’s power of discrimination can be formed, without encouraging an evil curiosity or courtng any familiarity with vice. For, first, it will grow gradually with the growth of our self-knowledge. Alas! we bear evil always with us; and if we search ourselves we must become acquainted with it. Yet even here we need a word of caution, for our very self-inspection may become the means of self-defilement. At God’s call we may walk unharmed even in the fire of present sin. And here, again, we may trace the provision God has made for this security in the nature He has given us. For the feelings of grief and shame which are naturally roused by the first sight of sin, and which of themselves will die away with each repetition, if, from curiosity or the love of excitement, we call them into fruitless exercise, these, when they lead us to strive against the evil which we see, grow into a living habit of resisting sin; and this habit keeps the conscience quick and tender, and, through the blessing of God’s grace, purifies and strengthens the power of moral judgment beyond all other means of wholesome exercise. Thus it is that God’s especial witnesses have borne, amidst an evil generation, the burden of His holiness and truth. (*Bishop S. Wilberforce, D.D.*)

*A shameful doctrine*.—Bellarmine, in his 4th Book and fifth chapter, *De Pontifice Romano*, has this monstrous passage: That if the Pope should through error or mistake command vices and prohibit virtues, the Church would be bound in conscience to believe vice to be good and virtue evil. (*R. South, D.D.*) *Straining at a gnat and swallowing*

**a camel**.—A Neapolitan shepherd came in anguish to his priest, saying, "Father, have mercy on a miserable sinner. It is the holy season of Lent; and while I was busy at work, some whey spirting from the cheese-press flew into my mouth, and,—wretched man!—I swallowed it. Free my distressed conscience from its agonies by absolving me from my guilt!" "Have you no other sins to confess?" said his spiritual guide. "No; I do not know that I have committed any other." "There are," said the priest, "many robberies and murders from time to time committed on your mountains, and I have reason to believe that you are one of the persons concerned in them." "Yes," he replied, "I am, but these are never accounted as a crime; it is a thing practised by us all, and there needs no confession on that account." (*K. Arvine.*) *Defective moral sense*.—It is no exaggeration to assert that Napoleon I.—strangely called the Great—had no moral sense. Carlyle tells the story of a German emperor who, when corrected for a mistake he made in Latin, replied, "I am King of the Romans, and above grammar!" Napoleon's arrogance was infinitely greater. He thought himself above morality, and really seems to have believed that he had a perfect right to commit any crime, political or personal, that would advance his interests by an iota: and, in truth, he did commit so many it is almost impossible to recount them. (*H. O. Mackey.*) *Little evils making way for greater*.—The carpenter's gimblet makes but a small hole, but it enables him to drive a great nail. May we not here see a representation of those minor departures from the truth which prepare the minds of men for grievous errors, and of those thoughts of sin which open a way for the worst of crimes? Beware, then, of Satan's gimblet. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

**Ver. 21. Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes.**—*A false estimate of human wisdom*.—The sin reproved (as Calvin well observes) is not mere frivolous self-conceit, but that delusive estimate of human wisdom which may co-exist with modesty of manners and a high degree of real intellectual merit, but which must be abjured, not only on account of its effects, but also as involving the worst form of pride. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *Wisdom and prudence: true and false*.—1. Persons are accounted wise and prudent who keep in view the most excellent designs, who govern their passions with moderation, who conduct their affairs with discretion, and proportion their application to their several interests according to the dictates of well-informed minds, and the maxims of sound wisdom. They belong to this description who are possessed of a sound judgment, a quick penetration and extensive knowledge, and improve these accomplishments for attaining the most valuable purposes. The wisdom and prudence of which such persons are possessed cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. According to the apostle James' description, it is pure, free from the corruptions of sin and error; it is peaceable, disposing those who act under its influence to live in harmony and concord; it is gentle, bearing with meekness the infirmities and injuries of others; it is easy to be entreated by the persuasion of sound reason and good counsel; it is full of mercy toward the offending and the afflicted; it is without partiality in its operations, and without hypocrisy and dissimulation, being sincere in all its exertions. 2. Persons are said in Scripture to have those qualifications in their own eyes or sight, which they vainly reckon they have acquired. People are said to be wise or prudent in their own sight who flatter themselves that these characters indeed belong to them, until the hatefulness of their iniquity is discovered. Though they know but little, they were never sensible of their ignorance; though, in the view of God, and men of understanding, they are foolish, they never were convinced of their folly. Elated with their supposed excellence on every occasion, and even when there is no occasion, they proclaim their own praises, and applaud their own performance. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Self-conceit*.—I. ITS SIGNS. Dogmatism; contempt of others; scepticism. II. ITS CAUSES. Ignorance; vanity. III. ITS FOLLY. It makes a man ridiculous; leads him into error. IV. ITS OFFENSIVENESS TO GOD—in spirit; principle; action. V. ITS CERTAIN HUMILIATION. (*J. Lyth, D.D.*) *Prayer for Divine enlightenment*.—In Dr. Samuel Johnson's diary the following prayer was found, offered in view of his becoming a politician: "Enlighten my understanding with the knowledge of right, and govern my will by Thy laws, that no deceit may mislead me, nor temptation corrupt me; that I may always endeavour to do good, and hinder evil."

Vers. 22, 23. **Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine . . . which justify the wicked for reward.**—*Wine-loving lawyers and judges*:—Among the men whom Isaiah denounces as the corrupters and destroyers of the society of which they are the leaders, are the unjust lawyers and judges: he mentions as characteristic of them, that they are heroes at drinking, and spice their wine to make it stronger; by which, perhaps, we are to understand, not that their heads and senses were overcome with wine like the drunkards spoken of above, but that the effect on their hearts and consciences was such as to harden them in their criminal perversion of the law. Perhaps the passage might be illustrated by instances of the professional character of hard-drinking but strong-headed judges of other times. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *Aromatites*:—The Romans called this spiced wine “Aromatites.” (*Ibid.*) *Drunkenness*:—The woe denounced in the text against those notorious for drunkenness is made up of the unavoidable effects it produces, and these effects are too dear a price to be paid by a reasonable creature for all the sensual pleasures of this life, did they even accompany this single sin.

**I. THE DRUNKARD'S EXCUSES.** 1. His first excuse is charged to the account of good fellowship. But surely, friendship can never be founded on anything else than an amiable and affectionate disposition, a likeness of temper, and true honesty of heart on both sides. Will strong drink bestow these on us? Can mutual love and confidence be built on vice? And how doth drunkenness promote the gaiety of conversation? Does it not rather destroy all conversation, for what is conversation, but the communication of rational and agreeable thoughts? 2. The next excuse for drinking to excess is, that it stupifies the cares and troubles of the drunkard, which arise from three different quarters,—his ill state of health, the unfortunate posture of his worldly affairs, or the stings of his guilty conscience. 3. The drunkard hath other more common and accidental excuses for his vice. He says he is so exposed to company and business, that it is impossible for him to avoid drinking to excess. Then, he is of so easy and flexible a temper, that he cannot resist the importunities of his friends, as he calls them. Thus, he is for softening his vice into a sort of virtue, and calling that mere good-nature, which his creditor calls villainy, and his family cruelty. **II. THE WOE DENOUNCED BY ALMIGHTY GOD;** or, in other words, the miserable effects, as well temporal as spiritual, of his favourite vice. 1. Poverty. 2. Universal contempt. 3. Ill health and an untimely death. 4. These evils are as nothing compared to the spiritual evils that spring from drunkenness. In destroying his health he shortens his life, and so far is guilty of self-murder. In impairing his reason he makes his life useless and burdensome to the world. (*J. Skelton.*) *Mighty to drink wine*:

—Strength is a great blessing, but if it is used in the service of sin it becomes a curse. **I. THE GREAT DRINKERS** of that day were just the same sort of men as they are now here in our country. 1. They are grasping and selfish (ver. 8). They are often willing to take bribes if they are magistrates (ver. 23), and to condemn the innocent rather than lose their money or credit. 2. They are dull of understanding of the things of God (ver. 12). 3. They are greedy of sin. Drink makes men pull destruction upon themselves (ver. 18). 4. They are liars (ver. 20). It would be difficult to find one lover of drink who was truthful. However kind and generous a sot may be, his word can never be depended upon. “Deceiving and being deceived” is his exact portrait. 5. Clever in their own eyes (ver. 21). **II. THE WOES** the prophet declares are sure to come on these men mighty to drink wine. 1. Poverty (vers. 9, 10). The great and beautiful houses will soon be vacant, and the neglected fields will soon be like the sluggard's garden. More than half the empty houses and the farms that are given up in this country represent the doings of drink. 2. Degradation (ver. 13). Captivity to a Jew meant more than poverty—loss of honour, of position, of hope, grinding toil, pollution, horrid slavery. What can degrade body and mind like drink? (ver. 15.) 3. Death (ver. 14). There is a sin unto death. More than 60,000 drunkards go down to their dishonoured graves every year in Britain. Think of death and hell “gaping” to take in these hosts of slain. (*Josiah Mee.*) *The bane and antidote* (with Hab. ii. 15):—**I. THE EVIL.** 1. As affecting the individual. It is no trivial result to demoralise the human spirit. 2. As it ramifies itself throughout the framework of society. (1) As respects the family. (2) The wider circle of the general community. **II. THE CURE.** 1. Total abstinence. 2. Legislative prohibition. (*J. Guthrie, M.A.*) *The unworthy glorying of the intemperate*:—They gloried in it as a great accomplishment, that they were able to bear a great deal of strong liquor, without being overcome by it. Let drunkards

know from this Scripture that—1. They ungratefully abuse their bodily strength, which God hath given them for good purposes, and by degrees cannot but weaken it. 2. It will not excuse them from the guilt of drunkenness that they can drink hard, and yet keep their feet. 3. Those that boast of their drinking down others glory in their shame. 4. How light soever men make of their drunkenness, it is a sin which will certainly lay them open to the wrath and curse of God. (*M. Henry.*) *Intemperance a fine art* :—Cyrus, writing the Lacedæmonians for assistance, spoke in very high terms of himself, telling them he had a greater and more princely heart than his brother; that he was the better philosopher, being instructed in the doctrines of the Magi, and that he could drink and bear more wine than his brother. (*Plutarch's Artaxerxes.*) *Mighty to drink wine* :—When Bonosus the drunken Roman had hanged himself, it went for a byword that a tun or tankard hung there and not a man. And when one was commended to King Alphonsus for a great drinker, and able to bear it, he answered that that was a good praise in a sponge but not in a prince. (*J. Trapp.*) Darius, King of Persia, caused it to be engraved upon his tomb, "I could drink much wine, and bear it bravely." Perhaps he was proud of it, but it was his shame. (*J. Mee.*) *Intemperance destroys character* :—The title of "Rois fainéants"—"do-nothing kings"—expresses very aptly the character of the last descendants of the house of Clovis. At the moment when circumstances demanded from the occupants of the Frankish throne a more than ordinary share of talent and force of character, they lapsed into a state of imbecility and insignificance, both bodily and mental. Intemperance and debauchery entailed on them premature decrepitude; few attained the mature age of manhood; they rarely appeared in public, except at the annual pageant of the Champ de Mars. (*Student's France.*) *A Japanese proverb* :—The Japanese have a true proverb which describes millions of sad cases: "A man took a drink, then the drink took a drink, then the drink took the man." *Effects of wine-drinking* :—Whilst the drunkard swallows wine, wine swallows him. God disregards him, angels despise him; men deride him, virtue declines him, the devil destroys him. (*Augustine.*)

Vers. 24-30. Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble.—*Sin brings judgment in its train* :—Let not those expect to live easily that live thus wickedly, for the righteous God will take vengeance. Observe—I. How COMPLETE this ruin will be, and how necessarily and unavoidably it will follow upon their sins. The prophet had compared this people to a vine (ver. 7), well fixed and which it was hoped would be flourishing and fruitful. But the grace of God towards it was received in vain, and then the root became rottenness, being dried up from beneath, and the blossom would of course blow off as dust, as a light and worthless thing (Job xviii. 16). Sin weakens the strength, the root of a people, so that they are easily rooted up; it defaceth the beauty, the blossoms of a people, and takes away the hopes of fruit. Sinners make themselves as stubble and chaff, combustible matter, proper fuel to the fire of God's wrath. II. How JUST the ruin will be. "Because they have cast away the law," &c. God doth not reject men for every transgression of His law and word, but when His word is despised and His law cast away, what can they expect but that God should utterly abandon them? III. WHENCE this ruin should come (ver. 25). It is destruction from the Almighty. 1. The justice of God appoints it. 2. The power of God effects it. "He hath stretched forth His hand against them." IV. The CONSEQUENCES AND CONTINUANCE of this ruin. When God comes forth in wrath against a people, "the hills tremble"; fear seizeth even their great men, that are strong and high; the earth shakes under men, and is ready to sink; and as this feels dreadful (what doth more so than an earthquake?) so what sight can be more frightful than the carcases of men torn with dogs, or thrown "as dung" (margin) "in the midst of the streets"? This intimates that great multitudes should be slain, not only soldiers in the field of battle, but the inhabitants of their cities put to the sword in cold blood, and that the survivors should neither have hands nor hearts to bury them. V. The INSTRUMENTS that should be employed in bringing this ruin upon them. It should be done by the incursions of a foreign enemy. When God designs the ruin of a provoking people—1. He can send a great way off for instruments to be employed in it. "From the end of the earth" (ver. 26). If God set up His standard, He can incline men's hearts to enlist themselves under it, though, perhaps, themselves know not why or wherefore. 2. He can make them come into the service with

incredible expedition. "With speed swiftly" (ver. 26). Those that defy God's judgments will be ashamed of their insolence when it is too late; they scornfully said (ver. 19), "Let Him make speed, let Him hasten His work," and they shall find to their terror and confusion that so He will. 3. He can carry them on in the service with amazing forwardness and fury (vers. 27-30). (1) Though their marches be very long, yet "none among them shall be weary"; so desirous shall they be to engage that they shall forget their weariness and make no complaints of it. (2) Though the way be rough, and, perhaps, embarrassed by the usual policies of war, yet "none among them shall stumble," but all the difficulties in their way shall easily be got over. (3) Though they are forced to keep constant watch, yet "none shall slumber or sleep"; so intent shall they be upon their work in prospect of having the plunder of the city for their pains. (4) They shall not desire any rest or relaxation; they shall not put off their clothes, not "loose the girdle of their loins," but shall always have their belts on and swords by their sides. (5) They shall not meet with the least hindrance to retard their march, or oblige them to halt; not a "latchet of their shoes shall be broken," which they must stay to mend, as Josh. ix. 13. (6) Their arms and ammunition should all be fixed and in good posture (ver. 28). (7) Their horses and chariots of war shall all be fit for service (ver. 28). (8) All the soldiers bold and daring; "their roaring," or shouting before a battle, "shall be like a lion," who with his roaring animates himself and terrifies all about him. (9) There shall not be the least prospect of relief or succour. Let the distressed look which way they will, everything appears dismal; for if God frown upon us how can any creature smile? (*M. Henry.*) *Divine judgments as fire and flame.*—They cannot be resisted, their direction cannot be altered, their force abated, nor can the flame be extinguished by human efforts. As threatened calamities cannot be averted, so inflicted judgments cannot be removed, unless by true repentance and earnest supplication to the supreme Disposer of all events. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Root and blossom.*—The posterity of Israel are here compared to a fruit-bearing tree, whose root gives it strength and stability, conveys to it nourishment, and preserves it firm amidst the storms to which it may be exposed. By their root may be meant everything whereby they thought to secure and establish themselves, such as their secret counsels, their deep-laid designs, their strength and riches, their friends and connections, from all which they derived support, and expected to keep their station. Viewing them in their social capacity, by their root we may understand parents, heads of families, judges, governors and princes, who give stability and support to the state and preserve it in a flourishing condition. . . . The blossoms denote the beautiful promising appearances among that people, which seemed to presage plenty of fruit; such as their religion, their children, their magnificence and influence as a nation; in short, everything which constituted their excellence, and displayed their glory was to be consumed. (*Ibid.*) *Universal judgment.*—The judgment here foretold was to prove universal; for what remains of a tree when its roots and branches are destroyed? (*Ibid.*) *Sin and judgment.*—Sin doth as naturally draw and suck judgments to it as the loadstone doth iron, as dry stubble and light chaff doth fire. (*J. Trapp.*) *The "law" and the "word."*—The "law" of Jehovah was given by Moses and embodied in institutions and a code; the "word" was that exposition of the meaning and life of these which the prophets were, from time to time, declaring in the ears of the people. The nation had cast away this law and despised this word. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *Withered roots.*—When all heart and morality are gone from a nation, its roots below ground are rotten, and its flourishing appearance is ready to turn to dust. There is no substance in such a people, nothing which can stand calamity of any kind. It will sweep them away as the fire licks up the stubble which men burn when the crop of corn or hay has been gathered in. (*Ibid.*) *Unfruitfulness: cause and effect.*—The sin of unfruitfulness is punished with the plague of unfruitfulness. (*M. Henry.*)

Vers. 25-30. **Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against His people.**—*The prophecy explained.*—Jehovah is about to bring foreign armies as the instruments of His judgment; the vision of the worst of human calamities—the invasion of a rich, civilised, luxurious nation by overwhelming hordes of barbarians—rises before the prophet: he speaks of them as present, and his words have a terrible force to him who reads them now, while he thinks of their fearful import then. Jehovah has set up a standard to which He is gathering the nations under

the Assyrian rule, and the prophet sees them steadily though swiftly coming on in warlike array—bowmen, horses and chariots: they rush to battle with the roar of lions, they seize and hold down their prisoners and their booty with the growl which marks the lion's refusal to give up his prey; they come on like the sea in its rage; and when the helpless inhabitant of Judah turns from this rising tide to the land—his own land—he sees only the darkness of woe; and when he turns again from the earth to look upward he sees only the thick clouds gathering over the heavens above him. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *Prophecy perpetually fulfilled*.—This is such a picture of "the life of things" that it is equally the description of the same judgment of God in whatever age or to whatever nation occurring. In successive ages it told the Jew of the Assyrian, the Babylonian, the Greek and the Roman; to the subject of the Roman Empire it spoke no less clearly of the Goth and the Vandal; the British monk must have recalled it in the days when Gildas learnt its truth from the Dane and the Norman; and the Spaniard from the Mohammedan; the Byzantine from Timour "the incarnate wrath of God"; the continental nations from the revolutionary armies and Napoleon; and, in our own day, the people of France from the Germans. (*Ibid.*) *God's anger and its manifestation*.—I. IN GOD'S INFINITE NATURE THERE IS THE QUALITY OF ANGER. It is not a stormy passion, like wrath in sinful man, but the settled, intense, burning antagonism to moral evil which must necessarily exist in one who is infinitely perfect. The man who most nearly resembles God will be "angry and sin not." II. GOD'S ANGER MAY BE KINDLED BY THE SPIRIT AND CONDUCT OF HIS PEOPLE. "Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against His people." Guilt is in proportion to the light and privilege abused. III. GOD'S ANGER MAY MANIFEST ITSELF IN ACTUAL AND FEARFUL PUNISHMENT. It is an active antagonism to moral evil. "He hath stretched forth His hand against them," &c. The hand of God is the symbol of His mighty power. "It is a fearful thing to fall," &c. (*H. M. Booth.*) *Hills trembling* (ver. 25).—The words seem to allude to the tremor occasioned by the stroke of the workman's hammer upon some hard body. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Horses' hoofs as flint* (ver. 28).—Therefore he will not shrink from riding them on the rocky soil of Palestine, which was extremely unfavourable to the use of horses (Amos vi. 12). Similar allusions are frequent in ancient literature, the shoeing of horses being unknown in antiquity. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *A darkened heaven* (ver. 30).—It is our wisdom, by keeping a good conscience, to keep all clear between us and heaven, that we may have light from above, when clouds and darkness are round about us. (*M. Henry.*)

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## CHAPTER VI.

**VERS. 1-13.** In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord.—*The story of the prophet's call—why inserted here*.—Why the narrative of the prophet's call was not, as in the cases of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, allowed to occupy the first place in the book, is a question which cannot be certainly answered. One conjecture is that chaps. i.-v. were placed first for the purpose of preparing the reader of the book for the severity of tone which marks the end of chap. vi., and of acquainting him with the condition of things in Judah which led to such a tone being adopted. Or, again, it is possible that chap. vi. may have been placed so as to follow chaps. i.-v., because, though describing what occurred earlier, it may not have been actually committed to writing till afterwards—perhaps as an introduction to chaps. vii. 1-ix. 7. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *Why did Isaiah publish this account of his call?*—Why was it needful to publish a private transaction between God and Isaiah? The only reason we can conceive of is that the prophet needed to give a justification of his public assumption of prophetic work. And that implies in the community a suspicion of prophetic men, and in the young prophet's mind struggles and hesitation such as we can easily conceive. This picture of his call he holds up half before himself, as the answer to all the timid fears of his own heart, and half before his countrymen, as his reply to all the objections they might raise against his prophetic commission. This is strongly confirmed when we proceed to look at the message which the prophet is sent to deliver (vers. 9, 10). (*P. Thomson, M.A.*) *The circumstances*

*of the vision* :—Let us try, if we can, and present to our imaginations some idea of this extraordinary scene. The shades of evening are closing in, and all is still within the sacred precincts of the temple. The daily ritual has been duly observed, and priests and worshippers have withdrawn from the hallowed fane. The noise and stir of the great city hard by is subsiding ; a solemn hush and stillness pervades the place. One solitary worshipper still lingers within the sacred courts absorbed in a reverie of prayer. He is a religious and devout man ; probably a member of the school of the prophets, well instructed in the faith of his fathers, and familiar with the sacred ritual of the temple, and the lessons that it inculcated. There he is, looking forward possibly to a prophet's career, yet feeling keenly the responsibilities which it will involve, and perhaps pleading earnestly to be fitted for his mission. He cannot be blind to the unsatisfactory condition of his people. Amidst much outward profession of religiousness and readiness to comply with the ceremonial demands of the faith, he cannot but discern the presence of barren formalism and hypocrisy, and of a latent superstition that might at any moment, were the restraints of authority removed, blossom out into open idolatry. And who shall say what heart-searchings may have occupied his own mind as he knelt there in the temple all alone with God. Was he more spiritual than those around him ? Was he sufficiently pure and devout to stand up in protest against a nation's sins ? One moment all is silence and stillness as he kneels in prayer ; the next, and lo ! a blaze of glory and a burst of song ! Startled and awe-stricken, the lonely worshipper raises his head to find himself confronted with a sublime and dazzling spectacle. His bewildered vision travels up through ranks of light till it finds itself resting for a moment, but only for a moment, on an Object too august for human gaze. " I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple." Around that dread Presence the forms of vast and wondrous intelligences of glory, the attendant ministers of the Majesty Divine, seem bending in adoration, and the voice of their worship falls like the roll of thunder on his ear, shaking the very pillars of the temple porch with its awe-inspiring resonance, as they echo and re-echo with answering acclamations the antiphon of heaven—" Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts : the whole earth is full of His glory." (*W. Hay Aiken, M.A.*)

*The vision* :—Isaiah might probably have said, as St. Paul did on a like occasion, " Whether I was in the body or out of the body I cannot tell," but he would undoubtedly have confirmed the plain meaning of his words that the vision was a reality and a fact. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*)

*The symbolism of Isaiah's vision* :—There is a variety of opinion among the commentators as to the basis of the symbolism of this vision. Some assert that the imagery by which the prophet sets forth the wealth and splendour of the heavenly kingdom is taken entirely from the scenery and ritual of the temple ; that when the worshippers had left, and the sacrifices had been offered, and only a few of the most devout remained for prayer and vigil, Isaiah, lingering with the few, unsatisfied and perplexed, beheld this vision, and consecrated himself to his prophetic activity. In this view the picture presented of the celestial world is the inner features and ritual of the temple idealised and expanded. Dr. Cheyne casts doubt upon this interpretation, and leans to the opinion that not the temple but the palace is the point from which the prophet's inspired imagination takes its departure. The figures, the messengers, and the throne are from the court, not from the temple. It is impossible wholly to accept either of these views. There is no reason why we should not blend both in our exposition of Isaiah's vision. There are certainly some references to the temple in the altar, the purging away of sin, and the smoke-filled house. In the throne and the train filling the temple there are suggestions of the court. As Isaiah was an attendant on both, it is probable that the ideas under which he sets forth the kingship of Christ, as priestly and yet regal, were drawn from his own observation of the centres of government and worship in his own country. Ideas of righteousness, and sympathy, and sacrifice unite in his conception of the invisible kingdom. (*J. Mathews.*)

*Isaiah's vision of God* :—Some of you may have been watching a near and beautiful landscape in the land of mountains and eternal snows, till you have been exhausted by its very richness, and till the distant hills which bounded it have seemed, you knew not why, to limit and contract the view ; and then a veil has been withdrawn, and new hills, not looking as if they belonged to this earth, yet giving another character to all that does belong to it, have unfolded themselves before you. This is a very imperfect likeness of that revelation which



must have been made to the inner eye of the prophet, when he saw another throne than the throne of the house of David, another King than Uzziah or Jotham, another train than that of priests or minstrels in the temple, other winged forms than those golden ones which overshadowed the mercy-seat. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) *The inaugural vision of Isaiah* contains in brief an outline of his prophetic teaching. The passage besides this has a singular psychological and religious interest of a kind personal to the prophet. It consists of a series of steps, each one of which naturally follows upon the other. I. There is first A VISION OF THE LORD, THE KING, surprising and majestic, with a singular world of beings and activities around Him (vers. 1-4). II. THIS VISION OF JEHOVAH REACTS UPON THE MIND OF THE PROPHET and makes him think of himself in relation to this great King, the Holy One, whom he had seen; and one thought succeeds another, so that in a moment he lives a history (vers. 5-7). III. Having passed through this history, the beginning of which was terror, but the end peace, AN ALTOGETHER NEW SENSATION FILLED HIS MIND, as if the world, which was all disorder and confusion before, and filled with a conflict of tendencies and possibilities, had suddenly, in the light falling on it from the great King whom he had seen, become clear and the meaning of it plain, and also what was his own place in it; and this was accompanied with an irresistible impulse to take his place. This is expressed by saying that he heard the voice of the great Sovereign who had been revealed to him proclaiming that He had need of one to send, to which he replied that he would go. IV. Finally, there comes THE SERVICE WHICH HE HAS TO PERFORM, which is no other than just to take his place in the midst of that world, the meaning of which his vision of the Sovereign Lord had made clear to him, and state this meaning to men, to hold the mirror up to his time and declare to it its condition and its tendencies, and what in the hand of the great King, God over all, its issue and the issue of all must be (vers. 8-13). (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) *Isaiah's vision*.—I. We have to contemplate a REMARKABLE MANIFESTATION OF GOD. II. WHAT WAS ITS EFFECT ON THE PROPHET? III. THE MEANS BY WHICH THE PENITENT PROPHET WAS PURIFIED. IV. THE CALL OF THE PROPHET. V. HIS COMMISSION. (*T. Allen, D.D.*) *Realising God*.—A man's realisation of the character of God does not depend altogether on his religious experience; it depends also on original capacity, temperament, and on suitable physiological conditions both of body and of mind. (*Ibid.*) *An anticipation of the Incarnation*.—This vision was an anticipation of the Incarnation of our Lord. St. John tells us distinctly that the glory which the prophet saw was the glory of the Redeemer. "No man hath seen God at any time." God is a spiritual being, and therefore He does not appeal to sense. He reveals Himself to faith, to conscience, and to love. But sense is an avenue through which the soul is reached and influenced, and Almighty God, in revealing Himself to man, has not overlooked this constitutional fact. The Incarnation was a tribute of respect paid to our senses. What the prophet saw only in symbol we realise in the form of a glorious historic Presence. (*Ibid.*) *Vision and service*.—I. THE PROCESSION OF THE DEAD FROM EARTH BRINGS US FACE TO FACE WITH THE ETERNAL KINGDOM. We cannot look upon any visible forms, and note their changefulness and yet the permanence of the ideas they illustrate, and not infer the existence of the world of thought, and law, and reality from which they proceed. But while all life is based on the unseen, and witnesses to its presence ever, the procession of the generations of men on the earth more powerfully still reveals the higher kingdom. Think of the populations that have lived in this planet, and received their first schooling and drill here. After a brief preparation and teaching in the knowledge of the laws and facts of existence, they depart. The procession into the pale kingdoms is endless and crowded. The majority the other side becomes greater each day. It is impossible to think of that succession and deny the celestial world. The law of continuity suggests a life beyond. The principle which secures the completion of all great work rightly begun, speaks of it. Our sense of the justice at the heart of things assures us of a realm of compensation for unrequited labour and unexplained sorrow. The union with God that begins here must be consummated elsewhere. Such facts as these would be forced upon the thought of Isaiah as all Israel mourned the death of their leader and king. II. THE SUPREME FACT OF THE CELESTIAL KINGDOM IS THE SOVEREIGNTY OF CHRIST. After John's statement (xii. 41) that Isaiah saw His glory, and spake of Him, there can be no question with any Christian mind as to the Messianic reference of the manifestation. Isaiah may not have known of the sacrifice and

resurrection by which that throne was gained, but the general outlines of the mediatorial kingdom are fully recognised here. "I saw the Lord, high and lifted up." All else in heaven was subordinated to that central fact. 1. The supremacy of our Lord's rule over heaven and earth, over angels, monarchs, events, the great and the little, the present and the future. 2. The absorbing attraction of that rule. For as prophet, and angels, and men, discern the glory of His love, and mercy, and power, they are constrained to praise. 3. The perfect serenity and sufficiency of His rule are indicated here. Beneath is storm and tumult. He sits above the flood. 4. The universality of His rule is clear. His train fills the temple. Those who went before, and those who came after, cried Hosanna! 5. The design of Christ's rule on earth is to bestow pardon and purity. 6. The King who confers cleansing and peace demands service. 7. He does not hesitate to discipline His unfaithful servants until their loyalty is assured. III. THE EFFECT OF THE VISION OF CHRIST'S LORDSHIP ON THE BEHOLDER. 1. A deep sense of personal sinfulness. 2. A deep sense of insufficiency for the work of God. 3. The vision that humbles, clothes with power, fills with certitude, directs our steps, inspires with invincible heroism, and makes us partakers of its glory and its resources. (*J. Matthews.*) *The vision of God*.—No truth is more familiar than that God cannot be seen by mortal eye. But God has so manifested Himself that we may say, without impropriety or mistake, that we have seen Him. He did so—I. OCCASIONALLY, BEFORE THE CHRISTIAN ERA. We have illustrations of this in the case of the burning bush (Exod. iii.), of Moses on the mount of God (Exod. xxxiv.), of Micaiah, the Hebrew prophet (1 Kings xxii.), and in that before us in the text. In such experiences, each one of which may have been unlike the others, a very special privilege was granted to these men; so special and peculiar that they felt, and had a right to feel, that they stood in the very near presence of the High and Holy One Himself. II. PERMANENTLY, IN THE TEMPLE. The religion of the people of Israel differed from that of the surrounding nations in that there was not to be found in their sacred places any image or statue or visible representation of God. If any such were found it was a marked violation of law, a distinct apostasy. Only one visible indication of the Divine presence was permitted, and that was as immaterial as it could be, and was only beheld by one man once in the year—the Shechinah in the Holy of holies. Once a year the high priest might use the words of our text; for when he entered within the veil, on the great day of atonement, he stood in the presence of manifested Deity. III. ONCE FOR ALL IN THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST. All previous historical manifestations were lost in the presence of the Son of God. He manifested the Divine so that those who saw Him did in truth see God. They saw nothing less than—1. Divine power, including control over the body and the spirit of man, over the elements of nature, over disease and death. 2. Divine wisdom, reaching to all those truths that concern the nature and will of God, and also the character, life, and destiny of man. 3. Divine purity, shown in an absolutely blameless life. 4. Divine love, shining forth in tender, practical sympathy with men in all their sufferings and sorrows; showing itself in compassion for men in their spiritual destitution (Mark vi. 34); culminating in the agony of the garden and the death of the Cross. Well might the Master say that His disciples were privileged beyond kings and prophets, for as they walked with Him they "saw the Lord." Conclusion—We can see God in nature, in history, in the outworkings of His providence, in the human conscience and human spirit. But the way in which to seek His face is by acquainting ourselves with, and uniting ourselves to, Jesus Christ, His Son. (*W. Clarkson, B.A.*) *The empty throne filled*.—I. THE VISION ITSELF. The centre-truth is that the Lord of hosts is the King—the King of Israel. II. THE MINISTRATION OF LOSS AND SORROW IN PREPARING THE VISION. If the throne of Israel had not been empty, the prophet would not have seen the throned God in the heavens. And so it is with all our losses, with all our sorrows, with all our disappointments, with all our pains; they have a mission to reveal to us the throned God. III. THE TEXT SUGGESTS THE COMPENSATION THAT IS GIVEN FOR ALL LOSSES. The one God will become everything and anything that every man, and each man, requires. He shapes Himself according to our need. The water of life does not disdain to take the form imposed upon it by the vessel into which it is poured. The Jews used to say that the manna in the wilderness tasted to each man as each man desired, of dainties or of sorrows. And the God who comes to us all, comes to us each in the shape that we need; just as He came to Isaiah in the manifesta-

tion of His kingly power, because the throne of Judah was vacated. So when our hearts are sore with loss the New Testament manifestation of the King, even Jesus Christ, comes to us and says, "The same is My mother and sister and brother," and His sweet love compensates for the love that can die, and that has died. When losses come to us He draws near, as durable riches and righteousness. In all our pains He is our anodyne, and in all our griefs He brings the comfort; He is all in all, and each withdrawn gift is compensated, or will be compensated, to each in Him. So let us learn God's purpose in emptying hearts and chairs and homes. He empties that He may fill them with Himself. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The moral and mediatorial dominion of God:—*

**I. PECULIARITIES OF THIS DOMINION.** 1. The law of belief, or what we may otherwise phrase, the law of intellectual humility. Revelation was never intended to be a revelation to our comprehension or to our reason. The revelation of the Bible is made to faith. 2. The law of evangelical faith. 3. The law of holiness. You will find a great difference between the nature of the obedience which God in the Gospel requires and that which earthly governments require. (1) Earthly governments take cognizance of the outward act, but none at all of the motives, the affections, or the tempers; but God in the Gospel government controls these. (2) Earthly governments are usually backward in interfering with the private arrangements of commercial and domestic life, and with the personal property of their subjects. But Christianity puts everything under law. Its sway is universal, all-pervading, absolute. (3) Earthly governments, earthly systems of ethics, either fail to inculcate, or are at positive variance with, much of the more elevated and spiritual morality of the Bible. The great peculiarity of the government of Jehovah the Saviour in this respect is, that He requires men to be holy and not merely to be moral. 4. The law of disciplinary suffering.

**II. EXCELLENCE OF THIS DOMINION.** 1. It is a spiritual government. 2. It is a mediatorial government—a government, therefore, of mercy. 3. The supremacy of this dominion might be adverted to. It is a "throne high and lifted up" above all the thrones and dynasties of the earth. Let this comfort the people of God. 4. It is eternal. (*W. M. Bunting.*) *The dead king; the living God:—* Israel's king dies, but Israel's God still lives. From the mortality of great and good men we should take occasion, with the eye of faith, to look up to "the King eternal, immortal, invisible." (*M. Henry.*) *Government human and Divine:—*

**I. THE CHANGES IN CIVIL SOCIETY TAKE PLACE UNDER THE DIRECTION AND GOVERNMENT OF THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD. II. THE PERMANENCY OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT AFFORDS A STRIKING CONTRAST TO THE FADING CHARACTER OF EARTHLY GOVERNMENTS. III. THE SPIRITUAL KINGDOM IN THE HANDS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST PROCEEDS WITH MAJESTIC PROGRESS NOTWITHSTANDING, AND EVEN BY MEANS OF, THESE VARIOUS CHANGES. (*R. Winter, D.D.*)** *Seeing God:—* Isaiah saw God: do men see Him to-day? Was He any nearer to Jerusalem than He is to London and New York? Did that old Hebrew possess faculties different from ours? 1. God can be seen and known. He has been seen and known. Moses, Isaiah, Elijah, Paul, John—all saw Him. He has been seen and known in all lands and among all religions. 2. What do we mean by seeing and knowing God? A spirit cannot be seen with physical eyes. We mean that we are so convinced of the nearness and reality of God that our thinking and living are all determined by that conviction—so sure of Him that we live as if we saw Him by physical sight. 3. But have not men seen their own imaginings, and thought that those were God? Is not a perfect God the noblest work of man? It has not been proved that any have actually known God. It would, in the nature of things, be impossible to demonstrate that to any one who did not himself possess the same knowledge; but it has been proved that those whom the world always heeds when they speak concerning other things have believed that they had this knowledge; and that faith has been the inspiration of dauntless heroism, most patient endurance, and most sacrificing service. 4. How is God known? Many answers are given. Probably all are partially correct. As each individual sees natural objects from his own standpoint, so must he approach the highest knowledge. We are not asking whether men have known about God, but whether they have known Him. We know about Cæsar, but we do not know him; we know about the Mikado of Japan, but we do not know him. Many know about God who show no signs of knowing Him. I think that no one has been able to tell how this knowledge is attained. Some say, "We are conscious of Him"; others, "We see Him with the inner eye"; others, "Reason

leads to Him"; and others still, "He is seen and known in the things which are made." But after all, the most that any can say is, "I know Him." Isaiah said, "I saw the Lord," but all is hazy and indistinct when he comes to detail.

5. All who have learned to love man in the spirit of Christ never can fail of coming to the knowledge of God, "for whosoever loveth is born of God and knoweth God." Love is the new life; and love secures knowledge.

6. When we want to know about God we stand before the majesty of an ocean in a storm, before the terrible splendour of Alpine crests and glaciers, beneath the host of the heavens that in solemn silence thread the mazes of the sky, and say: "Behold the greatness of God!" We study the movement of history, and see how the dispersion of the Jews sent true spiritual ideas into all lands; how the triumphs of Alexander gave a common language to the world; how the supremacy of Rome made nations one; how the carnival of blood called the "French Revolution" overthrew more abuses than it worked; how the American Civil War ended in the proclamation of freedom, and we say, God is revealing Himself in history. We read the story of the life and death of Jesus, and say, If that is a revelation of God, then He is the One for whom our souls long. But all these revelations may be accepted without personal knowledge. The Father, who is a Spirit, comes to us in spirit; speaks in a still voice in the chambers of memory, conscience, aspiration; and we know Him, and yet may not be able to explain that knowledge to those who do not have it. "I know my Father; He knows His child." That is the highest human experience. That is eternal life.

7. If eternal life is not a question of dates, of the succession of months and years, but knowing God, then no question is more imperative than, "Is it possible for me to know Him?" It is a great thing to claim that knowledge. It should never be done irreverently or lightly, but always humbly and with great joy. The mission of the pulpit and the Church is primarily to help men to know God. How, then, may we know Him? However many answers are possible, only one need be given. All who follow Jesus Christ are sure, sooner or later, to realise that, like Him, they, too, are sons of God. (*Amory H. Bradford, D.D.*) *Removing the veil*:—1. A king must die! There almost seems to be something incongruous in the very phrase. The very word "king" means power. The king is the man who *can*—the man who is possessed of ability, dominions, sovereignty; and the shock is almost violent when we are told that the range of kingship is shaped and determined by death. How the one word suffices for all sorts and conditions of men! The registrar deals with us very summarily! We look through his books. His vocabulary is very limited. He has two words, "born" and "died," and between the two he can fit in all mankind; there is no exception to disturb his little printed form; we all take our place in it, prince and peasant, emperor and slave. And all this irrespective of character.

2. As kings went in those days, Uzziah had proved himself an admirable king, a wise ruler, a good man. He was distinctly a progressive man, a man of action and enterprise. His energies were not absorbed in merely foreign affairs, nor shaped by the lust of mere dominion. He proceeded upon the principle that a successful foreign policy must be based upon a wise domestic policy; that an efficient and stable rulership must begin at home. I like the way in which the chronicler sums up the king's motives and gives us the very spirit of his home policy, "he loved husbandry." "He loved husbandry," and therefore you find him hedging his people about with security as they go about their daily life. He "dugged many wells," he attended to the requirements of irrigation, he laid the hand of protection and favour upon husbandmen and vine-dressers, and in every way he showed that he regarded agriculture as the fundamental and primary pursuit of national life. Upon that home policy he built his foreign policy. If you have peace, security, and contentment at the centre it is easier to extend and widen the bounds of your circumference; and with order and prosperity at home, Uzziah was able to enlarge the borders of his empire. He could raise from his devoted people an army of mighty power. The limits of his kingdom were being continually expanded. "His name spread far abroad. He was marvellously helped, till he was strong." Such was the nation's king; loved by all his people, feared by all his foes. Is it, then, any wonder that King Uzziah—skilled organiser in home affairs, subtle strategist in foreign affairs—became the pillar of the nation's hopes, the repository of her trust, the ultimate security of her prosperity and permanence? 3. Now, there is a strange tendency in human nature to deify any person who gives evidence of possessing any kind of extraordinary power. We place them on the heart's

throne—the throne on which are centred the soul's hopes and which carries with it the ultimate sovereignty and apportionment of life. Extraordinary power of any kind appeals to the godlike within us, and upon the object evincing the extraordinary power we too often fix our trust. Watch the principle in the narrative before us. Here is Isaiah. Before his call and consecration he had lived on the political plane of life. His thought was ever moving among the forces of diplomacy and statecraft. How intensely absorbed he was in the game of national politics! The national problem was to Isaiah a political problem. The ultimate foundation of national prosperity was stable government. The wise handling of political forces was the one essential for the continuity and grandeur of the nation's life. That was the plane of thought and life on which Isaiah moved, and on that plane he must find his heroes. He found the hero in Uzziah. What then? He had won Isaiah's admiration. Next, he won his confidence, next his love, next his devotion; then Uzziah became Isaiah's god! Uzziah filled the whole of Isaiah's vision. How now did Isaiah's reasoning run? Thus—"What will become of the world when Uzziah dies? When the master of statecraft is gone, in whose hands will the rulership rest? When the political nave is removed, will not all the spokes of the national wheel be thrown into the direst confusion?" That was Isaiah's fear, begotten by his hero-worship. Well, Uzziah died. What then? Says Isaiah, "In the year that King Uzziah died"—what?—"All my worst fears were abundantly realised"? No, no! "In the year that King Uzziah died I had my eyes opened; I saw there was a greater kingdom with a greater King—I saw the Lord." The hero died to reveal the hero's God. What, then, did the revelation do for Isaiah? It gave him an enlarged conception of all things. It gave him a new centre for his thoughts and life. It taught him this, that the ultimate security for all national greatness is not kings and crowns, but God. It taught him this, that big armies, and walled cities, and quiet husbandry, and subtle diplomacy, and complex civilisations are not the fundamental forces on which mankind rests. The eternal centre of all true life, the centre which time cannot weaken and which death cannot corrupt, is not diplomacy, but holiness—not Uzziah, but the Lord. The earthly king had come between Isaiah and his God, and it was only when the earthly king was taken away that Isaiah saw the King of kings. "I saw the Lord high and lifted up"—a limited interest replaced by a larger one, a low standard supplanted by a loftier one, a local monarch stepping aside to reveal the universal King. 4. This teaching has a most pertinent application to the life of to-day. Which is the most prominent in English national life to-day—King Uzziah or King Jesus, the representative of diplomacy or the representative of holiness? Which are we most concerned about—the science of politics or the science of holy living? What are the forces on which we are chiefly depending for the continuity of our national supremacy? The eternal forces are not material, but spiritual, proceeding not from the earth, but coming down from heaven. Material forces must be kept secondary, because they are transient; spiritual forces must be primary, because they are eternal. What is the conclusion of the whole matter? Don't let us lay the stress and emphasis of life upon secondary things—not upon Uzziah, but upon the Lord. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *The "Uzziahs" of history and the Lord*:—History tells us the stories of nations who have looked no further than King Uzziah, and who have been accustomed to use the temporal and earthly forces which Uzziah represents. And how has it fared with them? Ancient Phœnicia looked no further than King Uzziah. She built her national temple upon the foundation of commerce, and the only binding force among her people was the relationships of trade. Ancient Greece looked no further than King Uzziah. She raised a palatial national structure upon the foundation of literature and art, and the structure was exceeding beautiful, the wonder and admiration of all time. Ancient Rome looked no further than King Uzziah. She raised an apparently solid masonry, compact and massive, upon a political foundation, and all the stones in the building were clamped together by a tie of patriotism, such as the world has elsewhere never known. Now what has become of them—Phœnicia, Greece, and Rome? How has it fared with the nations so constituted, the houses so built? This is the record. They stood for a time, proud, august, radiant with imperial splendour, fair with the smile of fortune, and reflecting the sunny light of the prosperous day. But "the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon" those nations, and they fell, and great was the fall of them! Surely

that is a lesson for to-day, that national foundations must not be laid by Uzziah, but by the Lord. (*Ibid.*) *The material fleeting: the spiritual enduring.*—I spent a little time in the old castle at Stirling, and in one of the rooms of the tower were two curiosities which riveted my attention. In one corner of the room was an old time-worn pulpit. It was John Knox's pulpit, the pulpit from which he used to proclaim so faithfully the message of the King. In the opposite corner were a few long spears, much corrupted by rust, found on the field of Bannockburn, which lies just beyond the castle walls. John Knox's pulpit on the one hand, the spears of Bannockburn on the other! One the type of material forces, forces of earth and time; the other the type of spiritual forces, forces of eternity and heaven. The spears, representative of King Uzziah; the pulpit, representative of the Lord. Which symbolises the eternal? The force and influence which radiated from that pulpit will enrich and fashion Scottish character when Bannockburn has become an unimportant memory, standing, vague and indefinite, on the horizon of a far distant time. (*Ibid.*) *Gain through loss.*—God puts out our little light that we may see Him the better. When you are looking out of the window at night, gazing towards the sky, you will see the stars more clearly if you put out your gaslight. That is what God has to do for us. He has to put out the secondary lights in order that we may see the eternal light. Uzziah has to die, in order that we may see it is God who lives. (*Ibid.*) *The compensations of life.*—I know a little cottage which is surrounded by great and stately trees, clothed with dense and massy foliage. In the summer days, and through all the sunny season, it just nestles in the circle of green, and has no vision of the world beyond. But the winter comes, so cold and keen. It brings its sharp knife of frost, cuts off the leaves, until they fall trembling to the ground. There is nothing left but the bare framework on which summer hung her beauteous growths. Poor little cottage, with the foliage all gone! But is there no compensation? Yes, yes. Standing in the cottage in the winter time and looking out of the window, you can see a mansion, which has come into view through the openings left by the fallen leaves. The winter brought the vision of the mansion! My brother, you were surrounded by the summer green of prosperity. It had become your king. There your vision ended. But the Lord wished to give your thought a further reach. He wanted your soul to see "the mansion which the Father hath prepared" for them that love Him. So He took away your little king. He sent the winter and stripped your trees; and "in the year that the little king died you saw the Lord." (*Ibid.*) *Isaiah's call.*—I. THE MEDIUM THROUGH WHICH IT WAS GIVEN—A VISION. Why was it recorded? Not to indulge the conceit of the prophet, nor even chiefly to certify him to the Jews; but because of the messages to them which it so vividly conveys, and the representative interest of the experience to all spiritual minds. II. THE STATE OF MIND THE VISION PRODUCED. (Ver. 5.) Fear, dejection, self-humiliation. Both personally and as representative of the Jewish nation he was convicted of sin. This is the invariable result of close intercourse with God. Our inborn sin is brought to light and rebuked. And the more Christlike we are the more will our brothers' sin likewise weigh upon our hearts. It is in this very experience that our preparation for service begins. III. HOW THIS WAS DEALT WITH. The fact of sinfulness is not denied by Him to whom it is confessed. It is tacitly confirmed by what takes place. Yet how tender and considerate is the silence of the Judge of all the earth! At once He institutes and sets in operation a mediatorial agency. Such guilt and impurity no water can cleanse: fire is needed, fire from the Consuming Fire. IV. THE CALL. 1. Couched first in a universal question,—“Whom shall I send?” &c. 2. After the prophet's response the call is more direct and personal: “Go, and tell this people,” &c. The more general call to us consists, as it did to Isaiah, in the sense of our neighbours' need and our own duty with regard to supplying it. But if a Christian is in earnest, and willing to surrender himself to the commandment of his Lord, more specific direction will not be wanting. V. THE RESPONSE. (Ver. 8.) “Then said I, Here am I; send me.” A sacrifice and a petition. (*Homiletic Magazine.*) *Isaiah's vision.*—I. THE INEFFABLE MAJESTY OF GOD. 1. His supreme authority. “Sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up.” He is the high and lofty One. He ruleth over all, matter and mind, the evil and the good. 2. His magnificent aspect. “His train filled the temple.” This is an allusion to the flowing robes of Oriental monarchs, which signalise their stately grandeur. What is the costume of the Infinite? “Thou clothest Thyself with light as with

a garment." The flowing robes of His majesty filled the temple of immensity. 3. His illustrious attendants. "Above it stood the seraphim." Eastern monarchs had numerous princes and nobles as their attendants; but these fiery ones are the ministers of the eternal King. 4. His absolute holiness. "One cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts." The repetition indicates the intensity of their conviction. II. THE LOFTY SERVICES OF CELESTIAL INTELLIGENCES. Their services are—1. Reverential. 2. Alert. They do not move with a tardy reluctance in the service of their Lord; but with wings expanded they stand ever ready to execute His behest. 3. Individual. "One cried unto another." Each was intensely alive to his own responsibility and duty. 4. Harmonious. After the separate cries there was a blending of all in one grand chorus, "The whole earth is full of His glory." 5. Enthusiastic. As the peal of a majestic organ sometimes shakes the cathedral, the voice of one worshipper in heaven is represented as moving the posts of the door. The grand solo sends a tremor through the temple. III. THE AMAZING CAPACITY OF THE HUMAN SOUL. Isaiah saw all this, not with the outward eye, but with the eye of his mind. Unlike all other creatures on this earth, man has a capacity to see God. He can see God enthroned in the universe. 1. Sin has injured this capacity. Whilst all men have the power to see God, few men do. 2. The Gospel restores this capacity. It opens the spiritual eye, sweeps away the carnal atmosphere, and shows God filling the temple. (*Homilist.*) *The Trinity in unity* (for Trinity Sunday):—I. AS TO THE UNIVERSAL PREVALENCE OF BELIEF IN THE DOCTRINE. The doctrine of the Trinity has always been one of those things, to use the language of St. Luke, which have been most surely believed among us. II. THE SCRIPTURAL PROOF OF THE DOCTRINE. It underlies the whole Bible, and is inextricably interwoven with its fabric and its structure. III. THE NATURE OF THIS DOCTRINE. We grant at once that it is mysterious, and that it is inexplicable. We walk by faith, not by sight. This great doctrine in its inner being is hidden from us; but it presents a countenance to us full of beauty and loveliness, the features of which are discerned by the eye of faith. It is a golden casket, containing a most precious jewel; locked, if you like, which we cannot open, but enriching us nevertheless. It is a song in a strange language, the meaning of it in a great degree unintelligible, but the melody most exquisite. Practical application of the doctrine—1. It is bound up with our duty to God. We have duties to pay to each of the three Persons if we would perfectly know our glorious God, if we would worthily magnify His holy name. 2. It is bound up with our hope of salvation. 3. It is bound up with the fulness of Gospel blessings. Take the apostolic benediction; what more can you conceive of spiritual life and blessing than is contained within that? (*R. W. Forrest, M.A.*) *The command and encouragement to communicate the Gospel*:—The communication of the will of God to others is connected with the manifestation of the excellency of all the perfections of the Deity, but appears in the passage before us in more especial relation to the glory of the Divine holiness. I. THE REVELATION WHICH GOD HAS MADE TO HIS INTELLIGENT CREATURES MANIFESTS HIS SUPREME AND PERFECT HOLINESS. The great lesson which the vision taught was the holiness of Jehovah, and that by the manifestation of this the whole earth was to be filled with His glory. This, if not the source and end, has always formed a part, and has often been pre-eminent in the manifestations God has made to His intelligent creatures. Although inseparably blended with the infinite benevolence and perfect rectitude, we find this perfection more frequently associated with the name, and employed to qualify the attributes of Jehovah, than any other. The arm of the Lord, the emblem of His power, is called His holy arm; His eyes, emblems of omniscience, the eyes of His holiness; His presence, Holy of holies; His majesty, the throne of His holiness; His name, the holy name; Himself, the Holy One. This is equally applicable to the Father, Holy Father,—the Son, Holy Child,—the Spirit, Holy Ghost. All the manifestations God has ever made of Himself, so far as our limited and imperfect knowledge extends, have been those of His holiness. He is holy in all His works. It was because they beheld a new impress of the moral image of Jehovah that the sons of God shouted together for joy. The Divine holiness was also exhibited, under a new aspect, to all orders of intelligent creation, in the contrast between the state of the first human pair and that of fallen spirits. All the manifestations which, since the fall, the Divine Being has condescended to make to our race, either of His dominion over the affairs of men, the intimations of His will, or the operations of His grace and Spirit on the soul, have been revela-

tions of the Divine holiness. In the human nature of Christ, the glory of Divine holiness was enshrined in a temple more pure than that in which the Shekinah had appeared; here was an altar that sanctified both the giver and the gift; a sacrifice in which Omniscience saw no imperfection; a Priest who needed not to offer sacrifice for His own sins, for He was holy, harmless, and undefiled. The purity of God had been shown in the creation; in the consequences of the fall; the destruction of the old world; and the giving of the law: but on Calvary, though softened by the veil of humanity through which it was revealed, it beamed forth with an intensity and effulgence which rendered it at once the most stupendous and sublime display of the Divine equity and holiness that ever has, or, we have reason to believe, ever will take place. The design of the sacrifice displays more vividly this glorious perfection. It was not simply to redeem from sin, but to redeem to holiness. The dispensation which terminated with the return of the Redeemer to the bosom of the Father, has been followed by another, less imposing, but equally clear and more extensive, manifestation of the Divine holiness, the descent of the Holy Spirit. The volume of inspiration is a revelation of the Divine holiness; all its precepts and promises are holy. With what superiority in moral excellency does this view of the connection between the diffusion of the Gospel and the glorious holiness of Jehovah invest this sacred cause; what impressive instruction does it impart to all engaged in its varied departments, at home or abroad; and how imperative its requirement, that, on every order of agency in its support, direction, and application, holiness unto the Lord should ever be distinctly inscribed!

**II. THE COMMUNICATION TO OTHERS OF THE REVELATION WHICH GOD HAS MADE, IS ENJOINED BY DIVINE AUTHORITY.** Whatever motives may engage the people of God to communicate to others what He has revealed to them, the Divine command constitutes the foundation, augments the force of every other, and must give vitality and efficiency to all. This commission has been either special or ordinary; but the authority has been the same in all, and the obligation equal.

**III. KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIVINE WILL, AND EXPERIENCE OF THE DIVINE MERCY, DEMAND AND ENCOURAGE PROMPT AND CHEERFUL OBEDIENCE.** This is strongly and beautifully shown in the vision of the prophet. Many of the communications of the Divine will appear to have been preceded by peculiar manifestations of the Divine glory. Thus Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel; the disciples, after the resurrection, and on the mountain in Galilee; Saul, on his way to Damascus; and the beloved disciple in Patmos, were favoured. This was probably designed to strengthen their minds with vivid and solemn impressions of the greatness and majesty of that God whose message they were to declare, and to encourage their fidelity. It is a humiliating fact, that, with authority equally distinct, motives more numerous and strong, and facilities greater than at any former time, discouragements and difficulties still keep many at home, who ought to be on the broad plains of moral death, pointing the nations to "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world." These difficulties principally arise from the views which are taken of the nature of the work and the qualifications it requires.

1. Physical unfitness.
2. Deficiency of natural or acquired abilities.
3. Moral unfitness.
4. Attachment to home, and the privations and perils of the work.
5. The magnitude and importance of the work.

Let us glance at the encouragements to obedience.

1. The dominion and omnipotence of the Redeemer.
2. The grateful import of the message.
3. The measure of success, though not the rule of duty, is cheering.
4. The spirit of the times and the aspect of the world.

(*W. Ellis.*) *The idea of God.*—I. ISAAH'S VISION OF GOD. This was, in all probability, the greatest incident in his whole life, and it left an indelible mark on his thinking, just as the thinking of St. Paul, and, in fact, his whole activity, sprang out of what happened to him on the way to Damascus. That day he saw God. That is his own account of the matter. Now, as he prophesies through three reigns after the death of Uzziah, Jotham's, Ahaz's, and Hezekiah's, and probably lived sixty years after this date, he must at the time have been a very young man, and I am strongly inclined to think that this was not only the commencement of his activity as a prophet, but the beginning of his own religious life. It was what, in modern language, would be called his conversion. He says that he "saw the Lord," and what better account could any one give of the crisis by which real religion commences? Before this, Isaiah had heard plenty about God, because he seems to have been the son of a wealthy family living in Jerusalem; but, as another eminent Old Testament



writer indicates, there is a vast difference between hearing about God and seeing Him. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee." It is really just the transition from the religion of tradition to the religion of experience. Religion comes to us all first as a tradition. It is the tradition of our home, the tradition of our Church, the tradition of our country, and so on; but as long as it is merely that, it is vague, unreal, and remote. But some day this God of whom we have heard is realised by us to be here; and this Christ, of whom we have heard that He has saved others, comes seeking for entrance into our own soul; and if we let Him in, our religion passes into an entirely new stage. Now, this was what happened to Isaiah. II. THE EFFECT OF THE VISION ON HIS WORK. One of the seraphim cried to another, and said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." That is to say, two attributes of God overawed and overwhelmed these supernal beings—His holiness and His omnipotence. The one of these is the inner glory of God; the other is the outer glory. He is holy, holy, holy inwardly—that is perfectly, unspeakably, uncompromisingly holy; and then outwardly, the whole earth is full of His glory; or rather, to put it quite literally, the fulness of the universe—that is to say, all the variety of suns and stars, of heaven and earth, of land and sea—all that is His glory, or the garment by which He is made visible. We are wont in secular things to say that the child is father of the man, and if any man does anything very remarkable in the world it will usually be found that he has seen by the instinct of genius very early what he was intended to do. And this is true of Isaiah in the spiritual sphere. What he saw that day in a moment it took a whole life-time to write out. Manifest as is the truth in the Book of Isaiah, it may all be deduced from these two things—the holiness of God and the omnipotence of God. The one-half of his prophecies may be summed up in this word which I borrow from one part of his writings: "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." The book opens with an extraordinary description of the sins of the nation, and this theme occurs all through. And what is all that but just an echo of holy, holy, holy? If God is what the seraphim said that day He was, then sin must be such as Isaiah represents it to be. Then, the other great note of his writings is that which is expressed in the first verse of the opening of the second part of the book: "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God." Isaiah is among all the prophets the prophet of comfort. He was indeed a prophet of calamity, and perhaps in no other book of the Old Testament do we see so clearly as in his the cruel and the irresistible might of the great world monarchs by which the people of that age were surrounded; but mighty as these were, a Mightier was known to Isaiah; One to whom they were just like the dust; One that could call them like dogs to His feet, and wield them as the woodman in the woods wields his axe; and therefore those people whose God is the Lord do not need to fear these great monarchs; let them only trust and hope. That was the Gospel of Isaiah, and who does not see that it is merely an echo of what he heard the seraphim say: "The whole earth is full of His glory." For these two ideas about God, Isaiah has two names that recur all through his writings. To denote the holiness of God, he calls Him the "Holy One of Israel"; and to denote His omnipotence he calls Him the "Lord of hosts." III. THE EFFECT OF THE VISION ON HIMSELF. The revelation made to him that day about God, namely, that He is the Holy One, had an immediate and transforming effect on himself. My idea is that up to this time Isaiah was a man of the world, perhaps indulging in the vices which the young nobility of Jerusalem of that day were famous for; but now, in a moment, in the light of God, he sees the error of his ways and the putridity of his heart, and hence there bursts from him the exclamation: "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." You see he felt his sin chiefly on his lips—i.e., it was sins of speech he became conscious of. I should think that few will doubt that when he says, "I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips," he means to refer to a prevalence of profanity amongst his companions. Well, is it not the most natural explanation to believe that he had in his previous life given way to that sin, and now that is the sin that burns in on his conscience? But he learned at this point also something very precious about the holy God. As soon as he had confessed his sin, one of the seraphim, doubtless obeying a secret hint from Jehovah, flew to the altar, and, seizing the tongs, lifted from the altar a hot stone,

and laid it on the lips of the prophet—on the place where his sin was. The meaning was that his sin was burned away. And this became to Isaiah the cause of one of the greatest features of his work as a prophet in his subsequent life. There is no writer in the Bible that in language more tender and convincing speaks about God's willingness to forgive. And where did Isaiah learn that? He learnt it that day when the seraph laid the burning stone upon his own lips and burned his sin away. The other half of the revelation, the omnipotence of God, had its immediate practical effect also. But it was the Maker of Isaiah that was playing on his mind on this occasion for His own purpose. He was playing as an artist might play on an exquisite instrument, and in point of fact the mind of Isaiah was one of the most exquisite instruments that have ever existed in this world. There has hardly ever been a mind in this world, in its native structure, so perfect, and the Maker of it was now touching it to splendid issue. He was needing a messenger to that generation, and He had fixed on Isaiah to be His messenger, and He was making him ready. Isaiah had just realised that God was the Omnipotent, to whom all creatures and he himself belonged, and now that the relief and joy of forgiveness were thrilling through him, he realised in a still higher sense he belonged absolutely to the God who had pardoned. (*James Stalker, D.D.*) *Isaiah's vision in the temple* :—God often prepares His servants for special work by special grace. I. The views with which this vision furnishes us concerning GOD. 1. His sovereignty. 2. His holiness. 3. His mercy. II. The views with which this vision furnishes us concerning ANGELS. 1. Their humility. 2. Their obedience. 3. Their devotion. III. The views with which this vision furnishes us respecting MAN. 1. His sinful condition. 2. His gracious recovery. 3. His exalted calling. (*G. T. Perks, D.D.*) *Preparation for the Lord's work* :—I. SPECIAL PREPARATION IS NECESSARY FOR A SPECIAL WORK OF GRACE, WHETHER IT BE IN THE INDIVIDUAL HEART, OR IN THE CHURCH. II. THE BLESSED RESULTS OF THE WORK WILL BE LARGELY PROPORTIONED TO THE CHARACTER AND DEGREE OF THE PREPARATION. (*J. Sherwood.*) *The threefold vision* :—I. A VISION OF GOD. This can only come to us in our present state indirectly, parabolically, or as here, symbolically. It will include a conception of God's—1. Authority: "a throne high and lifted up." 2. Glory: "His train filled the temple." 3. Holiness: seraphic action and seraphic tones proclaimed Him as the Thrice Holy. II. A VISION OF SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE. Just as the prophet came to understand that there was a vast spiritual universe behind and beyond the material, and of which the material was but the hint and type, so must we. He saw in the seraphim a revelation of the existence of spiritual beings. III. A VISION OF SELF. There is a vision of his—1. Own individuality. The right use of the pronouns "I" and "me," is a lesson worth learning, he finds. 2. Relationship to others: "I dwell among a people," &c. 3. Sinfulness. To this—(1) The vision of God as holy; (2) The vision of spiritual beings as pure; and (3) The consciousness of his own condition, all contributed. 4. Possible purification. Here we have—(1) The supernatural means of this purification. "A seraph." (2) The connection of these means with sacrifice. "From off the altar," &c. 5. Life-mission. Here we note—(1) God's care for the world. It is He who cries "Who will go for Us?" (2) The godly man's response. It is for him eagerly, obediently, loyally to cry, "Here am I, send me." In Isaiah, in Paul, in every godly man, the vision of God leads to unselfish consecration to the good of others. (*U. R. Thomas, B.A.*) *Isaiah's vision* :—I. THE VISION WHICH THE PROPHET BEHELD (vers. 1-4). 1. Of the Divine supremacy. 2. Of the Divine attendants. Their name signifies "fiery ones." There is a remarkable analogy between what is said here, and what is stated of the mysterious beings in the Book of Revelation—"They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." The holiness of God is the great burden of the celestial songs. 3. The vision connects holiness with the Divine greatness—"The whole earth is full of His glory." All His creatures speak His praise. 4. A remarkable effect is stated to have been produced by this celebration of the Divine majesty and holiness—"The posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke." This may be intended to show the terrors of the Divine holiness, when it is kindled and brought into exercise by human transgression. Smoke is connected in Scripture with the tokens of rising wrath in the Almighty. (*Deut. xxix. 20; Psa. xviii. 7, 8; Rev. xv. 8.*) And the sequel informs us that He had determined to "waste the cities, and depopulate the habitations, until there should be a great forsaking

in the midst of the land." Observe from the vision here granted to the prophet, how necessary it is that those who go out on the work of the Lord should have a vision of His glory and greatness that they may have a proper sense of the work in which they are engaged. How can he speak of the glory of God, who has not seen it? Or how can he speak of the holiness of God, of the terrors of the Almighty, who has himself no true idea of either? II. THE EFFECT WHICH THIS VISION PRODUCED UPON THE PROPHET'S MIND. "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone," &c. The vision of the glory of God which he beheld, became the means of filling him with reverence, humility, and fear. The prophet was filled with an awful sense of his own depravity in two respects—1. As a man. Why are the lips mentioned? Not because the depravity is merely superficial, or resting on the surface; but because the depravity of the heart rends and rages without, and finds vent in the tongue. The vision of the Divine holiness is the best way of impressing our minds with a sense of our own defects and vileness. 2. As an intended messenger of God. He saw how unworthy he was to receive messages from God and go out to the people. If private Christians should feel their depravity and unworthiness, how much more should those who are ministers. He who has not been humbled under a sense of his own unworthiness before God has no right at all to go out to speak to others. III. THE SUSTAINING VISITATION WHICH WAS MADE IN CONNECTION WITH THE EFFECT PRODUCED. To prevent the prophet from sinking into despair, Divine consolation was given. Notice—1. The agent sent. "One of the seraphim." These are often employed in messages of goodness to man. Observe his celerity—he "flew." These celestial beings take an especial interest in the fulfilment of the designs of God. 2. The assurance communicated. "Thine iniquity is taken away," &c. 3. The manner in which the assurance is testified. "Then flew one," &c. Fire is symbolical of purity. The Spirit's influence is compared to fire. This transaction signifies—(1) The purity of the ministry. (2) The fervour of the ministry. IV. THE COMMISSION WHICH, IN CONNECTION WITH THIS VISITATION, WAS PROPOSED AND ACCEPTED. "Whom shall I send," &c. Observe—1. That the messenger who goes out, God sends by His own power. 2. Such messengers are fully devoted to God. They may indeed say "Corban" with respect to all they have. What an honourable work is this! It is also a work of responsibility. 3. The messenger of God must proceed without debate as to the object of his mission. (*J. Parsons.*) *Isaiah's vision* :—The scene is Messianic. Christ is in it. I. WHAT THE PROPHET SAW AND HEARD. There is no special stress to be laid on the term Lord, as used here. It is not the incommunicable name of essence, Jehovah; but the title of dominion, of mastership and ownership. The awe of His appearance is in the circumstances or surroundings. 1. He is upon a throne, high and lifted up. It is the throne of absolute sovereignty; of resistless, questionless, supremacy over all. 2. He is in the temple, where the throne is the mercy-seat, between the cherubim, over the ark of the Covenant, which is the symbol and seal of reconciliation and friendly communion. And He is there in such rich grace and glory that the whole temple is filled with the overflowing robe of His redeeming majesty. 3. Above, or upon, that ample overflowing train of so magnificent a raiment stood the seraphim. These are not, as I take it, angelic or superangelic spirits, but the Divine Spirit Himself, the Holy Ghost; appearing thus in the aspect and attitude of gracious ministry. In that attitude He multiplies Himself, as it were, according to the number and exigencies of the churches and the individuals to whom He has to minister. He takes up, moreover, the position of reverential waiting for His errand, and in an agency manifold, but yet one, readiness to fly to its execution. The cherubim are on almost all hands admitted to be representative emblems of redeemed creation, or of the redeemed Church on earth. And I cannot think it wrong to give to the seraphim in this, the only passage in which the name occurs, a somewhat corresponding character as representative emblems of the active heavenly agency in redemption. Nor is the plural form any objection. I find a similar mode of setting forth the multifarious and multifarious agency of the Spirit in the opening salutation of the Apocalypse—"the seven Spirits which are before His throne" (Rev. i. 4). It is the Holy Ghost, waiting to go forth from the Father, to apply and carry forward the threefold work of the Son, as Prophet, Priest, and King; and to do so as if He were becoming seven Spirits in accommodation to the seven churches; as if each church was to have Him as its own; yes, and each believer too. 4. With this great sight, voice and movement are joined. "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy,

holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." It is not necessarily the voice of the seraphim, though that is the ordinary view. I would rather take the words abstractly and indefinitely. There is an antiphonic cry or song. It is not said among whom. Of course, the readiest reference is to the seraphim. But the text does not require that; it is literally "this cried to this." And the attendance of an angelic choir, of all hosts of heaven, may be assumed. Assuredly Christ is here. He is here as revealing the Father. And He is here, not merely outwardly, in outward manifestation; but inwardly, in the deepest inward contact and converse of the soul with God. II. How THE PROPHET FELT (ver. 5). It is a thorough prostration. III. How THE PROPHET'S CASE IS MET. Lo! an altar; the altar of propitiation, on which lies the ever freshly bleeding victim. One of the seraphim—the Holy Spirit in one of His varied modes of operation—flies, as if in haste, with what is as good as the entire altar and its sacrifice to apply it all effectually. And the effect is as immediate as the touch. Nothing comes in between. There is no waiting, as for a medicine to work its cure; no bargaining, as if a price were to be paid; no process to be gone through; no preparation to be made. IV. THE SUBSEQUENT OFFER AND COMMAND (vers. 8, 9). Two things are noticeable here. I. The grace of God in allowing the prophet, thus exercised, to be a volunteer for service. The Lord might issue a peremptory command. But His servant has the unspeakable privilege of giving himself voluntarily to the Lord who willingly gave Himself for him. 2. The unreservedness of the prophet's volunteering. It is no half-hearted purpose conditional on circumstances; but the full, single-eyed heartiness of one loving much, because forgiven much, that breaks out in the frank, unqualified, unconditional self-enlistment and self-enrolment in the Lord's host, "Here am I, send me." Hence, accordingly, the crowning proof and pledge of his conversion, his cleansing, his revival, his commission. He now learns for the first time, after he has committed himself beyond the possibility of honourable retraction or recall, what is the errand darkly indicated by the heavenly voice, Whom shall I send? At first there may be secretly the feeling that any mission on which such a Master may send me must have in it the elements of intrinsic glory and assured triumph. But as it turns out it is far otherwise than that. The case is altogether the reverse. The mission is to be a mission of judgment. But what then? Does the freshly quickened volunteer withdraw his offer? or qualify it? or raise any question at all about it? No; he simply asks one question; a brief one; comprised in three words—"Lord, how long?" It is a question indicating nothing like reluctance or hesitation; no repenting of his offer; no drawing back. For himself he has nothing more to say. It is only in the interest of his people, and out of deepest sympathy with them, that the irrepressible cry of piety and of patriotism bursts from his lips—"Lord, how long? how long?" (R. S. Candlish, D.D.)

*Isaiah's vision*:—I. THE LIGHT IN WHICH THE SON OF GOD APPEARS TO THOSE WHO ENJOY AN INTIMATE UNION WITH HIM, AND A NEAR CONTEMPLATION OF HIM. He is represented—1. As seated on a lofty throne. 2. As attended by celestial spirits. 3. As receiving their homage and praise. (1) The matter of it. (2) The manner of it. II. THE EFFECT WHICH THIS INTIMATE UNION AND NEAR CONTEMPLATION WILL PRODUCE. 1. Humility. It is ignorance of God that is the parent of pride. True knowledge of Him tends to humility. Qualities are never seen so clearly as by contrast. The application of a straight rule marks the obliquity of a crooked line. 2. Purification. 3. Self-devotion. As eyes dazzled by the sun see not the glittering of drops of dew upon the earth, so the glory of worldly objects ceases to interest a soul that is taken up with the contemplation of God; while he will be led, by a regard to Him whose word has been the instrument of his purification and encouragement, to devote himself unreservedly to His will. (R. Brodie, M.A.)

*Isaiah's vision of God's glory*:—I. The first view of the Divine glory in the text is that of RULE AND DOMINION. The Lord is King—this is the first character under which to approach Him whenever we engage in worship. II. The second view of the majesty and glory of God is that in HIS NATURE AND PERFECTION HE IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE. III. The third view of the Divine Majesty is HOLINESS. IV. The fourth view is that of a PENITENT, ABASED MAN SINKING BEFORE THIS OVERPOWERING MANIFESTATION. V. The fifth view we have is that of THIS HUMBLE, SILENCED MAN OBTAINING MERCY. (J. Summerfield, M.A.)

*Isaiah's vision of Christ's glory*:—He who "sat upon the throne" Isaiah saw is none other than God Himself. But in his Gospel (xii. 41) John

tells us, "these things said Esaias, when he saw Christ's glory, and spake of Him." It is the throne of Jesus. Let us examine the manner in which they who actually saw the vision were affected by it, and this will best show us at once its consummate splendour and the sentiments it should awaken. I. It was seen by ANGELS AND THE "SPIRITS OF THE JUST MADE PERFECT," AND HOW WERE THESE AFFECTED? 1. They were astonished. 2. They were filled with joy. Because God's grace runs in the channel of justice. 3. They celebrate it with songs. 4. They were ready to advance the cause of redemption, for with their wings they were ready to fly. II. Let us understand from the experience of Isaiah HOW BELIEVERS ARE AFFECTED BY THE VISION OF OUR TEXT. 1. Isaiah was overwhelmed at the first. He sees in himself nothing but the dry stubble of guilt, and in God an insatiable fire, approaching to devour it. He sees no fitness for heaven, either in himself or those he loved. 2. But he is immediately revived. 3. Then called to active duty. III. We would now consider HOW THE WORLD IS AFFECTED BY THE VISION THAT ISALAH SAW. Isaiah preaches the Gospel, but his message is rejected. So now. (*J. J. Bonar.*) *The enthroned Lord*:—The Lord is always upon a throne, even when He is nailed to the Cross; this Lord and His throne are inseparable. There are dignitaries that have to study how to keep their thrones; but the Lord and His throne are one. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Isaiah's vision of God*:—I. THE OCCASION OF THE VISION. The emptied throne is the occasion for the manifestation of the true King. God's purpose in all His withdrawals is the same as His purpose in all His gifts, that we may be led to see Him more clearly as the one foundation of all things, the anchor of our lives and the hope and stay of our hearts. The text not only teaches us the purpose of all withdrawals, but comes to us heavy-freighted with the blessed thought that God is able to fill every place that He empties. This King of Judah was followed by another, a decent enough young man in his way, who on the whole went straight and did God's will. But that was no comfort to the prophet's heart. It did not avail to show him a Jotham behind an Uzziah. What he needed, and what you and I need, to fill the empty places in our hearts and lives, is the vision that flamed upon his inward eye; and the conviction that the Lord, the King Himself, had come when the earthly shadow passed away. II. THE CONTENTS OF THE VISION. The temple here is, of course, not the mere earthly house, but that higher house of the Lord, of which the temple of earth is a shadow. Isaiah's vision was none the less objective, none the less distinguishable from an imagination of his own, none the less manifestly and marvellously a revelation from God, because if we had been there we should have seen nothing, any more than the Sanhedrim shared in the vision of the opened heavens which gladdened Stephen's dying eyes. Mark, how there is no word of description here of what the prophet saw in the centre of the light. But if we listen to the description given to us, there are two great thoughts in it. "I saw the Lord sitting on the throne, high and lifted up"—the infinite exaltation of that Divine nature which separates Him from all the lowness of creatures, and makes Him the blessed and incomprehensible infinite foundation of good and of blessedness and the source of life. Correspondent and parallel to this thought of the sovereign exaltation is the song that is put into the mouth of the seraphim. The same idea is expressed by "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts," as is expressed by "high and lifted up." The holiness of God means the infinite separation of the infinite nature from the finite creature; and that separation is manifest both in the incomprehensible elevation of His being and in the perfect purity of His nature. But whilst thus a great gulf is fixed between us and Him, and we, like the seraphs, have to veil our faces that we see not, and our feet that we be not seen, there is another side to the thought, "His skirts filled the temple," and that is paralleled with the other number of the seraphs' song, "the whole earth is full of His glory." For the glory of God is the manifestation of His holiness. And just as the trailing skirts of that great robe spread over the whole floor of the temple, so through the whole earth go flashing the manifold manifestations of His glory. These twin thoughts, never to be separated from each other, of the infinite separation and the immeasurable self-communication of our Father-God, are all as true for us to-day as they ever were. That vision is as possible to us as it was to Isaiah. It was no prerogative of the prophet's office. Our eyes too, if we will, may behold the King in His beauty. It is Christ that explains to us by His Incarnation how it ever came to pass that to man's inward or outward eyes there was granted a manifestation of Deity in the form of humanity as here; and His

permanent revelation of God to us puts us more than on a level with any of those of old to whom were granted the foreshadowings of that historical fact of God manifest in the flesh. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." III. THE EFFECTS OF SUCH A VISION ON THE LIFE. A man that sees God will know his own impurity. Where there is a sense of sin roused by the sight of God there will come the fiery coal from the altar that purifies; and where there is a sense of sin, and the taking away of it, by the sacrifice not brought by the prophet, but provided for the prophet by God, there will follow the glad surrender of self for all service, and any mission. "Here am I, send me." So this vision of God is the foundation of all nobleness of life. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Isaiah a typical prophet*.—This is not a story of individual experience only. Isaiah was a typical prophet with special duties, and, consequently, with special qualifications for their right discharge. But in many respects he is also representative of the faithful preacher of the Gospel and worker for Christ. In its inspirations, its aims and motives, its responsibilities and difficulties, the prophet's office was like that of Christ's servant everywhere, and from this record we may gather lessons of universal application. 1. The prophet must be a man whose soul is possessed with God, to whom God is a reality, not an abstraction, a living and present Friend, not a distant and unknown Ruler. There must be visions of God in the glory of His holiness as well as in the tenderness of His condescension, or there will be neither desire nor capacity to testify of Him. It is the pure in heart who thus see God, and even as Isaiah needed that the live coal from the altar should touch his lips and he should be cleansed from all iniquity, so must Christ's messenger know for himself the blessedness of that salvation which he preaches to others. This does not supersede the necessity for intellectual qualifications for the work. Impulse, however pure and noble, cannot fit a man for even the humblest work, much less for the noblest, the most difficult, the most responsible of all. God does lay His hands upon some whom the wisdom of this world would pronounce incompetent for the work. As in the case of Bunyan, the working of His grace in the heart may develop gifts of fancy or of eloquence which might else have lain dormant. 2. Of the special gift of inspiration which Isaiah enjoyed suffice it to say that if that is to be reduced to a "genius for righteousness" which he shared in common with the rest of the Jewish race, the unique character and supreme authority of the Bible are gone. Define inspiration how men will, it must, at all events, imply that God revealed His will to these prophets and seers by whom the Sacred Volume was penned, as He did not to the great poets and writers of the world, or this Book has no distinctive value. 3. The prophet must be a consecrated servant—one who lives not to do his own pleasure, but to glorify God. (*J. G. Rogers, B.A.*) *The making of a prophet*.—1. The experience that made Isaiah a prophet took the form of a vision. It happened in a period of distressing perplexity and gloom. Wrestling passionately with the darkness, craving wistfully for light, the yearning to see God in the man's soul became so intense and sensitive, that the great Heart in heaven answered the longing of the heart on earth, and aspiration leapt into realisation, and faith flashed into vision. That sight of God—the living, holy, loving God—made Isaiah a prophet. Preachers and teachers of to-day! if we are to be prophets, we need just such a sight of God. 2. The vision of God made Isaiah a prophet; but the immediate result was something different. The first effect of contact with God was to produce in his soul an intolerable sense of sin. Had Isaiah been a Pharisee, he would have seized the opportunity of his sudden vicinity to the Almighty to direct the Divine attention to his virtues and superiority over other men. Had he been one of those philosophers in whom the heart has been overlaid by the intellect, he would have calmly proceeded to make observations of the Divine for a new theory of the absolute and unconditioned, in sublime insensibility to the deepest problem of existence, the awful antithesis of human sin and of Divine holiness. Because Isaiah was a good man, his new proximity to God woke within him a crushing horror of defilement and undoneness. And it was so, precisely because he had never been so near to God before, and had never felt himself of so much importance. Away down here, sinning among his fellow-men, the blots and blemishes of his soul seemed of little moment. But up there, in the stainless light of heaven, with God's holy eyes resting on him, every spot of sin within him grew hot and horrible, every defiling stain an insult and a suffering inflicted on the sensitive holiness of God. These two things are linked together, and no man can divorce them—the dignity of humanity and the damnableness

of sin. 3. The ethical process by which, in the imagery of the vision, Isaiah's sense of sinfulness came home to him, is finely natural and simple. It was at his lips that the consciousness of his impurity caught him. "I am a man of unclean lips." That, judged by our formulas and standards, might seem a somewhat superficial conviction of sin. We should have expected him to speak of his unclean heart, or the total corruption of his whole nature. But actual conviction of sin is very regardless of our theories, and is as diverse in its manifestations as are the characters and records of men. Sin finds out one man in one place, and another in a quite different spot, and perhaps the experience is most real when it is least theological. 4. Isaiah, in the presence of God, felt within him the pang of that death, which must be the end of unpardoned sin in contact with the Divine holiness. He felt himself as good as dead, yet never in all his life had he so longed to live as now, in sight of God and heaven and holiness. He did not ask to escape. He was too overwhelmed to pray or hope. But to God's heart that cry of despair was an infinitely persuasive prayer for mercy. Pagan sages and Christian saints alike unite in proclaiming the overmastering strength of sin. 5. Is there, then, no possibility of recovery? no way of cleansing? One there is, and one alone. Aye, if only God so loves our sin-stained race as that His stainless purity enters really into our humanity, and wrestles with our impurity in a contact that must be suffering to the Divine holiness, and is sin-cleansing to us—that were salvation surely; that were redemption. But is it a reality? Jesus Christ has lived, and died, and lives again, and we know that His Holy Spirit dwells in us and in our world. That, and that alone, is salvation; not any theories nor any rites, but God's Holy Spirit given unto us. 6. It was at Isaiah's lips that the sense of sin had stung him, and it was there that he received the cleansing. He, too, might now join in heaven's praise and service; no more an alien, but a member of the celestial choir and a servant of the King. That act of Divine mercy had transformed him. 7. He was a new creature, and instantly the change appeared. The voice of God sounds through the temple, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" And the first of all heaven's hosts to offer is Isaiah. A moment before, he had shrunk back, crushed and despairing, from God's presence, feeling as if the Divine gaze were death to him. Now he springs forward, invokes God's attention on himself, and before all heaven's tried and trusty messengers proposes himself as God's ambassador. Was it presumption? was it self-assertion? I think, if ever Isaiah was not thinking of himself at all, and was conscious only of God and goodness and gratitude, it was then, when his heart was running over with wonder, love, and praise for God's unspeakable mercy to him. It was not presumption; it was a true and beautiful instinct that made him yearn with resistless longing to do something for that God who had shown such grace to him. (*Prof. W. G. Elmstie, D.D.*)

*Christian missions*.—I. WHAT ISAIAH SAW. II. WHAT HE SAID. "Woe," &c. III. WHAT HE FELT. The assurance of pardon. IV. WHAT HE HEARD. The pardoned sinner is all ear, all eye. "I heard the voice of the Lord," &c. V. WHAT HE DID. He made consecration. (*Richard Knill.*)

*Isaiah's vision*.—1. Inasmuch as sitting upon a throne implies a human form, we are inclined to agree with those expositors who speak of Isaiah's vision as a vision of Jehovah-Jesus. 2. The vision rebukes those who entertain the notion that, so far as Divine superintendence is concerned, the universe is in a state of orphanage. 3. The vision likewise rebukes those who picture God as absorbed in the contemplation of His own excellence, and as existing in solitary grandeur. God is of a social nature. Like earthly kings He has a court, as much superior to theirs as He is Himself above them. 3. Isaiah's vision further teaches us, that the creatures referred to, and represented by the seraphim, possess such a knowledge of God, are in such sympathy with Him, and have such confidence in Him, that their lives are spent in an element of worship. 4. The vision was designed to qualify Isaiah for the fulfilment of his course as one of the prophets of Judah; and nobly it answered its purpose. (*G. Cron, M.A.*)

*Isaiah's vision* (for Trinity Sunday).—We have here the proper inauguration of the great evangelical prophet to his future work; and one which, in its essential features, resembles very closely the inauguration which other eminent servants of God, alike under the Old Covenant and under the New, obtained;—Moses (Exod. iii. 6); Jeremiah (Jer. i. 6-9); Paul; Joshua (Josh. i. 1); Gideon (Judg. vi. 12-24); Ezekiel (Ezek. i. 3); Peter (Luke v. 4-10). God's messengers go not until they are sent, and presume not to deliver a message which they have

not received directly from the Sender. 1. And, first, he gives the date of the vision. What meaning may there sometimes be in a thing which seems so simple as a date! What significance, what solemnity may it sometimes have, as surely it has here. How simply and yet how grandly are earth and heaven here brought together, and the fleeting phantoms of one set over against the abiding realities of the other. 2. But if God's throne is in heaven, the skirts of His glory reach even to the earth: "His train filled the temple." 3. The glimpse afforded here to the Church of the elder dispensation of that great crowning mystery which the Church of the newer dispensation throughout all the world is celebrating to-day. In this Trisagion we have, it is true, no more than a glimpse of the mystery; even as in the Old Testament more is nowhere vouchsafed. More, in all likelihood, the Church could not then, nor until it had been thoroughly educated into a confession of the unity of the Godhead, with safety have received; while yet it was a precious confirmation of the faith, when, in a later day, this mystery was fully made known, to discover that the rudiments of it had been laid long before in Scripture. 4. But what is the first impression which this glorious vision makes upon the prophet? His first cry is not of exultation and delight, but rather of consternation and dismay. "Woe is me," &c. Even the heathen, as more than one legend in their mythology declares, could apprehend something of this truth. If Jupiter comes to Semele arrayed in the glories of deity, she perishes, consumed to ashes in a brightness which is more than mortality can bear. So, too, it must have fared with Moses, if to him, still clothed in flesh and blood, that over-bold request of his, "Show me Thy glory," had been conceded; if it had not been answered to him, "Thou canst not see My face; for there shall no man see Me and live." "We shall perish, for we have seen the Lord of hosts," was the ever-recurring cry of those saints of old; and even such is the voice of the prophet here. 5. Yet that moment with all its dreadfulness is a passage, in some sense the only passage, into a true life. And such the prophet found it. Observe the manner in which sin, the guilt of sin, is here, as evermore in Holy Scripture, spoken of as taken away by a free act of God, an act of His in which man is passive; in which he has, so to speak, to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord; an act to which he can contribute nothing, save indeed only that Divinely awakened hunger of the soul after the benefit which we call faith. 6. Behold in the prophet the fruit of iniquity taken away, and sin purged. Behold the joyful readiness with which he now offers himself for the service of his God. (*Abp. Trench.*) *The triune Name a call, a message, a chastening*:—The contemplation of the majesty of God is the source of the largest hope for all His creatures. For beings pure and holy that vision is the call to unfaltering adoration and limitless faith; for men "of unclean lips"—sin-stained, and labouring in a sin-stained world—it is the reassuring call to the prophet's work. I. THE VISION OF GOD THE CALL OF THE PROPHET. 1. Nowhere is the thought presented to us in the Bible with more moving force than in this record of Isaiah's mission. The very mark of time by which the history is introduced has a pathetic significance. It places together in sharp contrast the hasty presumption of man and the unchanging love of God. The king died an outcast and a leper because he had ventured to take to himself the function of a priest in the house of God; and in close connection with that tragic catastrophe an access to God, far closer than that which the successful monarch had prematurely claimed, was foreshown to the prophet in a heavenly figure. Isaiah, a layman, was, it appears, in the heavenly court, and he saw in a trance the way into the holiest place laid open. The veils were removed from sanctuary and shrine, and he beheld more than met the eyes of the high priest, the one representative of the people, on the one day on which he was admitted, year by year, to the dark chamber which shrouded the Divine presence. For an eternal moment Isaiah's senses were unsealed. He saw that which is and not that which appears. For him the symbol of God dwelling in light unapproachable, was transformed into a personal presence; the chequered scene of human labour and worship was filled with the train of God; the marvels of human skill were instinct with the life of God. The spot which God had chosen was disclosed to his gaze as the centre of the Divine revelation; but, at the same time, he was taught to acknowledge that the Divine presence is not limited by any bounds, or excluded by any blindness, when he heard from the lips of angels that the fulness of the whole earth is His glory. Now, when we recall what Judaism was at the time—local, rigid, exclusive—we can at once understand that such a revelation taken into the soul was for Isaiah an illumina-



tion of the world. He could see all creation in its true nature through the light of God. So to have looked upon it was to have gained that which the seer, cleansed by the sacred fire, was constrained to declare. Humbled, and purified in his humiliation, he could have but one answer when the voice of the Lord required a messenger: "Here am I; send me." 2. Isaiah's vision and call are for us also, and they await from us a like response. When he looked upon that august sight, he saw Christ's glory; he saw in figures and far off that which we have been allowed to contemplate more nearly and with the power of closer apprehension. He saw in transitory shadows that which we have received in a historic Presence. By the Incarnation God has entered, and empowered us to feel that He has entered, into fellowship with humanity and men. As often as that truth rises before our eyes, all heaven is indeed rent open, and all earth is displayed as God made it. For us, then, the vision and the call of Isaiah find a fuller form, a more sovereign voice in the Gospel than the Jewish prophet could know. 3. What does "the mystery," the revelation "of God, even Christ" (Col. ii. 2), mean, the mystery of which we are ministers and prophets, the mystery which brings the eternal within the forms of time, the mystery which shows to us absolute love made visible in the Incarnate Word? It means that the outward, the transitory, is a veil woven by the necessities of our weakness, which half hides and half reveals the realities with which it corresponds; that the changing forms in which spiritual aspirations are clothed from generation to generation and from life to life, are illuminated, quickened, harmonised in one supreme fact; that beyond the temples in which it is our blessing to worship, and beyond the phrases which it is our joy to affirm, there is an infinite glory which can have no local circumscription, and an infinite Truth which cannot be grasped by any human thought; that man, bruised and burdened by sorrows and sins, was made for God, and that through His holy love he shall not fail of his destiny; that all creation is an expression of God's thought of wisdom brought within the reach of human intelligence; that God's Spirit sent in His Son's name will interpret little by little, as we can read the lesson, all things as contributory to His praise; that we also, compassed with infirmities and burdened with sins, may take up the song of the redeemed creation, the song of the unfallen angels, and say, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the fulness of the earth is His glory." It means this, and more than this. II. The vision of God THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHET. It is this vision which the prophet has to proclaim and to interpret to his fellow-men, not as an intellectual theory, but as an inspiration of life. The prophet's teaching must be the translation of his experience. The Gospel of Christ Incarnate, the Gospel of the Holy Trinity in the terms of human life, covers every imaginable part of life to the end of time, and is new now as it has been new in all the past; as it will be new, new in its power and in its meaning, while the world lasts. True it is that such a vision of God—Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier—entering into fellowship with the beings whom He has made, "gathering up all things to Himself," "making peace through the blood of the Cross," shows life to us, as Isaiah saw it, in a most solemn aspect: that it must fill us, as it filled Isaiah, with the sense of our immeasurable unworthiness in the face of Christ's majesty and Christ's love: that it must touch us also with something of a cleansing power. And because it is so we can take heart again. For such emotion, such purification of soul, is the beginning of abiding strength. III. The vision of God THE CHASTENING OF THE PROPHET. In the fulfilment of our prophetic work we need more than we know the abasing and elevating influences which the vision of Isaiah and the thoughts which it suggests are fitted to create or deepen. In the stress of restless occupation we are tempted to leave too much out of sight the inevitable mysteries of life. We deal lightly with the greatest questions. We are peremptory in defining details of dogma beyond the teaching of Scripture. We are familiar beyond apostolic precedent in our approaches to God. We fashion heavenly things after the fashion of earth. In all these respects, then, for our strengthening and for our purifying, we must seek for ourselves and strive to spread about us the sense of the awfulness of being, as those who have seen God at Bethlehem, Calvary, Olivet, and on the throne encircled by a rainbow as an emerald: the sense, vague and imperfect at the best, of the illimitable range of the courses and issues of action; the sense of the untold vastness of that life which we are bold to measure by our feeble powers; the sense of the majesty of Him before whom the angels veil their faces. If we are cast down by the meannesses, the sorrows, the sins of the world, it is because we dwell on some little part of which

we see little ; but let the thought of God in Christ come in, and we can rest in that holy splendour. At the same time let us not dare to confine at our will the action of the light. It is our own irreparable loss if in our conceptions of doctrine we gain clearness of definition by following out the human conditions of apprehending the Divine, and forget that every outline is the expression in terms of a lower order of that which is many-sided ; if in our methods of devotion we single out the human nature of the Lord, or rather the manifestation of His unascended manhood, as the object of our thoughts, and forget that He leads us to the Father ; if we rest in things visible and do not rather strive to read ever more clearly the spiritual lessons to which they point ; if we concentrate our worship in isolated rites and fail to bear to the world of daily thought and action the teaching and the promises of sacraments. (*B. F. Westcott, D.D.*) *Uzziah and Isaiah : George III. and John Wesley* :—The year in which King Uzziah died must have appeared a very noteworthy one to the Jewish contemporaries of Isaiah, most of whom, in all probability, regarded the death of one king and the accession of another as the most important events which occurred in it. Yet to us, who know that this was the year in which Isaiah was called to the prophetic office, these occurrences shrink into insignificance when compared with the last-named fact, although that would take place without attracting the notice of any one besides the prophet himself. . . . In the year 1738, on May 24th, the prince was born who was afterwards known as George III. The event would soon be proclaimed all through England. On the evening of the same day, in a quiet meeting in Aldersgate Street, London, another event took place, known only to one man : John Wesley “believed to the saving of the soul,” and obtained assurance of sins forgiven. In a few years George III. will become to all but a few a name, and nothing more ; but John Wesley will become more illustrious, and the influence of his work will be more widely felt, as the ages roll on. (*B. Hellier.*) *The elevating presence of God* :—How well I remember when first I visited Switzerland that my bedroom window, perched in Les Avants, looked across the blue of the Lake of Geneva towards that noble line of snow-capped mountains that border its southern shore. It seemed for the brief fortnight that I lived there as though the spell of that mighty vision held me enthralled. I slept and awoke and wrote and conversed as one on whom a new dignity had fallen. Could I ever be mean or selfish in the presence of that mystery of purity and solemnity ? This and much more shall be the temper of the soul which by the grace of the Holy Spirit has learnt habitually to recognise and cultivate the presence of God as revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

Vers. 2, 3. *Above it stood the seraphims.*—*The seraphim* :—The first question that arises is, Who, or what were the seraphim ? They belong to this vision only, and must stand in vital relation to the condition and circumstances of the seer at the time. It is to be noted, further, that the time was that of the greatest crisis in the life of the greatest prophet of the ancient world. It was the time when he was struggling through the portals of spiritual agony into the temple of prophecy. Such visions have no room for superfluous adornment. If ever a picture had a meaning that is worth knowing, it is surely Isaiah's picture of the seraphim. In the whole vision, as I have said, there is no sign of drapery. It throbs in all its parts with the struggles and revelations and hopes of the prophet's heart. What, then, was that crisis in the prophet's life in the light of which the vision will become interpreted ? It is pregnantly indicated in the first verse of this chapter—“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord high and lifted up.” These words indicate the battle-ground of Isaiah's soul. Around this King Uzziah, who was now dead, unusual hopes had gathered. In him many deemed that the Saviour of Israel had at length appeared. He feared God, and waxed mighty in his kingdom. On every hand he extended the realm of Judah, and made the foemen of God's people lick the dust. But when Uzziah waxed mighty, he revealed that he was but flesh. He became arrogant, as though the strength and prowess of his own right hand had accomplished all this. Then, forgetting the fear of the Lord, he presumed to carry the sacred censor into the sanctuary, and to usurp presumptuously the holy functions of God's anointed priesthood. Then the mighty hand of Jehovah that had upheld him so long struck him, and he fell. And with his fall a thousand hopes were shattered, and a nation's faith fell headlong to the ground. This was a critical moment for the young Isaiah. Now his faith must either die or be re-born with a new

and more glorious birth. Now it shall be seen whether everything falls for him with the fall of the great Uzziah. The vision is the answer. When Uzziah died, the young prophet saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up. The collapse of the Jewish monarch revealed the King Eternal. Now, beyond Uzziah's shattered throne, the young seer beholds the throne of God towering high in eternal majesty and splendour. The part that the seraphim play in this new consciousness is not far to seek. They are obviously an express contradiction of the attitude of Israel as typified and exemplified in the self-confident and presumptuous king. They represent the attitude which Israel ought to learn in contradiction of the attitude in which it was now found. They represent the prophet's own new ideal. Henceforth he will strive to make the attitude and the message of the seraphim his own. So the seraphim have probably no actual existence as celestial beings. They are here the symbol of a human ideal, wrought out of the struggling heart of a prophet. From the moment that his lips are touched with the glowing stone from the altar, Isaiah also becomes one of the seraphim. So the picture of the seraphim still remains as an ideal, not only for the ministers of the Word of God, but also for the whole Church of Jesus Christ. Let us, therefore, consider their attitude and their message. I. In relation to THE SIGNIFICATION OF THE SERAPHIM, it seems to me that the name by which the prophet designates them is very significant. These seraphim are simply the "burning" ones. They stand around (not above) the throne, and partake of its burning glory. In this participation in the fires of God the seer sees the starting-point of the new way that he is about to mark for himself and the nation of Israel and the peoples of the earth. He, too, will learn to stand in the presence of the glory of God until every fibre of his life is aflame with the same glory. He will learn to be a seraph, one of God's fiery ministers, one of His glorious ones. For such the true prophet must be. "He was a burning and a shining light," said our Saviour concerning John the Baptist. It is not enough to be reflectors of a higher light; we must become burners, and have a veritable fire of our own. There is a vaunted morality which is only a cold reflection of the life of Christ, in which the glory of the Christ is made nothing more than a chiselled model. The Christian man should be all on fire, yea, on fire to his very finger-tips. Such must be our response to the glory of God's throne. We must receive it into our life until we catch fire, and respond to Heaven with a glory like unto its own. Note, in the next place, the perfect reverence which is here pictured. "Each had six wings. With twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet." Of six wings, four are utilised for the purpose of doing reverence to the majesty of the eternal God. Here lies the central and most emphatic rebuke of the spirit of the Jewish people. Uzziah had no doubt rightly represented the prevailing spirit of the people when he dared presumptuously to invade the sacred offices of the temple of the Lord. Prosperity had made them arrogant, and arrogance had made them irreverent. In their own growing splendour they forget to do due homage to the glory of the Lord. The bulking throne of Uzziah had hidden the throne of Jehovah from view. The glory that made the seraphim veil their faces was not felt by the heart of the people. So as Isaiah gazes upon the veiled faces of the seraphim he passes from what is to what ought to be. Reverence is the mark of those that stand in the highest place, and henceforth will take a primary position in the life of Isaiah. In reverence power begins. The vision of the seraphim with veiled faces and feet is sorely needed again in our day. There are those that make their boast in desecrating the sacred things of life, and in defiling the vessels of God's temple. Yet you may be assured that all irreverence is essentially impotence. It will have its little day of loud presumption, and then the Spirit of the Lord shall blow upon it, and it shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take it away as stubble. The covering of the feet as well as the face is a striking picture. It is difficult to carry the spirit of reverence into the smaller, minuter, and obscurer details of life. There are many that remember to cover the face before God, yet that forget to cover the feet. We are on our guard on great occasions and in great things. In the sanctuary, with its atmosphere of worship, we bend our hearts into reverent homage, but we forget that the cottage and the villa, the workshop and the office, are also holy ground. There we often walk unveiled. And the world sees us uncovered, and thinks there is no God. The Christian Supper of Communion we treat as holy, but the daily meal is reduced to commonplace. The seraphim teach us also self-effacement. The prophet sees the glory that

they send forth, and hears the message that they utter in never-ceasing music, but the seraphim themselves are hidden from view, covered from head to foot with their own wings. They sing the message and flash the glory, but they completely efface themselves. Here again the attitude of the Jewish people as manifested in their king is challenged and contradicted. Uzziah, instead of effacing himself before God, had thrust himself ostentatiously forward, as though his own wonderful presence were necessary to bring glory to the land. If he had learnt to efface himself, he might have done great things for God and His people. But he gave glory to himself, and the Lord smote him. Self-effacement is no easy task, but is one of the fundamental lessons that must be learnt by the prophet of the Lord. There is no sight more contemptible on earth than that of a man parading his own marvellous personality when he has the message of the Lord to proclaim. To reverence and self-effacement the seraphim add readiness for service. "With twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly." "What a mistake!" says Mr. Modern Shallowbrain. "These seraphim are provided with six wings, yet they waste two pairs of them in reverence, and reserve only one pair for service. If they would only give up that other-world sort of thing which is called worship and reverence, and use all their six wings for service, what an increase of good there would be accomplished on the earth." So some simpletons talk, and act upon their own shallow creed, and for awhile you see nothing but the dust of their wings, as though they were turning the world upside down. Then they disappear, wings and all, and for all their labour nothing but a cloud of dust remains. And even that God's whirlwind soon sweeps away. With the seraphim is the secret of power. The wings that fly have the strength of ten, because face and feet are veiled by the others. Out of unceasing worship spring forth the currents of power and the energies of service. Four things go together in the life of the seraphim, and they must be found in every good and strong life—participation in God's burning glory, profound reverence, self-effacement, and readiness for service. To divide them is disaster. II. The message of the seraphim is important, because it is clearly a MESSAGE FOR ISAIAH'S OWN HEART, the message that is henceforth to be the keynote of his own teaching. The strain is twofold. The first part is, "Holy, holy, holy, Jehovah of hosts." Some would have us eschew all metaphysical conceptions of God, yet Isaiah must needs begin with one, and a very profound one too. If there is to be any conception of God at all, it must be metaphysical. That the standpoint we adopt should be an ethical one does not in the least lessen its metaphysical character. The problem of the Infinite is essentially a metaphysical one, and the question that remains is simply one of little or much. Shall our conception of God be little or great, clear or obscure, definite or indefinite, true or confused? These are the alternatives. We cannot move a step in the sphere of true religion without some conception of God, and the fuller and richer that conception is, the nobler and stronger will be our religious and ethical life. Isaiah, like every true prophet, begins, not with the service of man, but with the nature of God. The source of all inspiration for him lies in the profound conception that the heart of the Infinite and Eternal is holiness, and such a conception has vast unfoldings. The Old Testament "holy" is a very beautiful term. George Adam Smith appears to say that its primary meaning as applied to God is simply "sublimity." If he will change that into "moral sublimity," I agree with him. But if not, I must dissent. I do not believe that the word, whatever its origin, is ever applied to God in the Old Testament except with a moral signification. The "high" place and the "holy" place do not mean precisely the same thing. "Jehovah of hosts" is a mark of sublimity. But the thrice "holy" involves an ethical view of the nature of God. But there is another implication in "holiness," which the careful student of the Old Testament cannot fail to observe, namely, that of self-communication. That which seems at first an impassable barrier reveals itself as a yearning heart and stretched-out hands. "Be ye holy, for I am holy," is a golden chain of link within link. Such a conception of God leads to the inspired and inspiring response, "The whole earth is full of His glory." Or, to put the song of the seraphim more accurately, "The fulness of the whole earth is His glory." These words mean one of two things, and perhaps they mean both. They mean that everything that is of any value on the earth is a ray from God's glory. All the fulness of the earth, everything of beauty and of joy, all the products of thought and organisation and energy and life, all the love of human hearts, and all the achievements of

the human will, everything, in fine, that is lovely and of good report, belong to Him whose glory fills the heavens, are flaming sparks from the anvil of His brightness. Akin to this, though not identical, is the other signification. The words may mean that the earth can find its fulness only in and through the glory of God. This earth wants filling, for there is now in it many a gaping void; and nothing but the glory of God can fill it. We have now a larger term for the glory of the Lord than Isaiah had, and so can give his words a higher reading. For what is the highest reading of God's glory? Here it is: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father." Only in Him can the world receive its power, and the desert places of the earth blossom as the rose. In Him only all fulness dwells. (*J. Thomas, M.A.*) *The worship of the seraphim*:—Three times over in Holy Scripture is heaven so opened to us, and the blessed spirits shown to us adoring; in this sixth chapter of Isaiah, in the first of Ezekiel, and in the fourth of the Revelation. In each passage the vision of Godhead occurs as an introduction to the prophecy that follows. It forms the prophet's warrant and commission for his work. It is his strength and preparation for entering on his ministry. The lesson is of universal application. It is when we have shut ourselves up with God; when we have cast down our sins before His throne; when we have called up the vision of His glory—from such a trance of devotion we go out into the world, indifferent to the opinions of mankind; raised above the temptations of the flesh; with grace and power to control the little tempers that arise, and to hold them in submission to our work. 1. Learn, first, to veil our eyes when we approach the glory of the Lord. We must put off curious thoughts at prayer; we are not come to inquire, but to adore, and must strive to be absorbed in the sense of the Presence. Nay, in our studies, too, of the mysteries of religion, the nature of sin, the necessity of atonement, the punishment of eternity, or the Trinity in unity—here often must we restrain our curiosity, limit our speculations. A ray or two of light is all our capacities can receive; the full naked orb of truth is often more than we can bear. 2. Our weakness will teach us to veil our eyes, and our sins to veil our bodies and our feet. 3. "With twain they did fly." They exhibit to us the due union of meditative and active piety. Devotion in the temple without labour in the vineyard is not the worship of angels and is not to be the religion of men. While, on the other hand, to engage in the Church's work without a habit of earnest prayer, is to sink one's self into a toiling slave and run the danger of becoming a self-conceited religious busybody. 4. The seraphim are our pattern for common praise and prayer. They have suggested the antiphonal chanting of the Church, voice against voice, alternately. 5. Observe, too, that holiness is the attribute upon which they dwell, not the goodness or the greatness, but the holiness of the Lord whom they adore. There are pseudo-philanthropists who prefer to dwell entirely upon the goodness of the Lord, and would run up all His nature into benevolence. There are natural philosophers, again, who are lost in contemplation of the stupendous forces of nature and the vastness of the universe, and from them alone they draw their conceptions of the greatness of the Godhead. The Architect of all things, the Almighty, the Supreme, these are the names they know Him by and talk mostly of worshipping their Maker. But it is not Great, great, great, nor Good, good, good which is the angels' song, but Holy, holy, holy. It is in the character of a moral Governor and a Judge that we are to contemplate our God. 6. The earth is full of the glory of the Lord, but the temple shakes at the proclamation of His name. The living temples are penetrated with emotion and with awe before the glory of the Most High and the sense of His presence. 7. The prophet is himself moved and disturbed before the glory of God's presence, and under the sense of his own unworthiness. Here is the test of a genuine revelation from above. It dazzles not with vanity; it humbles to the dust under the burden of unmeetness for so great a favour from the Lord. Isaiah mentions his own sin first, and then the sin of his people. Let us always accuse ourselves the first. 8. But the sin that is thus deeply felt is thoroughly cured. The light that discovers to us our impurities is a sacred fire as well to burn them out. (*C. F. Secretan.*) *Who are the Seraphim?*—Canon Cheyne's answer in the "Polychrome Bible" is almost as grotesque as it is uncanny,—"mythical beings, adopted instinctively by Isaiah from the folk-lore of Judah"! On no other ground, apparently, than a disputed etymology, he sees in them only "mythical," treasure-guarding, serpent-like spirits, erect, gigantic, connected in some inexplicable way with the

snake worship of Egypt! Wiser, more consonant with the facts as related by the seer himself, and in stricter accord with the genius of the Hebrew religion and temple service, is the suggestion of the late Professor Maurice, that they represent, not slimy, treasure-loving, serpentine worldliness, but "those Divine energies and affections of which the zeal, devotion, and sympathy of man are counterparts." This is the only place in the Bible where they are mentioned. Their Hebrew name stands for burning radiancy, and in its adjective form may apply to "fiery" serpents, or "glowing" angelic appearances, or kinsmen "burning" dead bodies, or iconoclastic kings who destroy objects of idolatry by "fire." Though the visual shapes of these heavenly powers were symbolical, they clearly are not merely symbols, but "living intelligent creatures, who perform acts of unceasing worship," and were actual agencies in conveying the prophetic inspiration to the receptive soul of the prophet. (*F. Sessions.*) *The service of the seraphim, contemplative and active*:—That perfect prayer, which our Lord bequeathed to His disciples, sets forth to us angelic service as a model which we shall do well in our services to copy. Not that the services we are called upon to render are the same with those assigned to angels. No, the sphere in which they live is heaven; ours for the present is the earth; and each of these spheres has its distinct and peculiar duties appropriate to the nature and faculties of its occupants. I. THE TWOFOLD LIFE OF A SERVANT OF GOD, WHETHER HUMAN OR ANGELIC, IS HERE VERY BEAUTIFULLY EXHIBITED TO US. The seraphim are represented as veiling their faces and feet with their wings while they stand in adoration before the throne of God. But though engaged in ceaselessly adoring the Divine perfections, they lead not a life of barren contemplation. The words "with twain he did fly" intimate to us that they are also engaged in the active execution of those errands with which God has charged them. 1. Consider, first, the devotional branch of the Christian's life, that branch of it which is withdrawn from the eyes of the world, and opened only to the inspection of Him who seeth in secret. In the exercises of the closet and of the sanctuary are to be found the springs of the Christian's exertions in his Master's cause. The Christian's life, like that of the seraphim, branches out into the two great divisions of contemplative devotion and active exertion. It is the life of Mary, who sat at our Lord's feet and heard His word, combined with that of Martha, who busied herself in outward ministrations to Him. If even the energies of angels (excelling as they do in power) would be certainly impaired unless they were ever and anon renewed by an adoring gaze on the Divine perfections, how certainly shall ours languish and die if we stir them not up by the diligent and persevering use of all those means of grace which God has put into our hands! 2. The Christian life, although as to its springs and sources hid with Christ in God, yet has an outward manifestation, discernible by the world. Care must be taken not only that the lamp shall be filled with a due supply of oil, but also that there shall be a light shining before men. Here is a reproof of what may, without injustice, be termed the monastic principle—a principle which in former ages was deemed correct, and accordingly adopted into the practice of many. It is as if, in the case of animal life, a man should content himself with taking supplies of repose and nourishment, without exhibiting and improving the strength thus gained by the exercise of his limbs. II. Having thus opened the subject generally, LET US SEEK TO ENTER MORE INTO ITS DETAILS, as the text brings them before us. 1. Let us learn from the seraphim a lesson as to the spirit which should pervade all true devotion. (1) These bright and glorious beings are without sin, whether original or actual. Still, such is their sense of the infinite distance subsisting between themselves and Him, of whose hand they are the creatures, that they veil their faces and feet before His throne in token of adoring reverence. The first and most essential element of devotion is a feeling of deep awe, flowing from a sense of God's transcendent excellences, and leading to a profound self-abasement. (2) But, if there be ground for a sentiment of deep self-abasement even in the approach of unfallen creatures to the throne of God, with what intense feelings of humiliation should the members of Adam's fallen family draw nigh. God hath not left man without the means of such a moral cleansing, as may make him meet to bear part in those hymns of praise which are offered by creatures who still retain their integrity. But this provision would be, to say the least, most inadequate, if it did not involve sanctifying as well as pardoning grace. And this it does involve. 2. Let us follow the Christian's steps as he descends from the mount, on which he has held

communion with God, once again to grapple with the difficulties and trials of time, and to bear the burden and heat of the day amidst the engagements of the vineyard. "Son, go work to-day in My vineyard." (1) Our own heart is a vineyard into which God hath sent every one of us, to dress it and to keep it. (2) But surely there is an outward no less than an inward work which God has made binding upon all of us. (a) His providence has called almost all of us to a definite sphere of duty, and assigned to us a certain position in life. Every such position involves its peculiar responsibilities, its peculiar snares, its peculiar occupations. (b) But besides the fulfilment of the duties of our station, the Christian has many indirect opportunities offered to him—opportunities which as a Christian he cannot but arrest, and many of which we miss for lack of being on the watch for them—of promoting the cause of God in the world. (*Dean Gouburn.*) *The vision of God the essence of true worship*:—I take it that in the veiling of the head and the feet, the source of conception, the source of action, is represented the act of homage in which all true worship begins. I take it that in the outburst of song is represented the result of all the worship. All worship is meant to bring us nearer to God, and God near to us, so that if we worship truly, to us, as to them, there shall be a revelation of God's nature and God's truth. The object of all worship is not to please God, not even to save our own souls, though these may be incidents of worship; the object of worship is that, coming into His presence, we may be transformed into His image, as we learn of His ways and work. (*Brooke Lambert, M.A.*) *Commerce and science acknowledging God*:—The vision of Isaiah shall yet receive another fulfilment. Commerce and science shall yet bow their heads before the great Power from which they derive their true energy. And when they do, as with twain of their wings the seraphs flew, bowing the while before the Presence, there shall be an advance in knowledge and material prosperity such as the world has never known. Religion, which did stimulate the arts and the sciences to the creation of works which, with all our knowledge, we cannot rival; religion, which did permeate action in days of which history tells us, and stirred men to mighty deeds, shall yet again become a mighty power. And when through the world there goes up the chant, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory," there will be days such as the world has not yet known. (*Ibid.*) *The cry of the seraphim*:—I. The first thing that strikes us respecting the seraphim is THEIR REDUNDANCE OF WINGS. They each had six, only two of which were used for flying; the others, with which they shrouded their faces and their feet, were, apparently, quite superfluous. Why should they have had them when there was no fit employment for them? Was it not sheer waste to be possessing wings that were merely employed as covering, and never spread for flight? And yet, perhaps, without this shrouding of their faces and their feet they might not have answered so well high Heaven's purposes, might not have swept abroad with such undivided intentness and such entire abandonment on their Divine errands. We meet sometimes with these seemingly wasted wings in men, in the form of capabilities, knowledges, or skills, for the exercise of which there is no scope or opportunity to their lot. To what end, we ask, have they been acquired? or what a pity, we say, that the men could not be placed in circumstances in which a field would be offered them! And yet, a knowledge or skill gained may not be really wasted, though it be left without due scope and opportunity. The best, the finest use of it does not lie always in what it accomplishes, but often in what has been secretly added to us, or wrought into us, through gaining it; in the contribution which the gaining it has been to our character or moral growth. II. THE APPARENT CONTRADICTION HERE BETWEEN THE COVERED FACES OF THE SERAPHIM AND THEIR TEMPLE-SHAKING SHOUTS. Feeble, muffled sounds are the most we should have expected to proceed from them. Fancy the posts of the Lord's house quivering, and the prophet's heart stirred to its depths beneath the cries of those whose heads were bowed and hid behind their wings! Here, however, is an adumbration of much truth. Great, penetrating, inspiring utterances like the utterances of the seraphim of Isaiah's vision—are they not always connected with some deep, still inwardness, with some profound withdrawal and retirement of soul? No one speaks with quickening energy, to the rousing of his fellows, who has not dwelt apart, who has not had his moments, his hours, of dumb absorption, with bent brows and folded hands, when thought and feeling have weighed upon him heavily, and held him bound. There is no life of noble activity and influence which does not rest on, and issue

from, some inner, hidden life of careful self-discipline and quiet self-communion ; which is not fed and sustained from benind with cherishings of faith and contemplation of ideas. III. THE UNINTENTIONAL, UNPURPOSED EFFECT produced by the seraphim ; the much commotion they created without in the least aiming at or meaning it. What were they doing, because of which the vestibule of his temple shook, and the prophet awoke to an overwhelming conviction of his unworthiness ? Simply crying one to another, saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts : the whole earth is full of His glory." They were conscious of no audience, were making no appeal, but were entirely absorbed in adoring together, in exchanging with each other their Divine thoughts and emotions. Yet see the deep agitations they caused, the deep stir in a human breast. It reminds me of the incidental effects of intense enthusiasm ; how, in pursuing its object, in accomplishing triumphantly what it contemplates and desires, it will often overflow upon spectators, disturbing the idle with new dreams of work, rousing the lethargic, reanimating the faint and weary, moving some to attempt as they had not done, or to feel aspirations which they had not felt ; how sometimes, one and another standing by, dull and inert, are caught by and swept on with it, and begin, themselves, to glow ! IV. And now, concerning THE ASPECT, THE SALIENT FEATURES OF THESE BURNING ONES who proclaimed the glory of the Lord, and were such moving powers. They were creatures with six wings : "with twain they covered their face, with twain they covered their feet, and with twain they did fly"—in which composition of them we may see imaged three things which are always involved in real greatness of character, without which no real nobility is attained. "They covered their face"—it was the expression of humility, the humility of awe and worship, of those who were admirably conscious of a splendour and majesty, a sublime strength and perfection, in the presence of which they felt their own littleness, their poorness and infirmity. And no lofty excellence is ever reached where there is nothing of this. They only grow fine and do finely who know what it is to kneel in spirit, to have visions before which their heads are bowed. "They covered their feet"—renouncing the use of these, though they had them, because it was theirs to fly. Meaning to be wholly "winged" ministers of the Lord, they wrapt up their feet. And, devotion to some chosen life-purpose involves always some resolute self-limiting in relation to things lawful enough, but not expedient, and always impels to it. "With twain they did fly"—swift, so swift, to execute the errands of Jehovah ; and faithful velocity, instantaneous and vivid movement in obedience to the voice of the Lord within you, action that drags not, nor halts, that is never reluctant or slow when duty is seen, when conviction speaks, but flashes forth at once in quick and bright response—this is the third of the three essentials to real greatness of character and nobility of life which Isaiah's seraphim suggest. (*S. A. Tipple.*) *The six wings* :—I. THE WINGS THAT COVERED THE FEET. When we see the seraph spreading his wings over the feet, there comes a most useful lesson—the lesson of humility at imperfection. The brightest angels of God are so far beneath God that He charges them with folly. II. THE WINGS THAT COVERED THE FACE. Another seraphic posture in the text. That means reverence Godward. How many take the name of God in vain, how many trivial things are said about the Almighty ! Not willing to have God in the world, they roll up an idea of sentimentality and humanitarianism and impudence and imbecility and call it God. No wings of reverence over the face, no taking off of shoes on holy ground ! Who is this God before whom the arrogant and intractable refuse reverence ? Earthly power goes from hand to hand, from Henry I. to Henry II. and Henry III. ; from Louis I. to Louis II. and Louis III. ; but from everlasting to everlasting is God ; God the first, God the last, God the only. Oh ! what a God to dishonour ! The brightest, the mightiest angel takes no familiarity with God. The wings of reverence are lifted. "With twain he covered his face." III. THE WINGS OF FLIGHT. The seraph must not always stand still. He must move, and it must be without clumsiness. There must be celerity and beauty in the movement. A dying Christian not long ago cried out, "Wings, wings, wings !" The air is full of them, coming and going. You have seen how the dull, sluggish chrysalid becomes the bright butterfly, the dull and the stupid and the sluggish turned into the alert and the beautiful. Well, in this world we are in the chrysalid state. Death will unfurl the wings. See that eagle in the mountain nest. It looks so sick, so ragged-feathered, so worn out, and so half asleep. Is that



eagle dying? No. The ornithologist will tell you it is the moulting season with that bird. Not dying, but moulting. You see that Christian, sick and worn out, on what is called his deathbed. The world says he is dying. I say it is the moulting season for his soul—the body dropping away, the celestial pinions coming on. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *The seraphim* are not angels; they are rather the expressions of the forces of the universe waiting there beside the throne of God. They are titanic beings, in whom is embodied everything of strength and obedience which anywhere, in any of the worlds of God, is doing His will. Since man is the noblest type of obedient power, these majestic seraphim seem to be human in their shape; but, as if further to express their meaning, there are added to each of them three pairs of wings, whose use and disposition are with particularity described. If the highest attitude of any man's life is to stand waiting for what use God will choose to make of him, then we have a right to seek for something in the fullest life of consecrated manhood—of manhood standing by the throne of God—correspondent to each indication of temper and feeling which Isaiah shows us in the seraphim. How shall man stand, then, in a world where God sits in the centre on His throne? We gather so many of our impressions of humanity from poor stunted human creatures—poor wingless things who strut or grovel in their insignificance—that it will surely be good if we can turn for once and see the noblest image of consecrated power, and say to ourselves, "This is what man is meant to be. This it is in me to be if I can use all my powers and let God's presence bring out in me all that it really means to be a man." (*Phillips Brooks, D.D.*) *The wings of the seraphim*:—Each of the three pairs of wings has its own suggestion. Let us see how they represent the three qualities which are the conditions of a complete, effective human life. I. With the first pair of wings, then, it is said that the living creature, standing before God, "COVERED HIS FACE." There was a glory which it was not his to see. There was a splendour and exuberance of life, a richness of radiance coming from the very central source of all existence which, although to keep close to it and to bathe his being in its abundance was his necessity and joy, he could not search and examine and understand. There was the incomprehensibility of God! We talk about God's incomprehensibility as if it were a sad necessity; as if, if we could understand God through and through, it would be happier and better for us. The intimation of Isaiah's vision is something different from that. It is the glory of His seraphim that they stand in the presence of a God so great that they can never comprehend Him. No man does anything well who does not feel the unknown surrounding and pressing upon the known, and who is not therefore aware all the time that what he does has deeper sources and more distant issues than he can comprehend. I know, of course, how easily corruptible the faculty of reverence has always proved itself to be. The noblest and finest things are always most capable of corruption. I see the ghosts of all the superstitions rise before me. I see men standing with deliberately blinded eyes, hiding from their inspection things which they ought to examine, living in wilfully chosen delusions which they prefer to the truth. I see all this in history; I see a vast amount of this to-day; and yet all the more because of this, I am sure that we ought to assert the necessity of reverence and of the sense of mystery, and of the certainty of the unknown to every life. You can know nothing which you do not reverence! You can see nothing before which you do not veil your eyes! But now take one step farther. All of the mystery which surrounds life and pervades life is really one mystery. It is God. Called by His name, taken up into His being, it is filled with graciousness. It is no longer cold and hard; it is all warm and soft and palpitating. It is love. And of this personal mystery of love, of God, it is supremely true that only by reverence, only by the hiding of the eyes, can He be seen. Isaiah says of the seraphim not merely that their eyes were covered, but that they were covered with their wings. Now the wings represent the active powers. It is with them that movement is accomplished, and change achieved, and obedience rendered; so that it seems to me that what the whole image means is this—that it is with the powers of action and obedience that the powers of insight and knowledge are veiled. The being who rightly approaches God, approaches Him with the powers of obedience held forward; and only through them does the sight of God come to the intelligence which lies behind. The mystery and awfulness of God is a conviction reached through serving Him. Behold, what a lofty idea of reverence is here! It is no palsied idleness. The figure which we see is not

flung down upon the ground, despairing and dismayed. It stands upon its feet ; it is alert and watchful ; it is waiting for commandments ; it is eager for work ; but all the time its work makes it more beautifully, completely, devoutly reverent of Him for whom the work is done. II. Let us pass on to the second element in Isaiah's image of a strong and consecrated life. With twain of his wings, he says, each of the seraphim "COVERED HIS FEET." The covering of the feet represents the covering of the whole body. As the covering of the face means not seeing, the covering of the feet means not being seen. It signifies the hiding of one's self, the self-effacement which belongs to every effective act and every victorious life. Here is a man entirely carried away by a great enthusiasm. His heart and hands are full of it. What is the result ? Is it not true that he entirely forgets himself ? Whether he is doing himself credit or discredit, whether men are praising him or blaming him, whether the completion of the work will leave him far up the hill of fame or down in the dark valley of obscurity, he literally never thinks of that. He is obliterated. Consider your own lives. Have you not had great moments in which you have forgotten yourselves, and do you not recognise in those moments a clearness and simplicity and strength which separates them from all the other moments of your life ? The man who forgets himself in his work has but one thing to think of, namely, his work. The man who cannot forget himself has two things to think of—his work and himself. There is the distraction and the waste. Efface yourselves ; and the only way to do it is to stand in the presence of God, and be so possessed with Him that there shall be no space or time left for the poor intrusion of your own little personality. Here, as before, it may mean something to us that the feet are not merely covered, but covered with the wings. The meaning is that the thought of one's self is to be hidden and lost behind the energy and faithfulness and joy of active work. I may determine that I will not be self-conscious, and my very determination is self-consciousness ; but I become obedient to God, and try enthusiastically to do His will, and I forget myself entirely before I know it. III. "WITH TWAİN HE DID FLY." Here there comes the simpler, and, perhaps, the healthier thought of obedience purely and solely for itself—the absolute joy and privilege of the creature in doing the Creator's will. There are two extremes of error. In the one, action is disparaged. The man says, "Not what I do but what I am is of significance. It is not action. It is character." The result is that character itself fades away out of the inactive life. In the other extreme, action is made everything. The glory of mere work is sung in every sort of tune. Just to be busy seems the sufficient accomplishment of life. The result is that work loses its dignity, and the industrious man becomes a clattering machine. (*Ibid.*) *Reverence, an element of power* :—It is not only a pleasing sentiment, it is a necessary element of power—this reverence which veils its eyes before something which it may not know. What would you give for the physician who believed that he had mastered all the truth concerning our human bodies, and never stood in awe before the mystery of life, the mystery of death ? What would you give for the statesman who had no reverence, who made the State a mere machine, and felt the presence in it of no deep principles too profound for him to understand ? What is more dreadful than irreverent art which paints all that it sees because it sees almost nothing, and yet does not dream that there is more to see ; which suggests nothing because it suspects nothing profounder than the flimsy tale it tells, and would fain make us all believe that there is no sacredness in woman, nor nobleness in man, nor secret in nature, nor dignity in life. Irreverence everywhere is blindness and not sight. It is the stare which is bold because it believes in its heart that there is nothing which its insolent intelligence may not fathom, and so which finds only what it looks for, and makes the world as shallow as it ignorantly dreams the world to be. (*Ibid.*) *Reverence should be universal* :—To make the sentiment of reverence universal would be the truest way to keep it healthy and pure. It must not seem to be the strange prerogative of saints or cranks ; it must not seem to be the sign of exceptional weakness or exceptional strength ; it must be the element in which all lives go on, and which has its own ministry for each. The child must have it, feeling his little actions touch the infinite as his feet upon the beach delight in the waves out of the boundless sea that strike them. The mechanic must have it, feeling how his commonest tools are ministers of elemental forces, and raise currents in the air that run out instantly beyond his ken. The scientist needs it as he deals with the palpable and material which hangs in the impalpable and spiritual, and cannot be

known without the knowledge of the mystery in which it floats. Every true scientist has it; Newton or Tyndal pauses a moment in his description of the intelligible, and some hymn of the unintelligible, some psalm of delight in the unknown, comes bursting from his scientific lips. (*Ibid.*) *A seraph's wings*:— This is the only mention in Scripture of the seraphim. I would notice, before I deal with the specific words of my text, the significance of the name. It means "the flaming" or "burning ones," and so the attendants of the Divine glory in the heavens, whether they be real or imaginary beings, are represented as flashing with splendour, as full of swift energy, like a flame of fire, as glowing with fervid love, as blazing with enthusiasm. That is the type of the highest creature being that stands closest to God. Cold religion is a contradiction in terms, though, alas! it is a reality in professors. I. THE WINGS OF BEVERENCE. He covered his face, or they covered their faces, lest they should see. As a man brought suddenly into the sunlight, especially if out of a darkened chamber, by an instinctive action shades his eyes with his hand, so these burning creatures, confronted with the still more fervid and fiery light of the Divine nature, fold one pair of their great white pinions over their shining faces, even whilst they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty!" And does not that teach us the incapacity of the highest creature, with the purest vision, to gaze undazzled into the shining light of God? I, for my part, do not believe that any conceivable extension of creature faculties, or any conceivable hallowing of creature natures, can make the creature able to gaze upon God. "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." But who is the "Him"? Jesus Christ. And, in my belief, Jesus Christ will, to all eternity, be the medium of manifesting God. "No man hath seen God at any time," nor can see Him. But my text does also suggest to us by contrast the possibility of far feeble sighted and more sinful creatures than these symbolical seraphs coming into a Presence in which God shall be manifest to them; and they will need no veil drawn by themselves across their eyes. God has veiled Himself, that "we, with unveiled faces, beholding His glory, may be changed into the same image." So the seraph, with his white wings folded before his eyes, may at once stand to us as a parallel and a contrast to what the Christian may expect. We can see Jesus, with no incapacity except such as may be swept away by His grace and our will. There is no need for you to draw anything between your happy eyes and the Face in which we "behold the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father." All the tempering that the Divine lustre needed has been done by Him who veils His glory with the veil of Christ's flesh, and therein does away with the need for any veil that we can draw. But, beyond that, there is another consideration that I should like to suggest, as taught us by the use of this first pair of the six wings, and that is the absolute need for the lowliest reverence in our worship of God. It is strange, but true, I am afraid, that the Christian danger is to lose the sense of the majesty and splendour and separation of God from His creatures. What does that lofty chorus that burst from those immortal lips mean: "Holy, holy, holy!" but the declaration that God is high above and separate from all limitations and imperfections of creatures? We have need to take heed that we do not lose our reverence in our confidence, and that we do not part with godly fear in our filial love. II. THE WINGS OF HUMILITY. "With twain he covered his feet." The less comely and inferior parts of that fiery corporeity were veiled lest they should be seen by the Eyes that see all things. The wings made no screen that hid the seraph's feet from the eye of God, but it was the instinctive lowly sense of unworthiness that folded them across the feet, even though they, too, burned as a furnace. The nearer we get to God the more we shall be aware of our limitations and unworthiness. And it is because that vision of the Lord sitting on "His throne, high and lifted up," with the thrilling sense of His glory filling the holy temple of the universe, does not burn before us that we can conceal ourselves to have anything worth pluming ourselves upon. Once lift the curtain, once let my love be flooded with the sight of God, and away goes all my self-conceit, and all my fancied superiority above others. Get God into your lives, and you will see that the feet need to be washed, and you will cry, "Lord! not my feet only, but my hands and my head!" III. THE WINGS FOR SERVICE. "With twain he did fly." That is the emblem of joyous, buoyant, easy, un hindered motion. It is strongly, sadly contrary to the toilsome limitations of us heavy creatures who have no wings, but can at best run on His service, and often find it hard to walk with patience in the way that is set before us. But

service with wings, or service with lame feet, it matters not. Whosoever, beholding God, has found need to hide his face from that Light, even whilst he comes into the Light, and to veil his feet from the all-seeing Eye, will also feel impulses to go forth in His service. For the perfection of worship is neither the consciousness of my own insufficiency, nor the humble recognition of His glory, nor the great voice of praise that thrilled from those immortal lips, but it is the doing of His will in daily life. Some people say the service of man is the service of God. Yes, when it is service of man, done for God's sake, it is so, and only then. Now, we, as Christians, have a far higher motive for service than the seraphs had. We have been redeemed, and the spirit of the old Psalm should animate all our obedience: "O Lord, truly I am Thy servant." Why? The next clause tells you. "Thou hast loosed my bonds." The seraphs could not say that. The seraphim were winged for service even while they stood above the throne and pealed forth their thunderous praise which shook the temple. May we not discern in that a hint of the blessed blending of two modes of worship which will be perfectly united in heaven, and which we should aim at harmonising even on earth? "His servants serve Him and see His face." There is possible, even on earth, some foretaste of the perfection of that heavenly state in which no worship of service shall interfere with the worship of contemplation. The seraphs sang "Holy, holy, holy!" but they, and all the hosts of heaven, learn a new song from the experience of earth, and redeemed men are the chorus-leaders of the perfected and eternal worship of the heavens. For we read that it is the four-and-twenty elders who begin the song and sing to the Lamb that redeemed them by His blood, and that the living creatures and all the hosts of the angels to that song can but say "Amen!" (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The use of faculty*:—Is it not strange, that of those parts of an angel's figure which seem as if they were made only for action, four out of six are used for an entirely different purpose? It is to teach us, that it is not every power which we have—and which we might think given us for public service, and for the outer life—which is really intended by God for that use. Never think that large faculties are fitted only for large enterprises, and that all your endowments are to be spent on that which is to meet the general eye. Remember that of six wings an angel uses only two to fly with. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Why is an angel so very humble?*—1. An angel is very great, and therefore he grows humble. 2. An angel is always conversant with the great things of God. 3. An angel knows and is sure that he is loved. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 3. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts.—*The holiness of God*:—We consider holiness as essential to the very being of God. Holiness is originally in God. If angels are holy, God made them so. If believers are holy, God made them so. But the holiness of God is not derived; it was eternally, originally and unchangeably in Him. Let us now produce some evidence of this truth. 1. The holiness of God appears from the positive, uniform, repeated testimony of the sacred writers. 2. We refer to the original state of all rational and immortal beings. When formed by God they were holy. 3. Consider the nature of the law, originally given to man in paradise, and, long after, renewed at Sinai. It is "holy and just and good." 4. Let us take a view of the holiness of God as awfully displayed in His anger against sin and sinners. 5. But we must visit Calvary if we would behold at once the most awful and the most engaging display of the Divine holiness. It was because He was infinitely displeased with sin that the Lord was pleased to bruise His Son and put Him to grief. 6. The holiness of God appears in the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers, and in all the means appointed for that purpose. Practical inferences—1. Is God so holy? then how base and sinful is the hatred of holiness! 2. Is God so holy? then what cause is there for humiliation! 3. Is God holy? then let us also be holy. (*G. Burder.*) *The holiness of God*:—I. THE SUBLIME REPRESENTATION WHICH IS MADE OF THE HOLINESS OF JEHOVAH. Holiness is the glory of God's nature, and that which entitles Him to the supreme love, confidence, and worship of all His creatures. We may view the holiness of God more particularly—1. As that which He has Himself declared and made known in the sacred Scriptures. 2. As that which is displayed in the representations given us of the heavenly world. 3. As exhibited in the punishment of rebellious angels and lost spirits in hell. 4. As made known to the inhabitants of earth in the moral law and in

the glorious Gospel. II. THE EFFECTS WHICH THE CONTEMPLATION OF IT SHOULD PRODUCE ON US. It has been revealed for our benefit, and in proportion to its importance and glory should be its influence on our minds and characters. With what feelings of adoring reverence and humility was it beheld by the holy inhabitants of heaven! What was the effect which the vision of it had on the prophet Isaiah? "Then said I, Woe is me!" &c. A similar impression was made on the mind of Job. (Job xlii. 5, 6.) If such impressions were made on the minds of these eminent saints by the discovery of Jehovah's holiness, what effects should it produce on us? It should lead—1. To the deepest humiliation and contrition of soul. 2. To an immediate application to the blood of sprinkling. 3. Such a believing view of the character of God will produce love to holiness and earnest desire to possess it. The contemplation of the holiness of God should lead—4. To earnest supplications for the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. 5. To active efforts for the diffusion of His glory. (*Essex Congregational Remembrancer*.)

*The holiness of God* :—God has been pleased to declare to mankind His views as to what constitutes a holy or an unholy action; consequently, when we say that God is holy, we mean that He is both by nature and character originally, essentially, and infinitely inclined to the approbation and performance of those actions which He has Himself thus pronounced to be holy; and, by converse, that He is originally, essentially, and infinitely removed from the approbation of any action or disposition which He has declared to be sinful. The holiness of God may be established—I. BY APPEALING TO THE CONDUCT OF GOD AS IT MAY BE FREQUENTLY OBSERVED IN PROVIDENCE. It is of essential importance to remark that, although Divine providence affords many proofs of the holiness of God, yet there are many reasons why we may presume that the whole displeasure of God against sin is not thus exhibited. The present life, amid other purposes, serves that of a state of trial; it is impossible, therefore, that in it a complete exhibition of His holiness can be made. Notwithstanding these considerations, the providence of God affords the most abundant testimony to His holiness. The proof I allude to is this, that evil and misery invariably, in the common course of things, follow the practice of those actions, and of those actions only, which God has declared to be sinful. II. BY APPEALING TO THE CONDUCT OF GOD AS IT IS RECORDED IN THE SCRIPTURES. 1. The event which first claims our regard, as being the first in the order of time, is the condemnation of the apostate angels. 2. The fate of our first parents. 3. The destruction of the world by an universal deluge. 4. The sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. III. BY APPEALING TO THE EXPRESS TESTIMONY OF REVELATION. Everything too that has the slightest relation to Him is said to be holy, as partaking of this essential perfection of His nature: hence, His name is said to be holy. He is said to sit upon the throne of His holiness, to dwell in the most holy place. The hills on which His people meet to worship Him are said to be holy mountains. His promise, His covenant, His commandment, His law, His sabbath, His people, His prophets, His angels, His Son, His Spirit, are all respectively called holy in numerous passages. (*J. F. Denham, M.A.*)

*God's holiness and God's glory* :—Two of the Divine attributes form the theme of the seraphs' hymn. I. GOD'S HOLINESS AS INHERENT IN HIMSELF. Holiness denotes, fundamentally, a state of freedom from all imperfection, specially from all moral imperfection; a state, moreover, realised with such intensity as to imply not only the absence of evil, but antagonism to it. It is more than goodness, more than purity, more than righteousness; it embraces all these in their ideal completeness, but it expresses besides the recoil from everything which is their opposite. II. AS IT IS MANIFESTED IN THE MATERIAL WORLD. "The fulness of the whole earth is His glory." By "glory" we mean the outward show or state attendant upon dignity or rank. The glory, then, of which Isaiah speaks, is the outward expression of the Divine nature. Pictured as visible splendour, it may impress the eye of flesh; but any other worthy manifestation of the being of God may be not less truly termed His glory. It is more than the particular attribute of power or wisdom; it is the entire fulness of the Godhead, visible to the eye of faith, if not to the eye of sense, in the concrete works of nature, arresting the spectator and claiming from him the tribute of praise and homage. 1. Wherein does the world so reflect the being of God as to be the expression of His glory? It is visible (1) in the fact, as such, of creation; (2) in the means by which an abode has been prepared for the reception of life and intelligence, and the majestic scale upon which the process has been conceived and carried

out; (3) in the rare and subtle mechanism which sustains the world in every part, and the intrinsic adequacy and beauty of the results. 2. Can we trace any evidence of the moral character of God, or is the earth full merely of the tokens of His power? It is difficult to think that we are mistaken in tracing it in the constitution of human nature, in the affections and aspirations which it displays, in the conditions upon which social life is observed to depend. He who has inspired human nature with true impulses of justice and generosity, of sympathy and love, with admiration for the heroic and noble, with scorn for the ignoble and the mean, cannot but be possessed of a kindred character Himself. Though the rays are broken and the image is obscured, the moral glory of the Creator shines in the world; it is reflected in the verdict of the individual conscience; it is latent in the ethical sanctions upon which the permanence and welfare of society depends. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *The doctrine of the Trinity*:—This is a great deep where faith must receive mysteries on the authority of God, and reason be satisfied with the fact that He has revealed it. The objection that it is contrary to reason is weak, for nothing can be contrary to reason except what lies within its boundary. This lies in a region far above it. We can only know so much of God as He reveals. He would not be God if His nature were not mysterious to us. We are mysteries to ourselves. God's works are often mysteries to us. Can we expect to comprehend Himself?

**I. THE DOCTRINE IS INTERWOVEN WITH THE WHOLE TEXTURE OF REVELATION.** Indications of plurality in unity meet us in the first chapter of the Bible (Gen. i. 26, 27), "Our image." "His image." This becomes more definite as we advance (Numb. vi. 22-27). Threefold mention of Jehovah, yet "My name" (see Isa. lxi. 1). These Old Testament indications are remarkable because given to a people prone to polytheism. They are inexplicable except on the ground that a mysterious trinity existed in the unity of the Godhead. This mystery was breaking out amidst the shadows of the darker dispensation. A seed of truth only needing fuller light to develop it. It came out most distinctly in the New Testament. Besides many passages which assert the Deity of Christ and of the Spirit take three cardinal passages (Matt. iii. 16, 17, xviii. 19; 2. Cor. xiii. 14). At Christ's entrance on His ministry this truth shines out not so much as dogma but as fact. The very porch of the church, facing the world, has "the name" (not names) of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost inscribed on it. Dedication to the Trinity in baptism is dedication to the one God. The apostolic benediction invokes a Divine blessing from each Person; indicates their equality and their unity.

**II. THE SCRIPTURES PRESENT THIS MYSTERY IN A PRACTICAL ASPECT.** It is interwoven throughout with the living realities of faith; presented to the heart for affectionate embrace, rather than to the head for intellectual apprehension. Explanations of the infinite would be lost on finite minds: so the Bible reveals the Persons of the Trinity, not in their incomprehensible relations to each other, but in their appreciable relation to us. We find the doctrine underlying every truth, every hope of the Gospel. Take as illustrations Rom. viii. 9, 16, 17; 2 Cor. iii. 3; Gal. iv. 4-6; Eph. ii. 18; 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14; Tit. iii. 4-6; Heb. ix. 14; Rev. xxii. 1. Thus each Person co-operates in our redemption: the Father planning, the Son performing, the Spirit applying the work of redeeming love. If angels bowed and adored, with what reverence and gratitude should we exclaim, "Glory be to the Father," &c. 1. How much they reject, who reject the Gospel! A whole Trinity of grace, and love, and power! 2. How much they secure, who embrace the Gospel! What a Father, Saviour, Sanctifier! 3. Not a mere orthodox profession will bless us, but the sanctifying power of this creed in our hearts. Christ found and received by faith, through the Spirit, as the Son of God and our Redeemer, will unlock that mystery to the heart, which is beyond our poor reason to comprehend. (*W. P. Walsh, D.D.*) *The Holy Trinity*:—The doctrine of the Trinity teaches us to think of God not in singularity or individuality, but as a harmony of Persons or manifestations. This is best seen when we look at the Divine working in nature, and especially in that human life which is the crown of nature and which He has united with His own. The Jewish Church is often thought to have worshipped God only in His lonely, distant majesty. The word "Holy" by which He is so constantly described means "Separate"; and God was to them the Separate One, far removed in His purity from a sinful world. But there is another side to this teaching. Jehovah was separate or withdrawn from the world—not as a material world, but as a sinful world. Where sin is not, there He abides; and His people

are a kingdom of saints—a holy nation. They go with Him, so to speak, into the place into which He is withdrawn, that He may abide among them. And, further, the psalmists and prophets never lost sight of the universal hope; they looked forward to the Gospel times, when the Lord of Israel should sustain the same relation to the whole world which He sustained to His chosen people in their time. Thus it is that Isaiah in our text represents the seraphim as saying of the Holy or Separate God that the whole earth is full of His glory. What is the glory of God? It is the glory of Love. We are not to think of God as One resting in the self-complacency of a solitary majesty, but as Love, which goes forth continually to its object. When we read the highest expression of the conscious union of our Lord with His Father, this doctrine of love again and again appears. "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one." And surely it is a worthy conception of the Divine nature which the doctrine of the Trinity presents to us, when it makes us think of the Godhead not as chiefly glorious because of certain abstract qualities which a lonely individual nature might possess within itself, but rather as a fellowship which was self-involved and self-embraced in mystic, eternal love. This Divine love, I repeat, as being the very nature of God, was felt by the prophets of Israel to be dwelling in them, immanent in their nation. "The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them." Observe what this teaching or this consciousness implies. It is that the Divine nature of love is the soul of man's social life, that this is the binding power which draws men together. By unity God realises Himself among men, or draws them into Himself, that He may live out His life of love in their relationships. In this sense it is that the whole earth is full of the glory of the Holy One. When, then, we treat of the Christian doctrine of the Church, or social union of men in God, we are guided by the experience of the older dispensation, which in this, as in all things, finds its completion in our Lord. If God was to the Jews Immanuel, God with us, in Jesus Christ He has come yet closer to us. The loving embrace of the heavenly Bridegroom has taken the human nature into God. The twain are one. He abides in us and we in Him. (*W. H. Fremantle, M.A.*) **The whole earth is full of His glory.—God most fully displays His glory on earth:—**It is certain from the language of these holy beings that they delightfully contemplate the glory of God; and especially in this world, where it is most clearly displayed.

I. THE ANGELS OF HEAVEN HAVE ALWAYS BEEN WELL ACQUAINTED WITH THIS WORLD. Though these exalted spirits have always been invisible to mankind except on particular occasions, yet we have abundant evidence from Scripture that they have always been acquainted with the objects and events of this world. When God laid the foundation of the earth, they sang together and shouted for joy. And from that day to this, they have been more or less concerned in executing the purposes of God respecting mankind. They are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." It is natural to conjecture that many of them continually reside here, while others are alternately employed on great and extraordinary occasions. (Psa. lxxviii. 17; Luke ii. 8-14; 2 Kings xix. 35; Matt. xxvi. 53; Luke xxii. 43; Matt. xxviii. 2; Acts v. 19.)

II. THEY HAVE DISCOVERED MORE OF THE GLORY OF GOD IN THIS WORLD THAN IN ANY OTHER PART OF THE UNIVERSE. It may be presumed that they have explored the whole circle of creation, which, though widely extended, is certainly limited, and capable of being surveyed by finite beings. They have been friendly to God, and taken pleasure in contemplating the displays of His glory. They have always possessed great intellectual powers and capacities, which have enabled them to receive, retain and digest the most extensive and sublime ideas of their Maker and His works. And being spirits, unencumbered by such gross bodies as we have, they have always been capable of passing from world to world, and from one part of the universe to another, with inconceivable ease and rapidity. They say, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts"; i.e., the Lord of the whole vast number of created beings, in every part of His extensive dominions. They add, "The whole earth is full of His glory"; by which they intimate that, after surveying heaven and hell and the whole empire of God, they discover greater displays of His glory in this world than in any other. 1. God has established such a connection between one creature and another in this world as He has not, as we know, anywhere else established. Angels were all created at once, and stood independently of each other. And while some maintained

their integrity and attachment to God, others renounced their allegiance and rose in rebellion against their supreme Sovereign. But when God made man, He constituted an intimate and important connection between him and all that should proceed from him, to the end of time. 2. The method which God has devised and adopted to save the guilty and perishing children of men from destruction has given a display of His glory which He has not given in any other part of the universe. 3. In this world God has been constantly increasing the number of His moral subjects. There has been no increase of either good or bad angels; but there has been an immense increase of mankind for nearly six thousand years. If the glory of a prince consists in the multitude of His subjects, then the glory of God must be displayed by the vast numbers of rational and immortal beings which He brings into existence in this part of His dominions. 4. God subjects mankind to greater, more numerous and more surprising changes than He does any other of His intelligent creatures. The angels of light have never been subjected to any great or peculiar changes since their creation; and evil angels have experienced but one great and dreadful change. But all mankind, from their birth to their death, are perpetually subject to great, sudden and unexpected changes. Their bodies, their minds, and all their external circumstances are perpetually changing. Still greater changes and revolutions are frequently passing over whole nations and kingdoms. And as all these are ordered and brought about by God, so He here gives peculiar displays of His glory, which are not to be seen in any other part of the universe. 5. The angels of God behold Him here forming the moral characters of men for eternity. Though the angels of God have seen their fellow-angels changed from holiness to sin in heaven, yet they have never seen any of their fellow-creatures changed from sin to holiness anywhere but in this world; which is a distinction among equally guilty creatures that eminently displays the awful and glorious sovereignty of God. 6. The angels of God see Him, in this world, continually calling off mankind from the stage of life and from the state of probation into their eternal states. Improvement—1. If angels discover more of the glory of God in this world than in any other part of the universe, then we may justly suppose that this world is, on the whole, better than it would have been if neither natural nor moral evil had ever entered into it. 2. If angels discover the brightest displays of the glory of God in this world, then it is certain that He treats all mankind perfectly right, in all His conduct towards them in the dispensations of providence and grace. 3. If angels view this world as the most important and interesting part of the creation, then secure sinners are extremely stupid. They see the same world, the same objects, the same persons, and the same changes, which angels admire; but they take no notice of the glory of God manifested by them, though they are far more deeply concerned in the objects with which they are surrounded, and the scenes through which they are passing. 4. If the angels of heaven discover the brightest displays of the glory of God in this world, then all real Christians have great advantages, while they are passing through the changing scenes of life, to make constant and swift advances in Divine knowledge. 5. If angels see and admire the glory of God in His conduct towards mankind in this world, then there can be no doubt but they will see and admire the glory of God in His conduct towards them, in their eternal state. 6. If God gives brighter displays of His glory here than anywhere else, then all men, in this life, are in the most important stage of their existence. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. **And the posts of the door moved.**—*The shaken temple.*—It is stated that, at a musical festival which was held in Westminster Abbey on one occasion, the strains were so powerful in a certain part of the performance, that the whole building was shaken. So it was on this occasion. The sacred edifice trembled at the presence of God, and at the voice of those who were engaged in His praise.

Vers. 5-8. **Then said I, Woe is me!**—*The moral history of a rising soul; or, the way up from depravity to holiness.*—Whilst holiness is the normal, depravity is the actual state of man. A restoration to his spiritual condition is his profoundest necessity. What is the path of the soul up from the depths of depravity to those sunny heights of holiness where unfallen spirits live an exultant life? I. A VISION OF THE GREAT RULER AS THE HOLIEST OF BEINGS. Three facts show this. 1. There can be no excitement of the moral sensibilities



and powers without a vision of God. Show me a soul that has never had an inner vision of God, and you show me a soul whose moral powers are in a chrysalis state. 2. The means which the great God has ever employed to restore men are visions of Himself. What is the Bible but a record of Divine visions and manifestations to man? What is the Gospel—"God's power unto salvation"—but the manifestation of the Eternal in Christ? Here He appears to man in the "face of Jesus Christ." 3. The history of all restored souls shows that the improvement commences at this stage. II. A PROFOUND CONSCIOUSNESS OF OUR FALLEN STATE. "Then said I, Woe is me!" &c. The prophet's consciousness included four things. 1. A deep sense of his personality. "I am undone." He feels himself singled out from the millions. 2. A sense of personal ruin. 3. A sense of personal sin. 4. A sense of personal sin heightened by a remembrance of his neighbours' sins. So long as conscience is torpid, men often make the sinful conduct of others an apology for their own; but when conscience awakes, such sophistries depart. III. A REMOVAL OF THE CRUSHING SENSE OF GUILT. "Then flew one of the seraphims unto me," &c. Three thoughts are suggested by this. 1. There are Divine means for the removal of sin. 2. The means are something in connection with sacrifice. 3. The means are employed by a Divinely appointed ministry. Let that seraphim stand as the emblem of a true minister, and we see that his work is to take the purifying elements from the altar, and apply them to men. He has to take burning thoughts, and burning thoughts must come from the Cross. IV. AN EVER-OPEN AND SENSITIVE EAR TO THE VOICE OF GOD. "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Three thoughts will develop the general and practical meaning of these words. 1. The great God has deep thoughts about our race. 2. Just as the soul is cleared of sin does it become conscious of these thoughts. It will hear the voice of God in every sound, and see His glory in every form. 3. This consciousness of the Divine thoughts about the race is a necessary stage in the moral progress of the soul. V. A HEARTY READINESS TO DO WHAT THE SUPREME WILL DEMANDS. "Here am I; send me." To reach this point is to be in sympathy with the great and good everywhere; this is heaven. Conclusion—Art thou in the first stage, O my soul? Stay not there; a mere vision of the holy God will only fire thee with remorse; struggle on. Art thou in the second? Stay not there; hell is somewhere in that direction; struggle on. Art thou in the third? Stay not there; freedom from sin is but negative excellence; struggle on. Art thou in the fourth? Happy spirit! thou hast scaled the mountains of difficulty and darkness. Thy jubilee has commenced. Thou art in conscious companionship and concert with the Infinite. Still stay not there; struggle on. Ascend to the last; and from that supernal altitude, with the vast and beaming universe around thee, look ever, in waiting attitude, to thy Maker, and say, "Here am I; send me." (*Homilist.*) *The vision of the King:*—Every man's course is shaped by the view that he forms of the Supreme Ruler. If a man has no such view, he has no principle, and he is living either in anarchy or in slavery to some other mind. There are hours in every earnest life, and especially in every powerful leading life, when new truths or new views of old truths breaking in upon the eye of the soul change all the aspects of being, and give an impulse that never loses its force. Such an hour of insight as came to Jacob at Bethel and afterwards at Penuel now came to Isaiah in the temple. I. THE VIEW OF THE SUPREME RULER. Isaiah now passed through a great spiritual excitement, such as marks the hours of conversion, the chief turning-point in the careers of great souls. The leading idea is described in these words, "Mine eyes have seen the King." A new regal power had arisen within his life. Now, in his first natural, unenlightened, unregenerate state, a man sees no supreme authority that has a right to rule his inner and outer being. But when the light of God dawns upon his soul, then man becomes conscious of a personal will that claims to rule his life, and of a personal mind that knows his down-sitting and his uprising, and understands his thoughts afar off. In this vision of the Triune Godhead Isaiah saw the Divine life now more fully and more clearly than he had ever seen it before. In words he paints for us the impressions made by it upon his soul. Hitherto God had been to him a dim floating idea, far away in the clouds, like a distant monarch exercising no constant sway over existence; but now he recognises that the Divine life is everywhere; that all things are united to God; that all the duties, all the energies and the scenes of existence are, as it were,

parts of the royal train, wide as the world, filling the vast floor of the temple of being. This change in the spiritual ideas of Isaiah seems to have been very similar to the change that was wrought in the disciples by the power of the resurrection, the sight of the ascension, and the inspiration of Pentecost. They had before acknowledged Jesus as their Master, but their ideas of His Divine authority were dim and uncertain. But when He rose from the grave and ascended to realms out of sight, when He sent down the light and heat of His Spirit into their hearts and minds, then they recognised Him with the sight of the soul as the King; they then realised that all power was given to Him in heaven and in earth, that the height and the depth, that life and death, that sickness and health, that the cross of suffering and the crown of sovereignty, that the earthly course and the silent grave, the temporal home and the great hereafter, were all subject to the sovereignty of His Divine human sceptre. Similar to that is the change wrought in every human soul when religion comes instead of a misty, cloudy, speculative theory, as a living power to rule our daily being. This revelation of Jesus as the King is going on for ever through the ages.

II. THE EFFECTS OF THIS VISION UPON THE SOUL. 1. It produces an abasing sense of personal sin. Why did the vision of the King create this sense of guilt and misery? In the King is the law of our life; it is only when we see the King's life that we know what our own life ought to be. So it is for ever. Where there is no vision of excellence there can be no pangs of self-reproach. The village artist, who has never seen any works better than his own, is self-satisfied in his ignorance; but the man who has seen the master works of sovereign genius, recognises in the light his own nothingness in the presence of an ideal unapproached, high-throned, and lifted up: he cries, abased, "Woe is me! I am nothing, I have everything to learn." So is it in the moral world. When the vision of a pure life breaks in upon the eyes of the impure it creates bitter self-reproach, and at first rebellious impatience. 2. It quickens the sense of social sin. We cannot separate our personal life from our social life; therefore, in the moment when we begin to desire a nobler personal life we desire also to create around us a nobler social state. So Isaiah, when he saw the King, looked with agony upon the depravity of the society of which he was a member, and cried, "Woe is me! for I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." And what were the sins that defiled the lips of Israel in those days? We have a description of them in the five preceding chapters. The fountain of all uncleanness, ever the same, is the self-will of our lower nature, that rebels against the King whose higher law is that love which constrains man to sacrifice his baser instincts for the Divine glory and the social good. Sin is not peculiar to any age. Our nation has its great social evil. There are, amongst us sometimes, men who defile their lips with commercial fraud, but still the motto of the British merchant is "Integrity," and "Thoroughness" is the boast of the British workman. But there is one fountain of uncleanness that pours forth a poisonous stream to defile the lips of the nation. The curse of strong drink is an overflowing well of shame, of sin, of vice, of woe. We feel pain at social evil in exact proportion to the clearness with which we have seen the King—in other words, to the strength of our religious convictions, and the sincerity of our religious emotions. If we take low views of human destiny we do not feel much pain when existence around us is without high ends here, or high hopes of hereafter; then we can bear to look with calmness on the masses of human misery. But if we have seen the King; if, in the light of His face, we have learnt what life is to be, and what by His royal grace He will make it to be, then we never can look at these social evils without feeling our own share of responsibility, without feeling a bitter, salutary self-reproach and crying out, "Woe is me! for I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." 3. It brings to bear upon the life a purifying power. The altar is a place of sacrifice; sacrifice is an expression of love, and love is a leading feature in the countenance of the King, and therefore the power that redeems us into the likeness of the King is the Spirit that brings to bear upon us the burning influence of love from the altar. The altar is the Cross of Calvary, on which the Son of Man gave Himself for the good of many. Love is the source of all personal and of all social good. 4. It gives to the life an ardent mission. (*H. T. Edwards, M.A.*) *The vision of Isaiah*:—There was a veil before the Holy of holies, so that the prophet, who is evidently supposed to have stood in the outer sanctuary, could not ordinarily have seen the throne of the Lord; but the veil is here supposed to be taken away—a circumstance in itself emblematical;

for the vision related to the future kingdom of Christ, when the veil of separation was to be removed, and all distinctions destroyed between the Gentile and the Jew. I. THE CONDUCT OF ISAIAH. 1. Observe how affecting a testimony is given to the corruption and alienation of our nature by the fact that a manifestation of the Divine glory could produce in him nothing but dread and confusion. 2. The reason which Isaiah gives for being sorely confounded at beholding the glories of Christ. By specifying his "lips" and the "lips" of the people, as unclean, and thus calling to remembrance sins of the tongue rather than any other offences, the prophet appears to have in mind the office to which he had been appointed, and the difficulties which attended its faithful discharge. II. THE EMBLEMATICAL ACTION of which the prophet was the subject, and THE COMFORTING WORDS by which he was addressed. It was in consistency with the general course of the Divine dealings that the prophet's confession should be followed by an assurance of the Almighty's forgiveness. And it was, further, a sort of anticipation of the privileges belonging to believers in Christ, that one of the seraphim should be employed in conveying to Isaiah an assurance of pardon. There was no virtue naturally in the coal—the whole virtue must have been derived from some fire or some burnt-offering to which the coal bore a typical relation. And no one living in Christian times and blessed with Christian privileges can doubt for a moment what this typical relation was. And if this were a vision of Christ in His glory, rather than of Christ in His humiliation—a vision more fitted to instruct Isaiah as to the exaltation of the Mediator, than to show him that He might be a propitiation for sins—yet observe, that the scenery of the vision was laid in the temple, all whose furniture and whose every rite was emblematic of the suretyship and offering of Christ. The fire was still burning on the altar, though the Lord was on His throne, clad in that glory which was to be gained by the extinguishing the sacrificial flames—extinguishing them by the one oblation of Himself; and therefore might it justly be said, that the temple, thus lit up and thus crowded with brilliant forms, presented to the prophet a complete parable of redemption. From the altar of burnt-offering whose fire went not out, though celestial shinings flooded the sanctuary, might he learn, that the Divinity of the Person of the Mediator would not rescue humanity from the flames of God's wrath against sin; from the throne, with all the attendant gorgeoussness, might he be instructed, that when the work of suffering was complete, there should be given to the Saviour "a name above every name," and that He should sit in heavenly places, the "Head over all things to the Church." But then it is as "a live coal" that Christ acts. He was to baptize "with the Holy Ghost and with fire." (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Isaiah's vision* :—There were two purposes which might be served by this magnificent vision: it could hardly fail to be profitable both to the prophet to whom it was originally given, and to the people to whom he would assuredly reveal it. I. We have, perhaps, the most affecting possible illustration of HUMAN DEPRAVITY. II. THE SENSE OF DEFICIENCY IN THE PERFORMANCE OF DUTY. III. THE COMFORTING ASSURANCE OF PARDON. IV. THIS WORK WAS ACCOMPLISHED BY PERSONAL AGENCY. One of the burning ones came and took the live coal with the tongs from off the altar, and touched with it the lips of the delinquent prophet. And a fair inference from this will land us in the grand New Testament doctrine and privilege of the direct witness of God's Holy Spirit to the adoption of the believer into the family Divine. (*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*) *Sin and its cure* :—"Then said I, Woe is me!" &c. It is always thus when God draws near to man. When Moses saw that bush in the desert, which burned and was not consumed, he took the shoes from off his feet and hid his face, for it is written, "He was afraid to look upon God." At Sinai the people trembled and said, "Let not God speak with us lest we die." And when that glorious vision of the living Christ appeared to the apostle in Patmos, he says, "I fell at His feet as dead." Revelations of the unseen, of the eternal, of the unnameable Jehovah have filled men always with alarm and with fear. And when the saints of God—men of pure and irreproachable lives—have been going home to heaven, it has been said of many of them, "They died under a cloud." The sense of eternity drawing near has filled even them with apprehension. Is it that the unseen, the mysterious, must always be to creatures such as we are, the source of terror? as it was with those disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, of whom revelation records, "They feared as they entered into the cloud." It is nothing that you say our fears are vain and foolish under the circumstances, that blessings in disguise coming in this

way have filled men with terror, that Jesus Christ Himself drawing near to His tempest-tossed disciples upon the Sea of Galilee, and drawing near to bless them, approached after this fashion and alarmed them in this way—the fear is there, and the trouble is that this bondage of fear is upon some men all their lives, and that we do not leave it behind even in the most exalted moments that come to the saints of God. Men may have their theories which explain, or which contradict, the fact—it is true nevertheless. Isaiah's experience sums up that which is noblest and best in human life. I. First of all, it was the sense of sin, which moved Isaiah in that hour and in this way; sin in himself, sin in others, sin in the world around, sin which the sense of the nearness of God's presence made all the more vivid and real to him, just as the light reveals the darkness and the things of darkness to men who are immersed in it, men who otherwise may not have had and would not have had a thought concerning it. Live away from God, and sin is nothing, lies light as a gossamer upon the conscience; draw near to God, and sin begins to be a trouble, a perplexity, a burden to man. II. In the Divine way of dealing with men there is a provision made for removing this fear and purging this iniquity. It is not so much the method which is illustrated here as the fact itself. Sense of sin and unworthiness there must be to that man who comes near to God. But it need not be an abiding sense as of terror. There comes a day, or there ought to come a day, when God says, "Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." The sense of the remission of sin is as real as the sense of sin itself. (*W. Baxendale.*) *The Holy One the Purifier*.—I. WHAT IS THERE IN THE VISION OF GOD THAT NEED FILL A MAN, AND ESPECIALLY A RELIGIOUS MAN, WITH SUCH OVERWHELMING TERROR? I. No doubt certain very impressive contrasts are suggested between God and man when the Divine Majesty comes into close contact with His frail and feeble creature; but these are not, at any rate, all of them, of such a kind as to cause alarm. (1) There is the contrast between God's greatness and man's littleness and insignificance. This is, indeed, humiliating, and should lead us to abandon all foolish feelings of self-importance and self-sufficiency; but it need not induce overwhelming terror and alarm. So far from this, is there not something in our nature that seems to delight in the contemplation of greatness? Do we not go in search of greatness? (2) Or, again, there is the contrast between man's weakness and God's omnipotence. Yet here, again, we can but notice that in the mere revelation and exhibition of power, as of greatness, there is nothing necessarily alarming. All that we need to know is, that the power is friendly, or, at least, not actually unfriendly. (3) Or, just once more, there is something very humiliating in the contrast between God's eternal and ineffable wisdom and man's ignorance and blindness. Yet there is nothing alarming in superior wisdom; nay, there is something necessarily attractive in it. 2. What was the thought, then, that broke the prophet down, and what the contrast between God and himself that impressed him so powerfully and so painfully? For an answer we have but to listen to that song of the adoring seraphim that was sounding in his ear at the moment he was seized with this uncontrollable agony of terror. When he heard them cry, "Holy, holy, holy!" there rushed into his mind the thought of his own unfitness to stand before One to whom the intelligences of glory bore such witness. And it is to this that God brings us when we yield to the convicting influence of the Holy Spirit. There comes in most men's lives who yield to God—it is not equally marked in all—a moment of utter breakdown; a moment when all our self-respect seems to be humbled, and our self-confidence to melt away; a moment when the sense of sin seems indeed an intolerable load, that crushes the staggering conscience beneath its weight, and suggests the gloomiest anticipations of judgment, the forecast of despair. Some are led to God through Christ in very early days, and retain no recollection of any such experience, even if it ever occurred with them; though my personal observation leads me to conclude that it often does occur, even with very young children. Such an experience would doubtless occur in many more cases, were it not for our successful efforts at evasion. We endeavour to get away from reality, and take refuge in what is superficial and conventional; we flatter ourselves into the deep stupor of self-complacency by the cry, "Peace, peace!" when there is no peace. "He speaks to us just as if we were a pack of sinners," said the indignant churchwarden of a church in which I once conducted a mission, and yet that man had probably joined in repeating the Litany that very morning! II. But let us look again at this trembling man as he lies

there in his terror and anguish. WHAT IS TO BECOME OF ONE WHO IS, BY HIS OWN CONFESSION, GUILTY AND CONDEMNED IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS JUDGE? 1. At the very moment when the man felt himself undone, at the moment when the contrast between God's dazzling purity and awful holiness and his own uncleanness and sin had taken possession of his moral consciousness, and he could think and speak of nothing else, then flew one of the seraphim, speeding on a congenial errand, to bring the provisions of Divine mercy to bear upon this trembling soul. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." No doubt the phrase represents a feature of God's providence that is, at any rate, frequently illustrated in the incidents of our natural life. But I think we may say the words represent a law of the spiritual world, a great principle from which God seldom, if ever, departs in His dealings with human souls. How often, when men think they are waiting for God, and wondering why He does not intervene on their behalf, is He waiting for them to reach the end of their own resources, in order that He may find His opportunity! 2. Let us notice, too, how Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are alike concerned in the provision of this Divine consolation. It is at the behest of the eternal Father, responsive to the voice of His child's bewildered terror, that the great seraph speeds on his mission. God so loved the world that He sent His Son, and God so loves still, that He is ever sending—sending fresh influences of grace, fresh messages of mercy, fresh flashes of spiritual light. But further, notice how the mission of mercy is performed through the Divinely-appointed means. There stands the sacrificial altar where the expiatory sacrifices had that day been offered. Cleansing must reach the guilty in God's own appointed way. And as we have the love of the Father, and the sacrifice of the Son, presented to us here as the conditions on God's side of the cleansing of the sinner, so have we also a symbolic presentation of the work of the Holy Ghost. The spirit of burning, the "refiner's fire," that alone can cleanse the heart, and consume the dross and filthiness of our sin, breathing health and infusing purity, approaches us through the sacrificial work of Christ. And thus the night of sorrow and of self-despair melts into the blessed dawn of pardon.

3. As we contemplate this marvellous transformation scene, it is as well to dwell upon the fact that these effects were produced, not only by forgiveness, but by the knowledge of forgiveness. 4. And, most of all, was it not the expression of forgiveness to the heart of the awakened sinner that drew him towards the heart of his God, and led him in grateful love to present himself to God for service? (*W. Hay Aiken, M.A.*) *The three "thens" of Isaiah's temple vision:*—The prophet commenced his narrative by a note of time, and he makes his time-bell ring again and again—striking "then, then, then." I. The first "THEN" occurs thus—The prophet was led to feel his own uncleanness, and the uncleanness of those among whom he dwelt. When was that? For it is important for us to feel the same conviction, and we may do so by the same means. Was it when he had been looking into his own heart, and seeing its dire deceitfulness, and the black streams of actual transgression which welled up from that inward fountain of depravity? He might certainly have said "Woe is me!" if he had been looking there; but he was not doing so on this occasion. Had he been considering the law of God, had he observed how exceeding broad it is, how it touches the thoughts and intents of the heart, and condemns us because we do not meet its demands of perfect obedience? Assuredly if he had been looking into that pure and holy law he might have well bewailed his guilt, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Or, had he been turning over the pages of memory, and noting his own shortcomings and the sins of his fellows? Had he noted his own failures in prayer, or in service, or in patience? Had he watched himself in private and in public, and did the record of the past bring a consciousness of sin upon him? If so, he might well enough have lamented before the Lord and cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone." I might even say, had he been carrying out self-examination for a single day of his life, and had that day been the Sabbath, and had he been acting as the preacher, or had he been sitting under the most stirring ministry, and had he been at the holy feasts of the Lord, he might have found reason for confession. But none of these things are mentioned here as the occasion for this humbling cry. It was "then"—when he had seen the Lord. If you have never seen God, you have not seen yourselves; you will never know how black you are till you have seen how bright He is; and inasmuch as you will never know all His brightness, so you will never know all your own blackness. Learn, however,

this lesson, that to turn your face away from God in order to repent is a great mistake; it is a sight of God in Christ Jesus which will breed humiliation and lowly confession of sin. Now, did I hear you say, "I am a man that lives very near to God," &c. ? No man who has come fresh from God ever speaks in tones of self-congratulation. What said Job? (See Job xlii. 5, 6.) This was the experience of a perfect and an upright man. II. You see the man trembling; in himself unclean and conscious of it, and surrounded by a people as unclean as himself, and it is while he stands in that condition that we meet with our second "THEN." "Then flew one of the seraphims," &c. III. Let me now speak of the third "THEN." "Then said I, Here am I; send me." Knowing that we are now clean in the sight of God, through that altar which sanctifies all that it touches, we shall have all our fears removed, and then with grateful love burst out into the cry of full surrender and complete consecration. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The essentials of true worship*:—These verses teach us the essentials of true worship and of acceptable approach to God. And they seem to indicate these essentials as threefold, involving—**I. A SENSE OF PERSONAL WRETCHEDNESS.** To worship truly, there must be a sense of our own nothingness and need. The sense of wretchedness is first induced by the contemplation of the holiness and majesty of God. It is relieved by the condescension and mercy of the King. "Mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace embrace each other"; and in that embrace the man who is undone is folded, and invited to bring forth his offering. **II. A SENSE OF PARDON.** "Our God is a consuming fire," and our first contemplation of Him thus is one which appals and overcomes us. But a little further prostration before the Holy One shows that the fire is a purging fire, not to consume the man, but only to erase the confessed uncleanness from his lips. With the anointing of the holy fire on the lip there comes the new life into the heart, and now the mortal may mingle his praises with the seraphim themselves. **III. But worship is not complete without SERVICE.** To the ascription of the heart and lip there must be added the alacrity and obedience of the life. There was service for the seraphim: to fly with the live coal. And there is service for the seer: to fly with the living message. "Here am I; send me." Here is the alacrity of obedience. There is no curious inquiry about the nature of the service. The man becomes as winged as the seraph. (A. Mursell.) *Isaiah's purification*:—**I.** In the text we have **PERSONAL UNCLEANNESS ACKNOWLEDGED.** **II.** Observe, **GOD'S METHOD OF DISCOVERING THIS CONDITION TO HIS PEOPLE.** 1. A vision of Himself. 2. The prophet discovered his corruption by a particular manifestation. "Unclean lips." Lips are indicative of character; they reveal the state of the heart. **III.** **THE PROPHET WAS FILLED WITH KEEN DISTRESS** when he discovered that there was corruption within him. **IV.** The text reveals **GOD'S WILLINGNESS AND ABILITY TO SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM ALL SIN.** **V.** The text points out **THE DEFINITE NATURE OF THIS FULL SALVATION.** 1. As to date. "The year that King Uzziah died." 2. As to place. The sanctuary. It has been said that of all places in the world there are two which a man never forgets—the place where he was converted, and the place where he got his wife. A sea captain says, "I was crossing the Channel one day, in command of a passenger steamer, when a person rushed up to me, and said, 'Captain, why, that is Jersey!' 'Jersey,' I said, 'I know that, right well, for I have seen it hundreds of times'; but the speaker was not to be shaken off with my reply, and, with greater emphasis, repeated, 'But, sir,—Captain, that is Jersey!' I replied, 'Well, my good woman, what of that?' 'Why,' said she, 'I was born to God there!'" 3. As to results. Readiness and fitness for service. (H. Woodcock.) *The views of the glory of Christ which produce humiliation and penitence*:—**I. REPRESENT THE GLORY WHICH EVERY TRUE SAINT BEHOLDS IN JESUS CHRIST.** 1. The saints behold the Son of God undertaking, and in the fulness of time accomplishing, the work of our redemption. 2. They contemplate the exalted Redeemer, calling and entreating sinners to accept of the benefits of His purchase as the free gift of God. 3. They behold the great Redeemer setting up that kingdom which shall never be destroyed; taking possession of those by His Spirit, whom He hath purchased with His blood; and adorning and beautifying them with His own image. 4. They behold, with awful reverence, the majesty of Christ, when those who have heard the Gospel, but have not received the truth in the love of it, are given up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart. **II. EXPLAIN THE PECULIAR MANNER IN WHICH THE TRUE SAINTS BEHOLD THE GLORIES OF "THE KING, THE LORD OF**

HOSTS." 1. The saints, having the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, behold a glory and excellency, and taste a sweetness in Divine things, which other men cannot and do not perceive. 2. The saints alone are spiritually convinced of the reality and certainty of the great doctrines of the Gospel. III. CONSIDER THE TENDENCY OF SUCH VIEWS OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST, AND OF THE SCHEME OF SALVATION THROUGH HIM, TO PROMOTE THE VARIOUS EXERCISES OF PENITENCE AND SELF-ABASEMENT. 1. Such views of the great Redeemer will produce deep and serious thoughtfulness about salvation. 2. They will excite those who receive them to a strict and close examination of their hearts and lives. 3. They will produce low and debasing thoughts of ourselves. 4. They will promote in the mind of a saint a godly sorrow and a holy indignation on account of his personal sins. 5. They will determine those who receive them to turn from sin unto God, and by His grace to devote themselves entirely to His service. 6. They have a transforming or sanctifying influence. 7. They wean the affections from things below and place them on things spiritual and Divine. (*J. Erskine, D.D.*) *Personal responsibility of man as the possessor of speech.*—Like the coins which we daily pass through our hands without reading the superscription or testing the metal, we use language for our momentary needs without thinking whence it came to us, or what is its worth. But words are a great gift of God to man. Language is our inheritance from the ages that are gone; it grows richer as generations pass from the accumulations of their thought. Descending to us, it educates us. But if language does so much to fashion us, it is an instrument for us of wonderful power in moulding other minds. God's work, or else Satan's work, it is for ever doing. 1. If we were to decide what was the commonest fault of the tongue amongst ourselves, we should almost all answer that it was the making light of sin. We can allude to any sinful act in three ways: we can speak of it as the Bible speaks, as a sin against the Holy God; or as prudent men of the world speak, as a mistake, and a blunder, and a want of self-command and dignity; or, as the thoughtless speak, as something to be laughed at and forgotten, a natural and admissible thing. Our language is copious enough for any of these. One of the greatest dangers to souls is impurity. What shall we say of one who in that moment of trial when a soul is suspended between life and ruin, steps in, with no interest in the case except the love of evil, to unloose the bands that hold him to life, and so to help his downfall? If there is any retribution for sin, is not this the sin to call it down? Tell him that modesty is weak and boyish, and that a certain measure of dissipation befits the finished character of a man. Disconnect this sin, in all that you say about it, from every thought of God; speak never of fornication and adultery; language is rich in words that soften and disguise the guilt of this sin. Show how common the sin is. Throw on nature and on youth the blame, if there is blame, of passions too strong for restraint. You will extinguish, by such means, the last spark of that shame, which, fostered in a home where all was pure and chaste, has been sustained till now from extinction by a mother's pure prayers, by her solicitous efforts to keep enfolded even when far off, her darling in the invisible arms of her chaste affection. You will succeed. It were better that a mill-stone were hanged about your neck, and you drowned in the depth of the sea, than to reap such an accursed success against one of those for whom our beloved Lord died. 2. This brings us to another peril of the tongue. Two of the safeguards against sin are the love of God and the fear of judgment. But they suppose a faith that God indeed is, and that He verily is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. A theology of suppositions has no force as a safeguard. Faith may be strong or weak, but it cannot be faith and not faith at the same time. Through this state of division and doubt men have sometimes had to pass, but to linger in it is death. It is not a phase of religion, but a suspension of it. He for whom nor God, nor Christ, nor conscience, nor the life to come is a reality, has nothing on which he may support himself. But how are these questions, this state of doubt, treated in common talk? People mean no harm when they jest about the last new theory in science, yet when they come to consider what is the tendency of the conversation in the circle in which they live, they may have to confess that its tone tends to encourage doubt, and to make them content with the darkness. 3. Might not even our religious conversation be more fruitful than it is? St. James, from whose Epistle we might derive a complete code of rules for the government of the tongue, says, "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness

of God." He is speaking of religious things, of hearing and speaking "the word of truth," mentioned in the former verse. Does not religion suffer often from our hot and impetuous advocacy? We are zealous for God, and that, we think, excuses everything; and we are ready with the nickname or the good story against those whose views differ from our own, and we separate readily from those that will not go as far as we; and the lines that separate Church parties are daily more deeply marked. God's great purposes, in the growth of His kingdom, will gain nothing from our noisy warmth. (*Archbishop Thomson.*) *The making of a prophet*:—I. IF WE SEE GOD WE SHALL SEE OUR SIN. II. Note the second stage here, in the education of a soul for service—THE SIN RECOGNISED AND REPENTED OF IS BURNED AWAY. I would notice about this stage of the process—1. That Isaiah singularly passes beyond all the old ritual in which he had been brought up, and recognises another kind of cleansing than that which it embodied. He had got beyond the ritual to what the ritual meant. 2. But far more important than that thought is the human condition that is required ere this cleansing can be realised. "I am a man of unclean lips." "I am undone!" It was because that conviction and confession sprang in the prophet's consciousness that the seraph winged his way with the purifying fire in his hands. Which being translated is just this: faith alone will not bring cleansing. There must go with it what we call, in our Christian phraseology, repentance, which is but the recognition of my own antagonism to the holiness of God, and the resolve to turn my back on my own past self. 3. Again, note that we have here set forth most strikingly the other great truth, the two being as closely synchronous as the flash and the peal; namely, as soon as the consciousness of sin, and the aversion from it, spring in a man's heart, the seraph's wings are set in motion. Remember that beautiful old story in the historical books, of how the erring king, brought to sanity and repentance by Nathan's apologue, put all his acknowledgments in these words, "I have sinned against the Lord"; and how the confession was not out of his lips, nor had died in its vibration in the atmosphere, before the prophet, with Divine authority, replied with equal brevity and completeness, and as if the two sayings were bits of the one sentence, "And the Lord hath made to pass the iniquity of thy sin." That is all. Simultaneous are the two things. 4. Still further, notice how the cleansing comes as a Divine gift. The Lord is He that healeth us. 5. But, further, the cleansing is by fire. By which, as I suppose, in the present context, and at Isaiah's stage of religious knowledge and experience, we are to understand that great thought that God burns away our sins; as you put a piece of foul clay into the fire, and the stain melts from the surface like a dissipating cloud, as the heat finds its way into the substance. "He will baptise with the Holy Ghost and with fire"—a fire that quickens. A new impulse will be granted, and that will become the life of the sinful man's life, and will emancipate him from the power of his own darkness and evil. Now, let us remember that we have the fulness of all that was shadowed to the prophet in this vision, and that all these emblems are gathered together, not with confusion, but abundance and opulence in Jesus Christ Himself. Is He not the seraph? Is He not Himself the burning coal? Is He not the altar from which it is taken? All that is needed to make the foulest clean lies in Christ's great work. III. The third stage here is—THE PURGED SPIRIT IS READY FOR SERVICE. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The true messenger of God*:—Though the prophecies of Isaiah are amongst the most evangelical portions of the Old Testament, and though we read them with true delight, yet the history of the prophet himself, the writer of this splendid poem, is only very partially revealed. He is like a summer bird who sings sweetly on the branch of a tree, but hides himself from view. In this chapter we have an account, if not of his conversion, at least of his call to the prophetic office. It took place in the year of Uzziah's death. That was more than a date, or he would have probably said the year when Jotham began to reign. We find here the essential qualifications of the true messengers of God. I. A VIEW OF GOD'S HOLINESS. He saw the Lord "sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up," and heard the heavenly choir chanting "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts." The word "holy" means "separate." Israel was a holy nation, separate from all the people of the earth, and Canaan was the holy land. But God Himself is the holy, the separate, dwelling in light inaccessible. God is love, but He is holy love. He is a Father, infinitely exceeding any earthly parent in kindness and compassion; but He is a "holy Father." God's holiness was revealed to Isaiah in a remarkable manner. He saw God,



not with his natural eyes, but in such a manner as every quickened spirit must see Him. He saw God; that is, had a true conception of His character. He had heard of Him before when attending the national festivals, but he never saw Him properly until Uzziah was stricken with leprosy for his presumption. Every prophet and every messenger has a certain truth which has sunk deeper into his soul than any other truth, and it is not strange, therefore, if he enters into a covenant with that truth, as it were, that he will be faithful to it at all costs; and, on the other hand, he will receive great comfort to himself from such a truth, and find shelter under its branches from the heat of the day or the fury of the storm. Every worker for God in order to be successful must first have a vision of God. This must be the foundation of our work and the source of our success. To have a firm building, the foundation must be sound. We have never understood holiness, righteousness, and truth unless we have seen God. We can never have any idea of law except in the light of the Lawgiver. Great reformers have been great believers. This is the place to grow a creed in the sunshine of God's presence, and in contemplation of His supreme will. A short creed of thirty-nine letters burnt into our soul by the fire of conviction is better than a long creed of thirty-nine articles conveyed to our mind by traditionalism. A personal contact with God will ever leave its mark on the soul. This was experienced by Augustine, Anselm, Calvin, Bunyan, Jonathan Edwards, and other men of valour in the religious world. When Christmas Evans was once on his travels between Dolgelly and Machynlleth he had such a view of God's glory that he felt that the barren mountain of Cader Idris had become a Holy of holies. He wrestled with God for several hours, praying for the Churches and ministers of Wales by name. What wonder that he returned to Anglesey like a giant refreshed, and that a strong religious awakening was the natural result.

II. ANOTHER NECESSARY QUALIFICATION IS A SENSE OF MAN'S SINFULNESS. The vision of God's holiness created within Isaiah's mind a sense of his own unworthiness. "Then, said I, Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips." Why does he say unclean lips? Because he was called to speak for God, and therefore he must be, before all things, a man of pure lips, and must utter true words. He is only a voice uttering the thoughts of God, and it requires a clean channel for the waters of God's blessings to flow. He appears to be anxious to join the seraphic song, but how could he with his lips unclean? A sense of man's sinfulness will naturally follow a true view of God's holiness. No one with a light view of sin, viewing it only as mere weakness, the result of circumstances, or the effect of man's environment, can effect any real deliverance.

III. ANOTHER NECESSARY QUALIFICATION IS FAITH IN THE POSSIBILITY OF A MAN'S RENEWAL. Isaiah looked upon God, the Holy Being, as dwelling apart. On the other hand, the prophet views man in the darkness of his corrupt nature as far from God—the distance being measured, not by miles or geographical distinctions, but by sins and man's shortcomings. The prophet, first of all, seeks his own purity, and cries for renewal, and one of the seraphs, the agents of God's mercy, becomes the medium of that blessed work. We very often find during the first real awakening of a religious activity that men become very pessimistic in their views. They have passed through these two stages—the contemplation of God's holiness and man's sinfulness—and think of the great gulf between, but before they can expect to effect a great improvement, and turn any portion of the vast wilderness into God's garden, they must reach a further stage, and possess faith in the possibility of a man's renewal. They must look upon sin as a terrible enemy, but as an intruder in the city of Mansoul; look upon it as a serious blot upon our nature; but still to be removed by the healing influences of the grace of God. Michael Angelo saw in the rough stone at Florence the necessary material for the picture of an angel. So our Saviour looked with a prophetic eye upon all conditions of men, and He saw in Matthew, the publican, the making of an apostle. We need preachers of the Gospel of joy and of hope. John Newton said that he never doubted the power of God to save any, since he himself had been rescued from the bondage of sin. William Carey, studying a map of the world that hung in his workroom, thought with pain how small a portion of the human race had any knowledge of the Saviour; but he determined that something should be done, and he conversed, corresponded, preached, and published in order to awaken men, so as to expect great things from God, and to attempt great things for God. To love God and love our neighbour are two parts of the same law.

IV. ANOTHER QUALIFICATION IS A DESIRE TO PARTAKE IN THE WORK OF RESTORA-

TION. Isaiah heard the voice of God saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" This voice is only heard by those who are possessed of an obedient nature. 1. Man does not lose his personality in the work of God. "Here am I; send me." He offers himself. Nothing less will do, and nothing more is possible. The grace of God does not destroy man's identity, nor his personality. The most solemn thought possible is the responsibility of personal man to a personal God. We should lay our best at the feet of our Saviour, and put every faculty under tribute to Him. There is room in His service for the gifts of the imagination, the strength of the intellect, the power of the will, and the emotions of the heart. Let us do duty first, and then we can leave the consequences to God. Let us say, Send me, and let us consecrate the entire man on the altar of service. 2. The true worker must also feel that he is the object of Divine commission. "Send me." He feels, though willing and anxious to do his best, that he can accomplish nothing, unless he receives Divine commission, is endowed with Divine wisdom, and inspired by Divine fellowship. With this equipment a man can weather many a storm, and struggle manfully against many foes. Paul came face to face with God on the way to Damascus, and that made him strong to fight the battle and run the race. (*H. C. Williams.*) *In the temple:*—Jerusalem was the London of the Holy Land, the capital of Palestine. Well, a very dreadful thing had just happened in Jerusalem. The king was dead, and he died in the saddest possible way. The people were very sorry, and talked a great deal about it; and Isaiah, too, was filled with grief and wonder. What could it all mean? But there was nobody in all Jerusalem who could tell him. But God, who had a great work for the youth to do, took him and told him what it all meant. He showed him a vision. Just as we see things with our minds when our eyes are closed, so God taught Isaiah the meaning of the king's death, by making him see and hear wonderful things with the eye and ear of his mind.

I. WHAT ISALIAH SAW. He saw the Lord sitting on a throne. The King Uzziah was dead, but the eternal King never dies. He was on His throne, high and lifted up, and the glory of His garments filled the temple, so great and glorious was He. And then Isaiah heard angels singing, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory." If you went into a great picture gallery you would probably come to one room which would be called the "Rubens room," where all the pictures would be by Rubens; then in another part of the gallery you would come to the "Turner room," and all the pictures in that would be Turner's, the great English painter; and so on through room after room. And if you went into a library, on one shelf you would find the works of Shakespeare, on another the works of Bacon, on another the works of Milton. But with regard to God, the angels say you may go up and down the world, and everywhere you go you will find every room, every shelf, filled with the glory of the same One. The whole earth is filled with the glory of One, and that One is God. Now, why does God say that to Isaiah? In order to teach Isaiah reverence; to teach him to fear God—not to be afraid, but to teach him to honour God. Uzziah had dared God, as it were. Uzziah had forgotten the greatness of God, and so the first thing God did with the boy was to stamp upon his mind that he must be reverent. And, dear children, it is one of the greatest lessons that we all need: have your play and fun and laughter in their right time and in the right way; but when you come to this place for worship, for prayer and praise, remember how great God is.

II. WHAT ISALIAH FELT. He knew that Uzziah had done wrong; and God taught him that, young as he was, he too had sinned, and so he cried out, "Woe is me, I am unclean." He felt that he had sinned, and then lest his heart should be broken with sorrow, God made him feel that He—the God against whom he had sinned, could pardon and cleanse him. It is a grand moment when you find fault with yourselves. That is the finest thing a boy can do, to stand up and, as it were, pitch right into himself, find fault with himself, feeling that he has done wrong. Have you felt that, children—felt that you too have sinned? But if you have sinned it isn't hopeless, for God can take your sin away. Ask Him for pardon, ask Him for power not to sin.

III. WHAT ISALIAH HEARD. He heard God asking for somebody to carry a message for Him and do work for Him. Well, but you say, "We never heard God say that." No, you never heard Him in so many words, but if you know how to listen for God's call, you can hear Him calling every day. How does God call? God calls by putting a need before you. When anything wants doing, that is God's call to somebody.

IV. WHAT ISALIAH SAID. "Here am I."

He didn't look about and say, "Who is there that will go?" No; he said, "Here am I; send me," and God did not refuse him. You know that in arranging their play, the bigger boys choose who shall be on their side, and they always choose the best boys; the poor little fellows who can't play well are left for the other side. They are always so anxious to be called; but are always passed by, or left to the very last. God doesn't do that; He doesn't say, "Oh no, no, I want somebody else." He says, "Come, whosoever will let him come."

(*J. M. Gibbon.*) *Fear, as a preparation for duty*.—I. THE EMOTION WHICH THE MAN EXHIBITS. (Ver. 5.) II. THE BEARING IT HAS UPON HIS HISTORY.

Inferences—1. To make conviction of sin profounder a man needs to come up more and more evidently before the presence of the Divine purity. It never helps any one to begin desperately to study his wickednesses with a view to outroot them. It is better for him to keep looking at God. The objective study of Christ, His life, character, &c., is far safer and more profitable for growth in grace than any painful act of self-examination. 2. He who has suffered himself to tolerate trivial notions of disobedience has not yet ever had a proper conception of his Maker, who is one day to be his Judge. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*)

*A vision of God humbles*.—The prophet does not come away triumphing in what he has seen; he does not hold the vision as a prize, and mock other men because they have not seen similar revelations; he says, in effect, "If ever you see God you will fall down in humility, self-abhorrence and self-helplessness." (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *Isaiah's true character*.—Only the pure in heart can see God. But he who is sufficiently pure in heart to see God is, by that very vision, convicted of an unspeakable impurity. Isaiah was not a bad man but a good, one of the excellent of the earth in whom God took delight. But the very light that is in him turns to darkness in a glory so ineffable; and he finds a sentence of death in the very life which alone can quicken and renew him. (*S. Cox, D.D.*)

*Self-humbling a preparation for service*.—I have noted in my own experience that whenever I have been most blessed in the winning of souls, it has generally been just after I have endured a thorough stripping in my own heart, or when by soul trouble I have been brayed as in a mortar among wheat with a pestle till I seemed ground into dust. Trial has preceded triumph. A wider field has been opened to me by the breaking down of my hedges. I have shrunk into self-oblivion, and then the Lord has moved me to speak in a burning manner to His glory. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

*God's holiness, a revelation of sin*.—Like some search-light flung from a ship over the darkling waters, revealing the dark doings of the enemy away out yonder in the night, the thought of God and His holiness streaming in upon a man's soul, if it is there in any adequate measure, is sure to disclose the heaving waters and the skulking foes that are busy in the dark. (*A. MacLaren, D.D.*)

*The thought of God in the heart*.—The sleeping snake that is coiled in every soul stirs and begins to heave in its bulk, and wake when the thought of a holy God comes into the heart. (*Ibid.*) *No heaven possible to the uncleansed man*.—Oh, you who think that you are sure to go to heaven, are you quite sure that you would be happy if you got there? Might not the vision of God produce a similar effect upon you to that which was produced upon one who was probably a better man than you, by this august display? And what would heaven be but a moral hell if you found yourself grovelling in the dust, crying out in anguish and terror, "Woe is me! for I am undone"?

(*W. Hay Aitken, M.A.*) *Consciousness of sin*.—When one turns to look with a steadfast eye upon one's own doings, the terrible revelation comes as a sickening fear to each of us, that the dark side of our life is practically limitless. President Edwards used to exclaim for months together, "Infinite upon infinite! Infinite upon infinite!" And many an awakened soul has felt that the words were hardly exaggerated. (*D. M. McIntyre.*)

*The sense of sin*.—Augustine of Hippo records in his "Confessions": "Thou, O Lord, while he [Pontitianus] was speaking, didst turn me round towards myself, taking me from behind my back, where I had placed me, unwilling to observe myself, and setting me before my face, that I might see how foul I was, how crooked and defiled, besotted and ulcerous. And I beheld and stood aghast; and whither to flee from myself I found not."

*Self-revelation a preparation for great usefulness*.—Students of religious biography are familiar with the strange tale of the great mediæval preacher, Dr. John Tauler, of Strasburg, and know how popular he was while his sermons were of the letter only, and not from the Spirit, and how he was set

to the child's task of learning the very A B C of Christianity ere he could preach with the tongue of fire which reaches the hearts and consciences of the hearers. Falling into great weakness of body and continual sorrow of soul, losing all trust in himself and his own doings, he owned with bitter tears, "I am wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." It was at that moment he received the blessed knowledge of Christ as the sin-offering, and the Spirit of the Lord used him thenceforth in a marvellous manner for the convicting and comforting of the citizens, in the midst of earthquakes and wars and famine and pestilence, so that the great power of God fell upon that town as probably never before nor since. (*F. Sessions.*) *Jonathan Edwards' conversion*.—Jonathan Edwards was suddenly converted, as by a flash of light, in the moment of reading a single verse of the New Testament, into contact with which he was brought by a series of unusual circumstances. He was at home in his father's house; some ordinary hindrance kept him from going to church one Sunday with the family; a couple of hours in prospect with nothing to do sent him listlessly into the library; the sight of a dull volume with no title on the leather back of it piqued curiosity as to what it could be; he opened it at random and found it to be a Bible; and then his eye caught this verse: "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen." He tells us in his journal that the immediate effect of it was awakening and alarming to his soul; for it brought him a most novel and most extensive thought of the vastness and majesty of the true Sovereign of the universe. Out of this grew the astonishing pain of guilt for having resisted such a Monarch so long, and for having served Him so poorly. And whereas, he had hitherto had slight notions of his own wickedness and very little poignancy of acute remorse, now he felt the deepest contrition. Here is a precise reproduction of Isaiah's experience. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*)

Vers. 6, 7. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand.—*The live coal from the altar*.—These words seem to address themselves in the way of encouragement and consolation—I. TO THE MINISTERS OF THE WORD SPECIALLY. Like Isaiah they feel the importance of the work to which they are called, and their inability to discharge aright the commission with which they are entrusted. The more they contemplate the holiness of Jehovah, the purity and excellency of His Word, the distance between God and the sinner, the awful majesty of the Almighty, and the ineffable glory in which He is enshrined, the more they perceive their own unworthiness, and grieve over the sinfulness which adheres to them. They feel their shortcoming, and are disposed to say with the prophet, "Woe is me!" &c. But they have consolation. The coal from the altar, when brought in contact with the prophet's lips, purged his sin, cleansed his iniquity, and fitted him for the work to which he was Divinely called. II. TO BELIEVERS GENERALLY. Not only to the prophet of old, nor yet to the minister of the Gospel, but to every child of Adam, is there need for cleansing of sin in order to effect reconciliation, and make him a child of God. (*T. R. Redwar, M.A.*) *The ceremony of purification*.—It shows that contact with the fire of the Divine holiness is not necessarily destructive even to man. It is possible to "dwell with devouring fire." (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *The peace of forgiveness in Judaism*.—What was the meaning of this to Isaiah? If I am not mistaken, it is this: Up to this time all that system of sacred rites to which he had yielded all perfunctory obedience had been to him but as dead ceremonies, but now he sees that each of them is a living thing instinct with Divine life and power; each a splendid sacrament of grace to him who in conscious spiritual need will approach not it, but the God of Israel in and through it. And he realises how that, sinner as he is, he is by the providence of God in the midst of a great and glorious spiritual system in which his craving for peace is met, and where the Divine absolution is brought home to him. (*Canon Body, D.D.*) *The peace of forgiveness in Christendom*.—What is it that gives to this great system of Christendom the peace-giving power that by the confession of nineteen centuries it has? It is this. Behind all the ministries of the Church, vocal and sacramental, lies the pleading Priest, at the golden altar in heaven, for ever present and pleading before the Father the consummated sacrifice of Calvary. That sacrifice takes the form of a great offering of propitiation. And it is this that lies behind all the Church's rites, the powerful pleading by the living Christ of the death died on Calvary, through which pleading comes the living power of the Holy Ghost into

the Divine society, holding her in her weird, mysterious life, through which pleading simple rites are Divinely efficacious, through which pleading the coal becomes the coal that burns with living fire. And it is in the midst of this wondrous system of sacred ministries that the blessed Jesus applies to each the peace of reconciliation. (*Ibid.*) *The Holy Spirit as fire*.—Fire is something pure, burning, purifying; it lays hold of, penetrates, and, as it were, converts into its own substance whatever is susceptible of its action, thus hallowing the gifts laid on the altar. All these are the attributes of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to purge and illuminate man, to excite him to the love of God, to affect him with zeal for His glory, to arouse him from sloth to fervour, to inflame him with courage and constancy, with energy and devotion of all his powers to the cause of God, and to enable him to make supplications to God according to His will. And in this place fire signifies the spirit of prophecy, which spirit, like fire, sanctifies men in a peculiar manner to this great work, kindles, inflames, makes them glow with zeal; and, what is true in itself and specially applicable here, converts them into seraphs. (*C. Vitringa.*) “*A live coal*”.—The rendering of the A.V., “a live coal,” i.e., a burning log (for of course in those days the fuel was wood), is totally wrong, and, indeed, the conception is too grotesque to be for a moment entertained. (*P. Thomson, M.A.*) *The hot stone*.—A stone kept in all ancient Oriental households as a means of applying heat to household purposes. In order to bake cakes (1 Kings xix. 6, “cake baked on the hot stones”), or to roast flesh, the stone was first heated in the fire, and the wet dough or the flesh spread out upon it, the stones as they grew cold being exchanged for hot ones fresh from the fire. To boil milk, the hot stone was plunged into it when contained in the leathern skin that served alike as cauldron and pitcher. In short, the heated stone was a primitive means of applying fire wherever fire was needed. The prophet, carrying the similitude of an earthly household into the heavenly palace, assumes the presence of such an utensil on the hearth, which here, of course, must be conceived as an altar on the model of God’s earthly dwelling-place. (*Ibid.*) *The symbolic act of the angel*.—This would, perhaps, be quite intelligible to the contemporaries of the prophet; but it is undoubtedly very obscure to us. The act is intended to shadow forth in some way the cleansing of the prophet from sin; but what is the connection between such cleansing and the touching of Isaiah’s lips with the stone heated on the altar-fire? The stone is a means of applying fire; when, therefore, it is brought to the lips of the prophet, it is the same as if the whole altar-fire had been brought there; and that again is the same as if the prophet’s “unclean lips” had been laid on the altar. The everyday use of the stone would at once suggest this to the mind of Isaiah’s hearers. The angel’s act, therefore, is as much as to say: “Lo, I lay thy sinfulness on the altar-fire; and thou art cleansed from sin thereby.” But how should laying on the altar cleanse from sin? To lay on the altar is to give up to God—to make wholly His. Here, then, the angel says to Isaiah in substance this: “Thy sin-defiled nature (‘lips’) I lay on God’s altar. I make it all His again. The uncleanness of thy nature consisted in its opposition to God, for all sin is selfish action, as opposed to action for God, and now all the opposition of thy nature to God is taken away. Thy nature is, by this act, devoted wholly to God. By Divine power thou hast been suddenly, miraculously, turned into one from whom all selfish thoughts and words and deeds are taken away, into one whose every thought and desire is toward God; into one wholly consecrated and devoted to God; and therefore into one wholly pure.” All this is done only in symbol, of course; not in reality. What the prophet receives is in truth only God’s twice-repeated assurance that He looks on the prophet as one thus cleansed and devoted; that He overlooks the prophet’s past sins; that He imputes to him the purity of consecration; or, in short, that God pardons and forgives him. The essential core of the idea of forgiveness, in the New Testament as well as in the Old, is just this, that God treats guilty but penitent men as if they were not guilty, with a view to freeing them from their guilt and making them righteous. Isaiah conceives of His forgiveness under forms familiar to his time. He, a sinful man, is laid on the altar of God, and made wholly clean in God’s sight, whatever the imperfections that may still cling to his nature, whatever selfishness or self-will may still mar his reconciliation to the will of God. Of course, however, the change of will does not long continue merely imaginary, or in symbol only; for, in all time, God’s treatment of men as if their wills were devoted to Him, God’s loving forgiveness of men’s sins, has been the

chief means of subduing man's will to Him in actual fact. (*Ibid.*) *Christ symbolised by fire*.—A traditional saying attributed to our Lord—"He that is near Me is near fire." (*B. F. Westcott, D.D.*) *Holiness and service*.—Had the prophet need of a coal? Oh, then, grant for me a whole globe of fire, to remove my impurity and make me a fit messenger to Thy people. (*Bernard.*) *Sin, and God's treatment of it*.—No intelligent man can read the entire Bible without discovering four things—1. That God considers sin a positive element in human affairs, to be talked about and dealt with as a fact. 2. That sin is the one abominable thing God says He hates, and will heavily punish. 3. That every sin is inherent in some personal factor. 4. That Almighty God Himself has provided a way by which every sinner can be relieved from the penalty of his transgressions, and graciously restored to holiness. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *John Woolman's experience*.—That eminently holy man, "Saint John Woolman," as the poet Whittier called him, who struck the first blow against domestic negro slavery in America, notwithstanding the Divine illuminations he had been blessed with in early boyhood, had to pass through an analogous baptism ere he was able to follow the Master's call into public service. "I sought deserts and lonely places, and there with tears did confess my sins to God, and humbly craved His help. And I may say with reverence, He was near me in my troubles, and in these times of humiliation opened my ears to discipline. . . . From an inward purifying, and steadfast abiding under it, sprang a lively operative desire for the good of others. All the faithful are not called to the public ministry; but whoever are, are called to minister of that which they have tasted and handled spiritually." (*F. Sessions.*) *Stephen Grellet*.—Of all the men of recent generations, Stephen Grellet, the French refugee nobleman, seems to have come nearest to the ancient Hebrew "evangelical" prophet, and to the apostles of Christ. Pope, emperors, kings, and princes were the objects of his solicitude, and to these exalted personages he was permitted access, and personally delivered messages from God, as straightforward and cogent as those he gave to the veriest offscourings of the slums and purlieus of European cities, or to the formalists of Catholic and Protestant creeds. "One evening, as I was walking in the fields alone [this was when he was twenty-two years of age], my mind being under no kind of religious concern, nor in the least excited by anything I had heard or thought of, I was suddenly arrested by what seemed to be an awful voice, proclaiming the words Eternity, Eternity, Eternity! It reached my soul,—my whole man shook,—it brought me, like Saul, to the ground. The great depravity and sinfulness of my heart were set open before me, and the gulf of everlasting destruction to which I was verging." In this state he remained for many days, till it pleased God to deliver him, not by the agency of a hot stone brought by a winged angel from a visible altar, but by that of some loving sentences spoken by a lady preacher from England who was visiting the American home of the exile. "No strength to withstand the Divine visitation was left in me. Oh, what sweetness did I then feel! It was indeed a memorable day. I was like one introduced into a new world; the creation and all things around me bore a different aspect,—my heart flowed with love to all." From that "awful day," as he calls it, deep convictions laid hold of his mind, which, as he cherished them, led him to a full surrender, and a willingness to devote himself to the life of an ambassador of Christ to the rulers and peoples of the world. (*Ibid.*) *Another inward vision*.—He tells us that once again an inward vision came to him. It was during a period of silent worship among the members of the religious body to which this quondam disciple of Voltaire had joined himself. He was here granted such a view and sense of his sinful nature, though he was at that time a converted man, that he was like one crushed under millstones. "My misery was great, and my cry was not unlike that of Isaiah, 'Woe is me, for I am undone!'" Then there came to him a revelation of perfect salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 8. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send?—*Messengers wanted*.—I. THE PERSON WANTED, as described in the questions, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us?" The person wanted is viewed from two points. The person wanted has a Divine side: "Whom shall I send?" Then he has a human aspect: "Who will go for Us?" But the two meet together—the human and Divine unite in the last words, "for Us." Here is a man, nothing more than a man of human instincts, but clad through Divine grace with superhuman, even with Divine authority. Let us look, then, at this two-sided

person. 1. He is Divinely chosen. 2. Cheerfully willing. 3. Sent by the Three-One. When we tell others the story of the Cross we speak for God the Father. Nor must we forget our tender Redeemer. Moreover, that blessed Spirit, under whose dispensatorial power we live at the present hour, He has no voice to speak to the sons of men audibly except by His people; and though He works invisibly and mysteriously in the saints, yet He chooses loving hearts, and compassionate lips, and tearful eyes to be the means of benediction. II. THE PERSON OFFERING HIMSELF. "Here am I; send me." The person offering himself is described in the chapter at very great length—he must be an Isaiah. Being an Isaiah, he must—1. Have felt his own unworthiness. Notice how it was that Isaiah was made to feel his unworthiness. (1) By a sense of the presence of God. (2) Isaiah saw the glory of Christ. (3) It will strike you, too, that the particular aspect in which this humiliation may come to us will probably be, a sense of the Divine holiness, and the holiness of those who see His face. 2. We must possess a sense of mercy. 3. The man who will be acceptable must offer himself cheerfully. "Here am I." How few of us have in very deed given ourselves to Christ. It is with most professors, "Here is my half-guinea, here is my annual contribution"; but how few of us have said, "Here am I." 4. The person who thus volunteered for sacred service gave himself unreservedly. He did not say, "Here am I; use me where I am," but "send me." Where to? No condition as to place is so much as hinted at. 5. He gives obediently, for he pauses to ask directions. It is not, "Here am I; away I will go," but "Here am I; send me." Some people get into their head a notion that they must do something uncommon and extraordinary, and though it may be most irrational, it is for that very reason that the scheme commends itself to their want of judgment. Because it is absurd, they think it to be Divine; if earthly wisdom does not justify it, then certainly heavenly wisdom must be called in to endorse it. Now, I conceive that you will find that whenever a thing is wise in God's sight it is really wise, and that a thing which is absurd is not more likely to be adopted by God than by man; for though the Lord does use plans which are called foolish, they are only foolish to fools, but not actually foolish. III. THE WORK WHICH SUCH PERSONS WILL BE CALLED TO UNDERTAKE. Isaiah's history is a picture of what many and many a true Christian labourer may expect. Isaiah was sent to preach very unpleasant truth, but like a true hero he was very bold in preaching it. "Isaiah is very bold," says the apostle. Now, if you are called of God either to preach or teach, or whatever it is, remember the things you have to preach or teach will not be agreeable to your hearers. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Militia-Christians*:—Some people are militia-Christians—they serve the King with a limitation, and must not be sent out of England; but others are soldier-Christians, who give themselves wholly up to their Lord and Captain; they will go wherever He chooses to send them. (*Ibid.*) *Copyhold-Christians*:—Some professors appear to belong to God by copyhold. They grant a limited kind of Divine right to their energies and substance; but there are many clauses which limit the holding. I hope that you are God's portion upon an absolute freehold. (*Ibid.*) *God's call for servants*:—Several questions arise as we read these words. Why is God asking for service instead of discharging the work Himself? He can speak in tones which would make the proudest quail; He can unfold a majesty before which the whole nation should be subdued. Or again, if He needs service, why does He wait for volunteers? Why does He not compel servants to enter upon this mission, as He imposed on Moses the task of leading the people of Israel out of the land of bondage? I. THE DIVINE CALL. "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" 1. Why should God thus ask human service? We cannot doubt for a moment how independent our glorious God might be of all mere human resources. (1) The great purposes which God seeks to accomplish can best be achieved through human instrumentality. God craves from men, not the unconscious response which the mown grass makes to the showers, or dewdrops to the sunlight. He desires intelligent, trustful, loving union with Himself, and it may be that such ends as these are better obtained through human instrumentality than by an overpowering exhibition of the Divine majesty and glory. As the light comes to us through the atmosphere, which lessens its dazzling power, so that we are illuminated instead of being blinded with excess of light, so God gives to us His commands and messages through human tongues and language, lest we should be overpowered. (2) God means to educate His servants by using them for His purposes. When He says, "Whom shall I send," it is not that He

is destitute of angelic hosts who would thankfully accept the commission. He knows how our human hearts will be educated by the very ministry we render.

2. Notice what is involved in such a call as this. When God says, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us," He pledges Himself to endue with authority, and to endow with all needful gifts, the man who answers the call. II. THE RESPONSE OF THE PROPHET. "Here am I; send me." 1. What could have led the prophet to offer himself for a Divine mission? How had he the courage to step forward and volunteer? Did he not shrink from the vast issues involved in the work? Did he not understand the dangers into which he would plunge? Did he not know how hard it would be to reach men's hearts around him with the solemn message? He knew it all, but he stepped forward in the simplicity of a perfect faith, and said, "Here am I; send me." You will perceive in the foregoing verse an account of his preparation for receiving this call. He was prepared by a sense of pardoning love. In the fulness of a loving, grateful heart, he stepped forward and accepted the mission. 2. Notice the willingness with which the prophet offered himself. He steps forward as one who feels it an honour, and is ready for any sacrifice which the honour may entail. This is the light in which we may wisely look on Christian service. III. THE DIVINE ACCEPTANCE OF THE PROPHET'S OFFER. God said, "Go." You have just that very simple succession of events. God asking for service, the prophet offering himself, and God accepting his services. If God has given you aptitude in dealing with the experiences of men, go into the homes of the poor and destitute, ministering consolation to their sorrows. If God has given you warm sympathies with the young, go into the ranks of the Sunday school, draw young hearts around you, and win them to Christ. If God has given you influence with men, go to the drunkard and the fallen and seek to reclaim them from the depths of degradation in which they are sunk. If God has given you the tongue of the wise to speak a word in season, which shall be as apples of gold in pictures of silver, go and use the power in private talk with the men you meet in daily life. (*C. B. Symes, B.A.*) *The commission of a sinful but cleansed man* :—"Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Why does the Lord ask that question with such anxiety when He has all those shining seraphs standing at His side, and each one of them with six wings? Why was Isaiah, the son of Amoz, a man of unclean lips, and a man woeful and undone, so accepted, and so sent? Seraphs, not sinners, should surely be the preachers of such holiness as that of the God of Israel, and the heralds of such a Saviour—that is what we would have expected. But God's thoughts in these things are not as our thoughts. This has always been God's way in choosing and in ordaining and in sending both prophets, and psalmists, and priests, and preachers for His Church on earth. Only once did God choose a completely sinless preacher. Always, but that once, God has chosen sinful men; and, not seldom, the most sinful of men He could get to speak to their fellow-men about sin and salvation. Gabriel might come with his six wings and his salutation to announce to Mary that the fulness of time had come and that the Word was to be made flesh, but it was John, the son of Zacharias, who was not that light, who was sent to preach repentance to the vipers of his day, and to urge them to flee from the wrath to come. And just as for the awakening and the warning of sinners, so for the edification and the comfort of saints. "For every high priest is taken from among men, who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." Isaiah, accordingly, of all men on the earth at that moment, and of all angels in heaven, was the man chosen of God to preach repentance to Jerusalem, and to prophesy to her the coming of her Messiah. And he preached on all these matters as no angel in all heaven could have preached. He preached as only a leper could preach to his brother lepers, and as only one undone man could preach to other undone men. Just hear him in his first sermon. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib. Ah! sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers. Why should ye be stricken any more? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores." All God's seraphs taken together could not preach like that. It takes a great sinner to preach as well as to hear like that. You must have a man of men to see, and to feel, and to say things like that. And then, on the other hand, no seraph of them all, with all his wings, had seen down so deep, and had come up so close to the holiness of God as Isaiah had seen and had come close. The seraphs cry Holy, holy, holy, to one another,



but they do not know what they are saying. The seraphs are innocent children. And He whom they so innocently praise charges His seraphs with folly. But, "Woe is me! for I am undone!" The Lord likes to hear that. This young preacher, then, having seen both sin and holiness as no seraph ever saw these terrible things, proceeds in his sermon in this way: "Wash you, make you clean; cease to do evil, learn to do well; judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Every syllable of all that is out of Isaiah's own experience. Preaching like that never yet came out of the schools of the prophets, any more than it ever came out of the mouth of an angel. Isaiah had done it all to himself, and had had it all done unto him of God. (*A. Whyte, D.D.*) *The challenge of service:—*

I. THE CHALLENGE. "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" The Lord's ordinary manner of appointing His messengers is to select them Himself, and without consulting them send them to do their work. He commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh with every consideration for Jonah's fitness, and no consideration for Jonah's tastes. The work is always more important than the man, for the man has a brief life, and the work is immortal. It ought not, therefore, to be expected that the Lord should regard anything in choosing a servant for duty but that servant's qualifications for the duty. But there are exceptions to this rule of selection for work. When the task is a peculiarly hazardous one; when the performance of it demands the highest attributes of the intellect, the rarest qualities of the heart, and an extraordinary stimulus of inspiration, it is better that these gifts should go to the work under the impulse of a self-moving passion rather than under the enforcement of command. The General of an army wisely relaxes the routine discipline of duty when in the fortunes of the campaign the troops have to face the desperate service of some forlorn hope. "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" is the proclamation from the Commander's tent, and a storming party of volunteers is told off, to mount the breach and take the van of danger. 1. In the year that King Uzziah died it seemed as if the last hope of the people of God had expired with him. 2. The nature of the work may be inferred from the condition of the people. They were an old and not a young nation: they were wicked and not ignorant: the two fountains of power, the Church and the State, were corrupt at their sources, authority of every kind was on the side of licentiousness; and since, with all this, the outward forms of order and of piety were preserved, the people grew up to be as remarkable for their hypocrisy as for their immorality. It has always been supposed that, whether in the case of a nation, or an individual, suffering is a powerful moralist; and that a mind which is proof against the humbling and cleansing effects of pain is reprobate and beyond redemption. The people of Israel and Judah had been punished, by every species of chastisement; invasion, captivity, pestilence, famine, and sword, nothing that a people loves or a man cherishes had been left untouched; from the sole of the nation's foot to the crown of her head, the lash of retribution had been laid on so heavily that nothing was to be seen but "wounds and bruises and putrifying sores." Yet they continued to revolt more and more. This was the state of things for which the Lord demanded a voluntary workman. Who will be a bearer of evil tidings? Who will reprove kings for My sake? Who will expose and denounce wickedness in high places? Who will proclaim the insincerity of the priests, their robbery of the flock, and the fiction of their ceremonial? Who will go to the market-places and declare the dishonesty of their traffic? Who will beard the army and charge the soldiers with cowardice and treason? Who will be hated of all men, and be the victim of the conspiracies of the crafty, of the insults of the street rabble, and of the desertion of false and incompetent friends? Who will endure to fail; to be simply a witness; to speak without convincing; to sow without a harvest? 3. The voice of the Lord cries loudly in the midst of the Churches of to-day, inviting voluntary service for difficult work; missionary work abroad and missionary work at home.

II. THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE CHALLENGE. "Here am I; send me." Looking at this acceptance by itself, it seems an extraordinary sacrifice on the part of Isaiah. He was a youth, probably not more than eighteen or nineteen, when he answered the Lord's challenge; he was a member of the first circle of the Jewish aristocracy, and, according to some authorities, a prince of the royal blood. He was nurtured in the soft and sumptuous luxuriance of palaces. There had been in his training everything to satisfy sense and to kindle ambition.

Having great natural parts and a fine genius, and commanding both means and leisure, the career of a great State ruler, or a Church dignitary, or the easy splendour of an intellectual voluptuary, any or all of these distinctions were within reach of the gifted kinsman of Uzziah. Youth as he was, his social position and quick observation enabled him to appreciate the service demanded in the challenge. He knew the people to whom the message would be sent; he conjectured what the character of that message would be; and what kind of service awaited the man who should deliver it; that it would be hard, unthankful, and dangerous; and yet this youth, born to be a fine gentleman, accepted a task which might well have made the strongest and most experienced natures shrink, "Here am I; send me!" Let us seek the explanation of this simplicity, devotion, and courage in that which went before the acceptance of the challenge. (*E. Jenkins, LL.D.*)

**Visions of God.**—I. THE VISION OF GOD TO THE SOUL. The vision of God to the soul implies these two facts, namely, that God can communicate, speak, and make Himself manifest and known to the soul, and that the soul has capacity to receive what God makes known, or communicates to it. This capacity has been impaired, more or less, in all human beings. II. THE VISION OF GOD HAS EFFECTS UPON THE SOUL. It has a creative power that calls several new forces into action. 1. The sense of sin. 2. The sense of forgiveness. 3. The sense of duty. 4. Power to perform duty. (*W. Thomas.*)

**The Divine call for missionaries.**—I. Let us gaze upon THE VISION OF GLORY which Isaiah saw. It was necessary for him to see it in order that he might be brought into the condition of heart out of which should come the full consecration expressed in—"Here am I; send me." Observe what he saw. 1. The supreme glory of God. See the patience of His infinite majesty,—He sits in calm glory upon His eternal throne. Nor is it a mean throne either, nor one of little dignity; it is "high and lifted up." It is not merely above all other thrones by way of greater power, but over them all by way of supreme dominion over them. 2. The court of the great King. He beheld the glorious attendants who perpetually perform homage, nearest to His throne. 3. The perpetual song, for these sacred beings continually cried, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory." While you praise His holiness do not forget His power, but adore Him as "Jehovah of hosts." And then dwell, that you may feel a missionary spirit, on that last part of the song, "The whole earth is filled with His glory," for so it really is in one sense. "Jehovah of hosts is the fulness of the whole earth." Turn this ascription, for it may be so read, into a wish: "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory." Read it, if you please, as a prophecy: "The whole earth shall be filled with His glory," and then go you forward, O ye servants of the Most High, with this resolve, that in His hands you will be the means of fulfilling the prophecy by spreading abroad the knowledge of His name among the sons of men. II. Let us now turn our thoughts to THE VISION OF ORDINATION. This man Isaiah was to go forth in Jehovah's name, but in order to preparation for so high an embassy he must undergo a process peculiar but necessary. III. When a man is prepared for sacred work he is not long before he receives a commission. We come, then, to think of THE DIVINE CALL. Notice the particular kind of man for whom this voice is seeking. It is a man who must be sent, a man under impulse, a man under authority—"Whom shall I send?" But it is a man who is quite willing to go, a volunteer, one who in his inmost heart rejoices to obey—"Who will go for Us?" What a strange mingling this is! "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel," and yet "taking the oversight of the flock of God not by constraint but willingly." IV. Now comes the last point, THE EARNEST RESPONSE. "Here am I; send me." 1. I think I see in that response a consciousness of his being in a certain position which no one else occupied, which rendered it incumbent upon him to say, "Here am I." 2. Then, he makes a full surrender of himself. Isaiah gave himself up to the Lord none the less completely because his errand was so full of sadness. He was not to win men, but to seal their doom by putting before them truth which they would be sure to reject. 3. Then comes Isaiah's prayer for authority and anointing. If we read this passage rightly we shall not always throw the emphasis upon the last word, "me," but read it also thus, "Here am I, send me." He is willing to go, but he does not want to go without being sent. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) Here am I; send me.—**Whole-hearted service.**—"Here am I; send me." These few simple words express the crisis, the turning-point in the life of Isaiah. If he had never uttered these words you would never have heard of him. But the uttering of these words in

profound sincerity from the bottom of his heart made him one of the greatest of the prophets of God. The very first condition of whole-hearted service is the conviction that the cause which we serve will ultimately prevail. The day is coming when the Christian religion will prevail everywhere, when the will of God will be done on earth as literally and really as angels do it in heaven. Even now things are not as they seem. Even now the glory of God fills the whole earth. So young Isaiah realised in days much darker and more ominous than these. (*H. P. Hughes, M.A.*) *The birth of the true missionary*:—In the fellowship of the cleansing, the fellowship of the Cross, the missionary is born. (*R. J. Campbell, M.A.*) *Seeing and saying*:—Men must see before they can say. (*Ibid.*) *Ecstasy and self-immolation*:—Bless God for any ecstasy that leads to self-immolation. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Seers and servants*:—We must become seers before we can become servants. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Experience to be used for the benefit of others*:—Isaiah saw the King that he might serve the King. He was convinced of sin that he might convince his fellows. He was purged from his iniquity that he might proclaim the love, the sacrifice, which takes away the iniquity of us all. (*Ibid.*) *The whole life should be devoted to God*:—Though at times he had to rebuke princes and to pronounce the doom of nations, yet it was his whole life that he dedicated to God, with all its petty details of daily conduct. It was part of his work to live with the prophetess he took to wife according to a Divine law; to name and train his children so that little Immanuel and little Maher-shalal-hash-baz should be “for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts.” And, in like manner, God sends us to our own people, to our kinsfolk and acquaintance. (*Ibid.*) *“To let the love out”*:—If there were no humanity to save, none but our own, yours and mine, the fellowship of the cleansing would still be ours, but we would be seeking for something to do to express to the Christ our sense of what that fellowship had brought. Two sisters brought this fact home to me. One was weak, suffering, dying, though the other did not know it at the time. The one who was watching by the bedside said, “It seems dreadful to be so helpless, to feel I can do so little to assuage the suffering of the dear one. I can do nothing whatever. If I only could do something that hurts, hurts me, I think I should feel better, to let my love out.” I know what she meant quite well—to let the love out. The love that we bear the dear Redeemer compels us to see the Divine in mankind. There is a sweet and holy sympathy born of that urgent desire to let the love out which was born in the fellowship of the cleansing. (*R. J. Campbell, M.A.*) *Every church member should be a missionary*:—In looking over a certificate of membership which I had received from a church in New York, concerning one of its members who was a sailor, I was pleased to observe that at the back of the certificate there were directions given to the member; and the first one was this, “You are to remember that as a member of this church going upon a voyage, you are sent by us as a missionary. You are to understand that you and every other member of the church are bound to spread abroad the Saviour’s name.” (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *“Ready to obey”*:—Of a man chosen by the church council of a Uganda mission, to act as father to the boys and see that they kept out of mischief, a missionary writes: “An ordination candidate, whose name is Jacob the elephant, an extremely nice, sensible man, was suggested, and I was much struck by his reply when asked if he would undertake the post. He at once said, ‘Is it for me to choose my work? You tell me what to do, and I am ready to obey.’” (*Christian Endeavour.*) *The missionary spirit*:—General Booth once wanted fourteen recruits for India. He had his whole company about him, and he said: “This is very dangerous work, and it requires great self-sacrifice. I might detail you for the work, but I will not detail any one of you. I will tell you what I will do: if any of you want to volunteer for it, you will have the privilege to do so after one hour. Go away now and pray about it.” They went away and prayed about it, and at the end of the hour General Booth said, “Are any of you willing to undertake this work?” And fourteen stalwart men stepped forward and said, “We are ready to sail to-morrow morning.” (*A. H. Bradford, D.D.*) *A true missionary*:—Speaking at Exeter Hall, in 1886, James Chalmers said, in reference to his New Guinea experiences: “Recall the twenty-one years; give me back all its experiences, give me its shipwrecks, its standings in the face of death; give it me surrounded by savages with spears and clubs; give it me back again with spears flying about me and the club knocking me to the ground; give it me back, and I will still be your missionary.” (*Sunday School Chronicle.*)

"Send me."—David Brainerd prayed for such a complete absorption in the Divine will that he might become utterly indifferent to every outward circumstance of discomfort and trial, if only he could make known the love of Christ. He says in his journal:—"Here am I, Lord, send me; send me to the ends of the earth; send me to the rough and savage pagans of the wilderness; send me from all that is called comfort in the earth; send me even to death itself, if it be but in Thy service and to promote Thy kingdom." (*Ibid.*) *Save one.*—A man once rose in one of Mr. Moody's meetings, and gave his experience. "I have been for five years on the Mount of Transfiguration." "How many souls did you lead to Christ last year?" was the sharp question that came from Mr. Moody, in an instant. "Well, I don't know," was the astonished reply. "Have you led any?" persisted Mr. Moody. "I don't know that I have," answered the man. "Well," said Mr. Moody, "we don't want that kind of mountain-top experience. When a man gets so high that he can't reach down and save poor sinners, there is something wrong." (*Ibid.*) *Every Christian should be an evangelist.*—Dr. Howard Crosby used to say, "When will New York city be evangelised? I'll tell you—when every Christian becomes an evangelist." (*Christian Endeavour.*) *God's call: the anti-slavery and other crusades.*—Those who do the best work in the world's redemption, and yet may never preach a sermon, have had a "call" to accomplish it. The "call" may have been felt only as an overwhelming and disinterested desire to accomplish some noble end, but it has been as truly there as if seraphim had announced it. Such great movements as the anti-slavery crusade are full of instances. Of Thomas Clarkson it is recorded that when about twenty-four years of age, after having composed and read a Latin prize essay at Cambridge University, he travelled to London to assist in founding a society for the suppression of the slave trade. Overwhelmed with the awfulness of the traffic he had been denouncing, he alighted from his horse, and sitting by the roadside prayed that God would raise up some devoted champion of the oppressed African. Suddenly the thought flashed into his mind that he should offer himself to this cause. How he, under this overwhelming feeling, ultimately surrendered the clerical life for which he was preparing, how he laboured till the slave trade was excised from the body-politic, and how he was followed in a true "apostolic succession" by William Wilberforce, in the further attack upon domestic slavery, is recorded in the pages of history. Wilberforce, too, passed through times of deep self-conflict till the necessary new habits of mind and life were formed. He, in turn, gave place to such men as Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton and Joseph Sturge, who also were "called" and "ordained" by the Spirit of God to the Christlike work of securing liberty to the captive. Prison reformers and uplifters of the criminal, like John Howard, Elizabeth Fry and Sarah Martin, passed through periods of probation, when there seemed to be in their minds "a prophetic stir of coming duties outside the usual sphere" of their daily lives. (*F. Sessions.*) *Richard Knill's call.*—I was studying for the ministry, with a view to labour in England; it happened that there was a missionary meeting in the neighbourhood, and one of the ministers said to me, "Come over, and bring the students with you, it will do them good,"—and as one inducement he said, "There is an eminent Scotch minister in town, Dr. Waugh, who is to preach." We went—and, I have no doubt, we went praying to receive a blessing. Dr. Waugh took for his text that beautiful verse in Isaiah, "It shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come who were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." In the first part of his subject he spoke of the perishing condition of the man who was ignorant of the Gospel, and he said, "It is a fact, there are four hundred millions of our fellow-creatures in this deplorable condition, without God, and without hope." After he had dwelt on this, he spoke of the infinite wisdom and goodness of God, which had provided a remedy for perishing sinners. After speaking on this for some time he stopped, and looking around on the congregation, he said, "This trump cannot blow of itself, we must have men to blow it—pardoned sinners—redeemed men—those who have tasted the love of Christ, and who feel for their fellow-creatures—those who know what a precious Saviour Christ is, from sweet experience. We want such men—the heathen are perishing, and will perish, unless God's remedy is sent to them—that remedy is in your possession." He then paused again, and looking around, as if wanting to fix his eyes on some object, he said in a moving manner, "Is there one disciple of

the Lord Jesus Christ who has love enough for his Divine Master in his heart to say, Here am I; send me?" Oh, when he said that, I felt it thrill through my soul, and I silently said to Him who searcheth my heart, "Lord, I will go." It was a memorable day to me, I can never forget it. The sermon was soon ended; the congregation was broken up; my friends went to dine; I was invited to dine with my fellow-students; I had no appetite for food, my heart was full—and I said to a friend, Can you procure me a garret, where I can spend the remainder of the day in fasting and prayer? He procured it for me; and in that garret I spent some of the happiest and most solemn moments of my life; and seeing the agony of Him whose blood was shed a sacrifice for my sins, I said, "Lord, I will go." (*R. Knill.*) *Ready for service*.—When the Moravian Brethren in Germany were carrying on their great mission work in heathen lands, Zinzendorf, their distinguished leader, sent one day for one of the ministers, and said to him, "Will you go to Greenland to-morrow as a missionary?" The minister, after a moment's hesitation, said, "Yes, if the shoemaker can finish the boots which I have ordered of him by to-morrow, I will go." (*H. Macmillan, LL.D.*) *God's call: Cobden and Bright*.—Cobden and Bright believed—to quote the language of the former—that "a moral and even religious spirit might be infused into the question of the repeal of the Corn Laws." The story of Mr. Bright's dedication to this most beneficent idea is admirably reproduced in Vince's life of the great Tribune. There came to his soul's vision no forthshadowing of God's glory in any man-made temple, but the story is thus told by himself: "I was at Leamington when Mr. Cobden called upon me. I was then in the depths of grief,—I might almost say of despair,—for the light and sunshine of my house had been extinguished. All that was left on earth of my young wife, except the memory of a sainted life and of a too brief happiness, was lying still and cold in the chamber above us. Mr. Cobden called upon me as a friend, and addressed me, as you may suppose, with words of condolence. After a time he looked up and said, 'There are thousands of homes in England at this moment where wives, mothers, and children are dying of hunger. Now,' he said, 'when the first paroxysm of your grief is passed, I would advise you to come with me, and we will never rest till the Corn Law is repealed.' I accepted his invitation. I knew that the description he had given me of the homes of thousands was not an exaggerated description. I felt in my conscience that there was a work that some one must do. From that time we never ceased to labour hard on behalf of the resolution we had made." In this case a Lancashire manufacturer brought the "call," but surely the angels of sorrow and sympathy assisted in the "consecration," and the Holy One of Israel worked with His servant. (*F. Sessions.*)

Vers. 9-13. **And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not.**—*Isaiah: his heaviness and his consolation*.—1. Isaiah summed up his whole future life in those two words, "Behold me; send me." Then on his ardent soul was poured the heavy message, "Go, and thou shalt tell this people" (God speaks of them no more as His own), "Hear ye on, and understand not; and see ye on, and know not. Make thou dull the heart of this people, and its ears make thou heavy, and its eyes close thou; lest it see with its eyes, and with its ears hearken, and its heart understand, and it return and one heal it." Startling office for one so sanguine and so young! Heavy burden to bear for probably sixty-one years of life, to be closed by a martyr's excruciating death! Outside of that commission there was hope: hope, because the promises of God could not fail of fulfilment: hope, because in the worst times of Israel there had been those seven thousand which the prophet knew not of, but whose number God revealed to him, who had stood faithful to God amid the national apostasy: hope, because when God pronounces not a doom, we may take refuge in the loving mercy of Him who swears by Himself, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked," &c. 2. The message was to the people, not to individuals: "Go to this people, and say." It related to individuals, only as they were such as the mass of the nation was, as they themselves made up that mass. This, in all seeming, was the thankless office to which Isaiah was called, to be heard, to be listened to, by some with contempt, by others with seeming respect, and to leave things in the main worse than he found them. 3. Isaiah's office was towards those, in part at least, who were ever hearing, never doing, and so never understanding. And so (so to speak) he was only to make things worse. So St. Paul says, "The earth which drinketh

in the rain which cometh oft upon it—if it bring forth thorns and briars, is accounted worthless and nigh unto cursing,” not yet accursed, yet nigh unto it, “whose end”—if it remains such unto the end—“is to be burned.” There were better among the people; there were worse; but such was the general character; it was an ever-hearing,—hearing,—hearing (such is the force of the words, “hear ye hearing on,” evermore), never wearied of hearing, yet never doing; ever seeing, as they thought, yet never gaining insight; and so becoming ever duller, their sight ever more and more bleared, until to hear and to see would become well-nigh, and to man, impossible. The more they heard and saw, the further they were from understanding, from being converted, from the reach of healing. Such they were, a little later, in Ezekiel’s time. So it was when He came of whom Isaiah prophesied. They thought that they knew the law, but only to allege their interpretation of it against Him. The more they heard, the more they were blinded. And their imagined seeing and their real blindness, was their condemnation (John ix. 41). This is inseparable from every revelation of God, from every preaching of the Gospel, from every speaking of God inwardly to the soul, from every motion of God the Holy Ghost, from every drawing or forbidding of that judge which He has placed within, our conscience, from every hearing of God’s Word. All and each leave the soul in a better condition or a worse. Not by any direct hardening from God, not through any agency of the prophet, but by man’s free-will, hearing but not obeying, seeing but not doing, feeling but resisting, the preaching of the prophet would leave them only more hopelessly far from that conversion, whereby God might heal them. 4. And what said the prophet? Contrary as the sentence must have been to all the yearnings of his soul, crushing to his hopes, he knew that it must be just, because “the Judge of the whole world” must “do right.” He intercedes, but only by those three words, “Lord, how long?” He appeals to God. Such could not be God’s ultimate purpose with His people. The night was to come; sin deserved it; but was it to have no dawn? Hope there is yet, but meanwhile a still-deepening night, a climax of woe; and that in two stages. In the first, “cities left without inhabitants”; and not cities only, as a whole, but “houses” too “tenantless”; nor these alone, but “the whole land desolate, and God removes the inhabitants far away, and there shall be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.” Nor this only, but when, in this sifting-time, nine parts should be gone, and one-tenth only remain, this should be again consumed; only, like those trees which survived the winters and storms of a thousand years, while the glory, wherewith God once clad it, was gone, its hewn stem was still to live; “a holy seed” was to be the stock thereof. The vision, opened before him, stretches on until now and to the end. His question, “How long? Until when?” implied a hope that there would be an end; the answer “until,” declared that there would be an end. We have, in one, that first carrying away, the small remnant which should return; its new desolation; the holy seed which should survive; the restoration at the end, of which St. Paul says, then “all Israel shall be saved.” 5. And this message fell on one of the tenderest of hearts in its early freshness. As he is eminently the Gospel-prophet, the evangelist in the old covenant, so he had already been taught by the Holy Ghost the Gospel-lesson, “Love your enemies.” He denounces God’s judgments; but he himself is the type of Him who wept over Jerusalem. 6. Yet where there is desolation for the sake of God, there is also consolation. Wherein was Isaiah’s? Not in the solace of his married life. His daily dress was like John Baptist’s, the hair-cloth pressing upon his loins, wearing to the naked flesh, although mentioned only when he was to put it off and himself to become a portent to his people, walking naked and barefoot (chap. xx. 2). His two sons were, by their names, the continual pictures of that woe on his people. What, then, was his solace? Isaiah had seen, as man can see, Christ’s Deity (John xii. 41). He had seen Him, the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of His person. Yet he had not seen the Son alone. He himself says, “Mine eyes have seen the King, Him who is the Lord of hosts.” And the Holy Ghost says by St. Paul that He spake by Isaiah in these words (Acts xxviii. 25-27). It was a human Form which he beheld, sitting enthroned as the Judge, and receiving the worship of the glowing love of the seraphim. How should not this vision live in him for those threescore years? So God prepared him to be, above all “the goodly company of the prophets,” the evangelic prophet, in that he had seen the glory of the Lord. He,

too, was a man of longing. His darkest visions are the dawn-streaks of the brightest light. He lived in a future for himself, a future which God had promised to the remnant of His people. He looked on beyond this world of disappointment and shadows. God Himself is the everlasting bliss of those who wait for Him.

7. Be not dismayed, then, though men who think that they see, see not, or though they see not, because they think that they see. It is but the condition of the victories of faith over the soul, free, if it will, to disbelieve. Be not discouraged, if iniquity abound, or mankind seem to deafen itself in its pleasures or gains, or at the stupidity of an intellect which will not acknowledge a God whom it does not see, or own its own free-will, which it has used against God continually, and, by repeated choices of its own evil against God's good, has well-nigh enslaved to its master-passion, which God would have subjected to it. Jesus foretold at once His victories and His sorrows; His victories in those who willed to look to Him as their Master, their Saviour, their Regenerator, their Life, their Resurrection, their Immortality of joy; His sorrows, in those who would not be redeemed. (*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*) *The prophet's thoughts at this period are few, if great. They are in the main these three: 1. His thought of the Lord, the King. 2. His thought of the people in their insensibility to the majesty and rule of the King. 3. These two thoughts when brought together inevitably create the third—that of the annihilation of the people down to a remnant, that the Lord may be exalted in that day. (A. B. Davidson, D.D.)* *The importance of understanding truth:—*The vast importance of people's understanding what they hear, our blessed Saviour frequently inculcated upon those who attended His ministry. He often introduced His subject by calling upon them to hear and understand: after discoursing to them He sometimes asked if they understood what they heard? He blamed them if they did not understand, and commended those who were so happy as to know the things which were freely given them of God. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Israel's punishment necessary:—*We, reading this prophecy in the light of history, can say that if it were anywhere necessary thus to assert God's righteousness against sin, most especially was it so in this the chosen nation of Israel. Israel had been set apart that in him all the nations of the earth should be blessed; and if he became reprobate, where were this promise to the world? "If gold rusteth, what should iron do?" Therefore the cities were to be wasted without inhabitant, and the land utterly desolate; and even after a partial recovery from this punishment, and a humble restoration of a small part of their ancient glory, the stern process should be repeated again and again: the invasion of Pekah and Rezin would be repaired only to be followed by that of Sennacherib; the captivity of Manasseh would succeed the peaceful reign of Hezekiah; Josiah would restore the kingdom only to be laid waste by the Egyptian and the Assyrian; the Roman would come after the Greek, and even Hadrian after Titus. All thought of an earthly glory of the nation must give way before such a prospect. If the prophet could have looked so far forward, and with a patriot's hopes alone, there was nothing but humiliation and despair before him; he could, at most, expect but such temporary alleviation and restoration as might enable him to do his work while he was there. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *The meaning of the message intrusted to Isaiah:—*Did it represent the ministry to which he was solemnly deputed as a forlorn hope, because, from the moral temper and confirmed habits of the people, an unfavourable result was antecedently certain? This seems the sense in which it was understood by the authors of the LXX., and its form, if Hebrew idiom be taken into account, is by no means inconsistent with this meaning. It is a mode of expression, very characteristic of Hebrew thought, to represent the result of a course of action as designed which is only foreseen or confidently anticipated. Familiar with forms of government in which the sovereign power appeared wholly without control, the Hebrews transferred ideas derived from this source to the government of God. They had a conviction that the Judge of all the earth must do right, but the conception of the rights of the creature and correlative responsibilities of the Creator did not lie within the horizon of their thought. Their overwhelming sense of the Divine power, absolutely ordering all events and giving no account of its dealings, permitted them to say, without any idea that they were imputing evil to God, "Why hast Thou made us to err from Thy ways, and hardened our heart from Thy fear?" (*E. W. Shalders.*) *The message from God:—*It may be said that in the passage under consideration the utterance is not the prophet's, but God's. But this makes no difference,

since Isaiah's mind was the field of revelation; and, strictly speaking, there is no more difficulty in the idea of God's accommodating Himself to modes of human thought than in His employing our modes of speech. It is a necessity limiting the absolute truth of revelation. If men's minds are to be reached, the Spirit must use such avenues of approach as have been thrown up for other occasions. God's communications to Isaiah would be tinged by Isaiah's habits of thought as inevitably as the prophet's publication of them. (*Ibid.*)

*Incidental penalty* :—A college professor would not be doing his duty towards his conscientious and diligent students if he forbore to proceed to the higher branches of the subject of his prelections, because his teaching would have the inevitable effect of confusing and discouraging the idle men who had failed to master his elementary course. So it is the appointment of Isaiah's mission, notwithstanding its foreseen failure in the case of all but a remnant of the nation, which gives it a judicial character, and makes it a menace of judgment. (*Ibid.*)

*Judgment and mercy* :—Hence our Lord's use of the passage to justify His having recourse to parables while prosecuting His ministry in the midst of a nation that had already shown a strong disposition to reject Him. He puts His teaching into a form in which it could be apprehended by such as were willing to do the will of His Father, but which would hide it from those whose disobedience to known truth had deprived them of spiritual insight. This was a chastisement upon their perverse and prejudiced minds, because a virtual withdrawal of His saving ministry from them. It was like closing their day of visitation. Yet in another aspect the adoption of this course was an act of mercy; for teaching, the meaning of which is obscure to the unwilling hearer, is less hardening than plain truth, because it does not provoke such obstinate resistance. So also there was mercy in Isaiah's ministry to his hardened fellow-countrymen. It was to be continued until their cities were desolate, without inhabitant, and the Lord had removed men far away. Then its gracious purpose to them would become manifest, for when suffering Divine judgments they would be thrown back upon neglected warnings. Though so long unavailing, as unavailing as if their very design had been to confirm them in their disobedience, these warnings would eventually become weird fingers pointing to the cause of their sufferings, and indicating the way of salvation through repentance and turning to God (vers. 11-13). For the severest lines of the prophet's message plainly imply that, even after a course of obstinate impenitence, to turn to put a constraint upon God's mercy, and draw forth His forgiveness: "lest," He says, "they convert and be healed." (*Ibid.*)

*A loud call to repentance* :—For the prophet to represent God as actually no longer inviting men to repent, but only desiring their greater condemnation, was a new and most forcible call to repentance for men who had rejected many previous calls. It was like digging a grave for a man in his own sight, after you have failed to convince him by word that his course of conduct must end in death. It brought the far-off results of men's behaviour most vividly before their eyes. It roused them to thought by the unwonted cry that the hour of repentance was past. (*P. Thomson, M.A.*)

*God vindicating Himself* :—It is most important, when a boy at school is careless, and makes little or no progress in learning, that his teacher should put himself in a right position—that he should be able to declare that he paid attention to him, and did his utmost to promote his education. It is most important, when a son turns out badly, that the parents should put themselves in a right position—that they should be able to declare that they did their duty by him. In like manner, it was most important that, relative to the people of Judah, God should put Himself in a right position, or in a position to appeal to facts; that He should be able even to appeal to themselves, as to whether He had not interested Himself in them, borne patiently with them, and wrought with them in every possible way to guide their feet into right paths. But if Isaiah had not been sent to them, would God have been in a position to appeal to facts? He would not. It is not strange, then, that he was commissioned to go to them in the character of a prophet, and deal with them in order to their reformation. (*G. Cron, M.A.*)

*Opposite effects from the same agencies* :—The same fire reddens the gold and burns the dross. Under the same threshing-sledge the grain is cleansed and the chaff crushed out. By the same press-beam the oil is separated from the dregs. The same sunshine and rain which cause the living tree to grow and flourish, are the most potent influences to bring the dead tree to decay. (*Sunday School Chronicle.*)

*A hard ministry* :—"On the morning before I was licensed,"



says the late Rev. John Brown, "that text was much impressed on my spirit. 'He said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not,' &c. Since I was ordained at Haddington, I know not how often it hath been heavy to my heart to think how much this Scripture hath been fulfilled in my ministry. Frequently I have had an anxious desire to be removed by death, from being a plague to my poor congregation. Often, however, I have checked myself, and have considered this wish as my folly, and begged of the Lord, that if it were not for His glory to remove me by death, He would make me successful in my work." See ye indeed, but perceive not.—*Sight without insight* (with Mark viii. 18):—They had sight, but no insight. They exercised the power of observation, but had no imagination. They were ritualistic, but not poetic. In their company could be found scribes, but no prophets. They had many politicians, but no statesmen. Eyes had they, but no vision. Life to these people was a superficies, not a profundity. Facts were planes, not cubes. Everything was a surface phenomenon, a mere skin with no wondrous internal ministry to arouse the imagination and to fill the being with awe. Now the suggestion of the Scriptures is this: Life is cubical, every fact being a cube. To see only the surface is elementary and primitive. The crown of life consists in being able to comprehend with all saints "what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height," of every fact which we encounter in the common paths of daily life. The practical which we can measure with a foot-rule has mystical relationships; the material has spiritual significance. To see the larger relationships of things, to discern their spiritual pose and set, to peer into their possible issues, is vision. "Thousands of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see." (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *Two ways of looking at things: the superficial and the cubical*:—Let me illustrate a little more clearly these two ways of looking at things, the superficial and the cubical; the so-called practical and the imaginative; the way of sight and the way of vision. 1. There are two ways of looking at a little child. "Sight" exercises the power of observation and beholds a little animal, compounded of material atoms in varying quality, a cunning product of material forces; a little bundle of hungers and thirsts. "Insight" beholds in the child a germ of wondrous possibility, a promise of the eternal, a vehicle of unnamed endowments, a possible image of Christ. 2. There are two ways of looking at a flower. There is the way of "sight"—

A primrose by the river's brim  
A yellow primrose was to him,  
And it was nothing more.

And there is the way of "insight"—

Flower in the crannied wall,  
I pluck you out of the cranny.  
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,  
Little flower, but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is.

3. There are two ways of looking at a book: "sight" and "insight." Here is a book. It is a dictionary. A man gave years of ceaseless labour to its creation. What is it? A Chinese dictionary. Who compiled it? A missionary. And this when he might have been teaching the multitude, feeding the hungry, carrying consolation to the terrified and depressed. To what purpose is this waste? Why were not these years invested and given to the poor? So says "sight." How does "insight" regard the labour? The dictionary is a door of hope, the carrier of light, the key to an empire, a living way into the thought and heart of a vast people. 4. There are two ways of looking at the fabric of this building in which we at present worship. "Sight" says, "How plain the structure, made of common brick! And the windows! nothing about them tasteful and refined." "Insight" gazes at the building and recalls the men and women who have found their Saviour here. A panorama of spiritual ministers passes before it, the consecration of wedlock, the dedication of little children, the illumination of death, the transfiguration of sorrow, the heightening of joy! To the soul's

vision this plain brick house is an earthly vessel, precious because of the heavenly treasure of which it has been, and is, the shrine. 5. There are two ways of looking at the bread upon the Communion-table. To "sight" it is common baker's bread, bought at so much a loaf, and there is much more like it. To "vision" it is a token of a broken body and of shed blood. By vision we realise the spiritual significance of things, and by fixing our regard upon them we appropriate their contents into our own spirits. (*Ibid.*) *Religious, but without spiritual discernment*:—Now let me mention an astounding thing. This word of the prophet's, and the stern warning as to the perils of blindness with which this book abounds, are addressed not to the men of the world, the jauntily irreligious, the men who treat the affairs of the Highest with levity or derision. They are addressed to the religious, to the regular churchgoers, to the recognised adherents of the synagogue and the temple. They are addressed to men and women who are religious but who have no vision, who pay scrupulous attention to ritual but who are devoid of spiritual discernment. They had given undue emphasis to the formal. Their life had been lived on the superficialities. In the realm of religion they were geographers, not geologists; registrars, not poets. They lived and moved on the plane of rules, they did not enter into the roomy depths of principles. They were great at surface measurements; the measure of a Sabbath day's journey, the length of a rope, the hang of a tassel, the fixing of a pin, the duration of a fast. Now when the formal is unduly emphasised it is at the expense of the moral. When ritual is obtrusive the spiritual is impaired. These exalted the trellis and forgot the fruit! But when the spiritual is minimised, life becomes callous. We become indurated by worship of form. What therefore do we find? We find that in the speech of the prophets it is the formally religious people who are denounced for their senselessness; the formal have become the brutal. They have lost their spiritual refinement, and with it their sympathy for their kind. And when the refinement has gone from the spirit, men lose their insight, their power of seeing the invisible. "They have eyes, but they see not." (*Ibid.*) *Conditions of spiritual vision*:—How can we gain and keep the power of vision? 1. Let us seek our answer in the Book of Revelation: "Anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see." Mark the connection of this passage. The anointing follows an adorning; before the eyes are mentioned attention has been drawn to the garments. The garment must be changed; the raiment must be made "white." The life must attain unto purity. Then, succeeding the purity, comes the vision—the insight. First, there is the "washing of regeneration"; then "the vision and faculty Divine." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things." 2. And there is one other condition which must be named. It is suggested to us by a word of the Apostle Paul: "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." When we have discerned a heavenly meaning, when we have seen the Divine significance of things, when we have entered into the spiritual purpose, we are to be true to what we have seen. I must bring my life into conformity with my light. "Hold fast that which thou hast." I must not batter the gates of heaven for more light if I am rebellious to the light already given. I must be true to what I see. If I live truly I shall see truly. Obedience is the way to the larger vision. (*Ibid.*) *Israel's defective insight*:—The great objects which were presented to the view of this people were, the astonishing wonders which were brought before their eyes, the many terrible judgments inflicted upon their enemies, the signal victories with which they were crowned, the glorious deliverances and remarkable interpositions of kind Providence in their behalf. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Responsibility of having the Gospel*:—A writer says, "You may buy a New Testament for a few pence, yet it may be to you at last the most costly possession you ever had." (*Sunday School Chronicle.*) *Petrifaction*:—The petrifying well at Knaresborough is well known, and may illustrate this subject. It is a cascade from the river Nidd, about fifteen feet high and twice as broad, and forms an aqueous curtain to a cave. The dripping waters are used for petrifying anything that may be hung up in the drip of the water-ledge, which flows over, as it were, the eaves of the cave. This ledge of limestone rock is augmented unceasingly by the action of the water which flows over it. In the cascade a great variety of objects are hung up by short lengths of wire, and these are petrified, turned into rock, by the water trickling over them; sponges, books, gloves, veils, animals, and birds

subjected to the action of the shower are changed into stone. A sponge is petrified in a few months; and some things require a year or two. Petrifying streams threaten our spiritual life, and unless duly resisted, steal away our vitality and leave us with the coldness and hardness of stone. (*W. L. Watkinson.*)

**Ver. 10. Make the heart of this people fat.**—*The power of self-cursing*:—"Make the heart of this people fat," &c. By this it is not meant that Isaiah was to aim at and put forth what power he possessed to lead the people of Judah deeper and ever deeper into error and sin. That was an errand on which God was morally incapable of sending him. His business was to teach them, not error, but truth; to set them an example not of rebellion, but obedience to the Divine will; to diminish and do away with their moral insensibility and wickedness, not increase them. The meaning is, that they would so act that the effect of all his diligence and ingenuity to instruct and reform them would be to render them still more stupid and wicked, and still more the objects of the Lord's displeasure. Accordingly, both in Matt. xiii. 14, 15 and Acts xxviii. 25-27, we find the passage so quoted and interpreted as to bring out the guilt of the people themselves, and constrain us to throw all the blame on them. (*G. Cron, M.A.*)

**Ver. 11. Then said I, Lord, how long?**—*The state of the Church*:—I. NOTICE A FEW THINGS AFFECTING THE STATE OF THE CHURCH AND OF THE WORLD WHICH ARE CALCULATED TO EXCITE THE ASTONISHMENT AND GRIEF OF THE CHRISTIAN. 1. The little progress which Christianity has made after a lapse of eighteen hundred years. 2. The prevalence of irreligion in those parts of the world which are professedly Christian. 3. The low state of religion in the Church itself. 4. The obstacles which the Church presents to the increase of vital piety. II. HOW LONG THIS STATE OF THINGS IS TO CONTINUE, or when we may reasonably expect another, and a better. 1. There is a connection established between the spirit or the state of mind generally prevailing in the Church and its prosperity, or the extension of religion in the world. As soon as the Church is thoroughly alive and truly devoted to God, the time of her enlargement is at hand. 2. The second point respects the inquiry, what is that state of mind which must generally prevail in the Church in order to the extension of religion in the world? (1) It is absolutely necessary that the Church should realise her position and feel her responsibility. (2) It is absolutely necessary also that the Church should feel sympathy with her Lord in His intense solicitude, or in the accomplishment of the great purpose of His mediation. (3) Until this state of mind prevail in the Church our efforts will not be of such a character as God can greatly bless. III. HOW MAY THE CHURCH BE BROUGHT INTO THAT STATE OF MIND WHICH APPEARS TO BE ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY IN ORDER TO HER EXTENDED USEFULNESS AND TO THE DIFFUSION OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WORLD? Every man should begin with himself, and every one who is awake should endeavour to awaken his brother. (*J. J. Davies.*) *Isaiah's attitude towards his message*:—The prophet cannot venture to intercede for the people, nor does he dare to give vent to his sorrow over the need of this stern message save by the words, "How long, Lord?" How long shall I have this painful and fruitless duty to perform? (*P. Thomson, M.A.*)

**Ver. 13. But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return.**—*The remnant*:—In the worst of times God has a little remnant that kept their garments clean, and in the midst of the most sweeping and desolating calamities He will take special notice of it for good. 1. The remnant will be but small. "A tenth." A certain number put for an uncertain. The tenth was God's proportion under the law, consecrated for His use. 2. They shall return; i.e., from their sins and backslidings and the common defections of the Church of Israel. They shall return also from their captivity in Babylon to their native land. 3. It is asserted of this remnant that it shall be eaten; that is, say some, after they return they shall be devoured a second time by the kings of Assyria. God's remnant, when they are delivered out of one trouble, must lay their account with another. Or, as some understand it, shall be accepted of God as the tithe was which was meat in God's house. The saving of this remnant shall be meat to the faith and hope of them that wish well to God's kingdom and interest. 4. It is said of this remnant, that it shall be "as a teil, and as an oak whose substance

is in them, even when they cast their leaves." As if He had said, Though they may be stripped of their outward prosperity, and share in the common calamity; yet they shall recover like a tree in the spring, and sprout and flourish again: although they fall, they shall not be utterly cast down. 5. This distinguished remnant shall be the stay and support of the public interest. "The holy seed shall be the substance thereof." (*E. Erskine.*) *How the religious of a nation are the strength of it*.—I. WHAT ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE RELIGIOUS OF A NATION? 1. Those who, as to the doctrine of Christianity, "hold the Head." 2. Those who, as to the practice of Christianity, "fear God and work righteousness." II. HOW, AND IN WHAT RESPECTS, THEY MAY BE SAID TO BE ITS STRENGTH. "The holy seed" is here called "the substance," or "stock," of a people; so that in what respects the strength of a tree is in its stock, in those, or several of them, the strength of a people is in the religion of them. 1. The stock of a tree is the most firm and durable part of it. 2. The stock is that which propagates its kind. Cut off all the boughs, and yet the stem will shoot forth again, send out new leaves and fruit and seed, from which other trees will come. So here the righteous propagate their righteousness, communicate to others, beget children to God. 3. The stock of the tree is that for the sake of which the tree is dressed and watered and looked after. Men take care of the tree so long as there is life in the stock; they not only do not grub it up, but prune it, and bestow upon it what cost and labour is fit for it. III. ON WHAT ACCOUNT THE RELIGIOUS OF A NATION MAY BE SAID TO BE ITS STRENGTH, or what influence they have on the welfare and security of a people. 1. As they are God's favourites. 2. As they improve their interest with God for a people. 3. As they are a means many times to stop the current of wickedness, which is ready to overflow a land with judgments, and to bring swift destruction on it. 4. As they not only check the progress of sin, but propagate goodness to others, as well as promote it in themselves. This they do by their counsels, admonitions, example. 5. Sometimes the religious of a nation may have an influence upon its public welfare, by doing some eminent service, wherewith God is much pleased, and to which He hath a special respect. "Phineas stood up, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed" (*Psa. cvi. 30.*) 6. God may sometimes spare a people for the sake of His children among them, that they may be useful and helpful to them in His work. This end God had in sparing the Gibeonites; He intended they should be "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for His sanctuary, and so assistant to the priests and Levites in their service (*Josh. ix. 27.*) So, *Isa. lxi. 5, 6.* God can make even Moab "hide His outcasts" (*Isa. xvi. 3, 4.*); "the earth help the woman" (*Rev. xii. 16.*); Ahab favour a good Obadiah, that he may hide the Lord's prophets (*1 Kings xviii. 3, 4.*); a heathen Cyrus "let go His captives and build His city" (*Isa. xlv. 13.*); a Darius, an Artaxerxes, an Ahasuerus, countenance and prefer a Daniel, a Nehemiah, a Mordecai, public instruments of good to His people. Sometimes God may so twist and combine the interest of worldly men with the interest of His children, that they cannot promote their own, without helping on the others'. IV. APPLICATION. 1. If the religious of a nation are the strength and defence of it, then the same may be said of the religious of the world,—they are the substance of it, the support, the strength of it. The world itself is preserved chiefly for the sake of the godly in it, "the holy seed." 2. The religious of a nation are not its enemies. 3. The sinners of a nation are really the weakness of it. 4. It is the interest of any people where God hath a seed of righteous ones to favour them and make much of them. 5. It is folly in any people to persecute them that are truly religious. For by this means they lose—(1) the benefit of the saints' prayers; (2) the help of the saints. (*J. Collins, M.A.*) *The doctrine of the remnant an antidote to discouragement*.—Though it belongs to the very essence of Biblical revelation, we find, we moderns, a strange difficulty in laying hold of it. In spite of the pathetic beauty of its exposition in Isaiah it never lays hold of us in our reasonable thinking, in our habitual imagination, as the truth of all truths in estimating and justifying the ways of Providence. We read these great and beautiful passages which tell of the remnant which shall return, to come again to Zion with joy and singing, and yet it does not fasten on us as the exhibition of a principle which should govern our conduct, and determine our growth, and solve our practical perplexities, and disperse depression and feed hope. Yet this is what it did to the prophets, and this is what it did to St. Paul. In every darkest hour, under every bewilderment, at every blow that smote the spirit

of faith or wounded the heart of love, back they turned to this one prevailing theme—Never fear! Never give up! The remnant shall return; the remnant shall be saved. God has not forgotten His remnant, and in the safety of the remnant all is once more possible. The whole jeopardised salvation of Israel and the Church may yet be recovered. (*H. Scott-Holland, D.D.*) *Practical application of the idea of "the remnant"* :—Practically, in conduct, in handling your own lives, in dealing with your neighbours, surely this method of God's should be yours also. 1. You are inclined to denounce the wickedness of the world, to despair of human nature, to abandon some one as hopeless, to see nothing in him that you can like or respect. Look again, consider it once more. Is there no place in that man's heart where you may touch him, no point at which he will reveal a good side? It is strange how men we thought to be the very worst surprise us here; constantly we come upon something generous that they do, some touch of loyalty, some sign of tenderness and devotion. There it is; that is the one hope! God need not despair of the man so long as he has one spot left on which to work. One saith: "Destroy it not, for its blessing is in it"—the blessed words of mercy said over the dead trunk of a tree, bare and wasted and burned with fire, a stump charred to the naked ground, yet destroy it not; its seed, its substance is in it! So long as that can be said over a man, strive for him, pray for him, work for him at that spot to rescue it, to enlarge it, to save it. 2. And do the same with yourself when you are despairing, when you review your life and condemn it at every point, when you can see no use whatever in renewing resolutions which you are sure to break, and efforts which already foretell their own disaster. Nevertheless, go back on the holy substance—"Christ is in you, the eternal hope of honour." "Yes," you will say, "all else would have been lost but for that; verily, if God had not left me that seed, I should have been even as Sodom and Gomorrah, but, thanks be to God, it is not so; it never can be so if only I will believe it." (*Ibid.*) *The leafless tree* :—The application—I. TO THE JEWS. What a chequered history has been the history of the Jewish nation! Why is it that the Jewish race is preserved? We have our answer in the text: "The holy seed is the substance thereof." There is something within a tree mysterious, hidden and unknown, which preserves life in it when everything outward tends to kill it. So in the Jewish race there is a secret element which keeps it alive. We know what it is; it is the "remnant according to the election of grace." II. TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, whereof the Jewish people are but a dim shadow and an emblem. The Church has had its trials; trials from without and trials within. Why is it that the Church is still preserved, when she looks so dead? For this reason: that there is in the midst of her—though many are hypocrites and impostors—a "chosen seed," who are "the substance thereof." Let me draw your attention, as a Church connected with this place, to this point—that the holy seed is the substance of the Church. A great many of you might be compared to the bark of the tree; some of you are like the big limbs; others are like pieces of the trunk. Well, we should be very sorry to lose any of you; but we could afford to do so without any serious damage to the life of the tree. Yet there are some here—God knoweth who they are—who are the substance of the tree. By the word "substance" is meant the life, the inward principle. The inward principle is in the tree, when it has lost its leaves. Now, God discerns some men in this Church, I doubt not, who are towards us like the inward principle of the oak: they are the substance of the Church. Note here, that the life of a tree is not determined by the shape of the branches, nor by the way it grows, but it is the substance. The shape of a Church is not its life. In one place I see a Church formed in an Episcopalian shape; in another place I see one formed in a Presbyterian shape; then, again, I see one formed on an Independent principle. Here I see one with sixteen ounces to the pound of doctrine; there I see one with eight, and some with very little clear doctrine at all. And yet I find life in all the Churches, in some degree—some good men in all of them. How do I account for this? Why, just in this way—that the oak may be alive, whatever its shape, if it has got the substance. Observe, again, that the substance of the oak is a hidden thing; you cannot see it. Thou art a Church member. Let me ask thee—art thou one of the holy seed? Some will say, "How is it that good men are the means of preserving the visible Church?" I answer, the holy seed doth this, because it derives its life from Christ. III. This is true of EVERY INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER: his substance is in him when he has lost his leaves. 1. Christian men lose their leaves

when they lose their comforts. The faith of the Christian, when shrouded by doubts and fears, is just as much there as when he rejoiceth devoutly in the display of it. 2. Some Christians lose their leaves not by doubts, but by sin. Many a child of God has gone far away from his Master, but His substance is in him. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

*Life in the root*.—A gentleman had a beautiful shrub in his garden. He set great store by it as the pride of his place. At the time of the great blizzard it was blasted and withered. The life of it seemed wholly gone. He did not give up hope, though there was nothing that gave him encouragement. But he loved that shrub, and longed to save it if he could. So what did he do? Tended it more than ever. Opened its roots to the genial sun, pruned it patiently and with care, cherished it all he possibly could. A year or two passed away. It was a slow and cheerless business, and he came near losing hope. But, one day, what was his joy to see signs of life returning. The sap began to rise, the stems to recover their spring, it put on fresh leaves, bloomed anew, and filled his heart with thankfulness. Be patient. God sees deeper than we do. (*Sunday School Chronicle*.)

**A tell tree . . . an oak.**—*The terebinth and the oak*.—The two most common forest trees of Palestine were the terebinth and oak. They were strong hardy trees. It was a matter of difficulty to kill them, so to cut and maim them as to take the substance or vitality out of them. So long as the trunk or stem was allowed to remain in the soil, they were sure, in course of time, to grow and flourish anew; and Isaiah was taught by God Himself that His people would be equally tenacious of life. The red rough hand of war might shake off the leaves and lop off the branches; it might also reduce the stem to the slenderest proportions; but the tree of Judah, at times a large fair tree, would not fall into a state of utter decay, and vanish away. Period after period there would be a tenth—a remnant, however diminutive, as many as would, by the blessing of Heaven, once more develop into a prosperous nation. Sooner or later, the judgments of God would have the desired effect, and the tree that had been hurt and peeled would give indications that it had not been deprived of all its substance or vitality. (G. Cron, M.A.)

*The terebinth*, a beautiful tree, the *Pistacia terebinthus*, growing to a large size in the countries around the east end of the Mediterranean, and in countries further to the east, especially in Syria, Palestine, Arabia, and Persia. It is also called the "turpentine tree," and a transparent, pleasant-smelling resin of high value is procured in small quantities from slits made in the bark of branches and stems. Its blossoms bloom in April, and its fruit is a small bluish nut with an edible kernel, much used and relished especially by the Persians. In Palestine it was found in valleys, not in woods, but generally isolated. The name does not occur in the A.V., but the Heb. *elah*, rendered in Isa. vi. 13 "teal," and in Hos. iv. 13 "elm," is most probably the terebinth. (J. Macpherson, M.A.)

**So the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.**—*The substance of a nation*.—"The holy seed" is the substance, the body, the life, the worth of any nation, any community, or any church. I. First, therefore, we must contemplate "THE HOLY SEED" that we may know who they are. 1. This seed of God are they whom He has chosen out of the world, whom He has called to Himself in Christ Jesus, whom He has created anew by His Spirit, whom He has adopted into His family. 2. But this seed are evidenced and demonstrated by their holiness; they are "the holy seed." Holiness signifies separation, seclusion, setting apart. II. Our main point is to prove that THIS "HOLY SEED" IS, IN ANY COMMUNITY OR CHURCH, "THE SUBSTANCE" OF IT. The holy seed is the substance of a nation—1. Because God regards all beside in a nation but as dross and foliage—dross without gold, foliage without fruit. 2. Because the holy seed alone diffuses a sanctifying, a saving and a savouring efficacy upon the land in which it is found. 3. Because for their sakes God spares a guilty land when otherwise His whole displeasure would be allowed to rise against it (ch. i. 9; Gen. xviii. 23, &c.). 4. Because the holy seed are the spiritual warders of a nation, who watch with prayer, and stand in the breach and implore God that He should not destroy it. (H. Stowell, M.A.)

*The holy seed*.—I. GIVE A DESCRIPTION OF THE REMNANT spoken of in the text. 1. A remnant is a small piece taken from a greater. The Church of Christ is a remnant separated from the rest of mankind. 2. This remnant is different from the rest of mankind in their character. 3. They are also under a different government. 4. They also stand on a different foundation. 5. They are under the influence of another spirit. 6. They are travelling quite a different road. 7. They come to a different

end. II. SHOW WHY THEY ARE CALLED A SEED. Because—1. They owe their spiritual origin to God. 2. They bear His likeness. As every tree bringeth forth its natural fruit, he that is born of God will be like God. 3. They are seed in respect to their dependence on God. God grafts us into Jesus Christ, and we are therefore dependent upon Him for nourishment and strength, as the branch depends on the stock of the tree for support and sap to grow thereby. 4. Because they are of the family of God. 5. Because they are heirs of His estate.

III. SHOW WHY THEY ARE CALLED A "HOLY" SEED. 1. They are holy by sanctification. They are set apart. 2. Because of their purification. 3. Because the Spirit of God dwells in them. IV. WHAT IS MEANT BY THIS SEED BEING DENOMINATED THE "SUBSTANCE" OF A LAND OR CHURCH? 1. By the word "substance" I think the prophet means treasure, or the chief part, or that which constitutes the welfare of a land—that in which the chief excellency or support or wealth of a nation consists. This is true of the people of God. 2. Further, it implies that they are God's only inheritance in the world. 3. This seed is called a substance because it is the support and stay of a land or a church. V. SHOW IN WHAT RESPECT THIS SEED MAY BE SAID TO BE THE STAY AND SUPPORT OF A LAND OR OF A CHURCH. For their sakes ruining calamities are withheld from those nations which deserve to be visited with the judgments of God (Gen. xix. 22; 2 Sam. v. 12; Gen. xxx. 27, xxxix. 3; Mal. iii. 11). This remnant shall be the strength of the land by their prayers (Jer. xxix. 7; 1 Sam. vii. 9). (T. Bagnall-Baker, M.A.) *The present obligations of pious men.*—I. WHAT IS THE CONDUCT WHICH IT NOW BECOMES PIOUS MEN TO CULTIVATE AND DISPLAY. In order that they may sustain the honourable station which is assigned to them, they are to cultivate and display certain habits of thought and character appropriate to the season in which it is their lot to live. 1. Pious men should cultivate and display uncompromising separation from the practical wickedness which is around them. 2. Pious men ought to cultivate and display firm and unwavering attachment to the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith. 3. Pious men ought to cultivate and display cordial, fraternal attachment towards each other. 4. Pious men ought to cultivate and display zealous exertion for the promotion of Christian truth and influence throughout the land. II. WHAT ARE THE RESULTS WHICH, FROM THE CULTIVATION AND DISPLAY OF THIS CONDUCT, MAY BE PROPERLY ANTICIPATED. "The holy seed shall be the substance thereof." Pious men are to be the safeguards of the national interests; and when the time of calamity has passed, those interests are to be maintained in security and in honour. God preserves nations for the sake of the pious men who are in them, and who duly display and vindicate their character. 1. Observe the anticipated results as they bear upon what is temporal and civil. There has not been a dynasty holding the reins of empire since genuine Christianity took its root amongst us, and there has not been a single reign of any one of those dynasties, but what might be summoned, as affording living testimony to the truth, that the temporal interests of the nation have been bound up with the piety of its people. Pious men will preserve—(1) The order of our land. (2) The freedom of our land. (3) The peace of our land. (4) The prosperity and honour of our land. 2. Notice the anticipated results as they bear upon matters spiritual and religious. Here the promise is more distinct and the consequences are more palpable. (1) The defeat and destruction of erroneous opinions will be secured. (2) The salvation of multitudes of immortal souls will be secured. (3) Vastly increased facilities for the promotion of the Saviour's kingdom throughout the earth will be secured. Conclusion—1. The vast importance of being numbered amongst the "holy seed" yourselves. 2. Let us endeavour to arise to the performance of our obligations. (J. Parsons.) *The holy seed.*—1. The seed, like the tithe, is but little in respect of the rest of the field. Yet—2. It is a numerous seed, absolutely considered in itself (Rev. vii. 9). 3. It is an honourable seed. 4. A costly seed unto our glorious Redeemer. 5. A flourishing and fruitful seed. 6. A troubled and persecuted seed in this world. 7. Yet a very durable seed (Psa. lxxxix. 28, 29). 8. In this world a scattered seed. 9. A holy seed. (E. Erskine.) *The holy seed the substance.*—This imports—1. That the wicked of a land are but a heap of lumber in God's reckoning, whatever be their station, quality, or estate. 2. That the saints, the truly godly, in a land are excellent and valuable persons (Psa. xvi. 3; Prov. xii. 26; Rev. iii. 4; Heb. xi. 38). 3. That the saints of God are His inheritance and portion in a land. He has a peculiar right and property in them beyond the rest of mankind; they are so much His that they

are not their own, and therefore have not power to dispose of themselves, but for His glory. 4. That as they are His portion and property, so He has a great deal of pleasure in them, even as a man takes delight and pleasure in that which is his substance. 5. That there is something in and about the godly that is not to be found among other men. The wicked, when laid in God's balance, are found wanting solidity; but the holy seed are the substance, they bear weight. 6. That the remnant of truly godly in a land are the riches thereof, for a man's riches is his substance. 7. That the truly godly are the stay and support of the land where they live. (*Ibid.*) *The judgments threatened*:—We do not suppose that the prophet means to say that all the wicked men will be removed from captivity and the good men only left. (See on the contrary Jer. xxiv. 5-7.) He is dealing with the nation as representing the kingdom of God, and means to say that the coming judgments will weed out the worldliness and carelessness that prevail at present, will deepen true spiritual religion in Israel, and fit her to be the centre from which the truth and grace of God shall go forth to all the world. (*P. Thomson, M.A.*)

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## CHAPTER VII.

**VERS. 1-9. Rezin . . . and Pekah . . . went up toward Jerusalem to war against it.**—*The confederacy against Jerusalem*:—The reason of this war is not stated: but from the desire of those kings to dethrone Ahaz, and place on the throne in Jerusalem another, even Ben Tabeal, it may be inferred that Ahaz refused to join these two powers in a general rising against Assyria. Obviously, Ahaz was well advised in not taking a step of such decided opposition to Nineveh: for had he done so, the legions of that empire would only have spread desolation in Judah twenty or thirty years earlier than they did. To a certain extent, the policy commended by Isaiah was adopted: Ahaz did not take up his stand against Assyria. The prophet, of course, wanted more. For he urged an absolute and complete neutrality, in which Ahaz would have nothing at all to do with this power. So far as Ahaz acted on the prophet's advice, he was successful: for this confederacy against Jerusalem proved a failure. (*B. Blake, B.D.*) *Ahaz and Isaiah, a contrast*:—Ahaz is timid and helpless, takes no position, and displays no promptitude or courage. Isaiah, on the contrary, steps forward with assurance: he is collected and calm: and his complete control of the political situation impresses us forcibly. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *Isaiah's interview with Ahaz*:—At the date of Isaiah's interview with Ahaz the application to Assyria was meditated, but not actually carried into effect. To understand this interview two things must be borne in mind. Firstly, Isaiah is aware of the king's intention to solicit aid from Assyria, but it is not openly admitted between them. Secondly, the power and resources of the allied kings, especially of Rezin, so impressed the popular imagination that they were held to be practically invincible; Isaiah views both differently; describes them as "smoked out firebrands," and intimates that he considers the terror of the people to be unreasonable. (*Ibid.*) *The prophet and the king*:—God speaks comfort to many who not only are not worthy of it, but do not so much as inquire after it. (*M. Henry.*) *Unsuccessful attacks upon the Christian stronghold*:—"We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth": clever arguments, witty retorts, brilliant repartees, criticisms that dazzle by their brightness and exasperate by their acerbity, come and go, and Jerusalem stands, sunlit, fair, invincible. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

**Ver. 4. Take heed, and be quiet.**—*Take heed, and be quiet*:—That is, be on your guard and do not act precipitately, rather keep at rest. I. A WARNING AGAINST SELF-WILLED ACTING. II. AN EXHORTATION TO UNDISMAYED EQUANIMITY. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *The true attitude of life*:—This is the attitude we should observe in all this human life—on the one hand, vigilance, determination, earnestness; and on the other silence, resignation, hope. Just as we observe in due proportion the active and passive aspects of life will our character become complete and our heart find rest. I. ALL TRUE LIFE IS A LISTENING. 1. "Take heed," i.e., be attentive, alert, susceptible. Light will not come to careless, inattentive



souls. We must hearken, which really means the concentration of all the powers of the soul that we may detect the significance of things. (1) This is true in relation to nature. The light does not shine into our soul irrespective of our gazing; the secret does not disclose itself to us irrespective of our listening. (2) This is true in relation to revelation. The Bible is a great whispering gallery; but God's whisper is often lost because men come with souls full of noises, or because they do not lend their ear patiently and systematically. (3) It is so with our personal life. Our personal history is a revelation of the mind of God; but we often miss the precious instructions. 2. And when you have given full place to observation and reflection, "be quiet," for you will find plenty of room and reason for suspense, resignation, silence. When you have carried criticism to its final limit, see that no place is left in your heart for anxiety, unbelief, and despair. II. ALL TRUE LIFE IS A WATCHING. "Take heed." Be cautious, vigilant, circumspect. There is no room in life for presumption. But when we have felt the need of earnest prayer, when we have cultivated the habit of prayerful watchfulness, let us "be quiet." Many Christians feel the need of walking softly, of being on the alert, their soul is full of solemn caution; but they never know how to combine with this that strong confidence in God which brings the sensitive heart assurance and peace. Let us remember that when we have done our best God will do the rest. III. ALL TRUE LIFE IS A STRIVING. "Take heed." Life must be full of effort, aspiration, strenuousness, perseverance. The policy of many is the policy of drift. But this is not the true idea of life. We are perpetually called upon to consider, to discriminate, to decide, to act. And yet with all this we are to be "quiet." Calm amid tumult, tranquil in severest effort, full of peace and confidence when life is most difficult and denying. Let us remember this—(1) In all our worldly life. God has not promised the things of this life to the lazy. We must be earnest, discreet, economical, prudent, painstaking. But when we have done our best to provide honest things we must be quiet. No painful, misgiving thoughts or words. (2) In all our religious life. We shall never moon and dream ourselves into spiritual knowledge, strength, beauty, completeness. But having given ourselves to God's service and glory with a single, purposeful heart, let us for the rest "be quiet." (*W. L. Watkinson.*) "The crooked serpent":—True rationalism not only investigates, but is cautious, reticent, patient, hopeful. Much about us is very mysterious and bewildering. 1. It is so with nature. Ages ago the patriarch Job found this out. "By His Spirit He hath garnished the heavens; His hand hath formed the crooked serpent." "Garnished the heavens!"—that we can understand, that we can admire. The vast, the balanced, the magnificent, the beautiful, the benign—this is what we expected from the wise and generous Source of all things. "His hand hath formed the crooked serpent." Nature contains the mean, the unharmonious, the dark, the grotesque, the bloody; and this we did not expect. The thoughtful man is sorely puzzled in the presence of these confusions and contradictions. 2. It is so with revelation. We are often greatly delighted with the contents of the Bible. It is a firmament full of stars of light, speaking to us eloquently of the glory of God. We cry with rapture as we scan successive constellations which gleam with truth and love and righteousness. "By His Spirit He hath garnished the heavens." But it is not long before the problems of nature reappear in revelation; there are teachings obscure and painful, in fact, the crooked serpent wriggles across the page. People who read cursorily and think loosely may glide over such pages, but thoughtful souls are often sorely troubled. 3. It is the same in our personal history. There are times in our life when all things go smoothly with us—our health is good, in business we are in the swim, we are socially popular, and, full of gratitude and thanksgiving, we wonder how anybody can ever be fretful, or call into question the government of God; we feel that the Spirit that garnished the heavens has brought order and beauty into our personal lot. But soon circumstances change: our health fails, we are called to attend two or three creditors' meetings, our popularity wanes; and then we are staggered, and begin to ask sceptical questions touching the ways of heaven. What is the matter? The crooked serpent crawls across our path of roses. Now what are we to do when these dark enigmas reward our study, when we witness the contradictions of nature, the tragedy of history, when we endure the pathos of our own life? Are we to take refuge in scepticism, cynicism, despair? Surely not. "Be quiet." (*Ibid.*) A *New Year's motto*.—I. A WORD OF CAUTION. "Take heed." It is as though Isaiah called a halt; as though, to use another

metaphor, he swung the red light in front of the rushing train, as though he put a detonator on the rails in the time of mist and fog. Saith he, "Take heed; you are very busily preparing, your mind is filled with a multitude of thoughts." He does not speak ill of these preparations and these plans, but he does say, "Proceed with caution; look before you leap, think before you act. Do nothing till you have thought it over and prayed about it. You will discover, Ahaz, that whereas some of your precautions are legitimate, others of them are dishonouring to God and to the throne of David." Well now, is there not a word for you and for me just here? Take heed!—do not rush blindly on, wait to be guided, slip your hand into God's. Ye people of God, take heed! Worldliness is gradually creeping into the Church and fastening its fangs upon her. Doctrine of all sorts is at a discount, except false doctrine. Take heed lest you sip of the poisoned cup or ever you are aware. And ye shepherds of the flock, take heed! Ministers are too busy nowadays "getting up" this, that, and the other. Be it ours to bring the blessing down. Sunday-school teachers, take heed that you do not merely amuse or only instruct the children. Win them for Christ. Take heed, ye who profess to follow Jesus! Look where you are going; ponder the paths of your steps. II. Then THE PROPHET RECOMMENDED QUIET. "Be quiet." It is not the easiest thing in the world to be quiet, especially when there are two confederate armies coming up against you. It is ever easier to assault than to "sit tight." I do not believe there is anything that more honours our holy religion than self-possession in the time of stress and storm. It is then that the worldling says, "Why, I could not do that!" What is the secret of that wonderful composure? The secret is God. That heart is kept quiet that is stayed on Him. III. Then Isaiah says, "FEAR NOT." He has spoken of the outward attitude and action; now he refers to the inward emotion. Know you not that fear is fatal? I suppose that, humanly speaking, almost as many people die of fear as of anything else. Many of our best hopes are thwarted, not because there was any real necessity they should suffer so, but because we were afraid from the first that they would. Many of our high ambitions come to nought because we were never very confident that they would have any other ending. If the work be of God, trust God to see it through. We may have our fears, but we must not cherish them. There were words of cheer accompanying this message. The prophet said, "These great flaming firebrands that you fear are going out. Already they are smoking. They are only the tails of firebrands. A little patience and you will see an end of this trouble." We do not ask a sign of God that He will give us the victory in our warfare, and success in our work for Him. He gives it without asking. We would believe without a sign. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." But if God offers us a sign we do not refuse it. Ahaz did. He said—suddenly posing as a saint—"No, I will not tempt God." When God offers us a sign it is not reverence to refuse it; it is gross irreverence. But He has granted us the best sign of all, the sign to which I do not doubt that Isaiah made reference. Christ has come; nay, God has come, for Christ is God. "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." John Bunyan used to call unbelief a white devil. (*T. Spurgeon.*) *Tails of smoking firebrands* :—The two allies are at once designated as what they are before God, who sees through things in the future. They are two tails, *i.e.*, nothing but the fag-ends of wood pokers, half-burned off and wholly burned out, so that they do not burn any longer, but only still keep smoking. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *Caution with confidence* :—Life is danger. The more precious anything is the more enemies it has. You rarely see any lice on the wild rose in the hedgerow, but the prize rose in the garden will soon be covered with them if the gardener remits his severe attention; crab-apple trees on a common may be left with confidence to take care of themselves, but the husbandman must watch by night and day an orchard full of sweetness. Man has the most enemies of all, they swarm on every hand, he walks in jeopardy every hour. But we often forget all this and act with strange heedlessness. Awhile ago, from the flowery cliffs, I was watching the beautiful gulls as they flashed between the sun and the sea uttering cries of joy, when some wretched sportsmen appeared on the scene and began to fire at the lovely creatures. I thought that at the first shot the birds would have vanished into space, but, strangely enough, as if they were enchanted, they continued to whirl around the very focus of destruction. Fortunately, they were not hit, the marksmen's aim was as bad as their temper; but at any moment the glorious birds might have dropped, shattered, bloody

things, into the sea. It is very much the same with men. They go negligently, presumptuously, although moral dangers are thicker than all other dangers, and any moment might see the glory and hope of life quenched in midnight darkness. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *Morbid nervousness*.—We all know suspicious souls whose nervousness gives them not a moment of peace. If they are going on a railway journey, they anxiously look out for the middle compartment of the middle carriage, fancying that the safest place, and there is no telling how many trains they miss looking for that carriage; if they are in the country, they will not drink a drop of milk until they have ascertained whether the foot and mouth disease has been in that district; and at the railway station they cross-examine the driver to know whether he has conveyed in that cab any passenger having an infectious malady. Now, if you once give way to a morbid nervousness of this sort, there is positively no end to the thing, and every bit of comfort is taken out of life. (*Ibid.*) *God the sure Protector of His people*.—The sensible voyager lays his head on the pillow and goes to sleep, although the gleaming teeth of sharks are only a few inches away; the thickness of the plank or plate is practically the thickness of a planet: and although hell is always nigh, let us remember that God is still nigher, and that a bit of tissue paper in His hands is the munition of rocks to those who trust in Him. (*Ibid.*) *Vigilance and gladness*.—The bird on the branch is intensely sensitive and tremulous; it looks around, above, beneath; all the world might be a fowler, a snare, a cat, and yet at the same time it goes on pouring out its happy soul in music. Let us be like it in watchfulness and gladness. (*Ibid.*) *Morbid introspection*.—When I was a growing lad I was always measuring myself to see how much I had gained every week or two. Sometimes there was a distinct gain, and then another testing seemed to indicate that I was standing still; so I fed my hopes and fears. But I did very well on the whole, and it would have been a great deal better if I had let the measuring-tape alone and attended to my learning and my business. Do not afflict your souls with morbid solitudes. (*Ibid.*) *God's contempt for Rezin and Pekah*.—God will have those in derision who set their shoulders against His throne for the purpose of overturning it. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Harmfulness of fear*.—There is a legend which is in itself instructive concerning the time of plague in a certain Eastern city, to the effect that 20,000 people having died therein, a traveller entering the gates spoke to the plague as it was leaving, and said, "I understand that you have slain 20,000 people within these walls." "No," said the plague, "I have slain but 10,000; the rest have died of fear." It is an instructive story. (*T. Spurgeon.*) *Injurious struggling*.—Once I remember I picked up a small bird which had fallen on the pavement by my feet. I sought to reinstate it among the branches overhead; but the creature could not appreciate my generosity, and with passionate eagerness struggled to escape. I began unconsciously to talk aloud to it, "Poor, silly thing; why do you not trust your best friend? All I want is to get you up again in the fork of the tree. You are making it harder for me, by dashing so against my fingers; for I am obliged to hold you firmly, and you do all the hurting yourself." Why is it we all struggle so, when the Lord is giving us help? (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Be quiet*.—Phœbe Simpson said to Ellice Hopkins, "I think, miss, religion is doing things still." *Stillness of spirit* is like the canvas, for the Holy Spirit to draw His various graces upon. (*Dr. Love.*) *The happy people are calm*.—The really and substantially happy people in the world are always calm and quiet. (*Recreations of a Country Parson.*) *Christian serenity*.—The child of God should live above the world, moving through it, as some quiet star moves through the blue sky,—clear, and serene, and still. (*Hetty Bowman.*)

Ver. 9. *If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.*—*Faith in the Divine Word and promises the alone ground of the believer's establishment and happiness*.—There are only two sources from which human hope or happiness can be derived, and these are sense and faith. I. SENSE AS THE SOURCE OF HUMAN HAPPINESS. It is self-evident from the history of what is past and from observation and experience of what is present that, amidst all the enjoyments, whether more gross or more refined, the objects of sense can possibly furnish to flatter or gratify the passions, nothing is to be found that can give establishment to the human heart, or settle and compose the restless spirit. There are three things which render it impossible that any

mere worldly object or pursuit should render us happy. 1. The difficulty of acquiring what, in imagination or forethought, we have placed our happiness upon, and in the possession of which we have fondly dreamed of enjoying all that our hearts could desire. 2. When with infinite labour we seem to have surmounted every difficulty and to have gained the point we had in view, our promised happiness is snatched from us in a moment, and we feel our disappointment and distress rendered more poignant from the flattering prospects that lay before us, and the ideal estimate we had formed of what we have lost. 3. But let us suppose that we could acquire with ease, and enjoy with security, for a limited time—to our dying day—the objects we so eagerly pursue; how do we know that we shall preserve our relish for them? “Our very wishes give us not our wish.”

II. FAITH ALONE HOLDS FORTH THOSE OBJECTS THAT CAN ESTABLISH THE HUMAN HEART OR QUIET THE RESTLESS SPIRIT. Nothing can give establishment to the mind of man but what can effectually remove the cause of our present disordered state and prove a never-failing source of inward peace and self-enjoyment. 1. What is the cause of this disorder; of this inquietude and restlessness, amidst all the objects of sense; of this vacancy of the human mind, amidst all the profusion of nature? The cause is evidently a departure from the original constitution of our nature. For no creature can be unhappy, continuing in that state in which he was placed by perfect wisdom and goodness. 2. The remedy which faith provides for the cure of this evil. It directs us to the righteousness of God, manifested without the law, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all that believe; for there is no difference. The doctrine that holds forth a finished salvation by the blood of Christ, as the alone ground of a believer's hope, is, of all others, the best fitted to beget not only a humble submission, but a cheerful resignation to our gracious Lord in the various allotments of His providence concerning us. Who that believeth all this with all his heart could for a moment entertain a doubt that his bodily and temporal concerns would be safe in His hands? (*T. Gordon.*)

*Stability through faith.*—1. The promises of God are not at all times easily, steadily, and firmly believed. 2. God, in the communication of His Word, does not regard us as mere machines. The Word cannot profit unless it be mixed with faith in those who hear it. In the Christian's life there are three kinds of stability. I. THERE IS A STABILITY OF JUDGMENT. This regards the truths of religion. It is of great importance to have a judgment clear and fixed as it respects the great concerns of the soul and eternity, and the doctrines of the Gospel of Christ; for as we think we feel, as we feel we desire, as we desire we act, and as we act our characters are formed, and our conditions determined. There are some things in revelation concerning which a man's mind, so to speak, need not be made up. Little or no injury will arise from his hesitation or suspense. But this is not the case with all. There are some things which must be fundamental, and therefore sustain others; and according to the firmness of the foundation will be the firmness of the whole superstructure. Now what is to lead us into this stability but faith? It cannot be human authority among men. What one patronises another denies, and here you would soon find yourself like a man in a labyrinth, who on this side and on that is calling out, “Is this the way?” and knows not what direction to take with safety and comfort. Or, if you depend upon reason, this may do something from observation and analogy; but if you receive the revelation of God only as far as you can understand it, you will make your faith commensurate with your knowledge. Thus obstructions and difficulties will arise continually, and you will be strangers to all satisfaction and repose. No, we must believe all that the Lord has spoken to us in His Word, and because He has spoken it. “I had a little talent and a little learning,” said Dr. Watts before his death; “but now I lay them all aside, and endeavour to receive the Gospel as the poor and unlearned receive it.”

II. THERE IS A STABILITY OF PRACTICE. This regards the duties of religion. By faith we stand. In order to see the strength and beauty of the sentiment contained in our text, let us place the believer in three positions. 1. In a place of secrecy. When alone, how do we act? Faith is a principle that always operates alike upon the mind, *i. e.*, its motives are the same in private as in public. Faith shows us the future and eternal consequences of our actions. Faith brings God and places Him before us. Hence the closet is visited as the temple. The good fruit of faith is carried on amidst many struggles, unobserved by any

human being, but all well known to Him who is the Captain of our salvation. 2. In cases of prosperity and indulgence. How easily is a person drawn aside from the path of duty by the honour which cometh from men, by a regard to the friendship of this world, or by earthly riches! We are therefore told that the prosperity of fools destroys them. But the believer in Christ is not a fool: faith makes him wise unto salvation, wise both for time and eternity. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 3. In a condition of suffering and danger. What an agonising trial was Abraham called to endure, when God bade him take his only son Isaac, whom he loved, and offer him up for a burnt-offering! yet faith enabled him to do it. Moses had a hard task to accomplish, when he went and stood before Pharaoh, but we are told, "he had respect unto the recompense of the reward"; "by faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." And how was it with Daniel? There was something dreadful in being cast into the den of lions; but what was this to a man who saw that God would shut the lions' mouths, so that they should not hurt him? What was this to a man who by faith heard the voice of Him who said, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell; yea, I say unto you, fear Him." Faith also views the Saviour as acting and as suffering for us. III. THERE IS A STABILITY OF HOPE. This regards the comforts of religion. How is it that Christians can rejoice amidst their sorrows? The Scripture assigns the reason when it tells us of the joy of faith. Faith appropriates. (*W. Jay.*) *Isaiah's commission and King Ahaz*.—Isaiah had a very heavy commission from God. He was to go and speak to people who would not hear him, and to be to them a messenger rather of death than of life. Though the message itself would be full of life, yet they would refuse it, and so bring upon themselves a tenfold death. As a sort of experiment in his work, he was called upon first to go and speak to King Ahaz, that wicked king. He knew in his own soul that what he had to say would be rejected; but, nevertheless, at the command of God, he went to speak to the king. He was told where he would meet him. God knows where to send His faithful servants. He knows how to adapt the message with great speciality to the individual case of each person who is within sound of the preacher's voice; and He knows how to adapt even the voice itself to the ear of every hearer. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *No faith without faith*.—These words furnish us with a warning and an encouragement. I. GOD DESERVES TO BE BELIEVED. 1. He is God; and being God, He cannot lie. 2. His Word always has been true. 3. He has no motive for being untrue. 4. The honour of God is involved in His veracity. 5. Suppose even for a moment that we could not trust in the truthfulness of God, what would be left for us to trust to? When rocks move, what stands firm? II. SOME ARE NOT WILLING TO BELIEVE GOD. That is clear by the fear expressed in the text: "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." Believing is a matter of the will. God's grace works faith, not upon us, but in us. God works in us to will and to do; and in the willing He leads us up to believing. We voluntarily believe; and certainly men voluntarily disbelieve. Why is this, this strange unwillingness of some men, nay, in a sense of all men, to believe in God? 1. They are willing to believe other things. 2. Another thing is significant, that men cling tenaciously to faith in themselves. 3. Instead of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life, some prefer an emotional religion. 4. Some stubbornly suffer under unbelief. 5. I notice, too, that such people demand this and that of God, beyond what He has revealed. III. FAITH IS NOT A THING TO BE DESPISED. Have you never heard people say, "Oh, they preach up faith, you know"? "Well, what is faith?" "Well, it is just believing so-and-so." Faith is a most wonderful thing, for—1. It is a fair index of the heart. 2. A sure proof of a change of mind. 3. It inaugurates purity of life. 4. It is faith that leads to prayer, and prayer is the very breath of God in man. 5. It is faith that glorifies God. IV. THOSE WHO REFUSE TO EXERCISE FAITH WILL MISS MANY GREAT PRIVILEGES. I might mention many, but the text gives us the one which I will dwell upon: "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." 1. It means, first, that those who believe not will miss establishment in comfort. 2. Ye shall never enjoy establishment in judgment. There are many persons who do not know what to believe; they heard one man the other day, and they thought that he spoke very cleverly, and they agreed with him. They heard another the next day, who was rather more clever, and he

went the other way, so they went with him. Poor souls, driven to and fro, never knowing what is what! "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established"; you shall be like the moon, that is never two days alike; you shall seem to believe this, and to believe that, and yet really believe nothing. 3. Next, we want an establishment in conduct. 4. So it is also with establishment in hope. 5. We want to be established in spiritual vigour and strength. (*Ibid.*) *The principle of true permanence* is here shown to be a holding of Divine truth. "He who confides in God will abide." (*B. Blake, B.D.*)  *Holding and being held* :—If Judah does not hold fast to his God, he will lose his fast hold by losing the country in which he dwells, the ground beneath his feet. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *Ahaz a representative of double-mindedness* :—Ahaz was a mixed character. He has been convicted in history of being an idolater as well as a professor of the true religion. He was therefore the representative of double-mindedness, a halting between two opinions, that double-mindedness which is unstable, and which cannot excel. Probably Isaiah, marking the workings of his countenance under the delivery of this communication, saw signs of fear, doubt, hesitancy: the king did not spring at the word with access of energy and with the confidence of inspiration; so the prophet, quick to detect all facial signs, blessed with the insight that follows the spirit in all its withdrawal, said instantly, "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Unbelief undermines character* :—To take an illustration from architecture, materialism cuts out the foundation of the soul-structure just where the strain comes. We are told that the lamentable disaster to the Campanile of St. Mark's at Venice was due to the action of the Loggia architects in cutting out the stone coping in its whole length, thus making a wound on the side, where the pressure was severest, half a yard deep and half a yard high. If this be true, it is not remarkable that the massive tower came down bodily. Neither is the downfall of many a man remarkable to us when we come to know how his faith in God had been utterly destroyed. (*Sunday School Chronicle.*) *The power of faith* :—Lord Wolsey said, "Give me 20,000 fanatics and I would march across Europe." Grotius, in describing the success of the Dutch in snapping the Spanish yoke, gives this as the secret of their prowess, "Believing that they could do it they did it." (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 11. *Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God.—God's grace towards the wayward* :—Jehovah does not scorn to call Himself the God of this son of David who so hardens himself. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *A critical moment* :—In this hour when Isaiah stands before Ahaz, the fate of the Jewish people is decided for more than two thousand years. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 12. *But Ahaz said, I will not ask.—Why did Ahaz refuse to ask a sign?*—Ahaz, who looked on Jehovah not as his God, but only (like any of his heathen neighbours) as the god of Judæa, and as such inferior to the god of Assyria, and who had determined to apply to the King of Assyria, or perhaps had already applied to him as a more trustworthy helper than Jehovah in the present strait, declines to ask a sign, excusing himself by a canting use of the words of Moses, "Thou shalt not tempt Jehovah." He refused the sign, because he knew it would confirm the still struggling voice of his conscience; and that voice he had resolved not to obey, since it bade him give up the Assyrian, and trust in Jehovah henceforth. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *A secret disaffection to God* is often disguised with the specious colours of respect to Him. (*M. Henry.*) *Making a decision* :—How often men, like Ahaz, arrive at decisions which are irrevocable and unspeakably momentous! 1. To have to make decisions that may be solemn in both these senses is one of the things that make the position of a ruler or statesman so serious. 2. Every man is at some juncture called to make a decision, the results of which to him individually will be of unspeakable importance; e.g., the young ruler. Every one of you will at some moment be called to decide for or against Christ, and the decision will be final and irreversible. The test may come to you in the shape of a temptation, appealing to some passion of the mind or lust of the flesh, and your eternal destiny may be determined by the manner in which you deal with that one temptation. 3. Like a railway-train we are continually arriving at "points," and the manner in which we "take" them affects our whole after career. (*R. A. Bertram.*)

Ver. 13. Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?—*Wearying God*.—The work and experience of the prophet and the Gospel minister in dealing with men are similar. I. IT IS NO SMALL SIN TO WEARY GOD'S PROPHETS AND PREACHERS. They are His ambassadors. II. IT IS INFINITELY WORSE TO WEARY GOD, whose hand holds their life and destiny. God is patient. This is evident from Scripture and observation. (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7; 2 Pet. iii. 9.) Consider also the history of nations and individuals and of our own life. III. GOD'S PATIENCE MAY BE WEARIED OUT by indifference, obstinacy, procrastination, backsliding. The sinner is in present danger of doing this. Others have done it in Scripture and history. Application—The axe is laid at the root of the tree; make haste to repent. (*Homiletic Review*.) *Wearying God*.—Ahaz refused to ask a sign, probably wishing to avoid as much as possible further intercourse with Isaiah, who, he feared, would reprove him for his vices and idolatry. 1. That which seems specially to have wearied God in the instance of Ahaz was, the sinning yet more in a season of distress. 2. There is a likelihood that his offence may be copied, and that, too, not merely in the general, but even in minute particulars. God became wearied by a repetition of the sin when He had tried by calamities to produce its abandonment. It does not seem that there was ever the least pause in his wickedness. God smote him, but he went on frowardly. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Wearying God*.—The house of David weary the long-suffering of God by letting Him exhaust all the means of their correction without effect. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *Wearying God*.—1. The great God is pleased to consider the indignities and injuries done to His servants as done to Himself. 2. Beware then of wearying God by refusing to comply with the administrations and offers He gives you by His servants; but now, while it is called to-day, hearken to His voice and obey His call. (*R. Macculloch.*)

Ver. 14. Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign.—*God's sign to King Ahaz*.—Perhaps more perplexity has been produced among commentators by this passage than by any other in Old Testament prophecy. The chief difficulties of the passage may be stated as follows: Does the prophecy refer to some event which was soon to occur, or does it refer exclusively to some event in the distant future? If it refers to some event which was soon to occur, what event was it? Who was the child intended, and who the virgin who should bring forth the child? 1. The first step toward the unravelling of the prophet's meaning is to determine the exact significance of the words. What, then, is the meaning of the word  $\text{אֵימָן}$ , which is translated "sign"? Delitzsch defines the word as "a thing, event, or act which may serve to guarantee the Divine certainty of some other thing, event, or act." It does not of necessity denote a miracle. For example, in Gen. xvii. 11, circumcision is said to be a "sign," or token. The context, together with the nature of the thing, event, or act, must decide whether the  $\text{אֵימָן}$  is a miracle or not. All that is necessary to constitute a "sign" to Ahaz is that some assurance shall be given which Jehovah alone can give. And the certain prediction of future events is the prerogative of Jehovah alone. 2. We turn now to the word  $\text{עַלְמָּוָה}$ , translated "virgin," and shall try to find its exact meaning. The derivation of it from  $\text{עָלַה}$ , to hide, to conceal, is now generally abandoned. Its most probable derivation is from  $\text{עָלַה}$ , to grow, to be strong, and hence the word means one who has come to a mature or marriageable age. Hengstenberg contends that it means one in an unmarried state; Gesenius holds that it means simply being of marriageable age, the age of puberty. However this may be, it seems most natural to take the word in this place as meaning one who was then unmarried and who could be called a virgin. But we must guard against the exegetical error of supposing that the word here used implies that the person spoken of must be a virgin at the time when the child is born. All that is said is that she who is now a virgin shall bear a son. 3. Let us now proceed to consider the interpretation of the prophecy itself. The opinions which have generally prevailed with regard to it are three—(1) That it has no reference to any Messianic fulfilment, but refers exclusively to some event in the time of the prophet. (2) That it has exclusive and immediate reference to the Messiah, thus excluding any reference to any event which was then to occur. On this view, the future birth of the Messiah from a virgin is made the sign to Ahaz that Jerusalem shall be safe from a threatened invasion. (3) That the prophet is speaking of the birth of a child which would soon take place of some one who was then a virgin;

but that the prophecy has also a higher fulfilment in Christ. This last view we regard as the only tenable one, and the proof of it will be the refutation of the other two. The following reasons are presented to show that the prophecy refers to some event which was soon to occur. 1. The context demands it. If there was no allusion in the New Testament to the prophecy, and we should contemplate the narrative here in its surrounding circumstances, we should naturally feel that the prophet must mean this. If the seventh and eighth chapters, connected as they are, were all that we had, we should be compelled to admit a reference to something in the prophet's time. The record in chap. viii. 1-4, following in such close connection, seems to be intended as a public assurance of the fulfilment of what is here predicted respecting the deliverance of the land from the threatened invasion. The prediction was that she who is a virgin shall bear a son. Now Jehovah alone can foreknow this, and He pronounces the birth of this child as the sign which shall be given. 2. The thing to be given to Ahaz was a sign or token that a present danger would be averted. How could the fact that the Messiah would come seven hundred years later prove this? Let us now look at the reasons for believing that it contains also a reference to the Messiah. 1. The first argument we present is derived from the passage in chap. ix. 7. There is an undoubted connection between that passage and the one under consideration, as almost all critical scholars admit. And it seems that nothing short of a Messianic reference will explain the words. Some have asserted that the undoubted and exclusive reference to Messiah in this verse (ix. 7) excludes any local reference in the prophecy in chap. vii. 14. But so far from this being the case, we believe it is an instance of what Bacon calls the "springing, germinant fulfilment of prophecy." And we believe that it can be proved that all prophecies take their start from historical facts. Isaiah here (ix. 7) drops the historical drapery and rises to a mightier and more majestic strain. 2. The second and crowning argument is taken from the language of the inspired writer Matthew (i. 22, 23). (*D. M. Sweets.*) *Who was the "virgin," and who the son?—* 1. Some have supposed that the wife of Ahaz was meant by the "virgin," and that his son Hezekiah was the child meant. There is an insuperable difficulty against this view. Ahaz's reign extended over sixteen years (2 Kings xvi. 2), and Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he succeeded Ahaz (2 Kings xviii. 2). Consequently, at this time Hezekiah could not have been less than nine years old. It has been supposed that Ahaz had a second wife, and that the son was hers. This is a mere supposition, supported by nothing in the narrative, while it makes chap. viii. 1-4 have no connection with what precedes or follows. 2. Others have supposed that some virgin who was then present before Ahaz was designated, and they make the meaning this: "As surely as this virgin shall conceive and bear a son, so surely shall the land be forsaken of its kings." This is too vague for the definite language used, and gives no explanation of the incident in chap. viii. about Maher-shalal-hash-baz. 3. Another opinion is that the virgin was not an actual but an ideal virgin. Michaelis thus presents this view: "By the time when one who is yet a virgin can bring forth (i.e., in nine months), all will be happily changed and the present impending danger so completely passed away that if you were to name the child you would call him Immanuel." Surely this would not be a sign or pledge of anything to Ahaz. Besides, it was not a birth possible, but an actual birth, which was spoken of. 4. But the view which is most in keeping with the entire context, and which presents the fewest difficulties, is that the prophet's own son is intended. This view does require the supposition that Isaiah married a second wife, who at the time of this prophecy was still a virgin, and whom he subsequently married. But there is no improbability in the supposition that the mother of his son, Shear-jashub, was deceased, and that Isaiah was about again to be married. This is the only supposition which this view demands. Such an occurrence was surely not uncommon. All other explanations require more suppositions, and suppositions more unnatural than this. Our supposition does no violence to the narrative, and certainly falls in best with all the facts. We would then identify Immanuel (as Ahaz and his contemporaries would understand the name to be applied) with Maher-shalal-hash-baz. With this view harmonises what the prophet says in chap. viii. 18: "Behold, I and the children whom Jehovah hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from Jehovah of hosts, which dwelleth in Mount Zion." It is no objection to this view that another name than "Immanuel" was given to the child. It was a common thing to give two names to children, especially



when one name was symbolic, as Immanuel was. Jesus Christ was never called Immanuel as a proper name, though almost all scholars agree that the prophecy referred to Him in some sense. (*Ibid.*) *A double reference in Isaiah's prophecies* :—The careful, critical student of Isaiah will find this thing common in his writings, namely, that he commences with a prophecy having reference to some remarkable delivery which was soon to occur, and terminates it by a statement of events connected with a higher deliverance under the Messiah. His mind becomes absorbed; the primary object is forgotten in the contemplation of the more remote and glorious event. (*Ibid.*) *The virgin* :—The Hebrew word rendered "virgin" in the A.V. would be more accurately rendered "damsel." It means a young woman of marriageable age, and is not the word which would be naturally used for "virgin," if that was the point which it was desired to emphasise. (*Prof. A. F. Kirkpatrick.*) Our English word "maiden" comes as near, probably, as any to the Hebrew word. (*Speaker's Commentary.*) The Hebrew lexicons tell us that the word *almah*, here translated virgin, may denote any mature young woman, whether a virgin or not. So far as its derivation is concerned, this is undoubtedly the case; but in Biblical usage, the word denotes a virgin in every case where its meaning can be determined. The instances are, besides the text, that in the account of Rebekah (Gen. xxiv. 43), that of the sister of Moses (Exod. ii. 8), the word used in the plural (Psa. lxxviii. 25, 26; Cant. i. 3, vi. 8), its use in the titles of Psalms (Psa. xlvii; 1 Chron. xv. 20), and its use in Prov. xxx. 19. The last passage is the one chiefly relied on to prove that the word may denote a woman not a virgin; but, "the way of a man with a maid" there spoken of is something wonderful, incapable of being traced or understood, like the way of an eagle in the air, a serpent on a rock, a ship in the sea, and it is only in its application to that wonderful human experience, a first love between a man and a virgin, that this description can find a full and complete significance. The use of the word in the Bible may not be full enough in itself to prove that *almah* necessarily means virgin, but it is sufficient to show that Septuagint translators probably chose deliberately and correctly, when they chose to translate the word, in this passage, by the Greek word that distinctively denotes a virgin, and that Matthew made no mistake in so understanding their translation. (*Prof. W. J. Beecher, D.D.*) *Deliverance by a lowly agent* :—Not Ahaz, not some high-born son of Ahaz's house, is to have the honour of rescuing his country from its peril: a "nameless maiden of lowly rank" (Delitzsch) is to be the mother of the future deliverer. Ahaz and the royal house are thus put aside; it is not till chap. ix. 7—spoken at least a year subsequently—that we are able to gather that the Deliverer is to be a descendant of David's line. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *God's sign to Ahaz* :—The king having refused to ask a sign, the prophet gives him one, by renewing the promise of deliverance (vers. 8, 9), and connecting it with the birth of a child, whose significant name is made a symbol of the Divine interposition, and his progress a measure of the subsequent events. Instead of saying that God would be present with them to deliver them, he says the child shall be called Immanuel (God with us); instead of mentioning a term of years, he says, before the child is able to distinguish good from evil; instead of saying that until that time the land shall lie waste, he represents the child as eating curds and honey, spontaneous products, here put in opposition to the fruits of cultivation. At the same time, the form of expression is descriptive. Instead of saying that the child shall experience all this, he represents its birth and infancy as actually passing in his sight; he sees the child brought forth and named Immanuel; he sees the child eating curds and honey till a certain age. But very different opinions are held as to the child here alluded to. Some think it must be a child about to be born, in the course of nature, to the prophet himself. Others think that two distinct births are referred to, one that of Shear-jashub, the prophet's son, and the other Christ, the Virgin's Son. Yet others see only a prophetic reference to the birth of Messiah. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *A prediction of the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ* :—While some diversity of judgment ought to be expected and allowed, in relation to the secondary question (of the child of the period that is referred to), there is no ground, grammatical, historical, or logical, for doubt as to the main point, that the Church in all ages has been right in regarding this passage as a signal and explicit prediction of the miraculous conception and nativity of Jesus Christ. (*Ibid.*) *The figure of Immanuel an ideal one* :—The language of Isaiah forces upon us the conviction that the figure of Immanuel is an ideal one, projected by

him upon the shifting future—upon the nearer future in chap. vii., upon the remoter future in chap. ix., but grasped by the prophet as a living and real personality, the guardian of his country now, its deliverer and governor hereafter. The circumstances under which the announcement is made to Ahaz are such as apparently exclude deliberation in the formation of the idea; it is the unpremeditated creation of his inspired imagination. This view satisfies all the requirements of the narrative. The birth of the child being conceived as immediate affords a substantial ground for the assurance conveyed to Ahaz; and the royal attributes with which the child speedily appears to be endued, and which forbid his identification with any actual contemporary of the prophet's, become at once intelligible. It is the Messianic King, whose portrait is here for the first time in the Old Testament sketched directly. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *Immanuel, the Messiah*:—It is the Messiah whom the prophet here beholds as about to be born, then in chap. ix. as born, and in chap. xi. as reigning. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *What sign could the distant birth of Christ be to Ahaz?*—The answer is plain, as evidenced by the prophet turning away from the king who repudiated his privileges to the "house of David," to which in all its generations the promise was given. The king was endeavouring to bring about the destruction of "the land," but his efforts in that direction would be useless until the destiny of the house of David was fulfilled. The virgin must bear the promised Son; Judah is immortal till that event is accomplished. It matters not whether it is near or far, the family and lineage of David must survive till then. Hence the sign was plain enough, or ought to have been, to Ahaz and the people in general. The closing portion of this section of Scripture fully discloses the destruction that should befall Judah as well as Israel, but the final fall of Judah is after the birth of Immanuel. (*F. T. Bassett, M.A.*) *The virgin mother*:—To maintain that Isaiah did not mean to say that a certain Person in the future was to be born of a virgin, is not the same thing as to hold that Christ was not so born as a fact. (*F. H. Woods, B.D.*) *The mystery of the sign*:—The "sign" is on the one side a mystery staring threateningly at the house of David, and on the other side it is a mystery rich in comfort to the prophet and all believers; and it is couched in such enigmatic terms in order that they who harden themselves may not understand it, and in order that believers may so much the more long to understand it. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *A new thing in the earth* (vers. 10-16):—I. THE PLEDGE PROPOSED. 1. The condescension which God displayed on this occasion was very remarkable. 2. There may be a semblance of regard for the honour of God, while the heart is in a state of hostility against Him. 3. God may sustain a certain relationship to those who are not His in reality. II. THE INDIGNANT REBUKE ADMINISTERED. (Ver. 13.) 1. The persons to whom it was addressed. Not the king only, but the whole nation; which shows that they, or a large portion of them, were like-minded with their ungodly ruler. They are called "the house of David," a designation which was doubtless intended to remind them of his character, and the great things which God had done for him. Well would it have been if he by whom David's throne was now occupied had been imbued with David's spirit, and walked in David's ways; and that his influence had been exerted in inducing his subjects to do so likewise. 2. The feeling by which it was prompted. It was evidently that of holy indignation. 3. The grounds on which it rested. There were two things especially by which God was dishonoured on this occasion. (1) Unbelief. Nothing casts a greater indignity upon the Divine character than for His word to be distrusted. (2) Hypocrisy. Far better to bid open defiance to the Most High, and say with Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?" than pretend to serve Him while we are resolved to act in opposition to His will. III. THE GLORIOUS EVENT PREDICTED. As to this striking prediction, in itself considered, there are several particulars which it sets before us—1. The miraculous conception of Christ. 2. The essential Deity of Christ. 3. The design of the coming of Christ. For Him to be called "Immanuel, God with us," shows that He appeared to espouse our cause. 4. The lowly condition of Christ. "Butter and honey shall He eat," &c. 5. The moral purity of Christ. Although the expression, "before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good," has literal reference to His attaining the age of discernment, yet it may be applied with special propriety to the spotless sanctity of His character. He knew, in a sense in which no one else ever knew, how to refuse the evil and choose the good. (*Anon.*) *The birth of Christ*:—I. THE BIRTH OF CHRIST. 1. We see here a miraculous concep-

tion. 2. Notice next, the humble parentage. Though she was not a princess, yet her name, Mary, by interpretation, signifies a princess; and though she is not the queen of heaven, yet she has a right to be reckoned amongst the queens of earth; and though she is not the lady of our Lord, she does walk amongst the renowned and mighty women of Scripture. Yet Jesus Christ's birth was a humble one. Strange that the Lord of glory was not born in a palace! Let us take courage here. If Jesus Christ was born in a manger in a rock, why should He not come and live in our rocky hearts? If He was born in a stable, why should not the stable of our souls be made into a habitation for Him? If He was born in poverty, may not the poor in spirit expect that He will be their Friend? 3. We must make one more remark upon this birth of Christ, and that remark shall be concerning a glorious birthday. With all the humility that surrounded the birth of Christ, there was yet very much that was glorious, very much that was honourable. No other man ever had such a birthday as Jesus Christ had. Of whom had prophets and seers ever written as they wrote of Him? Whose name is graven on so many tablets as His? Who had such a scroll of prophecy, all pointing to Him as Jesus Christ, the God-man? Then recollect, concerning His birth, when did God ever hang a fresh lamp in the sky to announce the birth of a Caesar? Cæsars may come, and they may die, but stars shall never prophesy their birth. When did angels ever stoop from heaven, and sing choral symphonies on the birth of a mighty man? Christ's birth is not despicable, even if we consider the visitors who came around His cradle. **II. THE FOOD OF CHRIST.** "Butter and honey shall He eat, that He may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good." Our translators were certainly very good scholars, and God gave them much wisdom, so that they craned up our language to the majesty of the original, but here they were guilty of very great inconsistency. I do not see how butter and honey can make a child choose good, and refuse evil. If it is so, I am sure butter and honey ought to go up greatly in price, for good men are very much required. But it does not say, in the original, "Butter and honey shall He eat, that He may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good," but, "Butter and honey shall He eat, till He shall know how to refuse the evil, and choose the good," or, better still, "Butter and honey shall He eat, when He shall know how to refuse the evil, and choose the good." We shall take that translation, and just try to elucidate the meaning couched in the words. They should teach us—1. Christ's proper humanity. When He would convince His disciples that He was flesh, and not spirit, He took a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb, and ate as others did. 2. The butter and honey teach us, again, that Christ was to be born in times of peace. Such products are not found in Judea in times of strife; the ravages of war sweep away all the fair fruits of industry. 3. There is another thought here. "Butter and honey shall He eat when He shall know how to refuse the evil, and choose the good." This is to teach us the precocity of Christ, by which I mean that, even when He was a child, even when He lived upon butter and honey, which is the food of children, He knew the evil from the good. 4. Perhaps it may seem somewhat playful, but I must say how sweet it is to my soul to believe that, as Christ lived upon butter and honey, surely butter and honey drop from His lips. Sweet are His words unto our souls, more to be desired than honey or the honeycomb. 5. And perhaps I ought not to have forgotten to say, that the effect of Christ's eating butter and honey was to show us that He would not in His lifetime differ from other men in His outward guise. Butter and honey Christ ate, and butter and honey may His people eat; nay, whatsoever God in His providence gives unto them, that is to be the food of the child Christ. **III. THE NAME OF CHRIST.** "And shall call His name Immanuel." 1. The Virgin Mary called her son Immanuel that there might be a meaning in His name. 2. Would you know this name most sweetly you must know it by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The responsibility of revelation:*—1. This annunciation to Ahaz was a great opportunity for him—a crisis in his spiritual life. He was getting entangled in idolatrous ways, involved in disloyal relations with the Assyrian monarchy, and had already seriously compromised himself in sacrilegious appropriation of temple treasure. And here was a golden opportunity to break through his bonds, and cast himself loose, once for all, from his unworthy associations. He was only asked to trust on for a little while longer, to watch events, and, as they fell out in a certain direction, to recognise that they were of God's special ordering, and that they constituted a claim on his obedience and trust in God. But he was incapable of profiting by God's goodwill towards

him. He rejected the Divine overtures of prosperity and peace; and, while God still carried out the dictates of His purpose, they came to Ahaz without blessing and without relief. His enemies were removed, but a direr foe stood in their place; he could not but learn that God was faithful, but the word that he compelled God to keep was a word of retribution. 2. And if we were capable of the combined mental and spiritual effort that such a course would require, and were to sit down calmly and without prejudice to dissect our past lives, and with unerring judgment were to separate cause from effect in every case, and to trace each important issue of life to its true turning-point, how often, probably, should we find that the unsatisfactory features of the past were largely due to our neglect of some revelation—some annunciation—of God! By experience, by example, by warning, by discipline; by difficulties significantly placed in our path, or by clearances unexpectedly but unmistakably made; by words in season, out of season; by a thousand things, and in countless ways, we have had annunciations from God—plain indications of His will and pleasure concerning us, and no indistinct prophecies of things that shall be hereafter. And our judgment upon a review of the whole is this—that our true happiness and our genuine success have been in very exact proportion to our faithfulness or our unfaithfulness in reading the signs of God. (*E. T. Marshall, M.A.*)

*The mercy of God.*—The first word of this text joins the anger of God and His mercy together. God chides and rebukes the king Ahaz by the prophet; He is angry with him, and “therefore” He will give him a sign—a seal of mercy. I. GOD TAKES ANY OCCASION TO SHOW MERCY. II. THE PARTICULAR WAY OF HIS MERCY DECLARED HERE. “The Lord shall give you a sign.” III. WHAT THIS SIGN WAS. “Behold a virgin,” &c. (*J. Donne.*)

*Miracle of miracles.*—King Ahaz saith, I will not tempt God, and, making religion his pretence against religion, being a most wilful and wicked man, would not. We may learn by this wretched king that those that are least fearful before danger are most basely fearful in danger (ver. 2). We may see the conflict between the infinite goodness of God and the inflexible stubbornness of man; God’s goodness striving with man’s badness. When they would have no sign, yet God will give them a sign. “Behold.” (1) As a thing presented to the eye of faith. (2) As a matter of great concernment. (3) As a strange and admirable thing. It is atheistical profaneness to despise any help that God in His wisdom thinketh necessary to support our weak faith withal. The house of David was afraid they should be extinct by these two great enemies of the Church; but, saith Isaiah, “A virgin of the house of David shall conceive a son,” and how then can the house of David be extinct? Heaven hath said it; earth cannot disannul it. God hath said it, and all the creatures in the world cannot annihilate it. How doth friendship between God and us arise from hence, that Christ is God in our nature? 1. Sin, the cause of division, is taken away. 2. Our nature is pure in Christ, and therefore in Christ God loveth us. 3. Christ being our head of influence conveyeth the same Spirit that is in Him to all His members, and, little by little, by that Spirit, purgeth His Church and maketh her fit for communion with Himself. 4. The second person is God in our nature for this end, to make God and us friends. (*R. Sibbes.*)

*Christ in prophecy.*—You will find that the presence of one Person pervades the whole book. If you go into a British navy-yard, or on board a British vessel, and pick up a piece of rope, you will find that there is one little red thread which runs through the whole of it—through every foot of cordage which belongs to the British government; so, if a piece of rope is stolen, it may be cut into inch pieces, but every piece has the mark which tells where it belongs. It is so with the Bible. You may separate it into a thousand parts, and yet you will find one thought—one great fact running through the whole of it. You will find it constantly pointing and referring to one great Personage. Around this one mighty Personage this whole book revolves. “To Him give all the prophets witness.” (*H. L. Hastings.*)

*Immanuel.*—*Shear-jashub*; *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*; *Immanuel.*—The three names taken together would mean this—the Assyrians would spoil the countries of Syria and Ephraim, and though they would threaten Judah, God would be with His people, and save them, and so a remnant would be left which would return at once to religious faith and to national prosperity. For these two last are almost always associated in the prophet’s view. (*F. H. Woods, B.D.*)

*A prophecy of the Messiah.*—When Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, the Jews saw quite clearly that this was indeed nothing less than the claim to be Divine, and they cried out that this was blasphemy. And what

was His reply? Jesus reminded His hearers that the earliest judges and leaders of the people of Israel, as testified by the language of their Scriptures, had been called gods. "Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, ye are gods? If He called them gods, unto whom the Word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken; say ye of Him, whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" The judges and rulers of the early days of Israel had been called gods because their office and function was just this—to represent God on earth to men, to reflect His character, and do His will, and lead His people. They often failed to do this because they were merely human. In some cases they were false to their trust, and then God's vengeance overtook them. Yet they pointed to that one far-off Divine event when One who should perfectly fulfil that name was to interpose for the world's deliverance. And thus, just as the implied prophecy in calling men gods was to be one day fulfilled, so the prophecy of Isaiah before us was also a prophecy of that same later far-off event, when one who was in every sense "God with us" should come to satisfy the needs and the longings of the human heart. (*Canon Ainger.*) *Immanuel, the Sympathiser*:—"God with us." This means omnipotence with us, omniscience with us, perfection with us, and the love that never fails. Some of us, perhaps, have tried, in conformity with the passion for getting rid of the supernatural that marks the latest struggle of the scientific world, to construct a new religion out of the old, in which the same pathetic and lovely figure as before shall be placed beside us for our example, but from whom the aureole of Deity has been taken away; they have been trying to find all that life needs in the presence only of a fellow-man, however superior to ourselves in holiness and purity. There are moments in our lives when we feel ourselves face to face with sin, in the presence of sorrow or of death from which no man can deliver us. In the sad hours of your life, it has been said, the recollection of that Man you read of in your childhood, the Man of sorrows, the great Sympathiser with human woes and sufferings, rises up before you. I know it is a reality for you then, for you feel it to be not only beautiful but true. In such moments does it seem to you as if Christ were merely a person who eighteen hundred years ago made certain journeying between Judea and Galilee? Can such a recollection fill up the blank which some present grief, the loss of some friend, has made in your heart? It does not. It never did this for you or for anyone. But the comfort that came to you from the thought of Him may be safely trusted not to betray you, for that voice that came to you in your anguish says, "You may trust Me, you may lean upon Me, for I know all things in heaven and earth. I and My Father are one." (*Ibid.*) *Immanuel*:—Nature, God, and Jesus are words often used to designate the same power or being, but are suggestive of very different associations. The word "nature" veils from our view the glory of the Godhead, and removes His personality from our consciousness. It removes the Deity to a distance from us, but Jesus, the newer and better name, the latest revelation, brings Him nearer to us. The associations of the name Jesus, as a name of God, are most tender and endearing. Jesus does not remind us of blind power or unfeeling skill, as the word nature does; nor yet of overwhelming greatness, distant force and vast intelligence, the conception of which strains our faculties, and the realisation of which crushes our power, as the word God does. The name of Jesus reminds us chiefly of sympathy, kindheartedness, brotherly tenderness, and one-ness with ourselves. The word God presents a picture of the Deity to the mind, in which those attributes of the Divine character which are in themselves most removed from us, occupy the most prominent position, and are bathed with a flood of light, while those features of character, by which the Divine Spirit touches the delicate chords of human affections, are dimly seen amid the darkening shadows of the background. The picture is reversed in Jesus. The great attributes are buried in the light of love, as the stars are covered by the light of day. (*Evan Lewis, B.A.*) "*Immanuel*," a stimulus to the prophet himself:—Isaiah may have meant the Name to speak to him as well as to the nation. He may have desired to bring the message of the Name into his personal and family life. For, after all, a prophet is but a man of like passions with ourselves, subject to the same infirmities and fluctuations of spirit, "warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer." There were times, no doubt, when even Isaiah lost faith in his own function, in his own message, when the very man who had assured a sinful nation that God was with them could hardly believe that God was with him, or could even cry out, "Depart

from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man !” And in such moments as these, when, weary of the world and weary of himself, he lost courage and hope, he may have felt that it would be well for him to have that in his very household which would help to recall the truths he had recognised and taught in hours of clearer insight, help to restore the faith with which he had first sprung up to greet the Divine message. We may believe that there were many darkened hours in his experience, hours of broken faith and defeated hope, when he would fall back on his earlier faith and brighter hopes ; when he would call his little son to him, and, as he fondled him, would repeat his name, Immanuel, Immanuel—God-with-us, God-with-us,—and find in that Name a charm potent to restore his waning trust in the gracious presence and gracious will of Jehovah. (“*Niger*” in *Expositor*.)

*The child Immanuel* :—Isaiah may have felt, as we feel, that God is with a little child in quite another sense, in a more pathetic sense, than He is with grown men. To him, as to us, their innocence, their loveliness, and, above all, their love, may have been the most exquisite revelation of the purity and love of God. “Heaven lies about their infancy” ; and in this heaven the prophet may often have taken refuge from his cares, despondencies, and fears. Every child born into the world brings this message to us, reminds us that God is with us indeed and of a truth ; for whence did this new, pure, tender life come if not from the central Fountain of life and purity and love ? And from this point of view Isaiah’s “Immanuel” is but the ancient analogue of our Lord’s tender words : “Of such is the kingdom of heaven.” (*Ibid.*)

*Immanuel* :—The text is a prophecy of the Messiah (Matt. i. 23).

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH IT WAS SPOKEN. II. ITS FULFILMENT. For more than seven hundred years devout Jews waited for the Divinely predicted sign. Then came the day which Christmas commemorates. III. ITS PRACTICAL IMPORT. To Christians this prophecy is significant of those blessings which are pledged to us in Christ. In Him we have the assurance of God being—1. With us in the sense of on our side. Nature shows us God as above us ; law shows us God as against us, because we have made ourselves His enemies ; but the Gospel shows us God with us to defend us from the power of sin and to deliver us from the penalty of sin. 2. With us in the sense of in our nature. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” ; became one of ourselves, shared with us—(1) The trials of a human life ; (2) The temptations which assail us ; (3) The penalty of sin—death of the body, the hiding of God’s countenance. And so in Christ Jesus we have the pledge of the three cardinal blessings of all Divine revelation—(a) The Divine sympathy, because He is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” (b) The Divine salvation, because He has “put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” (c) The Divine succour, because He “ever liveth to make intercession” for us ; and His parting word to His Church is, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (*T. H. Barnett.*)

*God with us, though His presence is not always realised* :—Professor Tyndall has told us how, as he wandered through the higher Alpine pastures in the earlier months of the present summer (1879), he was often surprised to find at evening lovely flowers in full bloom where in the morning he had seen only a wide thin sheet of snow. Struck with the strange phenomenon, unable to believe that a few hours of even the most fervent sunshine had drawn these exquisite flowers to their full maturity, he carefully scraped away the snow from a few inches of pasture and examined the plants that were growing beneath it. And, to his surprise and delight, he found that the powers of life had been with them even while they seemed wrapped in death ; that the sun had reached them through the snow ; that the snow itself had both held down the rising warmth of the earth upon them, and sheltered them from the cold biting winds which might else have destroyed them. There they stood, each full grown, every flower maturely developed, though the green calyx was carefully folded over the delicately coloured petals ; and no sooner was the snow removed, no sooner did the rays of the sun touch the green enfolding calyx, than it opened and revealed the perfect beauty it had shrouded and preserved. And so, doubtless, we shall one day find that God, our Sun, has been with us even during the winter of our self-discontent, all through the hours of apparent failure and inertness, quickening in us a life of which we gave but little sign, maturing and making us perfect by the things we suffered ; so that when the hindering veils are withdrawn, and the full light of His love shines upon us, at that gracious touch we too may disclose a beauty of which we had not dreamed, and of which for long we gave no promise. (“*Niger*” in *Expositor*.)

*Life’s best amulet* :—A

Mohammedan negro in Africa was once taken prisoner in war. He wore suspended around his neck an amulet or charm. When this was taken from him he became almost frenzied with grief, and begged that it be returned to him. He was willing to sacrifice his right hand for it. It was his peculiar treasure, which he valued as life itself. It was a very simple affair—a little leather case enclosing a slip of paper on which was inscribed in Arabic characters one word—"God." He believed that the wearing of this charm secured for him a blessed immunity from ill. When it was returned to him he was so overjoyed that the tears streamed from his eyes, and falling to the ground he kissed the feet of the man who restored to him his treasure. That poor negro had but the bare name—we have God! Not a distant monarch seated lonesomely away from any human voice or footstep. There is one name that ought to be dearest of all to every Christian—"Immanuel." It means not a Deity remote or hidden, but "God with us." (*Christian Endeavour.*) *God with us*.—An old poet has represented the Son of God as having the stars for His crown, the sky for His azure mantle, the clouds for His bow, and the fire for His spear. He rode forth in His majestic robes of glory, but one day resolved to alight on the earth, and descended, undressing Himself on the way. When asked what He would wear, He replied, with a smile, "that He had new clothes making down below." (*Gates of Imagery.*)

Vers. 17-25. **The Lord shall bring upon thee . . . even the king of Assyria.**—*The prophecy fulfilled*.—The calling in of Assur laid the foundation for the overthrow of the kingdom of Judah not less than for that of the kingdom of Israel. Ahaz thereby became a tributary vassal of the Assyrian king, and although Hezekiah again became free from Assyria through the miraculous help of Jehovah, nevertheless what Nebuchadnezzar did was only the accomplishment of the frustrated undertaking of Sennacherib. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *Assyria and the Jews*.—If Isaiah here, in chaps. vii.-xii., looks upon Assyria absolutely as the universal empire (2 Kings xxiii. 29; Ezra vi. 22), this is so far true, seeing that the four empires from the Babylonian to the Roman are really only the unfolding of the beginning which had its beginning in Assyria. And if, here in chap. vii., he thinks of the son of the virgin as growing up under the Assyrian oppressions, this is also so far true, since Jesus was actually born in a time in which the Holy Land, deprived of its earliest fulness of blessing, found itself under the supremacy of the universal empire, and in a condition which went back to the unbelief of Ahaz as its ultimate cause. Besides He, who in the fulness of time became flesh, does truly lead an ideal life in the Old Testament history. The fact that the house and people of David did not perish in the Assyrian calamities is really, as chap. viii. presupposes, to be ascribed to His presence, which, although not yet in bodily form, was nevertheless active. Thus is solved the contradiction between the prophecy and the history of its fulfilment. (*Ibid.*) *Judah's loss of national independence*.—From this application of Ahaz to Tiglath-Pileser was to date the transition of Judah "to a servile state from which it was never permanently freed, the domination of Assyria being soon succeeded by that of Egypt, and this by that of Babylon, Persia, Syria, and Rome, the last ending only in the downfall of the State, and that general dispersion which continues to this day. The revolt of Hezekiah, and even longer intervals of liberty in later times, are mere interruptions of the customary and prevailing bondage." (*J. A. Alexander.*) *The perspective of prophecy*.—God makes what was announced by prophecy separate itself in reality into different stages. (*E. König.*) *History and prophecy*.—Prophecy never seems to forsake the ground of history. However extended the vista which stretches before him, that vista begins at the prophet's feet. (*Bishop Perowne.*) *Bees and flies*.—Bees and swarms of flies are used as a Homeric image for swarms of peoples (*Il. ii. 87*). Here the images are likewise emblematic. The Egyptian people, being unusually numerous, is compared to the swarming fly; and the Assyrian people, being warlike and eager for conquest, is compared to the stinging bee, which is so difficult to turn away (*Deut. i. 44; Psa. cxviii. 12*). The emblems also correspond to the nature of the two countries; the fly to slimy Egypt, which, from being such, abounds in insects (chap. xviii. 1), and the bee to the more mountainous and woody Assyria, where bee-culture still constitutes one of the principal branches of trade in the present day. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *Hissing for the fly and the bee*.—To hiss for them, is to call or summon them, derived from the practice of the bee-keepers, who, with a whistle, summoned them from the hives to the open fields, and, by

the same means, conducted them home again. . . . We are assured by St. Cyril that [the practice] subsisted in Asia down to the fourth and fifth centuries. (*J. Kitto, D.D.*) *A sentence of doom* :—I. GOD IS SOVEREIGN IN THE WHOLE EARTH. All governments are but instruments which He uses when and as He pleases (vers. 17-21). A thought full of comfort for the righteous, of horror for the unrighteous. II. THE CONSEQUENT INSECURITY OF ALL PROSPERITY THAT IS NOT BASED UPON, AND PROMOTIVE OF, RIGHTEOUSNESS (ver. 23). Britain will be "Great Britain" only so long as God pleases. III. WHATEVER CHASTISEMENTS GOD MAY HAVE INFLICTED, HE HAS ALWAYS A MORE TERRIBLE ONE BEHIND (ver. 17). IV. Seeing that all these things were threatened against and inflicted upon God's chosen people, learn that NO MERCY THAT GOD HAS SHOWN US WILL FURNISH ANY IMMUNITY FOR US, IF, NOTWITHSTANDING THAT MERCY, WE SIN AGAINST HIM. There is a tendency in our evil hearts to think that because God has been specially good to us, we may sin with less risk than others; but the teaching of the Bible is, that those who "turn the grace of God into lasciviousness" shall be visited with a sorer doom than others. (*R. A. Bertram.*)

Ver. 20. **In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired.**—*The hired razor* :—There is involved the bitterest sarcasm for Ahaz; the cheap knife which he had hired for the deliverance of Judah is hired by the Lord in order to shave Judah wholly and most shamefully. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *Shaving the beard* :—The most shameful of all. The beard is the sign of manly vigour, manliness, and manly dignity. (*Ibid.*) *The Lord's razor* :—The Bible is the boldest book ever written. There are no similitudes in *Ossian* or the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* so daring. Its imagery sometimes seems on the verge of the reckless, but only seems so. The fact is that God would startle and arouse men and nations. A tame and limping similitude would fail to accomplish the object. While there are times when He employs in the Bible the gentle dew and the morning cloud and the dove and the daybreak in the presentation of truth, we often find the iron chariot, the lightning, the earthquake, the sword and, in my text, the razor. This keen-bladed instrument has advanced in usefulness with the ages. In Bible times and lands the beard remained uncut save in the seasons of mourning and humiliation, but the razor was always a suggestive symbol. David says of Doeg, his antagonist: "Thy tongue is a sharp razor working deceitfully"; that is, it pretends to clear the face, but is really used for deadly incision. I. If God's judgments are razors, WE HAD BETTER BE CAREFUL HOW WE USE THEM ON OTHER PEOPLE. In careful sheath the domestic weapons are put away, where no one by accident may touch them, and where the hands of children may not touch them. Such instruments must be carefully handled or not handled at all. But how recklessly some people wield the judgments of God. If a man meet with business misfortune, how many there are ready to cry out, "This is a judgment of God upon him because he was unscrupulous, or arrogant, or over-reaching, or miserly." How I do dislike the behaviour of those persons who, when people are unfortunate, say: "I told you so—getting punished—served him right!" With air sometimes supercilious and sometimes Pharisaical, and always blasphemous, they take the razor of Divine judgment and sharpen it on their own hard hearts, and then go to work on men sprawled out at full length under disaster, cutting mercifully. They begin by soft expressions of sympathy and pity and half praise, and lather the victim all over before they put on the sharp edge. II. Again, when I read in my text that the Lord shaves, with the hired razor of Assyria, the land of Judea, I bethink myself of the PRECISION OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE. A razor swung the tenth part of an inch out of the right line means either failure or laceration, but God's dealings never slip, and they do not miss, by the thousandth part of an inch, the right direction. III. Further, my text tells us that GOD SOMETIMES SHAVES NATIONS. "In the same day shall the Lord shave with the razor that is hired." With one sharp sweep He went across Judah, and down went its pride and its power. Assyria was the hired razor against Judah, and Cyrus the hired razor against Babylon, and the Huns the hired razor against the Goths, and there are now many razors that the Lord could hire if, because of our national sins, He should undertake to shave us. IV. But notice that God is so kind and loving, that WHEN IT IS NECESSARY FOR HIM TO CUT, HE HAS TO GO TO OTHERS FOR THE SHARP-EDGED WEAPON. "In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired." God is love. God is pity. God is help. God



is shelter. God is rescue. There are no sharp edges about Him, no thrusting points, no instruments of laceration. If you want balm for wounds, He has that. If you want salve for Divine eyesight, He has that. But if there is sharp and cutting work to do, which requires a razor, that He hires. God has nothing about Him that hurts, save when dire necessity demands, and then He has to go to some one else to get the instrument. (*T. De W. Talmage, D.D.*) *Allies and razors*:—You thought you were buying an ally when you were only hiring a razor by which you were to be rendered naked and made contemptible. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

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## CHAPTER VIII.

**Vers. 1-4. Maher-shalal-hash-baz.**—*Maher-shalal-hash-baz*:—Four words, or rather two sentences, form now the burden of this message; and they are embodied in the name of a boy. Maher-shalal,—this first sentence means that quickly shall trophies be taken—the prophet thus seeing the army of Samaria in full and disgraceful flight. While Hash-baz, the second, tells us about booty being taken, as the Assyrian forces shall enter Damascus in 732 B.C., and help themselves to its wealth. (*B. Blake, B.D.*) *Unconscious testimony*:—I. GOD MEANT SOMETHING BY THIS CHLD. II. GOD HAS A MEANING OF HIS OWN WITH EVERY LIFE. (*J. R. Howatt.*) *God's writing*:—God hath a large print in some of His books. Verily, He can write a small hand too, which men can only see through the microscope of tears. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *A man's pen*:—They that write for men should write with a man's pen, and not covet the pen or tongue of angels. (*M. Henry.*) *A help to memory*:—It is sometimes a good help to memory to put much matter in few words, which serve as handles by which we take hold of more. (*Ibid.*) *Naming children from passing events*:—In 1900 many a helpless infant was saddled for life with a name drawn from South Africa, and reminiscent of certain towns and certain individuals conquered or conquering by the might of British arms. However patriotic we may be, we feel sympathy for these little innocents with the reverse of euphonious names, for their trials in after days when they become Miss Ladysmith Tomkinson and Mr. Pretorius Simpkinson, will not be light. An additional burden for the feminine portion of this sorry community will be, that their mere names will be as definite as a census paper and as plain as a birth certificate, as a declaration of age. In the year 1926 Mr. William Smith will have no need to inquire diligently the approximate age of Miss Methuen Redvers Robinson; he will at once be able to fix the glorious year when her presence began to usher a happy springtime into this wintry world—at least, for him. Strange and unforeseen results may follow from the naming of the little children from the crimsoned fields of war. But the custom of naming the children from passing events is by no means new. The old Hebrews, with their religious intensity, and fervent patriotism, usually found names for their children that had a very distinct meaning and a very distinct message, quite unlike the stolid English, who may by chance stumble upon the fact that Irene means peace, and Theodore, the gift of God, but who never trouble themselves overmuch about such un-English things. (*W. Owen.*) *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*:—One very distinct difference between this old Hebrew name and any recent English battle-name is this, that the latter is a cry of triumph, and the former an announcement of trial, and in this difference there may be seen a difference in the temper of these name-makers. "Let us remember the past," say the English, "let us perpetuate our victories and immortalise them, but let defeat be forgotten, and let the future take care of itself." "No, let us look onward," said the Hebrew prophet, "let us face the facts, and realise that no past victory at the Red Sea can make us conquerors now, if we lose our faith in God." Of course, as the result of such an utterance, Isaiah was deemed a pessimist (as is every man who is far-seeing enough to discern the cloud in the distance, even if it be no bigger than a man's hand, and brave enough to tell what he has seen), and it was easy enough then, as now, and satisfactory enough to the majority, to label him a pessimist and then ignore him! But, on the other hand, it is not the easiest of things to listen to the men who prop esy smoothly of continual summer,

while, round them as they speak, the leaves are falling in autumn, and the trees stripping themselves bare to face the unseen icy wind. There is room for the cry, "Maher-shalal-hash-baz!" (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 5-8. **This people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly.**—*Consolation amidst predictions of judgment*:—Isaiah does not find himself surrounded merely by the very wide circle of an incorrigible people ripe for judgment. He does not stand alone, but is surrounded by a small band of believing disciples who need consolation and are worthy of it. It is to these that the promising other side of the prophecy of Immanuel belongs. Mahershalal cannot comfort or console them; for they know that when Assyria has done with Damascus and Samaria the troubles of Judah are not over, but are only really about to begin. The prophecy of Immanuel is destined to be the stronghold of the believers in the terrible judgment-time of the worldly power which was then commencing; and to turn into the light and unfold the consolation it contained for the believers, is the purpose of the discourses which now follow (chaps. viii. 5-xii.). (*F. Delitzsch.*) *Judgment and salvation*:—1. Vision of a terrible devastation of the country, north and south, by the Assyrian. 2. The salvation and Saviour that rise to view behind the desolation (chap. ix. 1-7). (*A. B. Davidson, LL.D.*) *The waters of Shiloah* took their rise on Mount Moriah, "the hill of the Lord," the hill on which the temple was built. Indeed, the spring is said to have risen within the very precincts of the temple, and to have supplied its courts and cisterns with the abundant water required for its innumerable washings and sacrifices. From the summit of the hill it now flows gently to its base, not along any external channel however, but through a secret tunnel which it seems to have worn for itself through the solid rock. Its waters, therefore, flow underground, running far before they meet the light of day. And, when they re-emerge, they rise and flow without noise or turbulence. They form no brawling torrent, no swift and angry stream, sweeping away its banks and carrying havoc before it. Softly and gently they rise and fill the pool. Softly and gently they overflow into a placid stream, a stream that does not fail even in times of drought; a stream that quickens all it touches into life, and reveals its presence only by the beauty and fertility which mark its course. This is no imaginary description adapted to the requirements of the passage before us, but a description given by a traveller who stood on its margin and tracked its course only a few years since. And yet how admirably it illustrates the prophet's words—"The waters of Shiloah that go softly"; or, as the Hebrew word also means, secretly. They do go both secretly and softly. They flow unseen for a while; and when they emerge from their rocky tunnel, they do not rush and fret and whiten in their course as most hill streams do, but lapse gently on, carrying with them a belt of verdure to the very margin of the Dead Sea. The words of Isaiah describe the waters of Shiloah as they remain to this day. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Shiloah and the Euphrates, or mercy and judgment*:—The history of the Jewish nation mirrors the life of the individual man. I. THAT THE MERCIES OF OUR PRESENT LIFE FLOW "SOFTLY" BY AS A GENTLE STREAM. 1. They flow vivifyingly. The waters of Shiloah were the life of Jerusalem. The stream of mercy here is our life. 2. They flow constantly. The streams of Shiloah are flowing now. The stream of mercy is constantly rolling by us from infancy to our mortal gasp. 3. They flow softly. It rolls by us almost unheard. II. THAT THE ABUSE OF THIS STREAM OF MERCIES IS AN IMMENSE CRIME. The text teaches that the crime of the Jew in relation to his privileges was twofold: 1. Rejection. "They refused the waters of Shiloah," which means, they refused to avail themselves of those means of national improvement and defence which the munificent reign of Jehovah under which they lived afforded. They refused to trust Him in their dangers. 2. Presumption. These people "rejoiced in Rezin and Remaliah's son." Their minds ever occupied by the failures and successes of wicked men, their hope of safety rested on the confidence they had in mere worldly alliances; they trusted in an arm of flesh. We abuse God's mercy when we allow it not to inspire us with unshaken confidence in His protecting love and power. III. THAT THIS CRIME WILL BRING ON THE TUMULTUOUS RIVER OF RETRIBUTION. "Behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many," &c. 1. The abuse of mercy leads to retributive misery. 2. The streams of retributive misery stand in awful contrast with those of mercy. (*Homilist.*)

*Shiloah a type of Gospel grace* :—There are more reasons than one why Siloam, rather than the other waters of Jerusalem, is selected by the prophet as a type of Gospel influences and Gospel grace. It filtered clear from the temple-rock,—emblem of grace in its source,—and for a time ran its unseen course underground,—emblem of grace in its secrecy. Then it sparkled out and along a broad band of silver, till it reached the gardens and the vineyards beyond, where it divided into a hundred tiny courses that covered the sward with their shining network, and filled the air with their gentle music,—emblem of grace in its power to refresh and fertilise. Add to this the fact that Siloam played a part in Jewish religion, and entered once and again into Jewish story. It was there that the temple vessels were cleansed. There, once a year, at the Feast of Tabernacles, the priests went in solemn procession, and fetched water in golden goblets, to pour as an offering to the Lord. There, in later times, dwelt virtue to heal. It was by the brink of Siloam that the impotent man lay till He of whom Siloam testified wrought the cure he had waited so long for in vain. It was in the waters of Siloam that the blind man washed and received his sight. And it was close to Siloam that our Saviour most probably stood, when He spoke of a better store than gushed from its mossy fountain, or rippled in its pebbly bed, and uttered that greatest of all Gospel invitations, “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink.” The figure is fruitful in striking analogies, suggesting much as to the nature and progress of Christ’s kingdom of grace beyond the main fact of its gentleness. The Gospel of Christ as a matter that comes not by observation,—the prime and outstanding illustration of that gentleness of God which makes great,—an agency which pursues its peaceful processes and accomplishes its peaceful results, not by might nor by power, but by God’s own Spirit, whose operations are generally noiseless and often unseen,—is the subject before us.

1. When we speak of the gentleness of the Gospel, it is not denied that there may be a great deal of stir in the means and the circumstances that precede and prepare for the Gospel. That, however, does not interfere with the truthfulness of the figure; the figure, on the contrary, suggests it. When you wish to dig a bed for a stream, and lead its waters through a region hitherto dry, you must be prepared for a certain disturbance. Rocks may have to be blasted, trees to be torn up, long accumulations to be removed, as rough places are made smooth and crooked places plain, and a channel prepared for the fertilising current. But the stream when it comes may flow softly all the same, gurgling gently past the seams of the pickaxe and the stones that the powder has stained. The fact is, all God’s saving work is gentle. He may smite like the hammer, but He heals like the dew; His severities may crush, but it is the gentleness that comes after that makes great.

2. Nor, in speaking of the gentleness of the Gospel, do we forget that a great deal of stir may follow it. Most true it is that the Gospel fits a life for outward processes of activity, expenditures of effort and of energy, feats of work and of warfare, which may be far from being secret or noiseless. Just so with a stream. You may have the industry and stir of the mill on its banks, when the wheels whirl and the looms hum, as corn is bruised for man’s food, or cloth is prepared for his raiment; and you may have at the same time the quiet of the stream that turns it, whose current flows softly, and whose ripple is all but unheard, as it steals brimming through the lush, level meadows, or hides beneath the overarching elms. Yes, the outcome of the Gospel may mean stir. But the Gospel itself, the secret and spring of it, that is always as the waters of Shiloah that flow softly.

3. Nor, once more, when we speak of the gentleness and equality of the grace and influences of the Gospel, do we fail to remember that even the Gospel itself has its periods of quickening and enlargement. Every now and then the stream of its influences is more copious, and the evidence of its existence more visible and obtrusive. Again the figure fits in at this point,—for Siloam was intermittent. Every few hours or so the calmness of its surface was broken, the speed of its current was hastened, by a richer jet of water from its spring. But no perception of the good to be gained at such epochs is to blind our eyes to the fact that the blessing may exist, and exist to fertilise and enrich at other times, when the course of God’s dealings is more ordinary, and their effects more regular and unseen. After all, the waters of Shiloah flow softly, and, even when stillest and most secret, they are visible enough for thirsty souls to discover their existence, abundant enough for them to dip their pitchers, and drink. (*W. A. Gray.*) *The choices of life* :—Are we not all more or less in the position of the Jews whom Isaiah addresses, with

perils surrounding us, and with the need of protection and assistance pressed home on us? Have we not all, too, an alternative of the same kind presented us,—between Gospel grace and Gospel influences on the one hand, and worldly advantages and alliances on the other,—between the waters of Shiloah that go softly, whose very silence and secrecy may offend us, and the noisier rapids of earth, which attract, like the Euphrates in the prophet's figure, only to disappoint or betray? Every man's life yields an opportunity for choosing, and every man's life is shaped and conditioned by the choice which he makes. I. Let me exemplify the alternative before us by a reference to THE EXAMPLE WE FOLLOW. Our example has been given us. It is the example of one whose existence while here was a living embodiment of the figure of the text. It ran its course through this earth of ours like the waters of Shiloah that go softly. The stream of Shiloah was a picture and a prophecy of Christ. The mystery lies wrapped in the very name, and John, the evangelist, who was ever quick in discerning such references, and ever ready in expressing them, intends the analogy to be marked when he says: "The pool of Siloam, which is by interpretation, Sent." And was not the sending of Christ, to begin with, and His life all throughout, characterised by the aspect of the text? What of His youth? For thirty long years, His life ran its hidden course,—through a self-restraint that may well be called marvellous, making music and greenness, no doubt, in the mountain retreat where it flowed, but known nowhere besides; scarcely recognised, as it seems, even there. And when solitude and secrecy had accomplished their work, and His hour for disclosure had come, and the stream that had hitherto hid itself took its way through the glare of publicity, as He wrought and spoke among men, was it otherwise? Still, as before, His life, like the waters of Shiloah, flowed softly. Take His mien and bearing among men. Popularity did not elate Him; difficulty did not bewilder Him; insult did not ruffle Him. He was never unquiet; He never made haste; He was never surprised. Or take the nature of His kingdom and His sway. It was a powerful sway that He exercised even while on earth, but how was it manifested, and to what did it owe its might? No flaunt of banner nor beat of drum accompanied His progress. Victor and King though He was, He did not cry nor lift up His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He did not break; the smoking flax He did not quench. Whatever of tumult and confusion He experienced, it was in His circumstances and not in His life. Have you found your ideal of life in a picture of purity, of charity, of self-restraint and self-sacrifice such as this? If your heart's real creed is, Blessed are the rich, blessed are the joyful, blessed are the self-aggrandising, blessed are they of whom all men speak well,—your choice is the choice of the Jews; you have pitched by the rivers of Assyria, with their treacherous waves for protection, and their turbid stores for supply. II. We pass from the examples men follow, to THE PRINCIPLES AND THE AGENCIES THEY RELY ON, and try to illustrate how the alternative holds there. And the choice is just as before, between such agencies as are unobtrusive and gracious, and those that are pretentious and human; between the aids of religion and the aids of the world. Most men have an eye to success; especially have the young; and how often do they, in the choice of the agencies they depend on and the means they adopt, choose wrong. The thought applies to communities and to Churches as well as to individuals. III. Let us apply the principle of the text to THE MODES OF RELIGION WE ADOPT. There, too, there is the difference between what is unobtrusive on the one hand and what is ostentatious on the other; between what is satisfying and secure and what is disappointing and unsafe; between what is true and what is false. "The waters of Shiloah that go softly"; does not the phrase remind us—1. Of the Gospel's simplicity. 2. Of its secrecy and noiselessness? Phases of religion may come and go, and those who imagine that religion is real only where its instrumentalities are special, and its outward manifestations demonstrative, may have their hopes dashed and their faith staggered, as they watch these manifestations disappear. But religion itself, the kingdom which cometh not by observation, may be pursuing its quiet course, and extending its beneficent influences notwithstanding, and that in ways and in quarters which are unseen and unguessed of now, but which the last great day will in due time declare. (*Ibid.*) "By cool Siloam's shady rill":—Not only because of their usefulness had the waters of Shiloah endeared themselves to the heart of Israel. There were other and more hallowed associations which they suggested. I. The waters of Shiloah represented to the Jew the idea of FATHER-

LAND. Both Israel and Judah were in danger of forgetting the true ideal of patriotism which David had fostered, and were fast degenerating into a spurious imitation of it, a mere feverish militarism. How are we to translate this message into the English of the twentieth century? Does it not mean that the springs of our national greatness are not the matters which bulk most largely in our newspapers, are not the doings of courts and kings, of diplomatists and statesmen, of generals and armies, though these have an influence on a nation's destiny, and often one not to be despised? But far more important are the more unobtrusive factors of a nation's greatness; its care for the moral nurture and intellectual equipment of its children, its fostering of the arts and sciences and industrial training, the quality of its manufactures and the honesty of its commerce, its care for the moral and material condition of the workmen who produce its wealth, the freedom of its subjects, the equity of its laws, the purity and loftiness of its literature, the respect for religion, for home, for marriage bonds,—these are the things that make a nation great, though they are as “the waters of Shiloah that go softly,” little seen and regarded. The penalty for refusing these softly flowing waters of Shiloah is obvious to Isaiah's mind. The instinct of the statesman in him, apart from any predictive faculty, would be quite sufficient to show him the inevitable end of such fatuity. The king of Assyria, at first invited to interfere in Judah's interest, would be sure finally to interfere in his own, and both Israel and Judah, weakened by mutual jealousy and strife, and by internal dissensions, would fall an easy prey. So do God's retributive providences ever fall on the nation which forgets the true sources of its greatness, relies on the arm of flesh while inward corruption is working unheeded at its vitals, forsakes an enlightened patriotism which strives to be great for a spurious one which labours to appear so.

II. These waters of Shiloah suggested to the Jew, not only his Fatherland, but his RELIGION. It was a sacred stream, for it rose in a spur of Mount Zion, near the temple. And at the Feast of Tabernacles, on “the last great day of the feast,” a priest brought water from the Pool of Siloam in a golden vessel, and poured it on the altar amid the rejoicings of the people. It was on this annual occasion that the Immanuel prophesied by Isaiah stood and cried, “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.” Judah, in Isaiah's time, was fast deserting the religion so closely associated with this stream. Such apostasy from God brings its own retribution before long, whether on the nation or the individual that practises it. Some such loosening of moral fibre is often seen, not only in the man who loses his hold on religion itself, but who loses his loyalty to the Church which nurtured him.

III. The waters of Shiloah also represented to the Jew the sanctities of HOME, and the prophet here reproves him because he had rejected these sanctities and beauties of religious family life for polygamy and foul idolatry, which broke up the family, and embittered and destroyed its hallowed relationships. The word “home” is one in which we English have a special heritage. Be careful where you go outside the home for your enjoyments. Do not cast aside the healthful restraints of home, and reject those quiet waters, lest there rise upon you “the waters of the river, strong and many,” remorse and unavailing repentance, self-contempt, lost character, and a hopeless future. (*C. A. Healing, B.A.*) *God's gentle care* :—The brook which flowed by the base of Mount Zion, and down by the side of the temple-covered Moriah, was an emblem of the help and defence which the God of Zion and of the temple supplied to His people in Jerusalem. And it was no angry or noisy torrent, but water that flowed softly. So for communities and individuals now who trust in Him, there is a quiet but most potent protection from the Lord. Let us show this in the case of an individual.

I. TROUBLE WITHOUT. Say that gloom or pain, or both together, fall upon you. Your heart, like that of the king and people referred to by the prophet Isaiah, is agitated “as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.” You seek God in your affliction: you hearken to His prophets; you look to Him for deliverance. And from some unexpected quarter help arises. Your burden is lightened; your disaster is retrieved. Do not call it good fortune. You do well to seize what helps and remedies are brought within your reach; but give the glory to God. It is His secret will, His noiseless care that has been your true defence. You are not hurt because of “the waters of Shiloah that go softly.”

II. TROUBLE WITHIN. The spiritual life is invaded and endangered by unseen foes and spiritual wickednesses; and against such adversaries the appeal to God may still be made—“Strive Thou, O Lord, with those that strive with me: fight Thou against them that fight against me.” In such cases of

spiritual temptation, God knows how to help. But do not look for any mere show of power. It is the enemy that "comes in like a flood." Yet far greater than the power of the enemy is the power of Him who is to His people as "cool Siloam's shady rill." Fussy Christians are feeble. The calm and strong are they who trust God simply and fully, and are content with "the waters that go softly." The Lord will beautify the meek with salvation. In new covenant faith and privilege we "are come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." It becomes us to be calm, because that Living One is our defence. (*D. Fraser, D.D.*) *The Jewish temptation to a false trust*:—All the Hebrew prophets, and Isaiah among them, use the kingdoms of Syria and of Assyria as types of the great world-power, of those external forces of every kind in which it is our constant temptation to trust rather than in the Maker of heaven and earth. To the Jewish people, dwelling in their scattered village communities, with their self-elected judges and leaders—to this people, who were held together by religious rather than by political ties, the vast organised despotisms beyond their borders were a strangely impressive and terrible spectacle. It is impossible to read the inspired prophecies and chronicles without perceiving that the national imagination was dominated, that it was now attracted and now daunted, by the immense power of these great instruments of conquest and oppression; without perceiving that in the minds both of prophets and of the people these despotisms came to stand for all the hostile and seductive forces of that world which is without God and even opposes itself against Him. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *A virtual renunciation of the Consolation of Israel*:—In preferring the alliance of Syria and Assyria to the help of God, these men were virtually renouncing their special prerogative, the peculiar hope and consolation of Israel. For just as those ancient despotisms were prophetic types of the forces of the outward world, so the son of Isaiah was a type of the true Immanuel, and the waters of Shiloah a type of the quickening and cleansing ministry of Him who was sent of God to take away the sin of the world. To refuse the waters of Shiloah for the sake of Rezin and Remaliah's son, to pay so little heed to the promises and significance of the birth of Immanuel, was virtually, therefore, to reject the God whom they professed to worship, and to renounce the hope to which they had been called. It was to prefer man to God. It was to be conformed to the world, and alienated from the Christ. (*Ibid.*) *Choice and its consequences*:—If we refuse gracious ministries we must encounter judicial judgment. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Wise and unwise choices*:—Let us be best pleased with the waters of Shiloah, that go softly, for rapid streams are dangerous. (*M. Henry.*) *Christ the true Shiloah*:—No sooner has St. John told us (John ix.) that Jesus declared Himself to be "sent" of the Father, than he also tells us that Siloam means "sent"; the implication being that just as Christ was sent, so also the waters of Siloam were sent by God, and were His gift to the world. The commentators are agreed that the apostle adds this parenthesis in order to teach us that the cleansing, healing spring, which gave sight to the blind and kept the temple pure, was a symbol of the Messiah and of His cleansing and enlightening ministry. He tells us that Siloam meant "sent of God" in order that we may recognise in Christ the true Siloam—Him by whose virtue the sick are healed and the service of God is sanctified. So that, in fine, to refuse the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and to dread or to glory in Rezin and Remaliah's son, is, in the last resort, to put our trust in the forces of this visible and passing world, instead of trusting in Christ, the Sent One of God and the Saviour of the world. A very beautiful and suggestive meaning is thus reached. For the passage, so obscure at first, sets Christ before us—I. AS THE SENT ONE OF GOD, the true Siloam. He is the Fountain of Life in the spiritual temple. II. IN THE MIGHT OF HIS GENTLENESS. The waters of Shiloah go softly, secretly. In like manner, Jesus did not strive nor cry, nor make a noise in the streets. His course through life, like that of the sacred hill stream, was to be traced by the blessings He shed around Him, the added life and fruitfulness He carried to prepared and fertile hearts, the new life and fruitfulness He carried to barren hearts. III. AS REJECTED BY HIS OWN. They refused the waters of Shiloah—refused them precisely because they ran softly. Had Jesus come to reveal His power instead of to display His mercy, blazing fierce wrath upon His enemies and smiting hostile nations to the earth, the Jews would probably have received Him and rejoiced in Him. But He came not with observation. (*S. Cox, D.D.*)

Vers. 11-15. For the Lord spake thus to me.—*God's overpowering hand* :—The hand is the absolute Hand which, when it is laid upon a man, overpowers all his perception, feeling, and thinking. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) “*With strength of hand*” (ver. 11) :—That is, seizing him and casting him into the prophetic trance (2 Kings iii. 15; Ezek. i. 3, iii. 14, viii. 1). (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *Warning and encouragement* :—The cry in Judah had been, “There is a conspiracy against us, a formidable combination, which can only be met by a counter-alliance with Assyria” (such appears to be the best interpretation of this difficult verse) : Isaiah and his little circle of adherents had been warned not to join in it, not to judge of the enterprise, or probable success, of Rezin and Pekah, by the worldly and superficial estimate of the masses. A truer guide for action had been revealed to them. “Do not,” such is the lesson which he has been taught, “do not follow the common people in their unreasonable alarm” (ver. 12) : “Jehovah of hosts, Him shall ye count holy; and let Him be your fear, and Him your dread,” *i.e.*, in modern phraseology, “Do not be guilty of a practical abandonment of Jehovah; do not sacrifice principle to expediency. If you do not lose faith, ‘He will be for you a sanctuary’” (ver. 14), *i.e.*, (apparently) He will be as a sanctuary protecting the territory in which it is situated, and securing for those who honour it safety and peace; “but” (it is ominously added) “a cause of stumbling and ruin to both the houses of Israel,” to you of Judah not less than to those of Ephraim, to whom alone you think that the warning can apply. (*Ibid.*) *Principle and expediency* :—Translated into modern language, the prophet's lesson is this—that those who in a time of difficulty and temptation sacrifice principle to expediency, and abandon the clear path of duty for a course which may seem to lead to some greater immediate advantage, must not be surprised if the penalty which they ultimately have to pay be a severe one. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 12-14. Neither fear ye their fear . . . Sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself. —*Sanctifying the Lord* :—To sanctify Jehovah is in mind and in practice to recognise Him as the holy God, the Lord who is absolute, free from the limitations which hinder all other beings from carrying their wills into full operation; and to believe with the whole heart that God can and does govern all things according to the counsel of His own will, and that what He determines does certainly come to pass, however probabilities and appearances may be against the belief. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *God should be a nation's supreme regard* :—Isaiah's—or rather the Divine—policy was one of non-alliance and non-intervention. It did not forbid kindly commercial and literary intercourse with foreign nations. On the contrary, it ever looked hopefully forward to a time when all kings and their subjects should acknowledge Jehovah, and flow into His house. It was a policy of justifiable and absolute trust in the protecting care of the living God, who holds the nations in the hollow of His hand. It was a policy of the highest and truest patriotism, because it first insisted on the internal purification of the nation from sin and disobedience, from idolatry, drunkenness, oppression of the poor, unrighteous trading, luxury and lust, from hypocrisies and shams of ceremonial religion; and then, upon the uselessness and irrationality of standing armies and warlike weapons. (*F. Sessions.*) *The true remedy against fear* :—I. SPEAK AGAINST GIVING WAY TO FEAR. In periods of alarm the reports that are spread always much outstrip the truth. Fear is a very inventive passion; it creates to itself many causes of alarm which have no existence, and greatly magnifies those which really exist. II. POINT OUT THE PROPER AND ONLY SUFFICIENT REMEDY AGAINST DISQUIETUDE. There is no rationality in being free from fear, or relieved from fear, otherwise than by true piety towards God. “Sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself,” &c. III. SHOW HOW COMPLETE THIS RELIEF OUGHT TO BE. And in doing this, I shall place before you a few passages of Holy Scripture showing what is proposed to you, what may be hoped for and ought to be aspired after. “The name of the Lord is a strong tower,” &c. The perfections of God are our never-failing resource and security. “Come, My people, enter into thy chambers,” &c. (ch. xxvi. 20). “Be careful for nothing,” &c. “Cast thy burden on the Lord,” &c. “Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace,” &c. “They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion,” &c. (*J. Scott, M.A.*) *The fear of God* :—I. THE WHOLE SUBJECT OF GODHEAD IS ONE OF AWE, and if of awe, then “dread.” The more you know of God, the more you feel the unfathomableness of the mystery

of Godhead. And all mystery is awe. It is a rule of our being, that we must tremble when we stand on the margin of the unknown. Therefore they who know most of God will most "fear," not His anger, but simply His amazing greatness. II. THE SENSE OF MERCY AND BENEFITS HEAPED UPON US HAS AN OVERWHELMING INFLUENCE UPON THE MIND. Do not you know what it is to tremble at a danger when you have escaped it, much more than you did when you encountered it? That is exactly the "fear" and the "dread" of a pardoned sinner. It is the contemplation of a thunder-cloud which has rolled over your head. III. REVERENCE IS THE GREAT LESSON WHICH OUR AGE HAS TO LEARN. Be suspicious of the love which is without awe. Remember that our best acquaintance with God only shows us more the immensity of the fields of thought which no mind can traverse. IV. "HE SHALL BE FOR A SANCTUARY." Do you recoil at the idea of dreading God? That which makes the dread makes the hiding-place. To those who fear, He shall be for a sanctuary. 1. To a Jewish mind, the first idea of the sanctuary would be refuge. 2. The sanctuary of safety becomes the home of peace. "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." 3. God is the fountain of your holiness. The Shechinah shines within the veil; but as you become familiar with the precincts of that holy place, you catch some of its rays, and reflect its glory. (*J. Vaughan.*) *Fear*:—I. AN EVIL PRACTICE PROHIBITED. "Fear not their fear, neither be afraid." Sinful fears are apt to drive the best men into sinful compliances and indirect shifts to help themselves. Their fear may be understood two ways—I. Subjectively. A fear that enslaved them in bondage of spirit, a fear that is the fruit of sin, a sin in its own nature, the cause of much sin to them, and a just punishment of God upon them for their other sins. 2. Effectively. Let not your fear produce in you such mischievous effects as their fear doth; to make you forget God, magnify the creature, prefer your own wits and policies to the almighty power and never-failing faithfulness of God. II. AN EFFECTUAL REMEDY PRESCRIBED. "Sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself," &c. The fear of God will swallow up the fear of man, a reverential awe and dread of God will extinguish the slavish fear of the creature, as the sunshine puts out fire, or as one fire fetches out another. When the Dictator ruled at Rome, then all other officers ceased; and so, in a great measure, will all other fears, where the fear of God is dictator in the heart. III. A SINGULAR ENCOURAGEMENT PROPOSED. "He shall be for a sanctuary." (*J. Flavel.*) *Fear and its remedy*:—I. THE BEST MEN ARE TOO APT TO BE OVERCOME WITH SLAVISH FEARS IN TIMES OF IMMINENT DISTRESS AND DANGER. II. THE FEAR OF GOD IS THE MOST EFFECTUAL MEANS TO EXTINGUISH THE SINFUL FEAR OF MAN AND TO SECURE US FROM DANGER. (*Ibid.*) *Different kinds of fear*:—There is a threefold fear in man, namely—I. NATURAL, of which all are partakers that partake of the common nature. It is the trouble or perturbation of mind, from the apprehension of approaching evil or impending danger. 1. To this natural fear it pleased our Lord Jesus Christ to subject Himself in the days of His flesh (Mark xiv. 33). 2. This fear creates great trouble and perturbation in the mind; in proportion to the danger is the fear, and in proportion to the fear, the trouble and distraction of the mind; if the fear be exceedingly great, reason is displaced. 3. Evil is the object of fear, and the greater the evil is the stronger the fear must needs be; therefore the terrors of an awakened and terrified conscience must be allowed to be the greatest of terrors, because in that case a man hath to do with a great and terrible God, and is scared with apprehensions of His infinite and eternal wrath, than which no evil is or can be greater. 4. Yet evil, as evil, is rather the object of hatred than of fear. It must be an imminent or near approaching evil that provokes fear. 5. All constitutions and tempers admit not the same degrees of fear. II. SINFUL. Not only our infelicity but our fault. The sinfulness of it lies in five things. 1. In the spring and cause of it, which is unbelief (chap. xxx. 15-17). 2. In the excess and immoderacy of it; for it may be truly said of our fears, as the philosopher speaks of waters, it is hard to keep them within bounds. 3. In the inordinacy of it. To exalt the power of any creature by our fears, and give it such an ascendancy over us as if it had an arbitrary and absolute dominion over us, or over our comforts, to do with them what it pleased—this is to put the creature out of its own class and rank into the place of God. To trust in any creature as if it had the power of a God to keep us, or to fear any creature, as if it had the power of a God to hurt us, is exceedingly sinful (Matt. x. 28). 4. In the distracting influence it hath upon the hearts of men, whereby it discomposes



and unfits them for the discharge of their duties. Under an extraordinary fear both grace and reason, like the wheels of a watch, wound above its due height, stand still, and have no motion at all. 5. In the power it hath to dispose and incline men to the use of sinful means to put by their danger, and to cast them into the hands and power of temptation (Prov. xxix. 25; Isa. lvii. 11). There is a double lie occasioned by fear, one in words and another in deeds; hypocrisy is a lie done, a practical lie, and our Church history abounds with sad examples of dissimulation through fear. III. RELIGIOUS. This is our treasure, not our torment; the chief ornament of the soul; its beauty and perfection. It is the natural passion sanctified, and thereby changed and baptized into the name and nature of a spiritual grace. This fear is prescribed as an antidote against sinful fears; it devours carnal fears, as Moses' serpent did those of the enchanters. 1. It is planted in the soul as a permanent and fixed habit; it is not of the natural growth and production of man's heart, but of supernatural infusion and implantation (Jer. xxxii. 40). 2. It puts the soul under the awe of God's eye. It is the reproach of the servants of men to be eye-servants, but it is the praise and honour of God's servants to be so. 3. This respect to the eye of God inclines them to perform and do whatsoever pleaseth Him and is commanded by Him; hence, fearing God and working righteousness, are linked together (Acts x. 35; Gen. xxii. 12). 4. This fear engageth, and in some degree enableth, the soul in which it is, to avoid whatsoever is displeasing to God (Job ii. 3). (*Ibid.*) *The use of natural fear*:—If fear did not clap its fetters upon the wild and boisterous lusts of men, they would certainly bear down all milder motives, and break loose from all bonds of restraint. Men would become like the fishes of the sea (Hab. i. 14), where the greater swallow up a multitude of the smaller fry alive at one gulp; power and opportunity to do mischief would measure out to men their lot and inheritance, and consequently all societies must disband and break up. It is the law and fear of punishment that keeps the world in order; men are afraid to do evil because they are afraid to suffer it. If the severest penalties in the world were annexed to, or appointed by, the law, they could signify nothing to the ends of government without fear. This is that tender, sensible power or passion on which threatenings work, and so brings men under moral government and restraint (Rom. xiii. 3, 4). (*Ibid.*) *The use of sinful fear*:—The Lord knows how to overrule this in His providential government of the world to His own wise and holy purposes. And He does so—1. By making it His scourge to punish His enemies. If men will not fear God they shall fear men. There is scarce a greater torment to be found in the world than for a man to be his own tormentor, and his mind made a rack and engine of torture to his body. It is a dreadful threatening which is recorded in Deut. xxviii. 65–67. When fear hath once seized the heart, you may see death's colours displayed in the face. 2. By fear God punishes His enemies in hell. 3. Providence makes use of the slavish fears and terrors of wicked men to scatter them, when they are combined and confederated against the people of God (Psa. lxxviii. 55, and Josh. xxiv. 11, 12. See also Psa. ix. 20). (*Ibid.*) *The use of religious fear*:—1. By this fear the people of God are excited to and confirmed in the way of duty (Eccles. xii. 13; Jer. xxxii. 40). 2. Another excellent use of this fear is, to preserve the purity and peace of our consciences by preventing grief and guilt therein (Prov. xvi. 6; Gen. xxxix. 9; Neh. v. 15). 3. A principal use of this fear is, to awaken us to make timely provisions for future distresses, that whensoever they come, they may not come by way of surprise upon us (Heb. xi. 7; Prov. xiv. 16). (*Ibid.*) *The causes of sinful fear*:—I. The sinful fears of most good men spring out of their IGNORANCE; all darkness disposes to fear, but none like intellectual darkness. You read (Cant. iii. 8) how Solomon's life-guard had every man his sword upon his thigh, "because of fear in the night." The night is the frightful season, in the dark every bush is a bear; we sometimes smile by day to see what silly things those were that scared us in the night. So it is here; were our judgments but duly informed, how soon would our hearts be quieted! There is a fivefold ignorance out of which fears are generated. 1. Ignorance of God. Ignorance and inconsiderateness lay at the root of the fears expressed in Isa. xl. 27. 2. Ignorance of men. Did we consider men as they are in the hand of our God we should not tremble at them as we do. 3. Ignorance of ourselves and the relation we have to God (Isa. li. 12; Gen. xv. 1; Neh. vi. 11). O that we could, without vanity, but value ourselves duly, according to our Christian dignities and privileges, which, if ever it be necessary to count over and value, it is in such

times of danger, when the heart is so prone to sinking fears. 4. Ignorance of our dangers and troubles. We are ignorant of—(1) The comforts that are in them. Paul and Silas met that in a prison which made them to sing at midnight, and so have many more since their day. (2) The outlets and escapes from them (Psa. lxxviii. 20; 2 Pet. ii. 9; 1 Cor. x. 13). 5. Especially ignorance and inconsiderateness of the covenant of grace. II. Another cause of sinful fear is **GUILT UPON THE CONSCIENCE**. No sooner had Adam defiled and wounded his conscience with guilt, but he trembles and hides himself (Prov. xxviii. 1; Isa. xxxiii. 14). To this wounded and trembling conscience is opposed the spirit of a sound mind (2 Tim. i. 7). An evil conscience fomented fears and terrors three ways. 1. By aggravating small matters. So it was with Cain (Gen. iv. 14), "Every one that meets me will slay me." Now every child was a giant in his eye, and anybody he met his over-match. 2. By interpreting all doubtful cases in the worst sense that can be fastened upon them. If the swallows do but chatter in the chimney, Bessus interprets it to be a discovery of his crime; that they are telling tales of him and saying, Bessus killed a man. 3. A guilty conscience can and often does create fears and terrors out of nothing at all (Psa. liii. 5). III. No less is the sin of **UNBELIEF** the real and proper cause of most distracting fears (Matt. viii. 26). Fear is generated by unbelief, and unbelief strengthened by fear, as in nature there is an observable circular generation, vapours begetting showers and showers new vapours. 1. Unbelief weakens the assenting act of faith, and thereby cuts off from the soul, in a great measure, its principal relief against danger and troubles (Heb. xi. 27). 2. Unbelief shuts up the refuges of the soul in the Divine promises, and by leaving it without those refuges, must needs leave it in the hand of fears and terrors. 3. Unbelief makes men negligent in providing for troubles before they come, and so brings them by way of surprises upon them. 4. Unbelief leaves our dearest interests and concerns in our own hands; it commits nothing to God, and consequently must needs fill the heart with distracting fears when imminent dangers threaten us (1 Pet. iv. 19; 2 Tim. i. 12; Prov. xvi. 3). IV. Many of our fears are raised by **THE PROMISCUOUS ADMINISTRATION OF PROVIDENCE** in this world (Eccles. ix. 2; Ezek. xxi. 3; Hab. i. 13). The butcheries of the Albigenses, Waldenses, &c. 1. We are apt to consider that the same race and kind of men that committed these outrages upon our brethren are still in being, and that their malice is not abated in the least degree. Cain's club is to this day carried up and down the world, stained with the blood of Abel, as Bucholtzer speaks. 2. We know also that nothing hinders the execution of their wicked purposes against us but the restraints of providence. 3. We find that God hath many times let loose these lions upon His people. The best men have suffered the worst things. 4. We are conscious how far short we come in holiness of those excellent persons who have suffered these things, and therefore have no ground to expect more favour from providence than they found. The revolving of such considerations in our thoughts and mixing our own unbelief with them, creates a world of fears, even in good men, till, by resignation of all to God, and acting faith upon His promises (Rom. viii. 28; Psa. xci. 15; Isa. xxvii. 8; Rev. vii. 17), we do, at last, recover our hearts out of the hands of our fears again, and compose them to a quiet and sweet satisfaction in the wise and holy pleasure of our God. V. **OUR IMMEDIATE LOVE OF LIFE AND THE COMFORTS AND CONVENIENCES THEREOF** may be assigned as a proper and real ground and cause of our sinful fears, when the dangers of the times threaten the one or the other (Rev. xii. 11; Acts xx. 24, 25). 1. Life is the greatest and nearest interest men naturally have in this world, and that which wraps up all other inferior interests in itself (Job ii. 4; Gen. xxv. 32). 2. That which endangers life must, in the eyes of the natural man, be the greatest evil that can befall him. 3. Though death be terrible in any shape, yet a violent death by the hands of cruel and merciless men is the most terrible form that death can appear in. VI. Many of our sinful fears flow from **THE INFLUENCES OF SATAN** upon our phantasies. By putting men into such frights he weakens their hands in duty, as is plain from his attempt this way upon Nehemiah (Neh. vi. 13), and if he prevail there, he drives them into the snares and traps of his temptations, as the fisherman and fowler do the birds and fishes in their nets, when once they have frightened them out of their coverts. (*Ibid.*) *Effects of slavish and inordinate fear*.—I. **DISTRACTION OF MIND IN DUTY** (Luke i. 74). 1. Hereby Satan will cut off the freedom and sweetness of our communion with God in duties. 2. So distracting fears cut off the soul from the reliefs it might otherwise draw

from the promises. 3. We lose the benefit and comfort of all our past experiences (Isa. li. 12, 13). II. DISSIMULATION AND HYPOCRISY. Abraham (Gen. xx. 2, 11); Isaac (Gen. xxvi. 7); Peter (Matt. xxvi. 69, &c.). 1. By these falls and scandals religion is made contemptible in the eyes of the world. 2. It greatly weakens the hands of others, and proves a sore discouragement to them in their trials, to see their brethren faint for fear, and ashamed to own their principles. 3. It will be a terrible blow and wound to our own consciences. III. THE STRENGTHENING OF TEMPTATION IN TIMES OF DANGER (Prov. xxix. 25). Aaron (Exod. xxxii.); David (1 Sam. xxi. 12). It was fear that prevailed with Origen to yield so far as he did in offering incense to the idol, the consideration of which fact brake his heart to pieces. 1. Sinful fear drives men out of their place and duty. 2. Fear is usually the first passion in the soul that parleys with the enemy, and treats with the tempter about terms of surrender. "The castle that parleys is half won" (French proverb), e.g., Spira. 3. Fear makes men impatient of waiting God's time and method of deliverance, and so drives the soul into the snare of the next temptation. IV. PUSILLANIMITY AND COWARDICE. You find it joined frequently in the Scriptures with discouragement (Deut. i. 21, xx. 3, &c.). V. APOSTASY. It is not so much from the fury of our enemies without, as from our fears within, that temptations become victorious over us (Matt. xxiv. 9, 10). VI. GREAT BONDAGE OF SPIRIT. Sinful fear makes death a thousand times more terrible than it would otherwise be (Heb. ii. 16). 1. Such a bondage as this destroys all the comfort and pleasure of life. 2. It destroys our spiritual comforts. 3. It deprives us of the manifold advantages we might gain by the calm and composed meditations of our own death. (*Ibid.*) *The security of the righteous under national calamity*:—I. A CAUTION (ver. 12). 1. It will be necessary to explain the emotion against which the caution is directed. Taking the caution in its comprehensive import, it is addressed to men, not to submit the government of the soul to the influence of excessive terror, arising from the approach of temporal calamity and distress. It is an universal disposition, among the children of men, in the prospect of evil, to admit such fears and such emotions as these. The thought, for example, of national distresses, such as those which were now about to be poured out on the people of Israel; the thought of personal trials in the common relations of life, from domestic distress, from disease, from bereavement and death, are causes that often inspire the emotion we contend against, as existing in former ages, and which we are aware is often witnessed now. 2. We must consider also, the reasons on which the propriety of this caution is founded. (1) The origin of this emotion of fear is always degrading and improper, proceeding, as it invariably does, from ignorance or forgetfulness, or a disbelief of God as a God of providence and grace. (2) Its workings always fill the mind with unnecessary agitation, alarm, and anguish, and disturb it from, and entirely unfit it for, the right and adequate performance of the existing and the varied duties of life. (3) It opens the way for the entrance of many dark and dreadful temptations, and thus drives men to seek a shelter in those means which are forbidden by God; to propose an alliance, on any terms whatever, with adversaries whom, as idolaters, and the avowed and open enemies of God, they ought entirely to have foiled. (4) It is often directed to means of increased danger and trial, or to resort to those refuges which are but the means of increasing calamity. Thus, when we find that a confederacy of this unholy description, under the influence of slavish fear, had been formed by Israel with the people of Egypt, that very plan was the means of their downfall. God, at the commencement of the thirty-first chapter of Isaiah, exclaims, "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help," &c. II. A RECOMMENDATION. "Sanctify," or select and set apart, "the Lord of hosts Himself; and let Him," so selected and set apart, "be your fear, and let Him be your dread." 1. In this recommendation there is a call upon man to honour Jehovah, by recognising the presence and the action of His perfections in the various calamitous visitations which He permits or sends. His knowledge, His power, His holiness, His justice, His wisdom. 2. Here is a call upon men to honour Jehovah by repenting of their past transgressions, and by devoting themselves to a practical obedience to His commandments. It is remarkable to observe, especially in the Old Testament, how often the fear of God is connected with repentance, and with obedience to God. 3. Here is a call upon men to honour Jehovah by resorting and trusting to His mercy, as that which will grant spiritual blessings, and give final salvation to their souls. III. A PROMISE. "He shall be for a sanctuary." The ordinary meaning which

is ascribed to the word "sanctuary" is simply a place of religious worship; in this case, however, as in many others of the sacred writings, it signifies a place of religious worship, devoted also as a place where endangered persons may receive security. Amongst the heathen, religious temples were places of refuge; and when men endangered by misfortune or even crime ran within the threshold of the place called holy there was no possibility of grasping the offender; so long as he remained in the sanctuary he was safe. So it was amongst the Jews. When it is said that "God shall be for a sanctuary," it is intended that God shall be as a holy building where men endangered by temporal calamity may find shelter and repose. The instances are singularly numerous in which God is presented in the character of a refuge (Psa. xviii. 1, 2, xvi. 1, 11; Prov. xviii. 10; Isa. iv. 6, xxvi. 1, 3, 20). 1. God shelters those who resort to Him as their sanctuary from the perturbation of slavish fear. The fear of God is strictly what is called an expulsive emotion; it banishes from the mind of man a vast quantity of other modifications of feeling, from which he could derive only sorrow and anguish and pain (Prov. xiv. 26). 2. The Lord of hosts shelters those who resort to Him as their sanctuary from temporal judgments. There is provided, on behalf of the righteous, a remarkable exemption from those temporal calamities and judgments which God inflicts upon men directly as the consequence of sin. And if it sometimes does happen that the righteous suffer in those judgments as well as the wicked, it is not because of failure in the promises of God, but because the righteous will not come out and be separate. If a man will stay in Sodom when God has threatened to devour it with fire, the man who so stays must be destroyed. But when there is a separation from all the ungodly confederacies of the world, and a solemn and determinative sanctification to the Lord, by causing Him to be our fear and dread, the Scriptures plainly state that there shall, as the result, be an exemption from all those calamities which fall upon the world for sin (Ezek. ix. 4-6). 3. With regard to those calamities which are the common allotments of life, we are not to say that from these there is an exemption; they must suffer death in its most sudden, and its most awful power. But there is a Spirit that "guides the whirlwind and that rides upon the storm"; there is a hand of mercy in these calamities of providence, transforming them into a new class of blessings. 4. The Lord of hosts shelters those who resort to Him as their sanctuary from the perils and perdition of final ruin. (*James Parsons.*) *The Lord a sanctuary*.—I. THE DUTY. "Sanctify the Lord of hosts," &c. II. THE PROMISE. "He shall be for a sanctuary." Consider the preciousness of this promise in the time when all human help will be vain. We refer to the last day, when Christ shall come "to judge both the quick and the dead." (*W. Horwood.*) *The true sanctuary, and how to get there*.—I. THIS PASSAGE TELLS US WHAT TO DO WITH OUR NATURAL FEARS. God is in the believer's life as He is not in the life of another. He has come to him in the wilderness to be his guide, into the storm to be his pilot, into the battle to be his captain. All difficulties are nothing before Divine wisdom, all opposition nothing against Divine strength. The Christian's great danger is unbelief or unfaithfulness to God, which would make him lose for a time the means of safety and victory. He is like one closely following a guide in the darkness over pathless mountains, whose one concern is to keep him in sight who will thus secure to him a safe and successful journey; and again he is like a child who does not burden himself with any cares, but that of pleasing the father whose love and power have supplied all his need in the past and will supply all in the future. It is thus that the Christian fears his foes, only as the possible causes of the one misfortune of estrangement from his God. The treacherousness of his own heart and the subtlety of those enemies who are ever seeking to break the union which makes him too strong for them, exercise his thoughts and his feelings, but all in relation to God, so that He alone may be truly said to be the fear of His people. All this is true for a Church as it is true for the individual Christian. II. THIS PASSAGE TEACHES US WHAT IS, OR SHOULD BE, TO US TRULY HOLY. III. THIS PASSAGE OFFERS THE MOST EXALTED NOTION OF A SANCTUARY. Man dwelling in God is the realisation of our happiness and of the Divine glory. It speaks to all of purity, safety, peace, but it speaks of much more, according to the spiritual capacity of those to whom it is made known. But few among the thousands of Israel knew anything of abiding in that house of God, which, whether they knew it or not, represented Jehovah Himself. Most of them visited it at intervals more or less rare, and left to the priestly family the duty and privilege of regarding it as their home. And in this the great mass

of professors are aptly represented by the nation of Israel. They seek the Divine sanctuary as a house of defence or a place for pardon, when specially pressed by trouble or a sense of sin; but, if they would be Christians indeed, they should remember that the Church of Christ is the spiritual priesthood; that the members of it are expected to "offer the sacrifice of praise continually"; that to do this they must "dwell in God," they must "abide in Christ"; and that no less close and no less constant union than this can be natural to faith which has learnt that "we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." IV. THIS PASSAGE PREPARES US FOR WHAT OTHERWISE WOULD HAVE SEEMED INCONSISTENT WITH THE BLESSEDNESS IT SPEAKS OF—the sight of others stumbling at that which has become our glory, finding Jehovah Himself to be a rock of offence. How is this? A very simple law will answer. We stumble through ignorance. It is not what we know, but what we do not know that offends us. The rock of offence is a thing misunderstood, for which our philosophy had not prepared us. Now nothing is more misunderstood than goodness among the bad, than God among those who have fallen from the knowledge of Him. He Himself has said, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways." This stumbling of the natural mind at God may be seen in all His manifestations. Men deny His government because they do not see in it what they think worthy of His hand; they grumble or rage at His distribution of goods; they reject or explain away His revelations of the future; and, above all, they refuse to believe in salvation through His crucified Christ. But in all this they are fulfilling His sure Word of prophecy, and while they continue to exhibit the depravity of fallen man, and so the riches of Divine grace, they do not prevent humble, believing souls from sanctifying God in their hearts and proving Him to be their sanctuary. (*J. F. B. Tinsling, B.A.*) *The fear of God steadying the soul in worldly loss* :—Augustine relates a very pertinent and memorable story of Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, who was a very rich man both in goods and grace: he had much of the world in his hands, but little of it in his heart; and it was well there was not, for the Goths, a barbarous people, breaking into that city, like so many devils, fell upon the prey; those that trusted to the treasures which they had were deceived and ruined by them, for the rich were put to tortures to confess where they had hid their monies. This good bishop fell into their hands, and lost all he had, but was scarce moved at the loss, as appears by his prayer, which my author relates thus: Lord, let me not be troubled for my gold and silver: Thou knowest it is not my treasure; that I have laid up in heaven, according to Thy command. I was warned of this judgment before it came, and provided for it; and where all my interest lies, Lord, Thou knowest. (*J. Flavel.*) *The fear of God delivers from the fear of death* :—Mr. Bradford, when the keeper's wife came running into his chamber suddenly, with words able to have put most men in the world into a trembling posture: "Oh, Mr. Bradford! I bring you heavy tidings; to-morrow you must be burned, and your chain is now buying"—he put off his hat, and said, "Lord, I thank Thee; I have looked for this a great while, it is not terrible to me; God make me worthy of such a mercy." (*Ibid.*) *True courage* :—The following prayer was found in the desk of a schoolboy after his death: "O God, give me courage to fear none but Thee." (*Sunday School Chronicle.*) *The exaggerations of guilty fear* :—The rules of fear are not like the rules in arithmetic, where many nothings make nothing, but fear can make something out of nothing. (*J. Flavel.*)

Ver. 14. **And He shall be for a sanctuary.**—*Sanctuary in God* :—I suppose that what all of us mourn over most in a bustling age, is a loss of sacredness in life. We have no wish to secure the false-sacred—that which is merely ascetic; nor that which is merely solemn-sacred—the dull monotony of darkened church or gloomy retreat. We naturally say, if this is God's world; if civil and civic duties, social and relative responsibilities, are all God-ordained ones, it is likely, at least, that here, we may be able to secure a heavenly citizenship amid earthly cares and customs. God will not call us to the wear and worry, the strain and temptation, of a life in the world, and leave our souls without sacred home and spiritual retreat in Himself. How often this idea recurs in the sacred writings. God is our refuge and rest—our hiding-place, our dwelling-place. I. THE SACREDNESS THAT A REVERENT HEART DESIRES. Our Lord lived and worked amongst men, dined with the Pharisee, dwelt with the quiet family at Bethany, consecrated the marriage feast, and went to the publican's home. We, too, may secure sacred-

ness for our lives. II. THE SACREDNESS THAT MAKES SANCTUARY IN GOD HIMSELF. This is so beautiful: He shall be for a sanctuary. He whom wicked men dread and flee from—flee from, indeed, because He is a sanctuary; for, as of old, darkness cannot dwell with light, nor irreverence with reverence, nor mammon worship with devotion to God. We may carry very bad hearts into very beautiful places. Place is easily made unsacred. But the Divine nature must be spiritual. Into fellowship with God there can enter nothing that is false or worldly or vile.

1. Sanctuary in a person. Yes; for even here, in this dim sphere of earthly friendship, our best sanctuaries, apart from our Saviour Himself, have been those who bear His likeness, and who do His will. If asked where the fountains of our reverence have been best nourished, and where the noble thoughts that make us men indeed, have been most wondrously fed, we should think of friends that have received us into the sanctuary of their love and friendship, and helped to diminish the dross of our character and to brighten the gold of our faith.

2. We abide in Him who says, "I am He that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore." And if by His own Divine nature He is a sanctuary, He is so by experience too. He has been tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. "He suffered, being tempted." III. THE SACREDNESS OF ALL THE FUTURE DAYS. "He shall be." Names vary concerning what God is to suit need and experience. We translate the want, and then God's name is translated to meet it. I am hungry, He is Bread; I am thirsty, He is Water; I am faint, He is Wine; I am heated in the way, He is a Rock-Shadow in the weary land. We can suppose, therefore, that the word "sanctuary" meets special wants. Life is not always a seeking for a refuge, but it is so especially at certain times and in strange and desolate experiences. In looking forward, therefore, ourselves to life's future seasons, we see what the soul within us cannot do in itself, and what nature can never perfectly be to any of us. Christ, and He alone, will be now and for ever—a sanctuary.

IV. THE SACREDNESS OF PERSONAL LIFE IN GOD. We cannot say, as mediævalism said, Enter the Church and be saved. We want to obey God's sweet will—to seek more and more for union with Himself through Christ Jesus. (*W. M. Statham.*)

Ver. 16. **Bind up the testimony.**—"Bind up the testimony":—There is evidently a reference in the text to wares or merchandise which are very valuable, and which must be bound up and sealed, to preserve them from being injured or lost, and to convey them in safety to those to whom they belong. The meaning of the text is, that we should, by searching the Scriptures, and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, ascertain what truths and duties are contained in them, and carefully preserve and maintain these like that which is bound up and sealed. In acting in accordance with the instructions given in the text, the office-bearers of the Church should take the lead, to encourage and direct the people of Christ; and His people must concur with them in binding up the testimony and sealing the law. Bind up the testimony, seal the law among, or along with, My disciples.

I. IN WHAT MANNER the testimony must be bound up, and the law sealed, among Christ's disciples. 1. By their faith in His Word. 2. By their profession of the faith. 3. By obeying the truth. 4. By suffering for the truth. 5. By religious covenanting.

II. FOR WHAT ENDS the testimony is bound up and the law sealed among Christ's disciples. 1. For their preservation. 2. For their transmission to posterity. (*Original Secession Magazine.*)

*Divine revelation.*—It is a great instance of God's care of His Church and love to it, that He hath lodged in it the invaluable treasure of Divine revelation. 1. It is a testimony and a law. 2. This testimony and law are bound up and sealed, for we are not to add to them or diminish from them. 3. They are lodged as a sacred depositum in the hands of the disciples (2 Tim. i. 13, 14). (*M. Henry.*)

Ver. 17. **And I will wait upon the Lord.**—*Waiting upon the Lord.*—In the practice of this becoming resolution, Jehovah is the object of—1. Intense desire. 2. Diligent attention. 3. Earnest expectation. 4. Constant dependence. In this all-important exercise, humility and hope, patience and perseverance, are happily combined with an agreeable serenity of mind, which stands in direct opposition to turbulence of spirit and uneasy emotions of soul. It checks every opposite passion, and preserves the mind in a pleasing tranquillity, satisfied with the sovereign good pleasure of God, and attentive to the diligent improvement of all the means appointed for attaining the end in view. In every

change, affliction, and trial it disposes wholly to rely upon God, for all the blessings He hath promised to bestow, in the season He sees most proper to confer them. Hence, in the last clause of this verse, the same resolution is thus expressed, "I will look for Him." (*R. Macculloch.*) *Waiting on the Lord in desertion and gloom*.—I. THE CHARACTERISTIC APPELLATION OF JEHOVAH. "The God who hideth Himself." II. THE IMPLIED MYSTERIOUSNESS OF HIS DEALINGS WITH HIS PEOPLE. III. THE RESOLVE OF THE BELIEVER UNDER THIS VISITATION. (*G. Smith, D.D.*)

Ver. 18. Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me.—*Names as signs*.—The Hebrews, like most Eastern races, were very quick to see the omen in the *nomen*, the sign or portent in the name. ("*Niger*" in *Expositor.*) *Isaiah and his children as signs*.—If one of these names implied judgment, three of them implied mercy. The omen in the name "Speed-spoil Hasten-booty" was doubtless full of terror; for the Assyrians were the most fierce and cruel race of ancient times, and would sweep through the land like a destructive storm; but, if this one name was so terribly ominous and suggestive, all the others speak of an untiring and inalienable compassion. "Shear-jashub" predicted that God would bring back a faithful remnant even from the cruel bondage of Assyria; "Immanuel" assured them that God would be with them in all their perils and reverses; while the name of Isaiah himself pointed to the end of all Jehovah's dealings with them—"salvation" from all evil. (*Ibid.*) *Christian nurture*.—There are some things which if we can give them place and power in our own lives, will have great influence in enabling us to carry through our work as parents to a blessed issue of success. I. FAITHFULNESS. The meaning of this word is explained by the resolve of the Psalmist when he says: "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way; I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." Always when we try to do good to others we are thrown back upon ourselves; we are reminded that high work must have fit instruments, and that our influence is likely to be as our character is. As the man is so will be his strength. This is peculiarly the case as between us and our children. They know us much better than others, are much nearer to us, see us more clearly. For our children's sakes we are bound to be the best we may. Nothing that we can say or do will have half the force of that invisible and almost irresistible power which comes right from our souls, and goes at once and straight into theirs. This power, issuing from the depths of our own being, is an involuntary thing on our part. We cannot make it this or that by an act of will. This sincerity on our part ought to take as one of its forms a firm, steady family rule—an exercise of wise parental authority. On the other hand, parents mar their own influence, hinder their prayers, and injure their children, although they are very far from meaning it, by over-indulgence. They never command—never rule calmly and firmly—all is softness, liberty, or even license. Such parents tell us in defence of their system: "It is not for us to command; our best influence is, as has been said, that of personal character; if that be not right, commands from us will be of little use." On the same principle it might be said that God does not need to command; that He only needs to reveal to His creatures what He is, and they will love and serve Him. He has revealed Himself to us. And yet this same God, this Father of mercies, commands, legislates, and duly brings penalty upon those who do not obey. Law and love, these make the whole revelation of God. II. TENDERNESS. A mother's tenderness! It is one of the continual wonders of the world. It is really a greater thing than a father's constancy, a soldier's courage, or a patriot's love. Yet the world is full of it. III. Such feelings will lead to PRAYER. In prayer for our children we are putting ourselves in the line of God's laws. "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." It is not our nurture, it is His, and in prayer we cast it over on Him. IV. We are thus naturally led to the last word—HOPEFULNESS. We ought to cherish a feeling of cheerful confidence in God as to the result of our endeavours for our children's good. Discouragement, and despondency even, will come to us soon enough, and darkly enough, if we will permit them. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) "*I and the children*".—Turn to the New Testament and the text will be no mystery to you; its key hangs on its proper nail (Heb. ii. 13). We have evidence that it is our Lord who speaks, and speaks of His people as His children. This clue we will follow. The context sets forth, as is most common throughout the whole of Scripture, the different results which follow from the appearance of the Saviour. He is rejected by many,

and accepted by others. I. Here is a REMARKABLE RELATIONSHIP. Jesus is called a Father. This is not according to precise theology, or according to the more formal doctrinal statements of Scripture. 1. Still, the title of Father is very applicable to our Lord Jesus Christ for many reasons. (1) Because He is our federal Head. We speak correctly of "father Adam," and Jesus is the second Adam who heads up our race anew, and is the representative man of redeemed mankind. (2) Our Lord is also Father of the golden age of grace and glory. (3) There is a sense in which Christ is our Father, because by His teaching we are born unto God. Just as the minister who brings a soul to Christ is said to be the spiritual parent to such a soul, and is, indeed, instrumentally so, so the Lord Jesus, as the author of our faith, is our spiritual Father in the family of God. 2. Now, let us see whether there is not much of teaching in this metaphor by which we are called children of the Lord Jesus. The expression denotes—(1) That we derive our spiritual life from Him as children take their origin from their father. (2) They have a likeness to His nature. (3) The text has in it very clearly the idea of charge and responsibility. Children are a charge always; a comfort sometimes. Wherever conscience is lively, fatherhood is regarded as a solemn thing. (4) In our relationship towards our children there is involved very often a great deal of care and grief. (5) The possession of children involves a very near and dear love. (6) Children, when they behave aright, bring to the heart of their parent sweet solace and dear delight. II. A SPONTANEOUS AVOWAL—"Behold I," &c. 1. The Lord owns His children. Sometimes they are ashamed to own Him; and He might always be ashamed to own them, but He never is. 2. He glories in them as being God's gift to Him. "Whom Thou hast given Me"; as if they were something more than ordinary children. 3. He challenges inspection. "Behold! look at them, for they are meant to be looked at; they are set 'for signs and wonders' throughout all generations." 4. And do notice again—for it affects my mind much more powerfully than I can express, "Behold, I and the children." I can understand a mother speaking thus about herself and children, but for Christ the Lord of glory to unite His glorious name with those of such poor worms of the dust is very wonderful. Now, if Jesus owns us so lovingly, let us always own Him: and if Christ takes us into partnership—"I and the children"—let us reply, "Christ is all." Let Him stand first with us; and let our name be for ever joined with His name. III. A COMMON FUNCTION. Christ and His people "are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts which dwelleth in Mount Zion." Both Christ and His people are set for a purpose. 1. They are to be "signs and wonders" by way of testimony. 2. By way of marvel. Genuine Christians will generally be reckoned by the world to be singular people. 3. When the believer's testimony for good becomes a marvel, it is not wonderful if he afterwards becomes an object of contempt. Hold on, brother! and hold out to the end; be humbly and quietly faithful. Do not try to be a wonder, but be a wonder. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Children have a mission*.—Infancy is the perpetual Messiah which comes to the arms of fallen men and pleads with them to return to Paradise. (R. W. Emerson.)

Vers. 19, 20. And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits. — *Wizards*, and "they that have familiar spirits," are what we should now call "mediums," through whom the dead speak. (A. B. Davidson, D.D.) *Wizards that peep and mutter*.—"Peep" (i.e., chirp) and "mutter" refer to the faint voice, like that of a little bird, which antiquity ascribed to the shades of the departed: "The sheeted dead did squeak and gibber in the streets of Rome" (see chap. xxix. 4). The LXX. suggests that the voice of the ghost was imitated by ventriloquism, which is not unlikely. (Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.) *Religion and superstition contrasted* (vers. 19, 20). (*Ibid.*) Should not a people seek unto their God?—*Gripping old truths and seeing new visions*.—We must learn to recognise the friends and foes of our life even when they are presented to us in an Oriental and old-world dress. I. WE HAVE HERE A PLEA FOR THE LIBERTY AND INDEPENDENCE OF THE LIVING PRESENT. "On behalf of the living should they seek unto the dead?" Such is the sarcastic question that the disciples of the great prophet are required to ask the people when the latter desire to resort to wizards and witches to help them out of their straits. The retort goes much further than merely striking a blow at the silly superstition of seeking by enchantment to bring back and question the shades of the dead. It contains a principle which lies at the very



foundation of the world's development,—a principle the reverent recognition of which will enable us to work out unfettered the full mission of our lives, and give us unbounded faith in the future of the race which Christ has come to redeem. Every new generation has its own special mission to fulfil ; it is a new life charged with the duty of working out its own salvation. It is a new stage in the manifestation of the Divine through the human. The living present claims for itself a dignity and a mission, and, if we are lax in upholding the former, we are likely to fall short of fulfilling the latter. There is a way of worshipping the past, and of appealing to it which puts the present in chains, or, at least, compels it to be stationary. Has human life in very deed exhausted the thought of God ? Surely the very history of the past itself ought to teach us the essential liberty and power of life. What epochs of the past are those that call forth our highest admiration and homage ? Not such a period as that of the Middle Ages when the living fortified and entrenched themselves in the sepulchres of the dead ; but rather such times as those of the Lutheran reformation, when men felt the holy freedom of their own life, cast away the swathings of the past, and fearlessly took a new step in the name of God. I believe that God reigns through the rich movements of life, and not through traditional and external fetters. Given an earnest generation, awake to the responsibilities of its own life, and I can trust God to direct the flowing tide to a sacred shore. We cannot assert that an active and earnest generation will not make any mistakes. Every age has its own peculiar dangers, the vices which are the excess of its virtues. There are shallow lives that lose their gravity with the slightest movement, and dash themselves into thin vapour around the deeper movement of the time. And there are the men that pride themselves upon being fearless spirits in the realm of thought ; which often means that they take advantage of a new movement to rush into one-sided and extreme conclusions upon the most precarious basis—conclusions which a truer judgment will anon reverse or correct. And even the most earnest and reliable spirits find it difficult to discover the golden mean between the bondage of the old and the violence of the new.

II. THAT THE TRUE LIFE OF THE PRESENT CAN BE ATTAINED ONLY BY LIVING CONTACT WITH THE LIVING GOD. The prophet's message has not ended with the declaration that life is essentially a movement and a force, having a Divine right to cast off the encrusting forms of the dead past. In order to prevent this awful liberty from being abused, and this vast movement from being misdirected, he must supply it with a guiding Spirit, and a directing force. It is a dangerous thing for men to become suddenly conscious of a vast and unused power unless they at the same time feel the grip of the eternal principles along which this power should move. Every movement of life presupposes an appointed orbit, without which it runs wild, and ends in a crash. The prophet, therefore, directs the people to root and ground their liberty in living contact with God : "Should not a people seek unto their God ?" In examining, therefore, any particular case of movement in the moral and religious sphere it is all-important to inquire whether it exhibits the living energy of the Divine life in the human, whether it enriches men with a profounder apprehension of the beating, quickening life of God here in our very midst ; in fine, whether the movement is marked with the sacred brand of living contact with the living God. Every true life-movement brings God nearer—never drives Him further away. Let us apply this test in one particular and crucial case—the great question of the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. Perhaps our formal definitions may undergo a slight change ; but of this I feel sure—that it will never be necessary or rational for me to accept a theory of inspiration which will make the Bible less Divine than I hold it to be at present. There is no truly onward movement which is not also upward. Life's true mission is fulfilled and life's true path pursued, only in proportion as a people seek to their God.

III. So we are led to our last thought : THAT THE TRUTHS WHICH WERE THE ESSENTIAL BASIS OF THE BEST LIFE OF THE PAST MUST BE THE BASIS OF THE ENLARGING LIFE OF THE PRESENT. "To the law and to the testimony. If they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them." So the cycle of thought is completed. True progress and true conservatism are not opposed to one another, but are rather supplementary. The only true liberty is that which runs along the lines of eternal law. The world was not begun yesterday, and we have not been deputed to lay its foundations anew. So Isaiah's last position is not only consistent with his first ; it is necessarily involved in it. The living, says the prophet, need not consult the shades of the dead, for they

have a living God to guide them and to give them ever larger supplies of power. True; but God is one. He does not change with each new generation. The great principles by which He ennobles human life are well known, for they have been writ large in His self-manifestations in the past. God will not reveal Himself in the present to those that are too blind to recognise His glory as revealed in the past. God has revealed Himself to the world long ago. If we would have more light in the present, we must be true to the radiance that lights up the history of the past. (*J. Thomas, M.A.*)

*God to be sought by nations.*—The history of our own country coincides with the record which the Holy Spirit has given of the history of Judah and of Israel, in illustrating the important fact that God in the dispensations of His providence, deals with nations in their collective capacity according to their faithfulness in His service. The condition of Judah in the time of Isaiah demanded this remonstrance. There prevailed much of avowed irreligion and immorality. I. IN WHAT MANNER CAN WE PERSONALLY INFLUENCE THE CHARACTER AND CONDUCT OF THE NATION AT LARGE? The nation is made up of the aggregate of its individual members. Each person, therefore, may justly consider his own character and conduct in a twofold view: as it affects himself, and as it affects the whole country. The influence of each distinct member on the whole community, as contributing to the formation of its character, whether for good or for evil, is a subject of deep importance. In this respect, indeed, the more prominent the station in which a man is placed, the greater is his responsibility. But the religious character of the nation does not rest with these alone: piety or impiety in all other men of influence, of wealth, of talent, are likewise the constituent parts of the nation's excellence or the nation's guilt, while they are also productive of a corresponding character in the various subordinate ranks of life. Nor is there any single person, however subordinate his station, who does not in the same manner contribute towards the formation of the general character of the nation of which he constitutes a part. II. IN WHAT DOES THIS SEEKING UNTO GOD CONSIST? Nations and individuals seek unto the Lord—1. By applying to Him for true knowledge and instruction (ver. 20; John v. 39). 2. By taking refuge in Him as their confidence and hope. (1) Nationally, we have examples of this confidence in God, in the sacred records concerning Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah, in seasons of public alarm and difficulty. (2) Every man is called on to seek to the Lord for the foundation of his personal hope and comfort, not merely as to the concerns of this life, but in reference, also, to his eternal welfare. And, according as the hope of the people in general is well or ill grounded, will be the state and condition of the Church or of the nation professing the religion of Christ. 3. By following His guidance as to their character and conduct. (*J. Hill, B.D.*)

*The duty of seeking unto God.*—I. THE REASONS WHY WE OUGHT TO SEEK UNTO OUR GOD. 1. We should seek to Him for light and guidance in perplexity and doubt. No state is more painfully trying to man than to have the mind tossed and agitated like a bark on the stormy waves, without chart and compass. There is an eager impatience in such a state, which lays men open to imposition. They become the easy dupes of crafty deceivers. Hence magicians and necromancers, in an age of ignorance and credulity, gained such an ascendancy over the vulgar. You have read what history records of the oracles of Greece, and the sibyls of Italy. But a superstition, very similar, prevailed over all Asia, and at times penetrated into Judea. Now all such practices were dishonouring and forsaking Jehovah. The mind of a sincere believer may, both on points of faith and practice, be in a state of doubt and suspense. And to whom should he look, but to the Father of lights who can scatter every cloud? 2. For support and consolation in sorrow and distress (Job v. 8; Psa. l. 15). 3. For protection and defence amidst difficulties and dangers. 4. For strength to fit us for all the active duties of life and religion. II. HOW WE ARE TO SEEK UNTO OUR GOD. 1. By diligently and impartially consulting His revealed will in the Holy Scriptures. 2. By constantly and seriously frequenting the public ordinances of His house. 3. By carefully marking and observing the openings and leadings of Providence. "In particular cases," says Mr. Newton, "the Lord opens and shuts for His people, breaks down walls of difficulty which obstruct their path, or hedges up their way with thorns, when they are in danger of going wrong, by the dispensations of His providence. They know that their concerns are in His hand; they are willing to follow whither and when He leads, but they are afraid of going before Him." 4. By offering up humble and earnest petitions at the throne of

His heavenly grace. (*Essex Congregational Remembrancer.*) *From light to darkness: from darkness to light* (chap. viii. 18-22, ix. 2):—The experience of Israel is here described in three pictures, each marking a distinct stage in that experience—I. ISRAEL REJECTING THE LIGHT. The prophet comes with a Divine message to his people. The people will not believe—1. From inability, being unused to exercise simple trust in God. 2. From pride, for the mingling of judgment with mercy in Isaiah's message offends them. 3. Disbelieving Isaiah, and finding no help in human wisdom, they turn like Saul in his extremity, with the proverbial credulity of unbelief, to the oracles of necromancy. The old watchwords of religion, "To the law and to the testimony!" "Should not a people seek unto their God?" are forgotten. "For those who act thus," says Isaiah, "there is no morning dawn," for they wilfully turn from the light. II. A TIME COMES WHEN ISAIAH'S WARNINGS ARE FULFILLED. Calamity, famine, distress drive the people to despair. There is no voice of hope from their wizards and soothsayers. Haunted by the memory of the time when the watchword of faith might have saved them, they feel that they have grieved the Spirit and He is gone! "Hardly bestead and hungry they pass through the land and curse their king and their God." III. IN THE MIDST OF THEIR DESPAIR THEY LOOK UPWARDS, SCARCE KNOWING WHY. All other helpers failing, they direct towards heaven a despairing glance, as if hardly daring to think of God's help, and then at last light shines through the gloom. IV. SUCH ALSO MAY BE THE EXPERIENCE OF AN INDIVIDUAL SOUL. First, the Divine warning is despised, and the Word of God neglected, set aside as a worn-out superstition. The voice of religion seems to have lost its hold upon such a soul. Then all manner of refuges are tried, alliance with the world-power—immersion in secular business; the superstition of unbelief, agnosticism, etc. All in their turn fail to alleviate the weary heartache which prompts the cry, "Who will show us any good?" The whole universe seems out of joint, and the soul hardly bestead and hungry curses its king and its God, the whole order of things in the world, and every form of religion alike, the false and the true. At length, in very despair, as if feeling "it is no use, for me there is no morning dawn," the soul looks upwards. The darkness is past, the true light now shineth, the soul that walked in darkness and the shadow of death sees the salvation of the Lord. (*Hugh H. Currie, B.D.*) *Superstition*:—In the years which preceded the French Revolution, Cagliostro was the companion of princes—at the dissolution of paganism, the practisers of curious arts, the witches and the necromancers, were the sole objects of reverence in the known world; and so before the Reformation, archbishops and cardinals saw an inspired prophetess in a Kentish servant-girl; Oxford heads of colleges sought out heretics with the help of astrology; Anne Boleyn blessed a bason of rings, her royal fingers pouring such virtue into the metal that no disorder could resist it; Wolsey had a magic crystal, and Thomas Cromwell, while in Wolsey's household, "did haunt to the company of a wizard." These things were the counterpart of a religion which taught that slips of paper, duly paid for, could secure indemnity for sin. (*A. Froude.*)

Ver. 20. *To the law and to the testimony.*—*The written Word of God the only standard of truth*:—I. CONSIDER THE PRINCIPLE LAID DOWN IN THE TEXT, namely, that we are to take the Scriptures, the inspired Word of "the true and living God," as the only standard of truth. II. SEE HOW SADLY THE CHURCH OF ROME, BOTH IN DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE, HAS DEPARTED FROM THIS PRINCIPLE. At the Council of Trent, where the Pope, bishops, and other ecclesiastics were assembled, in the middle of the sixteenth century, to put into definite form the articles of their Church, it was unanimously decreed, that traditions should be received as "of equal authority with the Scriptures": and at the same Council it was also agreed to make all the books, apocryphal as well as others, "of equal authority." The reason of their adding traditions to the Scriptures is given by Pope Pius IV., in these words: "all saving truth is not contained in the Holy Scriptures, but partly in the Scripture and partly in unwritten traditions; which whosoever doth not receive with like piety and reverence as he doth the Scriptures, is accursed." We have a reasonable instance of their readiness to set aside the Bible, in order to establish their own opinions, at the Council of Augsburg. It was there that the Protestant confession of faith, drawn up by Melancthon, was presented to the Emperor. After the reading of it, the Duke of Bavaria, who was on the Popish side, asked Eckius, one of his

party, whether he could overthrow the doctrines contained in it, by the Holy Scripture. "No (replied Eckius), we cannot by the Holy Scriptures, but we may by the fathers." III. SEE HOW THE ACTING ON THIS PRINCIPLE, IN OPPOSITION TO THE CHURCH OF ROME, LED TO THE REFORMATION, and produced those blessed consequences which we are now reaping the advantage of. It is not a little remarkable that the art of printing, about the year 1450, very greatly contributed to the work which followed. It revived the study of classical literature; and thus the Bible, which even clergymen and others acquainted with learning, had been very little used to read before, was now studied by them; and it was that that led in the first instance to a discovery that the religion in which their fathers had been brought up could not be proved by the New Testament. IV. TEST THE REFORMED RELIGION BY THIS SCRIPTURAL RULE, AND PROVE THEREBY THE SOUNDNESS OF ITS PRINCIPLES. The Reformation has not founded a new Church, it has corrected an old one; and the religion which we now profess is the religion of primitive Christianity. See, in our sixth article, how the Church of England places herself on the ground of the Scriptures. She says, against the Church of Rome, that "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation, so that whatever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." (*W. Curling, M.A.*) *Holy Scripture, without tradition, man's sufficient guide to salvation*.—This passage embodies the truth that in the difficulties and questions that arise in the Christian Church, and which are frequently presented to the mind of Christian persons, the Holy Scriptures are the last appeal to which the Christian shall have recourse. This subject branches out into a vast variety of inquiries; but we shall consider it in connection with the sixth article of our Church of England. I. THE AFFIRMATIVE PROPOSITION which asserts the sufficiency of Holy Scripture in all things requisite or necessary to salvation. To men who have read the Holy Scriptures, it will seem strange that there ever should have arisen a question, as to their sufficiency in things requisite to salvation. They see that the Holy Scriptures are large and full, that they develop innumerable truths of mighty magnitude—that they unfold mysteries beyond the grasp of the human intellect—that they propound a series of the most pure and hallowing precepts—that they narrate the history of God's dealings with His people, so far as they are known to human knowledge—and that they enter upon an ample detail of all those things which God hath revealed of His future purposes for mankind. They see that the Scriptures unfold the fall of man, God's purpose to save a people to Himself, God's love in the gift of His Son Jesus Christ in order to save them, the incarnation of the Word, the atonement of the Cross, the resurrection and triumph over death, the ascension into heaven, the descent of the Holy Ghost, the judgment of the last day, and the everlasting glories that shall follow. They see that the Holy Scriptures contain all this; and still further, that they contain all those rules and principles that should govern man in his duty to God and in his duty to his fellow-man, and entering into such detail of relative duties, of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, princes and subjects, that every honest man, from the monarch to the peasant, shall find in the Holy Scriptures a sufficient guide and enlightener in the duties of a Christian life. But in the spirit of the words of our text, let us "to the law and to the testimony." Let us take counsel of our God, and ask of Him in the record of His own Word, whether the Holy Scriptures be sufficient unto salvation (Deut. xi. 16-21, xxxi. 11, 12; Psa. cxix. 9-11; Isa. viii. 20; Luke i. 1-4; John v. 39, xx. 30, 31; Acts xvii. 10-12; 2 Tim. iii. 14-17). The Romanists reply to these Scriptures in a body by stating that they prove too much, inasmuch as they prove either that the Old Testament Scriptures are sufficient, or that one or more Gospels are sufficient for our salvation. We reply, that, if this be true, then, a *fortiori*, if a part of the Scriptures contain sufficient unto salvation, the whole of the Scriptures as a matter of course must be admitted to contain all things necessary to salvation. II. THE NEGATIVE PROPOSITION in the article, namely, that "whatsoever is not read in Holy Scripture, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." The position upon which the Romanists have erected their whole system has been, that besides the written Word there is also an unwritten word—that besides the Holy Scriptures there is another vehicle for conveying religious truth, and that other vehicle they

have named tradition. The nature of tradition is this. They state that our Lord Jesus Christ taught many things to His apostles and disciples, which they did not commit to writing in the sacred Scriptures, but, instead of committing them to writing, they committed them by oral communication to those men whom they appointed as bishops throughout the Church universal; they add that those bishops have in a similar manner communicated these doctrines and practices to the bishops and priests that were to come after them, and that thus there is a mass of floating doctrine and practice pervading the Church universal, partly written in the books of Romish priests and partly deposited in the breasts of Romish bishops. There are certain difficulties and objections to this system.

1. A historical objection derived from the history of God's dealings with His people. The original revelation made to our first parents, being dependent upon tradition, soon became corrupted and lost. And this inefficacy of tradition is the more remarkable, when we consider that the life of man in the ante-diluvian world was extended far beyond the life of man in the post-diluvian world. Nor is this the whole of the historical argument or objection against tradition, because after the waters of the deluge had rolled away, the first fact that is narrated is that man had so lost the knowledge of the true God again, that he built the tower of Babel; and the next fact we read is that the world was so sunk in ignorance that it was necessary that God should choose Abraham and elect one family to Himself, in order that in that family He might take certain steps, by which to secure for ever the remembrance of His name in the earth. 2. A Scriptural objection. This is founded upon a conversation narrated in the Gospel history (Mark vii. 1-9). Our Lord states that His disciples were justified in rejecting the traditions of the elders because they made the law of God of none effect.

3. An objection arising out of the nature of tradition. With the most anxious desire only to speak the truth, the best men will sometimes vary in their narrative of facts—there is a defect in human memory; there is in the colouring of the minds of men, and there is in the degree of knowledge or ignorance of various men, that which leads to their varying more or less in their statements of fact. Now, if this be the case in reference to fact, how much more is it the case in reference to abstract doctrines! In order to show that this difficulty still more exists in reference to doctrine, we have but to reflect how few there are in the world, who agree in all things precisely in the same views of doctrine. We regard, therefore, everything that is purely traditionary as necessarily unsound. (*M. H. Seymour, M.A.*) *The rule of faith*.—There is a strong tendency in man to flee from the voice of his Maker. Why should any of us be afraid to hear the voice of God, or to have either our principles or actions judged by His Word? Conscience makes us afraid; it tells us that neither the one nor the other will square with the Divine law. Therefore, man forsakes the Word of his God and has recourse to those who will speak to him "peace, peace, when there is no peace" (ver. 19).

I. OUR POSITION is, that Holy Scripture is the only standard whereby to judge of controversies in matters of faith. II. We now proceed to ESTABLISH THIS POSITION. It is proved by a twofold line of argument,—negative, by denying the claims put forward on behalf of the addition to this rule; positive, by bringing evidence in favour of the rule itself. 1. The negative evidence. (1) God's design in furnishing His Word in writing was to guard us against the uncertainty of tradition, and lead us, through the truth revealed in that Word, to eternal happiness. (2) Tradition is an incompetent channel for the conveyance of truth. (3) In all our Lord's discourses, whether to the people or to His apostles, or in His disputation with His adversaries, He never made a single appeal to tradition. (4) Our Lord not only never appealed to tradition, but He expressly condemned it, and that in the most unqualified manner. 2. The positive evidence. (1) The Scriptures contain the superstructure that is reared upon faith. They contain exhortations to every possible good word and work. Faith is the means, the foundation, the source of every good word and work. (2) The Scriptures assert their own sufficiency as a rule. (3) Whenever the written Word has been laid aside, everything has gone astray; and whenever a reformation has taken place, all has been restored in accordance with the written Word (2 Kings xxii. 8, xxiii. 2, 21). Take yet another instance—the re-establishment of the worship of God after the rebuilding of the temple. By perusing the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah you will find that everything was done in accordance, not with any tradition preserved among them, but with the written Word. (4) The greatest question which can concern the human race has ever been decided by an appeal,

not to tradition, nor to the priesthood, but to the written Word. The greatest question that can concern us is, whether Jesus is the true Messiah (Matt. xi. 2-6). It was as if our Lord had said, Let John bring these, My actions and My preaching, to the written Word, and he cannot be mistaken. He will there find whether I am the Messiah or not (Acts xvii. 2, 11, xviii. 27, 28). (5) The denial of this truth, that the Scripture is the only rule whereby to judge of controversies in matters of faith, has been the cause of grievous errors and many heresies. (6) The end for which this new rule is pretended is, to say the very least, more than presumptive evidence against it, and consequently in favour of our rule. III. I proceed now to notice A FEW OBJECTIONS that are brought against our position.

1. "If the Scripture be your rule of faith, there could be no rule of faith, consequently no faith and therefore no salvation, until the canon of Scripture was complete. But for sixty years after the death of Christ the canon was not complete; therefore for sixty years after the death of Christ there could have been no salvation in the Church of God." This is plausible; but the reply is simple. We will try the soundness of the argument upon their own principles. If Scripture and tradition be, as they say, their rule of faith, there could not have been a rule of faith until this one was complete. The argument is as good one way as the other. The sophism lies in this,—that, because God may give more light at any particular period, therefore there was no adequate light before! 2. It is objected that controversies cannot be determined by our rule of faith. But, if the Word of God be not competent or sufficient to decide controversies, we ask one simple question—How, then, shall the controversies concerning the Church be determined? 3. "The Scriptures are (say they) difficult and liable to be misunderstood and perverted." We may say the same respecting Scripture and tradition. "But," says Dr. Milner, "we have an unerring judge of controversy" (*i.e.*, they bring in the infallibility of their Church) "to decide in the matter, and he must be understood." But how can he be understood? We must, as Chillingworth remarks, have an infallible interpreter to expound his interpretation, and so on *ad infinitum*. But this infallible interpreter has never yet spoken. Then, further, if Scripture be so difficult, the interpretation of the judge is not less so; for the decrees of councils and popes cannot possibly be more intelligible than those writings which were read in the hearing of men, women, and children; than the sermons which were addressed by our blessed Lord to the simple and ignorant; than that Word of which we read that it is so plain that a wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein. (*J. R. Page, M.A.*)

*The Word of God the only rule of faith and practice.*—When men are in some measure impressed with the nature and importance of the end for which they have been made, and when they see that this end respects matters which do not come under the cognisance of their senses and observation, that it has reference mainly to God and to eternity, they will naturally inquire whether any certain rule or standard exists which, when rightly used, and faithfully followed, may guide them to the attainment of this end. Writings possessed of such a character, proceeding from such a source, and resting on such an authority, it must, of course, be most important for us to know, that we may be enabled rightly to apply them for our direction. There are many who profess to regard the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as containing a revelation of God's will, and of course as being so far a rule to guide us in matters connected with our highest interests, who yet deny that they constitute the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy God. There are other rules which they would exalt to a co-ordinate place with the Word of God. (1) The adherents of the Church of Rome add to the Old Testament the apocryphal books, as if they too were inspired. They also believe that oral tradition has conveyed to us truths taught, and observances enjoined, by Christ and His apostles, which are not mentioned in the sacred Scriptures. (2) Those who call themselves rational Christians, practically take their own reason as the chief, if not the only, rule to guide them in matters connected with God and eternity; because, while they may profess to admit that the Scriptures are the Word of God, they practically set up their own reason not only as the instrument of interpreting Scripture, but as entitled to judge of the truth of its doctrines, and to determine what statements of Scripture may be received as true, and what as being irrational and incomprehensible, must be explained away, or virtually denied. There are two general observations deserving of attention, as affording strong presumption against the pretensions which have been put forth. 1. If the Bible be the Word

of God, we have no need of any other rule. The Bible is able to make men wise unto salvation. 2. The attempts which have been made to set up other rules as co-ordinate with the Word of God, have generally had the effect of superseding practically the sacred Scriptures; and this constitutes a fair and legitimate presumption against them. I. THE APOCRYPHAL BOOKS are certain writings composed in the interval between the time of Malachi and our Saviour's appearance in the flesh. They were not written in the Hebrew language, like the books of the Old Testament Scriptures, and exist only in Greek. The Jewish Church never acknowledged them as inspired; and when the apostle says (Rom. iii. 2), "that unto the Jews were committed the oracles of God," he seems to intimate, not merely that the possession of the sacred oracles was conferred on them as a privilege, but that the custody and preservation of them was imposed upon them as a duty, so that they being, as it were, the authorised depositories of the oracles of God, their testimony as to their authenticity is to be regarded as essentially important, if not of itself absolutely conclusive. The authority of these books was not in any instance acknowledged, directly or by implication, by our Saviour or His apostles, while they plainly acknowledged the authority of the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, the three classes into which the Jews usually distributed the canonical Scriptures. There is not a vestige of evidence that these books were composed by men who wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, or that their authors were regarded in that light by any of their cotemporaries. There are not a few statements in these books which, by no skill and learning, can be reconciled with each other, and which, therefore, cannot have proceeded from one and the same Spirit of truth. II. The Church of Rome further professes to receive and venerate APOSTOLICAL TRADITIONS with equal piety and reverence as the written Word. In support of the authority of tradition, Papists commonly refer to the injunction of the apostle (2 Thess. ii. 15), "to hold fast the traditions which they had been taught, whether by word, or by his epistle." Of course, it was the duty of the Thessalonians to hold fast all that they had been taught by the apostle, whether orally or by writing. And our answer to Papists, when they urge from this passage the authority of tradition, is just this, that if the Church of Rome will put us in the same situation with regard to her pretended traditions as the Thessalonians were in regard to the traditions to which the apostle refers; *i.e.*, if she will give us as good evidence as the Thessalonians had that these traditions really came from an apostle, and were delivered by him as public instruction to the Churches, we will implicitly submit to them, but not otherwise. III. Let us now advert to the claims which some who call themselves rational Christians put forth in behalf of HUMAN REASON, to be received along with the Word of God as a rule of faith and practice. Men are certainly bound to exercise their reason most fully upon a matter so momentous as the end for which they were made. It is by their reason alone that they come into contact with truth, so as to discover, to apprehend, and to establish it. When the Bible is pressed upon their attention, as containing a revelation from God, they are bound to bring their whole faculties to bear upon the examination of the evidence on which its claim to that character rests, and to come to a clear and decided determination upon that point. If they come to the conclusion that the Bible does contain a revelation from God, then they are further bound to use their reason in discovering the meaning and import of its statements, and in ascertaining from them what is the standard of belief and practice which they ought to follow. And here in right reason the province of reason ends. There can be no more satisfactory reason for believing any doctrine, no more conclusive evidence that it is true, than the fact that God has revealed it. This is a position to which the reason of every rational man assents, and it plainly supersedes the mere unaided efforts of our own reason upon any point on which God has made known to us His will. Men have no right to regard their own reason as the measure or standard of truth, or to suppose that they are capable of discovering much, by its unaided efforts, in regard to an infinite God and an invisible world. (*W. Cunningham.*) *Is conscience the supreme rule of life?*—There is, indeed, another notion very prevailing in the present day, which seems to hold up conscience as the supreme rule by which men ought to be guided in regard to religion, although it has scarcely been propounded as a distinct and definite doctrine. This is evidently a mere fallacy, although we fear it produces extensively very injurious effects. When men talk of their own conscience as being the rule which they are bound to follow, they can mean by their conscience only the opinion which

they sincerely entertain, and seem to forget that while, in a certain sense, they may be bound to follow their own conscientious convictions, and while it is undoubtedly true that God alone is Lord of the conscience, that is, is alone entitled to exercise jurisdiction over their opinions, or to require them to believe and act in a certain way merely because they are so required, it may still be a question, whether their conscience is well or ill informed, whether the opinions they conscientiously entertain are well or ill founded. Now this very obvious consideration shows that there must be a higher standard than conscience by which men should try all their opinions, however conscientiously they are held, and that therefore conscience cannot be regarded as a standard of opinion and practice in any such sense as to interfere with the supreme and exclusive authority of the Word of God, or to release men from the obligation to regulate their whole opinions and practice by its statements. (*Ibid.*) *Search the Scriptures* :—

I. Permit me to urge upon you THE BRINGING CERTAIN THINGS "TO THE LAW AND TO THE TESTIMONY." 1. The ideas engendered in you by your early training. 2. The preachers of the Gospel. 3. There is another class of men. These men are their own preachers; they believe no one but themselves. 4. Just do the same with all books that you read. II. THE GOOD EFFECTS that you will derive from a careful study of the law and testimony of God. 1. Unless you study the Word of God you will not be competent to detect error. 2. When you are in a matter of dispute you will be able to speak very confidently. 3. Search the Scriptures, because in so doing you will get a rich harvest of blessing to your own soul. III. OTHER REASONS. Many false prophets are gone forth into the world. There is a solemn danger of being absolutely misled. Read your Bibles to know what the Bible says about you. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The evils resulting from false principles of morality* :—There are three erroneous principles of morality prevalent among ourselves, expediency, honour, and custom. 1. Expediency, borrowed from the storehouse of sceptical philosophy, and placed, by its wisest defenders, as nearly as might be done, on a Christian foundation, pronounces that an action is right or wrong according as it tends to promote or to diminish general happiness. Whatever is expedient is right. Every moral precept is subject to exceptions. And of the expediency of regarding or disregarding the precept every man is in every case to judge for himself. 2. Honour, as a principle of action, refers to the estimation of the class of society in which the individual moves, and especially to the sentiments of the higher ranks, whose opinions will ever be of the most preponderating influence. Its concern respecting moral actions is limited to such as are useful in fashionable intercourse: and is particularly bestowed on those which have somewhat of splendour, commonly of false splendour, in their exterior appearance. 3. Custom is the general guide of those persons who give little thought to the investigation of principles, and take their moral opinions upon trust from others. No one of these is the Scriptural standard of conduct. They all depart from "the law and the testimony." "They speak not according to this word": therefore "there is no light in them." Let us now advert to their effects. I. One effect will be this: THE MORALITY PRODUCED WILL BE UNCERTAIN AND VARIABLE. From a survey of the variable morality produced by these false principles of morals, turn to the morality of the Scriptures. Behold it firm, consistent, immutable: not committing its precepts to the jurisdiction of man, and investing him with a dispensing power to suspend or to abrogate them at his discretion; but commanding him universally to be faithful in obeying them, and to leave consequences with God. II. Another effect of the erroneous principles under examination is, that THE MORALITY PRODUCED IS LOW IN DEGREE. From the view of the debased morality originating in false principles direct your eyes again to the Word of God. Behold the morality which it teaches, worthy of Him, suited to man! Behold it manifesting itself by its holiness to be a transcript of the holiness of God! Behold it as a branch of that "godliness," which "has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come": behold it conducing to the happiness of men, present no less than future. Behold it not partially confining its benefits to select classes of society; but with outspread arms showering them down upon all. Behold it displaying from age to age its hallowed truths, uncorrupt, unsullied, as the source from which it flows. Behold it exemplified in the fulness of perfection, by Him who is the corner-stone of Christian morality; by the incarnate Son of God; even by Him who was "God manifest in the flesh." III. THE MISCHIEF PRODUCED BY FALSE PRINCIPLES OF MORALITY WILL BE BEYOND MEASURE EXTENSIVE.



It is on moral dispositions and moral conduct that these principles operate. And it is in the government of moral dispositions, and in the exercise of them in moral actions, that much of the employment of life consists. If religion be weakened in one point, it is weakened in all points, it is endangered in all. If then you are anxious, in discharging the duties of morality, faithfully to follow the Divine commandments, and to tread in the steps of your Lord, "search the Scriptures." By them shall every moral deed be tried at last: by them let it be directed now. (*T. Gisborne.*) *The best guide-book*:—When Sir David Wilkie was setting out for an artistic tour in the Holy Land, he was asked what guide-book he was taking with him. He held out the Bible, saying, "This is the best guide-book." We are pilgrims to the heavenly Canaan. What guide-book will be so helpful to us as the Bible? It will shed light on our way. (*Gates of Imagery.*) *The Bible and superstition*:—After Henry the Eighth's rupture with the Pope the following order was issued, to counteract if possible the advance of sacerdotal superstition: "Every parson or proprietary of every parish church within this realm, shall provide a book of the whole Bible, both in Latin and in English, and lay the same in the choir, for every man that will to read and look therein; and shall discourage no man from reading any part of the Bible, but rather comfort, exhort, and admonish every man to read the same, as the very Word of God and the spiritual food of man's soul." (*H. O. Mackey.*)

**Vers. 21, 22. And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry.**—*Unsanctified suffering*:—I. SIN LEADS TO SUFFERING. II. THERE IS IN SUFFERING NO SANCTIFYING POWER. It may harden men in iniquity. III. SUFFERING DOES NOTHING IN ITSELF TO ABATE GOD'S ANGER AGAINST SINNERS. Nothing will turn away that anger but a genuine repentance (chap. ix. 13). (*R. A. Bertram.*) *Nemesis*:—He reads the doom of those that seek to familiar spirits, and regard not God's law and testimony. There shall not only be no light to them, no comfort or prosperity, but they may expect all horror and misery. 1. The trouble they feared shall come upon them. They shall pass to and fro in the land, unfixed, unsettled, and driven from place to place by the threatening power of an invading enemy. 2. They shall be very uneasy to themselves, by their discontent and impatience under their trouble. 3. They shall be very provoking to all about them, nay, to all above them. When they find all their measures broken, and themselves at their wits' end, they will forget all the rules of duty and decency, and will treasonably curse their king, and blasphemously curse their God. 4. They shall abandon themselves to despair, and, which way soever they look, shall see no probability of relief. They shall look upward, but heaven shall frown upon them; they shall look to the earth, but what comfort can that yield to those whom God is at war with? (*M. Henry.*) *Hardly bestead*:—Embarrassed with difficulties, oppressed with anxieties, distressed with bitter reflections and desponding thoughts, not knowing what to do or whither to go. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Hungry*:—Destitute not only of necessary provision for their personal support, but of the Word of the Lord, which is the nourishment of the soul (Amos viii. 11, 12). (*Ibid.*) *Fretfulness*:—Though hunger and poverty is indeed a great calamity, yet fretfulness of spirit is a still greater one; and when both are united, it is evident that the mind is as empty of spiritual good as the body is of necessary provision. (*Ibid.*) *No good without God*:—Those that go away from God, go out of the way of all good. (*M. Henry.*)

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## CHAPTER IX.

**Vers. 1-7. Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation.**—*The prophecy explained*:—Let me venture to give what I conceive to be the true rendering of the prophecy—a rendering which at least in its main particulars has the support of the best modern interpreters—and the striking beauty and force and consistency of the whole will become evident. The prophet has been speaking in the previous chapter of a time of terrible distress and perplexity which was close at hand. King and people had forsaken their God. Ahaz had refused the sign of deliverance offered him and was hoping, by an alliance

with Assyria, to beat off his enemies. The people in their terror were resorting to wizards and to necromancers for guidance instead of resorting to God. And the prophet warns them that the national unbelief and apostasy shall bring its sure chastisement in national despair. They will look around them in vain for succour. The heavens above and the earth beneath shall be wrapt in the same awful gloom. Nothing can exceed the dramatic force of the picture; it is a night at noonday, the very sun blotted from the heavens; it is a darkness which might be felt. But even while the prophet's gaze is fixed upon it he sees the light trembling on the skirts of the darkness. The sunrise is behind the cloud. "The darkness," cries the prophet, "is driven away." So I venture to render the last words of the eighth chapter. "For there shall no more be gloom to her (*i.e.*, to the land) that was in anguish. In the former time He made light of (not 'lightly afflicted,' as our A.V. has it), poured contempt upon the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, but in the latter time He hath made it glorious by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee (the circuit) of the nations." Take this rendering and you have a perfectly exact and very striking prediction. It was not true that the land had first been lightly afflicted and afterwards was more grievously afflicted. But it was true that in the former time the land had been despised; Zebulun and Naphtali and Galilee of the nations had been a byword among the Jews; their territory had been trampled under foot by every invader who had ever entered Palestine. In the former time He did make light of it, He did abase it, but in the latter time He made it glorious with a glory far transcending the glory of any earthly kingdom. For it was here, amid this despised half heathen population, that the true Light shined down, here the Lord of Glory lived, it was here that He wrought His wonderful works and uttered His wonderful words, it was here that He gathered fishermen and tax-gatherers to be His first disciples and missionaries to the world. This land was of a truth made glorious by the feet of Jesus of Nazareth. Well may the prophet continue, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, on them hath the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation, Thou hast increased their joy." The insertion of the negative is an unfortunate mistake which, though found in our present Hebrew text, can be easily explained, and indeed has been corrected by the Hebrew scribes themselves. "They joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men exult when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden, and the staff upon his shoulder, the rod of his oppression Thou hast broken, as in the day of Midian. For the greaves of the greaved warrior and the battle-tumult and the garments rolled in blood shall be for burning for fuel of fire." The A.V., by the insertion of the words "but this," introduces an antithesis which destroys the whole force and beauty of the picture. Strike out those words and all becomes clear and consistent. The meaning is that at the advent of the Prince of Peace all wars shall cease. The soldier's sandals and the soldier's cloak and all the bloodstained gear of battle shall be gathered together and cast into the fire to be burned. The heir of David's throne is no earthly warrior; He does not win His kingdom by force of arms. "For a Child is born unto us, a Son is given unto us, and the government shall be upon His shoulder; He shall wear the insignia of royalty. And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with judgment and with righteousness, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this." Such is the majestic vision of light and peace that dawns upon the prophet's soul in the midst of the national apostasy. (*Bishop Perowne.*) "Nevertheless":—There is in this world mercifully a compensating balance to all Divine denunciations, a "nevertheless" to all God's judgments, and a Gospel of grace appended to every message of doom. It is this that makes this world, amid all its tragic scenes, a world of mercy. (*D. Davies.*) *Clearer promises of Christ in darkest times*:—It is noteworthy that the clearest promises of the Messiah have been given in the darkest hours of history. If the prophets had been silent upon the Coming One before, they always speak out in the cloudy and dark day; for well the Spirit made them know that the coming of God in human flesh is the lone star of the world's night. It was so in the beginning, when our first parents had sinned, and were doomed to quit the paradise of delights. When Israel was in Egypt, when they were in the sorest bondage, and when many plagues had been wrought on Pharaoh,

apparently without success; then Israel saw the Messiah set before her as the Paschal lamb, whose blood sprinkled on the lintel and the two side posts secured the chosen from the avenger of blood. The type is marvellously clear, and the times were marvellously dark. I will quote three cases from the prophetic books which now lie open before us. In Isa. xxviii. 16, you read that glorious prophecy: "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." When was that given? When the foundation of society in Israel was rotten with iniquity, and when its corner-stone was oppression. Read from verse 14: "Wherefore hear the Word of the Lord, ye scornful men," &c. Thus, when lies and falsehoods ruled the hour, the Lord proclaims the blessed truth that the Messiah would come and would be a sure foundation for believers. Next, look into Jer. xxiii. 5: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch," &c. When was this clear testimony given? Read the former verses of the chapter, and see that the pastors were destroying and scattering the sheep of Jehovah's pasture. When the people of the Lord thus found their worst enemies where they ought to have met with friendly care, then they were promised happier days through the coming of the Divine Son of David. Glance at Ezek. xxxiv. 23, where the Lord says, "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even My servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd." When came this cheering promise concerning that great Shepherd of the sheep? It came when Israel is thus described: "And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd," &c. Thus, in each case, when things were at their worst, the Lord Jesus was the one well of consolation in a desert of sorrows. In the worst times we are to preach Christ, and to look to Christ. In Jesus there is a remedy for the direst of diseases, and a rescue from the darkest of despairs. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

*Phases of Divine purpose.*—Let us look at some of the abiding doctrines and illustrations suggested by this noblest effort of the prophet's imagination. Isaiah's wing never takes a higher flight than it does in this prevision of the centuries.

1. The Divine purpose has never been satisfied, if we may so say, with darkness, judgment, desolation. When God has judged a man He would seem to return to see what effect the judgment has had, if haply He may see some hope of returning feeling, of loyalty and filial submission. God's feeling has been always a feeling of solicitude to bless the nations. We shall do wrong if we suppose that pity comes in only with the historical Christ, that compassion was born on Christmas Day.

2. The Divine movement amongst the nations has always expressed itself under the contrast of light and darkness (ver. 2). No contrast can be more striking; therefore this is the one God has chosen whereby to represent the Divine movement. [God is associated with light, and all evil with darkness.] The fulfilment of Divine purpose has always been associated with incarnation, idealised Humanity.

3. Look at the Deliverer as seen by the prophet (ver. 6). The Deliverer is to come as a child, a son, a governor, a name; He is to sit upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. Say there was a secondary application of the terms, there can be no objection to that; but no living man ever filled out in their uttermost spherical meaning all these names but one, and His name is Jesus.

4. Then comes rapture upon rapture. And the pledge of the fulfilment of all is, "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." (J. Parker, D.D.)

*The remedy of the world's misery.*—I. THE VIEW TAKEN BY THE PROPHET OF THE MORAL STATE OF THE WORLD PREVIOUS TO THE GLORIOUS CHANGE WHICH MAKES THE SUBJECT OF HIS PROPHECY. 1. The people are represented as walking in darkness. The prophet contemplates the world at large. Light is an emblem of knowledge; darkness of ignorance and error. 2. But darkness alone appears to the mind of the prophet only a faint emblem of the state of the heathen. He adds, therefore, "the shadow of death." In Scripture this expression is used for death, the grave, the darkness of that subterranean mansion into which the Jews supposed the souls of men went after death. Figuratively, the expression is used for great distress; a state of danger and terror. It is an amplification, therefore, of the prophet's thought. Experience has justified this representation of the prophet. The religion of the heathen has ever been gloomy and horrible. II. THE BLESSED VISITATION (ver. 2). 1. As darkness is an emblem of the religious sorrows which had overcast the world, so light is an emblem of the truth of the Gospel. The Gospel is "light." This

marks its origin from heaven. This notes its truth. It is "light" because of its penetrating and subtle nature. It is called "light," "a great light," because of the discoveries which it makes. It is life and health to the world. Where it prevails, spiritual life is inspired, and the moral disorders of the soul give place to health and vigour. 2. As in the vision light succeeds to darkness, so also joy succeeds to fear and misery. III. SO VAST A CHANGE MUST BE PRODUCED BY CAUSES PROPORTIONABLY POWERFUL: and to the means by which this astonishing revolution is effected the prophet next directs attention (vers. 4, 5). These words speak of resistance and a struggle. In the conduct of this battle two things are, however, to be remarked: the absolute weakness and insufficiency of the assailants, and their miraculous success. The weakness of the instruments used in breaking the rod and yoke of the oppressor is sufficiently marked by the allusion to the destruction of the host of Midian by Gideon and his three hundred men. But it may be said, "Is not all this a splendid vision? You speak of weak instruments effecting a miraculous success; of the display and operation of a supernatural power, touching the hearts of men, and changing the moral state of the world; but what is the ground of this expectation?" This natural and very proper question our text answers. IV. "FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN," &c. (vers. 6, 7). (*R. Watson.*) *Light out of darkness*.—We are not left in doubt as to what the end of this great prophecy was. In Matt. iv. 15, 16, we have it expounded to us. I. THE GREAT DARKNESS. The prophet first saw the people utterly overwhelmed by the ruthless hand of merciless war. It had been once a prosperous land, but now darkness dense had come over it till it was a veritable "shadow of death." Turning from the immediate political significance of this to its spiritual import, we can easily see in it a picture of the spiritual condition of the world when Jesus came. The whole world was lying in the wicked one. The Jewish people, though they had the living Word of God, had in the darkness of their carnal ambition and lifeless formality lost all true vision of God. The Gentile world was no better. The best which they had was, on the one hand, a sensuous and godless Epicureanism, and on the other a cold and hopeless Stoicism. Turning to the condition of the unconverted people of our own day, we see also darkness and the shadow of death. What light for the soul has all our modern philosophical thinking and scientific research given? II. THE GREAT LIGHT. The light which the prophet saw was the intervention of God for the deliverance of the people from political bondage and physical misery, with some spiritual return to God. That which it typified was the advent and work of Christ. How this light shone upon the darkened world when He came! Truly it was a "great light." The light seen in the face of Jesus Christ is the glory of God, revealing His eternal purposes of grace to all sinful men. Christ lights the world by loving it, *i.e.*, by revealing the love of God to sinners. III. THE GREAT BLESSINGS. With the coming of the true light came wonderful blessings to the people. This is described in the language of the prophet under several figures of speech. 1. "Thou hast multiplied the nation." If we look to the real fulfilment of this prophecy, what a vast increase in the people of God there has been! 2. "And increased their joy." Of old the people of God rejoiced at their best periods in mere national prosperity. But under the spiritual reign of Jesus the people shall rejoice in better things. The joy of salvation. 3. "According to the joy in harvest." The happiest festival of the Jews was the harvest feast, when the fruits of the earth were all gathered in, and the people blessed God and rejoiced in their riches. But now He gives us a new and better harvest, the ingathering of souls, the first-fruits of which were gathered on the day of Pentecost. There is no such pure joy as that which arises in the heart when God's salvation is being accepted by men and women, and His harvest is being gathered. What will it be in that day when the glad harvest home is accomplished? 4. "And as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." This is a figure borrowed from the triumphant joy of the victorious warrior, who, having overthrown the enemy, and taken possession of his goods, divides them as spoil among the victors. Well, so shall, and so do, God's people rejoice over the victories which the Gospel wins over "the god of this world." 5. "Thou hast broken the yoke . . . and the staff." Hitherto the people had been under the iron yoke of their oppressors, and beaten by the rod of their taskmasters, as in the old slavery times of Egypt. How happy when that yoke shall be broken, and that cruel staff or rod done away! Under Messiah's reign the cruel bondage of Satan's yoke is broken, and the taskmaster's staff done away. IV. How

CHRIST DELIVERS. In earthly conflicts battles are fought "with confused noise and garments rolled in blood." The captives were delivered of old by these terrible and sanguinary methods; but Christ delivers His captives by the power of the Spirit of God, "with burning and fuel of fire." The fire is the Holy Ghost, and the fuel of fire is the Word of truth. (*G. F. Pentecost, D.D.*) *The nativity of our Lord*.—I. LIGHT OUT OF DARKNESS. II. JOY BECAUSE OF THE LIGHT.

1. Because Jesus was born. 2. Because in His incarnation God and man were united. 3. Because through His birth "the yoke" of man's burden has been broken (ver. 4), and the power of his oppressor destroyed. III. THE GROUNDS OF THIS JOY (vers. 6, 7). (*Clergyman's Magazine.*) *Good things in the days of the great Messiah*.—If it be asked, What the great design of God is in the Scriptures? I answer, To bring a lost world to the knowledge of a Saviour.

All the prophecies, promises, histories, and doctrines of the Word, do point us to Him, as the needle in the mariner's compass points to the pole-star. "To Him bore all the prophets witness." And when apostles under the New Testament were sent unto all nations, with the silver trumpet of the everlasting Gospel in their mouths, what was the great theme of their sermons? It was just to make Christ known among the nations. All the lines of religion meet in Him as their centre. The prophet in the close of the preceding chapter, having spoken of dark and dismal days of trouble and distress, comes in the beginning of this, to comfort and encourage the hearts of true believers, with the good things which were coming in the days of the great Messiah.

I. There are THREE GREAT NEW TESTAMENT BLESSINGS he condescends upon. 1. Great light should spring up to a lost world (ver. 2). 2. Joy in the Lord (ver. 3). 3. Spiritual liberty (vers. 4, 5). II. If any should ask WHO IS HE, AND WHERE IS HE, THAT SHALL DO ALL THESE GREAT THINGS? You have an answer in the words, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder," &c. In the words we may notice these things following. 1. The incarnation of the great Messiah; for here the prophet speaks of His birth.

2. His donation. He is the gift of God to a lost world. "Unto us a Son is given." 3. His advancement to the supreme rule and authority. "The government shall be upon His shoulder." 4. His character and designation, in five names here given Him, which show that He has a name above every name, "Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

5. The relation He stands in to lost sinners of Adam's family. He is born "to us," He is given "to us," and not to the angels which fell. 6 The application and triumph of faith upon all this; for the Church here lays claim to Him, and triumphs in her claim; for the words are uttered in a way of holy boasting, "Unto us this Child is born, unto us this Son is given." (*E. Erskine.*) *Fulness of Christ*.—There is that in Jesus Christ alone which may and can afford sufficient comfort and relief in the worst of times and conditions. I. WE WILL INQUIRE INTO THE TRUTH OF IT (Col. ii. 9). 1. If you look into Scripture you shall find that the promises and prophecies of Christ are calculated and given out for the worst of times.

2. If there was enough in the types of Christ to comfort and relieve the people of God under the Old Testament in the worst of their times; then there must needs be enough in Christ to comfort the people of God now in the worst of our times. In the times of the Old Testament, in case they had sinned, what relief had they? A sacrifice to make an atonement (Lev. iv. 20), and so a type of Christ the great Sacrifice (Heb. ix. 26). In case they were in the wilderness and wanted bread, what relief had they? Manna, a type of Christ, "the true Bread that came down from heaven."

In case they wanted water, what relief had they? The rock opened, and "that rock was Christ." In case they were stung with the fiery serpents, what relief had they? They had the brazen serpent, and that was a type of Christ (John iii. 15). 3. If all the promises of good things made to us were originated in Christ, and if all the promises that were made unto Christ of good things to come, do descend upon us, then surely there is enough in Christ to succour in the worst of times. For what are the promises but Divine conveyances? 4. If all our want of comfort and satisfaction doth arise from the want of a sight of Christ's fulness and excellency, and all our satisfaction and comfort doth arise from the sight of Christ's fulness and excellency, then this doctrine must needs be true. II. WHAT IS THAT IN CHRIST THAT MAY OR CAN COMFORT, SUCCOUR, AND RELIEVE IN THE WORST OF TIMES AND CONDITIONS?

1. Look what that good thing is which the world can either give or take away, that is in Christ in great abundance; and if that be in Christ in great abundance

which the world can neither give or take away, then there is that in Christ that may or can succour, comfort, and relieve in the worst of times. Can the world take away your estate, gold, or silver? Then read what is said in Prov. iii., concerning wisdom, where Christ is called wisdom (ver. 13). Can the world take away your liberty? Then you know what Christ says, "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." Can the world take away your life? You know what Christ saith, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." On the other side, what can the world give to you? Can the world give you peace, rest, quietness? Then you know what Christ saith (Matt. xi. 28; John xiv. 27). Can the world give you happiness? I am sure Christ can.

2. There is in Jesus Christ the greatest excellency under the best propriety. "My Lord and my God." 3. There is in Jesus Christ the greatest fullness joined with the most communicativeness. 4. The sweetest love under the greatest engagement. Is not a brother engaged to help his brother? A father his children? A husband his wife? Now, suppose there were one person that could stand under all these relations—a brother, a father, a husband; how much would that person be engaged to help? Thus Christ doth; He stands under all these relations.

5. There is that in Jesus Christ that suiteth all conditions. III. HOW FAR THIS CONCERNS US. (*W. Bridge, M.A.*) *Immanuel, the Light of Life*.—I. THERE is to be a light breaking in upon the sons of men who sit in darkness, and this light is to be found only in the incarnate God. Let me ILLUSTRATE THIS FACT BY THE CONTEXT. 1. I must carry you back to chap. vii. 14. The sign of coming light is Jesus. 2. Further on we see our Lord Jesus as the hold-fast of the soul in time of darkness. See in chap. viii. 8, the whole country overwhelmed by the fierce armies of the Assyrians, as when a land is submerged beneath a flood. Then you read—"And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of Thy land, O Immanuel." The one hope that remained for Judah was that her country was Immanuel's land. There would Immanuel be born, there would He labour, and there would He die. He was by eternal covenant the King of that land, and no Assyrian could keep Him from His throne. If you are a believer in Christ, you belong to Him, and you always were His by sovereign right, even when the enemy held you in possession. We might exultingly have gloried over you, "Thy soul, O Immanuel." Herein lay your hope when all other hope was gone. Herein is your hope now. 3. Further on in the chapter we learn that Jesus is our star of hope as to the destruction of the enemy. The foes of God's people shall be surely vanquished and destroyed because of Immanuel. Note well in verses 9, 10, how it is put twice over like an exultant taunt: "Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for Immanuel." Our version translates the word into "God with us," but it is "Immanuel." In Him, even in our Lord Jesus Christ, dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and He has brought all that Godhead to bear upon the overthrow of the foes of His people.

4. Further on we find the Lord Jesus as the morning light after a night of darkness. The last verses of the eighth chapter picture a horrible state of wretchedness and despair: "And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry;" &c. But see what a change awaits them! Read the fine translation of the R.V.: "But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish." What a marvellous light from the midst of a dreadful darkness! It is an astounding change, such as only God with us could work. There are some here who have traversed that terrible wilderness. You are being driven as captives into the land of despair, and for the last few months you have been tramping along a painful road, "hardly bestead and hungry." You are sorely put to it, and your soul finds no food of comfort, but is ready to faint and die. You fret yourself: your heart is wearing away with care, and grief, and hopelessness. In the bitterness of your soul you are ready to curse the day of your birth. The captive Israelites cursed their king who had led them into their defeat and bondage; in the fury of their agony, they even cursed God and longed to die. It may be that your heart is in such a ferment of grief that you know not what you think, but are like a man at his wits' end. Those who led you into sin are bitterly remembered; and as you think upon God you are troubled. This is a dreadful case for a soul to be in, and it involves a world of sin and misery. You look up, but the heavens are as brass above your head; your prayers appear to be shut

out from God's ear; you look around you upon the earth, and behold "trouble and darkness, and dimness of anguish"; your every hope is slain, and your heart is torn asunder with remorse and dread. Every hour you seem to be hurried by an irresistible power into greater darkness. In such a case none can give you comfort save Immanuel, God with us. Only God, espousing your cause, and bearing your sin, can possibly save you. See, He comes for your salvation!

5. Once more, we learn from that which follows our text, that the reign of Jesus is the star of the golden future. He came to Galilee of the Gentiles, and made that country glorious, which had been brought into contempt. That corner of Palestine had very often borne the brunt of invasion, and had felt more than any other region the edge of the keen Assyrian sword. It was a wretched land, with a mixed population, despised by the purer race of Jews; but that very country became glorious with the presence of the incarnate God. That first land to be invaded by the enemy was made the headquarters of the army of salvation. Even so at this day His gracious presence is the day-dawn of our joy. Here read and interpret chap. ix. 3. Then shall your enemy be defeated, as in the day of Midian. When Jesus comes, you shall have eternal peace; for His battle is the end of battles. "All the armour of the armed man in the tumult, and the garments rolled in blood, shall even be for burning, for fuel of fire." This is the rendering of the Revision; and it is good. The Prince of Peace wars against war, and destroys it. Now is it that the Lord Jesus becomes glorious in our eyes; and He whose name is Immanuel is now crowned in our heart with many crowns, and honoured with many titles. What a list of glories we have here! What a burst of song it makes when we sing of the Messiah (ver. 6). Each word sounds like a salvo of artillery. II. I want to PRESS HOME CERTAIN TRUTHS CONNECTED WITH MY THEME. Immanuel is a grand word. "God with us" means more than tongue can tell. It means enmity removed on our part, and justice vindicated on God's part. It means the whole Godhead engaged on our side, resolved to bless us. 1. Jesus is Immanuel (Matt. i. 21). 2. Perhaps you wish to know a little more of the incident in the text which exhibits Jesus as the great light. Our Lord made His home in the darkest parts. He looked about and saw no country so ignorant, no country so sorrowful, as Galilee of the Gentiles, and therefore He went there, and lifted it up to heaven by priceless privileges! 3. We will turn back to where we opened our Bibles at the first, and there we learn that, to be God with us, Jesus must be accepted by us. He cannot be with us if we will not have Him. Hear how the prophet words it: "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." Be sure that you go on with the verse to the end—"and the government shall be upon His shoulder." If Christ is your Saviour He must be your King. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Lux in tenebris*:—One evening last week I stood by the seashore when the storm was raging. The voice of the Lord was upon the waters; and who was I that I should tarry within doors, when my Master's voice was heard sounding along the water? I rose and stood to behold the flash of His lightnings, and listen to the glory of His thunders. The sea and the thunders were contending with one another; the sea with infinite clamour striving to hush the deep-throated thunder, so that His voice should not be heard; yet over and above the roar of the billows might be heard that voice of God, as He spake with flames of fire, and divided the way for the waters. It was a dark night, and the sky was covered with thick clouds, and scarce a star could be seen through the rifts of the tempest; but at one particular time, I noticed far away on the horizon, as if miles across the water, a bright shining, like gold. It was the moon hidden behind the clouds, so that she could not shine upon us; but she was able to send her rays down upon the waters, far away, where no cloud happened to intervene. I thought as I read this chapter last evening, that the prophet seemed to have stood in a like position, when he wrote the words of my text. All round about him were clouds of darkness; he heard prophetic thunders roaring, and he saw flashes of the lightnings of Divine vengeance; clouds and darkness, for many a league, were scattered through history; but he saw far away a bright spot—one place where the clear shining came down from heaven. And he sat down, and he penned these words: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined"; and though he looked through whole leagues of space, where he saw the battle of the warrior "with confused noise and garments rolled in blood," yet he fixed his eye upon one bright spot in futurity, and he declared that there he saw hope of peace,

prosperity, and blessedness; for said he, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful." (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 2. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light.—*The true Light*.—The prophet's vision has been fulfilled. The true light now shineth; Jesus Christ as the Word made flesh is the true Light which lighteth every man. There is no light in any real sense but that which comes to man through Him. I. Christ sheds light upon sin. By His words and by His life He testifies to the reality of sin. 1. In Him was exhibited for the first and only time a life perfectly obedient to the will of God, a life the one inspiring motive of which was love to God and love to man, a life in which every thought, every word, every act was influenced only by a regard to the glory of God, a life in which was manifested in perfect union and in perfect harmony every human virtue. Thus Christ has shown us what we ought to be, and in showing us this has shown us what we are. In the presence of His awful purity how deep our impurity appears. 2. And He has tracked sin to its secret hiding-place. He has discovered the fountain in the heart, the evil thought, the murderous hate, the impure desire, the covetousness, the malice, the bitterness which lurk within, and which no human law can touch. He has made us discern not only the evil done and the evil thought, but the good left undone. There is no part of our nature which He has not explored. Never had it been so profoundly, so truly judged, never had man been so discovered to us. 3. Is the light which Christ casts upon sin only a condemning light? Is it a light which shows us our misery only to leave us without hope, which shows us what we ought to be, but gives us no power to attain to the ideal set before us? No, the light which reveals to us our sin, reveals to us also the mercy of God, a love greater than our transgressions, a pardon greater than our sin. It is the light of the Cross that gives us hope. Never does God appear in more perfect holiness than when He pardons sin, and the sinner looking upon the Cross feels the malignity of that sin which nothing but the sacrifice of the Son of God could take away. All other religions, all other philosophies have failed here, all have made some compromise with sin, all have concealed its deep malignity; the Cross alone dares to reveal it, because the Cross alone takes it away. II. And so, too, of HUMAN SUFFERING. The Cross consoles sorrow, because it manifests to us a power of sympathy in God such as man had never dared to dream of. There is no suffering for which the Cross is not a precious balm, because there is no suffering which it does not surpass and consecrate. III. And much more Christ's light is a light cast upon DEATH. Or rather let me say the light which He came to bestow is the light of life. He came that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. Beyond the Cross there is the Resurrection. "Because I live, ye shall live also." This is the grand prerogative of the Gospel. All other religions have failed here. All have spoken with stammering lips of the world beyond the grave. (*Bishop Perowne.*) *Experiences on a sick-bed*.—We are accustomed to conceive of our experience of bodily affliction as a land of "the shadow of death." Just as there was a preparation for receiving good in the moral shadow which enveloped the Galileans, so is there also good in the pain and abasement of bodily suffering. There is a breaking down of pride, and a clearer insight into our own utter weakness. There is new openness to spiritual realities, and in this, at least a preparation for being dealt with according to the light of our relation to eternity. I. One almost invariable sight revealed to us in the shadow of death is THE IMPERISHABLENESS OF THE PAST. I remember reading some years ago an account of an exploration of one of the pyramids of Egypt. The impression of the darkness upon the explorers at first was very oppressive. On every side and overhead, piled one above another in prodigious lengths and masses, rose the polished blocks of granite which formed the walls and ceiling. There was not a window, nor open chink from top to bottom. The torches of the guides only deepened the sense of awe, blinking as they did like mere glow-worms in the gloom. As the travellers crept and slid along the dismal passages, through the almost solid darkness, an undefined and painful consciousness of something like terror arose within them, from the felt want of any really satisfactory knowledge of the purpose which could be intended in such a building. At length they came to what seemed to them a coffin of stone. When they struck it, it rung like a bell. Everything else had had a baffling and perplexing effect



on their minds. Here was one object they could thoroughly understand—the monument of a purpose, even if not the main purpose, which the building was intended to serve. And in the midst of that darkness they found their minds summoned by that coffin into the presence of the past. Something not very unlike this takes place when we are sent in, under some serious illness, to explore the land of the shadow. At first we are oppressed by the mere darkness—the deepening out on every side of the possibilities of the disease. Then, the ignorance of the purpose for which we are afflicted perplexes us. But at last, more or less in every case, we find our minds settling upon the past. Sometimes it is our instinctive forward-looking, our attempt to penetrate the dim, unsounded future which thus leads us back into the past. The consciousness that we are passing onwards into its territory will not let sleep the question, “What sort of past am I carrying thither with me?” More frequently it is the consideration of unfinished purposes which recalls the past. Often, however, there is something in the very circumstances of the affliction, some appropriate word, perhaps, suggested and pressed upon our attention, which leads us in this direction of the past. Joseph’s brethren, *e.g.*, in the Egyptian prison, by the simple utterance of the words, “Your youngest brother,” had the past which related to themselves and Joseph recalled to their minds. It was this which Job complained of when he cried to God: “Thou makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.” His youth was not dead as he had supposed; nor had its actions altogether passed. The threads of these were still in His hand who was afflicting him. And now, in his distress, they are drawn up and placed like network around his soul. But there is good in this revision of the past. For one thing, the very sight of the fact is good that nothing of our lives passes utterly into oblivion. It is good to know that the past as much as the present is real, that our deeds lie there, imperishable, dormant, but not dead. For a second reason it is good. The remaining hours of our time here are more likely to be encountered and occupied with serious hearts. But, for a third and still deeper reason, it is good to have made this discovery. One of the main purposes of redemption is to deal with this imperishableness of the past, and solve the problems which arise out of that and our responsibility. Our Redeemer came to put away the guilt of our past lives, and to lift us into a position from which the consequences of our guilt would shut us out for ever. But nothing more disposes us to listen to the offers of Divine mercy, than a clear unambiguous view of the actual past of our lives.

II. Another and most important sight vouchsafed to us in serious illness, is **THE SIGHT OF THE WORLD WE LIVE IN DWARFED TO ITS TRUE PROPORTIONS.** It is a great loss to any one to see the world he lives in only from the side of health. The true proportions of things are almost sure to be hidden from his view. This is especially the case with respect to the common pursuits of life. It requires the discipline of a sick-bed to reveal our error—to discover to us that we have transgressed the bounds of mere necessity, and have been giving them more thought than they demand. I would liken the false value which we put on our lower vocations to the shadow cast by a manor-house on the lawn. The house itself may represent the actual legitimate thought, which we may put into our daily toils. The shadow of the house is the added, illegitimate thought—the burdensome, down-crushing care, thrusting and pushing from their centres our higher affections and hopes. At two different moments there is no shadow. There is none when the sun is in the centre of the heavens, and pouring his light down upon the roof of the house; there is none until he bends from the centre. But then the shadow begins to lengthen out its neck. The sunlight comes forth in horizontal beams, and the shadow stretches out its arms and spreads its wings, and lies prone and black on all the colour of the neighbouring field. At last the sun goes down, and the shadow has disappeared again. Night has rolled its shadow over the land, and the greater has swallowed the less. The house is there, but not its shadow. A most true picture this of the different values we put on our pursuits in the hours of health and at the gates of the grave! For with us also there are two moments when no shadow falls. There is no false estimate so long as God is in the centre of our heavens. At last death is rolling his shadow over our earthly life. And we are enveloped in the gloom of that. And then, looking outward, we discover how all other shadows have disappeared, and have been to us but vanity and vexation of spirit.

III. A third experience in serious illness is, that **AWAY FROM THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, THERE IS NO LIGHT FOR THE WORLD TO COME.** The lights which surround us in our daily walks, when all is well with

us, forsake us in the shadow. The light of friendship, for example. It cannot pierce the blackness of the shadow of death, nor search forward into the dimness of unrevealed futurity. Next to our friends, as lights of life to us, are our books. They are our inner lights. But away from the Book which specifically tells us of the resurrection of the Son of God, the light of no book in our keeping abides with us in the shadow to give us one gleam of hope. But it is worth while being sent into the shadow, if we come out with this experience. IV. A fourth experience is generally reached in serious illness, of which it is not so easy to see the good. This is THE LONELINESS OF SUFFERING. Our spirits are gaddera-about too much. Our lives spread themselves too far upon society. A serious illness carries us away from this folly. It takes us out into the solitude, and leaves us there. This loneliness of great suffering is the shadow sent forth to bring us home. Society is not our home. The dearest, innermost circle of it is not our home. God is our home—our present home. V. TO THE CHILDREN OF GOD AFFLICTION IS IN EVERY WAY A GOOD. Its shadow is a retirement for renewed and deeper insight into the character and purposes of their Father. As much as unspiritual sufferers they feel the distress of their circumstances. The difference is, that over and through this distress they discern the loving purpose towards themselves of Him who chasteneth. Every way their condition is different. The world which death is bringing close to them is the habitation of their best and most beloved Brother. Sustaining promises are suggested to them by the Spirit, which have new and unthought of appropriateness to their case. Light from heaven, in inexpressible fulness, comes down into familiar passages of the Bible, revealing unimagined depths of Divine love for human souls. There is a nearer, sweeter, more experimental view of the Cross of Christ. Sin is felt to be the evil thing on which God cannot look, in a way to deepen the abhorrence of it, and to excite a more cleaving love to Him who is making all things work together to deliver us from its marks and power. And glimpses of the sinless land, holy, beautiful as morning light, come glowing and reddening through the clouds. And the hour of weakness is changed into an hour of strength. (*A. Macleod, D.D.*) *Christ as light* :—I. HOW THIS LIGHT MAY BE APPROPRIATED TO CHRIST. 1. Light is an all-necessary thing. 2. It separates—divides the night from the day. 3. It cheers. 4. Christ stands pre-eminently glorious as a great light. There is a fulness in Him commensurate with His Divinity; there is a brightness in Him that knows neither change nor diminution. II. THE DESCRIPTION OF PERSONS TO WHOM THIS LIGHT HAS BEEN, OR SHALL BE, REVEALED. 1. In darkness. 2. Walking in darkness. 3. In the shadow of death. (*F. G. Crossman.*) *Christ the true Light* :—I. THE DARKNESS reigning in the world beforehand was to be traced even in the land of Judæa itself. At the period of Christ's nativity, there was the darkness of types, the shadows and mere secondary images of Divine truth. Some few only were partially enlightened to believe and understand the truth, and these exulted in the coming light, *e.g.*, Simeon and Anna. But if some few in Jerusalem looked for redemption, what was the state of the heathen world? They, indeed, by all their wisdom, knew not God; they were immersed in the darkest idolatries and most cruel superstitions. There was, in all this mass of external darkness, something congenial to the inner corruption, the shadow of death, resting on our common sinful nature: never could the one have existed or taken effect without the other. We must look within our own hearts for that guilty ignorance, that wilful blindness and hardened indifference to God and His truth, which was the source alike of Jewish perversions and heathen abominations. II. Christ was THE LIGHT spoken of by the prophet. To the Jews, how well calculated was His appearance to clear up the obscurities of their own Mosaic ritual and prophetic declarations! To the Gentiles, no less did the coming of Christ present a religion able, for the first time, to resolve all their doubts, to satisfy all their wants, and unite the whole family of man under one great Head of all. 1. It was a sudden light; unexpected by most, and undeserved by all, the Sun of Righteousness, Jesus Christ, rose upon a benighted world. 2. It was a great light. 3. This was verily the true light. "It shines with a ray which," saith St. John, "lighteneth every man that cometh into the world." It is that which is adapted to man as man, beaming with an evidence only to be resisted by wilful blindness, and convincing all with a force which leaves the wanderer without excuse, who perishes in his sin. 4. It is a Divine light; one shining as if from the very throne of God Himself. (*C. J. Hoare, M.A.*) *Darkness and the shadow of death* :—Picture to yourselves

a traveller fallen into a defile, the heavens concealed from his view by clouds and darkness; and as he turns in his passage he hears the ravening beasts of night yelling around him, and ready to devour him; conceive his heart sinking within him, and seeking a refuge in vain! If to this man a glimmering light was raised from a distant cottage where he might find security, oh, what joy, what hope of escape would burst across his mind! But yet this will but faintly represent the scene, for the light here spoken of is not a transitory light which may soon be extinguished, but it is a bright light that arises in the land, a light that is raised in heaven to shine on benighted man. (*J. Burnett, LL.B.*)

*Walking in darkness*.—Concerning the people it is affirmed—I. That they walked in DARKNESS. Darkness must be understood in the figurative sense in which it is often used in Scripture to signify a state of ignorance, sin, and misery. Ignorance, like a veil, continues upon their hearts until the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ shines into their minds. In this uncomfortable state they act under the influence of corrupt principles, committing those enormous transgressions which are justly denominated the works of darkness. From hence arise distresses and miseries of various kinds, which terminate in utter darkness and everlasting woe, unless prevented by the illumination of the true light. II. In this condition the people are described as WALKING, which, in the Word of God, frequently denotes the whole course of man's life, in which every action makes a step towards that everlasting state to which we are journeying. 1. Walking is a voluntary motion, the consequence of preceding choice and deliberate resolution. 2. Walking is a continued motion, in which one step regularly follows another, until the ground intended is gone over. 3. Walking is a progressive motion, by which a traveller still goes forward until he arrives at the end of his journey. (*R. Macculloch.*)

*The Light of the world*.—In the Arctic regions, after the long dark night of winter, the rising of the sun is especially welcome. So should Christ be to us. I. THE WORLD WITHOUT CHRIST SITS IN DARKNESS. 1. The minds of the heathen are dark. 2. Their religion is dark and gloomy. 3. Their conduct is dark. 4. Their prospects after death are dark. II. JESUS CHRIST IS A "GREAT LIGHT." He is—1. Great in Himself, for He is God. 2. He is a perfect light. 3. He shines into the heart (2 Cor. iv. 6). 4. He gives happiness and healing as well as light (Mal. iv. 2; John xv. 11). 5. This light cannot be put out (Isa. ix. 20). 6. It is the light of heaven as well as of earth (Rev. xxi. 23).

III. IT IS THE WILL OF GOD THAT THE HEATHEN AS WELL AS OURSELVES SHOULD SEE THIS GREAT LIGHT (1 Tim. ii. 1-6; 1 John ii. 2; Mark xvi. 15). (*R. Brewin.*)

*The land of darkness and the great light*.—I. WHO ARE THE PEOPLE WHOM THE PROPHET SAW WALKING IN DARKNESS? By darkness, Scripture means spiritual alteration. Our normal condition is light; for God is light and we were made in His image. But this primitive state no longer exists; an astounding fact has overthrown Divine order; sin has changed all things. The alteration produced by sin is—1. An alteration of truth. Our intellect is darkened "through the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness of our heart." The knowledge of God and of ourselves, which in the origin was pure, has been perverted by a spirit of error and replaced by a veil of darkness. Man has ceased to know God and to know himself. What light would you kindle to dispel these shadows of death? 2. An alteration of life. A false life has invaded the soul and driven away the light of life. The source of life is in God, but it is no longer God who holds dominion over the soul; it is self, the world, and sin. 3. An alteration of joy. Light and joy are synonymous in Scripture: "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." But what becomes of joy if it is deprived of truth and life? It is turned into sorrow. Our earthly joys are but disguised sorrows. II. WHAT IS THE LIGHT SPOKEN OF BY THE PROPHET? Revert to the fall of the first man and woman in Eden; a promise shines. This promise henceforth accompanies humanity. (*Homiletic Magazine.*)

*Darkness exchanged for light*.—The North American Indians used to hold a New Year's feast with revolting ceremonies, the sick and aged being neglected, or even killed, to avoid trouble. But missionaries have taught them the Gospel. They are Christians, and their New Year's feast is kept in a different way. Before it begins a list is read of aged and sick unable to come. Bundles of good things are packed up and sent to each by the fleetest runners, who think it a joy and not a burden. Surely these people "have seen a great light." (*Egerton Young.*)

**Ver 3. Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy.—National power and national character.**—The difference between national power and national character, between the success and the worthiness of a State, is suggested by these words. Scientific insight shows us that a planet is under the dominion of the law of gravitation precisely as a pebble is; and religious insight leads us to study the life, and estimate the merits and the perils, of an empire in the same light and by the same standards that we should apply to any single person. And so religious insight prevents us from accepting the mere numbers, opulence, prominence, and power of a State as sufficient justification for joy in its existence, just as it forbids us to acknowledge such tests for private persons. If a man is a sensualist, a knave, a gambler, or a ruffian, no honest mind thinks of praising him because he is strong-limbed and in florid health, because he lives in a handsome house, is worth a million, and adds largely every year to his meadows and park. These splendid circumstances only furnish a pedestal for a piece of incarnate depravity to make its vileness conspicuous and repulsive. And a nation may be vigorous in physical health, and may be gaining thus, while it is going backward and downward in character. The noble elements which a nation embodies and represents, and which gleam as expressions upon the lineaments which its countenance will wear in history, constitute its glory. Mere numbers, as of the Chinese, Hindoos, or Turks, awaken no satisfaction in the competent student. The brawny energy that tugs at the conquest of nature; that pushes out pioneers whose axes mow the wilderness, and whose ploughs furrow the prairies; that quarries counties for coal, and tames the torrents for its wheels, and makes the air over wide longitudes buzz with furious and cunning mechanism,—this, in contrast with lazy content or nerveless beggary, properly awakens joy in the aspect of a nation. And when, out of this groundwork of enthusiastic strength, an intellectual force is born that dots the land with schools which lead up to academies, and in turn are crowned with colleges, from which literatures blossom and shed the fragrance of culture and poetry in the social air, there is new and higher call for satisfaction and gratitude. And if a religious spirit presses for utterance out of the widening life of the State, so that churches grow as naturally from its soil as court-rooms, capitols, and schools; and if the religion of the people, instead of being a selfish commerce with Infinite power for private insurance against suspected peril, is a reverent and glad recognition of the Infinite mind as the source of truth, and the Infinite heart as unspeakable love, so that, if poverty begins to border the general plenty, the national genius turns to study for the wisest relief of it by the quick impulse of duty, and when vice and crime burst to the surface the conscience of the State is moved as quickly to devise cures as to build prisons; then a spectacle is seen grander than any miracle of genius, any individual heroism, any personal sanctity; for then a nation stands out with intellect on its forehead, chivalry in its carriage, and Christianity in its heart. (*T. Starr King.*)

**They joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest.—Joy in harvest.**—We may look upon the words of our text as a kind of double picture set in a single frame, so that its component parts may be contrasted as well as compared together. On one side is placed before us a merry harvest scene—just like what you might see going on in many a smiling corn-field of this happy English land. On the other side is depicted the confused noise of battle, and warriors with garments rolled in blood, exulting in that fierce joy which foemen feel in prospect of hard-earned victory. Gradually the tumult passes on, and the ground is strewn with the dead and dying, with here and there a broken chariot and many a shivered spear. And then the camp followers issue forth to strip the slain, and to carry off the spoil to their tents until the pursuers shall return, when it shall be divided share and share to every man with boisterous mirth and songs of revelry. You will see, therefore, that our attention is directed first of all to the joy of harvest—man's triumph in the labours of the field. And then we can almost fancy that we hear the ringing shout of victory as the battle sweeps across the plain. Dissimilar though such things may be, yet there is more than one connecting link between them. For "peace hath her victories no less renowned than war." We might even say that they are more real, more complete, more generally shared in. The rejoicing after some successful campaign is often loud and great; the news comes in, the cities are illuminated, the joy-bells are rung, the excitement is intense, and outwardly there is every appearance of extreme delight; but it is only a one-sided gratification after all. For many feel, alas!

how keenly, that the victory has been purchased at the cost of many a valued life, and that warfare is always accompanied by desolation, and mourning, and woe. But in harvest joy this is not the case. Here we have an unmingled gladness; especially in a year when the crops are reported from all quarters to be unusually good—the triumphant result of toil and industry rewarded by the fruits of the ground. (*E. Bell.*) *Harvest joy among the Jews*:—To a commercial people the expression is not so significant as it would be to a Jew. The Jews were essentially an agricultural people. God did not encourage them to trade with surrounding nations, lest they should fall into idolatry; and so we find that they were not a manufacturing community, and, except in the time of Solomon, they made no pretensions to a navy. The arts and sciences were but little cultivated; but the fields and vineyards gave them abundant occupation, and the soil and climate were favourable to the growth of the corn and the vine. God took special interest in their agricultural pursuits. He laid down minute laws respecting sowing and gleaning, and He reminded the people in the feasts which He appointed that they were dependent on Him for the gift of food, and should receive it with a devout and thankful heart. It has been well observed respecting the three chief Jewish festivals that one opened the harvest, the second marked a stage in it, and the third closed it. Joy occupied an important place in the religion of the Jews; and never, I suppose, was it so loud in its expression as at the Feast of Tabernacles, when they looked upon their full granaries, and brought in the last clusters of their fruitful vines. (*F. J. Austin.*) *Harvest joy*:—Christian people should be characterised by joy. While rejoicing on account of our spiritual blessings, we ought not to be indifferent to our daily temporal blessings. I. THE NATURE OF THIS JOY. Joy in harvest is—1. A reasonable joy. The prosperity of a nation depends very largely upon the character of its harvests; and, therefore, it is most natural that when the harvest is plenteous, our praise should ascend to God the Father, from whom this, even more directly than many blessings, has surely come. We have been taught to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread." If we thus recognise our dependence on God, is it not fitting that we should thank Him when He answers our prayer? Consider what would be the result of a complete failure of our crops for one year, notwithstanding that the balance might be restored, to some extent, from foreign lands. Or, consider what would be the result if there were failure in those countries from which we could draw our supplies. 2. A universal joy—a joy in which all sections of the Christian Church, all classes of the community, all nations and races may unite together. There are some occasions for joy which only affect small and select circles. But a good harvest hurts no one, and brings blessings to all. And surely anything that tends to soften prejudices, annihilate differences, break down the barriers of caste and sect is a national boon. 3. A holy joy. "They joy before Thee," says the prophet, "according to the joy in harvest." Among the Jews, joy in harvest was an act of worship. The first fruits were presented before the Lord with thanksgiving. And the joy of harvest should be regarded by us as a religious festival. Agriculture, more than any other branch of human industry, is seen to be under the superintendence of God. To rejoice in a good harvest, therefore, and to forget the Being to whom we owe it, would be an act of impiety. II. THE GROUNDS OF THIS JOY. A bountiful harvest is—1. A sign of God's activity. Very beautiful is the harvest festival hymn which David wrote and sang. Everything is there attributed to Divine agency (*Psa. lxx. 9-13*). Now, we are apt to forget sometimes how much we really owe to God. We talk of the laws of nature until we seem to lose sight of the Law-maker. It is easy to say that the corn grows. But what is growth? It is, as one has described it, "the increase of a living body according to a fixed pattern, and by materials derived from without—materials changed into its own substance or substances. Here, then, are three wonders—the power of absorbing fresh materials from the earth and air; the power of changing them into living and vegetable substance, and the power of arranging these new materials according to a fixed pattern." But how does all this come to pass? Has the plant a mind? The more we reflect, the stronger is the conviction that there is some intelligent, powerful agent at work, to whom all nature is subject, and whose will it readily obeys. And for whom does God make this yearly provision of golden grain? For us who so constantly forget Him, and who, at best, serve Him in a half-hearted way. 2. A proof of God's fidelity. Once, long ago, God gave a promise (*Gen. viii. 21, 22*). On the strength of that promise the farmer

sows his seed. He may not always think of the promise. But it is, nevertheless, in accordance with this promise that his crops arrive at maturity. He must sow in faith, whether it be a blind faith or an intelligent faith. He can only fulfil certain rules and conditions. And when he has done this he must wait. If the rain does not fall he cannot bring it down. If the sun shines too powerfully he cannot ward off its scorching rays. But he is in the hands of a faithful God; and though here and there the fields may not look very promising, and in some districts there may be occasional scarcity, the harvest is always plentiful in some regions, and we are thus able to assist each other and ward off or mitigate human suffering and distress. Let us remember—(1) That God's faithfulness in providing for our physical necessities is only an illustration of His general character. (2) Every Christian is a husbandman. But, as in sowing corn, we have to work in faith and sometimes with sore discouragement. It was so with Christ. But we have promises, and upon these we must rest. (3) There is a grand harvest-day approaching, when we shall have abundant evidence of the faithfulness of our God; and though there is a dark side to that picture, which we dare not conceal, we must not overlook the bright side, which is as plainly revealed. "The harvest is the end of the world. The reapers are the angels. Then shall He say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into My barn." What an ingathering of souls will be then! Oh, happy day! when those that sowed and those that reaped shall rejoice together. Oh, happy day! when much of the seed which we feared was lost shall prove to have been good and fruit-bearing. (*Ibid.*)

*The analogy between the joy of harvest and spiritual joy:—*I. THE HARVEST. 1. Its established natural laws—fruits of the field, orchard, vineyard, or the garden. 2. Its antiquity. It began with the dawn of created life. It is older than any human form of government, and it has the charm of having existed anterior to the division of humanity into tribes and nations, and before the formation of any landed estates. It is one of nature's first bonds to assure every living creature the right of existence. 3. Its universality. It is the heritage of all countries, according to their climates. 4. Its constancy. It is as firm from age to age as the Word of God, and an infallible witness to His faithfulness, as well as to the plenitude of His goodness. II. THE JOY OF HARVEST. The harvest songs are no pretence without reality. 1. Its intensity. Joy of harvest signifies great joy. 2. Its reasonableness. It is grounded on realised goodness. 3. It is grounded on realised goodness in abundance. III. THE ANALOGY BETWEEN THE JOY OF HARVEST AND THE JOY WHICH SPRINGS FROM FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD. 1. Both are God's gifts. 2. Both are sequels of human industry. 3. Both are teachers of impressive moral lessons. (1) The goodness of God in providence and grace. (2) The continual duty of gratitude. (3) The real dignity of labour. (4) The wisdom of looking for and hastening to the heavenly harvest-home. 4. They differ in that one is temporal and the other eternal in its duration. Joy centred in God will never end. (*Homilist.*)

*The joy in harvest is the joy of the reward, the joy of victory.* I. THE REWARD OF LABOUR. God gives us comparatively few things ready for use. The world is much more like a manufactory than a storehouse of ready-made goods. God gives us the raw material, but we must work it up into the manifold forms in which we require it for the purposes of life. God does not give us bread, but the possibility of bread. Even so God gives His Word, not as life, but as the possibility of life. The seed stored in a cellar, though it has in it the possibility of life for a city, is valueless until it is sown broadcast in the fields; and the Word of God, though it has in it the promise of life eternal for the whole world, may be concealed in a convent-cell or buried in a dead language, whilst all around the souls of men are perishing for lack of knowledge. Man lives by bread, but not by bread alone. As there is a life which bread sustains, so there is a life which truth sustains. To sow the truth, to prepare for its harvest, is as truly to save spiritual life as the sowing of corn in its season is the saving of natural life. Every man is a sower, and every man in due season shall be a reaper. "Whoever a man soweth," &c. Is not this the solemn lesson of the harvest-time, that he who would reap hereafter must sow now, that he who would rest hereafter must work now? II. THE REWARD OF PATIENCE. If the earthly husbandman has need of long patience, how much longer patience does he need who seeks a spiritual harvest! The corn of wheat grows slowly, but God's truth grows more slowly still. What are the uncertainties of the

changeable skies compared with the uncertainties of the changeable human life ! Yet if he will let patience have her perfect work he shall have no need to complain of his harvest. III. THE REWARD OF FAITH. Faith and patience always go together. The man who believes can wait. When a child puts seed into the ground, he does so without any of that strong conviction of its vital power which experience has given to his father, and so from want of faith in the seed he appeals to sight, and digs it up to see how it is getting on. There are many older children who make a similar mistake as to spiritual sowing. The Gospel sower must have faith in his seed. We cannot feel too strongly the truth that the power lies in the seed, not in the sower. This is as true in the Church as it is in the corn-field. (*A. E. Gregory.*) *Christian joy* :—I. THE FACT OF THEIR JOY. " Their joy." Who ? Those who, embracing the light of the Gospel, and renouncing the hidden works of darkness, are made the children of the light and of the day.

1. It is Divine in its nature. The joy of the men of the world, however diversified it may be, has its spring and source in the world. The joy of the ambitious has its rise in the pride of the world. The joy of the miser has its spring in the riches of the world. The joy of the sensualist is derived from the pleasures of the world. But believers are taught better.
2. It is extensive in its grounds. God—their Christian privileges—their Christian principles—their Christian prospects.
3. Salutary in its effects. Its tendency is good.

II. THE PECULIARITY OF THEIR JOY. " Before Thee." This is an expressive term and intimates several things.

1. It is spiritual. It is a joyful state of mind, connected with that Divine Being who is a Spirit. Every exercise of the mind that unites us to Him must be spiritual.
2. It is sincere. The Christian's joy is real, not imaginary. It will bear inspection.
3. It is secret. As the world knows not the extent of our sorrows, so it is unacquainted with the abundance of our joys.

III. THE RESEMBLANCE OF THEIR JOY. To what may it be likened ? The sacred writers have used various similitudes. It may be compared to the joy of the captive, released from bondage ; to the joy of a patient, after his recovery from a severe illness ; to the joy of a mariner, after a storm. Two figures are here employed to set forth the Christian's joy—1. The husbandman in the field of harvest. " According to the joy of harvest." (1) It is a joy that results from labour. (2) Connected with anxiety. (3) Requires patience. 2. The soldier in the field of battle. Conclusion—This subject gives us a view of two things with regard to Christianity. 1. Its requirements. It is no easy thing. There is much to be done and suffered. 2. Its rewards. These are inestimable. Present and future—exceeding description and baffling conception. (*E. Temple.*) *Harvest joy* :—To some minds, and to all of us, perhaps, in some moods, autumn brings gloom, harvest sadness ; but to others autumn brings rest—harvest, joy. (1) There is a joy in the harvest of agriculture. (2) In the harvest of commerce. Such is the often honest joy of the man who, after years of industry or enterprise, feels that he has realised a fortune, abundant in its provision for himself and his dear ones. (3) In the harvest of literature. As when, after the toils of intellectual endeavour, the mind is at home amongst " the fairy tales of science, and the long results of time." (4) There is a harvest of love, when parents rejoice over the maturity of filial affection ; when friends approach the completeness of intelligent and sympathetic communion. (5) In the harvest of religion. In personal experience it is a glad-some thing to reach the autumn of faith, resignation, peace, after the earlier seasons of doubt, murmur, tumult. In Christian activities it is wondrous happiness to reap the results of sorrowing, anxious sowing in enlightened, comforted, and converted souls.

I. WHAT IS THE ESSENCE OF THE JOY IN HARVEST ? Is not the cause of joy the same in all these instances ? For there is—1. Joyful retrospect. 2. Joyful anticipation. II. WHAT IS THE MEASURE OF THE JOY IN HARVEST ? Do not two things regulate the measure of the joy that any feel, in any harvest ? 1. The amount of its cost. The wheat-field on which the farmer has expended most will be the one whose yield will the most interest him. So is it in every kind of harvesting, and so especially in what are distinctively the harvests of religion. In our own personal experience we value most in reaping that which has cost us most. The creed that we have fought out against doubts and difficulties, is inestimably more precious to us than that which has been handed down and adopted as a matter of course. The character which is pure after battle with impurity, sacrificial after contact with selfishness, peaceful after provocations to revenge and anger, is of far greater moral worth than that which has been seldom or feebly assailed. In our work for others, those results

on which we have spent most time and thought and prayer are dearest to us. Harvest is valuable according to—2. Its intrinsic value. In our English harvest-homes there is rejoicing because of the intrinsic value of the wheat that is reaped and garnered. This is so because of—(1) Its necessariness. So ever the most joyful harvest will be the obtaining the greatest necessary. What is that? Is it mere wheat, or wealth, or learning, or even human love? No, a thousand times, no, for a man can be without food, or gold, or earthly knowledge, or human love, and yet live. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Religion is the greatest necessary. Christ is the Bread of Life. A harvest is of worth according to—(2) Its sufficiency. The results of an abundant corn harvest last on until, and even past, another harvest-tide. Through successive seasons its bounties are being enjoyed. Because thus the permanence of the result of harvest is one measure of its value, the harvest of knowledge is worth far more than the harvest of gain, and that of religion most of all. Its ingatherings are "treasures in heaven, which neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." Two conclusions arise—1. We ought to have some of "the joy in harvest" now. With souls it is not in every respect as with the soil. For in them some sowing and reaping, dropping in of seed, and quickening of germ, springing of one blade of promise, and reaping of another harvest of result, go on contemporaneously. 2. We must have joy or sorrow in harvest by and by. There will be unmistakable, unavoidable harvest with us all soon. "The harvest is the end of the world; the reapers are the angels." In solemn expectation of that harvest let us remember—(1) We shall reap what we sow. (2) We shall reap more than we sow. What an unparalleled, almost infinite, contrast between the grain carried from the field in harvest, to that which had been deposited there in the seed time. (3) We shall reap as we sow. "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; but he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully." Be careless in sowing, and you will be ashamed in reaping. (*U. R. Thomas, B.A.*) *The joy of harvest*:—This joy is used as a picture of the joy God designs for His Church. I. OBSERVE A GREAT PRINCIPLE IN THE WORDS "BEFORE THEE." All true joy is "before God"—in His presence—with conscious reference to Him. 1. One use of harvest thanksgivings is to bring out this principle, to connect the gift of the harvest with the Giver. 2. All the joy of life is to be sanctified in the same way. Make it be "joy before God." Let it be deepened, purified, ennobled by the thought of the love that gave it, and the presence and sympathy of the Giver. 3. We learn from the same principle the limit of innocent joy. It must be "before God." Can you connect your pleasure with Him? Use this as a test. II. THE PURPOSE OF GOD IS THAT HIS PEOPLE SHOULD HAVE JOY, DEEP, FULL, SATISFYING. You wish to be happy. God wishes it infinitely more than you do. 1. Are you happy? Yes? Because you have health, comforts, &c.? Is this all? Poor joy! Enough for animals, but not for immortal spirits. Not like the joy of harvest; no rest in it, no noble achievement, no permanence. God is not satisfied with this joy for you. 2. Are you happy? No? Wishes unfulfilled, cares, bereavements, dissatisfaction with self, vain endeavours after goodness, sense of guilt, &c.? Your Saviour knows your sorrows, offers you joy. 3. Purpose accomplished in the final harvest. "Joy before Him"; the "rest"; the "well done"; the "evermore." (*F. Wynne, M.A.*) *The joy of spiritual ingathering*:—I. It is the JOY OF REALISATION. Harvest is the realisation of faith, of hope, and of labour. So with the conversion of souls. II. It is the JOY OF CONGRATULATION. Let us congratulate one another that the Spirit of God is with us. Let us congratulate one another that our prayers, notwithstanding all the faults that mar them, and the infirmities that cleave to them, are being heard. III. It is the JOY OF GRATITUDE. I envy not the man who can see the Church increased and yet not feel a sacred home-felt joy. IV. It is the JOY OF SYMPATHY. V. And may I not ask you to REJOICE BECAUSE THERE IS ONE WHO LOVES SOULS better than I do, better than you do, who rejoices more than any of us? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The joy of harvest*:—I. WHAT IS THE JOY OF HARVEST, which is here taken as the simile of the joy of the saints before God? 1. Sometimes the farmer only rejoices because he sees the reward of his toils, and is so much the richer man. 2. The joy of harvest has another element in it, namely, that of gratitude to God for favours bestowed. 3. To the Christian it should be great joy, by means of the harvest, to receive an assurance of God's faithfulness. 4. To the Christian, in the joy of harvest, there will always be the joy of expectation. As there is a harvest to the husbandman



for which he waiteth patiently, so there is a harvest for all faithful waiters who are looking for the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Our joy of harvest is the hope of being at rest with all the saints, and for ever with the Lord. II. WHAT JOYS ARE THOSE WHICH TO THE BELIEVER ARE AS THE JOY OF HARVEST? I. One of the first seasons in which we knew a joy equal to the joy of harvest—a season which has continued with us ever since it commenced—was, when we found the Saviour, and so obtained salvation. No husbandman ever shouted for joy as our hearts should when a precious Christ was ours, and we could grasp Him with full assurance of salvation in Him. The joy of harvest generally shows itself by the farmer giving a feast to his friends and neighbours; and, usually, those who find Christ express their joy by telling their friends and neighbours how great things the Lord hath done for them. 2. It is the joy of answered prayer. 3. We have another joy of harvest in ourselves when we conquer a temptation. Those know deep joy who have felt bitter sorrow. As the man feels that he is the stronger for the conflict, as he feels that he has gathered experience and stronger faith from having passed through the trial, he lifts up his heart, and rejoices, not in himself, but before his God, with the joy of harvest. 4. Again, there is such a thing as the joy of harvest when we have been rendered useful. 5. Another delight which is as the joy of harvest is, fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Our condition matters nothing to us if Christ be with us. (*Ibid.*) *The joy in harvest*:—Is a joy—I. FOR HOPES FULFILLED. In the midst of all his anxieties the farmer had never abandoned hope. His fears were ended and his hopes realised, when the last sheaf was gathered into his garner. Thus the Christian, who has throughout his pilgrimage gone on through fears and doubts and infirmities, yet still cheered by hope, shall stand before his Saviour at the great morning of the resurrection. II. FOR LABOUR REPAID. No matter how abundant the crop may be, so long as it stands in the field it is unprofitable to the farmer. But, when he looks at his well-filled barns, he feels that his labour has not been in vain. If this be true respecting the things of time, how much more with respect to those of eternity. The Christian's labour here is a labour of self-denial in hope of future glory. It is true that he has not the same uncertainty with respect to futurity which characterises the labours of the husbandman. But, when the conflict is at last over, and he receives that for the sake of which he had renounced all earthly objects and lusts, and finds that his labour has not been in vain in the Lord, he "joys before Him with the joy of harvest." III. FOR REST OBTAINED. The farmer's year had been a year of labour, and often of very severe labour too; and when the period of harvest had commenced, his exertions were necessarily redoubled. At length, however, his heavy toil was for a season ended, and in that rest which is doubly sweet after labour, he "joys according to the joy in harvest." The rest of the husbandman is but for a time, and a short time, but the rest of the Christian shall be eternal. He has had his time of labour, such as far to exceed in its constancy and its steadfastness that of the husbandman. IV. FOR PROVIDENCES COMPLETED. Notwithstanding all the care of the husbandman, he is constrained, from time to time, to acknowledge that the entire process of the growth and ripening of the corn has depended on circumstances over which he has had no control. Had he been left to dispose of the seasons as he might have thought right, he would, in all probability, have destroyed his crop. Many a time had he complained that the frosts were too severe, the rain too heavy, the wind too strong, the sun too hot—measuring the goodness of the all-wise God by his own limited understanding. But now he admits that his fears were groundless, and that all things have worked together for good. May we not in this picture see the progress of the Christian whilst he is the object of Divine Providence here on earth; whilst, now sorrowing and now rejoicing, he is ready to murmur at every salutary check which he receives from the hand of a Heavenly Father? But at the harvest-time the "God who hideth Himself" shall be made manifest as having caused all these things to work for His own glory in the good of His people. V. FOR PROMISES FULFILLED. The husbandman has one promise whose fulfilment gladdens him, the Christian has thousands. VI. FOR MEETING WITH FRIENDS. Now the harvest-home is proclaimed, and friends long absent meet together. We go to meet the friends whom we have known and loved in the Lord. And in this meeting with the dearest objects of the affections of the Christian's soul, there is One "whom having not seen, we love"; Him, we shall then meet and "know, even as we are known." If then these be the joys in harvest, how desirable

it is that we should examine whether we are such as shall partake of them. Let me briefly call your attention to the character of those who shall partake of this joy. 1. The ignorant, self-conceited husbandman, who neither knows how or what to sow nor when to reap, shall not have "the joy in harvest." 2. Nor is there joy in harvest to the slothful. 3. And should we see any one who laboured as though it were his design to make his land barren and unproductive we should at once declare him mad, and predict that beggary and starvation must be the inevitable lot of himself and his family. 4. Those who are indeed preparing for that great harvest are those who are applying to heavenly things the same diligence, the same care, the same watchfulness, and the same energy which the husbandman applies to this earthly tillage. (*R. M. Kyle, B.A.*) *Harvest joy, and how we may share in it.*—The idea of national prosperity being dependent on agricultural prosperity, true as applied to Israel, is really universally true. There may be many an industry that brings more wealth to a nation in the shape of money—as the coal industry, the iron industry, the shipping industry—but the primal industry is the agricultural industry. "Moreover, the profit of the earth is for all; the king himself is served by the field," says the writer of Ecclesiastes, thereby giving expression to the eternal truth that all wealth comes ultimately from the soil; even the king himself is not independent of it. One cannot help rejoicing over the ingathering of the harvest, for nature itself seems musical with joy. "The valleys are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing." This joy is—I. THE JOY OF PROVISION SECURED. We can joy before the Lord—not before the world, for that would mean pride; nor before ourselves, for that would mean selfishness; but before the Lord, for that means thankfulness over provision secured. There is nothing meaner than to boast of one's prosperity before the world, or before one's own heart; but we can derive joy from it before the Lord, for the Lord means us to rejoice in all His gifts—material as well as spiritual. II. THE JOY OF PATIENCE REWARDED. III. THE JOY OF LABOUR REQUIRED. What kind of harvest is your life to have? (*J. Mackie, B.D.*) *The joy of harvest.*—Harvest crowns the year with God's goodness. When the harvest is abundant there is universal joy. Everybody rejoices. The owner of the land is glad, because he sees the recompense of reward; the labourers are glad, for they see the fruit of their toil; even those to whom not a single ear may belong nevertheless sympathise in the common joy, because a rich harvest is a boon to all the nation. It is a joyous sight to see the last loaded wain come creaking down the village road, to note the youngsters who shout so loudly, yet know so little what they are shouting about, to mark the peasant on the top of the wain as he waves his hat and gives vent to some gleeful exclamation, and to see them taking it all into the stack or barn. There is joy throughout the village, there is joy throughout the land, when the harvest-time is come. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Harvest rejoicing among the Jews.*—It was a common saying of the Rabbis that he who had not seen the rejoicing of the people at that glad time had yet to learn what true joy was. (*J. Mackie, B.D.*) *The joy of finding the Saviour.*—My heart was fallow, and covered with weeds; but on a certain day the great Husbandman came and began to plough my soul. Ten black horses were His team, and it was a sharp ploughshare that He used, and the ploughers made deep furrows. The Ten Commandments were those black horses, and the justice of God, like a ploughshare, tore my spirit. I was condemned, undone, destroyed, lost, helpless, hopeless,—I thought hell was before me. Then there came a cross ploughing, for when I went to hear the Gospel it did not comfort me; it made me wish I had a part in it, but I feared that such a boon was out of the question. The choicest promises of God frowned at me, and His threatenings thundered at me. I prayed, but found no answer of peace. It was long with me thus. After the ploughing came the sowing. God who ploughed the heart made it conscious that it needed the Gospel, and the Gospel seed was joyfully received. Do you recollect that auspicious day when at last you began to have some little hope? It was very little—like a green blade that peeps up from the soil: you scarce knew whether it was grass or corn, whether it was presumption or true faith. It was a little hope, but it grew very pleasantly. Alas, a frost of doubt came; snow of fear fell; cold winds of despondency blew on you, and you said, "There can be no hope for me." But what a glorious day was that when at last the wheat which God had sown ripened, and you could say, "I have looked unto Him and have been lightened: I have laid my sins on Jesus, where God laid them of old, and they

are taken away, and I am saved." I remember well that day. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The joy of spiritual ingathering* :—I cannot help being egotistical enough to mention the joy I felt when first I heard that a soul had found peace through my youthful ministry. I had been preaching in a village some few Sabbaths with an increasing congregation, but I had not heard of a conversion, and I thought, "Perhaps I am not called of God. He does not mean me to preach, for if He did He would give me spiritual children." One Sabbath my good deacon said, "Don't be discouraged. A poor woman was savingly impressed last Sabbath." How long do you suppose it was before I saw that woman? It was just as long as it took me to reach her cottage. I was eager to hear from her own lips whether it was a work of God's grace or not. I always looked upon her with interest, though only a poor labourer's wife, till she was taken away to heaven, after having lived a holy life. Many since then have I rejoiced over in the Lord, but that first seal to my ministry was peculiarly dear to me. It gave me a sip of the joy of harvest. If somebody had left me a fortune it would not have caused me one hundredth part of the delight I had in discovering that a soul had been led to the Saviour. I am sure Christian people who have not this joy have missed one of the choicest delights that a believer can know this side heaven. (*Ibid.*) *Joy of realisation* :—Dickens describes how he dropped his first published paper stealthily one evening at twilight, with fear and trembling, into a dark letter-box up a dark court in Fleet Street: and his agitation when it appeared in all the glory of print. "On which occasion I walked down to Westminster Hall, and turned into it for half an hour, because my eyes were so dimmed with joy and pride, that they could not bear the street, and were not fit to be seen there." (*H. O. Mackey.*)

Ver. 4. For Thou hast broken the yoke of his burden.—*Deliverance from the burden of sin* :—I. SIN IS A BURDEN (Psa. xxxviii. 4). Sinners are heavy laden with this insupportable load, which detains them from God, who alone can relieve them; enfeebles their minds; and harasses them with perplexing fears, and the most uneasy reflections. A proper sense of its powerful influence, its polluting nature and dreadful guilt, like a crushing weight, depresses the spirit, becomes irksome and grievous, and if not happily removed, will prove the means of irremediable ruin. II. THE CEREMONIAL LAW IS THE YOKE OF THIS BURDEN (Acts xv. 10). III. IMMANUEL HAS BROKEN THE YOKE (Col. ii. 14). (*R. Macculloch.*) *The Gospel a liberating power* :—1. The design of the Gospel, and the grace of it, is to break the yoke of sin and Satan, to remove the burthen of guilt and corruption, and to free us from the rod of those oppressors, that we might be brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 2. This is done by the Spirit working like fire (ver. 5). It is done as in the day of Midian, by a work of God upon the hearts of men. Christ is our Gideon. (*M. Henry.*) *Encouragement from the past* :—If God makes former deliverances His patterns in working for us, we ought to make them our encouragements to hope in Him. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 5. For every battle of the warrior.—*Significance of verse 5* :—The verse is more noteworthy for its connection than for its contents. As it stands it suggests a not very vivid contrast between two sorts of battle, which contributes nothing to the progress of the prophet's thought as well as quite misrepresents the original. The true rendering, according to all interpreters, is substantially this: "For all the armour of the armed man in the onset, and the garments rolled in blood, shall be for burning, shall be the food of fire." Thus understood, the verse admirably concludes the picture of prosperity given in the previous context by declaring that even the implements of warfare and the blood-stained clothing they cause shall be utterly consumed. Thus considered, the passage appropriately introduces the famous Messianic prophecy that follows: "For unto us a Child is born," &c. Such a wondrous triumph of peace can be adequately explained only by the appearance of One whose name is Wonderful. (*T. W. Chambers, D.D.*) *Destroying weapons of war* :—After the suppression of the Sepoy revolt, the British Government spent a week in melting down the vast array of weapons of all sorts accumulated by the disarming of a large portion of the people of Northern India. (*Ibid.*) *Burning implements of war* :—The prophet foretells a time when out of these wars and tumults there should come a period of deep peace, when these warlike

implements should be burnt to ashes, according to the practice of ancient times which heaped sword, spear and armour as on a huge funeral pile, when the victory was won, to proclaim that the strife was over, that the chariots were burnt with fire, and the spears broken asunder. And he saw that this peace would come, because within his own time or hereafter—he knew not clearly which—a Son, a King, should be born, who would be the Prince of Peace, the founder of a new and eternal kingdom, clothed with a majesty which should put to silence the contentions of men, and with a power which should compress and unite the most divergent elements. (*Dean Stanley.*) *The accoutrements of the warrior only fuel for the fire*:—It has been submitted that a better rendering is this: “Every boot of the warrior that tramps noisily and the cloak rolled in blood shall be for burning as fuel for fire.” The soldier wears his tall boot, and as his foot comes down on the earth he makes it ring again: and hearing an army pass by who could suppose that the earth will survive the cruel tramp? Religious inspiration lifts men so high as to enable them to despise the pomp and circumstance of war: every boot of the warrior that tramps noisily, and the cloak rolled in blood which men would gather up and preserve in museums, and show to admiring ages, shall be gathered up by the hand of time and thrust into the middle of the hottest fire. All such relics were made for burning. In our patriotic folly, our exuberant and intoxicated zeal, we gather the boots of warriors and the cloaks of conquerors, and the tattered banners of famous fields, and all but worship them: underneath the whole pile should be written, “These are for burning as fuel for fire.” (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Vers. 6, 7. *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.*—The “child” *Hezekiah*—yet some one else:—I am unable to form any distinct notion of Isaiah as a man and a Hebrew, and as a prophet of Jehovah in contrast with those muttering wizards he denounces, without supposing that, at this period of his life and ministry, he must have connected the thought of “the child” with Hezekiah, on whom the name of the Mighty God had been actually named (“Hezekiah” means “Jehovah strengthens”), and who (being now a boy nine or ten years old) may already have given promise of the piety which afterwards distinguished him: and that he would not, at this time, have considered that his prediction would be quite inadequately realised if the youthful prince should, on his accession to the throne of David and Solomon, renew the glories of their reigns, in which peace and justice were established at home and abroad, through trust in Jehovah and His covenant:—reigns of which the historical facts must be studied in the light which the Book of Psalms and such passages as 2 Chron. ix. 1-8 throw on them. I say at this time, because we shall have occasion to inquire what was the effect on Isaiah’s mind when he did see a restoration under Hezekiah of such a reign of righteousness and prosperity; and whether his expectation of the Messiah did not eventually assume a very different form from what could have been possible to him at the time we now speak of. There is a method through this whole Book of Isaiah’s prophecies which reflects a corresponding progress in the prophet’s own mind; and this method offers us a clue through difficulties which are otherwise impassable, if we will only hold it fast and follow its guidance fairly. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *A prediction of an ideal king*:—Such language speaks of an ideal king, even a Divine ruler, and only in a very poor degree found its fulfilment in Hezekiah or any Jewish king. (*B. Blake, B.D.*) *The way that led to Christ*:—In the crooked alleys of Venice, there is a thin thread of red stone inlaid in the pavement or wall, which guides through all the devious turnings to the Piazza in the centre, where the great church stands. So in reading the Old Testament we see in the life of many a personage, illustrious or obscure, and in many a far-off event, the red line of promise and prophecy which stretches on unbroken until the Son of Man came. (*Sunday School Chronicle.*) *The Messianic prophecies*:—Dr. Gordon, of Boston, had a large dissected “puzzle map,” which he gave to his children, saying, “Don’t press the parts into their places; you will soon know when they fit.” Coming again into the room, very soon after, he was surprised to find the map complete. He felt like saying, as Isaac to Jacob, when the latter returned with the venison, “How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son?” “Why, father,” was the reply, “there was a man printed on the back; we saw where the feet, the eyes, the arms, and the rest of the body came, and so it was easy to watch it and fit all in.” So, if we know the Bible, we see “the Man on the back”;

we put together the prophecies of the Old Testament by "the Man Christ Jesus." (*A. T. Pierson, D.D.*) *The prophet's supernatural prevision*:—It is not necessary to suppose that the prophet knew the literal meaning of his own words. He is but a poor preacher who knows all that he has said in his sermon. Had the prophet done so, he would be no longer the contemporary of his own epoch. It is the glory of prophecy to feel after. It is the glory of science to say long before the planet is discovered—there is another world there: no telescope has seen it, no message of light has been received from it consciously, but keep your telescope in that direction, there must be a starry pulse just there. The botanist knows that if he finds a certain plant in a given locality there will be another plant of another name not a mile away. He judges from one plant to another; he submits himself to inferential logic: he has not seen that other plant, but he tells you in the morning that because yesternight he found this leaf growing not far from the house in which he resides he will find another leaf of a similar pattern, or a diverse pattern, not far away; and at night he comes home, radiant as the evening star, and says, Behold, I told you this morning what would be the case, and there it is. So with the larger astronomy, and the larger botany: there is another planet somewhere yonder; when it is discovered call it the Morning Star, and inasmuch as there is triacle, treacle, in Gilead—a balm there—there shall be found another plant not far away; when you find it call it by some sweet name, such as the Rose of Sharon, or the Lily of the valley. It is the glory of the prophet to see signs which have infinite meanings—to see the harvest in the seed, the noonday in the faintest tint of dawn, the mighty man in the helpless infant, the Socrates in the embryo. This prevision made the prophets seemingly mad. Their knowledge was to them but a prison, so small, so dark, yet now and again almost alive with a glory all but revealed. The horizon was loaded with gloom, yet here and there a rent showed that heaven was immediately behind, and might at any moment make the dark cold earth bright and warm with eternal summer. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The great Deliverer*:—Look at the Deliverer as seen by the prophet—"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called —," Now, the English punctuation seems to fritter away the dignity of the appellation. The compound name really falls into this classification: first, Wonderful-Counsellor, as one word, as if, indeed, it were but one syllable; second, God-the-Mighty-One, not four words, but hyphenated together; third, Father-of-Eternity, also hyphenated and consolidated; fourth, Prince-of-Peace, that likewise an instance of the words run into one another, and in this fourfold classification we have the mysterious name of the Deliverer. This is no evidence that Isaiah saw the birth of Christ as we understand that term, but what he did see was that the only deliverer who could accomplish the necessary work must fill out the whole measure of these terms; if he failed to fill out that outline, he was not the predicted Messiah. Let us see. 1. He must fill the imagination—"Wonderful." Imagination cannot be safely left out of any religion; it is that wondrous faculty that flies to great heights, and is not afraid of infinite breadths; the faculty, so to say, that lies at the back of all other faculties, sums them up, and then adds an element of its own, using the consolidated mind for the highest purposes of vision and understanding. Is this name given for the first time? Where do we find the word "Wonderful" in the Scriptures? We may not, perhaps, find it in the English tongue, but it is really to be found in Judg. xiii. 18: The angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, "Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?"—the same Hebrew word that is rendered in the text "Wonderful"; so we might read, "The angel of the Lord said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is Wonderful?" 2. He must satisfy the judgment. His name, therefore, is not only Wonderful, but "Counsellor," the fountain of wisdom and understanding, the mind that rules over all things with perfectness of mastery, that attests everything by the eternal meridian, and that looks for righteousness. 3. He must also satisfy the religious instinct, so He is called "The Mighty God." It is not enough to describe God without epithetic terms. Sometimes we say, Why utter such words as, Thou infinite, eternal, ever-blessed God? Because we are so constituted in this infantile state of being that we need a ladder of adjectives to get up to our little conception of that which is inconceivable. 4. Not only so, there must be in this man a sense of brotherhood, so He is called "The-Prince-of-Peace." He will bring man to man, nation to nation; He will arbitrate amongst the empires of the earth and rule by the Sabbath spirit.

Christianity is peace. 5. He is to be more still. He is to be "The Everlasting Father," otherwise translated, The Father of Eternity; otherwise, and better translated, The Father of the age to come. Therein we have misinterpreted Christianity. We have been too anxious to understand the past. The pulpit has had a backward aspect—most careful about what happened in the second century, dying to know what Tertullian thought and what Constantine did. Christ is the Father of the age to come. If He lived now He would handle the question of poverty; He would discuss the great uses of Parliament; He would address Himself to every church, chapel, and sanctuary in the kingdom; He would come into our various sanctuaries and turn us out to a man. Christianity is the prophetic religion. It deals with the science that is to be, with the politics yet to be developed, with the commerce that is yet to be the bread-producing action of civilised life. (*Ibid.*) *The birth of Christ*:—I. LET US EXPLAIN THE PREDICTION. The grandeur of the titles sufficiently determines the meaning of the prophet; for to whom, except to the Messiah, can these appellations belong? This natural sense of the text is supported by the authority of an inspired writer, and what is, if not of any great weight in point of argument, at least very singular as a historical fact, it is supported by the authority of an angel (Matt. iv. 12, &c.; Luke i. 31, &c.). To remove the present fears of the Jews, God reminds them of the wonders of His love, which He had promised to display in favour of His Church in ages to come; and commands His prophet to say to them: Ye trembling leaves of the wood, shaken with every wind, peace be to you! Ye timorous Jews, cease your fears! let not the greatness of this temporal deliverance, which I now promise you, excite your doubts! God hath favours incomparably greater in store for you, they shall be your guarantees for those which ye are afraid to expect. Ye are in covenant with God. Ye have a right to expect those displays of His love in your favour, which are least credible. Remember the blessed seed, which He promised to your ancestors (Gen. xxii. 18). "Behold! a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and call His name Immanuel" (Isa. vii. 14). The spirit of prophecy that animates me, enables me to penetrate through all the ages that separate the present moment from that in which the promise shall be fulfilled. I dare speak of a miracle, which will be wrought eight hundred years hence, as if it had been wrought to-day, "Unto us a Child is born," &c.

II. LET US SHOW ITS ACCOMPLISHMENT. Who is a king? What is a throne? Why have we masters? Why is sovereign power lodged in a few hands? And what determines mankind to lay aside their independence, and to lose their beloved liberty? The whole implies some mortifying truths. We have not knowledge sufficient to guide ourselves, and we need minds wiser than our own to inspect and to direct our conduct. We are indigent, and superior beings must supply our wants. We have enemies, and we must have guardians to protect us. Miserable men! how have you been deceived in your expectations? what disorders could anarchy have produced greater than those which have sometimes proceeded from sovereign authority? You sought guides to direct you: but you have sometimes fallen under the tuition of men who, far from being able to conduct a whole people, knew not how to guide themselves. You sought nursing fathers, to succour you in your indigence: but you have fallen sometimes into the hands of men, who had no other designs than to impoverish their people, to enrich themselves with the substance, and to fatten themselves with the blood of their subjects. You sought guardians to protect you from your enemies: but you have sometimes found executioners, who have used you with greater barbarity than your most bloody enemies would have done. Show me a king who will conduct me to the felicity to which I aspire; such a king I long to obey. Such a king is the King Messiah. You want knowledge: He is the Counsellor. You want reconciliation with God: He is the Prince of Peace. You need support under the calamities of this life: He is the Mighty God. You have need of one to comfort you under the fears of death, by opening the gates of eternal felicity to you: He is the Father of Eternity. (*J. Saurin.*) *Titles of Christ*:—I. THE NAMES AND TITLES OF THIS WONDERFUL CHILD. II. FOR WHOM HE WAS BORN.

III. THE PREROGATIVE, WHICH IS PREDICTED IN OUR TEXT RESPECTING THIS CHILD, namely, that the government shall be upon His shoulder. 1. In the Revelation the Church is figuratively represented under the similitude of a woman, and this woman is represented as bringing forth a man-child, who should rule all nations with a rod of iron. The same may be said of the Child whose birth is foretold in our text. All power is committed to Him in heaven and on

earth; and God's language respecting Him is, I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion. This kingdom, which is usually styled Christ's mediatorial kingdom, includes all beings in heaven and hell, who will all, either willingly or by constraint, finally submit to Christ; for God has sworn by Himself that to Christ every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things in the earth and things under the earth; and that every tongue shall confess Him Lord. He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. Agreeably, our text informs us, that of the increase of His government there will be no end. He will go on conquering and to conquer.

2. But in addition to this mediatorial kingdom of Christ, which is set up in the world, He has another kingdom, the kingdom of His grace, which is set up in the hearts of His people. This kingdom consists in righteousness and peace and holy joy, and of the increase of this kingdom also and of the peace which accompanies it, there shall be no end. This kingdom is compared to leaven hid in meal till the whole be leavened. Even in heaven there shall be no end to the increase of His people's happiness. Thus of the increase of His government and peace, there shall be no end. (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *Christ presented to mankind-sinners*.—It is "to us," the sons and daughters of Adam; we are His poor relations; and to us as His poor relations on earth, sons of Adam's family, whereof He is the top-branch, this Child is presented born, for our comfort in our low state.

I. WHAT IS PRE-SUPPOSED IN THIS PRESENTING OF CHRIST AS A BORN CHILD. 1. His birth was expected and looked for. 2. Christ is now born. He was really born; a little Child, though the Mighty God; an Infant, not one day old, though the Everlasting Father. 3. Some have been employed to present this Child to the friends and relations; and they are still about the work. (1) The Holy Spirit. (2) Ministers. 4. This Child is actually presented to us on His birth.

II. TO WHOM IS CHRIST PRESENTED? 1. Not to the fallen angels. 2. To mankind-sinners, those of the house of His father Adam. (1) Embrace Him, with old Simeon, in the arms of faith. (2) Kiss the Son, receiving Him as your Lord and King and God. III. HOW IS CHRIST PRESENTED? 1. In the preaching of the Gospel. 2. In the administration of the sacraments. 3. In the internal work of saving illumination. IV. WHAT IS THE IMPORT OF HIS BEING PRESENTED TO US? 1. Our special concern in His birth—as the birth of a Saviour to us. 2. Our relation to Him. Sinners of mankind have a common relation to Christ. (1) In respect of the nature He assumed. "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph. v. 30). (2) In respect of His office—the Saviour of the world. 3. An owning of our relation to Him. "He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. ii. 11). 4. The comfortableness of His birth to us. Children are presented on their birth to their relations, for their comfort; and so is Christ to sinners of mankind. V. WHEREFORE IS CHRIST PRESENTED TO US ON HIS BIRTH? 1. That we may see the faithfulness of God in the fulfilling of His promise. 2. That we may rejoice in Him. 3. That we may look on Him, see His glory, and be taken with Him (John i. 14). 4. That we may acknowledge Him in the character in which He appears as the Saviour of the world and our Saviour. (*T. Boston.*) *A prophecy of Christ*.—I. WE SHALL VIEW THESE PROPHETIC APPELLATIONS, IN THEIR APPLICATION TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AS EXPOUNDING TO US HIS NATURE AND WORK, AND RECEIVING THEIR FULLEST REALISATION IN HIM. They are not mere empty names, assumed for the purposes of pomp and impression, but appropriate descriptions of living realities. When it is said, "His name shall be called," the meaning is that He shall be such, for in the Hebrew language "to be called" and "to be" frequently mean the same thing. Every name He bears is the Divine exponent of a corresponding attribute, or office, or work, and so it is here. 1. He is the Wonderful. The proper idea conveyed by this appellation is something miraculous, and it means that the great Personage to whom it is here applied, in His nature and works, would be distinguished by supernatural qualities and deeds, would be raised above the ordinary course and laws of nature, and would stand out before angels and men as a unique and splendid miracle. In this sense, it applies with great force and accuracy to the Redeemer, and to Him alone. 2. He is the Counsellor. (1) This appellation points to Christ, not as a Counsellor among others, but as Counsellor, Counsellor in the abstract, the great Counsellor of the vast universe, one of the glorious persons in the Godhead, who was concerned in all the acts and counsels of past eternity. Hence the Septuagint translates it, "the Angel of the mighty counsel"; and the Chaldee, "the God of the wonderful counsel." (2) As "the Counsellor," He directs and instructs His people in all their temporal, spiritual,

and eternal concerns; if He did not do so, they would soon be involved in disorder and ruin. (3) And He is "the Counsellor," inasmuch as He is the Advocate of His people, and has carried their cause into the high court of heaven. 3. He is "the Mighty God"; an appellation impressively sublime, which no serious mind can approach without feeling the most profound reverence and awe. It naturally and obviously denotes a person possessing a Divine nature. 4. He is "the Everlasting Father," or, "the Father of Eternity." The emphasis of this appellation is not on the word "father," but on the word "eternity." It was customary among those who spoke and wrote the Hebrew language, to call a person who possessed a thing, the "father" of it: hence, a strong man was called "the father of strength"; a wise man, "the father of wisdom"; a wealthy man, "the father of riches"; and so on. Now, the phrase, "the Father of Eternity," seems to be here applied to Christ in a similar way—He possessed eternity, and, therefore, He is called the Father of it. It is a Hebraism of great poetic strength and beauty, employed to express duration—the duration of His being—the essential eternity of His existence past and future—and, perhaps, there could not be a more emphatic declaration of His right to this wonderful attribute of the Deity, a strict, proper, and independent eternity of being. 5. He is the "Prince of Peace." This appellation seems intended to teach us, that the Messiah would be invested with the prerogatives and honours of royalty, and that His kingdom, in its essential laws and principles, would differ from all the kingdoms of men, past, present, and future. While other kings were despots and warriors, He would be a peaceable Prince. While other kingdoms were acquired by physical violence and force, and were cemented with human tears and blood, His would consist in righteousness, peace, and joy, and would win its way among men by the inherent power of its own excellence, would gradually terminate war and conflict, and restore love and order to the whole earth. But His reign was to achieve higher ends still, for it was to establish peace between man and his own conscience, between man and all good beings, between man and all the physical and moral laws of the universe, and between man and his insulted and offended Maker. Hence, prophecy foretold that, in His days there should be abundance of peace; that, in His reign, justice and mercy should meet together, righteousness and peace should embrace each other; that the chastisement of our peace should be on Him; that He should be the peace; and that, of the increase of His peace there should be no end. II. PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. Hold fast the divinity of Christ. 2. How great is the sin and how fearful is the condition of those who reject the Saviour. He is "the Wonderful"—the admired of God, of angels, and of saints; and yet He has no attractions for you. He is "the Counsellor"; and yet you never "wait for His counsel," but follow your own vain imaginations. He is "the Mighty God"; and yet you trample on His authority, defy His power, and risk His awful displeasure. He is "the Father of Eternity"; and yet you seek no place in His heavenly family, and are in imminent danger of being forever banished from His presence, and the glory of His power. He is "the Prince of Peace"; and yet you voluntarily live in a state of hostility to Him and His kingdom, and refuse to be reconciled by the blood of His Cross. 3. How secure and happy is the state of believers. (*W. Gregory.*) *The names and titles of the Messiah*:—I. The first description that is here given of the Redeemer is in these words—UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN. This may denote either the infancy of His state, when He appeared in our world, or the reality of His human nature. 1. With regard to the infancy of His state, the apostle says, it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren. 2. With regard to the reality of His human nature, the Scripture assures us, that it was of the same kind with ours, consisting of a human body and a human soul. II. The next description of our Redeemer is in these words—UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN. This is spoken of His Divine nature. He is often called in Scripture the Son of God, His own Son, His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, and as such is said to be given to us. A son always means one, not of an inferior, but of the same nature as his father. III. It is added, THE GOVERNMENT SHALL BE UPON HIS SHOULDER. Taken in its most extensive sense, the government of our Lord extends over all. The whole universe is under His dominion. But what we are chiefly to understand here is the kingdom of grace, the administration of mercy, the government of which in a peculiar manner is intrusted to Him. The kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven were phrases familiar to the Jews, by which they always understood the Messiah's kingdom. The immediate design of erecting this king-



dom on earth is the salvation of believers, of the guilty race of men. All parts of the universe are concerned in this glorious design. The angels of heaven rejoice in it, and are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation. The powers of darkness unite their force to disappoint the hopes of the heirs of this kingdom, but in vain; the King of Zion has bound them in chains of darkness, and will turn their malicious designs to their greater condemnation. All men do not indeed submit to the laws of this government, but all are nevertheless the lawful subjects of it. But the Redeemer has also many voluntary subjects. The right of Jesus to His mediatorial kingdom is founded upon promise, conquest, and purchase, even the price of His own precious blood; and we have the utmost assurances in His Word, which cannot fail, that He will one day take to Himself His great power and reign in a more illustrious and extensive manner than He has yet done. IV. The next thing asserted of the Redeemer is, **HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED WONDERFUL**. And the Redeemer is indeed Wonderful. 1. In the constitution of His person, as Immanuel, God in our nature. 2. The preparations for His birth, and the manner and circumstances of it, were also wonderful. 3. Jesus was also wonderful in His life. 4. And in His death. 5. And in His rising from the grave, and in His ascension to heaven. V. The next title which the Redeemer has, is that of **COUNSELLOR**. He is fully instructed in the counsels of God the Father, for He lay in His bosom from eternity; and as the execution of the plans of the Divine administration is committed to Him, He cannot but be well acquainted with them. Besides, our Lord, by His office and appointment, is the great Counsellor or Prophet of the Church. VI. He is also **THE MIGHTY GOD**. The same expression is used in chap. x. 21 concerning Jehovah, the God of Israel. All the perfections of the Mighty God are ascribed to the Redeemer in Scripture. And worship, which only belongs to the Mighty God, is given to Christ. VII. The next thing asserted of our Redeemer is, that He is **THE EVER-LASTING FATHER**. The LXX. renders these words, the Father of the world to come, or final dispensation of mercy and grace, as the Gospel is often called. And Christ may be called so—1. As He has chosen His people, in His eternal purpose, that they might be sharers in His bliss and glory. 2. Christ is the Father of all true believers, in a spiritual sense. They are all His spiritual seed. The great outlines of His features are drawn upon them, and when they arrive at heaven, they shall attain to the likeness of Jesus in an eminent degree. VIII. The last thing asserted of the Redeemer is, that He is **THE PRINCE OF PEACE**. Melchisedec was an eminent type of the Son of God, in this respect. He was King of Salem, which is by interpretation, King of Peace. And peace is the disposition for which the Saviour was renowned; the blessing which He died to purchase, and lives to bestow. Conclusion: 1. What an honour did the great and mighty God, our Saviour, put upon our nature by taking it into a personal union with His own Divine nature! 2. We may see from hence, how well the Redeemer was qualified for His office. What arm so powerful to save as that of the Mighty God? 3. What a fund of consolation does this passage of Scripture exhibit! 4. This subject speaks terror to the wicked. 5. We ought to entertain adoring and admiring thoughts of the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. (*J. Ross, D.D.*)

*The Incarnation*.—I. We are led to inquire, **HOW OUR SAVIOUR BECAME INCARNATE AND TOOK OUR MORTAL NATURE UPON HIM**. Before Christ could become incarnate, He would have to lay aside His glory—the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. Having laid aside His glory, Christ took a human soul, took our humanity upon Him, together with our form, and was made in the likeness of man. Nevertheless, Christ is not, and was not, two persons, but one. II. We have now to inquire **WHY CHRIST BECAME INCARNATE**. To say that Christ died to save sinners is true enough, but it is not the whole truth. The question we have to answer is this: Why Christ became a man? He came to save, but why not in another form? 1. To take away the consequences of the fall, to raise man to a higher estate even than he originally possessed, to save him from eternal ruin, and vindicate the love and wisdom which made man originally righteous, but not immaculate or impeccable, it was necessary for the Son of God to become the Son of Man, and to acknowledge a human parent; to “bear our griefs and carry our sorrows” (Heb. ii. 9–18). For only as a man could He undo the evil which man had brought upon himself; only as one of those He came to save, could Christ perform what man had left undone. 2. Moreover, Christ came to fulfil God’s law, and that for us, though not to supersede our obedience. That law was designed for man, and alone in the form of man

could Christ obey it. And having fulfilled His own broken law on their behalf to whom He had given it, He is enabled to help them to observe and do it. By His perfect obedience He has become our Pattern, and has procured and purchased for us the strength to enable us to walk in the steps of His most holy life. 3. In the next place, by assuming our nature, Christ is enabled to sympathise with us. 4. Again, it was necessary for Christ to become man in order to reveal His Father to us. Men, untaught by the Spirit of God, are apt to think that God is altogether such as themselves. Such we find was the case with the heathen philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome; if they taught otherwise, they taught in vain. 5. Christ also became man to make us love God, for to know Him is to love Him. 6. Christ became man to unite man to God. (*G. E. Watkins.*)

*The Child born: the Son given.*—I. THE PROMISED SAVIOUR IS DESCRIBED IN HIS HUMAN NATURE. "Unto us a Child is born." Having respect to the connection of the passage, and to the object for which the announcement is made, we feel that it is impossible to look on at the birth of this Child that was predicted, without seeing that a greater than one born of woman is there. 1. Still the main object of the first clause of the verse is, undoubtedly, to show forth that human nature in which He was to be manifested in order that He might do the work of salvation for His people. To be born is as truly the evidence and characteristic of humanity as to die. Not less in the simple but impressive fact of His birth of a human mother, than in the fact of His dying a human death, do we recognise the proof of our oneness with the Son of God in the same nature. 2. And why was it necessary for the hope and consolation of those whom He came to redeem, that they should be taught by the prophet that the Redeemer must be one with them in their very nature; and that the Eternal Son of God should be born of a woman? (1) It was necessary that the Son of God should be made man, because otherwise He could not have stood in man's place and dealt with God on man's behalf, nor suffered and died, as it was needful to suffer and die, in order to offer a true atonement for human guilt. (2) It was necessary that the Son of God should become man in order that He might be qualified to enter into our human feelings and fears, and to furnish us with a pledge of His sympathy in all our infirmities and temptations. II. We find the prophet in the second clause making reference to THE DIVINE NATURE OF CHRIST. "Unto us a Son is given." And this view of the Person of Christ, as the Son of God as well as the Son of man, is not less necessary than the truth of His proper humanity to furnish a ground of hope and consolation to the Church of God in coming to Him as a suitable and all-sufficient Redeemer. III. But passing from the description of Christ's Person, the prophet next proceeds to give an account of the OFFICE WHICH BELONGS TO HIM, and which He executes as the Saviour. "The government shall be upon His shoulder." Borrowing its language from ancient customs, it is quite plain that the statement of the prophet contains in substance a declaration that the predicted Deliverer, whose advent was to shed light and blessedness on those who sat in darkness and the shadow of death, was to exercise a supreme and unlimited authority, and to employ this authority for accomplishing the great purpose for which He was born as a Child and given as a Son. 1. In the case of believers—i.e., of those who are already subjects of Christ's kingdom—it is a blessed privilege for them to be assured that He reigns, alone and supreme, in the world and the Church. 2. On the other hand, in the case of mere nominal professors, such a truth, if in any degree realised, is fitted to fill them with anxiety and dispeace. (*J. Bannerman, D.D.*)

*The predicted names of Christ.*—In interpreting the peculiar language employed, it is impossible to enter into its true significance without remembering that in ancient times, and more especially in the practice of the Jews, names had oftentimes, when applied to individuals, a significance which they have not when given, as among ourselves, upon no principle except family custom or personal preference. Among the Jews especially, they were often selected and given on the ground of some peculiarity in the circumstances or character of the person named; so that they ceased to be empty and arbitrary signs of the parties thus designated, and became truly descriptive of something in their history or condition. It is in this way that the name of God Himself is used as a synonym for the character of God (*Exod. xxxiii. 21, xxxiv. 5-7; Prov. xviii. 10*). And it is in this way, undoubtedly, that we are to understand the language of the prophet when he tells us, in reference to the coming Deliverer, that "His name shall be called, Wonderful," &c. (*Ibid.*)

*The great Deliverer.*—I. THE DIGNITY OF CHRIST'S PERSON. He is

the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God. II. THE DEPTH OF HIS LOVE. He is born unto us a Child—given unto us a Son. III. THE SUCCESS OF HIS UNDERTAKING. He is become the Father of the everlasting age—the Prince of Peace. IV. HIS TITLE TO OUR OBEDIENCE. The government is on His shoulder. (*G. Innes.*) *The nativity of Christ*:—I. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF MESSIAH'S BIRTH by the prophet. 1. The Person announced. 2. The terms of the announcement. Not for angel, nor for archangel, was the mighty scheme devised; it is for the human race—for man though rebel of his God; for man ruined and desolated by sin. 3. The confidence with which this announcement is made, as immediately taking place. "To us a Child *is* born; to us a Son *is* given." Faith pierces the vista of time, and beholds events, anticipated hundreds of years before, the birth of that glorious Redeemer who was slain from the foundation of the world; which had been promised by the word and oath of Jehovah Himself; and who, therefore, in the fulness of time should assuredly be granted. II. THE OFFICE AND THE TITLES WHICH THE SAVIOUR SHOULD ASSUME. (*D. Wilson, M.A.*) *The child Jesus*:—I. HIS INCARNATION. II. HIS EMPIRE. III. HIS NAMES. (*W. Jay.*) *The message of hope*:—To us, as we begin to wonder whether the entire movement of human life is not by some evil inspiration gone after a false scent, taken some terrible misdirection, shut itself up in a blind path that arrives at no goal and has no outway; to us, so heavily laden and so entangled, so fondly hoping; to us, as we walk on still in darkness and seem entering the very shadow of death; to us this Child is born, to us a Son is given,—a Child who shall be the issue, the justification, the consummation of all the long and weary story; a Son who is Himself the goal of our pilgrimage, the fulfilment of our imperfections, the crown of our endurance, the honour of our service, the glory of our building. There, in this Son of God, is an offer made by God, by which He will justify all suffering, retrieve all failure, redeem all fault; He gives us, in Him, an end for which to live. Here is His mind; here is His plan for us—for us, not only in our simple individual troubles and worries, but for us in the mass, as a race, as a society, as a civilisation. God has a scheme, an issue prepared for which He worketh hitherto, and that issue is His Son. In Him all will be gathered in and fulfilled, and "the government shall be upon His shoulder," "of His kingdom there shall be no end," "His name shall be called Wonderful, the Mighty Counsellor, the Prince of Peace." And in the power of this message we are told not to faint or fail. (*Canon H. Scott-Holland.*) *A Christmas question*:—The principal object is to bring out the force of those two little words, "unto us." I. IS IT SO? 1. If this Child is born to you, then you are born again. "But," saith one, "how am I to know whether I am born again or not?" (1) Has there been a change effected by Divine grace within you? (2) Has there been a change in you in the exterior? (3) The very root and principle of thy life must become totally new. 2. If this Child is born to you, you are a child; and the question arises, are you so? Man grows from childhood up to manhood naturally; in grace men grow from manhood down to childhood, and the nearer we come to true childhood, the nearer we come to the image of Christ. 3. If this Son is given to you, you are a son yourself. 4. If unto us a Son is given, then we are given to the Son. Are you given up to Christ? II. IF IT IS SO, WHAT THEN? If it is so, why am I doubtful to-day? Why are we sad? Why are our hearts so cold? III. IF IT IS NOT SO, WHAT THEN? 1. Confess thy sins. 2. Renounce thyself. 3. Go to the place where Jesus died in agony. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ the Revealer of God and the Asserter of man*:—I. Christ took to Himself human flesh to furnish us with an EXHIBITION OF THE MORAL CHARACTER OF GOD. II. The incarnation of Jesus is also a STUPENDOUS DISCOVERY OF WHAT MAN IS IN HIS HEAVENLY IDEAL AND HIS MORAL DESTINY. (*A. MacLennan, M.A.*) "Unto us":—As if Heaven would underline the words to catch the eye, as if it were the keynote of its love, and should be the keynote of our song of praise, the words are twice repeated—"Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." (*Ibid.*) *The nativity*:—I. THE SUBJECT OR MATTER OF THE BLESSING. "A Child," "a Son." II. THE MANNER OF ITS CONVEYANCE. "Born," "given." III. OUR INTEREST IN IT. "Unto us," in our behalf all this, and to our benefit and advantage. (*A. Littleton, D.D.*) *Redemption from within humanity*:—This promise of a Deliverer has lit up the march of all human generations; it has been the fountain of the fairest gleams which have crossed the darkness of the heathen world. And it is out of the bosom of Humanity that the Redeemer must be born—the Christ must be the human Child. The

essential point lies here—redemption is not a process wrought by the right hand of power, so to speak, from without; the act of a Being of almighty power, who, seeing man in desperate extremity through sin and frustrating utterly the purposes and preparations of Heaven, stooped to lay hold on him, to lift him out of the abyss in which he was sinking, and to place him by a sovereign act on a foundation where he might rest in safety, and work and grow. It is from within the bosom of humanity that the redemption is to be wrought which is to save humanity. It is by the outward and upward pressure of a life which is truly and fully human, which has buried its Divine force in the very heart's core of our nature, and is "bone of our bones, and flesh of our flesh," that man is to be lifted to the levels which are above the sphere of tears and death for ever. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*) *Christ's birthday* has been a day through all ages so solemn and sacred, that Justin Martyr, a father and saint of the second century, calls it *ἡ βασίλισσα ἡμερα*, the Queen-day in the calendar. We do not owe this solemnity then to the rubric of the Roman Church. (*A. Littleton, D.D.*) *The need for the incarnation*:—Man can suffer, but he cannot satisfy; God can satisfy, but He cannot suffer; but Christ, being both God and man, can both suffer and satisfy too; and so is perfectly fit both to suffer for man and to make satisfaction unto God—to reconcile God to man, and man to God. (*Bishop Beveridge.*) *Human redemption by the Divine man*:—The humanisation of God is the divinisation of man. (*Novalis.*) *The preparation of the world for Christ*:—A few generations before the Advent the word would have been meaningless. Jew and Gentile, Greek and Barbarian, freeman and slave, were terms full of meaning; but "man," what could that mean? Even Aristotle found it hard to discover a common term which would cover the life of the freeman and the slave. But as the hour of the Advent, "the fulness of the time," approached, through a very wonderful chain of agencies and influences, in the linking together of which the Hand which guided the culture of the Jewish people to the fulfilment of the primal promise is very palpably manifest, the idea of a common human nature, with common attributes, common sympathies, needs, and interests, and capable of a common life, the life of the universal human society, began to haunt the minds of men. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*) *The world into which Christ was born*:—Here are two very distinct features of human development during the ages which preceded the Advent of the Lord. Men were feeling after the ground and the conditions of a universal human society; and they were searching for the basis and the law of personal conduct, as beings endowed with moral and intellectual faculties which might be a rich blessing or a terrible curse to them and to mankind. To this point humanity had progressed, moved from within, led from on High. Was the higher progress possible to heathen society? Was there power in heathenism to lift man into this sphere of universal brotherhood, and to expound the mystery of his being and destiny? None, absolutely none. Heathen society, with all its brilliant civilisation, was utterly, hopelessly exhausted. The Lord was born into a world of wreck. But for Christ all must have perished. The world which the Lord came to save was groaning beneath the wrecks of most of the most hopeful political, philosophical, and religious efforts and achievements of mankind. And yet there had been splendid progress. Man's life was enlarged in every direction but the highest. (*Ibid.*) *Christ the Revealer of God*:—"Seek fellowship with Zeus," cried Epictetus, in a last, eager, desperate appeal. Alas! it was the Zeus that was wanting; and to find Him Epictetus must pass on his disciples to a higher school. There was a yearning for God, for personal fellowship with God, for personal likeness to God, unknown to the older ages; marking a grand advance in the aspiration and effort of the noblest and most far-seeing spirits. "But who is the Zeus, the god of whom you talk, that I may believe on Him," was the cry which grew more hopeless and agonising generation by generation; to which tradition had no answer, to which philosophy had no answer, to which religion had no answer; to which no answer was possible until One stood on the earth and said, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." Then man began to look up and live. (*Ibid.*) *Christ the new life of humanity*:—When that Child was born to humanity, when that Son took His place by its hearth-fire, a new life entered into the world. That age of the Advent is very manifestly the age in which some transcendently stimulating, quickening influence penetrated the life of men, and began to make all things new. Faster than the old civilisation decayed, the new power reorganised and restored. (*Ibid.*)

*Important births* :—Now and then a birth occurs of such momentous portent to man, that men are constrained by the influences which proceed from it to fix it in memory, and give to its anniversary fitting commemoration. There are births which are like the introduction of new forces and energies into human society, which pour the current of their power down through the ages with ever-widening and deepening volume. When Confucius was born, half of the human race had a father and a teacher given them. When Moses was born, not only a few millions of slaves found a deliverer, but the great underlying, eternal principles of morality and piety found a spokesman. With Socrates, Greece had given to her the opportunity of goodness. With Cæsar came into human history the embodiment of ambition. The birth of Wilberforce was the beginning of a philanthropic education to Christendom. Howard demonstrated that the extremest feelings of a kindly humanity were practical and serviceable to society. With Washington came to mankind the ideal of unselfish patriotism; while Lincoln embodied the first century of the American Republic. These were noted men, extraordinary beings; and the names of these are all memorable. Their names have passed into history, and remain as certainly fixed as the stars beaming in the sky; and, like the stars, their glory is abundant to attract unto them the observation of men. When the date of their birth, or the supposed date of their birth, is reached, as with the movement of time we swing round the circuit of the year, men instinctively pause; thought is quickened; the depths of gratitude are stirred with benign remembrance; and thanksgiving naturally ascends unto God, who has given unto men, unto them and theirs, such a beneficent gift. (*W. H. Murray.*)

*Christmas celebrates a personality* :—Wherever you find love, you find a personal being connected with it as its object. We do not love motherhood, we love mother. We do not love family government, we love the persons who compose the family. We do not love theology, we love God of whom it treats. We commemorate to-day, therefore—not the birth of a system, but the birth of a man. It is a sweet and innocent babe, and not a collection of doctrines, in praise of whom our songs are sung to-day, and unto whom our hearts are lifted in holy gladness. (*Ibid.*)

*Jesus had universal connections* :—We celebrate the birth of a man with universal connections; you and I were born connected with but a few. A little group absorbed us, and a little spot bounded us within its limits. Other men, of larger mould than we, were born with larger connections. The chief is connected with his tribe at his birth; the king with his kingdom; the patriot and leader with his country or party; the priest with his Church. Around all these walls are builded, over which they never pass until death lifts them above the local, and multiplies their associations. But Christ was born with universal connections. His little family did not absorb Him. He was not the son of Mary and Joseph, He was the son of humanity; He was the Son of Man the world over. (*Ibid.*)

*Jesus meets universal wants* :—The reason that Christ had these universal connections was because He came to assist men in reference to those conditions of want that are universal. In Him the perfect constitution had organisation. In feeling, in thinking, in suffering and gladness, in mourning and joy, in every capacity which men have, in every condition in which men stand, He was akin to them. From every bosom a sympathetic chord ran up into His, and He could, therefore, sense the needs of every bosom. He sympathised with every phase of humanity, because His humanity was perfect enough in its sensitiveness to be intelligent with every phase. (*Ibid.*)

*An infant's birth a great event* :—The birth of any infant is a far greater event than the production of the sun. The sun is only a lump of senseless matter: it sees not its own light; it feels not its own heat; and, with all its grandeur, it will cease to be: but that infant beginning only to breathe yesterday, is possessed of reason—claims a principle infinitely superior to all matter—and will live through the ages of eternity! (*W. Jay.*)

*A Christmas-day sketch* :—I. GOD CAME TO US IN THAT CHILD. His parents were instructed to call Him "Immanuel"—"God with us." Such a fact is big with meaning; pregnant with vital, jubilant truth. Why did God come to us thus in a babe? He must have had some wise and loving purpose that He wished to secure thereby. What? For ages men had been taught to fear God, their thoughts of Him filled them with dismay; hence the gods of the heathen nations. The large body of the Jewish nation was not much in advance of the heathen. This dread of God was universal. To correct all such ideas, and remove all such feelings from the minds and hearts of men for ever, God came to us as a child. Are you afraid of a babe? II. GOD

**CAN COME TO US IN THE SMALLEST THINGS.** We generally look for God in the great, vast, mighty, terrible. We expect something to strike the eye, &c. Will you remember that God came to us in that quiet, loving, unpretending babe, that lay in that manger and nestled in His mother's bosom? And so God comes to us in the little, simple, humble, noiseless, common things of life, if we only look for Him. Especially He comes to us in our children. They bring love with them, and "love is of God," &c. We might in a far higher sense than we think for call every child "Immanuel." In our child God comes to us, God is with us. Do we believe this? If so, should we not oftener look for and educate the God in them? We should do far better with them if from the beginning we sought to bring out, nourish, educate, develop the good, the God that is in them, instead of making it our chief concern to correct the wrong, to restrain the evil.

**III. THE WHOLE OF LIFE IS SACRED, AND SHOULD BE CONSECRATED TO GOD.** God came to us in that Child. The whole of life is sacred, open for the operations, possession, enjoyment of God. God was in that Child notwithstanding all its infantile wants, weaknesses, complaints. And so God was in that boy, notwithstanding all His playfulness and vivacity. Indeed, that was the boyish, outward manifestation of God; the boyish way of declaring God's glory. If God was in that Child, "God manifest in the flesh," His whole life, from His birth to His death, was God-life.

**IV. GREAT ENDINGS HAVE LITTLE BEGINNINGS.** Who shall measure the magnitude, height, depth, length, breadth of the work which Christ accomplished as Saviour of the world? Yet it has all to be traced back to the birth of that Child. God's method is "evolution" from the small to the great. (*B. Preece.*) *The Child Divine*.—Pure Christianity owes its power to the fact that it comes to us as a little child, beautiful in innocence and simplicity. The pure spirit of Christianity is the essence of kindness. Christianity owes its power to its spirit of gentleness. Christianity is forgiving like a little child. Christianity, however, like a little child, is often misunderstood. Alas! that Christianity should be hated by some people. Not only did Herod seek its life eighteen hundred years ago, but there are men to-day who, Herod-like, seek to strangle the infant Christ. (*W. Birch.*) **Unto us a Son is given.**—*Christ, the Son of God, gifted to sinners*.—**I. THE GIFT ITSELF.** Many precious gifts have come from heaven to earth, yea, all we have is Heaven's gift (James i. 17). But this is the great gift. 1. What this gift is. (1) A Person. Persons are more excellent than things. A soul is more precious than a world. So this gift is more precious than the whole world. (2) A Divine Person. (3) The Lord Jesus Christ. 2. Wherein this gift appears and comes to us. Those who send precious gifts to others, wrap them up in something that is less precious. And a treasure sent in earthen vessels is the method of conveyance of the best gifts from heaven to earth. The Son of God, being the gift, was sent veiled and wrapped up in our nature. This veil laid over the gift sent to poor sinners was (1) less precious than the gift itself. The human nature of Christ was a created thing, His Divine nature uncreated. (2) However, it was a cleanly thing. The human nature of Christ, though infinitely below the dignity of His Divine nature, yet was a holy thing (Luke i. 35). This gift appeared and was sent to us in the veil of the human nature—(a) that it might be capable of the treatment it behoved to undergo for our relief—to suffer and die; (b) that it might be suited to the weakness of the capacity of the receivers. The Son of God in His unveiled glory would have no more been an object for our eyes to have looked on, than the shining sun to the eyes of an owl. A few rays of His glory, breaking out from under the veil, made His enemies fall to the ground. 3. What a gift this is. Singular for (1) the worth of it. If it were laid in the balance with ten thousand worlds, they would be lighter than vanity in comparison of it; nay, balanced with the gift of created graces, and the created heavens, it would down-weigh them; as the bridegroom's person is more worth than his jewels and palace. (2) The suitability of it (Acts iv. 12; Heb. vii. 25; 1 John v. 12). (3) The reasonableness of it. (4) The comprehensiveness of it (Rom. viii. 32; Col. ii. 9, 10; 1 John v. 11). (5) The unrestricted freeness of it. What is freer than a gift? The joint stock of the whole world could not have purchased this gift. (a) Beware of slighting this gift. (b) Take heed ye miss not to perceive this gift. Most men see no further into the mystery of Christ than the outward appearance it makes in the world, as administered in the Word, sacraments, &c.; and they despise it. (c) Admire the wisdom of God, and His infinite condescension, in the manner of the conveyance of this gift. (d) See here how you may be enriched

for time and eternity. II. THE GIVER. 1. Who is the Giver? God. And to exalt the Giver's free love and grace herein, observe from the Word three things there marked about it. (1) It was His own Son that He gave. (2) It was His beloved Son. (3) It was His only-begotten Son. 2. What has He given sinners, gifting His Son to them? The tongues of men and angels cannot fully express this. (1) He has given them Himself. (2) Eternal life. Here is legal life, moral life, a life of comfort; and all eternal. (3) All things (Rom. viii. 32; 1 Cor. iii. 21; Rom. viii. 17; Rev. xxi. 7). III. THE PARTY TO WHOM HE IS GIVEN. 1. To whom He is given. To mankind-sinners indefinitely. 2. In what respects Christ is given to them. (1) In respect of allowance to take Him. (2) In respect of legal destination (1 John iv. 14). If ye had an act of parliament appointing a thing for you, ye would not question its being given you; here ye have more. (3) In respect of real offer. (4) In respect of the freeness of the offer. (5) In respect of exhibition. This gift is held forth as with the hand, God saying, Ho, sinners, here is My Son, take Him. And God doth not stay the exhibiting of His Son to sinners till they say they will take Him. 3. In what character Christ is given to sinners. A Saviour; a surety; a physician; a light; an atoning sacrifice; a crowned King, mighty to destroy the kingdom of Satan and to rescue mankind-sinners, his captives and prisoners. IV. APPLICATION. 1. Believe that to us poor sinners the Son of God in man's nature is given. 2. Receive the gift of Christ, at His Father's hand. (1) Consider ye have an absolute need of this gift. (2) There are some who have as much need as you, to whom yet He is not given, namely, the fallen angels. (3) Ye must either receive or refuse. (4) Consider the worth of the gift. (5) Consider the Hand it comes from. (6) Consider that others before you have received it, and have been made up by it for ever. (7) Consider that this gift will not always be for the taking as it is now. (8) Your not receiving will be very heinously taken, as a deepest slight put upon both the Giver and the gift. (9) It will set you at greater distance from God than ever. (*T. Boston.*) *The Son given*.—I. WHO IS THE SON GIVEN, AND WHAT IS HIS PURPOSE? It is our Lord Jesus Christ. The verse begins with His humanity; and, mounting upwards, it rises to the height of His Divinity. The prophet conducts us to Bethlehem and its stable, to the desert and its hunger, to the well and its thirst, to the workshop and its daily toil, to the sea and its midnight storm, to Gethsemane and its bloody sweat, to Calvary and its ignominious death, and all along that thorny path that stretched from the manger to the Cross; for in announcing the birth and coming of this Son and Child, he included in that announcement the noble purposes for which He was born—His work, His sufferings, His life, His death, all the grand ends for which the Son was given and the Child was born. II. BY WHOM WAS THIS SON GIVEN? By His Father. Man has his remedies, but they are always behindhand. The disease antedates the cure. But before the occasion came God was ready. Redemption was planned in the councils of eternity, and Satan's defeat secured before his first victory was won. The Son gave Himself, but the Father gave Him; and there is no greater mistake than to regard God as looking on at redemption as a mere spectator, to approve the sacrifice and applaud the actor. God's love was the root, Christ's death the fruit. III. TO WHOM WAS HE GIVEN? He was given "to us." (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *The advent of Jesus joy-producing*.—A poor little street-girl was taken sick one Christmas and carried to a hospital. While there she heard the story of Jesus' coming into the world to save us. It was all new to her, but very precious. She could appreciate such a wonderful Saviour, and the knowledge made her very happy as she lay upon her little cot. One day the nurse came around at the usual hour, and "Little Broomstick" (that was her street name) held her by the hand, and whispered: "I'm having real good times here—ever such good times! S'pose I shall have to go away from here just as soon as I get well; but I'll take the good time along—some of it, anyhow. Did you know 'bout Jesus bein' born?" "Yes," replied the nurse, "I know. Sh-sh-sh! Don't talk any more." "You did? I thought you looked as if you didn't, and I was goin' to tell you." "Why, how did I look?" asked the nurse, forgetting her own orders in curiosity. "Oh, just like most o' folks—kind o' glum. I shouldn't think you'd ever look gloomy if you knowed 'bout Jesus bein' born." (*Faithful Witness.*) "*The joyful quarter*":—Part of the city of Florence was called "The Joyful Quarter." It was through a picture painted by Cimbric of Jesus as a baby seated on His mother's knee. When finished, the grand old painter did not make a charge for people to see it, but

had it carried into the poor quarters, and through the streets slowly, in the sight of all the people. Before this, they had thought of Jesus as far too grand for them to love. In this picture He looked so sweet and good that people broke into surprised thankfulness and joy. (*Sunday Magazine*.) *A son and a brother*.—A respectable family becomes very reduced in its circumstances; the mother finds it difficult to make the meagre provision suffice for her hungry little ones; their clothes get more ragged; the father's threadbare coat makes it less and less possible for him to obtain the situation which his qualifications deserve. But a child is born into that home, quite unlike the rest of the children—beautiful in feature, quick in intelligence, winsome, gifted, *spirituelle*. As he grows up, he manifests unusual powers; rapidly distances his compeers; passes from the elementary school to the college, and thence to the university. Presently tidings begin to come back of his success, his growing fame, his prizes, the assured certainty of his becoming a great man; and as they arrive in letter, and rumour, and newspaper, the mother's eye gets brighter; the father no longer evades the associates of earlier days; the home becomes better furnished and the table better spread; the other children are better clothed and educated and put forward in life; and the one glad explanation of it all is found in the words, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." And as the years go on, whilst money pours in as a golden tide to the successful student, it will find its way increasingly to the family in the old home; and each member of it will reap the benefit of association with its child and son, all that is needed being to prove a distinct need, and to put in an appropriate claim. What a mine of wealth would be opened up in the counsel, strength, resources, influence, and position, of that beloved and trusted son and brother! This will illustrate the prophet's thought. As the oppressed Jews, groaning in their brick-kilns, were glad for Moses, given to lead them forth from the house of bondage; as England, travelling under the cruel exactions of the Danes, was glad for our great Alfred; as the Netherlands were glad when William the Silent arose to arrest the bloodthirsty rule of Alva; as Italy was glad when her Victor Emmanuel overthrew the dark misrule of the Papacy—so may we be glad because God has given Himself to us in Jesus. Why should living men complain? Granted that Adam was our father, the second Adam is the Son of Man. If tears and toil and pain and death have come by one, glory and honour and immortality are ours by the other. If we are sons, and therefore younger brothers of the Son; if we have the right to call His Father our Father, we gain from our association with Him more than enough to compensate us for our association with the gardener who stole his Master's fruit in the garden of Paradise. Christian people do not enough appreciate this connection, or avail themselves of its benefits. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) **And the government shall be upon His shoulder.**—*Christ the universal Governor*.—I. **JESUS CHRIST HAS THE GOVERNMENT OF HEAVEN.** After He had triumphantly risen from the dead, and the time of His glorious ascension to heaven was at hand, He said unto His disciples, "All power is given unto Me in heaven," meaning, that to Him, as the gracious and glorious Mediator between us sinners and God our heavenly Sovereign, all power in heaven was given. And hence the following great and gracious truths—1. Jesus Christ is the only person who, principally and above all others, has power with God for us. "There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." 2. He is the only person by whom we can hope to obtain an entrance into heaven. 3. He has power in heaven to exclude, as well as to admit, whom He will. 4. He has power in heaven to provide mansions for His friends. 5. He has power in heaven over all the angels; He is their Lord, whom they worship and obey; He is exalted above all principalities and powers; the angels are His ministering spirits, whom He sends forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation (Heb. i. 6-14). II. **JESUS CHRIST HAS THE GOVERNMENT OF EARTH** (Matt. xxviii. 18). 1. He has power on earth to form and establish a Church to the glory and praise of God. 2. He has power on earth to keep His Church, through faith, unto final and full salvation. 3. He has power on earth over the wicked. III. **JESUS CHRIST HAS THE GOVERNMENT OF HELL.** Satan, therefore, and the whole host of evil spirits, are under His command; and therefore their malice, their subtilty, and power, shall never prevail to the ruin of the weakest of His flock. Conclusion—1. And first, we infer—What a glorious person is Jesus Christ! In defiance of all His enemies, He it is of whom the Father declares, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion" (Psa. ii. 6). 2. How dignified, and secure, and happy, must they be who



have Jesus Christ as their Governor, to whom they willingly yield themselves in all humble and affectionate submission and obedience. 3. The tremendous case of those who are strangers to Jesus Christ, and without God in the world. (*E. Phillips.*) *The government on Christ's shoulder* :—As a people whose affairs are ruined have great need of an active and expert governor ; so the government of such a people is a great burden. Such a people are lost sinners, and with respect to them these words speak two things—1. The burden and weight of taking the management of their affairs. 2. Jesus Christ the person on whom this burden was laid. This is part of the glad tidings of the Gospel. (*T. Boston.*) *The government on Christ's shoulder* :—I. THE OCCASION OF SETTING UP THIS PRINCE AND GOVERNOR. It was sinners' absolute need. 1. Their first prince was gone, to manage their affairs no more. Adam their natural head mismanaged the government quite. 2. They were left in confusion, in the hand of the enemy Satan. 3. Their affairs were desperate. When the whole earth could not afford one, heaven gave sinners a Prince, of shoulders sufficient for the burden. II. THE IMPORT OF THIS PRINCIPALITY AND GOVERNMENT LAID ON JESUS CHRIST FOR THE BENEFIT OF MANKIND-SINNERS. It speaks—1. His near relation to them. 2. His eminency among them. 3. His honourable office over them. 4. His sovereign power and authority over them. 5. The burden of the care and duty belonging to the office and station. III. THE HONOUR, POWER, AND AUTHORITY BELONGING TO THIS PRINCIPALITY AND GOVERNMENT OF JESUS CHRIST. 1. The legislative power belongs to Him solely. 2. The supreme executive power is lodged with Him (*John v. 22, 23*). 3. The power of granting remissions, receiving into peace with Heaven, pardoning and indemnifying criminals and rebels (*Acts v. 31*). 4. A large and vast dominion, reaching to earth, heaven, and hell, and the passage between the two worlds, namely, death (*Matt. xxviii. 18 ; Rev. i. 18*). In His hand is—(1) The kingdom of grace. "And gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church." (2) The kingdom of glory (*Luke xxii. 29, 30*). (3) The kingdom of providence. "And hath put all things under His feet." IV. THE BURDEN OF THIS PRINCIPALITY AND GOVERNMENT LAID ON CHRIST JESUS. It is sevenfold. 1. The burden of the purchase of it. 2. The burden of a war with the devil for the recovering of it. 3. The burden of subduing sinners. 4. The burden of their reconciliation with Heaven. 5. The burden of their defence and protection. 6. The burden of their provision in all things necessary for life and godliness. 7. The burden of the whole management and conduct of them through the wilderness, till they come to the heavenly Canaan. V. IMPROVE THE DOCTRINE. 1. Information. (1) Jesus Christ is the alone Head of His Church and supreme Governor thereof. (2) The interests of the Church and of every particular believer will certainly be seen to. (3) Believers have all reason to be quietly resigned to the Divine disposal and to live in confidence of a blessed issue, whatever be the difficulties they have to grapple with, either in respect of the case of the Church or of their own private case. 2. Exhortation. (1) Receive Him as your Prince and Governor. (a) Let His Spirit be your Guide and Leader. (b) Let His Word be your rule. (c) Let His will be the determining point to you. And receive Him as Governor—(a) Of your hearts and spirits. Let the proud heart be made to stoop to Him, let the covetous heart be purged by Him, and the vain foolish heart be made to find the weight of His awful authority. While Christ has not the government of thy heart, thou hast not given Him the throne. (b) Of your tongues. (c) Of your practice. (2) Receive Him as the Prince and Governor of your lot and condition in the world, resigning the same to His disposal. (a) Be content with the lot carved out for you. (b) Never go out of God's way to mend your condition. (c) In all changes of your lot, acknowledge Him for direction and guidance. Take Him for your only Governor; your absolute Governor; your perpetual Governor. Take Him without delay; take Him heartily and willingly. 3. Motives. (1) Consider what an excellent Prince and Governor He is. Perfectly just in His administration; infinitely wise; most vigilant and careful; most tender of His subjects and of all their interests. (2) While ye are not under His government, ye are under the government of Satan. (3) Jesus Christ is your rightful Prince and Governor. (4) If ye submit not to Him, He will treat you as rebels, who have broken your faith and allegiance to Him, and cast off the yoke of His government. (*Ibid.*) *The hope of Israel* :—I. THE HOPE OF THE CHOSEN PEOPLE CONCERNING THEMSELVES AND THEIR RACE CENTRED IN A CHILD. As a general fact, how many of the world's hopes and expectations have in all

ages focussed in cradles. The children represent the hope of all generations.

II. Now the paradox of Jewish faith consisted in this—THAT IT FOCUSED AT ONCE IN A CRADLE AND A THRONE; a Child and a King. Hence the birth in which that ancient hope found fulfilment was the birth of a King. The question of the wise men was grandly expressive. It centred alike in a Child and a King. "Where is He that is born King?" 1. At the very centre of the Jewish religion was the belief in kingship—a Divine kingdom or a theocracy. This great spiritual fact was symbolised by "the outward visible sign" of human kingship. But all human symbols are imperfect. Their kings died like other men. But their true King did not die. They sought to make the outward symbol of government as complete as possible; hence they adopted hereditary kingship. The human, and, in this case, the Jewish heart is impatient of an interregnum. There is a feeling in man that the throne should at no period be empty. This feeling ever tends toward hereditary rule. The prophet points to a King to the increase of "whose government and peace there shall be no end." It is a kingdom which knows of no interregnum. In contrast to all other kings and royal personages, who soon die and pass away, He ever lives. 2. It is such a king that the Jewish people yearned and looked for. Hence, when the wise men came with the question, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" it not only moved Herod, but all Jerusalem with him. The Jews looked eagerly for a king who should bear upon his shoulder the burden of perpetual government. This yearning for a king is one of the deepest in the heart of nations. 3. Alas! that when He came men did not recognise Him in the humble garb He wore. They placed a Cross upon the shoulder that was to bear the ensign of rule, and a crown of thorns upon His royal brow. Yet, all was well, for what could be a better ensign of His kingship than the Cross, since His is "the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ," and He is a "Prince and a Saviour." 4. His sacred brow, too, bore the only crown which man could place there and He accept—a crown of thorns, symbol alike of our sin and misery and of His royalty who has overcome us by the might of His compassion, and become our King by the shedding of His blood. What becomes the brow of the Man of Sorrows and King of sorrowing humanity like a crown of thorns? Our Lord exclaimed some time before His hour had come, "I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again." He based His kingly claim upon that twofold power. It is from His Cross that He sways His sceptre over us. 5. The cradle predicts the Cross. Once God has condescended to touch the manger and the crib, we are prepared to see Him even touch the Cross and bearing it. There is no depth of condescension which He will not fathom, no height of self-sacrifice which He will not reach. The story of Divine love is harmonious throughout. We are not surprised that the great God who submitted Himself to the humblest conditions of human birth should also, in the same spirit, endure the Cross, despising the shame. 6. This cradle, too, is prophetic of the Gospel, in which so much that is weak and human is linked to so much that is strong and Divine, namely, man's voice uttering God's message, earthly forms and ordinances conveying heavenly energies, human swaddling clothes enveloping a Divine life. (*D. Davies.*)

*The government upon Christ's shoulder*.—I. I would offer a few thoughts concerning THE CHURCH OR KINGDOM OF CHRIST IN THE WORLD. 1. By the Church I understand that remnant of Adam's family who, being determined to break their covenant with hell, and their agreement with death, join themselves to Christ, as their Prophet, Priest, and King, either in reality, or by a visible and credible profession of their faith in Him. 2. The Church or kingdom of Christ, during the Old Testament dispensation, was peculiarly confined to the posterity of Abraham, to the nation of the Jews, excepting a few Gentile proselytes; but now, since the coming of Christ in the flesh and His resurrection from the dead, is extended also to the Gentile nations. 3. All the subjects of Christ's kingdom and government, are originally brought out of the territories of hell, being "children of wrath, even as others." 4. The great engine whereby Christ rears up a kingdom to Himself in the world, is the preaching of the everlasting Gospel, accompanied with the power and efficacy of His Spirit. 5. The Church and kingdom of Christ being founded and governed by Him, "in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid," cannot miss of being one of the best regulated societies in the world as under His management, whatever irregularities may be found in her through the corruptions of men intermingling with the concerns of the kingdom. Everything necessary to render any kingdom or society regular is to be found in the Church or kingdom of Christ. (1) A

kingdom well constituted hath its laws and so hath the Church of Christ. And the laws given by her King are all "holy, just, and good"; and all the true subjects of the kingdom delight in the laws of their King, as being the transcript of infinite wisdom and equity. (2) A kingdom hath its offices under its king; and so hath the Church of Christ (Eph. iv. 11-13). (3) A kingdom hath its courts, where the subjects attend to receive the will of the king, and the benefits of his administration; and so hath the Church. (4) A kingdom hath its seal. So in the kingdom of Christ, He hath appended two public seals unto the charter of His covenant of grace, namely, baptism and the Lord's Supper. (5) A kingdom commonly hath its enemies to grapple with, both foreign and intestine; and so hath the kingdom of Christ. (6) A kingdom hath its armies and auxiliaries; and so hath the Church of Christ, being in a confederacy with the Lord of hosts. The armies of heaven are ready to fight her quarrel. (7) A kingdom hath its fortifications and strongholds; and so hath the Church of Christ.

II. I would speak a little of THE GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE KINGDOM. 1. Christ Himself is the great and glorious Governor. 2. All things in heaven, earth, and hell are put under the power of Christ, for the more advantageous government of His Church (Eph. i. 22, 23; Phil. ii. 9-11). 3. Christ the King of Zion is wonderfully fitted by His Father for the government and administration (Isa. xi. 2-4). 4. Christ's government and administration are very wonderful. The name of the Governor is Wonderful. 5. Christ's government and administration in and about His Church and people are exceeding wise. So much is imported in His being called the "Counsellor." 6. Also irresistible. The Governor is "The Mighty God," who will go through with His designs. 7. He is exceeding tender and compassionate; for His name is "The Everlasting Father" from whom compassions flow. 8. Christ's government and administration of His Church are very peaceable; for His name is "The Prince of Peace," and "of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end." 9. This government is everlasting.

III. INQUIRE HOW THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH IS COMMITTED TO CHRIST. The government is laid upon Christ's shoulder with a threefold solemnity. 1. The solemnity of an unalterable decree (Psa. ii. 6-8). 2. The solemnity of a covenant transacted betwixt Him and His Eternal Father, when the council of peace was between them both. 3. The solemnity of an oath, ratifying the determination of the council of peace in this matter (Psa. lxxxix. 3, 4, 35).

IV. GIVE THE REASONS OF THE DOCTRINE. Why is the government laid upon His shoulder? 1. Because His shoulder alone was able to bear the weight of the administration and government of the Church. 2. That He might be in better capacity for accomplishing the salvation of His people, and bringing many sons and daughters unto glory. Hence we find His kingdom and salvation frequently joined together; "Thou art my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth"; and Zech. ix. 9. 3. That He may "still the enemy and the avenger," that He may resent His Father's quarrel against Satan, and entirely bruise his head, for his defacing and striking at His and His Father's image in our first parents, and disturbing His government, which He had established in innocence. 4. Because He hath a just title to it. (1) By birth. (2) By purchase. (3) By His Father's promise and charter, granted to Him upon the footing of His death and satisfaction (Isa. liii. 12). (4) By conquest.

V. APPLICATION. 1. Information. (1) The wonderful love of God which He bears to His Church in providing such a Ruler and Governor for them. (2) What a happy government and administration believers are under, namely, the government of the Child born, the Son given to us, whose name is Wonderful, &c. (3) The misery of a wicked, unbelieving world who will not have Him to rule over them. (4) The nullity of all acts, laws, and constitutions that do not bear the stamp of Christ, and are not consistent with the laws and orders He has left for the government of His Church. (5) They run a very serious risk who do injury to His servants. (6) They have a hard task to manage who attempt to jostle Him out of His government and take it upon their own shoulders. (7) All odds will be even, and Christ will render tribulation to those that trouble, vex, and harass His poor people in their spiritual rights and privileges. 2. Consolation to the poor people of God; particularly to those who are spoiled of their liberties and privileges as Christians. (1) Your God does not stand as an unconcerned spectator. (2) God hath founded Zion. (3) He who hath the government upon His shoulder rules in the midst of His enemies, and has so much of the act of government that He both can and will bring good out of evil. (4) The most

dark dispensations towards the Church and people of God are in the event found to have been pregnant with love and mercy. (5) He on whose shoulders the government is laid hath power to provide you with honest ministers. (*E. Erskine.*) *Christ the "Kinsman" of the race.*—The King must be the Son of Man. The real root of king and queen is "kin." The king is not the "able" man but the "kinsman" of the race. All our fundamental, social, and political ideas have their root in the patriarchal home, as the researches of Sir H. Maine and other able scholars have established; and in the king the whole "kindred" is represented. "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." The King who rules in righteousness, mighty to save, is the Son of Man, the Divine Kinsman of our race. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*) *Jesus Christ the King of all creation.*—I. CHRIST THE KING OF ALL THINGS GREAT. There is nothing so great as to be above the government of Jesus. Things great belong to each of the two great provinces into which the universe is divided, namely, the province of matter and the province of mind; yet, Christ is King of all. 1. Greatness in the physical creation. The earth is very great, as we count greatness. The sun is greater than the earth, and many a star which appears only as a glittering point of diamond, is greater than the sun: yet, Jesus makes the earth bring forth, commands the sun to shine, and moves the stars in silent harmony. Jesus can rule the sea. Its billows rise and fall according to His will; and when they leap along, then, amid the roar of tempest and the cries of men for aid, the gentle voice of Jesus speaks "Peace, be still," and winds and waves obey Him, for "there is a great calm." "The government is upon His shoulder." 2. The greatness of death. Of all the forces of nature, none is feared more than death. Even death is in the hand of Jesus; it never comes without asking His permission, and in every case He could forbid its coming, and no doubt He would forbid it, if that were for the best, for He has the keys of death and of Hades. 3. Greatness in the spirit-world. Material forces, however, form but an insignificant part of the forces of creation. There is a world of spirit within, as well as above and beyond the world of matter, and yet, of this nearest world of matter we know but little. The spirit-world is under the rule of Jesus; He is its only King; His word its only law; His presence its only bliss. He reveals to the eye of faith the home of heaven. He brings "life and immortality to light." 4. Greatness in moral government. God has promised for us—and thereby has guaranteed—results which can never be effected by any mere force, though that force should be even infinite. The difficulty in the Saviour's government of moral beings lies here,—that He has guaranteed and foretold the final issues of that government; that He has foreseen the course of life pursued by every moral agent, though that life is in many points independent of all external forces. Neither Scripture nor reason may explain the difficulty, but it is pleasing to think of my text,—“The government shall be upon His shoulder,” for Jesus is “Kings of kings, and Lord of lords.” II. CHRIST THE KING OF ALL THINGS SMALL. There is nothing so small as to escape the notice of Jesus. When on earth He observed the poor as well as the rich, and commended each according to his fidelity. Think not that you are forgotten by the Saviour, or that your work or suffering is overlooked because you are poor, obscure, and feeble, and therefore, forgotten and overlooked by men. What men despise through ignorance may be most highly prized in another form. Filthy soot and the brilliant diamond are formed of the same material. The Saviour sees, not merely what we are, but what we may become, and as fidelity is the highest element of moral worth, He estimates the value of men, not by what they do, but by their fidelity—by the proportion which exists between their power and their performance. The lisping prayer of a little child may thus be of greater value in God's estimation, than the highest song which ever rose from an angel's heart. III. CHRIST THE KING OF ALL THINGS GOOD. There is nothing so good that it can exist apart from the rule of Jesus. The day is no more dependent on the sun, the rain upon the clouds, the stream upon the fountain, than happiness is dependent upon Christ. IV. CHRIST THE KING CONTROLLING EVIL. There is nothing so bad but Jesus can make it the means of good. In all we suffer, as well as in all we enjoy; in the dark and dreary night of trouble, as well as in the bright day of prosperous life, it is equally true that Jesus Christ is King of all. (*Evan Lewis, B.A.*) *Christ our life's Ruler.*—Fifteen miles from Sandy Hook the pilot comes on board the English steamer to navigate it into New York harbour. I remember his climbing on board, on the last occasion that I made the passage. The great steamer slowed, and as we looked down from the deck

into the dark night we could see a lantern on the surface of the ocean, where his boat was lying. Presently he emerged from the pitchy darkness and reached the deck. From that moment the anxieties of the captain were at an end, and he might refresh himself in deep, long slumbers. So when Christ is on board our life, the government is upon His shoulders, and of the increase of His government and of our peace there is no end. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) **And His name shall be called Wonderful.**—*Messiah's name.*—As Jacob conferred the birthright and blessing of his race upon the sons of Joseph by saying, "Let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac" (Gen. xlviii. 16); or as the children of Israel in the wilderness were warned to obey the angel who went before them, because the "name of Jehovah was in him"; so the name of God, wonderful in counsel, mighty in work, the Father of their fathers and of their children for a thousand generations, the Eternal Upholder of their race and their nation and of its prosperity and peace, shall be named upon, shall be in, this anointed Saviour, on whose shoulder the government shall rest. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *The Prince of the four names:*—Wonderful-Counselor; God-Hero; Father-Everlasting; Prince-of-Peace. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *Christ's name above every name:*—I. WHO CALLS HIM BY THIS NAME? 1. His Father (Phil. ii. 9). 2. All His people, flying to Him, in their first believing, as such an one, and depending on Him all along their course of life as such an one. II. WHAT DOES HIS BEING CALLED BY THIS NAME IMPORT? 1. That He really is what this name bears. 2. What He is called He is found to be in the experience of saints. III. APPLICATION. Study the name of Christ, as represented in the Word, so that your souls may be enamoured of Him. (*T. Boston.*) *God's namings* always mean character. They are always revelations. They tell us what the person is or what he does. (*Mrs. H. W. Smith.*) "Ah! that's the name!"—Some Hindus who had read Christian tracts travelled a long way to hear more about Jesus from a missionary. As soon as he mentioned the name of Jesus, they all exclaimed, "Ah! that's the name!" (*Gates of Imagery.*) *Christ's name Wonderful:*—Our Lord Christ is beyond the creature's comprehension. So that this is fitly made the first syllable of His name, that men may know that whatever they know of His excellencies, there is still more behind; and though they may apprehend, they cannot comprehend what He is. I shall inquire— I. UNDER WHAT NOTION CHRIST IS HELD FORTH AS A MIRACLE, a miraculous person. 1. Not in respect of His being a miracle-worker. It is Himself, and not His work, that is here called a miracle. 2. Nor in respect of His Divine nature simply. 3. Nor in respect of His human nature simply. 4. Christ is held forth as a miraculous personage as God-man in one person. II. WHAT IS THE IMPORT OF CHRIST AS GOD-MAN BEING AND APPEARING TO BE A MIRACULOUS, MOST WONDERFUL ONE? 1. The excellency of His person as God-man. 2. The fulness of excellencies in Him, our incarnate Redeemer. Some excel in one thing, some in another, but none but Christ in all (Col. i. 19). 3. The uncommonness and singularity of His excellencies. Every excellency in Christ is beyond that excellency in another. 4. The absolute matchlessness of His person, for excellency and glory. 5. The shining forth of His excellencies, fit to draw all eyes upon Him. (1) His Father's eyes are fixed on Him, as the object of His good pleasure (Matt. iii. 17). (2) The eyes of the angels are drawn after Him, as a most wonderful sight (1 Pet. i. 12). (3) The eyes of all the saints are drawn after Him, as the object of their admiration and affection. 6. The incomprehensibility of Him to any creature. III. IN WHAT RESPECTS IS OUR INCARNATE REDEEMER A MIRACULOUS ONE? He is wonderful—1. In His person and natures. 2. In His perfections and qualifications. 3. All along His duration. Some are wonderful in one part of their life, some in another; but He is miracle all over His duration. (1) In His eternal generation of the Father. (2) In His birth. (3) In His life; a wonderful infant; a wonderful child; a wonderful youth, &c. (4) In His death; betrayed by one of His own; forsaken by them all, acquitted by His judge as innocent, yet condemned to a most cruel death. Astonishing wonder! God dying in man's nature; the beloved Son of God hanging on a cross. (5) In His burial. The Lord of life lying dead in a grave; the spotless Jesus making His grave with the wicked; the great Deliverer from death carried prisoner to its dark regions—is a wonder that may hold us in admiration for ever! (6) In His resurrection. (7) In His ascension into heaven. (8) In His sitting at God's right hand. (9) In His coming again to judge the world. (10) In His continuing for ever to be the eternal band of union and means of communion, between

God and the saints (Rev. vii. 17, xxi. 23). 4. In His offices. (1) Prophetical. The Spirit came at times on the prophets, but He rested on Him. They had their foreknowledge of future events at secondhand; but it is His privilege to look with His own eyes into the sealed book. (2) Priestly. He is Priest, Altar, and Sacrifice all in one. All the sacrifices before Him were but as hand-writings to own the debt of sin, but could pay none. His sacrifice was truly expiatory. (3) Kingly. Zion's King is most wonderful in His victories, rescuing men from the power of the devil, subduing their hearts to Him, and conquering their wills; in His defence of His subjects from the devil, the world, lusts, frowns, and flatteries of the world; in ruining His enemies totally, and completing the happiness of His friends. Christ's kingdom is the most ancient kingdom; the most extensive kingdom, embracing both heaven and earth. Never a kingdom had so many enemies and so potent; yet has it stood through all ages, and will stand for ever and ever, without end. 5. In His relations. (1) He is nearly related to the house of heaven, and so has the highest possible relation. The angels are the servants of the house of heaven; but Christ is the Son of that house (Heb. i. 5). (2) He is nearly related to the house of Adam. He is the top-branch of it (Luke iii. 38). He has a common relation to them all—the Saviour of the world. He has a nearer relation to believers—Brother, Head, &c. (3) He is the centre of union to the two (John xvii. 23). The Son of God married our nature to Himself, and so brings together the two houses, making peace through the body of His flesh. 6. In His love (Eph. iii. 19). Consider—(1) The subject of it—the party loving us. That ever there should have been an eye of love cast from heaven on us, not from among the courtiers, but from the throne, the King Himself, is wonderful. (2) The objects of it. Sinful men. (3) The effect, force, and energy of this love. It is absolutely matchless. (4) The qualities of it. Free; sovereign; preventing; tender; unchangeable; everlasting.

IV. APPLICATION. 1. Information. (1) The greatness of the Father's love in giving to us such a wonderful One for our Prince. (2) The reasonableness of the believer's superlative love to Christ. (3) The reasonableness of the Gospel demand of all to receive and submit to Christ as their Prince and Governor. His transcendent excellency entitles Him to the principality and government over the sons of men. His merit requires our absolute resignation to Him. He is the Father's choice, and in making that choice He has acted like Himself, having chosen for us this most wonderful personage. (4) The dreadful sin and danger of slighting Christ. The more wonderful and excellent He is, the deeper will be the guilt of refusing Him; the deeper the guilt, the more fearful will be the vengeance for rejecting Him (Heb. ii. 3). 2. Exhortation. (1) Make Him the choice of your soul. (2) Part with all for Him—your lust and idols; renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, resting on Christ for all, for time and eternity. (3) Dwell in the contemplation of His matchless excellencies. Let it be the substance of your religion to love Him, to admire Him, to be swallowed up in His love. (*T. Boston.*) *Who was Jesus Christ?*—That is a question to which no man dares to be indifferent save at the peril of his soul. The great Unitarian minister, W. E. Channing, said, "Love to Jesus Christ depends very little on our conception of His rank in the scale of being." I believe that remark to be profoundly wrong. On our views of the Person of Christ depend not only our love to Christ, but also our conception of Christianity. Christ is Christianity, and without clear views of His character and person our religious and moral life must be vague, unstable, like a house that is built upon the sand. Consider—

I. HIS WISDOM AS A TEACHER. 1. His originality. He never went to college. He had no learned tutors to instruct Him. Yet at the early age of thirty He taught the world the sublimest truths that man has ever heard. He belonged to none of the sects of His day. He had no great intellectual friends from whom He might gain flashes of suggestive thought. From the depths of mental and social obscurity, He went forth to proclaim a world-wide kingdom, and to-day, in the most cultivated nations, Christ ranks first of all the world. He did not teach by human methods. All others have had to prove the words they spoke. Christ simply and directly uttered truths, and His hearers saw that there was no contradicting Him. He did not speculate about God. He simply revealed the Father, and men felt that His words were true. Others had taught virtue before Christ. But how different was their teaching! Note especially Christ's dealings with the poor. Christ was the first poor man's philosopher. And now, after eighteen centuries of weary strife and struggle, we are just beginning to see the

transcendent wisdom of such a course of action. 2. His boldness in teaching. His mission was world-wide. Having never seen a map of this earth, He comes forth from the carpenter's shop to inaugurate a kingdom more extensive than the sway of Alexander, more lasting than the firmament itself. And history is showing its success. He was the greatest reformer that ever lived. But He never started wild theories for facts to make sad havoc with. He laid down those principles of love, of doing to others as we would have them do to us, of righteousness, purity, truth, and justice, the same for rich and poor, those principles which alone can heal the wounds of society in the future as alone they have healed them in the past. Observe, too, the calmness of Jesus, under all circumstances. He was always calm, because He knew that in the long run He would succeed.

3. The consistency of His life with His doctrine. To preach a low standard of morality and live up to it is easy. But Christ's standard is the very highest. Yet He lived up to it. All other teachers confess their shortcomings. Christ never does. Observe, too, the harmony of His character. All virtues unite in Him, and none in excess. Is not His name wonderful? II. HIS INNOCENCE AND SINLESSNESS. Most marvellous is His character in this respect. All our goodness begins with repentance. Not so His. He puts before us the highest form of morality, "Be ye therefore perfect." But He never hints that He has need of penitence for shortcomings. Further, Jesus claims to be sinless, though He is full of sincerity and meekness. Now, no man could sham perfect holiness. No faulty man could claim to be faultless without soon displaying faults that would cover him with derision. Piety without an ounce of repentance, without any confession of sin, without one tear! Let any man try that sort of piety, and see how soon his assumed righteousness will appear most impudent conceit. When we think of His sinlessness, we must say, "His name is Wonderful."

III. HIS INFLUENCE OVER OTHER MEN. 1. His influence as a Teacher is wonderful. We see in ethics far more than Socrates did. We see further in theology than Luther. Mathematicians have gone far beyond Euclid. Our children will see further than we do. But eighteen centuries have passed since the sun of humanity rose to its zenith in Jesus Christ; and what man, or what body of men, has mastered His thought and come up to His teachings, far less gone in advance of Him? 2. Observe the total change in the moral life of those who have accepted this Teacher. And His influence came from Himself. He was not supported by the authority of the Rabbis. He was in opposition to all the religious prejudices of His day. From a most sectarian nation, He was most unsectarian, proposing to found a universal kingdom embracing all nations, a religion for all the earth. 3. The influence of His Church. Villainous misdeeds have been done in the name of His Church. But the true Church never did these things, and her influence has been most beautiful. The world has never been the same since the holy steps of Jesus trod the soil of Palestine, and His sacred tears bedewed Mount Olivet. The hospital is an invention of Christian philanthropy. The degradation of woman, of which the pagan world was full, has been exchanged for a position of peculiar honour. The sensualism which paganism mistook for love has been put under the ban of true Christian feeling, and the chivalrous respect which all good men have for pure women, and the poetry of holy love, have come from the teachings of Jesus and His apostles. The old and universal sentiment of bitter hostility between races and nations is denounced in the severest terms, and has been largely toned down by Christianity. Look again at the enthusiasm which this wonderful Teacher instilled into the early Christians. Jesus Christ Himself is a greater miracle than the raising of Lazarus from the dead. We have not yet assumed the truth of His miracles. Yet is it not idle to deny these? How can we separate Christ from His miracles? And this Divine Jesus, whose name is Wonderful, who has been the support of our fathers in the days of old, is with us still. We need this marvellous Being in the strife of Christian duty. (*F. W. Aveling, M.A., B.Sc.*) *Christ wonderful in His victories*:—1. Over the forces of nature. (1) The sea is a crystal sepulchre. It swallowed the Central America, the President, and the Spanish Armada, as easily as any fly that ever floated on it. The inland lakes are fully as terrible in their wrath. Recent travellers tell us that Galilee, when aroused in a storm, is overwhelming. And yet that sea crouched in His presence and licked His feet. He knew all the waves and the wind. When He beckoned, they came. When He frowned, they fled. The heel of His foot made no indentation on the solidified water. (2) Medical science has wrought great changes in rheumatic

limbs and diseased blood ; but when the muscles are entirely withered, no human power can restore them ; and when a limb is once dead, it is dead. But here is a paralytic—his hand lifeless. Christ says to him, "Stretch forth thy hand" ; and he stretches it forth. In the eye infirmary, how many diseases of that delicate organ have been cured ! But Jesus says to one born blind, "Be open ! " and the light of heaven rushes through gates that have never before been opened.

(3) The frost or an axe may kill a tree : but Jesus smites one dead with a word.

(4) Chemistry can do many wonderful things ; but what chemist, at a wedding when the refreshment gave out, could change a pail of water into a cask of wine ?

(5) What human voice could command a school of fish ? Yet here is a voice that marshals the scaly tribes, until, in the place where they had let down the net and pulled it up with no fish in it, they let it down again, and the disciples lay hold and begin to pull, when, by reason of the multitude of fish, the net brake.

2. Behold His victory over the grave. Here comes the Conqueror of death. He enters that realm, and says, "Daughter of Jairus, sit up ! " and she sat up. To Lazarus, "Come forth ! " and he came forth. To the widow's son He said, "Get up from that bier ! " and he goes home with his mother. Then Jesus snatched up the keys of death, and hung them to His girdle, and cried, until all the graveyards of the earth heard Him : "O death, I will be thy plagues ! O grave, I will be thy destruction ! " 3. But Christ's victories have only just begun. The world is His, and He must have it. (*T. De W. Talmage, D.D.*)

*The wonderful name*.—I. JESUS CHRIST IS THE MOST WONDERFUL BEING THIS WORLD EVER SAW. 1. Because of the number and character of the prophecies announcing His advent and mission. 2. Because of what He said of Himself. He distinctly declared that He existed before He was born. "Before Abraham was I am." Now, in the matter of natural birth, man is utterly without choice or control, nor is he consulted as to his coming, whether it shall be now or in the future, this place or that. But Jesus Christ declared that He had perfect control in all these matters,—control in coming, and control in going,—"No man taketh away My life. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." He actually said He was God. He invited all to come to Him for pardon and eternal life, and declared that, if they did not so come, they should all die in their sins. He said He had power to call to His aid "twelve legions of angels," who would gladly tender Him celestial protection, if required. 3. Because of what He did. His life was filled with deeds of sympathy and self-sacrificing benevolence. He assumed and exerted perfect control, both in the physical and moral world.

4. Because of what He was. "Great is the mystery of godliness ; God manifest in the flesh." Omnipotence clothed in frailty. II. JESUS CHRIST IS THE MOST WONDERFUL BEING IN HEAVEN. Not that He is an intruder, or a new-comer. He was at home in heaven, and dwelt amid the undivided glory of His Godhead before man or angel was created. He is the most "wonderful" Being in heaven because of—1. His history. He has a history of honour and glory in heaven, and a history of unspeakable sorrow and suffering on earth. 2. His relationship. He appears in heaven in the unique relationship of Brother and Redeemer of our race, and Son of God. 3. His work. Through the glorified human lips of Jesus Christ the Divine mandates for the control of the universe are now uttered. The feet once spiked to the Cross now rest upon the throne. Through the Person and work of this wonderful Being, redeemed humanity is elevated to the very Person and throne of the Deity. (*T. Kelly.*)

*Christ wonderful in the magnetism of His person*.—After the battle of Antietam, when a general rode along the lines, although the soldiers were lying down exhausted, they rose with great enthusiasm and huzzaed. As Napoleon returned from his captivity, his first step on the wharf shook all the kingdoms, and two hundred and fifty thousand men joined his standard. It took three thousand troops to watch him in his exile. So there have been men of wonderful magnetism of person. But hear me while I tell you of a poor young man who came up from Nazareth to produce a thrill such as has never been excited by any other. (*T. De W. Talmage, D.D.*)

*The birth of the "Wonderful"*.—Christmas marks the birthtime of the matchless Christ. In what respect was He wonderful ? I. WONDERFUL IN CHARACTER. II. WONDERFUL IN HIS TEACHING. III. WONDERFUL AS TO HIS MISSION. (*B. F. Grenoble.*)

*No extravagance in Christ*.—No one can at all appreciate the wonderfulness of Christ who does not consider its freedom from the merely marvellous. Has not the element of wonder in human history always had as its drawback and bane the tendency to extravagance ? It cannot keep within bounds. Its



disease is unnaturalness, exaggeration, grotesqueness. It piles marvel on marvel, outraging all sense of proportion. It defies every feeling of the ludicrous. It delights in trampling on the understanding, and finds a merit and satisfaction in receiving the monstrous and contradictory. Is not this the characteristic of all mythologies, and not least of the history of Buddha, whom some have ventured to mention along with Christ? The wonderfulness of Christ is not marvellous. It is not something to astonish. It has a meaning and a purpose prior to that and above it. His is not the marvellousness of the aurora borealis, but of the eastern aurora, the dawn. It is not the marvellousness of an architectural monument meant to exhibit the resources of art and wealth, but the architecture of a temple for God and man to dwell in. His is not the marvellousness of a gigantic tree, but of the tree of life producing medicine and food; not the splendour of a vast orb of fire, but of the sun that rays out life to the worlds. There is no part of Christ's wonderfulness which does not serve a great end and occupy a distinct and necessary place. (*J. Leckie, D.D.*)

*His name—Wonderful:—*I. Christ shall be called Wonderful FOR WHAT HE WAS IN THE PAST. 1. Consider His eternal existence, "begotten of His Father from before all worlds," being of the same substance with His Father; begotten, not made, co-equal, co-eternal, in every attribute, "very God of very God." 2. Consider, again, the incarnation of Christ, and you will rightly say that His name deserveth to be called Wonderful. 3. Trace the Saviour's course, and all the way He is wonderful. 4. Christ is surpassingly wonderful. 5. He is not a nine days' wonder. He is and ever shall be wonderful. He is altogether wonderful. 6. He is universally wondered at. II. He is Wonderful FOR WHAT HE IS IN THE PRESENT. III. His name shall be called Wonderful IN THE FUTURE. As the Judge. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

*Counsellor.—Christ the Counsellor:—*This syllable of His name refers to His singular capacity for management of matters. Other princes must have their counsellors, by whose

advice they may act: but He Himself is, and shows Himself to be, Counsellor, an oracle of government, a Prince in whose own breast is the oracle for right management of all things relating to His dominion. I. IN WHAT RESPECTS IS CHRIST THE COUNSELLOR? 1. He is of the secret council of heaven (*Zech. vi. 13*). He is a member of the cabinet-council of heaven, to which the most favourite angel is not admitted. There is nothing transacted there, nor has been from eternity, but what He is acquainted with (*John v. 20*). With His Father and the Spirit He is of the council. 2. He is the oracle of counsel for the earth (*John i. 18; Matt. xi. 27*). (1) He is the Counsellor of the world of men. (a) In respect of office. (b) Of capacity (*Col. ii. 3*). (2) He is the Counsellor of the visible Church. (a) He consults her interest, for her protection and preservation in the world. (b) He is still actively counselling her by His Word. (3) He is the Counsellor of the invisible Church, and of every particular believer in it.

II. WHAT IS THE IMPORT OF THIS PART OF CHRIST'S NAME? 1. He is of singular wisdom for the conduct and management of affairs (*Isa. xi. 2, 3*). The fulness of the Spirit of wisdom is lodged in Him. He is wisdom itself, the eternal wisdom of the Father (*Prov. viii.*). And His children are wisdom's children (*Matt. xi. 19*). 2. He is a Prince of great and noble designs and projects, requiring counsel and wisdom (*1 Tim. ii. 5, 6; Psa. xlix. 7, 8; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19; John xvii. 24*). 3. He can manage all by Himself and needs no counsel of men. The name of the wisest on earth may be Consulter (*Prov. xi. 14*). But He is so far a Counsellor that He is a consulter of none (*Rom. xi. 34*). (1) His understanding is infinite. (2) His counsels were all concerted before we had a being. (3) The execution of them was begun entirely without us. (4) How often have we seen that our counsels, had they been mixed with those of the great Counsellor, would have marred all? 4. His manner of conduct and method of management are deep and uncommon (*Matt. xiv. 25, &c.*). 5. He does nothing without a becoming reason. 6. He manages all with a depth of wisdom. 7. He is the best Counsellor—there is none like Him.

III. IMPROVEMENT. 1. Take Him for your Counsellor, renouncing all other. (1) Renounce your own wisdom. (2) Renounce the counsel of the world. (3) Take Christ for your Counsellor, instead of all other (*Isa. lv. 4*). 2. Follow the counsel that He is giving you. He is counselling you in the Gospel—(1) To believe in Himself. (2) To be holy. 3. Make use of Christ as a Counsellor, by consulting Him daily. (*T. Boston.*)

*Christ the best Counsellor:—*I. CONFIRM THE TRUTH OF THIS ASSERTION. 1. He is of the Father's choice and nomination for a Counsellor to us—"made of God unto us wisdom." 2. He is the saints' choice in all ages for a Counsellor. 3. He never misses the point in

His counselling. **II. WHEREIN DOTHTH CHRIST COUNSEL SINNERS?** 1. In their greatest concerns, their concerns for eternity. 2. In their lesser concerns, the things of time. **III. HOW DOTHTH CHRIST GIVE HIS COUNSEL?** 1. He proposes His counsel in and by His Word. 2. He clears and opens and confirms it by His providence. 3. He makes it effectual by His Holy Spirit. (*Ibid.*) *Christ the Counsellor*:—Christ is our Counsellor upon a threefold account—1. As He hath rectified our notions of the Deity and turned us from the worship of dumb idols, to serve the living and true God. 2. As He hath taught us the truths of the moral law, and the real difference between good and evil. 3. As He hath instructed us in the means whereby we may obtain everlasting salvation. (*W. Reading, M.A.*) *Messiah the Counsellor*:—The word is employed in the Bible frequently of those who assisted in the councils of kings. Jonathan, the uncle of David, was called “a wise counsellor” to his prince; Ahithophel, the wisest man of his day, was termed “the king’s counsellor,” the king’s adviser. And thus it is constantly employed of a person giving sound and wise advice. The name, then, evidently implies these three things respecting Him—I. **THAT HE SHOULD POSSESS ADEQUATE WISDOM.** 1. When He came into the world He descended from the bosom of God. 2. As He was acquainted with God, He was acquainted with man. He “searches the reins and the hearts.” He therefore has wisdom enough to guide His people through time to eternity, and to be their most effectual and safest Counsellor. **II. THAT HE SHOULD COMMUNICATE THIS WISDOM BY POSITIVE INSTRUCTION.** And this includes the fulfilment of an earlier promise, made by Moses to the Church of God, “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, like unto me.” Jesus came, then, to be this Prophet, to speak with authority from God, and thus to communicate that instruction to mankind, and especially to believers, which was needful for their welfare. He came, according to the Divine appointment, to reveal the character of God, which He knew; to communicate to mankind that amount of knowledge respecting God which they were capable of receiving. He could therefore say repeatedly, when He was upon earth, that He had manifested the name of God (that is, His character) to His disciples, who received His instruction. **III. THAT HE SHOULD URGE AND PERSUADE MEN TO RECEIVE THAT INSTRUCTION.** The Lord Jesus Christ still communicates His Spirit to men, in order to open their understandings and their hearts; just as He did when at the outpouring of His Spirit on the day of Pentecost three thousand were subdued at once by the Gospel, and disregarding all the differences in their circumstances, and putting away from them all considerations of worldly ease or comfort altogether, at once embraced the Gospel of Christ,—just as much does Jesus Christ now communicate His Spirit, to subdue men to Himself, and is thus their effectual Counsellor. He has given instruction by His Word, but He makes that instruction effectual by His Spirit. (*B. W. Noel, M.A.*) *His name—the Counsellor*:—It was by a counsellor that this world was ruined. Did not Satan mask himself in the serpent, and counsel the woman, with exceeding craftiness, that she should take unto herself of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, in the hope that thereby she should be as God? It was meet that the world should have a Counsellor to restore it, if it had a counsellor to destroy it. But mark the difficulties that surrounded such a Counsellor. 'Tis easy to counsel mischief; but how hard to counsel wisely! **I. Christ may well be called Counsellor, for He is a COUNSELLOR WITH GOD.** It hath been revealed to us that before the world was, when as yet God had not made the stars, the Almighty did hold a solemn conclave with Himself; Father, Son, and Spirit held a mystic council with each other, as to what they were about to do. **II. Christ is a Counsellor in the sense which the LXX. translation appends to this term.** He is said to be **THE ANGEL OF THE GREAT COUNCIL.** Do you and I want to know what was said and done in the great council of eternity? There is only one glass through which we can look back to the dim darkness of the shrouded past and read the counsels of God, and that glass is the Person of Jesus Christ. You may find out whether you are among His chosen ones. Christ is the Angel of the covenant, and you can find it out by looking to Him. **III. CHRIST IS A COUNSELLOR TO US.** A man without a counsellor, I think, must of necessity go wrong. Woe unto the man that hath got a bad counsellor. 1. Christ is a necessary Counsellor. 2. Christ’s counsel is faithful counsel. How often do our friends counsel us craftily! 3. Christ’s counsel is hearty counsel. 4. Christ has special counsels for each of us. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **The mighty God.—Christ the mighty God:—I. CHRIST IS**

**THE TRUE GOD.** 1. The Scripture expressly calls Him so (John i. 1; Acts xx. 28; Rom. ix. 5; 1 John v. 20). 2. The attributes of God, distinguishing Him from all created beings, are ascribed to Him. 3. The works peculiar to God alone are done by Him and ascribed to Him. 4. Divine worship, which must be given to God alone, is due to Him. 5. He is equal with the Father.

**II. THE MAN CHRIST IS THE MIGHTY ONE.** 1. He does and has done works that no other could do. 2. He has all at His command in heaven and earth, whether created persons or things. 3. Being God as well as man His power is infinite. **III. APPLICATION.** 1. This serves to refute the heresy of those who impugn the supreme Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2. It speaks terror to all the enemies of Christ. 3. It speaks comfort to the Church and every believer in their low estate. 4. It serves to exhort all to take Him for their Prince.

(*T. Boston.*) *His name—the mighty God.*—Other translations of this Divine title have been proposed by several very eminent and able scholars. Not that they have any of them been prepared to deny that this translation is after all most accurate; but rather that whilst there are various words in the original, which we render by the common appellation of “God,” it might be possible so to interpret this as to show more exactly its definite meaning. One writer, for example, thinks the term might be translated “The Irradiator,”—He who gives light to men. Some think it bears the meaning of “The Illustrious,”—the bright and the shining One. Still there are very few, if any, who are prepared to dispute the fact that our translation is the most faithful that could possibly be given—“the mighty God.”

**I. THE FOLLY OF THOSE WHO PROFESS TO BE THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST, YET DO NOT, AND WILL NOT, CALL HIM GOD.** It is His being verily God, that frees Him from the charge of blasphemy. It is the fact that He is God, and that His Godhead is not to be denied, that makes His death an unrighteous decide at the hand of apostate man, and renders it, as before God, an acceptable sacrifice for the sins of the people.

**II. HOW DO WE CALL CHRIST, “THE MIGHTY GOD”?** It is our delight and our privilege to attribute to Him the attributes of Deity. 1. In hours of devout contemplation how often do we look up to Him as being the eternal Son. In doing so we have virtually called Him the mighty God; because none but God could have been from everlasting to everlasting. 2. How frequently do we repeat over to ourselves that precious verse, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” Do you not see that you have in fact called Him God, because none but God is immutable? 3. Is it not also our joy to believe that wherever two or three are gathered together in Christ’s name, there is He in the midst of them? Have we not ascribed to Christ omnipresence, and who can be omnipresent but God? How is it possible for us to dream of Him as being in the bosom of His Father, with the angels, and in the hearts of the contrite all at the same time, if He be not God? 4. We call Him “the mighty God” in many of His offices. (1) Mediator between God and man. There is no mediatorship unless the hand is put on both, and who could put his hand on God but God? (2) Saviour. I could not put my trust in any being that was merely created. **III. HOW CHRIST HAS PROVED HIMSELF TO US TO BE “THE MIGHTY GOD.”** This Child born, this Son given, came into the world to enter the lists against sin. For thirty years and upwards He had to struggle against temptations more numerous and terrible than man had ever known before. And yet, without sin or taint of sin, more than conqueror He stood. We know also that Christ proved Himself to be “the mighty God” from the fact that at last all the sins of all His people were gathered upon His shoulders, and “He bare them in His own body on the tree.” But He did more than this—when He led captivity captive, and crushed death and ground his iron limbs to powder, He proved Himself then the mighty God. Oh, my soul, thou canst say that He has proved Himself in thy heart to be a mighty God. I beg and beseech of you all, come and put your trust in Jesus Christ; He is the mighty God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Jesus the mighty God.*—**I. HE OF WHOM THE PROPHET SPEAKS IS THE MIGHTY GOD.** **II. IN WHAT SENSE THE CHILD BORN MAY BE CALLED “THE MIGHTY GOD.”** Not that the humanity is deified, or the Deity humanised. Humanity is still humanity, Deity is still Deity. But so united in one person that that which is peculiar to one nature is often ascribed to the other (Acts xx. 28; John iii. 13). **III. THE GREATNESS OF HIS ACTS IN REGARD TO THAT CHURCH TO WHOM HE IS GIVEN.** 1. He bare her sins. And had He not been the mighty God, as well as man, He never could. 2. Besides this, He wrought out a perfect righteousness for His Church. He conquered all

her enemies, sin, Satan, and the world, those three strong ones. 3. He converts the hardest heart, working mightily by His own gracious Almighty Spirit. 4. He supports the feeblest grace, carries on the work which He has begun. What mighty effects He accomplishes by the simplest means! He bears up the most timid and desponding spirit, binds up with His own hand, by His own Spirit, with His own blood. 5. And what shall we say of that mighty God, in all His mighty doings, when He shall raise the dead, judge the world, destroy sin, and in the new heavens and the new earth give His saints the eternal possession of Himself, and of God in Himself? (*J. H. Evans, M.A.*) *Jesus the mighty God*.—The surrounding nations, Egypt and Assyria, gave great names to their gods. Look upon the inscriptions on the pillars in the time of Sargon. One Assyrian king was called “The great king, the king unrivalled; the protector of the just; the noble warrior.” If Isaiah wrote in a time of great names he, by this conception of an appellation, threw all other cognomens into contempt. “The mighty God.” The word is not *Elohim*, a word under which a species of sub-divinity could be classified: “Said I not unto you, Ye are gods?” That word is *El*, a word which is never applied but to Jehovah, and which is never used but as connoting the innermost essence of ineffable Deity. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **The everlasting Father.**—*The everlasting Father*.—The tender, faithful, and wise trainer, guardian, and provider of His own in eternity (chap. xxii. 21). (*F. Delitzsch.*) *The everlasting Father*.—Abiding in protection, as the Father of His people. (*B. Blake, B.D.*) *Christ the everlasting Father*.—I. IN WHAT RESPECTS CHRIST IS THE EVERLASTING FATHER. II. WHAT A FATHER HE IS. III. IMPROVE THE SUBJECT. (*T. Boston.*) *Christians bear Christ's image*.—1. Conformity to Christ in His holiness. 2. Conformity to Christ in His sufferings. (*Ibid.*) *Jesus the everlasting Father*.—I. CHRIST IS CALLED FATHER. 1. Not in respect to the eternal Three. He is the Son in this point of view. 2. But as one with Him, and the Eternal Spirit, in the unity of the same Godhead. 3. He is the Father of His people. “He shall see His seed” (Isa. liii. 10). 4. He is their spiritual life (Gal. ii. 20). II. HE IS CALLED THE EVERLASTING FATHER. He ever lives. He is Life. He ever loves. His blessings are everlasting. (*J. H. Evans, M.A.*) *The everlasting Father*.—To be the “Father of eternity” is to have eternity, and to rule in eternity—to be the Lord of eternity. That is the meaning of it; and so Christ Jesus, who hath the government upon His shoulders, hath it on His shoulders for ever and for ever. But the eternity spoken of here is not the eternity that is bygone; it is the ongoing and unending duration that lies before us, and Christ Jesus is Lord and Ruler of all. No doubt He who can hold the future eternity in His hand, and who can rule all its affairs, must have been Himself the Unbeginning and Eternal One; and the Scriptures leave no doubt about that being the attribute of the Lord Jesus Christ. But that august tribute of being “from everlasting to everlasting” is not what is strictly before us here. It is the duration from the time that Christ became human onwards. I. Jesus Christ is the Father of the eternity that lies before and goes on, because He Himself lives for ever. He is POSSESSOR; He has it (Psa. cii. 25-27, and Heb. i. 10-12). The fact that the Lord Jesus Christ in humanity is to live for ever is a stupendous expectation and belief. Sometimes it has seemed to me as if it were more wonderful than the mere incarnation. That this is an important thought appears from two considerations. 1. It is a part of the Divine promise of the Father to the Lord Jesus Christ (Isa. liii. 10). 2. It is a thing for which Christ Himself prayed as part of His Father's promise (Psa. xxi. 4). And so the Lord Jesus Christ thus in human nature lives for ever and ever. But that implies that His work was finished to the Father's satisfaction; to live for ever was a proof that God the Father regarded Christ's work as finished—this same title, “Father of eternity,” hath in germ within it the great facts of Christ's resurrection and ascension and session in glory. And so when John, in Apocalyptic vision, beheld Him as the Son of man, he heard Him thus speak: “Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, amen; and have the keys of Hades and of death.” Application.—1. To God's people. What a Saviour they have! They need never fear that they will be without His care. They could not find a world in all the universe where He is not with them, and they cannot live on to any age when He shall cease to be their light and King. 2. The same thing brings comfort to every sinner; for is it not written, “He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” ?

Mark, it does not say "seeing He died"—if that is all that could have been said, it would not have ever availed for the comfort and salvation of sinners—but seeing that, having died, "He ever liveth to make intercession for them." II. The Lord Jesus Christ is **ORIGINATOR** of this age that is spoken of. He made this "forever," and gave it its grand characteristic; and all Gospel privilege that belongs to time, and all celestial enjoyment that belongs to eternity, we owe to Him. III. Jesus Christ is **CONTROLLER** in this eternal age; the administration of its whole affairs is in His hands. The Author of our faith is the Ruler of its progress, and that not on earth alone, but in heaven. Can you doubt it, that when the Lord Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, went back to the glory that He had with the Father before the world began, went back in human nature, and appeared among the saints in heaven—can you doubt that from that hour heaven was another thing even to the glorified, because the Lord that brought them there by His blood was amongst them? And so, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we read that we are come to the "spirits of just men made perfect," which means to the Old Testament Church, perfected now in privilege; for at the 13th verse of the eleventh chapter it is expressly said, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off." God willed that He should "provide some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect,"—that heaven itself should not, in privilege and glory, even to the saints that had gone home, be perfect until Christ Himself had introduced a new age, and gone Himself to heaven. (*J. Edmond, D.D.*) *His name—the everlasting Father* :—How complex is the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ! Almost in the same breath the prophet calls Him a "Child," and a "Counsellor," a "Son," and the "everlasting Father." This is no contradiction, and to us scarcely a paradox, but it is a mighty marvel. How forcibly this should remind us of the necessity of carefully studying and rightly understanding the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ! We must not suppose that we shall understand Him at a glance. A look will save the soul, but patient meditation alone can fill the mind with the knowledge of the Saviour. The light of the text divides itself into three rays—Jesus is "everlasting"; He is a "Father"; He is the "everlasting Father." I. Jesus Christ is **EVERLASTING**. Of Him we may sing, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." A theme for great rejoicing on our part. 1. Jesus always was. 2. So also He is for evermore the same. Jesus is not dead; He ever liveth to make intercession for us. 3. Jesus, our Lord, ever shall be. The connection of the word "Father" with the word "everlasting" allows us very fairly to remark that our Lord is as everlasting as the Father, since He Himself is called "the everlasting Father"; for whatever antiquity paternity may imply is here ascribed to Christ. It is the manner of the Easterns to call a man the father of a quality for which he is remarkable. To this day, among the Arabs, a wise man is called "the father of wisdom"; a very foolish man "the father of folly." The predominant quality in the man is ascribed to him as though it were his child, and he the father of it. Now, the Messiah is here called in the Hebrew "the Father of eternity," by which is meant that He is pre-eminently the possessor of eternity as an attribute. II. We come to the difficult part of the subject, namely, Christ being called **FATHER**. In what sense is Jesus a Father? Answer 1. He is federally a Father, representing those who are in Him, as the head of a tribe represents his descendants. The grand question for us is this, Are we still under the old covenant of works? If so, we have Adam to our father, and under that Adam we died. But are we under the covenant of grace? If so, we have Christ to our Father, and in Christ shall we be made alive. In this sense, then, Christ is called Father; and inasmuch as the covenant of grace is older than the covenant of works, Christ is, while Adam is not, "the everlasting Father"; and inasmuch as the covenant of works as far as we are concerned passes away, being fulfilled in Him, and the covenant of grace never passes but abideth for ever, Christ, as the Head of the new covenant, the federal representative of the great economy of grace, is "the everlasting Father." 2. Christ is a Father in the sense of a Founder. The Hebrews are in the habit of calling a man a father of a thing which he invents. For instance, in the fourth chapter of Genesis Jubal is called the father of such as handle the harp and organ; Jubal was the father of such as dwell in tents, and have cattle; not that these were literally the fathers of such persons, but the inventors of their occupations. The Lord Jesus Christ is, in this sense, the Father of a wonderful system—a great doctrinal system; a great practical system; a system of salvation. 3. Now there is a

third meaning. The prophet may not so have understood it, but we so receive it, that Jesus is a Father in the great sense of a Life-giver. That is the main sense of "father" to the common mind. Everything in us calls Christ "Father." He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. If we love Him, it is because He first loved us. If we patiently endure, it is by considering "Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself." He it is who waters and sustains all our graces. We may say of Him, "All my fresh springs are in Thee." The Spirit brings us the water from this well of Bethlehem, but Jesus is the well itself.

4. The term implies that Jesus Christ is to be in the future, the patriarch of an age. So Pope in his famous poem of the Messiah understands it, and calls Him, "the promised Father of the future age." 5. Christ may be called a Father in the loving and tender sense of a father's office. God is called the Father of the fatherless, and Job says of himself, that he became a father to the poor. Now, albeit that the Spirit of adoption teaches us to call God our Father, yet it is not straining truth to say that our Lord Jesus Christ exercises to all His people a Father's part. According to the old Jewish custom the elder brother was the father of the family in the absence of the father; the firstborn took precedence of all, and took upon him the father's position; so the Lord Jesus, the firstborn among many brethren, exercises to us a father's office. Is it not so? Has He not succoured us in all time of our need as a father succours his child? Has He not supplied us with more than heavenly bread as a father gives bread unto his children? Does He not daily protect us, nay, did He not yield up His life that we His little ones might be preserved? Is He not the head in the household to us on earth, abiding with us, and has He not said, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come unto you"? As if His coming was the coming of a Father. If He be a Father, will we not give Him honour? If He be the head of the household, will we not give Him obedience? III. We weigh the words, "EVERLASTING FATHER." Christ is called "the everlasting Father" because He does not Himself, as a Father, die or vacate His office. He is still the federal Head and Father of His people; still the Founder of Gospel truth and of the Christian system; not allowing popes to be His vicars and to take His place. He is still the true Life-giver, from whose wounds and by whose death we are quickened; He reigns even now as the patriarchal King; He is still the loving family Head; and so, in every sense, He lives as a Father. But here is a sweet thought. He neither Himself dies, nor becomes childless. He does not lose His children. He is the Author of an eternal system. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

**The Prince of Peace.**—*The Prince of Peace*:—How peaceful was the scene when the first Sabbath shone upon this world! How peaceful was the scene of man's Sabbatism when sin entered to revolutionise it! It is a work of magnitude to which the Redeemer stands appointed when He is presented in the character of a pacificator to bring this strife to a happy conclusion for man.

I. WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS OF CHRIST FOR ACTING AS THE PRINCE OF PEACE? 1. His original personal excellence as the Only-begotten of the Father. 2. His Father's ordination of Him to the office. 3. The meritoriousness of His work when substituted in the room of sinners. 4. The station to which He has been exalted and the executive power which has been lodged in His hand. 5. The fervency with which His heart is dedicated to the attainment of His object. Assemble, then, together these various items of qualification, and howsoever dreadful be the war in which man is naturally so unequally engaged, here we have a Prince all-sufficient to reduce it to peace in behalf of those who may accept His aid. That aid He offers to all.

II. THE PRINCIPAL ARTICLES OF THAT PEACE OF WHICH CHRIST IS, OR SHALL YET BE, THE MINISTERING PRINCE TO ALL THAT BELIEVE ON HIM. 1. The fundamental article of this great pacification is that He hath reconciled God to them. The principal idea conveyed in the text we maintain to be that God has in Christ devised a scheme whereby He may consistently leave off His anger, and not impute to mankind their trespasses. 2. In Christ we cease to war against ourselves. The sinner's follies, his passions, his evil conscience, destroy him. By the gifts of the Spirit which He has secured for His people, He restrains, subdues, and controls their passions and appetites, through the lawlessness of which men so frequently bring ruin on their persons, their characters, and their fortunes; and altogether, so does He incline them to their duty that their conscience ceases to torment them with its upbraidings and shall even invigorate and gladden them with the smiles of its complacency.

3. Our Prince hath reconciled to us the angels. When the human race rebelled,

zealous as they are for God, they participated in the wrath of their King, disowned man as their brother, and became the willing executors of His wrath. But when God becomes the Friend of the believer, the angels hasten to salute him as a recovered fellow-subject and brother, and resume their emulousness of the honour to be made the ministering spirits of his salvation. 4. By the Prince of Peace reconciliation is effected between Jew and Gentile. 5. The fifth article of pacification is the general reconcilment of man to man, the destruction of selfishness, and the diffusion of benevolence. (*W. Anderson, LL.D.*) *Christ the Prince of Peace*.—I. **PEACEFUL OF DISPOSITION.** 1. He bears long with His enemies. 2. He bears much at the hands of His friends. 3. He is easy of access for poor sinners. 4. He is ready to forgive. 5. He is very familiar with His true subjects. 6. The afflicting of His people is, as it were, against the grain with Him (Lam. iii. 33; 1 Pet. i. 6; Heb. xii. 10; Isa. lxiii. 9). 7. He bore His own sufferings with the utmost peaceableness, meekness, and patience. II. **PEACEFUL IN ACTION.** Consider—1. What peace is effected by this Prince of Peace? (1) Peace with God. (2) Peace among men. (3) Peace within men, peace of conscience. 2. What is His work about that threefold peace? (1) He purchased it by His precious blood. (2) He makes the peace of His own efficacy. The covenant of grace is the covenant of peace, and He is the Mediator of it. He does, by His Spirit, bring the sinner into the covenant of peace, and by His intercession obtains peace with God for him. He, by the same Spirit, unites men to Himself by faith, and to one another in love. (3) He maintains the peace made. (4) He restores the peace when at any time it is disturbed (Isa. lvii. 18). (5) He perfects the peace. III. **PEACEFUL IN RESPECT OF THE STATE OF HIS KINGDOM.** He is the true Solomon (Peaceful); and no king of Israel had such a peaceable and prosperous reign as Solomon. 1. Every one of His subjects is, by His wise management, put in a state of peace (John xvi. 33). 2. The peace of His kingdom is the fruit of war and victory in that war. What made Solomon's reign so peaceable was David's wars and victories. Our Lord Christ was a man of war; He fought and overcame sin, death, and the devil; and the peace of His kingdom now is the fruit of that. 3. Hence in His kingdom is the greatest wealth and abundance. 4. The good of His kingdom is advanced from all quarters, and there is nothing but is turned to the profit thereof, by the infinite wisdom of the Prince (Rom. viii. 28). 5. In the end the peace of His kingdom will be absolute. Solomon's reign was more peaceable in the beginning than toward the end. But Christ's kingdom is contrariwise; though, indeed, it will never end. But, at last, all occasion of disturbance, from without or from within, will be utterly cut off. (*T. Boston.*) *Christ the Prince of Peace*.—1. We learn from the Roman historians, that at the time of our Lord's nativity, the temple of Janus at Rome was shut up, in token of a profound peace all over the world; for the Romans, being then lords of the world, had power to make peace or war as they pleased. But there was a special providence of God in it, that His blessed Son, "the Prince of Peace," should be brought into the world in such a season of tranquillity. Accordingly we hear the angels proclaiming at His nativity, "Peace on earth, and goodwill towards men." 2. When He came to preach the Gospel, He began His sermon, with "Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are the meek, blessed are the peacemakers; bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." He calls upon His disciples to learn of Him to be meek and lowly in heart, that they might find rest for their souls. When He was apprehended and brought to His trial, He practised His own doctrine of meekness and patience. And when St. Peter drew his sword in His defence, He commanded him to put it up again, "for," says He, "all they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword." 3. When He took His leave of His disciples, He bequeathed peace to them, as the best legacy which He could leave them. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." At His various appearances among them after His resurrection, He commonly saluted them with the blessing of peace. 4. One great end of our Lord's coming into the world was, to break down the partition-walls between all nations, and take away all party distinctions from among men. 5. The most signal act which entitles our Lord to the character of the Prince of Peace, is this, that He has reconciled us to God, and made an atonement for the sins of the whole world. (*W. Reading, M.A.*) *Christ the Prince of Peace*.—I. **HE IS THE PEACE BRINGER**, as He is the revealer of His Father's peaceful designs towards His sinful creatures. 1. Point out the situation in which man stood in relation

to God. 2. The office of Christ as the bringer of peace reminds us how God might have acted in relation to man. 3. But His love prompted Him to a design of rich and sovereign mercy. 4. He has developed this design through the medium of His Son, who, therefore, takes His title from His work—the Prince of Peace.

**II. HE IS THE PEACEMAKER;** the efficient means of procuring and establishing peace between God and man. 1. His atonement made reconciliation for the sin of man. 2. By His mediatorial office He secures peace for us individually.

**III. HE IS A PRINCELY GIVER OF PEACE.** 1. It is a knowledge of His sacrifice which gives peace to the troubled conscience. 2. By Him we receive the grace of the Holy Spirit which gives peace from the power of sin. 3. He brings us into a state of communion with God, so that we enjoy peace. 4. The peace which Jesus gives endures through all troubles and in spite of all enemies. 5. He gives eternal peace and rest in heaven.

**IV. THE FOUNDATION AND SUPPORT OF HIS KINGDOM ON EARTH IS PEACE.** 1. It was founded without the intervention of violence or carnal weapons. 2. Its very essence consists in the influence of peaceful doctrines. 3. In the promotion of His kingdom He employs none but peaceable means. (*The Evangelist.*) *The Prince of Peace.*—**I. HE POSSESSES PEACE.** He possesses it as none other does, in greater measure, the abundance of it. It is all at His command. He is the Prince or Monarch of it. 1. He is in a world where the noise of our strife and tumult never reaches. Discord is never known there, change is never experienced. 2. And then we must try to get into His mysterious soul, and see the eternal calm which reigns there day after day, year after year, age after age, unbroken. All is as quiet within as around Him. And it is not the quiet of inaction or indifference, of a clod of earth or a stone; His mind is ever working and ever feeling, and with an energy which to us is inconceivable; but yet His mind is never ruffled. **II. HE EXERCISES PEACE.** 1. Look at Him as He trod our earth. The meek and quiet lamb was an image of Him. 2. He bears long with His enemies. 3. He bears much, too, with His friends. 4. There must, then, be a mighty inclination to peace where things are thus. **III. HE BESTOWS OR DISPENSES PEACE.** God is often called in Scripture the God of that which He communicates. In this way may our Lord be called the Prince of Peace. 1. Our peace with God flows from Him. 2. And peace, too, among men. 3. Peace of conscience and peace of mind are His gifts. **IV. HE DELIGHTS IN PEACE.** (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *Messiah, the Prince of Peace.*—Christ, our blessed Lord, does evidently by establishing peace in each bosom of His people, peace in each family of His disciples, peace in each congregation of His saints, and peace in all His Churches, lead directly to the establishment of international peace throughout the world. (*B. W. Noel, M.A.*) *Apparent contradictions.*—When we receive this prediction of our Lord, and reflect upon it, we are met with some contradictions to it, which are both apparent and most effectual. Our Lord, when He was upon earth, declared on the contrary—"I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword." Accordingly, He further told His disciples that they must expect to be "hated of all men," and to be "hated of all nations." He warned them, that the feuds that should arise through His doctrine, would poison the peace of families; "the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child." He warned them, that there should be public persecution as well as private, and that they should be dragged before governors and kings for His sake, and scourged in public. Universal war, then, rather than peace, seemed to be predicted as the result of the doctrine of Christ. And have not facts, up to this day, answered to these predictions? Ten imperial persecutions, extended over the most civilised parts of the world, threatened through three centuries the extermination of the Church of Christ: in which every atrocity was committed, and the barbarous ingenuity of man taxed to the utmost extent to devise new torments to make the servants of Jesus Christ suffer. And when heathenism was subdued by the power of the Gospel, and ceased to reign, it was only that this other prediction might be accomplished fearfully in the earth; so that the saints of Jesus Christ became His martyrs throughout Europe. Papal Rome succeeded to the enmity of pagan Rome: in the valleys of Piedmont, and along the plains of France, and throughout the Low Countries, and in England also, as well as, in the time of the Reformation, throughout Italy and Spain, everywhere accomplishing what Christ by His apostle had predicted, and bringing myriads of the saints of Jesus to public martyrdom; massacring without mercy the feeblest and the strongest, young and old, and threatening the extermination of the Church of Christ. And this



led to still more extensive offerings to the sanguinary dispositions of man; great and long protracted wars following these massacres. Witness the wars of the Hussites in Bohemia, the wars of the Huguenots in France, to mention no other civil commotions, to which the doctrine of Christ has seemed to lead. And then, when the sword was sheathed, and nation was not imbruing its hands in the blood of other nations for the sake of theology, even then the different Churches of Christ raged in enmity one towards the other: factions that have not ceased to this day, so that the governments of the world find questions of theology and ecclesiastical rivalry still mingling with the counsels of senates, and embarrassing all their decisions. Is this the peace which Christ came to produce? In what sense is He "the Prince of Peace"? (*Ibid.*) *The Prince of Peace not responsible for strife and violence*.—These evils that have arisen from the doctrine of Christ, and which, perhaps, have made that doctrine occasion more bloodshed than any single cause that has afflicted mankind, do not in the least degree detract from the glory of this great Monarch, this adorable Saviour, who after all establishes beyond all question at once, to the minds of all who believe on Him, His claim to be "the Prince of Peace," throughout the universe. If the servants of Jesus Christ were sent forth by Him as sheep among wolves, and the wolves have torn the sheep in every land, it is not the fault of the sheep that these raging persecutions have taken place. If He has sent forth His disciples to love one another, and to love all mankind, it is not the fault of Him, nor His doctrine, nor His people, if apostates from His faith have chosen to carry His abused name upon their foreheads, and under that name to persecute with a violence which would have stamped infamy even upon heathenism, those who loved Him and served Him the best in the earth. And, if those who have even followed Him with honesty of purpose, have yet been so ill instructed in His declared will, or have sinfully given way to the weakness of their tempers, so that those have quarrelled for ages, who by His express authority ought to have been one in Him, it is not to be ascribed to His doctrine, but to their faults. And all this evil, great as it unquestionably is, and though it has fed the mirth of the infidel age after age, is transitory still, preparatory still; and still does the strong and steadfast faith of His people carry forward their thought to that day when transient evil will only end in lasting good, and when, after all impediments have been swept away, He will still reign everywhere and always as "the Prince of Peace." (*Ibid.*) *All creation at war with the sinner*.—When God wars against the sinner, all creation must war. The earth wars against him in its barrenness, its poisons, its inundations, its earthquakes and volcanoes. The atmosphere wars against him in its storms and thunders, and winds breathing pestilence. The beasts war against him, thirsting for his blood, and pursuing him as their prey. His neighbour wars against him, slandering him, robbing him, oppressing him, and murdering him. The angels war against him, executing the judgments of their insulted King. He wars against himself, his own passions enslaving and destroying him, and his conscience stinging him with deadly remorse. The grave and hell have marked him for their victim. Oh, how beautiful, then, upon the mountains are the feet of Him that publisheth peace. (*W. Anderson, LL.D.*) *The good time coming*.—What a day that will be when museums shall be erected to preserve as curiosities the implements and accoutrements of war, that the children of the new age may study the old barbaric times which shall have passed away as a bad dream! (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The Prince of Peace*.—It would be ridiculous to depict the Lord Jesus with a rifle over His shoulder. (*Josiah Mee.*)

Ver. 7. **Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end.**—*The missionary work*.—I. WHAT IS THE WORK TO BE PERFORMED, AND WHOSE AGENCY SHALL ACCOMPLISH IT? 1. The missionary work is the increase of Messiah's government and peace: the proclamation of Messiah as King of kings and Lord of lords throughout the universe; the establishment of peace among men, because He hath made peace for them through the blood of His Cross. 2. "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." II. WHAT ARE THE INSTRUMENTS WHOM THE LORD OF HOSTS WILL EMPLOY IN THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THIS SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE WORK? They are themselves subjects of the kingdom which they aim to extend, and adorers of the one name which they desire to exalt, believers in the Word which they combine to diffuse, holding substantially the same truths, maintaining steadfastly some fellowship with those to whom the Lord Jesus proclaimed in the days of His flesh, "Go

ye," and to whom He graciously declared, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." III. WHAT IS OUR OWN DUTY AND OBLIGATION IN REFERENCE TO THIS WORK? As we are Britons, the missionary work belongs to us from our country; as we are Christians, from our profession; as we are churchmen, it appeals to us from our very prayers, for how can we implore our blessed Lord to bring home to His flock the infidel, the heretic, the beguiled Romanist, the benighted idolater, unless we are prepared, as far as in us lies, to "prepare the way of the Lord, and make in the desert a highway for our God"? But neither as Britons, nor as Christians, nor as churchmen, shall we ever learn our duty from any teacher but God's Word, or perform it through any power but that of God's Spirit. Besides, while the missionary work, being a work of faith, is therefore acceptable to God, it is also profitable to ourselves; it awakens brotherly affections, it kindles a holy zeal, it expands Christian charity, it brings us into communion with "the excellent of the earth," it cements our fellowship with each other, and with Christ; by engaging in it heart and soul, we not only apprehend the brotherhood of man, but we anticipate the brotherhood of heaven, when they shall "come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God." Nor is the missionary work profitable only to the heathen and to our own souls, but to those who dwell immediately around us. What we attempt abroad we shall never be content to leave undone at home. (*T. Dale, M.A.*) *The increase of His government*:—

I. THE INCREASE OF HIS GOVERNMENT. This implies—1. The extended diffusion of the knowledge of His Gospel. 2. The triumphs of His grace over the sin and misery of man. 3. The diffusion of the peaceful influence of the Gospel in calming the passions, and allaying the violence of unhappy men. 4. The annihilation of all that opposes His progress. II. HOW IS THE GOVERNMENT OF CHRIST TO INCREASE? By the agency of miracles? No; the age of miracles is gone. By the distribution of the Bible, and suitable tracts, by pious individuals? Doubtless this may be the means of great usefulness. By the education of the young? We look for something more than all this. How then shall it be increased? By the instrumentality of the preached Gospel accompanied by the influences of the Holy Spirit. III. WHERE IS THE NECESSITY OR CERTAINTY OF THIS INCREASE OF THE SAVIOUR'S GOVERNMENT? 1. In the Divine appointment. 2. In the claims of His mediatorial sacrifice (Phil. ii. 8-11). 3. In the very nature of His exaltation (Eph. i. 21, 22). 4. In the events which have taken place in the theatre of the world (Hag. ii. 7). 5. In the proofs with which we are furnished of the final evangelisation of the world. (*E. Parsons.*) *The government of the Prince of Peace*:—

I. THE VAST AMPLITUDE AND GROWING EXTENT OF THE MESSIAH'S KINGDOM. II. THE MEANS BY WHICH THE KINGDOM IS GROWING. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Christian peace conditional*:—"His government and peace." Note that combination. It contains a truth much needed in these times. There is no peace without government. Liberty and independence are our favourite watchwords; liberty for the community, liberty for the individual. Obedience, order, self-control, are less enthusiastically praised. Yet we cannot have the one without the other. We need no appeal to history, no *à priori* conjectures, to convince us of the truth, that peace and government must go hand in hand. The experience of our own times, the experience of each man's daily life, is ample to teach us that. Every newspaper we take up is full of such lessons. Every reproach of conscience tells the same. 1. Is it not so in the State? Whence comes the want of peace in our sister island? Whence come the perplexity and the insecurity which are such a stain on our civilisation, and which make statesmen well-nigh despair? Is it not because government has become impossible, while law is neutralised and defiled by the unscrupulous opposition of a rival and self-constituted power? 2. Is it not so in ourselves? Whence comes the want of peace in our own hearts? Is it not because of the want of government there; while passion, and self-indulgence, and the fashion of the world, usurp in turn the authority of conscience? What we fancy, what comes easiest to us, what other men do, these constitute our rule of life: not the dictates of conscience, not the will of God, not the example of Jesus Christ. We most of us wish for peace, as we most of us wish for heaven; but we take little means of winning either the one or the other. The cry for personal freedom, for liberty of thought and conscience, is on every lip; but we are most of us more eager to win the power of doing what we choose, than careful to choose what is best. Self-knowledge, self-control, self-renunciation—this is the only road.

And while you pursue it, liberty will come unsought; for the highest liberty of all is to be free from the tyranny of self. Self-government is only another name for that service which is perfect freedom. Perfect peace is found in the absolute surrender of self to One who cannot abuse so tremendous a trust. And with this peace in your own hearts you will almost without effort, almost without knowing it, bring peace to others. (*A. Plummer, M.A.*) "He will do it"—Charles, King of Sweden, father of the great Gustavus Adolphus, was an ardent Protestant, and purposed for his country more good than he was able to accomplish. His son, who gave early promise of his brilliant qualities, was his father's great hope. Often when a scheme of reformation, yet impracticable, was referred to, the king would lay his hand upon the boy's head and say to the bystanders, "He will do it." So with respect to all which cannot now be accomplished, our faith should look confidently to "Great David's greater Son," in whose reign it will surely be effected. (*Sunday School Teacher.*) "The empire is peace"—Napoleon, standing amid the ambassadors of Europe, reassured the entire continent by the utterance of his New Year's motto, "The empire is peace." But with far greater truth may we apply the words to Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, whose rule over the soul is the synonym of peace unspeakable and full of glory. And as His government spreads further and further over the soul, with its growing area there is growing peace, until they shall both become complete to all the heights, and depths, and breadths of blessedness. Of the increase of His government, and of our peace, there is no end. (*F. B. Meyer B.A.*) *Christ's influence ever increasing*.—Speaking on the day of Mr. Gladstone's funeral, the Rev. F. B. Meyer said: "One of the marks which distinguish Jesus Christ from every human teacher and reformer is the fact that His influence is ever increasing. The influence of Gladstone, to-day so great, will diminish year by year, but Jesus Christ's influence was never so great as it is now." *The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.*—*The zeal of the Lord*.—"The zeal" translates our English version, but no one English word will give it. It is that mixture of hot honour and affection to which "jealousy" in its good sense comes near. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *Claiming and reckoning*.—If we ask anything according to His will, we know that He hears us; and if we know that He hears us, we know that we have the petition that we desired of Him—not only that it will be ours, but that it is ours, to be used forthwith for His glory, because the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform it. 1. Are you in need of counsel? Reverently and thoughtfully claim the wisdom of the "Counsellor"; reckon that you have it, and act to the best of your judgment, believing that His wisdom is threading it with its unseen direction. And when you have acted, whatever be the results, dare to believe that you were directed to do the best thing, and never look back. 2. Are you in need of strength? Reverently and believingly claim the power of the "Mighty God," and reckon that it is yours; and go forth to any work to which He may call you, believing that you are adequately equipped. You will not know what power you have till you begin to use it. 3. Are you in need of unchanging love and affection, in a world of incessant disappointment, in which the warmest friendships cool, and the dearest friends die? Reverently and gladly avail yourself of the love of the "Father of the Ages," the I AM, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. 4. Do you want peace? Reverently and trustfully claim His peace, who is the "Prince of Peace"; and know that it is yours in the depths of your soul, though the surface of your life be still swept by storms. These are two great words—"claim" God's fulness, and "reckon" that whatever you can claim is yours, although no answering emotion assures you that it is. Dare to act in faith, stepping out in the assurance that you have what you have claimed, and doing just as you would do if you felt to have it. But this is only possible when you have put the government, where God the Father has placed it, on the shoulders of Jesus. It is there by right, but it must be also there by choice and acquiescence. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

Ver. 10. *The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones.*—*A drinking song*.—It has been conjectured that these words are a fragment of a drinking song actually sung in Ephraim. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Israel's presumption*.—In the first strophe Isaiah depicts the Ephraimites' proud superiority to danger, and their placid assurance after defeat: "The bricks," they say, "are fallen, but we will build with

hewn stone; the sycamores are cut down, but we will put cedars in their place": no sooner, in other words, has one scheme miscarried than they are prepared with a more magnificent one to take its place; no sooner is one dynasty overthrown than another rises in its stead. The proverb gives apt expression to the temper habitually displayed by the northern kingdom. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *The sycamore*:—The commonest tree in the lowlands of Palestine, by the Mediterranean Sea (1 Kings x. 27). (*Ibid.*) *Beautiful words of varying import*:—There cannot be two opinions about the beauty of these words. What, then, will be your surprise, when you find that they express nothing more than a wicked thought on the part of Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria? This circumstance gives us our first point. Noble mottoes may be written upon unworthy banners. Religious words may be pronounced by irreligious lips. We must always look at the surroundings of a circumstance in order to understand its full value. Every circumstance, like every globe, has an atmosphere of its own, hence the wisdom of looking at the context as well as at the text itself. How needful it is to inquire into the surroundings of anything that may charm us. If you have seen a man in church, his mouth opened in praise, his head inclined in prayer, surely you have a right to argue from that individual circumstance to the whole circle and bearing of his daily life. It is impossible that a man can have bowed his head in prayer, and then allow the devil to roam through the whole circle of his intellect, there to inspire evil thoughts. He cannot allow anything that is mean and unworthy to touch and debase the life that has been consecrated by prayer. You know how fallacious would be such reasoning! But the rule should be applied impartially, and therefore I hasten with the noblest interpretation which my judgment can approve to those who may have been caught in some moment of evil passion. Surely a man is not a bad man utterly because he has once been in high excitement. If the one little beauty does not redeem the whole sterile place, in the midst of which it was found, surely the one act of evil cannot spoil the whole paradise of the life, and blight a heart beautiful as a garden in summer. We may learn from these words that wickedness is not mitigated by the beauty of the language in which it is expressed. Is there anything lovelier in all the universe, possible to the inspired imagination, than poetry, painting, and music? Do they not carry with them all elements of beauty and all qualities of high and noble strength? Yet even they have been uncrowned, robbed of their nobleness, and bound down to do menial work in the devil's service. Let me guard the young, therefore, along this line. They will come from certain places and will say, "the music was so beautiful!" No doubt of it. They will come again and say, "the whole scene was so lovely!" No one questions its loveliness. "The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars,"—what language, what music could be more beautiful! And yet through this beautiful speech, Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria indicated their ambitious purpose to thwart the God of the universe! What would you say if I told you that this hand of mine was the hand of an assassin, but yet pleaded for it because of the jewel which flashed upon its fingers? Would you kiss a hand so decorated? Now, take the other view, and let us imagine beautiful words expressing a beautiful purpose. Then we shall have the wedlock which God loves. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Building with hewn stone*:—There are three classes of you who are building with bricks, and I will ask you if you had not better build with hewn stones. 1. Take those who make good vows limited by time. There are many such. A man, for example, has said to his father, "I promise I will go to church once a week, for twelve months." It is very good so far as it goes, but it is building with bricks, not with hewn stones. A young man has said, "Give me this paper, and I will pledge myself to abstain from everything that can intoxicate for six months." Very good. I do not pour contempt upon such a resolution; so far as it goes, it is good. But the very limitation of the vow is a source of weakness. Thus—for the first few days you are strong in your purpose, but gradually you begin to count the days that you have yet to serve. The last week comes, and the vow is like a pale figure gradually disappearing; the last day but one comes, where then is the vow? to-morrow you say you will be free. Free what to do? To become a slave again! Now I want you to change that brick wall of temporary resolution for the hewn stone of an eternal vow. 2. Then there is another class building with bricks instead of hewn stones, namely, those who are inspired by inadequate

motives. Where the motive is insufficient, conduct must go down. We live in motive. When the motive force fails the machinery must of necessity stand still. There is a man who says he will do a certain thing to obtain a reward. That man's virtue is only suppressed vice. He who will do a good thing simply because he will earn a reward, will do a bad thing if you double the premium. The motive is insufficient, and the last state of that man will be worse than the first. Others will come to church to please an admirer. That is not church-going. Would that I could speak in sufficiently forceful language to the young about this! Where the motive of church-going is inadequate it will always be intermittent, and in the end it will expire. If you go to church because you love to be there, and would have Sunday doubled in its golden hours, then you will always be strong in your religious attachments, affections, and convictions. Then there are those who attempt to do right in order to escape a penalty. This is an insufficient motive. I know that fear plays a very important part in the constitution of the human mind, and in the direction of human conduct. But man can outlive fear. Man can become accustomed to the unexpected. There is but one true motive—a hearty love of God! 3. Then there is the third class to which I refer,—those who have not calculated the full force and weight of temptation. When you build a house, you build for the roughest day in the whole year. That should be the sovereign rule, in the building of the life-house. The ship that left for the United States yesterday, probably took out three or fourfold the necessary provisions, according to the season of the year, and probably took out coal sufficient for a double journey. Why this excess? Why take more than is needed for the ten days' voyage? Because of the unforeseen. If, therefore, in such things men make such arrangements, they condemn themselves—I do not hesitate to say the word—as fools, if they leave the spiritual life and the spiritual destiny without more than a transient consideration. Herein is the glory of Christianity, that it builds with hewn stones. Christ's Gospel is full of soundness, life, and indestructible virility. (*Ibid.*) *Wise lessons from wicked lips* :—Jesus said, "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light," meaning by the statement that they excel them in the shrewdness and tact with which they manage their business when that has taken an adverse turn. Men of the world do not readily submit to defeat and failure, but strive to convert defeat into victory, and failure into success. Of this the text affords illustration. I. These children of this world PROCEED WITH A DEFINED PURPOSE, and in this are worthy of imitation. The bricks mentioned as having fallen down were not a heap of burned clay which had got piled up, no one could tell how. They had been built by human hands, and the builders had heads as well as hands. We are not told what sort of buildings they were which "Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria" had constructed, and which had "fallen down." They may have been dwelling-houses, or a temple, round which the sycamores would be planted for groves in which idolatrous Israel worshipped the gods of her own evil devising and choice, and for which she had forsaken the God of her fathers. But let this be as it may, now that the bricks had fallen, and the sycamores were cut down, in making up their minds as to what should be done—being anxious to repair the ruin and desolation—they proceed with a defined purpose. The architect precedes the builder: the head leads the hand. So when they set to work they know what they are about. Now, the same principle should underlie the building up of all Christian character and work. Knowledge and zeal should ever be in partnership. II. These children of the world WERE INSPIRED WITH HOPEFULNESS, and, therefore, are worthy of imitation. Their bricks fell down, but their spirits fell not into the pit of despair. Their sycamores were cut down, but their ambition was not. Is not that the spirit of the world to-day as then? In 1865 men said England and America shall be connected by the electric telegraph, and they went to work. But the cable snapped, and for the present the enterprise failed. Were the promoters daunted, and persuaded that their scheme was beyond the reach of possible things? No, not they. The next year saw them again at their work, and saw not only a new cable successfully laid, but the broken one, searched for in the great "wilderness of waters," at length found, after which it was lost and found again several times over, until the 2nd September, when it was at last secured, and the following telegram flashed along its wire: "I have much pleasure in speaking to you through the 1865 cable." So the Christian ought to be hopeful. You have fallen! Say, I will rise again.

Your schemes have failed! Say, I will try again. You are afraid you have laboured in vain! Say, In labours I will be more abundant. You have stormed the citadel of indwelling passion and evil, and still you have to confess, "The good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not that I do." Say again. By the grace of God I shall meet my spiritual foes. Have you with earnest soul entered the Holy of holies, desirous to know "the deep things of God," and where you expected light, lo! great darkness; and where you sought for peace, and sunshine, and beauty, and harmony, lo! seeming contradiction, the howling waste, cloud, and storm? You searched for a way out of your intellectual doubts and difficulties, and behold mystery has added itself to mystery. Still hope thou in God. III. These children of this world show a SPIRIT OF INDUSTRIOUS PERSEVERANCE, and are therefore worthy of imitation. Their hands responded to the impulse of their hearts. They dreamed not that by mere wishing their ruined walls would rise again, or their gardens, laid waste, would blossom with the rose, and be made beautiful with the cedar. The moral here is plain. "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord (so hoping to enter), shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father." Hoping will not do everything. It must be backed by earnest effort. IV. These children of the world IMPROVE MATTERS, and are, therefore, worthy of imitation. These tumble-down buildings were, after all, but brick; but now they would build, not with bricks, but with hewn stones. Around them had flourished the sycamores, but now that these were cut down, they would plant no more sycamores. They would do better than that; they would plant cedars. In three different places (1 Kings x. 27; 2 Chron. i. 15, ix. 27) the value of the sycamore as compared with the cedar is given as the value of stones compared to that of silver. Such is the spirit of the world. Is not this the spirit which ought to animate us? Never to rest satisfied with present attainments in self-culture or success in our work. (A. Scott.)

Ver. 11. Therefore the Lord shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him.—*Oppositions*.—"The Lord shall set up the adversaries." This accounts for many oppositions which otherwise would be without explanation. We wonder why such and such people should be opposed to us. Ask them questions about this opposition, and they will confess themselves bewildered; they daily look round for causes, and find none; yet they say they cannot restrain the dislike, and they must force it into forms of opposition about whose urgency and determinateness there can be no mistake. How is all this? Is it not the Lord reigning even here? God means to chasten us, to make us feel that there are other people in the world beside ourselves, and that we have no right to all the room, and no claim that can be maintained to all the property. Thus we teach one another by sometimes opposing one another. We are brought to chastening and sobriety and refinement by attritions and oppositions that are, from a human point of view, utterly unaccountable. The Bible never hesitates to trace the whole set and meaning of providence to the Lord Himself: He sends the plague, the pestilence, the darkness, all the flies and frogs that desolated old Egypt; He still is the Author of gale, and flood, and famine, and pestilence. We have amused ourselves by deceiving ourselves, by discovering a thousand secondary causes, and seeking, piously or impiously, to relieve providence of the responsibility of the great epidemic. Within given limits all we say may be perfectly true; we are great in phenomena, we have a genius in the arrangement of detail; but, after all, above all, and beneath all, is the mysterious life, the omnipotence of God, the judgment between right and wrong that plays upon the universe as upon an obedient instrument,—now evoking from it black frowning thunder, and now making it tremble with music that children love, and that sweetest mothers want all their babes to hear. (J. Parker, D.D.)

Vers. 12, 13. For all this His anger is not turned away.—*The end of judgments and the reason of their continuance*.—I. THE DESIGN AND INTENTION OF GOD IN SENDING JUDGMENT UPON A PEOPLE; that is, to reclaim them from all their sins, implied in these words, "for the people turneth not to Him that smiteth them." This, indeed, is the intention of all God's dispensations towards us in this world. The end of all His mercies is to take us off from our sins and win us to our duty (Rom. ii. 4). This is the way wherein God delights to deal with us. The way of judgment is that which He is more

averse from. Though the judgments of God be evils in themselves, yet considering the intentions of God in them, they are no real objections against His goodness, but rather arguments for it. 1. The judgments of God are proper for the cure of a far greater evil of another kind—the evil of sin. We take wrong measures of things, when we judge those to be the greatest evils which afflict our bodies, wound our reputation, and impoverish our estates. For those certainly are far the greatest which affect our noblest part; which vitiate our understandings, deprave our wills, and wound and defile our souls. Now it is very agreeable with the goodness and mercy of the Divine providence, to administer to us whatever is proper for the cure of so great an evil. 2. The judgments of God are likewise proper for the preventing of far greater evils of the same kind; I mean, further punishments. In sending temporal judgments upon sinners God usually proceeds by degrees. 3. The judgments of God are not only proper to these ends, but in many cases very necessary. Our condition many times is such as to require this severe way of proceeding, because no other course God hath taken, or can take with us, will probably do us good. The providence of God makes use of hunger and extreme necessity to bring home the prodigal (Luke xv). II. THE REASON OF THE CONTINUANCE OF GOD'S JUDGMENTS—because the people were not reclaimed by them. And how can t be expected it should be otherwise, when incorrigibleness under the judgments of God is a provocation of so high a nature, a sign of a most depraved temper, and an argument of the greatest obstinacy in evil? (2 Chron. xxviii. 22; Lev. xxvi. 22, &c.; Deut. xxviii. 58, 59; Isa. i. 4, 5; Hos. vii. 9, 10; Amos iv. 11, 12; Psa. xviii. 26.) (*J. Tillotson, D.D.*) *God's judgments*:—God hath invited us to Him by many blessings, but we would not come; so (to borrow an apt illustration from Bishop Sanderson) we have forced Him to deal with us as Absalom did with Joab: he sent one civil message to him after another, but he would not come; at last he set on fire his cornfield to try whether that would bring him: this course God hath taken with us; we would not be persuaded by messages of kindness (by His many blessings and favours) to return to Him, and therefore hath He sent amongst us the terrible messengers of His wrath. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 13. For the people turneth not unto Him that smiteth them.—*God's rod should be kissed*:—"The people turneth not unto Him that smiteth them." That is one element of the cause of this judgment. They do not kiss the rod: they see it to be a rod only; they do not understand that judgment is the severe aspect of mercy, and that without mercy there could be no real judgment. There might be condemnation, destruction, annihilation, but "judgment" is a combined or compound term, involving in all its rich music every possible utterance of law and grace and song and hope. When a man kisses the hand that wields the rod, the rod blossoms, and God's judgment becomes God's grace. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Turning to God*:—Sin is described in Scripture as departing from God. Repentance, therefore, is returning to Him. To "seek" God, in the idiom of Scripture, is to pray to Him (chap. lv. 6), to consult Him (chap. viii. 19), to resort to Him for help (chap. xxxi. 1), to hold communion with Him (Amos v. 4, 5). Hence it is sometimes descriptive of a godly life in general (Psa. xiv. 2). So here it includes repentance, conversion, and new obedience. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *God's purpose in affliction should be considered*:—A very holy man, who was working on behalf of the sufferers in the recent plague at Bombay, wrote home to ask certain of his friends not to pray that God would remove the plague, but to pray that whatever was His purpose and intention in sending it might be done. It was a true and lofty view. (*C. H. Sharpe.*) *Chastisement should bring the soul to God*:—A Christian friend visiting a good man under great distress and afflicting dispensations, which he bore with such patient and composed resignation as to make his friend wonder and admire it, inquired how he was enabled so to comfort himself? The good man said, "The distress I am under is indeed severe; but I find it lightens the stroke very much to creep near to Him who handles the rod!" (*J. Whitecross.*)

Ver. 14. Therefore the Lord will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day.—*God giving account of His actions*:—I. THE GROUND OR OCCASION OF THE JUDGMENT in the particle "therefore." Wherefore? (ver. 13). The cause which is here expressed may be conceived

to proceed in the way of a threefold gradation. 1. Of their simple impiety. Sin is the meritorious cause of all punishment. 2. Of their additional impenitency. Those that sin and so thoroughly provoke God's anger against themselves, by repentance may happily divert and appease it. But the people in the text "turned not to Him that smote them." And this made their judgment to be so much the surer to them. Impenitency seems in a manner to own and justify sin and stand in the commission of it. Further, it does in a manner trespass upon all the attributes of God, which it either questions or vilifies. The omniscience of God, as to the deserts of sin (Psa. xciv. 7). The truth of God, as to the threats of sin (2 Pet. iii. 4). The justice of God, as to the punishing of sin. The power of God, as to the executing of judgment. 3. Of their continued obstinacy. They did not "seek the Lord of hosts." II. THE JUDGMENT ITSELF. (*T. Horton, D.D.*) *God's judgment on Israel*.—I. THE DENUNCIATION OF IT. 1. The Author of it. "The Lord." (1) His sovereignty and power. It is He only that is able to punish; it is He only that hath all men and creatures under His command. (2) His purity. There are none who are so fit to punish others as those who are innocent persons. 2. The nature of it. "The Lord will cut off." From correction He passes to destruction. First, He cuts them short; and if that will do no good upon them, He cuts them off. First the pruning-knife, then the axe. There is a twofold sword which God makes use of for cutting with, before He proceeds to cut off; the sword of His mouth, *i.e.*, the Word of God, and the sword of His hand, *i.e.*, the rod of God. "He will." (1) A word of premonition. Despise not God's gracious hints and admonitions of judgment beforehand. (2) A word of procrastination. God is slow to anger. (3) A word of resolution. God will not be always willing; He will be at last doing. 3. The subject of it. If Israel shall provoke God by their impenitency and obstinacy against Him, even Israel shall be punished and cut off by Him (1 Pet. iv. 17). II. THE EXTENT OF IT. That we have expressed in a double metaphor; the one from the nature of the head and the tail; the other from the nature of a tree, in the branches and roots: both of them coming to one and the same purpose. Whereby we have signified to us the universality and impartiality of the destruction which is here threatened; it shall be of so general an extent, as to reach to all sorts of persons, high and low, rich and poor, great and small, to one as well as to another. 1. The metaphor taken from a body in the head and the tail. We may reduce it by way of explication to a threefold rank of—(1) Age: old and young. (2) Estate: rich and poor. (3) Place or authority: governors and governed; magistrates, ministers, and those who are subordinate and in subjection to them. 2. The metaphor taken from the nature of a tree or plant: the branch and the rush. It is not said the branch and the root, because the Lord reserved a remnant which should be spared by Him. But the branch and the rush; the branch as an emblem of usefulness—persons of parts and employments; the rush as a note of unfruitfulness—idle and unprofitable persons. The branch is a note of strength and solidity; the rush of weakness and inconstancy. The branch (in like manner as the head) is a note of supremacy, the rush of meanness. In the execution of public judgments for the impenitency and incorrigibility of a nation, God's hand is indifferent and impartial; He will spare no ranks or sorts or conditions of people at all. III. THE TIME OR SEASON OF IT. "In one day." It is a day—1. In regard of the certainty of it, as that which is set and fixed. 2. In regard of the suddenness, as that which is speedy and soon accomplished. (*Ibid.*) *Judgment obliterates classifications*.—"Branch and rush"—the allusion is to the beautiful palm-tree: it shall be cut down notwithstanding its beauty; and the "rush"—the common growths round about it, entangled roots, poor miserable shrubs that crowd and cumber the earth—branch and rush cannot stand before God's sword and fire: everything that is wrong goes down in a common destruction. Judgment obliterates our classifications. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 16. For the leaders of this people cause them to err.—*Leaders misleading*.—Render: "And the leaders of this people have become misleaders." (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Leaders' responsibility for the people's faults*.—1. By conniving at their wickedness. 2. By countenancing wicked people. 3. By setting them ill examples. (*M. Henry.*) *Unfaithful physicians*.—It is ill with a people when their physicians are their worse disease. (*Ibid.*) *A shameless ruler* (Charles II.).—A king might be pardoned for amusing his



leisure with wine, wit, and beauty, but it was intolerable that he should sink into a mere saunterer and voluptuary; that the gravest affairs of State should be neglected, and that the public service should be starved, and the finances deranged in order that harlots and parasites might grow rich. (*Macaulay's England.*) *The responsibility of leaders*.—The ancients placed the statues of their princes and patriots near the fountains, to show that they were the spring-heads of good or evil to the public. (*J. Trapp.*) *Leadership*.—I. The world is so constituted that LEADERS OF THE PEOPLE ARE AT PRESENT A NECESSITY. II. LEADERSHIP INVOLVES FOR THE LEADERS THE HIGHEST HONOUR OR THE DEEPEST SHAME. 1. The man who leads his fellow-men well is entitled to the highest honour. 2. But leadership does not necessarily involve any honour at all. 3. Through leadership a man may reach the most utter degradation and shame. (1) Through his incompetence. (2) Through his dishonesty. III. LEADERSHIP INVOLVES FOR THE LED SALVATION OR DESTRUCTION. (*R. A. Bertram.*)

Ver. 17. Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young men.—“*The Lord shall have no joy in their young men*”:—The meaning is full of suggestion. God delights in the young. God has made the young a ministry of instruction and comfort to old age. God keeps the world young by keeping children in it, and helpless ones. But God shall cease to see in young men any hope for the future. Henceforth God withdraws from the young, and they become old; He takes from them His all-vitalising and all-blessing smile, and they wither as flowers die when the sun turns away. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *General corruption followed by general desolation*.—The desolation should be as general as the corruption has been, and none should escape it. 1. Not those that were the objects of complacency; none shall be spared for love. “The Lord shall have no joy in their young men,” &c. 2. Not those that were the objects of compassion; none shall be spared for pity. He shall not “have mercy on their fatherless and widows.” They had corrupted their way like the rest; and if the poverty and helplessness of their state was not an argument with them to keep them from sin, they could not expect it should be an argument with God to protect them from judgments. (*M. Henry.*)

Vers. 18-21. For wickedness burneth as the fire.—*Wickedness as fire*.—Wickedness, *i.e.*, the constant willing of evil, is a fire which man kindles in himself. And when the grace of God, which stifles and checks this fire, is at an end, it breaks forth. . . . The fire of wickedness is nothing else but God’s *קָדַח*, for so wrath is called as breaking forth from within and spreading itself inwardly more and more, and then passing outwards into word and deed; it is God’s own wrath; for all sin carries this within itself as its own punishment. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *Sin compared to a great fire*.—The prophet affirms that there are resemblances between a fire and sin. It is not a common fire to which he refers, such as is employed for domestic or public purposes. It is a great conflagration which burns the humble shrubbery, the gigantic forest, extends over the land, and sends a mighty column of smoke and flame up to heaven. I. THE ORIGIN OF A GREAT FIRE. Recently we read an account of a great fire, and the paragraph closed with these words: “the origin of the fire is unknown.” The same with the origin of sin. We know it had a beginning, for God only is from everlasting. We know it had a beginning before Eve and Adam felt its power, since they were tempted. We know it began with him who is called Satan and the father of lies. Still, there are three questions about it which we cannot answer. (1) Where did it begin? (2) When did it begin? (3) How did it begin? II. THE PROGRESS OF A GREAT FIRE. Place one spark amid combustible material in London. Let it alone. It will leap from point to point, house to house, street to street, until the whole city is in flames. Sin has spread in an exactly similar way. One sin, to the individual; one wrong action, to the family; one immoral look, to thousands; one crime, to a kingdom. III. THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF A GREAT FIRE. Wood, coal, &c., it transforms into its own essence, because it makes fire of these. It is even so with sin. It turns everything, over which it gains the slightest control, into its own nature—that is into a curse. The desire to possess, sin has turned in a different direction, and made it an autocratic passion. Take the principle of ambition in the same way. Take commerce in the same way. Thus the richest blessings, yea, all the blessings which God has given to us, sin can so transform that they shall become

curse. **IV. THE DESTRUCTIVE ENERGY OF A GREAT FIRE.** Who can calculate the amount of property in London alone, which has been destroyed by fire? But the destruction which sin has caused in London is infinitely greater and more momentous. Some have bodies, once beautiful, now bloated and withered by sin. Some have feelings, once tender, now petrified by sin. Some whose intellectual powers were once strong, now feeble by sin. Some, who were once full of hope, now hopeless by sin. The destruction which sin has caused is awful.

**V. THE TERMINATION OF A GREAT FIRE.** It terminates when all the material is reduced to ashes. Can the fire of sin ever be put out in this way? The body in the grave is scorched by it no more; but what of the soul? Look at the rich man. He is tormented, in pain, not by a literal flame, but by the fire of sin. He will be so for ever, because the soul is immortal. A great fire has been terminated by a superior quenching power. There is also an element which can completely remove sin from the soul. What is it? Ask those in heaven, and those on earth, who have been saved. They all say that they "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (*A. M' Auslane, D.D.*)

*Sin mirrored as fire*.—The Bible is full of the figurative and analogic. **I. SIN IS LIKE FIRE IN THE FORMS IN WHICH IT EXISTS.** Fire is found to exist in two states—the insensibly latent, and the sensibly active. 1. In an insensible state, heat is everywhere. Even in solid masses of ice it is to be found. Sir Humphrey Davy, it is said, quickly melted pieces of ice by rubbing them together in a room cooled below the freezing point. It is so with sin. It is found in every part of the human world; it sleeps, perhaps, even in the most innocent of our kind. All it wants is the contact of some tempting circumstance to bring it out into an active flame. The virtue of some men is but vice sleeping. As savages light their fire by rubbing two pieces of wood together, so men stir up the latent fires of depravity by mutual contact. There is sufficient latent fire around us to burn up the globe, and there is sufficient latent sin in humanity to turn earth into hell. 2. But fire is active as well as latent. In its active state you see it flaming on your hearths, illuminating your cities, working your manufactures, propelling your fleets, drawing your carriages, flashing in the lightning and thundering in the earthquake. Sin is terribly active in our world, active in every department of life:—in commerce, in politics, and religion. To use the language of the text, "It mounts up like the lifting up of smoke": the smoke of this fire of sin pollutes and darkens every sphere of life. **II. SIN IS LIKE FIRE IN ITS TENDENCY TO SPREAD ITSELF.** What a great fire a little spark will kindle! Fire is essentially diffusive; so is sin. How true it is that "one sinner destroyeth much good." **III. SIN IS LIKE FIRE IN ITS POWER OF CHANGING EVERYTHING TO ITS OWN NATURE.** It has turned alcohol into intemperance, merchandise into fraud, government into tyranny, aggression into the demon of war. When Archimedes, to gratify his vengeance on the Romans, brought down the genial rays of heaven by his magic glass to burn up their ships, he only dramatised the universal fact that sin ever strives to turn the greatest blessing to the greatest curse. **IV. SIN IS LIKE FIRE IN ITS REPELLING ENERGY.** Philosophers tell us that fire is that principle in nature which counteracts attraction, and keeps the various particles of matter at their proper distance. It is that repulsive force which prevents atoms from coming into close contact, and sometimes drives them far apart. It turns the solid bodies into liquids and liquids into vapours. Apply fire to the compact tree, and it will break it into a million atoms, and send these atoms abroad on the wide fields of air. Were it not for heat, all parts of the universe would rush together into one solid mass, whose parts would press together in closer contact than the heaviest stone. Sin is a repulsive principle. It separates man from man, family from family, nation from nation—all from God! **V. SIN IS LIKE FIRE IN ITS DEVOURING CAPABILITY.** It consumes something far more valuable than the most beautiful forms of material nature, or the most exquisite productions of human art—it consumes man. You cannot walk the streets of any great city, without meeting men whose bodies are being consumed by sin. Sin devours the soul. It dries up its fountain of Divine feeling, it sears its conscience, it withers its intellect, it blasts its prospects and its hopes. **VI. SIN IS LIKE FIRE IN ITS POWER TO INFLICT PAIN.** There is no element in nature capable of inflicting more suffering on the body than fire. But sin can inflict greater suffering: the fires of remorse are a thousand times more painful than the flames that enwrapped the martyrs. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" The fire of sin in the soul will "burn to the lowest hell." Ask Cain, Belshazzar, Judas, concerning the

intensity of moral suffering. VII. SIN IS LIKE FIRE IN ITS SUSCEPTIBILITY OF BEING EXTINGUISHED. You have seen a raging fire go out from one of two causes; either because it has consumed the body on which it fed and reduced it to ashes, or because of the application of some quenching force. The fire of sin will never go out for the former reason—the object on which it feeds is indestructible: if it is ever to be destroyed, it must be extinguished by some outward force. Thank God! there is a moral element on earth to put out sin; the river of mediatorial influences that rolls from the throne of God has quenched the fire of sin in the case of millions, and is as efficacious to do so now as ever. (*Homilist.*) *Wickedness as fire.*—I. WICKEDNESS. Of this wickedness there are divers sorts, each of which may be distinguished by the objects on which it terminates. 1. When immediately directed against God, it is discovered by an absurd contempt of His providences and ordinances, His commandments, promises, and threatenings, and a virulent opposition to the interests of His kingdom and glory. 2. When its operations are aimed against men, it is perpetrated by harassing, oppressing and persecuting those who are entitled to acts of justice, beneficence, and charity, and by disturbing the peace and good order of human society. 3. When it chiefly respects the persons themselves by whom it is acted, the most daring iniquities are committed, forbidden by the law of nature, the law of nations, and the law of God, in order to gratify their ungovernable desires, and to promote their interest, honour, or pleasure. II. WICKEDNESS BURNETH AS FIRE. The amiable endowments of the person in whom it burns, the good dispositions and laudable desires with which his mind is furnished, will fall a sacrifice to its rage. It will enfeeble the understanding, harden the conscience, deprave the heart, hurt the memory, weaken the senses, debilitate the whole frame; it will entirely eat away peace of mind, and lead on to contention, confusion, and every evil work. It will devour the strength and vigour of the body, bring on untimely old age, and shorten the now short life of man. It will consume his honour and reputation, and leave behind it indelible marks of disgrace and reproach, that shall not be wiped away. It will burn up his riches and possessions; for by means of it a man is often brought to a piece of bread, and a nation involved in irremediable destruction. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Wickedness is destruction.*—There is to be internecine war: Manasseh shall fly at Ephraim, and Ephraim at Manasseh, and they who could agree upon nothing between themselves always agree in flying together against Judah. This is what wickedness will bring the world to—to murder, to mutual hatred and distrust, to perdition. We do not understand the power of wickedness, because at present, owing to religious thinking and action and moral civilisation, there are so many mitigating circumstances, so many relieving lights; but wickedness in itself let loose upon the earth, and the earth is no longer the abode of green thing, of fair flower, or singing bird, of mutual trust and love: it becomes a pandemonium. If we could consider this deeply, it would make us solemn. We do not consider it; we are prepared to allow it as a theory or a conjecture, but the realisation of it is kept far from us. The wicked man kills himself; puts his teeth into the flesh of his own arm, and gnaws it with the hunger of a wild beast. That is what wickedness comes to! It is not an intellectual error, not a slight and passing mistake, not a lapse of judgment, or a momentarily lamentable act of misconduct which can easily be repaired: the essence of wickedness is destruction. Wickedness would no sooner hesitate to kill a little child than to snap a flower. The thing that keeps the world from suicide is the providence of God. Were God to take away the restraining influences which are keeping society together, society would fall into mutual enmity, and the controversy could only end in mutual death. “For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still.” Do not blame the judgment, blame the sin; do not say, How harsh is God, say, How corrupt, how blasphemous is man! (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Injury inflicted on the body politic.*—A nation is sometimes spoken of as a person constituted of a soul, and the various parts of a human body. In this political body there are those who act the part of the arms, by whom its strength is exerted, and its safety preserved. On this principle I explain this prediction, they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm. Every one almost was to be employed in cruelly harassing and devouring those whose business it was to support and defend the interests of the nation. Unmindful of the laws of nature, the ties of friendship and gratitude, they would vex and destroy those useful members of the community with whom they were nearly connected, and to whom they were obliged for their efforts in their behalf. (*R. Macculloch.*)

## CHAPTER X.

**VERS. 1-4. Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees.**—*Crime under colour of law*.—The prophet has described the sins of Ephraim in a general manner; but on the mention of Judah he proceeds to denounce what we know from the whole tenor of his discourses he felt to be the worst form of the guilt of his own people, with a particularity which it is perhaps not fanciful to attribute to his thoughts being now directed homewards. The Ten Tribes were far more ferocious and anarchical than the men of Judah; there are more indications in the latter of that national respect for law which so characterises the English, that it has been observed (by Lord Campbell), that though history attributes to us our share in national wickedness, our crimes have almost always been committed under colour of law, and not by open violence,—as in the series of judicial murders in the reigns of Henry VIII., Charles II., and James II. And thus Isaiah, recurring to Judah, denounces the utmost severity of God's wrath in the day in which He, the righteous Judge, shall come to visit "an hypocritical nation," whose nobles and magistrates decree, and execute, unrighteous decrees,—“to turn aside the needy from judgment,” &c. (ver. 2). They are satisfied that they are safe in their heartless selfishness, with peace at home and protection abroad restored by their statecraft and their alliance with Assyria. But while they thus rejoice at home, “desolation cometh from afar.” To whom will they fly for help when God has abandoned them? Under whose protection will they leave their wealth, their dignities, their glory, which they have been heaping up for themselves? Captivity or death are the only prospects before them. And yet, as though no judgments could sufficiently condemn and punish their utter wickedness, the prophet repeats,—“For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still.” (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *God against all unrighteousness*.—The Lord's voice is always for righteousness. What is it that is denounced? It is the very thing that is to be denounced evermore. There is nothing local or temporary in this cause of Divine offence. The Lord is against all unrighteous decrees, unnatural alliances, and evil compacts. This is the very glory of the majesty of omnipotence, that it is enlisted against every form of evil and wrong. Then, “Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed”—scribes or registrars who preserve all the forms of the court, and keep their pens busy upon the court register, writing down every case, and appearing to do the business correctly and thoughtfully; and yet, all the while, these very registrars were themselves plotting “to take away the right from the poor, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless.” The court of law was turned into a means of robbery, as it is in nearly every country under the sun. The scribes who wrote down the law were men who secretly or overtly broke it; the judge used his ermine as a cloak, that under its concealment he might thrust his hand farther into the property of those who had no helper. “For all this His anger is not turned away.” Blessed be His name! Oh, burn Thou against us all; mighty, awful, holy God, burn more and more, until we learn by fire what we can never learn by pity. The Lord speaks evermore for the poor, for the widow, for the fatherless, for the helpless. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Oppressors of the poor and needy*.—I. THE INDICTMENT drawn up against these oppressors (vers. 1, 2). They are charged—1. With making wicked laws and edicts. Woe to the superior powers that devise and decree these decrees; they are not too high to be under the Divine check; and woe to the inferior officers that draw them up, and enter them upon record, “the writers that write the grievousness,” they are not too mean to be within the Divine cognisance. Principal and accessories shall fall under the same woe. 2. With perverting justice in the execution of the laws that were made. No people had statutes and judgments so righteous as they had; and yet corrupt judges found ways to “turn aside the needy from judgment,” to hinder them from coming at their right. 3. With enriching themselves by oppressing those that lay at their mercy, whom they ought to have protected. II. A CHALLENGE given them, with all their pride and power, to outface the judgments of God (ver. 3). Will there not come a desolation upon those that have made others desolate? Perhaps it may come from far, and therefore may be long in coming, but it will come at last. Reprieves are not pardons. 1. There is a day of visitation coming, a day of inquiry and discovery, a searching day which

will bring to light, to a true light, every man and every man's work. 2. The day of visitation will be a day of desolation to all wicked people, when all their comforts and hopes will be lost and gone. 3. Impenitent sinners will be utterly at a loss, and will not know what to do in the day of visitation and desolation. 4. It concerns us all seriously to consider what we shall do in the day of visitation—in a day of affliction, in the day of death and judgment, and to provide that we may do well. III. SENTENCE PASSED UPON THEM, by which they are doomed, some to imprisonment and captivity. (*Matthew Henry.*) *Legalised injustice*:—I. MAGISTRATES AND RULERS ARE ANSWERABLE TO GOD. II. THEIR DECISIONS WILL BE REVISED. III. THEIR DECISIONS WILL IN MANY INSTANCES BE REVERSED. IV. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR INJUSTICE WILL RETURN BACK UPON THEMSELVES. (*J. Lyth, D.D.*) *Oppression resisted* (Taxation of Henry VIII.):—In every county a tenth was demanded from the laity and a fourth from the clergy by the royal commissioners. But the demand was met by a general resistance. . . . A revolt actually broke out among the weavers of Suffolk; the men of Cambridge banded for resistance; the Norwich clothiers, though they yielded at first, soon threatened to rise. "Who is your captain?" the Duke of Norfolk asked the crowd. "His name is Poverty," was the answer, "for he and his cousin Necessity have brought us to this doing." There was, in fact, a general strike of the employers. Cloth makers discharged their workers, farmers put away their servants. "They say the king asketh so much that they be not able to do as they have done before this time." Such a peasant insurrection as was raging in Germany was only prevented by the unconditional withdrawal of the royal demand. (*J. R. Green's English People.*)

Ver. 3. And what will ye do in the day of visitation?—*The day of visitation*:—In Scripture style the season in which God is pleased to draw near to a person or people, that He may accomplish various important purposes, is called a day of visitation. 1. Sometimes His visitation is intended to afford deliverance and consolation to the oppressed, by extricating them from servitude and misery, and introducing them into a happy and comfortable condition. In this sense the Lord is said to have visited His people Israel, when He delivered them from Egyptian bondage (Exod. iv. 31); and to have visited and redeemed His people when He bestowed upon them the greatest mercy (Luke i. 68). 2. Sometimes it is designed to manifest His tender care and constant inspection of His people, over whom He exerciseth the most vigilant attention, that He may effectually promote their best interests (Psa. lxxxix. 32). Such times are indeed days of visitation, wherein God sensibly draws near with the proofs of His kindness and favour, which He most undeservedly confers; and in which He appears with His rod of correction, that He may administer necessary chastisements, and restore those who had forsaken His laws from their wanderings. 3. At other times, God visits those who have not profited by the many warnings they have received, nor repented of the sins they have committed, notwithstanding the repeated corrections that He hath administered, to execute upon them desolating judgments and terrible vengeance (Jer. v. 9). In this last sense, I suppose, the day of visitation is here meant. (*R. Macculloch.*) *The day of visitation*:—So far from God having abandoned the world, He is continually calling it to account. Not only has He fixed in His eternal mind a period of final visitation, but days of visitation are repeatedly coming. And who knows how many may come to us? I. THE SOLEMN PERIOD SPOKEN OF. God is said to "visit" men when He comes to them, or reveals Himself, either in mercy or judgment. Christ Himself calls the days of His ministry among the Jews the day of their visitation—their Gospel day of mercy. But the term, as used in our text, is to be understood in the contrary sense, to denote a period of judgment. There are several periods which are days of Divine visitation. 1. The day of trouble. 2. The day of affliction. 3. The day of death. 4. The day of judgment. II. THE SOUL-AWAKENING APPEAL MADE. "What will ye do? To whom will ye flee for help?" This language implies that something has need to be done—that help will be required. Self-sufficient as we may wish to think ourselves when all is bright, whenever either of the days of Divine visitation comes, we shall find that "help" will be needed in order to stand the trial well. If so, what will you do? 1. What in the day of trouble? Many are then overwhelmed thereby; in these circumstances many die in despair, fade away in melancholy, or lay violent hands on themselves. When every draught of life's cup is the very

gall of bitterness, where will ye go for sweetness? 2. Should afflictive visitations come on, what then will ye do? You may flee to the physician, but he can do no more than the God of means may permit him. 3. And then, when the day of dissolution, that awful day of "visitation" comes, what will ye do? Will you send for your minister to pray for you? But what avail his prayers, if you do not pray for yourself? 4. And when the last great day—that day of all days—comes, oh, what then shall we do? and where shall we flee for help? Now, bring all this to a point. (1) Settle it in your minds that days of visitation will come. (2) How necessary, now in the time of our merciful visitation of Gospel offers and encouragements, to make the Almighty God our friend by faith in Christ. (3) If we do not, must we not expect to be abandoned and left to everlasting ruin, without help or hope? (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *What will ye do in the day of visitation?*—However wicked men may flatter themselves, or be flattered by others, God will not do it.

I. Let us notice TWO OR THREE PARTICULARS CONTAINED IN THE TEXT, before we pursue the principal inquiry. 1. The persons originally addressed were the children of Israel, a rebellious people; but the words are applicable to sinners of every description. 2. For the people of Israel "a day of visitation" was appointed, and the same may be said of us. There are days of visitation to individuals as well as to whole nations. II. PURSUE THE PRINCIPAL INQUIRY: "What will ye do?" &c. 1. Will you plead and expostulate with God? At a throne of grace the sinner may indeed plead with God, but what arguments will avail at the tribunal of His justice? 2. Will you attempt to resist Him? 3. Will you fly from Him? Whither? 4. Will you harden yourselves against Him; and seeing you cannot escape punishment, endeavour to support yourselves under it as well as you can; saying, with impenitent Israel, "Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it" (Jer. x. 19). "Who can stand before His indignation?" (Joel ii. 11; Nah. i. 2-6). 5. Will you cast yourselves at His feet, and adopt the humble and submissive language of David: "If He say, I have no delight in thee, here am I; let Him do to me as seemeth good in His sight"? This certainly would be highly proper, before the decree is gone forth, and such humiliation would be accepted; but it cannot be done afterwards, or if done, it would not avail. Propose then to yourselves another question: What shall I do before this day of visitation come, that I may avoid the tremendous consequences? (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *The day of visitation and preparation for it.*—I. A DAY OF VISITATION IS COMING UPON ALL MEN. II. IT IS OF THE GREATEST IMPORTANCE TO BE PREPARED FOR THIS DAY. 1. Because your happiness, when the day of visitation comes, will depend upon it. 2. It will be positive misery to be unprepared. 3. You have an invaluable treasure in peril. 4. If you come to judgment unprepared it will be too late for ever. III. GOD IN HIS MERCY PRESSES THIS SOLEMN QUESTION UPON OUR SERIOUS AND DEVOUT CONSIDERATION. 1. It appears clear that God does sincerely desire the happiness of all men. 2. His thus pressing this solemn thought upon men's consideration shows that they are unwilling to obey God. 3. Man's want of happiness is entirely with himself and not with God. (*N. M. Harry.*) *Where will ye leave your glory?*—*The vanity of earthly glory.*—The principal word in this short question seems, by its very sound, to bring before the mind indistinctly, a vision of something great and magnificent, yet unsubstantial and vain. When we bring our thoughts upon it more distinctly, we recognise it as the most conspicuous favourite term of heathenism. We mean a heathenism of all times and countries; that action and passion of the human mind, by which notions and feelings of greatness, transcendent value, have been attached to certain things of but imaginary worth; which things have been coveted, adored, toiled for, fought for, lived for, died for—as glory. "Glory," therefore, has been the name of vanity turned into a god. And how vast the dominion of this idolatrous delusion! What it consists of—the world's glory—is readily apprehended. That a man be conspicuous among and above his fellow-mortals; be much observed, admired, even envied as being that which they cannot be.

I. Where will ye LEAVE your glory? It is, then, after all, not really united to the man. He expends the ardour of his soul to combine it with his being—to make it his very substance—but it is extraneous still! He may have to go where it will not accompany him. II. And WHERE will they leave their glory? Where, that it can in any sense continue to be theirs—theirs, for any beneficial or gratifying effect to them? What will it be to them how it falls to other mortals? Nothing is more mournful than parting with what is passionately

loved, under a perfect certainty of possessing it no more. III. As the concluding part of these meditations, let us briefly APPLY THEM TO SEVERAL OF THE FORMS OF THIS WORLD'S GLORY. There is presented a Christian, a heavenly, an eternal glory. When the lovers of glory are invited to this, and scorn it, and reject it, what is it that they take? 1. The most common form of the idolised thing is—what may be called the material splendour of life; that which immediately strikes the senses. But they must leave their glory. 2. It is, in part, a different and additional form of the world's glory, when we mention elevated rank in society. All know how vehemently coveted and envied is this glory,—how elated, for the most part, the possessors of it feel. But the thought of leaving it! With what a grim and ghostly aspect this thought must appear, when it will sometimes intrude! 3. The possession of power is perhaps the idol supreme; to have at control, and in complete subjection, the action and the condition of numbers of mankind; to see the crowd, whether in heart obsequious or rebellious, practically awed, submissive, obedient. But it is not that voice that is long to command! 4. We might have named martial glory,—the object of the most ardent aspiration, and of the most pernicious idolatry. There is often an utter delusion in this expectation. 5. In the last place might be named intellectual glory,—that of knowledge, talent, and great mental performance. If, in that passion for renown, you have exerted great powers of mind to do fatal mischief—to overwhelm truth—to corrupt the morals—to explode religion—to degrade the glory of the Redeemer—what then? If you can, in that world, have any vital sympathy with your fame, your influence remaining in this, the consequence would but be a quick continual succession of direful shocks, conveyed to your living spirit from what your works are doing here. Contrast with all these forms of folly, the predominant aim of a Christian—which is “glory” still; but a glory which he will not have to leave; a glory accumulating for him in the world to which he is going. (*John Foster.*)

Vers. 5-34. **O Assyrian.**—“*O Assyrian*.”—“*Ho Asshur*,” the name both of the people and its national god. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *The judgment of the world-power.*—The leading idea of the passage is the contrast between the mission assigned to Assyria in the scheme of Jehovah's providence, and the ambitious policy of universal dominion cherished by the rulers of that empire. Assyria was the instrument chosen by Jehovah to manifest His sole Deity by the extinction of all the nationalities that put their trust in false gods. But the great world-power, intoxicated by its success, and attributing this to its own wisdom and resource, recognises no difference between Jehovah and other gods, but confidently reckons on proving His impotence by the subjugation of His land and people. Hence, it becomes necessary for Jehovah to vindicate His supreme Godhead by the destruction of the power which has thus impiously transgressed the limits of His providential commission. And this judgment will take place at the very moment when Assyria seeks to crown its career of conquest by an assault on Jehovah's sanctuary on Mount Zion, the earthly seat of His government. (*Ibid.*) *Assyria an instrument of vengeance.*—We must not omit the reflection that this was a terrible thing for Assyria. What man likes to be an instrument through which righteousness will punish some other man? Who would willingly accept a calling and election so severe? (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Nations instruments in the hands of God.*—What are the nations but instruments in the hands of Him who made them? So we are puzzled and perplexed by many an imperial policy; we do not like it, and yet still it proceeds to work out all its mysterious issues—now severe, now beneficent. We are in tumult and darkness and perplexity, thick and that cannot be disentangled; and how seldom we realise the fact that all this may be a Divine movement, a clouding of the Divine presence, and an outworking of Divine and eternal purposes. (*Ibid.*) *Our Assyria may be the world in Christ's sense,* that flood of successful, heartless, unscrupulous, scornful forces which burst on our innocence, with their challenge to make terms and pay tribute, or go down straightway in the struggle for existence. . . . It is useless to think that we common men cannot possibly sin after the grand manner of this imperial monster. In our measure we fatally can. In this commercial age private persons very easily rise to a position of influence which gives almost as vast a stage for egotism to display itself as the Assyrian boasted. But after all the human Ego needs very little room to develop the possibilities of atheism that are in it. An idol is an

idol, whether you put it on a small or a large pedestal. A little man with a little work may as easily stand between himself and God as an emperor with the world at his feet. Forgetfulness that he is a servant, a trader on graciously intrusted capital—and then at the best an unprofitable one—is not less sinful in a small egoist than in a great one; it is only very much more ridiculous than Isaiah, with his scorn, has made it to appear in the Assyrian. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *Our Assyria may be the forces of nature*, which have swept upon the knowledge of this generation with the novelty and impetus with which the northern hosts burst across the horizon of Israel. Men to-day, in the course of their education, become acquainted with laws and forces which dwarf the simpler theologies of their boyhood, pretty much as the primitive beliefs of Israel dwindled before the arrogant face of Assyria. The alternative confronts them either to retain, with a narrowed and fearful heart, their old conceptions of God, or to find their enthusiasm in studying, and their duty in relating themselves to, the forces of nature alone. If this be the only alternative, there can be no doubt but that most men will take the latter course. We ought as little to wonder at men of to-day abandoning certain theologies and forms of religion for a downright naturalism—for the study of powers that appeal so much to the curiosity and reverence of man—as we wonder at the poor Jews of the eighth century before Christ forsaking their provincial conceptions of God as a tribal Deity for homage to this great Assyrian who handled the nations and their gods as his playthings. But is such the only alternative? Is there no higher and sovereign conception of God, in which even these natural forces may find their explanation and term? Isaiah found such a conception for his problem, and his problem was very similar to ours. Beneath his idea of God, exalted and spiritual, even the imperial Assyrian, in all his arrogance, fell subordinate and serviceable. The prophet's faith never wavered, and in the end was vindicated by history. Shall we not at least attempt his method of solution? We could not do better than by taking his factors. Isaiah got a God more powerful than Assyria, by simply exalting the old God of his nation in righteousness. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 7-9. **Howbeit he meaneth not so.**—*Man proposes, but God disposes*:—"He meaneth not so." 1. The wise God often makes even the sinful passions and projects of men subservient to His own great and holy purposes. 2. When God makes use of men as instruments in His hands to do His work, it is very common for Him to mean one thing, and them to mean another; nay, for them to mean quite contrary to what He intends (Gen. 1. 20; Mic. iv. 11, 12). Men have their ends, and God His; but we are sure "the counsel of the Lord that shall stand." (*M. Henry.*) *God's use of evil men*.—As in applying of leeches the physician seeketh the health of his patient, the leech only the filling of his gorge, so is it when God turneth loose a bloody enemy upon His people; He hath excellent ends, which they think not on. (*J. Trapp.*) **It is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few.**—*Assyrian conquests*:—The significance of ver. 9 appears when the dates of the events alluded to are considered. . . . The application to Jerusalem is obvious. . . . It is true the conquests alluded to in vers. 9-11 are not those of Sennacherib, and vers. 13, &c., would be in his mouth an exaggeration; and hence the prophecy has been referred by some to the period of Sargon. But the subject in vers. 7-11 is "Assyria" (see ver. 5), and though Isaiah may have regarded the king (ver. 12) as being here the speaker, yet vers. 5, &c., show that he speaks, not with reference to his personal achievements, but as an impersonation of the policy of his nation. And this policy Sennacherib in 701 was truly maintaining. The language of these verses does not, therefore, in reality militate against a date which in other respects is in entire accordance with the contents of the prophecy. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *Foolish ambition*:—Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, having enlarged his dominions by the conquest of Macedonia, was bent upon subduing Italy, and adding it to his empire. Asking the advice of his counsellor Cineas, he inquired of the prince what he meant to do after he conquered Italy? "Next," said he, "I mean to invade Sicily, which is a rich and powerful country and not far off." "When you have got Sicily," said Cineas, "what then?" "Africa," replied the king, "containing many fine kingdoms, is at no great distance, and through my renown and the valour of my troops, I may subdue them." "Be it so," said the counsellor, "when you have vanquished the kingdoms of Africa, what will you do then?" Pyrrhus answered, "Then you and I will be merry



and have good cheer." Cineas replied, "Sir, if this be the end at which you aim, what need you venture your life, your honour, your kingdoms, and all that you have, to purchase what you already possess. Epirus and Macedonia are sufficient to make you and me merry: had you all the world you could not be more merry, nor have better cheer." (*R. Macculloch.*)

**Ver. 12. When the Lord hath performed His whole work upon Mount Zion.—***God's two-sided providence:*—1. God designed to do good to Zion and Jerusalem by this providence. When God lets loose the enemies of His Church and people, and suffers them for a time to prevail, it is in order to the performing of some great good work upon them; and when that is done, then, and not till then, He will work deliverance for them. 2. When God had wrought this work of grace for His people, He would work a work of wrath and vengeance upon their invaders. (*M. Henry.*) *Stoutness of heart:*—The "stout heart" here threatened is entirely different from true magnanimity or greatness of mind, arising from good principles and accompanied with other virtues, which excites to the most laudable and renowned actions. It is an odious, stubborn disposition, which acts in direct contrariety to lowliness of mind and poverty of spirit, whereby people are inclined to think modestly of their abilities and performances; it proceeds from pride, is strengthened by external grandeur and dignity, and discovered by vain self-conceit and foolish boasting of past exertions and successes, and future intended enterprises. The fruit of the king of Assyria's stout heart was a daring expedition against Jerusalem, undertaken in proud contempt of the true God, and accompanied with blasphemous insults, repeatedly offered to the Most High over all the earth. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Penalty in apparent success:*—When the scum is at the highest, it falls in the fire. (*J. Trapp.*)

**Ver. 13. For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it.—***The ungodliness of worldly pursuits:*—1. Let us reflect on the total forgetfulness of God, and the unwillingness to recognise His power and presence, with which objects of human interest and ambition are frequently prosecuted and enjoyed. 2. Let us dwell on the spirit with which worldly men engage in the pursuit of their favourite objects, the temper and disposition of mind with which they encounter disappointment, and the kind of happiness which they derive from the success of their enterprises. (1) The ardour with which they prosecute these is virtually a declaration that they are determined to be happy independently of God; the firmness and perseverance with which they struggle with adversity, and labour to retrieve their losses, are so many attempts to dispute with Him the determination of events, and to wrest from His hand the government of the universe; and when they have been successful almost or altogether to the extent of their expectations, and when they contrast the success that has rewarded them with the failure and disappointment that have befallen others in similar circumstances,—the principle which lies at the foundation of all their enjoyments, and gives zest to every other gratification, is substantially that which is expressed in our text, "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent." (2) It is not, however, to those only who place their chief good in a given portion of this world's wealth, that these observations are applicable. They will be found to hold equally true in the case of those who can find in the exercise of high intellectual endowments a gratification which mere worldly wealth never could furnish,—but who have not yet acquired any capacity for the purer and more permanent happiness of a growing conformity to the Divine image in this world, and the enjoyment of eternal communion with God in the world to come. Elevated as such pursuits may be, and profound as is the homage of respect which the world is called upon, and readily consents to pay to them, yet, wherever they constitute the only portion that the soul seeks after, and occupy that place in the affections which God claims as His own, then they bear upon them the same impress of ungodliness which characterises the schemes of worldly aggrandisement, and may ultimately be traced to the very same principle. (3) The same remark is applicable also to the man who, by the benevolence of his character and the irreproachable regularity of his life, has secured the world's respect, and who builds with confidence on his many virtues as a sure foundation of hope for the future; for when such a man contrasts his own character with that of multitudes around him, it will be with feelings of self-complacency. 3. It would be easy, by entering on the detail of particular cases,

to show how the principle in the text pervades all the business and the pleasures of an unregenerate world. 4. The sentiment is as foolish with regard to the sinner, as it is impious with respect to the Almighty; for as well might it be supposed that the movements of the material universe would remain undisturbed, though the principle that is essential to its stability were annihilated, as that an intelligent and moral creature could be permanently blessed, if released from the law of dependence on his Creator. (*R. Gordon, D.D.*) "*Remover of boundaries*":—A title assumed by the Assyrian kings. They claimed to be king of kings, and lord paramount or superior. (*B. Blake, B.D.*) "*Robbing treasure*":—Great conquerors are many times no better than great robbers. (*Matthew Henry.*)

Ver. 14. **And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people.**—*A proud boast of utter subjugation*:—The Assyrian conqueror has gathered all the earth as one gathers the eggs from which he has first driven off the terrified hen-bird. But she would hover round her rifled nest and its plunderer with a trepidating flight and piercing cry, than which no movements and sounds in the brute creation express more anguish; while these spoiled nations dare not show even such instinctive signs of a broken heart, but know a depth beyond that depth—"there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or chirped." (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) "*Easy conquest*":—"I have taken by my might the riches of the people, with as great ease as a countryman takes young birds out of a nest; yea, as one taketh and gathereth eggs which the bird hath forsaken"—which is easier than to take birds. (*W. Day, M.A.*) "*Unholy brag*":—Strange that ever men, who were made to do good, should take a pride and take a pleasure in doing wrong or doing mischief to all about them without control, and should reckon that their glory which is their shame. (*M. Henry.*)

Ver. 15. **Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith?**—*The Divine supremacy*.—All the various orders of creatures, natural and supernatural, animate and inanimate, are under the control of the Divine Being, who uses them for the accomplishment of His own purposes. The Assyrians were not conscious of being the Lord's servants; it was, therefore, no virtue in them to be employed in His service. Mark the speech of the king of Assyria, it is vain and fulsome enough. Here observe—I. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD. 1. This is a doctrine of Scripture. 2. The term sovereignty is suitable here, since it is significant of the supremacy of the Divine Being. Where shall we go for manifestations of the Divine sovereignty? (1) To creation. (2) The moral government of the world furnishes the most striking illustration of the Divine sovereignty. II. THE SUBJECTION OF MEN. 1. Man is not a merely passive instrument, but an active being, dependent upon and under the control of his Maker. 2. Man is a voluntary agent, has in possession a power which we call will, and an awful power it is either for good or evil. It imports responsibility. 3. Still, whatever may be said about the will of man, or the will of a nation, considered as a power, it must be allowed that man and his circumstances, that nations with all their complicated affairs, are under the control of the Divine Being. 4. The Divine Being is still at the head of the nations of the earth, directing and controlling all their affairs, for the accomplishment of His own ends; just as a man directs and controls the mountain stream, for the working of his mill, or the watering of his lands. III. THE SIN OF SLIGHTING THE DIVINE BEING. 1. It is obvious that man has no choice as to whether or no he will have to do with his Maker. Man's choice is as to whether or no he will pursue a line of conduct befitting the relation in which he stands to God; whether he will obey or disobey, honour or slight God. 2. It is in the very nature of a creature to be dependent; man is a creature, and therefore dependent upon God for everything essential to his temporal welfare; and certainly not less so for everything essential to his spiritual welfare. 3. It is therefore irrational, and indeed grossly sinful, for those who excel others in station, in fortune, in respect to anything that may be justly deemed an advantage, to ascribe the difference altogether, or even mainly to their own skill and efforts; as though there were no God, or as though He were unable, or unwilling, to interfere with human affairs (1 Cor. iv. 7). 4. God is jealous of His honour. He cannot give His glory to another. 5. The case of Nebuchadnezzar, as recorded in Dan. iv., furnishes a remarkable illustration of the supremacy of the Divine Being, and of the sin of slighting it. We infer—(1) That it is the will of God that there should be various

distinctions among men with regard to circumstances; that some should be above others. (2) It is the imperative duty of man, whatever his rank or position in society, to acknowledge the Divine Being, uniformly and constantly. (3) The Divine supremacy ought to be cheerfully acknowledged in every household. (4) Let the nations of the earth acknowledge the Divine authority. (5) The Church especially is bound to honour God. (*W. Winterburn.*) *The worker and his tools*.—These words describe one of the common temptations of strong men in every sphere of action. Pointing to power in the sphere of human industry, we say, "Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith?"

**I. THE REAL CONNECTION OF HUMAN INDUSTRY WITH GOD.** Useful and fine art belongs to the original idea of man as a working being. Man is conformed to the design of his nature when muscle and nerve, mind and heart, are taxed in the productions of human industry. 1. This is made evident by the constitution of man. Sinfulness does not belong to the Divine idea of man. Hence man's inward nature does not approve of sin. But industry produces no such distress and confusion in the soul. 2. This is further seen in the kind of world which God has made our present home. Some things He has hidden, and others so constituted that we must search, discover, adapt, apply, and manufacture, before we can get from the earth (although full of God's riches) what we really need. The toil and sorrow which are now connected with labour do not pertain to the original ordinance of labour. But even this discipline is merciful. In prison labour the criminal is sometimes required to turn a wheel connected with a loaded crank. The power is applied to no useful purpose, but is merely intended to weary the prisoner, and thus to punish him. And one bitter element in this correction is this, the prisoner knows that his labour produces nothing. Now, God has superadded toil to work, but with toil He has connected increase. 3. The mode in which Scripture speaks of the arts sustains the doctrine we now propound. Not one word is written in the Bible against the highest development of human industry. On the contrary, much is to be found in the Scriptures of the nature of sanction. When the desire to possess the products of industry becomes lust, and when the possession involves pride, then the creations of art assume a position and sustain a relation which is of the world, and not of the Father. But this shows that the evil is in the excess, and not in the thing itself. The New Testament confirms our remarks. Jesus Christ was the reputed son of an artisan, and, though He chose a condition of poverty, He did not clothe Himself in sackcloth nor refuse to partake of the luxuries of the rich. Not a word did He say against human industry, although He reprobated and denounced every vice and folly of His times, and at the time of His death He was wearing an entire woven coat, for which Roman soldiers cast lots. The apostles trod in the steps of the Saviour. Paul does not require Lydia, a seller of purple, to change her occupation. Let us learn to separate human handiwork from human sin. Art is safe when God is recognised in it. **II. THE DISCONNECTION OF INDUSTRIAL PURSUITS FROM GOD IN THE MINDS OF MEN GENERALLY.** Men have either excluded God entirely from art, or they have worked as if on Divine sufferance. And because God has not been in their thoughts, they have felt that God was not in their craft, and they have taken to themselves all the glory. While idolaters have had a God for every art and for all important branches of human enterprise, Christians have too often thought that they must call art the world, and while they use and enjoy its varied products, verbally abuse them. We do not so read human nature. We do not so read Divine providence. We do not so read our Bible. And we are warned against this spirit by the words before us. Man is made a producer; and when he produces by his labour he fulfils one part of his mission. Now in this shall God be forgotten? God! whose earth this is? God! whose are the precious and the useful metals, and to whom belong the trees of the forest and the cattle upon the hills? Shall God be forgotten? God! we are His workmen; we use His tools; we employ His materials, and we labour in His factory. God forgotten? How unseemly and ungrateful is this! 1. The evil complained of in the text may exist either in a negative or a positive state. Say that God is not in the thoughts. There is no rejection of God, but God is not present. The man thinks of himself—he does not think of God. 2. The sources of this evil are religious ignorance and alienation from God. 3. The forms in which this evil is developed are such as these—God's law is not applied to human labour. Work is not performed in a devotional spirit. God's honour is not sought thereby. And you have one of two things—a man in appearance everywhere irreligious,

or a man in appearance religious everywhere but in his business. And then what have you? A whited sepulchre, a man-lic, or a rebel, open and avowed, against God the Creator. Trace this to its results. Banish religion from human industry, and you remove the chief salutary restraint! Then man will hold his brother in slavery; then men will cheat and lie and overreach and keep back the hire of the labourer. 4. The doctrine of what is commonly termed Justification by faith, has a most intimate connection with this subject. The substance of that doctrine is, that when a sinner truly repents and believes in Jesus Christ, God, instead of putting him upon a probation, immediately receives him to child-like communion. This shows that a Christian may at once have communion with God on every subject that concerns him. 5. Pride, covetousness, oppression, and cruelty are the four transgressions, chiefly named as God's reason for the overthrow of Nineveh and Babylon, Egypt and Tyre. Without true religion the progress of art fosters these evils. 6. The duties especially incumbent upon the Christians of this land, in connection with their daily labour, are, the unfailing recognition of Divine providence, humility, justice, and kindness. There are no colours so brilliant, no forms so graceful, no combinations so complete, no products so perfect and abundant as those which exist apart from human skill and toil. Man, in comparison with the Great Worker, has done nothing. 7. You will not have failed to mark God's calling the mightiest by this name, "axe and saw"; also God's intimating the uselessness of all boasting, "as if it were no wood"; and God's threatening to teach the axe and saw their real position; and you will take this lesson—if we do not make God of infinitely more consequence than man, He will make us feel how much lower than man His curse can sink us; and then, when like Nebuchadnezzar, we feel less and lower than man, we may, in this severe school, "learn to praise, and extol, and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and all whose ways are judgment, and who is able to abase those that walk in pride." (*S. Martin.*) *Proud boastings not overlooked by God*:—God keeps an account of all men's proud and haughty words, with which they set heaven and earth at defiance. They that speak great and swelling words of vanity shall hear of them again. (*Matthew Henry.*) *Absurd brag*:—Oh what a dust do I make! said the fly upon the cart-wheel, in the fable. What destruction do I make among the trees! saith the axe. (*Ibid.*) *God to be honoured*:—Bengel, when a tutor, addressing a letter to an old pupil, said, "Either refrain, dear Reuss, from writing to me, or do not apply to me such superlative expressions. I should quietly, like a fond father, place it all to the account of your love, were I not afraid that my allowing it will bring upon me a heavy responsibility. For the same reason I wish it were not said here at daily prayers 'our most reverend tutors.' I believe that if Herod had been displeased with the acclamation, 'It is the voice of a god and not of man,' he would not have been struck dead in such a horrible manner. God's honour is an awfully tender thing, and may be injured before we are aware." *Napoleon Bonaparte's presumption*:—When Bonaparte was about to invade Russia, a person who had endeavoured to dissuade him from his purpose, finding he could not prevail, quoted to him the proverb, "Man proposes, but God disposes"; to which he indignantly replied, "I dispose as well as propose." A Christian lady, on hearing the impious boast, remarked, "I set that down as the turning-point of Bonaparte's fortunes. God will not suffer a creature with impunity thus to usurp His prerogative." It happened to Bonaparte just as the lady predicted. His invasion of Russia was the commencement of his fall. (*J. Whitecross.*)

Ver. 17. *And the light of Israel shall be for a fire.*—*The light of Israel*:—A name of Jehovah, who was represented by the Shekinah glory. (*B. Blake, B.D.*) *The collapse of the Assyrian enterprise*:—Isaiah's genius supplies him with a splendid figure under which to depict the collapse of the Assyrian enterprise. The serried battalions of Assyria appear to his imagination as the trees of some huge forest, irresistible in their strength and countless in their number; but the Light of Israel kindles majestically into a flame; and at the end of a single day a child may count them. (*Prof. S. K. Driver, D.D.*)

Ver. 18. *They shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth.*—*A different rendering*:—"As the pining away of a sick man," better suits a connection in which there is no reference to battle. Assyria shall be utterly consumed. Thorns and thistles, lordly woods and fruitful fields shall alike perish;

or, if any remain, they shall waste away as a man smitten by an incurable disease. (*Talbot W. Chambers, D.D.*) *The Christian standard-bearer*.—Let me endeavour to present to you one or two features by which a leader in the Christian army ought to be distinguished. I. THERE MUST BE FIXED AND STRONG PRINCIPLE. The man who is to bear the standard in any army must be devotedly attached to the cause for which the army is contending. The man who is to be a guide and leader in the Christian Church ought certainly to have very definite convictions as to what Christianity is, and as to what the Church is. There are other qualities which may be of eminent service to him—a capacity to take a broad view of all questions, a ready sympathy with all who are struggling after truth, though they may be at present in darkness. II. THE SECOND QUALIFICATION OF A STANDARD-BEARER IS COURAGE. A true standard-bearer may be described in a single epithet, taken from one of the prophets, as “valiant for the truth.” That means that truth is his law. Truth is not with him a thing to be toyed with. It is not so much his possession, but rather he is possessed by the truth; it has laid hold of his reason, enthralled his affections, quickened and inspired his conscience. III. THERE IS A STILL HIGHER ELEMENT, A STILL NOBLER, MIGHTIER FORCE BY WHICH THE STANDARD-BEARER IN THE CHRISTIAN ARMY IS DIRECTED AND GOVERNED, AND THAT IS PERSONAL DEVOTION TO CHRIST. Christ is to him the truth, and Christ only is his law. The most illustrious of the standard-bearers of the Christian army, I suppose it would be universally confessed, was the apostle of the Gentiles; and if we study his life and character, we shall perhaps arrive at the best and truest conception of an ideal leader in the Christian army. (*J. G. Rogers, B.A.*) *A standard-bearer*.—In a sermon on the death of the Rev. G. M. Murphy preached by the Rev. P. J. Turquand, Mr. Turquand said: He carried—1. The standard of the Cross. 2. The standard of temperance. 3. The standard of education. 4. The standard of justice. (*Christian World Pulpit.*)

Vers. 20-23. *The remnant shall return*.—“*A remnant shall turn*” (ver. 21).—Thus shall be fulfilled the prophecy embodied in the name of Isaiah’s son, Shear-jashub (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *A happy conversion*.—Consider— I. WHAT IS SAID OF THEIR FORMER ERROR. When it is said that they “shall no more stay upon him that smote them,” it surely implies that they had done this before: this was their error. 1. They had exercised an improper dependence. 2. Their dependence had been disappointed. 3. Their folly was to be corrected by their Sovereign. II. WHAT IS SAID OF THEIR RENEWED EXPERIENCE. “Shall stay upon the Lord,” &c. 1. It is an enlightened confidence. It is foolish to trust without inquiry, and to refuse to trust the trustworthy. 2. Their confidence is very extensive. It covers all times; all events that can awaken our anxiety; all that appertains to life and godliness, &c. 3. It is a blessed confidence. III. THE REALITY OF THEIR CHANGE. “In truth.” That is the important thing. This confidence is distinguishable—1. From mere pretensions. 2. From imaginary confidence. (*W. Jay.*) *Adversity may reach the hard heart*.—The four seasons once determined to try which could quickest reach the heart of a stone. Spring coaxed the stone with its gentle breezes, and made flowers encircle it, and trees to shoot out their branches and embower it, but all to no purpose. The stone remained indifferent to the beauties of the spring, nor would it yield its heart to its gentle caresses. Summer came next, and caused the sun to shine on the stone, hoping to melt its obdurate heart; but though the surface of the stone grew warm it quickly became cold again when not under the influence of the summer sun’s rays. Summer thus being unable by any degree of warmth to penetrate the flinty nature of the stone, gave place to autumn. Believing that the stone had been treated with too much kindness, the autumn withered the flowers and stripped the trees of their leaves and threatened and blustered; but still the stone remained impassive. Winter came next. First it sent strong winds which laid the stone bare; then it sent a cold rain, and next a sharp frost, which cleaved the stone and laid bare its heart. So many a heart which neither gentleness, warmth, nor threats can touch is reached by adversity. (*Nye’s Anecdotes.*) *God’s twofold work on Judah*.—The prophet had said (ver. 12), that “the Lord would perform His whole work upon Mount Zion and upon Jerusalem,” by Sennacherib’s invading the land. Now here we are told what that work should be, a twofold work—I. THE CONVERSION OF SOME, to whom this providence should be sanctified, and yield the peaceable fruit of righteous-

ness, though for the present it was not joyous but grievous. This remnant of Israel is said to be such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, such as escaped the corruptions of the house of Jacob, and kept their integrity in times of common apostasy. Therefore they escape the desolations of that house. 1. This remnant shall come off from all confidence in an arm of flesh; this providence shall cure them of that; they "shall no more again stay upon him that smote them." "Sufferings teach caution." They have learned, by dear-bought experience, the folly of leaning upon that staff as a stay to them which may perhaps prove a staff to beat them (Hos. xiv. 3). 2. They shall come home to God, to the Mighty God, one of the names given to the Messiah (ix. 6), to the Holy One of Israel. They shall return to God and shall stay upon Him. Those only may with comfort stay upon God that return to Him. II. THE CONSUMPTION OF OTHERS. They shall be wasted away by this general decay in the midst of the land. Observe—

1. It is a consumption of God's own making.
2. It is decreed, not the product of a sudden resolve. It is particularly appointed how far it shall extend, how long it shall continue, who shall be consumed by it and who not.
3. It is an overflowing consumption, that shall overspread the land, and like a mighty torrent or inundation, bear down all before it.
4. Though it overflows, it is not at random, but in righteousness. (*Matthew Henry.*)

*The remnants of society* :—Did you ever ponder the disintegrations that are going on in human society? The number of those who fall out of the ranks of society is infinitely greater than the number of those who ever fell out of any army that was gathered on the field of battle. We usually take statistics of the prosperous men in society. But who stands to take an accurate account of all the weak? Who cares for the remnants of society? God does. Let us look at some of these remnants.

1. Those who are broken in health, and are utterly turned away, by that reason, from all that they sought. They count as ciphers. The only thing they seem to be good for is to serve as memorials of a mother's patience, of a sister's goodness, or of a wife's fidelity. How many men are like a man-of-war, that is staunchly built of the best material, but that on its first voyage is so handled by the winds and waves that it becomes unmanageable, and makes haste to come to port again, and anchors at the navy yard, and is an old receiving hulk for the rest of its days!
2. Then, how many remnants there are in society on account of the misapplication of their powers and their utter failure therefrom. How many second and third-rate men there are who undertake to perform functions which require the exercise of the faculties in their best estate.
3. Then there are remnants from the overtaking of men who are adapted to their work, but have not the endurance which their circumstances require. There are some men who, when they break down, are like those who ride in low waggons, and who if the waggon breaks do not fall far, but can get up and mend it, and go on; but there are other men who when they break down are like those who cross a dark chasm on a high bridge, and who, if the bridge break, fall a great distance into the stream below, and have no power to get back, and repair the damage and proceed on their journey.
4. A great many more persons break down from a secret mismanagement of themselves. I see men who use more wind to waft a cockle-boat across a pond than would be required to carry a man-of-war across the sea.
5. Besides these, who are perpetually breaking down and falling in the rear, are those who violate the laws of society; who are detected, and convicted, and branded with shame. I think the most piteous thing in the world is to see a man, no worse than we are, who, under the influence of company, or through temptation, has committed a great wrong, and has been branded by society. His life is not worth anything after that. For the laws of society are like the laws of a fort, which when a man is inside defend him against all attack, but which when he is outside open all the artillery of the fort upon him if he attempts to get back. Many men have a conscience under a prison jacket. God judges with the justice of love, and not with the injustice of hatred. To all those who are cast down and suffering, I say, There is a God that is sorry for you. Beware, then, of desperation. If you have failed for this life, do not fail for the other too. There is very much that may yet be done, even in the afternoon and twilight of men's lives, if they are hopeful and active. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

*Remnants* :—Think a moment of what is meant by "a remnant." It does not mean simply a few; neither does it mean merely the last things; though it includes both of these ideas. When one has cut out a garment from a web of cloth, there is a selvedge, there are the side pieces, of curious shapes, and there is at last the

tail-piece—a little bit left. The main and best parts have been taken out and used. Although they are of as good substance as the rest, there are these edges, the intermediate bits, and the final remaining part; and all these are called “the remnants.” They are not exactly waste, but they are parts that are left over after the good has been principally taken out. Out of no carpenter’s shop does the timber ever come as large as it went in. The chips, the shavings, the slabs, the edges, the intermediate pieces—they are the remnants of the carpenter’s work—the parts which have not been used up for commercial objects. Look in upon a household after all the children have been fed, after all the servants have eaten, and the table is cleared off, and see what is left. See the bones; the gristle; the scraps of meat that are stringy and not easily chewed; the bits of potato; the pieces of confection; the heap of fragments. These are the remnants of the meals. Look at the remnant in the harvest—all those stray stalks of wheat in the blackberry edges of the uncomely farm; all those that have fallen by the way; the gleanings; the refuse of the field. So, in all the phases of society—in the army, in the navy, in business circles, in the household, everywhere—there is a remnant constantly coming up. It is the portion which is left after the better or more favoured has been culled out and used. (*Ibid.*) *Society’s treatment of the weak* :—Who thinks of the poor and fallen? Society? The most bungling work society ever does in this world, it does when it attempts to be merciful. Society is a machine, at best, of patches and expedients. When men fall out of their places, and need to be tenderly dealt with, then the hands of society are clumsier to deal with than a lout’s, a yeoman’s hand, in the field, is clumsy to take care of the new-born babe. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 24-34. **O My people, that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian.**—*Forbidden fear* :—It is against the mind and will of God that His people, whatever happens, should give way to that fear which has torment and amazement. They that dwell in Zion, where God dwells, and where His people attend Him, and are employed in His service, that are under the protection of the bulwarks that are round about Zion, need not be afraid of any enemy. Let their souls dwell at ease in God. 1. The Assyrian shall do nothing against them but what God hath appointed and determined. “He shall smite thee” by the Divine permission, but it shall be only with a rod to correct thee, not with a sword to wound and kill. Nay, “he shall but lift up his staff against thee,” threaten thee and frighten thee, and shake the rod at thee, “after the manner of Egypt,” as the Egyptians shook their staff against your fathers at the Red Sea, when they said, “We will pursue, we will overtake,” but could not reach to do them any hurt. We should not be frightened at those enemies that can do no more than frighten us. 2. The storm will soon blow over (ver. 25). God’s anger against His people is but for a moment; and when that ceaseth, and is turned away from us, we need not fear the fury of any man, for it is impotent passion. 3. The enemy that threatens them shall himself be reckoned with. The rod with which He corrected His people shall not only be laid aside, but thrown into the fire. The prophet, for the encouragement of God’s people, quotes precedents; and puts them in mind of what God had done formerly against the enemies of His Church that were very strong and formidable, but were brought to ruin. It is good to observe a resemblance between God’s latter and former appearances for His people, and against His and their enemies. 4. They shall be wholly delivered from the power of the Assyrian, and from the fear of it (ver. 27). (*M. Henry.*)

Ver. 26. **According to the slaughter of Midian.**—*Assyria and Midian* :—1. As the hand of God was seen in the slaughter of the Midianites, so it was in the slaughter of the Assyrians. 2. As the Midianites were slain without loss of any of the Israelites, so were the Assyrians without any loss of the men of Judah. 3. As the whole army of the Midianites was overthrown, so was the whole army of the Assyrians. 4. As the Midianites were overthrown on a sudden, when their thoughts were at the highest, so was the whole army of the Assyrians. (*W. Day, M.A.*)

Vers. 27-34. **His burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder.**—*A picturesque representation of the invasion of Judah* (vers. 28-34) :—The description here given, when looked at æsthetically, is one of the most

picturesque and magnificent representations that human poetry has ever produced. "He comes upon Ayyath, marches through Migron, in Michmash he leaves his baggage. They march right across the ravine;—let Geba be our night-quarters! Ramah trembles; Gibeah of Saul flees; scream loud, O daughter of Gallim! O only listen, Laysha! Poor Anathoth! Hurries Madmena, the inhabitants of Gebim rescue. To-day he still makes a halt in Nob,—swings his hand over the mountain of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem. Behold, the All-Lord, Jehovah of hosts, lops down the branches with terrible force, and those of towering growth are hewn down, and the lofty are laid low. And He fells the thickets of the forest with the iron; and Lebanon, by a majestic One it falls." (*F. Delitzsch.*) *The actualities of faith*:—The prophetic confidence in a Divine must be leads to the description of it as an actuality. Faith sees not the difficulties that reason emphasises; but laughs at impossibilities, saying, "It shall be done." (*B. Blake, B.D.*) *God's providence critical and retributive*:—This is the providence, then, under which we live. Facts prove it. We are under law and criticism of a moral kind: our conduct is examined, our motives are inquired into and pronounced upon by the just One; every morning is as a white throne set in the heavens; every noonday is as an eye of fire watching the ways of men; every night is a pavilion of rest, or an image of despair. The axe of heaven is lifted up against all the thick trees that suppose themselves to be independent of God. All moral loveliness is cherished as the pearl greater in value than all others. This is the economy under which we live! We are not left without law, judgment, supervision, criticism; every one of us must give an account of himself to God. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing." If for a few years we grow towards strength, we soon turn the growing point, and go down into old age and weakness, that we may know ourselves to be but men. Life is a great triumph up to middle age, because the man may be always well; he may grow in strength and in prosperity, and he may represent himself as a successful fowler; but after that grey hairs are here and there upon him, and he knoweth it not, and presently men may say as he passes by, He stoops a little more; his memory will begin to be a little blurred and clouded, and though he can keep good reckoning, yet he must trust to paper more than he ever trusted before. If we plant vineyards and forests, and subdue wildernesses by generous culture, we die whilst we gaze on our success, and are buried under the very flowers which have rewarded our toil. This is the economy under which the nations have ever lived, and under which every little life works out its little day. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

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## CHAPTER XI.

**VERS. 1-16.** And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse.—*A prophecy concerning Messiah the Prince*:—I. HIS RISE OUT OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID (ver. 1). II. HIS QUALIFICATIONS FOR HIS GREAT UNDERTAKING (vers. 2, 3). III. THE JUSTICE AND EQUITY OF HIS GOVERNMENT (vers. 3-5). IV. THE PEACEABLENESS OF HIS KINGDOM (vers. 6-9). V. THE ACCESSION OF THE GENTILES TO IT (ver. 10). VI. And with them the REMNANT OF THE JEWS that should be united with them in the Messiah's kingdom (vers. 11-16). (*M. Henry.*) *The picture of the future* which fills the eleventh chapter is one of the most extensive that Isaiah has drawn. Three prospects are unfolded in it. I. A PROSPECT OF MIND (vers. 2-5). The geography of a royal mind in its stretches of character, knowledge, and achievement. II. A PROSPECT OF NATURE (vers. 6-9). A vision of the restitution of nature—Paradise regained. III. A PROSPECT OF HISTORY (vers. 9-16). The geography of Israel's redemption. To this third prospect chapter xii. forms a fitting conclusion, a hymn of praise in the mouth of returning exiles. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *Three great ideals*:—1. The perfect indwelling of our humanity by the Spirit of God. 2. The peace and communion of all nature, covered with the knowledge of God. 3. The traversing of all history by the Divine purposes of redemption. (*Ibid.*) *Assyria and Israel: a contrast*:—We should connect the opening of the eleventh chapter



with the close of the tenth in order to feel the full force of the contrast. There we read: "And He shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty One." Then comes the prophecy that "there shall come forth a rod," &c. The cedar of Lebanon was the symbol of Assyrian power. It was a poor symbol. Looked at botanically, it very vividly represented the passing pomp of a pagan empire. It is of the pine genus, and sends out no suckers, and when it is cut down it is gone. The oak is the symbol of Israel's power, and though it be cut down it grows again—"there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots"—out of the very lowest stump that is left in the ground. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Eternal youthfulness*:—What is the symbol of our power? Is ours an influence that can be cut down and never revive? or are we so rooted in the Eternal that though persecution may impoverish us, and we may suffer great deprivation and depletion of every kind, yet we shall come up again in eternal youthfulness? (*Ibid.*) *Prophecy: a very good transition*:—It is a very good transition in prophecy (whether it be so in rhetoric or no) and a very common one, to pass from the prediction of the temporal deliverances of the Church to that of the great salvation, which, in the fulness of time, should be wrought out by Jesus Christ, of which the others were types and figures. (*M. Henry.*) *The Branch*:—The word translated "Branch" is in the Hebrew *Netzer*. The word is said to be derived from a root which means "bright" or "verdant." And this agrees with the character of the valley in which the town of Netzer or Natsoreth (Nazareth) stands. "The bushes and aromatic shrubs, and especially the brilliant wild flowers, take away from the bleakness of the landscape." It is from this title, then, *Netzer* or the Branch, that St. Matthew quotes when he says, "He shall be called a Nazarene" (Matt. ii. 23). (*Expository Times.*) *The rod out of the stem of Jesse*:—Let us go back to the humblest point, the very starting line, and learn that this Son of God was not the son of a king only, but the son of a king's lowly father. Christianity is the religion of the common people. The Gospel appeals to all men, rich and poor, in every zone and clime, and is most to those who need it most. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Christ the fruitful Branch*:—"A shoot out of its roots brings fruit." The sprout shooting out below the soil becomes a tree, and this tree gets a crown with fruits; and thus a state of exaltation and completion follows the state of humiliation. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *The qualifications of Christ for His mediatorial office*:—I. The first verse of the text foretells the BIRTH AND FAMILY OF THE MESSIAH. The Messiah was to be born of the house of David, the son of Jesse. But why is Jesse mentioned here, rather than David, his more illustrious son? Partly to point out the birthplace of the Messiah. Jesse appears always to have lived at Bethlehem, and was known as the Bethlehemite; whereas, David resided the greater part of his life at Hebron and Jerusalem. Jesse was in a more humble rank of life than Jesse's son; and so Jesus, though superior to David, as a royal king, being David's Lord, as well as David's son, yet, in the actual circumstances of His life, was nearer to the humble rank of Jesse than the royal state of David. It was also out of the stem of Jesse that the rod was to come forth—from a stem where there was nothing but stem and root remaining; not out of a noble tree, with its wide-spreading branches. "And a Branch shall grow out of his roots." It is intimated here, and elsewhere more clearly foretold, that the Branch should spring from the family of Jesse, when it was in lowly circumstances, at a time when the house of David should be much reduced, and that slender expectations should be formed of it at first, but that in process of time it should grow into a beautiful and glorious Branch. How exactly all this describes the birth and lineage of Jesus Christ. Yet was ever branch so glorious in its increase? What noble fruits have hung on that Branch! What Churches have clustered around it! II. HIS FULL QUALIFICATIONS FOR HIS OFFICE, as described in this prediction (ver. 2). "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him." On Him was poured the unction of the Holy One in all its fulness. But, remember, the Spirit of the Lord rested on Him in His office of Mediator. Now, this is a public office, an office which Jesus sustains for the benefit of His people; and therefore the Spirit of the Lord rests upon Him for His people. 1. "The spirit of wisdom." He had wisdom in full measure. He must have had a perfect comprehension of God in His nature, qualities, attributes, works, and ways; He must have had a thorough understanding of the only method by which wretched man could be saved; He must have known what was in the mind of man, for He answered the Pharisees and

Sadducees, and knew the difficulties and doubts of His disciples, even before they gave them utterance in words. How wise were all His provisions for His Church! How wise to win souls was Jesus Christ! And remember He has wisdom for you. 2. "The spirit of understanding." This is enlarged on in the following verse. The Saviour had a quickness in understanding what might be for the glory or dishonour of His heavenly Father. No tinsel could hide from Him the foul deformity of sin; no hypocrisy could veil from Him the pride and corruption of the Pharisee. When Satan came with his temptations, and baited his snare with all the kingdoms of the world in all their glory, Christ instantly understood the deceit, and, "Get thee hence, Satan," was His indignant language. 3. "The spirit of counsel." "This," says our prophet, "is the name whereby He shall be called, Wonderful Counsellor." Christ is able to give the wisest counsel in the kindest manner. He has advice suited to every case. He counsels the sinner. He says to the Church in a Laodicean state, "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich." He counsels the Christian warrior how to maintain the fight against sin with persevering faith. 4. "The spirit of might." He is a Lamb in meekness; He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah in strength. His work required a very undaunted spirit, and He never quaked with fear, nor trembled with alarm. And He has the spirit of might for you also. 5. "The spirit of knowledge." In Christ dwells all knowledge—the knowledge of Jehovah, His heavenly Father, of His holy will, His righteous claims, the blessedness of knowing God as Father. And this same knowledge of His Father He is able to impart to you. 6. "And of the fear of the Lord." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and it is also one of the highest attainments of wisdom, and one of the best effects of the Holy Spirit on the heart. (*J. Hambleton, M.A.*) *The kingdom of Christ*:—We may well study this picture of the Messiah's reign on earth, drawn by a Divine hand and painted with unfading colours, because through it we see, as we cannot otherwise, what we are daily praying for. History does not fully interpret prophecy for us. If we knew just the changes in the nations before the fulness of the times comes, if we could be assured where and when and how Jesus would reign in an earthly way among men, still we should not have what the vision of Isaiah furnishes us. He saw nothing of this. And what did he see? First of all a mighty forest, whose tall trees sent their roots down deep into the earth, and whose branches cast wide shadows. These were the proud nations that were oppressing Israel, and seemed strong enough to stand forever. But they were to lose their glory. Among them there was a stump, sending up from its decay and humiliation a small, tender, but vigorous shoot. This was the ancient but fallen house of David; and the green shoot coming up was only in fulfilment of the old covenant that there should always be one to sit on David's throne. As we look, through the seer's vision, we see the young tree dissolve into the form of a Man, a Man on whom the Holy Spirit rests with sevenfold gifts of wisdom and knowledge and counsel and might and understanding in the fear of the Lord. This Man is full of righteousness, and His robes are girdled with righteousness as He sits and judges among the people. And again, as we gaze, we see that the Man dissolves into a mountain—the mountain of the Lord which shall be established in the top of the mountains in the last days. This mountain is full of peace and security. Once more, as if to express in a sentence the whole thought and hope of the prophet, we see the whole earth filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Interpreting this vision there are two truths that may well be dwelt upon. I. THE CHIEF FACT ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST IS CHRIST HIMSELF, WHO MAKES HIS KINGDOM BY DWELLING IN THE HEARTS OF MEN. II. HIS REIGN IS LIKE THE REIGN OF THE LITTLE CHILD IN THE MIDST OF THE ANIMALS THAT NATURALLY HATE AND DEVOUR ONE ANOTHER. It is a reign of childlikeness and innocence, the power of weakness and purity over brute force. (*E. N. Packard.*) *The kingdom of Christ in the world is only the presence of Christ in the world, repeating His acts of mercy and love, uttering His eternal truths, scorching hypocrisy and error with the breath of His mouth, changing unruly wills ever into docile ones, cleansing and making glad everything everywhere. There is no reign of Christ of which we can form any idea but this. When men are holy, through His indwelling among them, that is Christ's reign. Let us forget the scenic and dramatic elements in millennial glories and simply think of the kingdom as being the presence of the King. Here we see the difference between His reign and that of any earthly monarch who can transmit his power to his son and he to*

his posterity, and so, with precedent and law and tradition, there may be some approach to security and peace. Frederick the Great dies, but his empire goes on and holds him in memory. But Christ has no successors, and there is no royal family save that which is made from all who are named after His name. Christ must be as truly among men at one age as another, and where He is not a living and controlling presence there is nothing but a name. What we call Christianity—the sum total of the influences that emanate from Christ and touch the complex life of man—has no inherent vitality of its own. It cannot abide upon traditions of One who founded it ages ago. Christ's perpetual presence alone makes Christianity possible. The same is true of the Church. (*Ibid.*)

*Messiah's reign*.—I. THE PERSON. II. THE CHARACTER. III. THE KINGDOM of Messiah. (*D. Brown, D.D.*) *The stem from the rod of Jesse*.—That this refers to the Lord Jesus is undoubted. I. HIS DESCENT. Three ideas seem to be involved. 1. Meanness or obscurity. 2. Progression. How decayed soever the tree might appear, yet a Branch was to shoot and grow up out of its roots. For a time, the growth was far from being rapid, but at length it appeared as a Plant of everlasting renown. 3. Secret and mysterious operation. The metaphor is taken from vegetation, that process of the wonder-working God which none can explain, yet the existence of which none can dispute. II. HIS PERSONAL AND OFFICIAL ENDOWMENTS. 1. Their nature (ver. 2). They were—(1) Diversified in their character. (2) Unlimited in their range. The Spirit was imparted to Him without measure. (3) Continuous in their possession. "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him." 2. The purposes for which these endowments were conferred. (1) That He might discriminate the characters of men. "And shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord," &c. (2) To defend the cause of the oppressed. "But with righteousness shall He judge the poor," &c. (3) To punish the workers of iniquity. "And He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth," &c. III. THE BLESSED STATE OF THINGS WHICH WILL BE REALISED UNDER HIS ADMINISTRATION. We dare not lose sight of the truth, that He is mighty to destroy; but how encouraging is it to remember, that He who speaks and acts in righteousness is also mighty to save. And the concluding portion of this prophecy shows in how signal a manner His saving power will be exerted. 1. The condition described. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb," &c. We have here two leading ideas. (1) Peace and harmony. (2) Security. 2. In order thereto the most marvellous transformations will be effected. 3. The means of this transformation will be the universal diffusion of Divine knowledge (ver. 9). Conclusion—1. Let us pray that the Redeemer's kingdom may come. 2. To us, personally, the great thing is to possess the knowledge of the Lord ourselves. (*Anon.*)

Vers. 2-5. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him.—*The Spirit of the Lord*.— $\text{רוח ה'}$  is the Divine Spirit as the bearer of the whole fulness of Divine powers. Then follow in three pairs the six spirits comprehended by  $\text{רוח ה'}$ , the first pair of which relate to the intellectual life, the second to the practical life, and the third to the direct relationship to God. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *The Spirit of God* is absolutely the heart of all; it corresponds to the shaft of the seven-flamed candlestick, and the three pairs to the arms that stretched out from it. (*Ibid.*) *The great Preacher*.—Here it is distinctly prophesied that our Saviour, when He should come into the world, would be peculiarly endowed by the Holy Spirit, with wisdom, discernment, and might in speech, such as should make Him a remarkable preacher. I. WHAT A CONSUMMATE MASTER JESUS WAS OF REAL ELOQUENCE. Of course I do not refer to the petty arts and studied rules of the professional orator and actor. He needed none of these to aid Him; He was infinitely above them all. His whole demeanour was perfectly simple and natural, though earnest, discriminating, and impressive, as the pure love and complete appreciation of truth could make one. Aside from earnestness and naturalness, His great power of eloquence consisted—1. In the clearness and completeness of His views. 2. In His perfect command, through language, of all the powers and passions of the human soul. II. HOW PLAINLY AND FORCEFULLY OUR SAVIOUR PREACHED THE GREAT DOCTRINES OR FUNDAMENTAL FACTS OF THE GOSPEL SYSTEM. III. THE PECULIAR MANNER AND AMAZING POWER OF THE SAVIOUR'S PREACHING. (*E. P. Marvin.*) *The Spirit of Whitsuntide*.—This is Isaiah's description of the Spirit of Whitsuntide; the royal Spirit which was to descend, and did descend without measure, on the ideal and perfect King. Let

us consider what that Spirit is. 1. He is the Spirit of love. God is love; and He is the Spirit of God. 2. He is the Spirit of wisdom. Now, is the spirit of wisdom the same as the spirit of love? (1) Sound theology, which is the highest reason, tells us that it must be so. To suppose that God's wisdom and God's love, or that God's justice and God's love, are different from each other, or limit each other, or oppose each other, or are anything but one and the same eternally, is to divide God's substance; to deny that God is one. (2) But more; experience will show us that the spirit of love is the same as the spirit of wisdom; that if any man wishes to be truly wise and prudent, his only way is to be loving and charitable. The experience of the apostles proves it. They had the most enormous practical success that men ever had. They, twelve poor men, set out to convert mankind by loving them: and they succeeded. Remember, moreover, that the text speaks of this Spirit of the Lord being given to One who was to be a King, a Ruler, a Guide, and a Judge of men; who was to exercise influence over men for their good. This prophecy was fulfilled first in the King of kings, our Lord Jesus Christ: but it was fulfilled also in His apostles, who were, in their own way and measure, kings of men, exercising a vast influence over them. And how? By the royal Spirit of love. Our own experience will be the same as the apostles' experience. If we do not understand our fellow-creatures we shall never love them. But it is equally true that if we do not love them we shall never understand them. 3. Next, this royal Spirit is described as the "spirit of counsel and might," i.e., the spirit of prudence and practical power; the spirit which sees how to deal with human beings, and has the practical power of making them obey. Now that power, again, can only be got by loving human beings. My experience is this: that whensoever in my past life I have been angry and scornful, I have said or done an unwise thing, I have more or less injured my own cause; weakened my own influence on my fellow-men; repelled them instead of attracting them. 4. And next: this Spirit is "the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord." They both begin and end in love. (1) If you wish for knowledge, you must begin by loving knowledge for its own sake. And the more knowledge you gain, the more you will long to know. And if this be true of things earthly and temporary, how much more of things heavenly and eternal? We must begin by loving whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, honest, and of good report. We must begin by loving them with a sort of child's love, without understanding them. But as we go on, as St. Paul bids us, to meditate on them; and "if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, to think on such things," and feed our minds daily with purifying, elevating, sobering, humanising, enlightening thoughts: then we shall get to love goodness with a reasonable and manly love; to see the beauty of holiness; the strength of self-sacrifice; the glory of justice; the divineness of love; and in a word—to love God for His own sake, and to give Him thanks for His great glory, which is: that He is a good God. (2) This Spirit is also the "spirit of the fear of the Lord." That, too, must be a spirit of love not only to God, but to our fellow-creatures. For if we but consider that God the Father loves all; that His mercy is over all His works; and that He hateth nothing that He has made: then, how dare we hate anything that He has made, as long as we have any rational fear of Him, awe and respect for Him, true faith in His infinite majesty and power? If we but consider that God the Son actually came down on earth to die, and to die, too, on the Cross, for all mankind: then, how dare we hate a human being for whom He died? (C. Kingsley, M.A.) *Gifts of the Spirit from Christ to His Church*:—It was as Head of His Church that the Spirit was shed forth upon Him, and from Him descends upon His members. If we would, then, know what are the graces we are to expect of this kind, we must inquire what our Lord received. I. THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT UPON CHRIST, FITTING HIM FOR HIS MEDIATORIAL OFFICE. Three several branches of grace seem intended: wisdom, might, intelligent devotion to God's Word. II. HOW THE GRACES OF SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE FLOW FROM CHRIST TO HIS PEOPLE. 1. They first descended on the apostles when, assembled at Jerusalem, they waited for the promise of the Father. 2. These gifts were not confined to the apostles. Multitudes, through their preaching, were turned from the idolatry of the Gentiles or the superstition of the Jews to serve the living God; and on them, too, the Spirit was bestowed. 3. Neither are these rich streams exhausted. The Saviour still bestows with liberal hand the spiritual influences we need. (J. Ayre, M.A.) *The Spirit of the Lord has*

*always been in human history*.—It accounts for all heroisms, noble darings, self-sacrifices, for all labours meant, not for the blessedness of the labourer himself, but for the gratification and progress of other ages. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Spiritual endowments for earthly rulers*.—Modern expositors have often restricted this gracious description of royal enrichment to the ideal King of Israel, the coming Messiah. This application is, no doubt, its ultimate designation, but there is more than sufficient evidence to warrant the discrimination of mediæval teachers, who boldly selected this heroic passage concerning the seven Spirits of God as a perfect epitome of the gifts that might be rightly claimed for those, and by those, who are Divinely called to wear an earthly crown, and to rule in temporal affairs. Dean Plumtre has suggested that these verses may well represent the programme which Isaiah himself set before his pupil, Hezekiah, on his accession to the throne, which his weak predecessor had suffered to degenerate into a vantage ground for abuse of justice and laxity of morals such as had deteriorated the faith and moral fibre of his people. And, as Dr. George Adam Smith points out, in the theology, art, and worship of the Middle Ages, this text was constantly and consistently associated with the assumption of royal responsibilities, and with the judicial administration of magistrates. It was known as “the mirror for magistrates,” and was commonly employed at the coronation of kings and the fencing of tribunals of justice. “What Isaiah wrote for Hezekiah of Judah became the official prayer, song or ensample of the earliest Christian kings in Europe. It is evidently the model of that royal hymn—not by Charlemagne, as is usually supposed, but by his grandson, Charles the Bald—the *Veni Creator Spiritus*.” So deeply did this sense of the need and privilege of the gifts of the Spirit for the ruling class pervade the life of the times that Henry III.’s order of knighthood, “*Du Saint Esprit*,” was restricted to political men, and particularly to magistrates. (*F. Platt, B.D.*) *Coronation gifts*.—We may, therefore, claim abundant precedent in using the text to correct two perilous tendencies in the national and religious thought of our own day—one brought about by a mistake made by men of the world in the affairs of State, and the other the result of a misapprehension by men of God in the affairs of the Spirit. 1. The first tendency, which is to depreciate the operation of the Spirit of God in civic life and duty, may be illustrated by a simple fact. In the speech from the throne, at the opening of Queen Victoria’s last Parliament, the customary reference at the close to the blessing of Almighty God upon the labours of her faithful Commons was omitted. It was afterwards explained by a responsible Minister of the Crown that the omission was accidental, but the omission marks nevertheless a tendency. The recognition of the Divine in political life has become formal. Its symbols linger, but it is assumed that thoughtful men smile at them and lay the burthen of their survival upon the substantial emoluments of office, or upon the popular love of the spectacular symbols of dignity. In depreciating the “Divine right” of kings, have we diminished the assurance, “By *Me* kings reign and princes decree justice”? Do the splendours of a coronation impress us more than its solemnities? Does the sense of widening empire attract us more than a growing sensitiveness to the supremacy of spiritual obligation? Are we more responsive in national movements to the solicitations of sensual excitement than to the inward suggestions of the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord? It was in the midst of social and political conditions strangely analogous to our own that Isaiah set forth his inspired conception of the spiritual qualifications of true kingship amongst men. 2. Between the tendency to depreciate the place of the Divine in national life, and the further tendency in religious thought to limit the sphere of the activities of the Spirit of God unduly to what are termed spiritual as opposed to temporal affairs, there is an inner correspondence that is very significant. There is a mode, popular amongst the religious, of speaking of the work of the Spirit of God as “supernatural,” and as thus excluding processes known as natural or rational, that is distinctly perilous. This distinction implies that we may feel and know the presence of the Spirit of God at the Keswick Convention, but fails to expect His influence in the Convention at Bloemfontein. It asserts His inspiration in Holy Scripture, but has no sure place for His control or suggestion in the leading articles of the “secular” press. His gifts may be possessed by the “spiritually minded,” but the man immersed in political affairs thinks and toils in quite another sphere. His presence is invoked at the councils of the Church, but at the councils of industry it is regarded as a negligible quality. In the problems of the soul His

guidance as the Spirit of truth may be consciously expected, but in the problems of science men must follow the light of nature. It was against a similar conception in his time that Isaiah's declaration of the Spirit's seven-fold gifts was announced. Israel had made the fatal distinction between secular and sacred that is at the root of so much of our own disregard of God. We do not wonder that with national emergencies and necessities such as these pressing upon him, Isaiah reveals the source and strength of political sagacity and regal authority as dwelling with these august prerogatives of the Spirit of the Lord that are pre-vaillingly intellectual, "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." They display a marvellous co-ordination of the intellectual and practical life with the sense of the direct relation of the life to God. They cannot be too closely studied and applied as the Divine provision for the governing and political mind, and the scientific temper of our own day. "'Wisdom' is the power of discerning the nature of things through the appearance; 'understanding' the power of discerning the difference of things in their appearance; 'counsel' is the gift of forming right conclusions, and 'might' the ability to carry them through with energy. 'The knowledge of the Lord' is knowledge founded on the fellowship of love; and 'the fear of the Lord' is fear absorbed in reverence." These are the hidden springs of the genius for statesmanship. The Spirit is the true historic glory of royalty, and the secret of citizenship in all abiding developments of popular liberties and imperial expansion; and to accept any statute of limitations in the opulence of His energies in national life is as fatal to permanence as to progress. (*Ibid.*) *The Spirit of God in patriotism and judicial administration*.—True patriotism is an inspiring variation of the work of the Spirit of God. Judicial administration is a part of religious life and faith. "The Lord of hosts is for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate." (*Ibid.*) *The hallowing of the secular life*.—Whilst we are heedful of the richer revelation of the grace of the Holy Spirit disclosed in the New Testament, the Old Testament interpretation of His gifts is of essential importance. This may be summed up generally as the hallowing of the secular life, the fertilising contact of the Spirit of God with matter and mind in their organisation in nature and in human society. Joseph as an administrator is recognised as His product—"a man in whom the Spirit of God is." It was the equipment of Moses' colleagues in the judicature, "God took of the Spirit which was upon him and gave it unto them." Of Bezaleel and his weavers and craftsmen the record runs, "I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom and understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship to devise cunning work." Samson's might was the Spirit of the Lord, and "the Spirit of the Lord clothed itself with Gideon" for the prowess of his great military enterprise. The story of the coronation of Saul, Israel's earliest king, is the progressive history of the movements and endowments of the Spirit of God. And time would fail to tell of David and the long line of kings whom the same Spirit anointed and established in government. (*Ibid.*) *Christ is full of light*.—Going into a village at night, with the lights gleaming on each side of the street, in some houses they will be in the basement and nowhere else, and in others in the attic and nowhere else, and in others in some middle chamber; but in no house will every window gleam from top to bottom. So it is with men's faculties. Most of them are in darkness. One shines here, and another there; but there is no man whose soul is luminous throughout. But Christ presented a perfect character. Every room in His soul was filled with light. He is light. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Ver. 3. **And shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord.**—"*Of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord*"—a word which relates to the power of smell or scent; He is to have that keen sense which the hound has when the game is not far away, and yet is deeply hidden; He is to know wisdom and right and truth as the thirsty hart smells the water-brooks; or, by another etymology, He is to draw His breath in the fear of the Lord; i.e., the fear of the Lord is to be His native breath. Religion is to be no burden to Him, no superimposition which He must carry, whether He will or no; His religion is His breath, He will pray because He breathes, He will speak because He breathes; it is part of Himself, of His very nature; it belongs to a great system of voluntari-

ness, which constantly and continually gives itself out for the benefit of those who are within the range of its influence. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Christ's penetrating insight*:—This prediction was fully verified in our Lord Jesus Christ, who was of such quick discernment and acute understanding in the dispositions of the human heart, that He could infallibly determine with respect to men's characters, of which some memorable instances are recorded in the New Testament. Such was His penetrating sagacity that, at first sight, He could easily discover a true Israelite in whom was the fear of the Lord, from those that were wicked, hypocritical or formal, and destitute of this internal qualification (John i. 47, 48). He showed that He was perfectly acquainted with the character of the woman who was a sinner. According to this prophecy the Messiah, in admitting persons into His kingdom, was not to have respect to their external advantages, their descent or their riches, their reputation and condition in the world, or their exterior appearances of feigned piety; but to judge of them simply by their fear and reverence of the Lord, which forms the beauty of the inward man, and is inseparably connected with every other Divine grace and the exercises of dutiful obedience to God. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Christ and the fear of Jehovah*:—"Fear of Jehovah is fragrance to Him." It is not meant that He has as regards Himself pleasure in fear of God, but that fear of God when He perceives it in men is fragrance to Him (Gen. viii. 21); for the fear of God is a sacrifice of adoration, continually ascending to God. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *Religion quickens the intelligence*:—1. Those are most truly and valuably intelligent that are so "in the fear of the Lord," in the business of religion; for that is both the foundation and topstone of wisdom. 2. By this it will appear that we have the Spirit of God if we have spiritual senses exercised, and are "of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." Those have Divine illumination that know their duty and know how to go about it. 3. Therefore Jesus Christ had the Spirit without measure, that He might perfectly understand His undertaking. (*M. Henry.*) *The fear of the Lord* may here denote the devout affection of reverence, which arises in the mind by means of the contemplation of the grandeur and dominion, the power and righteousness, with the other Divine excellences of Jehovah. It adores His greatness; it venerates His purity; it respects His omniscience; it does homage to His goodness; it stands in awe of His power; it honours His justice, and is solicitous to avoid His displeasure. It is such a profound reverence for God as is accompanied with love, and a becoming concern to yield an exact obedience to all His commands; it resembles the affection which a dutiful son discovers towards his esteemed parent, and faithful subjects entertain for a good prince. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Effects of the fear of the Lord*:—When this principle reigns in the heart it produces the most powerful effects, and hath an extensive happy influence over all the purposes, affections, desires, and actions. It dispels the fear of man that bringeth a snare, and renders superior to all the threatenings and terrors of the world; it restrains from sin, and closely adheres to God and His ways; it renders cautious and circumspect, and proves the watchful guardian of the heart; it presides in every act of worship, and excites to the performance of every duty that may please the Lord. (*Ibid.*) *The relation of the fear of the Lord to other graces*:—This filial fear and reverence of Jehovah is the fruit of the Spirit; the offspring of faith, whereby it is cherished; the concomitant of love, which preserves it from degenerating into slavish dread; the companion of hope, which it keeps from falling into presumption, whilst hope preserves fear from sinking into despair; it qualifies joy and keeps it from levity, whilst joy shows that fear is genuine, and of the right kind. (*Ibid.*) **And He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes.**—*Christ's impartial judgment*:—Impartial judgment and equitable reproof are foretold to be administered by Him. In the exercise of His penetrating judgment He was impartially to pronounce upon the characters of those who were to be admitted to participate in the privileges of His people, to determine according to the perfect rules of equity the differences that might arise among them respecting their conduct and interests, to defend them from the injuries to which they might be exposed, and to avenge the wrongs which they sustained. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 4. **But with righteousness shall He judge the poor.**—*The righteousness of Christ's kingdom*:—As it may in many ways be shown that the Church of Christ though one Church with the Jewish, differs from it as being a kingdom, so now let me dwell on this point: that though a

kingdom like empires of the earth, it differs from them in being a Church, *i.e.*, a kingdom of truth and righteousness. That Scripture speaks of the kingdom of Christ as not an earthly kingdom, not supported by strength of arm or force of mind or any other faculty or gift of the natural man, is plain. But consider some objections to which the circumstances of its actual history and condition give rise. I. IT MAY BE SAID THAT THE EVENT HAS NOT FULFILLED THE PROPHECIES; that the kingdom has indeed been large and powerful, but it has not ruled according to justice and truth; that at times it has had very wicked men among its rulers, and that great corruptions, religious and moral, have been found in it; and that worse crimes have been perpetrated under colour of religion than in any other way. But this may be granted in the argument; yet the Scripture account of the Church remains uncompromised. It is a kingdom of righteousness, because it is a kingdom founded in righteousness. II. IN THE GOSPEL, CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS ARE REPRESENTED AS POOR, DESPISED, WEAK, AND HELPLESS. Such pre-eminently were the apostles. But in the prophets, especially in Isaiah, the kingdom is represented as rich and flourishing and honoured, powerful and happy. If the Church of Christ were to seek power, wealth, and honour, this were to fall from grace; but it is not less true that she will have them, though she seeks them not—or rather, if she seeks them not. Such is the law of Christ's kingdom, such the paradox which is seen in its history. It belongs to the poor in spirit; it belongs to the persecuted; it is possessed by the meek; it is sustained by the patient. It conquers by suffering; it advances by retiring; it is made wise through foolishness. III. TEMPORAL POWER AND WEALTH, THOUGH NOT ESSENTIAL TO THE CHURCH, ARE ALMOST NECESSARY ATTENDANTS ON IT. (*J. H. Newman, D.D.*)

Ver. 5. **And righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins.**—*The right girdle*.—I. We have the Saviour here represented in His **RIGHTeousNESS**. The Saviour was abstractedly, in and of and from Himself, righteous. But the righteousness here means the actual accomplishment of His mission. He saith of Himself, "Ought not Christ to suffer these things?" But He was not only righteous in His work, He was righteous on all sides. "Righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins"; go all round Him. That cannot be said of us except by faith. By faith we put on the girdle of righteousness. But personally we are compassed with infirmity. Not so the Saviour. He was tempted or tried, but never showed a weak part anywhere. Not only was He righteous, He was also strong. II. We have the Saviour here represented in His **FAITHFULNESS**. By the "reins," as Cruden well observes, the vital affections of the soul are meant. Did Christ's vital affections ever give way? No! How faithful He was in love! (*James Wells.*) *Girdles* of various kinds, made of valuable materials, were anciently worn by persons of high rank, which distinguished them from those of inferior station, by whom girdles of some sort were likewise worn. The girdles which the priests put on were made of gold, of blue, of purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen. The military girdle was sometimes of considerable excellence and value, as is plainly intimated in what Joab said to the young man who informed him he had seen Absalom hanging in a tree (2 Sam. xviii. 11). (*R. Macculloch.*) *Righteousness and faithfulness*, agreeably blended together, compose the girdle of the Messiah. These two amiable qualities cannot be separated, and serve mutually to illustrate each other; faithfulness is necessary to fulfil the promises of God, and righteousness is no less requisite to discern the characters of those to whom they ought to be fulfilled, in what measure, and in what time they should be accomplished. (*Ibid.*) *Christ's girdle*.—1. As a girdle surrounds a man's whole body, and is seen to advantage whithersoever he turn himself, so, in like manner, these two Divine excellences should every way appear most conspicuous in the Messiah's administration of the affairs of His kingdom. 2. As the girdles which were anciently worn, served to fasten the loose and flowing garments that were then used and to strengthen the loins of those who were girt with them, so these glorious perfections complete the character of the King of Israel and give vigour to the honourable and successful exercise of regal authority. 3. As girdles served in ancient times for ornaments to the illustrious persons who put them on, so righteousness and faithfulness were eminently to adorn the personal conduct and public character of the Prince of Peace, the King of kings, and Lord of lords (Rev. xix. 11). (*Ibid.*) *The trilogy of the prophetic*



*figures of the Messiah*—as about to be born, as born, and as ruling—is now complete. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*)

Vers. 6-9. **The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb.**—*A portrait of humanity*.—I. **THE MORAL VARIETIES OF THE RACE.** Men are here represented by irrational creatures, differing immensely in their organisations, their habits, and their tempers—the “wolf,” the “lamb,” &c. The physical differences between men are great. The mental differences are also great. But the moral varieties are, perhaps, greater still. There are men everywhere about us as ferocious as the “lion,” as savage as the “bear,” as snarling as the “wolf,” as cunning as the “leopard,” as venomous as the “serpent,” as harmless as the “kid,” the “lamb,” or the “little child.” II. **THE GOSPEL REFORMATION OF THE RACE.** These creatures are here represented as having passed through a wonderful change in their instincts and habits, and this change is ascribed to the advent and reign of Messiah. It is not a change in their physical constitution. The wolf, the leopard, the bear, the lion, and the serpent retain their constitutions intact, though they dwell with the kid, the lamb, and the little child. The change is in their temper—in their ruling instincts. Such is the change that the Gospel works in man. The change is simply in the temper—the heart. It does two things. 1. It extracts social antipathies. 2. It implants social sympathies. This is the only reformation that will meet the case.

III. **THE SOCIAL HARMONY OF THE RACE.** These creatures, once antagonistic, are here eating together, lying down together, playing together. All are wedded in spirit. Christianity is essentially pacific in its spirit, its teachings, its tendencies and results. (*Homilist.*) *The fruits of Christ's kingdom*.—1. In every soul which shall come to heaven there must be a change. 2. The change is not of the substantial parts of the body, but of the corrupt qualities of the mind, or soul. 3. The change is made upon the Church of God in this world. 4. The change cometh from the grace of God, and floweth to us by Jesus Christ our Lord. 5. The means by which the change is wrought, namely, by the knowledge of the law, &c. 6. The marks of the change. (*R. Sibbes, D.D.*) *The touchstone of regeneration*.—It is an eminent mark of regeneration to have the violence and fierceness of our cruel nature taken away. The signs of regeneration contained in our text are—I. **HARMLESSNESS.** This, though it runs along the body of the text and is last mentioned, may be named first, for it is implied in all. How can a man say he is renewed unless in some sort he be like unto God in mercifulness? It is a prime quality in the wicked to do mischief; it is a property of God's child to be harmless. There are two signs of this sign. 1. If we would not do evil, though we might do it unseen of any creature: as when a little child shall lay his hand on the cockatrice's den, the serpent might sting, and yet, unseen of any, pull in the head again. 2. Though we have provocation, we will abstain from doing evil. The little child plays on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child lays his hand upon the cockatrice's den. Is not here provocation? “Bless them that curse you,” &c. II. **SOCIABLENESS.** With whom is it that this society holdeth? Not of wild beasts with wild beasts; but there is implied here not only a simple society, as among wild beasts, but a sociableness, as it were, among those of another generation. Naturally all of us have been lions, bears, and wolves, and unsociable haters of goodness in others. This sociableness with those former servants of God, who have been called thus, is a very sure mark of this change in us (1 John iii. 14). 1. No man can love a saint, as a saint, but a saint. A true trial of sociableness is when men will joy to sort themselves with those with whom formerly they have been most unsociable, and whose company they have most loathed. 2. A second sign of this sign is, to love every brother, yea, though it were to lay down our life for a brother. III. **CONSTANCY.** How is this implied? By dwelling and lying together. You shall have many companions go with a man for fashion's sake to the church, and yet leave going ere it be long. You shall have some men sick, and then like a serpent frozen in winter, which casts his skin, you shall have them cast their skin a little; that is, send for a preacher, make confession of their sins, saying, “Oh! if God will spare me, I will become a new man.” But when he is well, within a month after, you will find him not with the lamb, but with the bears and the wolves. IV. **INWARDNESS.** Their little ones—dear unto them, and of whom they are so jealous and tender—shall lie down together (Acts iv. 32). V. **TRACTABLENESS.** A little child shall lead

them and rule them. It is a true sign of grace when we become easy to be ruled, and brought in compass (Job xxxi. 13). VI. SIMPLICITY. "The lion shall eat straw like the ox." Cain was bloody, and fed upon blood; therefore, as it is (John iv. 32) when a man is come thus far, that he hath meat which one seeth not. Uses—1. For consolation. Look which religion makes a man most mild, and tames his fierce nature—there is the Church. If we be fierce and savage, let us not deceive ourselves; we are not come to the mountain of which it is said, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain." 2. For exhortation. There is yet a little of the lion and the bear remaining in every one of us—our tree yet bears, on one side of it, crabs. See what minds we must have if we look for a habitation in God's holy mountain. (*Ibid.*) *The splendour and amplitude of Christ's kingdom*.—I. THE MEANING OF THIS PROPHECY. What is meant by the wolf, the leopard, and the rest of the creatures here mentioned? Christ shall come to make the world so happy, that princes and people, the mighty and the meaner sort; the violent, and they that have no power, or no will to resist; the soldier, and the peaceable countryman; the waspish people, and they that are of a sweet disposition, shall all be brought under the same discipline, and submit to the same laws; not to hurt or molest one another, but to promote the common good of the whole body to which they belong. II. THE TRUTH OF IT; or, that it was exactly fulfilled in our Lord and Saviour. 1. It was the apparent design of our Saviour's coming to make such a happy accord among men. 2. The nature of His religion is such as is apt to produce this effect which He designed. This will be evident to every one's satisfaction who will seriously weigh these three things. (1) The principles of His religion, together with the ways and means whereby these principles were established in men's minds. He taught them that there is but one God, the disbelief of which had set the world at such enmities one with another as they confessed was among the deities. He revealed Him as His and their Father, full of kindness and goodwill to all His children; which St. Paul thought a bond so strong and a motive so efficacious that it concludes the great heap of arguments whereby he persuades Christians to unity of the spirit and peace (Eph. iv. 6). They are taught to worship this one God, by one Mediator alone. He sent His apostles to baptize all nations into one simple faith (Eph. iv. 5). The world was to be governed and judged by one common law, and that not the law of Moses, but the plain rules of righteousness, sobriety and godliness. (Eph. ii. 14, 19). All, both Jews and Gentiles, were indifferently endued with one and the same Spirit. (2) The precepts of His religion. Exact justice (Matt. vii. 12). Mercy, Meekness and patience. To bless our enemies and do them good, which hath a strange power in it to charm and conquer even the most fierce and barbarous natures. He would have us contented with such things as we have: which evidently destroys that envy, emulation, and ambition, from whence no small stir and confusions arise in the world. In questions about matters of liberty, He charges those that are satisfied, not to despise such as are not; and those that are not satisfied, not to judge those that are (Rom. xiv. 3). In all manner of differences which are apt to arise among us, He would have "the peace of God rule in our hearts," so that having this empire there, we should rest in the determination of what will make most for peace. He instructs likewise our behaviour in our several relations, teaching husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, pastors and people, to demean themselves so to their mutual satisfaction, as to take away the cause of all discord, not only in families and parishes, but in the larger societies of Church and State. The root and foundation of all these our Lord hath laid in much humility and charity. (3) The obligations He laid upon men to receive these principles and observe these precepts. His doctrine excels that of the best philosophers, who taught many excellent lessons, but could not enforce them with such an assured hope of immortal life or fear of eternal death as our Saviour and His apostles have done. 3. This effect was actually produced in those that heartily embraced His religion (Acts iv. 32; 2 Cor. viii. 3, 4). It is to be hoped that the time is coming when Christianity will end, as it began, in abundance of truth and peace, by a right understanding of the will of God and a hearty submission thereto. Let every soul of us do his part that the place where he lives may be in peace—princes and governors, ministers of the Gospel, &c. (*S. Patrick, D.D.*) *A picture of what the world is to be*.—It is not a photograph. The poet never photographs, he pictures. And this poet is no exception. He does not wish

us to believe that wolves and lambs will one day be friends, and that what Burns calls "Nature's social union" is to be realised by the transfiguration of a lion into a domestic pet or into a beast of the stall. He is not photographing, but picturing a scene which never was and never shall be, in order to represent a splendid spiritual and social reality which must be—the reign amongst men of perfect union and peace on earth. You can see how true this is when you turn over to another picture by this same prophet-artist intended to illustrate the same theme. There the wilderness is to be glad, the desert is to blossom as the rose and rejoice, the lame man is to leap as the hart, the highway usually infested by lions and beasts of prey is to be safe as a strong tower, for the obvious reason "no lion shall be there." Plainly the prophet is not photographing, but picturing. (*R. J. Kyd.*) "*Nature's social union*": a picture of heaven upon earth. —I. We have A PICTURE OF THE INNER SPIRITUAL UNION AND PEACE WHICH GOD IS CREATING IN EVERY MAN'S BOSOM. In man all animalism sums itself up in subtlest composition; but there is a Divine element also in his bosom represented by a little child, an elemental force which is placed there to reign over fierce passions and carnal lusts, a force which is destined to be master. Paul gives us insight into this subject. He recognises in man's composite nature the wolf and the lamb, the lion and the child. The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. The word "flesh" is Paul's term for that nature in us which loves self and self only, a nature which is characteristic of the whole animal world. The term "spirit" is a term for that Divine nature in us which loves and cares for others and takes little or no thought of self. As things are, these two natures are at variance more or less in us all. But there should be no war in our bosom. Peace is the ideal state. Love of self and love of others should not clash, but co-operate as they do in the maternal breast. Self-love must not hurt the spirit, the conscience, the finer and higher feelings of charity. This harmony pictured by Isaiah and ethically set forth by Paul is the heaven which has begun to be in our bosom, but only begun. The Child-heart must reign. He who has begun the good work in us will carry it on until the day of Christ. II. We have A PICTURE OF MAN'S SOCIAL UNION. His social union is the result of inner spiritual union. When a man is constantly quarrelling with himself, his conscience taunting his cupidity and selfishness, and the child in him leading him to toil and self-sacrifice whilst the animal in him demands ease and pleasure, this picture of union and brotherhood is not possible of realisation. The first thing to be done if we would realise it is to get each man's bosom put right. The wolves of society, the serpents, the land-sharks, the men who devour widows' houses, the foxes or Herods who are ever looking after Number One, the hypocrite with the slimy lie on his lip whilst the crocodile tear is in his eye, will all be changed into men of honour and kindness, men of purity and righteousness. Social quarrels will end. The labour and capital problem will be solved, and capital and labour will dwell together, like Isaiah's wolf and lamb, in peace. The poor and the weak will not be driven to the wall. Even the innocent child will be safe in the dark. The policeman's footstep will cease to be heard in the land, and the soldier will beat his sword into a ploughshare. Blessed outlook! III. THIS PICTURE IS TO BE REALISED BY THE CHRIST THAT WAS AND IS TO BE. From the power Christ has shown in transfiguring men and raising the tone of society to what it is, we are persuaded that He will succeed in accomplishing His herculean labour of turning earth into heaven. Surely He must be Divine who proposes to undertake such a work! Let us look at the Divine Man who is able to accomplish what seems to us to be impossible. He has a child-heart in Him. "He is," says Isaiah, "a Rod out of the stem of Jesse. On Him rests the Spirit of the Lord, the spirit of wisdom and understanding." The Good Shepherd's music which brings about the peace of God in our bosom is at first a summons to war. It is a call to the child in us to awake and lead into a glorious captivity the lower animal nature which ever lusts to be first. It is a call to the higher in us to hold in check the lower and bring it by confidence and obedience into union and co-operation. We are summoned to accept the blessed task of being peacemakers in our own breasts, and peace-making there must begin by a proclamation of war. Strange work for a child! Impossible work! do you affirm? "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." It is God's way by "things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." (*Ibid.*) *The wild beasts*: —We, who live in countries from which wild beasts have been exterminated,

cannot understand the insecurity and terror that they cause in regions where they abound. A modern seer of the times of regeneration would leave the wild animals out of his vision. They do not impress any more the human conscience or imagination. But they once did so most terribly. The hostility between man and the beasts not only formed once upon a time the chief material obstacle in the progress of the race, but remains still to the religious thinker the most pathetic portion of that groaning and travailing of all creation which is so heavy a burden on his heart. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *Not exterminated, but tamed*.—Isaiah would not have the wild beasts exterminated, but tamed. There our Western and modern imagination may fail to follow him, especially when he includes reptiles in the regeneration, and prophesies of adders and lizards as the playthings of children. But surely there is no genial man, who has watched the various forms of life that sport in the Southern sunshine, who will not sympathise with the prophet in his joyous vision. Upon a warm spring day in Palestine, to sit upon the grass, beside some old dyke or ruin with its face to the South, is indeed to obtain a rapturous view of the wealth of life with which the bountiful God has blessed and made merry man's dwelling-place. How the lizards come and go among the grey stones and flash like jewels in the dust! And the timid snake rippling quickly past through the grass, and the leisurely tortoise, with its shiny back, and the chameleon, shivering into new colour as he passes from twig to stone, and stone to straw,—all the air the while alive with the music of the cricket and the bee! You feel that the ideal is not to destroy these pretty things as vermin. What a loss of colour the lizards alone would imply! But, as Isaiah declares,—whom we may imagine walking with his children up the steep vineyard paths, to watch the creatures come and go upon the dry dykes on either hand,—the ideal is to bring them into sympathy with ourselves, make pets of them and playthings for children, who indeed stretch out their hands in joy to the pretty toys. (*Ibid.*) *The mystery of the brute creation*.—What are these animals? Who made them? Who can explain them? Who knows their future? This is a gracious mystery at all events, and may be accepted as a fact—that when man is right with God, the animals will be right with man; when man is right with God, the earth will be right with man, and will feel as if she could not do enough for him in growing him all the bread he wants, and then giving him more than he needs. “Let the people praise Thee, O God; let all the people praise Thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us.” (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The redemption of nature*.—It is one of those errors, which distort both the poetry and truth of the Bible, to suppose that by the bears, lions, and reptiles which the prophet now sees tamed in the time of the regeneration, he intends the violent human characters which he so often attacks. When Isaiah here talks of the beasts, he means the beasts. The passage is not allegorical, but direct, and forms a parallel to the well-known passage in the eighth of Romans. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *The legend of St. Blaise* is of Greek origin. He was bishop over the Christian Church at Sebaste in Cappadocia, and governed his flock for many years with great vigilance, till the persecution under Diocletian, A.D. 289, obliged him to fly; and he took refuge in a mountain-cave at some distance from the city. This mountain was the haunt of wild beasts (bears, lions, and tigers); but these animals were so completely subdued by the gentleness and piety of the good old man, that, far from doing him any harm, they came every morning to ask his blessing. If they found him kneeling at his devotions, they waited dutifully till he had finished, and, having received the accustomed benediction, they retired. Now, in the city of Sebaste, and in the whole province, so many Christians were put to death, that there began to be a scarcity of wild beasts for the amphitheatres. And Agricolaus, the governor, sent his hunters into the mountains to collect as many lions, tigers, and bears as possible; and it happened that these hunters, arriving one day before the mouth of the cave in which St. Blaise had taken refuge, found him seated in front of it, and surrounded by a variety of animals of different species. The lion and the lamb, the hind and the leopard, seemed to have put off their nature, and were standing amicably together, as though there had been everlasting peace between them; and some he blessed with holy words, knowing that God careth for all things that He has made; and to others that were sick or wounded he ministered gently; and others he reprehended because of their rapacity and gluttony. And, when the hunters beheld this, they were like

men in a dream: they stood astonished, thinking they had found some enchanter. And they seized him, and carried him before the governor; and, as they went, the good bishop returned thanks to God, and rejoiced greatly, that, at length, he had been found worthy to die for the cause of Christ. (*Mrs. Jameson.*)

*Man to blame for the wildness of the beasts:*—We may take on scientific authority a few facts as hints from nature, that after all man is to blame for the wildness of the beasts, and that through his sanctification they may be restored to sympathy with himself. Charles Darwin says: "It deserves notice that at an extremely ancient period when man first entered any country the animals living there would have felt no instinctive or inherited fear of him, and would consequently have been tamed far more easily than at present." And he gives some very instructive facts in proof of this with regard to dogs, antelopes, manatees, and hawks. "Quadrupeds and birds which have seldom been disturbed by man dread him no more than do our English birds the cows or horses grazing in the fields." Darwin's details are peculiarly pathetic in their revelation of the brutes' utter trustfulness in man before they get to know him. Persons who have had to do with individual animals of a species that has never been thoroughly tamed, are aware that the difficulty of training them lies in convincing them of our sincerity and good-heartedness, and that when this is got over they will learn almost any trick or habit. The well-known lines of Burns to the field-mouse gather up the cause of all this, in a fashion very similar to the Bible's. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*)

*Man's relation to the lower animals:*—The practical "uses" of such a passage of Scripture as this are plain. Some of them are the awful responsibility of man's position as the keystone of creation, the material effects of sin, and especially the religiousness of our relation to the lower animals. (*Ibid.*)

**A little child shall lead them.—The child to the front:**—The Bible, when it speaks as it does in these verses, always means something better than it says. Many things come to children much worse than being destroyed by a lion, or eaten by a wolf, or poisoned by a serpent's fang, only, I am sorry to believe, neither children nor grown-up people think them worse things, nor anything like so dreadful. Perhaps that is the most doleful evil of all. Had I not faith in God's great wisdom, love, and justice, I should feel that for tens of millions of children in this world it would be infinitely better that they were never born; and that, being born, the next preferable event would be that they should die as soon after birth as possible, even though it were a hungry wolf that should slay them. They come into places more terrible than a wild beast's lair or a cockatrice's den. They come into places full of ignorance and iniquity, where they have no opportunity of growing up good, or even of knowing what good is. Now, this text says that in the good time coming all this shall be changed. The day is coming in our country when the child, because of his weakness and his wants, shall be the most cherished and cared-for person either in the home, the Church, or the State.

I. From these words, then, we get the idea THAT AS THE WORLD GETS ON, AND MEN GROW WISER, TRUER, AND HOLIER, CHILDREN RISE IN THEIR REGARD. The care for children becomes exalted; it ceases to be a merely natural affection, and is intensified and purified into a moral and spiritual passion. The Bible teaches us that love of children is a note of moral culture, and all history shows that in the measure the claims of the little ones are lightly regarded the moral tone is low. There may be strength and courage for war, there may be art and philosophy, there may be an abundance of physical and intellectual display, but the higher morals—those that are the very graces of the soul, those which perfect men and go to the root of the world's sins and sorrows—are exceedingly scarce.

II. These words teach us THAT CHILDREN ARE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THAT WHICH IS HIGHEST AND MOST DIVINE—that they can share the best and highest with the best and highest men. The philosophy of the highest good may be far beyond the reach of their reason, but the blessing of it may be realised by them and enjoyed. The sunshine is as warm and delightful to them without any theory of light and heat as with one.

III. Another word we have to speak is, THAT THEY WHO ARE WORKING FOR THE CHILDREN ARE ON THE LINES OF THE WORLD'S PROGRESS. The world follows the children—they are always in front. (*W. Hubbard.*)

*Ministry of children:*—God's ministers are varied. Children teach many lessons. 1. They purify—by their innocence, teachableness, and purity. 2. They elevate—appealing to our highest and best instincts. 3. They stir. They move us to better living, and stimulate our best qualities. 4. They instruct—e.g., Samuel and Eli.

5. They console—helping to take our minds off trouble. 6. They reconcile. A mother is cheerful for the sake of the children. A father is strengthened by his home life. 7. They gladden. Children are the poetry, flowers, and sunshine of life. 8. They soften and make tender,—for their helplessness appeals to us; the touch of a tiny hand thrills us with pity. 9. They lead Godward. 10. They are a powerful ministry for good. (*See for Busy Sowers.*) *Led by a child*:—

1. We have no right to sink an interval of many centuries between the verses of this brief prophecy, and to say that while one part of it was fulfilled at the Advent, the other will only be fulfilled in the still distant Millennium. We are rather bound to say: "If the Lord Jesus was the Branch that shot forth from Jesse's root, and the Spirit of the Lord did really come upon Him that He might rule and reprove the people, then, from that moment, the wolf began to dwell with the lamb, the leopard to lie down with the kid, the lion with the calf; and the little Child went before them, leading them to the holy mountain in which they neither hurt nor destroy." We need fix no date to these words. They are not for an age, but for all time, and for eternity too. They describe the universal reign of Christ. They tell us what the spirit, what the distinguishing characteristics, of that reign always have been and always will be.

2. The beast-tamer is distinguished by a quick eye, a prompt punishing hand, a courage and self-possession that never falter; and how should we look for these features and qualities in a child? But may not a child have other qualities quite as potent, and even more potent? Is brute force the only force by which even brutes are ruled? Surely not. Baby lies on the rug with dog and cat. He is not so strong or lithe or quick as they are, or even as you are. Yet he takes liberties with them which you cannot take,—and remember, the cat is of one blood with the leopard, and the dog with the wolf. Nor are even wild beasts insensible to his claim and charm. Else what mean all those stories of helpless and abandoned children suckled, fed, guarded by wolves and bears and lions; or of children chosen by caged wild beasts, the more savage for their captivity, to be their playmates and companions? Many of these stories are quite true, and show what power a little child may have, a power beyond that of man.

3. But when the prophet tells us that in the kingdom of Christ, a little child leads the wolf and the leopard and the lion, as well as the lamb and the kid and the calf, he cannot simply mean that an innocent babe may have more power over the brutes than a grown man. He also meant, no doubt, that in proportion as Christ reigns on the earth the primal order will be restored; that men, reconciled to God and to each other, will also be at peace with all the forces of nature, will rule over them, and bend to their service even those of them which are the most fierce, lawless, hostile, and untameable, and thus regain all, and more than all, that Adam lost.

4. Has not the prediction been verified again and again, and that even on the lower levels of our life? Here, say, is a bad man,—brutal, fierce, unloving and ungovernable. God sends him a little child. And the rough man and the abandoned woman, as they lean over it, are touched, softened, purified. God leads almost all men by their children, leads them to the "holy mountain," i.e., to higher levels of life where they breathe a purer air and gain a wider outlook. He sends the "little child," and forthwith even the hard and selfish grow tender and unselfish, at least in some of their aims. They will follow him even to the house and worship of God—for many a man repairs to the house of God for his children's sake who would not come for his own,—and find themselves in "the holy mountain" or ever they are aware.

5. So that when God sent the Holy Child Jesus to lead men into the kingdom of heaven, He took no new untried way with us, but a way long tried and approved. But, for us, the Lord Jesus is not the Holy Child only at Christmas, or only because He was once a babe in Mary's arms. When He grew to be a man, He Himself took a child in His arms, and taught His disciples that to enter His kingdom they must become as little children, and that whosoever most fully possessed himself of the childlike spirit would be greatest in that kingdom. But to enter His kingdom is to begin to grow like Christ; and to become great in it is to grow as like Him as we can. To grow childlike is, therefore, to grow Christlike. But how can that be unless Christ Himself is like a little child?

6. "A little child shall lead them." But does he not lead them already? When the little ones come to them, who is it for whom they think, and work, and plan? Who is it that determines the amount of their toil, and even the kind of amusements in which they indulge, and often determines also the very aims and methods

of their lives? 7. "A little child shall lead them." These words refer to the future as well as to the past and the present. There is a promise in them even for us who are in the kingdom of the Holy Child. And the promise is that as the kingdom of God comes we shall be more and more animated by the child-spirit which was and is the Spirit of Christ Himself. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *What is the child-spirit?*—But what is this blessing, and why is it so great? Consider how fearless a child is, so that it can play and take liberties with many a fierce creature whose talons or teeth keep you at a respectful distance. Consider how innocent a child is as compared with you, and what you would give to be equally clear of stinging memories and impure desires. Consider how friendly a little child is, responding with smiles and caresses to every genuine and tender advance. Consider how cheerful it is, with how little it is pleased; how unworldly, making no distinction between beggar and prince, loving its poor nurse better than the fine lady in all her bravery. Consider how free from care a child is, because it trusts in a wisdom, an ability, a goodness beyond its own—taking no thought for what it shall eat or drink or wherewithal it shall be clothed. Consider, too, how lordly a child is. Hardly anything strikes one in little children so much as their calm assumption that all the world was made for them, and that all the men and women in it have nothing else, or nothing else so important, to do as to wait on their will and minister to their whims. (*Ibid.*) *Child-leading*.—I. The text suggests some thoughts about the GENTLENESS AND HUMILITY OF HIM WHO CAME TO US AS A CHILD. Never was a child born into this world in humbler fashion than the Child who came to redeem it. Fit prelude to that strange, solemn, sorrowful, yet infinitely beautiful life! Surely, if humility depends at all on outward circumstances, this "little Child" was humble indeed. But the inward spirit was in perfect keeping with the outward circumstances. The little Child was never lost in the Man. II. WAS THIS PROPHECY NOT FULFILLED IN MANY WAYS BY THE CHILD OF BETHLEHEM? He led the herald angels from their highest ministrations in the realms of glory down to the plains of Bethlehem. He led the star that travelled ever westwards until it "came and stood over where the young Child was." He led the sages who came with their typical offerings of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. He led the aged prophet, who, in the temple of Jerusalem, caught up the young Child from His mother's arms, and burst into that glad Dismission Hymn which has become incorporated with the liturgies of the Christian Church. Think what marvellous leading is here! III. DOES NOT THE PROPHECY STILL RECEIVE DAILY FULFILMENT in the history and experience of the world? What is it that brings and binds men to Christ? Is it the Divinity of His person, the glory of His miracles, the thunder of His power, the attraction of heaven, the terrors of hell? Ask a missionary who has laboured for many years among the heathen what has been the element in the Gospel which has drawn men away from their idols to Christ. He will tell you that it was not the Divine power, but the human tenderness that won their hearts. Stern warriors become gentle in His presence. This is He for whom the world has been waiting, and before whom it will bow. IV. Perhaps YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE will help you to understand the prophet's words. Think of your own personal relation to Christ. What was it that first drew you to Him, and now keeps you in His track? It was the gentleness and beauty of His character—the "little Child" that is for ever enshrined in the person of Christ. Or look around you, and see the marvellous power of child-leading in the familiar experience of life. V. It may be that the words will touch for some of us THE SPRING THAT UNLOCKS SECRET AND VERY SACRED MEMORIES. We said, with the stricken parent of old, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." But are we very sure of this? Are the mysteries of life and death so clear to us, that we dare not think of child-ministers and child-leading continued in spite of death? VI. "A little child shall lead them." The words may have yet ANOTHER FULFILMENT, IN "THE LAND THAT IS VERY FAR OFF." "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," the Saviour said, as He took the children in His arms. Perhaps when our children sing, "Little children shall be there," they touch a truth which their elders are too slow to believe. It may be among the child-ministries of heaven to give the first greetings to those who received them in the helplessness of their earthly infancy; and many a weeper may begin to gather "the far-off interest of tears," when "a little child shall lead them" through the forum of the elders to the throne of the King. (*J. C. Cameron.*) *The power of the children*.—I. I am going to show you THE POWER

OF THE CHILDREN. Again and again great changes have been brought about, history has been made, grown-up people have worked and have suffered because of this strange power of the children. If children have power they can use it.

II. THE GOOD THINGS CHILDREN CAN DO. (*E. Medley, B.A.*) *The child not to rule but to lead* :—I don't think it is good for children to rule, but I do think it very good for children to lead. (*Ibid.*) *A little child may disarm anger* :—A missionary on the great River Congo had pushed up on a little steamer into a part where no white man had ever been before. The anchor was let down, and the steamer brought to. Food was needed for the men, and firewood for the engines. The natives came crowding down to the bank to look at this wonderful boat; they were armed with arrows, and big, ugly spears. The missionary tried to talk to them, and made signs of peace. But nothing that he could do seemed to touch them; it was plain that they were partly angry, partly suspicious, and partly afraid, and when savages are in that state they are very dangerous. What was to be done? A happy thought flashed across the missionary. He had his wife and a dear little baby on board; he got the baby, took it up in his arms, and showed it to the people. Now the baby was a really sensible baby, it seemed to understand the situation, and instead of crying, or pretending to be shy, it laughed and crowed as merrily as could be, and when the poor savages saw the baby they felt themselves safe; they understood in a moment that no harm was meant, and so they laid down their arms, and became quite friendly. Even in Africa we can say—a little child shall lead them. (*Ibid.*) *A mother led to Christ by her child* :—Some years ago, a good woman came to a minister, wanting to join the Church, and confess herself a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. She was asked how it was that she had come to think of Him, for she had lived a rough, bad life. "Oh," said she, "it was in this way: I didn't care for good things, I had to slave all day long, I was too busy and too hard-hearted and too miserable to care for such things at all. But my little girl, she goes to the Sunday school, and when she comes home she just sings some of the hymns she has learnt—not to me, for I never asked her, but to herself. But I couldn't help hearing, and one of them went to my heart; do what I would, I couldn't forget it, until I began to ask myself whether I, too, could not sing—

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
Come unto Me and rest.

I did hear Him, and though I am very dark still, I do love Him." A little child shall lead them; so it is. (*Ibid.*) *Little Lord Fauntleroy* :—Some of you may have read a very beautiful children's story called Little Lord Fauntleroy. The pith of it is just this: A noble, open-hearted boy is thrown into the company of his grandfather, a proud, hard-hearted, selfish, old nobleman, who knows as well as those about him do, what a mean, cynical old tyrant he has been. The earl is thoroughly miserable, only he is too proud to own it. But the lad, who has been brought up in pure and holy ways, insists on thinking well of the old man, attributing to him all sorts of good deeds. In the honest simplicity of his little heart he believes his grandfather to be a very fine man, and says that when he grows up he means to be like him. The trustful love of the boy touches his grandfather's stony heart just as opening spring sunshine touches the winter ice, and it begins to melt; without knowing it the little fellow leads the old man in good ways, and he is won. As to the boy, he is still the merry-hearted fellow he was, not in the least priggish, or goody-goody, or conceited, but he has done a work that shall never die. (*Ibid.*) *A child's voice settling a great question* :—Many years since the see of Milan was vacant, and the position was eagerly sought by two parties who disputed the election with strong and bitter feelings. The prefect of the town, who was a celebrated young lawyer, was called in to quell disorder and settle the dispute. In very earnest and affectionate strains he addressed the excited assembly. But, during one of the momentary pauses in his speech, a child's voice was heard exclaiming, "Let Ambrose be our bishop!" That tender utterance was accepted like a Divine instruction; the youthful lawyer was forthwith chosen to the occupancy of the episcopal chair, and became a useful servant of the Church. Thus a little child led the assembled electors and secured the ministry of St. Ambrose; St. Ambrose became the means of the conversion of St. Augustine, and St. Augustine by his writing still speaks to Christendom. (*J. H. Hitchens, D.D.*) *The children leading* :—



A man commonly lives, if possible, nearer to the school to which he sends his children than to his own place of business. It is the children who commonly fix the hour at which he shall dine, and often even what he shall have for his dinner, their health and convenience being consulted before his own. He often goes shabby that they may be well clothed, and sometimes hungry that they may be well fed. His very home is furnished with an eye to them; and the new carpets or the costly furniture which he would like to have are postponed till the children are grown up, or the good piano which his wife would like till the children have got through their practising. Where shall the summer holiday be spent? is a question in which the children have the casting vote. How many a man, too, long after he has laid by enough for himself and his wife, and craves retirement and rest, goes labouring on, either that he may provide for children who cannot provide for themselves, or that he may leave them a little more money when he dies! And when the children grow up into young men and women, is it not they who lead the world as once they led their several households? The ruling and shaping spirit of the world changes with every generation. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Age and youth*.—Are we, then, to dis-crown age, experience, authority, and enthrone youth, inexperience, and insolence? Are we to listen to whatever our children may say, and let them lead us where they will? By no means. That would be as injurious to them as to us. But we are to realise the fact that God is educating the race; guiding every generation, and conducting it to a point beyond that of the generation which preceded it. This reverence for youth as the new element, the progressive and advancing element, of the world, is, I believe, peculiar to Christianity, and even in some measure to the Christianity of the present day. (*Ibid.*) *Children's influence*.—I heard the other day in the north of England of a large school where the older scholars came together and asked the superintendents that there should be no prizes and no Christmas trees and no ordinary gifts, but that the money should be given to the Soldiers' and Sailors' Fund. No one had put them up to it. What was the result? All round that district everybody rose up at once to a sense of their responsibility, and the gifts received there exceeded the gifts from other places. (*Canon Wilberforce, D.D.*) *A beautiful epitaph*.—In a certain graveyard a white stone that marks the grave of a little girl bears these words: "A child of whom her playmates said, 'It was easier to be good when she was with us.'" Is not that a beautiful epitaph, little ones? "*My darling*" :—One instance wherein the prophet's words were fulfilled in spirit, if not in letter, is reported in an American exchange: "My darling." These tender words were painted in large letters on the dashboard of a big truck in the street. The thoroughfare was jammed with vehicles, and drivers were filling the air with profanity. But the driver of this particular truck sat silent and motionless. No word of his offended the ears of the patient, plodding beast over which he held the reins. During the din of curses a curious man stepped forward and inquired: 'You seem to take things very easy in this blockade.' 'Yes, mister; I'm used to 'em,' was the laconic reply. 'Besides,' he added, 'it don't help a bit to swear.' 'I notice that you have a name for your truck.' 'Yes,' and the stoical man's face brightened and assumed an expression born of a tender heart. "'My darling'" was my dear little daughter. She's dead now. Just before she died—but you don't care to hear any part of this —' 'Indeed, I do,' interrupted the listener. 'Well, you see it was this way: Nellie, my darling, took sick, and we couldn't save her; but just before she died she put her thin little arms around my neck and whispered in my ear: "Papa, your Nellie is going to die; please promise me that you will be kind to good old Dexter, and don't swear at him. Will you do that for me?" Well, sir, I used to be pretty tough and rough, and I could curse with the best of 'em, but,' and the man's voice trembled, 'I loved my Nellie, and—and I promised her that I would do what she asked.' 'Yes, sir; I've kept my word. That's going on three years now, but I haven't cussed once since. That's why I've named my truck "'My darling'" ; it always reminds me of my Nellie and her sweet blue eyes.' Just then the blockade was raised, and 'My darling' rumbled on." (*Christian Age.*) *The effect of a child's prayer*.—In a Southern hospital a little girl was to undergo a dangerous operation. She was placed upon the table, and the surgeon was about to give her ether when he said, "Before we can make you well, we must put you to sleep." She spoke up sweetly and said, "Oh, if you are going to put me to sleep, I must say my prayers first." So she got on her knees, and

said the child's prayer, "Now I lay me down to sleep." Afterward the surgeon said that he prayed that night for the first time in thirty years. (*Christian Endeavour Times*.)

**Ver. 9. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain.—The golden age.**—Poets have sung of a golden age, saints have prayed for one, the Bible distinctly teaches that one will come. This passage gives us the characteristics of this "good time coming." **I. THE WHOLE EARTH SHALL BE THE SPIRITUAL REALISATION OF WHAT MOUNT ZION WAS BUT THE SYMBOL.** What were the great ideas that Mount Zion of old symbolised? They were especially two—1. Man's meeting-place with God. 2. Entire consecration to worship. It was for worship and worship only. These ideas will be fully realised in the last days. The whole earth will be man's meeting-place with God, the Shechinah will gleam everywhere, light up every social circle, radiate from every institution, &c. Every spot, too, will be sacred to worship. Man will worship in everything, handicraft, commerce, politics, literature. **II. THE WHOLE EARTH SHALL BE FREED FROM INJUSTICE AND VIOLENCE.** "They shall not hurt nor destroy." 1. They shall not hurt. They shall not hurt by any unkind word, or any ungenerous deed, by any species of mean conduct. Exquisite delicacy of conduct shall distinguish all. Every man shall deal with his fellow with the loving tenderness of a brother. 2. They shall not destroy. They shall not destroy the property, the reputation, or the life. There shall be no wars. **III. THE WHOLE EARTH SHALL BE FLOODED WITH CHRISTIANITY.** "As the waters cover the sea." Full as the waters roll through the channels of the Mediterranean, will Christianity roll through every district of human life. But whilst this universal diffusion of Christianity is a characteristic of the golden age, the text suggests that it is the instrumental cause. We infer—1. That Christianity is essentially pacific. 2. That every philanthropist should use Christianity as his grand instrument. There is no other panacea for the world's woes. (*Homilist*.) **Messiah's peaceful reign.**—**I. THE PACIFIC SPIRIT THAT SHALL BE IN THE WORLD IN MESSIAH'S REIGN.** **II. THE CAUSE OF ITS UNIVERSAL PREVALENCE.** The knowledge with which the world will be filled. (*J. Summerfield, M.A.*) **For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.—The great Gospel and millennial kingdoms of Christ our Lord.**—1. The declaration of the word before us has never yet been fulfilled. 2. God is now about speedily to fulfil it. **I. We shall open the whole chapter which contains our text, in order to explain WHAT THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST IS of which it speaks, and we shall bring before you the great events with which the introduction of that kingdom of our Redeemer shall be attended.** 1. The chapter commences with a glorious description of the Person and the office of the blessed Redeemer of men. 2. Proceed we now to open unto you the Gospel kingdom of Christ, which is contained in the following portion of the chapter. The design of the figure (vers. 6–9) is to show that in the great day when Christ shall execute His office in a more full and wide extent over the earth there shall be a marvellous concord and union and love among all the children of men by their being brought to worship the one Redeemer, through the one Gospel of His grace and through the sameness of His blessed Spirit. 3. With reference to the expression in our text—"For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea"—we have here set before us both the extent of the knowledge of the Lord, which shall characterise this kingdom of our Lord, and the depth of that knowledge also; for both are represented by this similitude of the ocean. We are to believe, therefore, that the knowledge of God which shall then prevail, shall as far surpass, in extent and in depth, the knowledge of every preceding Church state, as the waters of the ocean exceed, in width and profundity, the common lakes in the midst of kingdoms. 4. One great event that shall immediately precede this glorious issue of things shall be the conversion of God's ancient people, the Jews; their gathering from out of all the nations of the earth into the land of their fathers; and, as I believe, their becoming the preachers of the Gospel of Christ to all those nations of the earth, which shall now be converted unto Him. This glorious event is immediately appended, in this chapter, to the description of the Gospel kingdom of the Redeemer (ver. 11, &c.). 5. Another mighty reality which shall accompany the introduction of the coming kingdom of our Lord and Saviour is the destruction of the anti-christian church (the papacy). 6. The destruction of antichrist. **II. We shall**

present to your view THE MEANS WHICH YOU MAY THE MOST SAFELY ADOPT FOR INSTRUMENTALLY PROMOTING THE KINGDOM OF OUR ADORABLE REDEEMER amidst the kingdoms of the world. (*H. Cole*) *The millennium*.—I. THE NATURE OF THE MILLENNIUM. It is generally believed, by judicious divines—

1. That the millennial blessedness shall consist of an extraordinary degree of spiritual knowledge.
2. That holiness shall prevail to an unexampled extent.
3. That the millennial period will be distinguished by happiness and peace altogether unexampled in any previous period of the history of the Church of Christ.

II. SOME PASSAGES WHICH SEEM PLAINLY TO INDICATE THAT SUCH A PERIOD SHALL ARRIVE (Psa. lxxii.; Isa. lx; Rom. xi. 12, 15; Rev. xiv. 6). III. EXHIBIT THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST DURING THE DAYS OF MILLENNIAL BLESSEDNESS. (*A. Fletcher, D.D.*) *The moral certainty of the earth being filled with the knowledge of the Lord*.—This prophecy was partially fulfilled when the Christian dispensation was instituted, and “the Gospel of the kingdom” produced the most wonderful effects on the hearts and lives of multitudes who had been the most determined enemies of the Cross. But the expression looks forward to a far more illustrious day, when the prediction will have its complete accomplishment, and the whole family of man will be blessed with the “knowledge of the Lord.”

I. THE IMPORT OF THE PHRASE, “THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD.”

1. It implies an acquaintance with the character of the true God.
2. An acquaintance with the plan of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. An acquaintance with God’s will.

II. THE MORAL CERTAINTY THAT THE EARTH SHALL BE FILLED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD. Reason renders it probable, but revelation declares its certainty.

1. I argue this from a consideration of the nature of the Christian religion. Christianity is a religion of benevolence. It has nothing exclusive in its character. It is designed for man, considered as such, and is adapted to every latitude under heaven. It presents us with a worship which is simple, a faith which is easily understood, ordinances few in number, sacrifices that are unbloody, doctrines and precepts which lead to God, promises which are joy and peace, and hopes which centre in the throne of God! It is reasonable to conclude that God, who is good to all, will not limit blessings of such magnitude and so universally necessary for human happiness, to any one particular nation or age, but that He will, in His own way and at His own time, extend the benefits of Christianity to the whole family of man.
2. The covenant relation between God and His beloved Son furnishes another guarantee that the prediction will be fulfilled.
3. We ground our hopes on the character of the Saviour as Mediator.
4. Think also of the prophetic record.

III. OUR DUTY AT THE PRESENT TIME IN CONNECTION WITH THE EXTENDING OF THIS KNOWLEDGE. The work is very great. How is it to be accomplished? By the agency of miracles? No. May we expect the Saviour to visit our earth and organise a system for the conversion of the heathen? He has done so already. He has made it our duty to use the means He has appointed. (*John Hill, M.A.*) “*As the waters cover the sea*”—The expression is remarkable for its force. In looking over the face of the ocean, there are no differences to be perceived: one part is not fuller than another; one part is not covered, and another left dry; but all is one unbroken stream, filling and covering the whole. So shall it be with the Word of God among men. It shall not be known to some, and hidden from others. It shall not be fully declared in one place, and only partially set forth in another. This is not the whole purpose of the Almighty. But rather, whatever knowledge it pleases Him to give at all, shall be given equally, and without distinction. (*H. A. Sullivan, M.A.*)

*A picture of the moral condition of the world without the knowledge of God*.—If the waters of the ocean were suddenly drained, and the channels of the great deep laid bare, a rugged, unseemly spectacle would meet the eye. The elements of sublimity and beauty might then be seen, but strangely disfigured, and blended in rude chaotic masses; profound valleys and dark ravines, the pathways of the monsters of the deep; gloomy caverns, never visited by the light of day; towering mountains, abrupt headlands, and precipitous rocks, the cause of many disasters to the adventurous seaman, would form an uncouth, repulsive scene. All these are hidden now by a veil which the Almighty has thrown over them; He has covered them with a fluid, bright, transparent, elastic, filling all the depths, smoothing all the asperities, reducing mountains and valleys to one level, and spreading from the equator to the poles, ever in motion, ever obedient to His will, whether He bids its mountain billows utter

His praise in awful tones, or its unruffled surface reflect His glories to the tranquil heavens bending over it. Like the dark, rude bed of ocean, emptied of its waters, has been the moral aspect of our world in all ages and countries since the fall. If we look abroad over the nations to-day, what disorder, misery, and ruin meet the eye and pain the heart! But the text speaks of a blessed change to be realised ere long: of a coming day, when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (*W. J. Armstrong, D.D.*) *The far-spreading grace of the Holy Spirit*.—1. Most exactly have the figures which the Holy Spirit condescended to apply to Himself been fulfilled in the course of the dispensation; nay, even to this day. His operation has been calm, equable, gradual, far-spreading, overtaking, intimate, irresistible. What is so awfully silent, so mighty, so inevitable, so encompassing as a flood of water? Such was the power of the Spirit in the beginning, when He vouchsafed to descend as an invisible wind, as an outpoured flood. Thus He changed the whole face of the world. The ark of God moved upon the face of the waters. 2. And what the power of the Spirit has been in the world at large, that it is also in every human heart to which it comes. (1) Any spirit which professes to come to us alone, and not to others, which makes no claim of having moved the body of the Church at all times and places, is not of God, but a private spirit of error. (2) Vehemence, tumult, confusion, are no attributes of that benignant flood with which God has replenished the earth. That flood of grace is sedate, majestic, gentle in its operation. (3) The Divine baptism, wherewith God visits us, penetrates through our whole soul and body. It leaves no part of us uncleansed, un sanctified. It claims the whole man for God. Any spirit which is content with what is short of this, which does not lead us to utter self-surrender and devotion, is not from God. 3. The heart of every Christian ought to represent in miniature the Catholic Church, since one Spirit makes both the whole Church and every member of it to be His temple. As He makes the Church one, which, left to itself, would separate into many parts, so He makes the soul one, in spite of its various affections and faculties, and its contradictory aims. (*J. H. Newman, D.D.*) *The knowledge of the Lord*.—"As the waters cover the sea." How do they cover it? 1. Completely. There are no gaps or interspaces. The sailor is glad to get out into the open sea. Near the land he is watchful, but when his pathless track lies far from the shore he is more at ease. 2. They cover it, too, abundantly. There is nothing scanty about the sea. The average depth, geographers tell us, is about thirteen times the average height of land above sea-level. 3. They also cover it helpfully. The waters seem to sever country from country, but, really, they are the best means of bringing far separate lands into communication with each other. What a grand picture, then, is here suggested with regard to the knowledge of God! It will cover the earth completely. All shall know Him from the least to the greatest. It will be an abundant knowledge. As it is, the earth is full of the glory of the Lord. Everywhere, God. The cataract utters forth God. "Every common bush afire with God," but too often we only "sit round it and pick blackberries." It is one thing for God to be everywhere, it is another thing for God to be recognised everywhere. It will also be a helpful knowledge. It will not lead us to make less of this world's duties, but more. As the waters that seem to separate, yet connect all the more closely, remote lands, so the more truly men know God, the better will they know each other, and the grander will seem the duties of the common day. One great blessing resulting from that knowledge is specially mentioned in the chapter—"They shall not hurt nor destroy." It is something one can hardly imagine, that beautiful time when nature shall no more be "red in tooth and claw." It may be but a poetical description of the peace and harmony of the Messiah's kingdom. But there is one part, at least, will be literally true. However it be with regard to the attitude of beasts to men, or to each other, man's attitude to the beasts will be one of thoughtfulness, gentleness, and mercy. It is said that a man's dog should be the better for his Christianity, and so it will. "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast." And, of course, still more will it be true that man's attitude to his fellow-man will be what it ought to be. One of the saddest thoughts in connection with this earth of ours, as it is, is the frightful callousness and unconcern with regard to human life where God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, is not known. Think of a country like Dahomey, where the most prized ornaments are human heads stuck on poles along the highways. The Church of Christ may be far from perfect in our own day, but, at least, it stands

for much that is beautiful and helpful among men, and it labours and prays for the fulfilment of its hope that righteousness and peace shall at last be universal. One comprehends that the Church—even the visible building of stone and lime—stands for some measure of realised blessing among men, by even such a simple story as that of the shipwrecked mariners, in doubt as to what sort of coast they had been cast upon,—whether the inhabitants were cannibals, or with some humanity in them,—and whose fears were quite relieved when one of their number, who had climbed a neighbouring hill, came rushing back, shouting, "It's all right. We are safe. I saw a church spire in the distance." The most practical and visible result of the universal knowledge of the Lord will be that men's relationship to each other will be of the happiest and most helpful kind. (*J. S. Mavor, M.A.*) *Things must be seen through the right medium*:—"Seeing is believing." But no man sees. Nearly every man is befooled by his own eyes. We see nothing as it really is. We are the gulls and the dupes of appearances. Said a friend to me, whilst we lived in the Alps, "Can you see any living things on the side of that mountain?" Whereupon I answered, "There is no living thing there." It was a reckless speech. I was then the victim of incomplete sight. I was deluded, as all men are deluded, by the naked eye. Said my friend, "Look through this telescope." And I looked, and, behold! the chamois and the shepherds—the beautiful little creatures feeding on abundance of grass on the slopes of the hill. I should have looked through the telescope before I gave my judgment. Things are not all given in revelation to the naked eye. We must look through the right medium if we would see things with any approach to reality. Is this world going to be converted to Christ? "Never!" Why say you, never? "Because there are more drunkards than pure men; there are more brothels than altars; there are more dishonest gamblers on the Exchange than there are honest men." Now look through this telescope—the Divine promises, the Divine oaths, the repeated and emphatic assurances. Look! What seest thou now, O man? "I see multitudes turning unto the Lord, Ethiopia stretching out her hands unto God to receive the vessel that shall carry the news of the eternal kingdom to all places on the face of the earth." That is how we view things. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *A sure word of prophecy*:—On Sabbath, 15th May 1836, we saw the sun seized, on the very apex of his glory, as if by a black hand, and so darkened that only a thin round ring of light remained visible, and the chill of twilight came prematurely on. That mass of darkness within seemed the world lying in wickedness, and that thin round ring of light, the present progress of the Gospel in it. But not more certain were we then, that that thin round ring of light was yet to become the broad and blazing sun, than are we now, that through a Divine interposal, but not otherwise, shall the "knowledge of the glory of the Lord cover the earth as the waters the sea." (*G. Giffilan.*)

**Ver. 10. There shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people.**—*Messiah, the root of Jesse*:—If, through the infallible guidance of the Divinely inspired apostles and evangelists, we can find the Messiah spoken of in many passages of the Old Testament, in which we should not otherwise have found Him; in many others He is so evidently intended and set forth, that, even without that guidance, no intelligent person, possessed of any degree of spiritual discernment, can fail of discovering Him (Psa. ii. 7, 8; Isa. ix. 6, xlii. 1, lxi. 1, xxxv. 4-6, l. 6; Psa. xxii. 16-18, lxix. 21; Isa. lii. 13, liii. 2, 3; Dan. ix. 26; Zech. vi. 12, 13). This paragraph is so manifestly meant of Christ, and of His kingdom, that it is perfectly incapable of any other application. **I. THE PERSON, AND ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL OFFICES OF THE MESSIAH**,—"A ROOT OF JESSE"; "AN ENSIGN OF THE PEOPLE." 1. In the preceding verses, He is set forth in His human nature, as the "Rod" which should "come forth out of the stem of Jesse," "the Branch which should grow out of his roots" (Jer. xxiii. 5; Zech. iii. 8); but here, in His Divine nature, in which alone He could be the "root of Jesse"; the creating "word" (Col. i. 16). The word here rendered "root," is properly so translated, and never means branch, or rod. This is the case likewise in Rev. v. 5. In Rev. xxii. 16, we find both natures mentioned and distinguished; and also in Rom. i. 3, 4. 2. His office. "He shall stand for an ensign of the people." Where they may take oath, and swear allegiance to the great King, and bind themselves by covenant to be His loyal subjects. Where

they may enlist, and engage to be His faithful soldiers to their life's end. But how is He an ensign, a banner, or standard, visibly displayed? By manifestation of His real character, and showing Himself to be the very Messiah that should come. By unfurling and unfolding the truth in His doctrine. By exerting and displaying His power in miracles. By manifesting His love in all His actions and sufferings. As lifted up upon the Cross (John xii. 32). As exalted to the Father's right hand (Acts ii. 33). As preached and declared to every creature, to every nation under heaven, for the obedience of faith. As coming in the clouds of heaven, gathering His elect, gathering "all nations and tongues," to see His glory. II. THE APPLICATION THAT IS TO BE MADE TO HIM BY THE GENTILES. "To Him shall the Gentiles (Heb., 'the nations') seek." He Himself came to seek and save the lost, and He is often found of those that before sought Him not. Those, however, that are first found of Him do themselves also seek Him. 1. But for what purposes? As an infallible Teacher, for truth and grace. As a Mediator, for pardon, &c. As an all-sufficient Saviour, expecting deliverance from the power and pollution of sin, from the flesh, the world, and the devil. As their rightful Sovereign, to give law to them, to rule, protect, and exalt them. As the Captain of their salvation, to go before them and conquer for them, to enable them to conquer, and to crown them as victorious. 2. But how do they seek Him? By desire, earnest, constant, increasing, restless (Isa. lv. 1; John vii. 37; Rev. xxii. 17). By prayer (Joel ii. 32; Acts ii. 21; Rom. x. 13; 1 Cor. i. 2). By faith and trust (Isa. xxviii. 16; Rom. x. 11, xv. 12). III. THE EFFECTS THAT SHALL FOLLOW. "His rest shall be glorious." As a Teacher, the "light of the world," and as made of God to His people "wisdom," He gives rest to the understanding from the uncertainties of error, by the clear and satisfactory knowledge of the truth, and faith therein, or "the full assurance of understanding." As a Priest, and as made of God to us "righteousness," He gives rest to the conscience. As a Saviour from sin, and as made of God unto us "sanctification," He gives rest to the will, affections, and passions, humbling our pride, subduing our rebellious dispositions (Matt. xi. 29). As a King, by delivering, defending, governing, ordering, disposing, and making all things work for good, and setting up His kingdom in our hearts, He gives us rest from cares, fears, and anxieties. As the Captain of our salvation, He gives the rest consequent on victory over our enemies, in deliverance from all tormenting fear of them, even the fear of death, and enabling us, while on earth, to live in peace, love, and harmony, with one another. He gives rest to the earth during the millennium (Isa. xi. 6-9, ix. 7, xxxii. 15-19; Mic. iv. 1-4; Zech. xiv. 6-9). (*J. Benson, D.D.*) *The root of Jesse*:—I. THE SURROUNDINGS WITH WHICH THE REDEEMER WOULD BE CONNECTED. He was to be "a root of Jesse." Elsewhere in his prophecy Isaiah speaks of Him as "a root out of a dry ground." The dry ground in which this root yielded the Plant of renown was the barren soil of a corrupt age, a worn out civilisation, a depraved humanity. His descent from Jesse associated Him vitally with a notable family of the Jews. But centuries had passed since the descendants of Jesse had made themselves conspicuous. The energy of that vigorous family had expended itself in the luxury and the frivolity of many kings. Joseph of Nazareth, the village carpenter, and Mary his espoused wife, were the living representatives of an illustrious ancestry; and they were so poor and so humble that Bethlehem, their native city, had no welcome for them when they went thither to be enrolled. The Child Jesus shared their lot. He could not have frequented the schools, for His townsmen were astonished at His wisdom when He began to teach. He evidently had the Old Testament Scriptures in His hands, and He had the sweet influence of His mother, and the wise counsels of Joseph, and He had the synagogue. That was His environment—so far as His environment was helpful. He could draw no inspiration from the ordinary Jewish life of Nazareth, and still less from the Greek or Roman life of Galilee. His Jewish lineage is unquestioned, and yet there is nothing Jewish about Him. He is larger than the nation, larger even than the race. None of the important laws of heredity can explain Him. II. THE ATTITUDE WHICH THE REDEEMER WOULD ASSUME. He was to "stand for an ensign of the people." Ideas are symbolised by standards. A national flag represents a national idea. Isaiah declared that Jesus would "stand for an ensign of the people"—not of the Jews merely, but of the Gentiles also; and Jesus made a similar declaration concerning Himself. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth," &c. He anticipated universal supremacy. This is surely a

very remarkable expectation to be cherished intelligently by an ordinary Jew of that period of history. Racial lines were then sharply drawn. Yet Jesus—a Jew, and a Jew in a small provincial town, rose to an appreciation of the essential oneness of humanity, and presented Himself, with His idea, as the ensign of the people, so that Paul, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, was able to write to the Gentiles of Ephesus: “Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” This expectation was not cherished by one who was marching at the head of an invincible army, but by a very humble young man in the quiet village of Nazareth. He had never been abroad. He had enjoyed but little contact with the world. Yet He made this claim of universal authority. The sobriety of His claim will appear, and the wisdom of His purpose will be evident, if attention is directed to the characteristics of His idea, and if the trend of human progress is regarded. The idea of Jesus, the idea illustrated by His character and life, the idea around which Christendom is crystallising, is clearly expressed in the words, “not to be ministered unto, but to minister.” This idea, the service of self-sacrifice, is one which is capable of transforming life. Now that idea is beginning to assert its power. III. THE INFLUENCE WHICH THE REDEEMER WOULD EXERT. “His rest shall be glorious.” This is the promise of peace which Jesus Himself repeated. Very simple are the terms, and yet men draw back from their simplicity. They want the rest, but they do not want to kneel at the feet of Christ. This work—so glorious—is not an experiment. It has approved itself. In Christ, all men may find rest. (*H. M. Booth, D.D.*) *The holy war*.—Our Lord as an Ensign—I. MUSTERS HIS FORCES FOR THE BATTLE. Under the Old Testament dispensation, Jehovah revealed Himself as the Lord of hosts—as a man of war; and God manifest in the flesh was the Captain of salvation, and set up His standard for men to rally around, that they might overcome sin without and sin within. As soldiers of the Cross, we are to muster around our great Ensign, for discipline, drill, and for battle. The royal proclamation has gone forth; war has been declared against the powers of darkness; the trumpet of the Gospel has sounded, calling upon “all the world” and “every creature”; to it the Gentiles have come, and the Church militant is going forth in this holy war. II. MARCHES WITH HIS FORCES TO THE BATTLE. He goes in front as Leader and Commander, to guide, stimulate, and cheer. The strength of His arm and the light of His eye are to act as inspiration to His troops. 1. He goes before in His example. He fought with Satan, and He overcame the world. He conquered its frowns and smiles, and always went His way. “He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” 2. He goes before us in precept. He has given us commandments how we shall march and how we shall fight; and He is ever present to give power to His Word by the illumination and demonstration of His Holy Spirit. The early Christians were heroic and successful in battle, for they realised the presence of the great Ensign with them. III. MINGLES WITH HIS FORCES IN THE BATTLE. “His rest shall be glorious.” It shall not be a doubtful or drawn battle; it shall end in complete victory. The Saviour, when He finished the great atonement, ascended up on high, and “sat down” in peace and power,—He entered into glorious rest. (*F. W. Brown.*) *Jesus the Ensign*.—I. THE WORK OF CHRIST. 1. Jesus may be called an ensign because He is a gathering or rallying point for men. There always have been persons who have stood forth prominently from their fellows, in travel, in science, in ethics, in art, in song. These have founded particular schools of thought or philosophy, and men have claimed them as leaders, ranged themselves round their standards, and been proud to be called by their names. Such individuals have been “ensigns of the people,” gathering or rallying points for their own followers. Just so is Jesus pre-eminently “an ensign for the people.” 2. An “ensign” is a banner to fight under. The watchword of the true believer in Jesus is, “Jehovah nissi!” There are different regiments enrolled in the Lord’s sacramental host, and therefore are they spoken of as “an army with banners”; but every sectional flag droops and dips in the dust as it is borne before the “Captain of our salvation.” 3. An “ensign” is a guide to travellers. And such is Christ to the travellers from earth to heaven. II. THE REST OF CHRIST. “His rest shall be glorious.” 1. Because it will be the rest which follows victory. 2. The rest of abiding peace. In 1815, when the British Parliament were voting honours and emoluments to Wellington, and considering “the measures necessary towards forming a peace establishment,” suddenly all their plans were interrupted and their peace projects dissipated by the intelligence

that Napoleon had escaped from Elba. Nothing like this will occur during the rest of Christ; His enemies once subdued will be subdued for ever. 3. Because it will be the rest which follows successful attempts at salvation. Like the rest of the life-boat crew, when the mariners have been all brought from the tempest-tost and torn and tottering wreck; like the rest of the firemen when they have rescued the last inmate who was ready to perish from the burning building. His rest shall be glorious, for "He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied." 4. Because it shall be the rest of social enjoyment, unmarred by pain or sickness, by separation or death. 5. The rest of joyous activity. 6. A rest of unending duration. (J. W. Cole.) *Christ the Ensign for His people.*—I. THE PERSON OF CHRIST. II. THE EMBLEM BY WHICH HE IS REPRESENTED. III. PRACTICAL APPLICATION. 1. The need we have of the Holy Spirit's work. Christ may be faithfully and constantly preached, but it is by the Holy Spirit convincing us of our need, and giving us a living faith, that we range ourselves under His banner. 2. We must expect a conflict. 3. Christ will come to take His saints to Himself, to claim that glory which He has purchased by having died for them. (E. Auriol, M.A.) **His rest shall be glorious.**—*The Christian's glorious rest.*—I. CONSIDER WHEREIN THIS REST CONSISTS. 1. In that great obedience which Christ has rendered unto God, in the human nature, for man. There is a rest of conscience to those who are in Christ. 2. Another ground of this rest of the spirit is in the victory that Christ has obtained over all His enemies. Death, sin, Satan, the world. The enemies of the believer are vanquished through Christ Jesus. II. IN WHAT SENSE IT MAY BE CALLED GLORIOUS. 1. It is glorious to God the Father; whose wisdom and love it manifests. It is glorious to God the Son; who obtained it for His whole spiritual Church by His incarnation and toil and agony. It is glorious to God the Spirit; who foretold it, who described it, who reveals it, and seals them for it. It is glorious, because all God's attributes are honoured in it. His justice is satisfied: His mercy also is infinitely displayed. 2. The rest is glorious and honourable to all those who are brought into it. For they are washed from their sins wholly, through the blood of the Lamb, and stand as candidates for heaven in those blessed garments, which grace has purchased for them and called them to wear. They cease from the impious intention of asking heaven for their own obedience, from a deep and heart-felt conviction of God's infinite holiness and their own unworthiness. They place the crown of honour on the head, where God would have it placed—even on that head that wore the crown of thorns. 3. There remains a more glorious rest hereafter. (T. Snow, M.A.)

Vers. 11, 12. **The Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people.**—*The restoration of the Jews to their own land, and conversion to the faith of Christ.*—I. THE PAST AND PRESENT STATE AND CHARACTER OF THE JEWS. The past history of the Jews has been very remarkable, more so than that of any other nation. They have been remarkable in their origin; in the miraculous events which befell them; in their separation; in their preservation; and in their punishment. II. WHAT IS TO BECOME OF THESE MEN FOR THE FUTURE? 1. Every part of their history is wonderful. This would lead us to expect that their future history should be remarkable also. We generally find this to be the rule of Providence. The restoration and Christianisation of the Jews would be thus remarkable, and of a piece with His other dispensations towards them. It would not be so wonderful that they should continue to be punished as they are at present; but that they should be restored and converted, in spite of so many obstacles in the way of both, how singular!—that they should be honoured in those respects in which they have been most dishonoured, how remarkable and how worthy of the other wonderful events of the Jewish history! 2. We have to remember, and it strengthens the foregoing consideration, that the Jews are capable, by the events supposed, of adding much to the illustration of God's glory. In accomplishing these events there would be a mighty manifestation of power and wisdom, forbearance and compassion, not to speak of truth. The very length of time that the Jews have lain under the curse of God, and the severity of their punishment, and the mystery which overhangs their condition and prospects, would render their deliverance, and consequently the manifestation of Divine glory, more illustrious when it came. 3. With God the past is a pledge of the future; and how large is the honour and goodness of which He has made



the Jews partakers in former times! 4. The actual circumstances of the Jews, at present, betoken a propitious change. There are circumstances in their feelings and condition which intimate that, at least, their temporal state shall be improved. The Jews themselves expect that one day they shall be restored; and this expectation is not the vague idea of a few individuals, got up as a refuge from present pain—it is the prevailing idea of the Jewish nation in every age, and it is persevered in, in spite of the hardest experience which should damp and destroy it. So strong is the impression, that many Jews, when dying, make provision that their bodies, and those of their friends, shall be buried in the land of their fathers; and some repair thither in the decline of life, that they may lay their bones within the borders of Canaan, in the full expectation that one day that land is to be inhabited by, and to form the sepulchre of, their children. 5. The Jews are visibly separated from all other nations. This was predicted of them, and it has been strikingly realised. Now, what is the object and use of this remarkable separation? Possibly to make the punishment fall more heavily upon the sin of the Jews; but this will not explain the whole. It will not explain the continued distinction, now that the punishment is becoming less severe. There seems to be no way of explaining it, but by believing that some great and wonderful event awaits them in the future; and what can that be but their restoration and conversion? It cannot be their amalgamation with other nations, for this would not be very wonderful. It would not be worthy of so singular and protracted a separation; and besides, were this what was contemplated, we would expect that there should be some approach to amalgamation now. 6. In their pursuits and mode of life the Jews are eminently a movable people. They count no country their home. It is their business to travel from country to country. They are not tied down to fixed pursuits, such as those of agriculture, which cannot be readily parted with. Even in Poland, where they are most numerous and stationary, they are chiefly engaged in trade and commerce, and cannot be prevailed upon to engage in anything else. As a whole, they are most remarkable as dealers and exchangers in money—their property is convertible in the easiest manner. They are, so to speak, upon the wing—they could change their abode at a moment's warning. 7. And if, from the Jews themselves, we turn to the land of their fathers, we find it in a condition above all others most apt and likely to change masters. It is very partially inhabited—inhabited, where there are a people, only by the wandering Arab, almost as migratory as the Jew. The government is fast hastening to dissolution. It is the interest, humanly speaking, of no great or powerful nation to hinder the establishment of the Jews in Palestine. It is rather for their advantage to promote it. The Jews are sufficiently able to purchase the land with money, were this the stipulation. 8. We must now betake ourselves to the Scriptures, and see what they declare upon the subject. (*J. G. Lorimer.*) *Restoration of the Jews—obstacles to be overcome*:—All obstacles, even the most formidable, to the restoration of God's people, shall be overcome or taken away by His almighty power. This idea is naturally expressed by the dividing of the Red Sea and Euphrates, because Egypt and Assyria are the two great powers from which Israel had suffered and was yet to be delivered. (*J. A. Alexander.*)

Ver. 13. *The envy also of Ephraim shall depart.—Judah and Ephraim*:—Jacob, in his prophetic statement of the fortunes of his sons, disregards the right of primogeniture, and gives the pre-eminence to Judah and Joseph, and in the family of the latter to the younger son Ephraim. Hence, from the time of the exodus, these two were regarded as the leading tribes of Israel. Judah was much more numerous than Ephraim, took precedence during the journey in the wilderness, and received the largest portion in the promised land. But Joshua was an Ephraimite; and Shiloh, where the tabernacle long stood, was probably within the limits of the same tribe. The ambitious jealousy of the Ephraimites towards other tribes appears in their conduct to Gideon and Jephthah. Their special jealousy of Judah showed itself in their temporary refusal to submit to David after the death of Saul, in their adherence to Absalom against his father, and in the readiness with which they joined in the revolt of Jeroboam, who was himself of the tribe of Ephraim. This schism was, therefore, not a sudden or fortuitous occurrence, but the natural result of causes which had long been working. The mutual relation of the two kingdoms is expressed in the recorded fact that “there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam,

and between Asa and Baasha all their days." Exceptions to the general rule, as in the case of Ahab and Jehoshaphat, were rare, and a departure from the principles and ordinary feelings of the parties. The ten tribes, which assumed the name of Israel after the division, and perhaps before it, regarded the smaller and less warlike state with a contempt which is well expressed by Jehoash in his parable of the cedar and the thistle, unless the feeling there displayed be rather personal than national. On the other hand, Judah justly regarded Israel as guilty not only of political revolt, but of religious apostasy, and the jealousy of Ephraim towards Judah would, of course, be increased by the fact that Jehovah had "forsaken the tabernacle of Shiloh," that He "refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim, but chose the tribe of Judah, the Mount Zion which He loved." (*J. A. Alexander.*)

**Ver. 15. The Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea.—***The Egyptian sea and the river:*—The "tongue," i.e., the bay (cf. Josh. xv. 2) of the Red Sea (the Gulf of Suez) will be "banned," i.e., rendered harmless to those who would cross it, by being dried up; "the river" (the Euphrates), swift and too deep to be forded as it is, will be split into seven separate channels, which separately may be forded without danger. (*Prof. Driver, D.D.*)

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## CHAPTER XII.

**Vers. 1-3. And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise Thee.—***Praise for redemption:*—As the Israel that was redeemed from Egypt raised songs of praise on the other side of the Red Sea, so likewise does the Israel of the second redemption when brought not less miraculously over the Red Sea and Euphrates. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *A song in the night:*—It is time we had a hymn in this prophecy of Isaiah, for the reading has been like a succession of thunderstorms and earthquakes. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Did Isaiah write this song?*—Some say Isaiah did not write this song. It is of no consequence to us who wrote it: here it is, and it is in the right place, and it expresses the right thought, and there is probably more evidence for the authorship of Isaiah than for the authorship of any other man. Some have said it is not like his style: but what is his style? What is the style of the sky? Is it for two days alike? Who could write the history of the sky simply as it appears to the vision of man? The accounts would seem to contradict one another, for the sky passes through panoramic changes innumerable, infinite, and all beautiful where they are not grand. So with the style of this great statesman Isaiah. He handles things with the infinite ease of conscious power; he is as strong in his music as he is in his prophecy. (*Ibid.*) *Praise for redemption by the individual and by the Church:*—In that day—I. EVERY PARTICULAR BELIEVER shall sing a song of praise for his own interest in that salvation (vers. 1-3). "Thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise Thee." Thankgiving work shall be closet work. II. MANY IN CONCERT shall join in praising God for the common benefit arising from this salvation (vers. 4-6). "Ye shall say, Praise the Lord." Thankgiving work shall be congregation work. (*M. Henry.*) *A new song for new hearts:*—The text is many-sided. We shall find out the very soul of the passage if we consider it as an illustration of what occurs to every one of God's people when he is brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light. I. THE PRELUDE of this song. Here are certain preliminaries to the music. "In that day thou shalt say." Here we have the tuning of the harps, the notes of the music follow after in the succeeding sentences. 1. There is a time for that joyous song which is here recorded. The term, "that day," is sometimes used for a day of terror, and often for a period of blessing. The common term to both is this, they were days of the manifestation of Divine power. "That day," a day of terrible confusion to God's enemies; "that day," a day of great comfort to God's friends. Now, the day in which a man rejoices in Christ, is the day in which God's power is revealed on his behalf in his heart and conscience. 2. A word indicates the singer. "Thou." It is a singular pronoun, and points out one individual. One by one we receive eternal life and peace. You fancy that it is all right with you because you live in a

Christian nation ; it is woe unto you, if having outward privileges, they involve you in responsibilities, but bring you no saving grace. Perhaps you fancy that your family religion may somewhat help you, but it is not so ; there is no birthright godliness : " Ye must be born again." Still, I know ye fancy that if ye mingle in godly congregations, and sing as they sing, and pray as they pray, it shall go well with you, but it is not so ; the wicket gate of eternal life admits but one at a time. This word, " thou," is spoken to those who have been by sorrow brought into the last degree of despair. 3. The next thing to be noted in the preliminaries is the Teacher. It is God alone who can so positively declare, " thou shalt say." If any man presumes to say, " God has turned His anger away from me," without a warrant from the Most High, that man lies to his own confusion ; but when it is written, " Thou shalt say," it is as though God had said, " I will make it true, so that you shall be fully justified in the declaration." 4. Here is another preliminary of the song, namely, the tone of it. " Thou shalt say." The song is to be an open one, avowed, vocally uttered, heard of men, and published abroad. It is not to be a silent feeling, a kind of soft music whose sweetness is spent within the spirit. II. IN THE SONG ITSELF, I would call to your notice—1. The fact that all of it is concerning the Lord. It is all addressed to Him. " O Lord, I will praise Thee : though Thou wast angry, Thine anger is turned away." When a soul escapes from the bondage of sin, and becomes consciously pardoned, it resembles the apostles on the Mount Tabor—it sees no man, save Jesus only. God will be all in all when iniquity is pardoned. 2. The next thing in this song is, that it includes repentant memories. " Though Thou wast angry with me." There was a time when God was to our consciousness angry with us. In the Hebrew the wording of our text is slightly different from what we get in the English. Our English translators have very wisely put in the word " though," a little earlier than it occurs in the Hebrew. The Hebrew would run something like this, " O Lord, I will praise Thee ; Thou wast angry with me." Now we do this day praise God that He made us feel His anger. 3. The song of our text contains in itself blessed certainties. " Thine anger is turned away." Can a man know that ? can a man be quite sure that he is forgiven ? Ay, that he can ; he can be as sure of pardon as he is of his existence. 4. Our song includes holy resolutions. " I will praise Thee." I will do it with my heart in secret. I will praise Thee in the Church of God, for I will search out other believers, and I will tell them what God has done for me. I will cast in my lot with Thy people. I will praise Thee in my life. I will make my business praise Thee ; I will make my parlour and my drawing-room, I will make my kitchen and my field praise Thee. I will not be content unless all I am and all I have shall praise Thee. I will make a harp of the whole universe ; I will make earth and heaven, space and time, to be but strings upon which my joyful fingers shall play lofty tunes of thankfulness. 5. This is a song which is peculiar in its character, and appropriate only to the people of God. I may say of it, " no man could learn this song but the redeemed." It is not a Pharisee's song—it has no likeness to " God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men " ; it confesses, " Thou wast angry with me," and therein owns that the singer was even as others ; but it glories that through infinite mercy, the Divine anger is turned away, and herein it leans on the appointed Saviour. It is not a Sadducean song ; no doubt mingles with the strain. It is not the philosopher's query, " There may be a God, or there may not be " ; it is the voice of a believing worshipper. It is not, " I may be guilty, or I may not be." It is all positive, every note of it. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The heart's diapason* :—It is a full song—the swell of the diapason of the heart. (*Ibid.*) *Grace upon grace* :—" Thou comfortedst me." Persons may be liberated from slavery by the arm of power ; they may be rescued from oppression by the exercise of justice ; they may be relieved from want by the hand of bounty ; but to pour reviving consolation into the dejected mind is the kind office of pure affection and pity (Isa. lxvi. 13). (R. Macculloch.) *The song of the ransomed* :—Such will one day be the song of a ransomed nation, and such is even now the song of the ransomed soul. Until we can sing this song we do not know what praise really means. It is a striking contrast indeed. (1) It is a stern and terrible fact that there are some persons on whom the wrath of God does rest (John iii. 36). There are few more startling expressions in the whole Bible than this. Think of the wrath of God abiding on you ! You rise up in the morning, and there it is—hanging over you. You go forth to your work, the sun is shining in the outer world, making all nature jubilant, and over you this dark funereal pall is still

hanging. You surround yourselves with all the pleasing scenes of a comfortable home. In the very midst of your comfort and prosperity still that cloud is there. You lay your head upon your pillow at night, and if you should think at all, your last thoughts might well be: If I never wake again here on earth, I must certainly wake to find the wrath of God abiding on me. This is not the only passage in which such an affirmation is made. (2) How did this great change indicated here take place? If you refer to the immediate context, you will learn a valuable lesson. In the previous chapters we meet with a very mournful refrain: "For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still." These sorrowful words come after a description of terrible and overwhelming judgment. This points to the solemn conclusion that, although it is perfectly true that sin always brings punishment in its train, the punishment which we endure, as the result of our sin, does not expiate its guilt. What was it that turned away the anger of God from Israel? The tenth chapter is merely a parenthesis. It is when the Rod of the stem of Jesse has appeared, and the eye of God, looking down upon His own nation, sees something within that nation that He is well pleased with, that a complete change comes over the aspect of things. The anger of God disappears, the sunlight of Divine pleasure bursts upon a rejoicing nation, and the next moment we are introduced to this song of triumphant praise. The moment that the eye of God, gazing down upon you, sees in your nature that which He beheld of old in the sacred land, and which He will behold again one day on a consecrated earth, the Plant of renown—Christ received into your nature, Christ growing in the thirsty, barren soil of your fallen humanity, like a root in a dry ground, and making all things fertile and fruitful by His presence—when God, gazing down, sees within you a received Christ, He has no anger, no judgment for that. You will be able to say, "Thou wast angry; Thine anger is turned away: Thou comfortedst me." I. In reaching this point the soul proceeds to make the most astonishing and glorious discovery it is possible for us to make. "Behold, God is my SALVATION." I suddenly discover that I have no longer anything to fear in God. He bridges over in His own blessed Person the vast chasm between my sin and His purity, and as I step upon this wondrous bridge I find that it will bear my weight. God Himself brings me to God. This salvation is offered to us for nothing. But it cost the Son of God something. This salvation is to be appropriated by simple trust. "I will trust, and not be afraid." II. But not only does the happy soul find out that God is his salvation; he goes on to find out that the Lord Jehovah is his STRENGTH. The very title which the prophet gives to God suggests the eternal immutability of the great "I Am." As we obtain salvation by taking God for our salvation, so we obtain strength by taking God for our strength with equally simple, childlike faith. III. When you have made the discovery that the Lord Jehovah is your strength, no wonder if you go on to make yet a third. He is our SONG. God designs that from this time forth you shall be perfectly happy; but, if you want to be really happy, God must be your song. When we think upon God there is always something to sing about. His faithfulness and truth; His unchanging love; His readiness to be to us all that we want; the hope that He holds out to us, blooming with immortality. IV. And, as the result of this, we shall "WITH JOY DRAW WATER OUT OF THE WELLS OF SALVATION." Some have sat beside the wells of salvation, from time to time, as a matter of custom and habit, and yet have never known what it was to draw water out of the wells with joy. You have come to church on Sunday because it happened to be Sunday. You were expected to be there, and there you were. Some of you have read your Bible because it is a proper thing to do. Your life has been a life of legal performances. Your prayers have been little better than superstitious incantations. Now all that is changed. It is with joy, and not with murmuring, that we are to find our wells. On more than one occasion the Israelites applied for water in this spirit, and found a curse mingled with their blessing. Let us dig our wells as they dug the well of old at Beer, when, though they lacked water, they were wise enough to leave the matter in the Lord's hands. Then it was God undertook for them. (*Anon.*) *The present happiness of God's people set before the unconverted*.—God, in His infinite mercy, has addressed the most various motives to sinners in general, to induce them to turn to Him. He has been pleased to set before sinners in His Word the immediate happiness that they may enjoy in His service, as incomparably greater than any they can hope to have in this world while absent and alienated from Him. And this truth is set before us most strikingly in these

words. I. We have to consider THE JOY THAT FLOWS FROM THE SENSE OF PARDONED SIN. 1. The first thing here declared to us is, that God does pardon the penitent believer. He was originally angry with him. God is, and must be, according to His Divine perfections, angry with those who are living in a state of rebellion against Him. But when a person is brought to believe in Christ that anger is gone. 2. And as this is the blessing itself, so is the believer, when faith is strong, assured of that blessing. But when I speak of this as a constraining motive why sinners in general should turn to God, they may feel that ungodly persons have no such burden. Yet though now the sinner may not feel his need of such a consolation, he may be assured that it is a consolation surpassing in value and in peace and in joy all that he has ever experienced in a life of indifference and ungodliness. II. THERE IS A JOY ARISING FROM TRUST IN GOD FOR FUTURE BLESSINGS. "Behold, God is my salvation," &c. 1. God is become the "salvation" of a penitent believer. That is, He accomplishes His entire deliverance from sin and its consequences. 2. God is his "salvation" from all present evil, and introduces him to the possession of all real good (Psa. cxxi. 7, lxxiv. 11; Rom. viii. 28). Hence, then, the Lord does not reserve all the blessings of His people for the eternal world, but pours out His treasures of mercy upon them even now. And as God bestows upon His people this assurance that He is "their strength and their salvation," it must fill them with abiding joy. (B. W. Noel, M.A.) *The joy of salvation*.—At the Southport Convention, 1901, the Rev. W. Y. Fullerton told an amusing incident of a friend of his, not a Methodist, but with enough fire for two, who wrote a post-card to a friend, and having filled up the back, wrote a closing message on the front of the card, "Be of good cheer, brother." And the Post-office authorities not only surcharged the recipient, but stamped beneath the message, "Contrary to regulations." Christian joy is legitimate, and not opposed to the regulations of heaven. (*Methodist Times*.) *Assurance of salvation* makes the firmest, the most active, the most useful, the holiest, the happiest, the most even and regular Christians. (John Bate.)

Ver. 2. Behold, God is my salvation.—*Rejoicing in God*.—These words are used by the prophet, in the name of the Church, to set forth the happiness and salvation of the Jews when they shall be gathered in with the fulness of the Gentiles. They also express the experience of a believer—I. WITH RESPECT TO HIS MORAL STATE. "God is my salvation." Some would have the aid, the consolation, and the favour of God, but refuse His salvation, and remain in sin. This, however, is vain and impossible. The privileges of a believer are unspeakably great, but they all are founded on that change which the grace of God makes in his nature, here called salvation. Salvation is deliverance, and how does this show itself in a believer? He is delivered from darkness (2 Cor. iv. 6). From insensibility (Ezek. xxxvi. 26). From pride. From creaturely dependence. From a sense of condemnation (Rom. viii. 1). From slavery (John viii. 36; Rom. vi. 22). He is delivered from misery, into union with God, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; no longer a stranger and foreigner, but a fellow-heir, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and in the hope of His glory. Observe, to whom the believer refers us as the Author of this salvation—"God." II. WITH RESPECT TO HIS AID. "The Lord Jehovah is my strength." If we have not yet learned that our own strength is weakness, and that we shall never be sufficiently strong until the Lord Jehovah Himself strengthens with all might in our inner man, we have learnt little of Christianity. But he who knows that God is his salvation, knows also that God is his strength. Dost thou fall? "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." Art thou faint? "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." Art thou wounded? A touch of the Divine hand shall heal thee. Art thou buffeted by Satan? God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. In one word, behold a Divine and almighty power everywhere, and always surrounding you, sufficient for all purposes to bless, support, deliver. III. WITH RESPECT TO HIS CONSOLATIONS. "And my song." Here is an allusion to the ancient custom of composing and singing sacred odes or songs upon occasions of any signal deliverance, or the communication of any peculiar blessing. Such were the songs of Moses and Miriam, when Pharaoh and his host were swallowed up in the Red Sea; of Moses, after he had brought the Israelites to the borders of the promised land; of many of the Psalms of David, &c. Observe, the subject

of his song, "the Lord Jehovah." His nature; His dispensations. IV. WITH RESPECT TO HIS CONFIDENCE. "I will trust, and not be afraid." (*J. Walker, D.D.*) *Salvation of the Lord*:—The physician may be the means of restoring to health, but it is God who performs the cure. The counsellor may give good advice, but it is God who guides by His counsel and conducts to glory. Soldiers may fight our battles, but it is God who crowns them with victory. Friends may try to assist, relieve, and comfort us, but their success depends entirely upon God. From providences and ordinances we may derive much benefit, but for this purpose it is absolutely requisite that they be accompanied with the Divine blessing. In this manner we are taught that salvation is of the Lord. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Salvation*:—The word "salvation" is too narrowly defined in many instances. People suppose that it means a kind of spiritual selfishness which, being expressed in more words, would run in some such fashion as this: Thank God I am safe, whatever may become of anybody else! Any man who can say that, or mean that, or be in any way under such a delusion, simply knows nothing whatever about the spirit of the Gospel. "Salvation" is one of the largest terms in human speech. Emancipation does not mean—you are now no longer under obligation to serve your old tyrant or your old master. That is but a negative aspect of emancipation. The true meaning is—you are invested with all the responsibilities of organised liberty; you have conferred upon you an opportunity of developing your whole manhood; you may now show the very best aspect of your character, and unless you do it, then slavery were for you better than freedom. It is so with the fullest meaning of this word salvation. Saved people are generous people, beneficent, charitable, anxious about others; nay, the only explanation of their anxiety about others is that they themselves are conscious of having been saved—not saved from fear only, but saved into life, liberty, and conscious possibility of doing great and small things. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The Old Testament interpreted by the New*:—"Behold, God is my salvation." Jerome translates this, "Behold, God is my Jesus." Jerome was right in going back to the Old Testament with the key of the New. In fact, we are entitled to begin at Genesis after we have perused the whole Gospel story with the profoundest interest and have received its spirit into our heart. The Gospels explain the Pentateuch. There are arithmetics which are awful in their initial hardness. They are all questions. Arithmetic is the most audacious interrogator I ever knew. But at the end of the arithmetic, in some cases, there is a key. What different reading! There is not a question in the whole key unless it be at the beginning of an answer, and who, having read the answer, does not feel how easy it was to have worked out the sum after all if one had only taken pains enough at the beginning? At the same time there is a strong disposition just to appropriate what the key says, and then, perhaps, to appear before the spectacled master as if we had never heard of such a thing as a key. That would be illegitimate in arithmetic. There have been young arithmeticians who have been guilty of that meanness. But we are called to look at the key in open day; we are referred to the key; we are invited and challenged to peruse it, and then to go back with the key in our hand to work out all the mystery of the lock. This is what Jerome did; so he did not hesitate to take out the word "salvation" in the second verse and put in the word "Jesus," and say with unction and thankfulness, "Behold, God is my Jesus." "His name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." (*Ibid.*) *Salvation, the possession of God*:—If there is a man or a woman that thinks of salvation as if it were merely a shutting up of some material hell, or the dodging round a corner, so as to escape some external consequence of transgression, let him or her learn this: the possession of God is salvation; that and nothing else. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *God our salvation*:—The prophet has been looking forward through times of darkness and captivity to the coming day of light and freedom; and in the hymn of which our text is the keynote he shows what will be the spirit of the new age, what the prevailing thoughts and emotions of the time. It is an exultant song, but without a word of self-congratulation. It is the keynote of the kingdom of heaven; and the regeneration of society for which ardent spirits long will not be reached until this old song become again a voice of the time. 1. We are far enough from it now. We have the song in our Bibles, we quote it in our pulpits, we sing it in our church services, but it is not in our modern life. There is nothing of it in the current literature. It is the function of the poet to give voice to the nobler thoughts and emotions of his

time. Now can you imagine a poet of our times bursting out into a song like that; and if he did, would the editors of our first-class reviews be eager to glorify their pages with it? Instead of exultation in the name of God, there is all eagerness to avoid it. It is not that the age is indifferent: there is much real earnestness. The word "salvation" is not much in vogue; but the thing meant is by no means despised. If the spirit of earnestness now abroad had been foreseen fifty years ago, men would have thought that the kingdom of heaven was verily at hand at last. But now, here all around us, is the earnestness—philanthropic, moral, even spiritual, earnestness to a considerable extent; but where is the kingdom? Alas, it still seems very far away! 2. We are better than we were. Year by year there is some improvement. But not nearly enough. The end will not be brought within sight till the spirit of this old song comes back to us; till the nation as a nation, not one here and there among the people, but the people as a people, look upwards to the hills from whence cometh their aid; till the inhabitant on every side cries out, "Behold, God is my salvation." 3. Let it be remembered that trust in God does not mean neglect of ordinary means. We who believe in God are thoroughly with the humanitarians so far as they go. We believe with them in heredity and in its power for evil and for good; only we do not believe that there is any inheritance of evil so terrible that the grace of God cannot reach and save its victim, nor any inheritance of ancestral nobleness so excellent that the grace of God is not needed to make and keep pure, and to raise to still higher things. We believe in education, in refinement, in progress of all kinds, in all processes of evolution which are moving in the right direction, onwards and upwards; only we recognise that none of these, nor all of them together, quite meet the case, or mean salvation. There remain with us mystery, unsolved; sin, crying for forgiveness and cleansing; sorrow, scarce abated or diminished; death, with all its victory—mystery, sin, sorrow, death: all present, patent facts, not to be disputed, not to be conquered by the freest education, or the highest culture; and then there is judgment to come, to which the conscience is a witness not in any case to be for ever silenced, though it may be hushed and quieted for a time; and there is the great eternity, the thought of which God has put into our hearts. When we look at these things we see our need, not of education merely, but of salvation, and heart and flesh cry out for God. 4. But is not this the watchword of the Churches? Do not they sufficiently represent the Divine factor in the world's salvation? Would that they did. Look, first, at the national Church. What is its great message? Is it, "Behold, God is thy salvation"? What we all want is to be so filled with the Spirit of God, and so thoroughly saved ourselves, that the keynote of every minister's sermon, and of every Christian's life shall be, "Behold, God is my salvation." 5. There is, indeed, a human side of Divine truth which is of very great importance. If God is to be my salvation, He must be in touch with me. If He show Himself to me, it must be in my likeness; if He speak to me, it must be in my language; if He act on me, it must be through my faculties and in accordance with the laws of my being. He is the God of nature as well as of grace. But important as it is to show the Gospel natural, it is far more important to hold fast to the supernatural. (*J. Monro Gibson, D.D.*) *God the soul's salvation*.—A character in a modern book says, "I said I would leave the saving of my soul to Him that made my soul; it was in right good keeping there I'd warrant." *Man's Saviour Divine*.—Dr. Mason of America said—"I need such a Saviour; for I would not trust my soul to the hands or heart of the brightest seraph that burns before the eternal throne." *Full assurance of salvation*.—Mrs. Edwards, wife of President Edwards, says, "In 1742 I sought and obtained the full assurance of faith. I cannot find language to express how certain the everlasting love of God appeared; the everlasting mountains and hills were but shadows to it. My safety and happiness and eternal enjoyment of God's immutable love, seemed as durable and unchangeable as God Himself. Melted and overcome by the sweetness of this assurance, I fell into a great flood of tears, and could not forbear weeping aloud. The presence of God was so near and so real that I seemed scarcely conscious of anything else. My soul was filled and overwhelmed with light and love and joy in the Holy Ghost, and seemed just ready to go away from the body. This exaltation of soul subsided into a heavenly calm and rest of soul in God, which was even sweeter than what preceded it." **I will trust, and not be afraid.**—*Our liability to fear, and the power of faith to overcome it*.—Naturally any creature must be liable to

fear. The finite nature, however exalted, must always feel itself transcended and surrounded by the infinite Unknown. There can be only one Being in the universe absolutely and for ever free from that liability—He who knows everything, and who controls everything—who knows all beings, agents, facts, possibilities, and rules them. We are manifestly far more liable to the inroads of this fear than those creatures who have never fallen. I. THE GREAT MYSTERIES OF EXISTENCE HAVE A TENDENCY TO PRODUCE FEAR. Something depends, of course, on the susceptibility of the individual; a strong practical nature is not so much affected by mysteries; but there are few thoughtful persons who do not sometimes feel the shadow of them on the path; and the continual contemplation of them does not irradiate or dissolve them; they become only more impenetrable and more densely dark, and then comes the fear lest this aspect of them should never be relieved, lest they should be unfathomable and unconquerable for ever. 1. Has not every thoughtful mind bowed and almost trembled before the great mystery into which so many others may be resolved—the existence of evil in the universe, under the government of an infinitely powerful and infinitely benevolent Being? We have, indeed, to consider that along with sin was introduced the Gospel—the glorious, all-sufficient remedy, by which sin is to be taken away and purity restored; but they exist together. The remedy, although we have the utmost confidence in its perfect sufficiency, does not destroy the disease in a moment; it struggles with it, and overcomes it only by slow degrees, and in some instances the disease seems to return with increasing virulence, and to re-assert its supremacy after the cure has been more than half effected; while, in a multitude of other instances, the remedy never takes effect at all, and whole generations of human beings are swept away by death, in a moral condition that augurs ill for any future happiness. He who can say that he has had no difficulties with such a subject, only shows that he has had no thoughts about it. And yet it is not at all desirable to be under the influence of this oppression of evil; it is very desirable, and quite possible, to rise superior to it. But how? “I will trust, and not be afraid.” Many have tried to reach the ground of satisfaction by knowledge. They have said, “I will know, and not be afraid”; but they have had no success. 2. There is great mystery also about the plan of Divine providence in this world. We see glimpses of Divine meaning shining out of the plan at intervals, and we make our way with certainty to some of the leading principles of that providence. We are sure, *e.g.*, that God is the friend and protector of the righteous man, and yet, see how some righteous men are tried! And see, on the other hand, how ungodly men rise into influence sometimes. If we gaze upon God’s great providence in the hope of being able to scan its parts and explain all its movements, we shall be sadly disappointed. But if we cease from the vain attempt to understand the complexities of providence and, looking above all its visible movements, rest our faith on Him who conducts them all, we shall begin to have peace. It would be easy to mention many other providential mysteries which are very appalling and perplexing to the natural understanding. Do you say, It is all according to law? But are you not afraid as you see how stern and unrelenting law is? Where is your relief? Will you try to vanquish nature and providence by thought? Will you resist and seek deliverance by strength? Will you be wiser and trust? Ah, that is relief! II. THERE ARE CERTAIN POSSIBILITIES, THE THOUGHT OF WHICH HAS A TENDENCY TO DARKEN THE SPIRIT WITH FEAR. Unsatisfied with past and present, we cast our hopes always within the veil of the great to-morrow; but our fears go with our hopes. And it is not merely that there are such bare possibilities in every man’s future, but these are always shaping themselves into probabilities. Perhaps there is no one person who cannot fancy, and who is not sometimes almost compelled to expect, some particular form of ill, something which he shrinks from. What is the remedy? “I will trust, and not be afraid.” There is yet one dread possibility, the contemplation of which is more appalling than the very worst of earthly calamities—the possibility of spiritual failure, ending in a final exclusion from the presence of God and the joys of the blessed. There is but one way of grappling with and overcoming this great fear. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *Trust in relation to the will*.—A Christian lady of my acquaintance was at one time in her life an apparently hopeless victim of doubts and fears. She knew she ought to trust the Lord, and longed to do it, but she seemed utterly unable. After a long period of suffering from this cause, she finally confided her difficulties to a friend, who, as it mercifully happened, understood this



secret concerning the will, and who told her that if in her will she would decide to trust, and, putting all her will power into trusting, would utterly ignore her feelings, she would sooner or later get the victory over all her doubts. The poor doubter listened in silence for a few minutes, and then, drawing a long breath, said with emphasis, "Yes, I see it. If I choose in my will to trust, I really am trusting, even though all my feelings say contrary. I do choose to trust now. I will trust; I will not be afraid again." As she came to this decision, and thus deliberately put her will on the side of God's will, all the darkness vanished, and her soul was brought out into the glorious light of the Gospel; a light which was never dimmed again, until her eyes were opened in the presence of the King. (*Mrs. H. W. Smith.*)

*Trust in God*.—"How do you know that you are ready to appear before God?" was once asked of one dying; and the answer was, "Sir, God knows that I have taken Him at His word." (*Prof. Laidlaw, D.D.*)

*Trusting*.—I once illustrated the act of faith by the experience of a friend who was in an upper room of a hotel at night when the building took fire. He seized the escape rope that was in his room, swung out of the window, and lowered himself in safety to the side-walk. He had a good opinion of that rope during the day when he saw it coiled up by his bedside, but it was only an opinion; when he believed on the rope, and trusted himself to the rope, it saved his life. (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*)

*A definition of faith*.—An intensely interesting incident was related lately by Dr. J. G. Paton of a discovery of a term in the language of Aniwa for "Faith." It seems that for a long time no equivalent could be found, and the work of Bible translation was paralysed for want of so fundamental and oft-recurring a term. The natives apparently regarded the verb "to hear" as equivalent to belief. For instance, suppose a native were asked whether he heard a certain statement. Should he credit the statement he would reply, "Yes, I heard it," but should he disbelieve it, he would answer, "No, I did not hear it," meaning not that his ears had failed to catch the words, but that he did not regard them as true. This definition of faith was obviously insufficient—many passages, such as "faith cometh by hearing," would be impossible of translation through so meagre a channel; and prayer was made continually that God would supply the missing link. No effort had been spared in interrogating the most intelligent native pundits, but all in vain; none caught the hidden meaning of the word sought by the missionary. One day Dr. Paton was sitting in his room anxiously pondering. He sat on an ordinary chair, his feet resting on the floor; just then an intelligent native entered the room, and the thought flashed to the missionary to ask the all-absorbing question yet once again in a new light. Was he not resting on that chair? Would that attitude lend itself to the discovery? "Taea," said Dr. Paton, "what am I doing now?" "Koihae ana, Misi" ("You're sitting down, Misi"), the native replied. Then the missionary drew up his feet and placed them upon the bar of the chair just above the floor, and, leaning back upon the chair in an attitude of repose, asked, "What am I doing now?" "Fakarongrongo, Misi" ("You are leaning wholly," or, "You have lifted yourself from every other support"). "That's it," shouted the missionary, with an exultant cry; and a sense of holy joy awed him as he realised that his prayer had been so fully answered. To lean on Jesus wholly and only is surely the true meaning of appropriating or saving faith. And now, "Fakarongrongo Iesu ea anea moure" ("Leaning on Jesus unto eternal life," or, "for all the things of eternal life"), is the happy experience of those Christian islanders, as it is of all who thus cast themselves unreservedly on the Saviour of the world for salvation.

**The Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song.**—*Jehovah the strength of His people*.—1. He is the strength of my understanding, whereby I discern and acknowledge the great mysteries of salvation, and am enabled to perceive the way in which I ought to go. 2. He is the strength of my heart, of which He takes the direction, working in me to will and to do of His good pleasure; giving the willing mind, which makes His work go forward with alacrity and cheerfulness. 3. He is the strength of my affections, which He preserves from becoming languid and feeble, and fixes them upon the proper objects on which they ought to terminate. 4. He is the strength of my graces, who establisheth my faith, enliveneth my love, animateth my hope and patience; who enableth me to resist my spiritual enemies, to vanquish temptations, to mortify corruptions, to perform duties, to sustain afflictions, and to surmount all the obstacles that lie in the way to the kingdom of God. (*R. Macculloch.*)

*The joy of the Gospel*.—At least twenty-one times in his letter to the Philippians,

written in prison, does St. Paul use such words as joy, rejoice, gladness, while the whole letter is charged with the spirit of joy. This is the real spirit of the Gospel. (*Great Thoughts.*) *Rejoicing in God*:—When the poet Carpani asked his friend Haydn how it happened that his church music was so cheerful, the beautiful answer was: "I cannot make it otherwise; I write according to the thoughts I feel. When I think upon God, my heart is so full of joy that the notes dance and leap, as it were, from my pen; and since God has given me a cheerful heart, it will be pardoned me that I serve Him with a cheerful spirit." (*Ibid.*) *Jehovah His people's song*:—The wife of Hawthorne, the American writer, said in a letter to her mother: "Sunday afternoon the birds were sweetly mad, and the lovely rage of song drove them hither and thither, and swelled their breasts amain. I kept saying, 'Yes, yes, I know it, dear little maniacs, I know it! There never was such an air, such a day, such a God! I know it! I know it.' But they would not be pacified. Their throats must have been made of fine gold, or they would have been rent with such rapture-quakes." Human beings are compelled to declare in song the ecstasy which is at times in their souls because of the goodness of God. They cannot help being tunelessly demonstrative when the Infinite Being comes into their souls, and makes Himself known as a gracious visitant by the plenitude of blessing He bestows. If the great visitation be to them on the week-day, they give praise for it in the music which attested their jubilant enthusiasm on the Sabbath. If the great visitation comes to them on the Sabbath, they can scarcely tell whether they belong to earth or to the paradise never darkened by evening shadows, and in their singing they endeavour to emulate "the voice of harpers, harping with their harps." (*Gates of Imagery.*)

Ver. 3. *Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.*—*Drawing water from the wells of salvation*:—The Talmudists refer the words, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation," to the custom of making an oblation of water on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. But as it is not prescribed in the law of Moses, it has been doubted whether it dates back earlier than the times of the Maccabees. It is, however, at least as probable that the Asmonean princes should have restored an ancient as ordained a new rite; such a rite, to acknowledge God's gift of the water without which harvest and vintage must have failed, would always have been a likely accompaniment of the feast in which these were celebrated; and the like acts of Samuel and Elijah, though for different purposes, perhaps go in confirmation of the ancient existence of such a practice. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *The prophecy and its fulfilment*:—Two events, separated from each other by fifteen hundred years, bear upon these words. One was the origin of the peculiar form of this prophecy, the other contains its interpretation and claims to be its fulfilment. 1. The wandering march of the children of Israel had brought them to Rephidim, where there was no water. Their parched lips opened to murmur and rebel against their unseen Leader and His visible lieutenant. At his wits' end, Moses cried to God, and the answer is the command to take with him the elders of Israel, and with his rod in his hand to go up to Horeb; and then come grand words, "Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock, and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it." It is not the rock, nor the rod, nor the uplifted hand, but it is the presence of God which makes the sparkling streams pour out. How the thirsty men would drink, how gladly they would fling themselves on the ground and glue their lips to the glancing blessing, or dip their cups and skins into it, as it flashed along! Many a psalm and prophecy refer to this old story, and clearly Isaiah had it in his mind here, for the whole context is full of allusions to the history of the Exodus, as a symbol of the better deliverance from a worse bondage, which the "Root of Jesse" was to effect. The lyric burst of praise, of which the text is part, carries on the same allusion. The joyful band of pilgrims returning from this captivity sing the "Song of Moses," chanted first by the banks of the Red Sea, "The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation." This distinct quotation, which immediately precedes our text, makes the reference in it which we have pointed out, most probable and natural. The connection of these words with the story in the Exodus was recognised by the Jews at a very early period, as is plain from their use in the remarkable ritual of the Feast of Tabernacles. That festival was originally appointed to preserve the remembrance of Israel's nomad

life in the wilderness. In the later days of the nation, a number of symbolical observances were added to those of the original institution. Daily, amidst loud jubilations, the priests wound in long procession down the slope from the temple to the fountain of Siloam in the valley beneath, and there drew water in golden urns. They bore it back, the crowd surging around them, and then amidst the blast of trumpets, and a tumult of rejoicing, they poured it on the altar, while thousands of voices chanted Isaiah's words, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." 2. So much for the occasion of the prophecy; now for its meaning and fulfilment. Nearly eight hundred years have passed. Again the festival has come round. For seven days the glad ceremonial has been performed. For the last time the priestly procession has gone down the rocky road; for the last time the vases have been filled at the cool fountain below; for the last time the bright water has been poured out sparkling in the sunlight; for the last time the shout of joy has risen and fallen, and as the words of the ancient chant were dying on the ear, a sudden stir began among the crowd, and from the midst of them, as they parted for his passage, came a young man, rustic in appearance, and there, before all the silence-stricken multitude, and priests with their empty urns, "in the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink." Surely such words, in such a connection, at such a time, from such lips, are meant to point the path to the true understanding of the text. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The wells of salvation*.—I. Consider what we have to understand by THE WELLS OF SALVATION. 1. We are not to be content with any shallow and narrow interpretation of either idea in that phrase. No doubt "salvation" in the Old Testament often means merely outward deliverance from material peril. We shall not strain the meaning here, if we take salvation almost in the fully developed New Testament sense, as including, negatively, the deliverance from all evil, both evil of sin and evil of sorrow, and, positively, the endowment with all good, good both of holiness and happiness, which God can bestow or man receive. 2. Then if so, God Himself is, in the deepest truth, the Well of Salvation. The figure of our text does not point to a well so much as to a spring. It is a source, not a reservoir. So we have but to recall the deep and wonderful words of the psalmist: "With Thee is the fountain of life," and others not less profound, of the prophet: "They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters," in order to be led up to the essential meaning of this text. Salvation has its origin in the depths of God's own nature. It wells up as of itself, not drawn forth by anything in us, but pouring out as from an inner impulse in His own deep heart. Surely, too, if God be the fountain of salvation, the essence of salvation must be His communication of Himself. The water is the same in the fountain as in the pitcher. But, God being the true fountain of salvation, notice that Jesus Christ plainly and decisively puts Himself in the place that belongs to God: "If any man thirst," &c. Think of the extraordinary claims involved in that invitation. Every craving of heart and mind, all longings for love and wisdom, for purity and joy, for strength and guidance, He assumes to be able to slake by the gift of Himself. 3. One other remark may be made on this part of our subject. The first word of our text carries us back to something preceding, on which the drawing water with joy is founded. That something is expressed immediately before: "The Lord Jehovah is my strength and song," &c. These words are quoted from Moses' song at the Red Sea, and there point to the one definite act by which God had saved the people from their pursuers. In like manner, we have to look to a definite historical act by which the fountain of salvation has been opened for us, and our glad drawing therefrom has been made possible. The mission and work of Jesus Christ, His incarnation, passion and death, are the means by which the sealed fountain has been opened. For men, Jesus Christ is as the river which flows from the closed and land-locked sea of the infinite Divine nature. He is for us the only source, the inexhaustible, the perennial source—like some spring never hot or muddy, never frozen, never walled in, never sinking one hair-breadth in its basin, though armies drink, and ages pass. II. Consider again, what is THE WAY OF DRAWING from the wells of salvation. 1. Christ has taught us what "drawing" is. To the Samaritan woman He said, "Thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." So, then, Drawing is Asking. To the crowds in the temple courts He said, "Let him come unto Me and drink." So, then, Drawing is Coming. To the listeners by the Sea of Galilee He said, "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that

believeth on Me shall never thirst." So Coming, Asking, Drawing, are all explained by Believing. 2. Now that faith which is thus powerful, must fasten on a definite historical fact. The faith which draws from the fountain of salvation is not a vague faith in generalities about God's goodness and the like, but it grasps God as revealed and becoming our salvation in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. 3. The words preceding our text suggest another characteristic of the faith which really draws water from the fountain: "He is become *my* salvation." That is to say, this believing grasp of Christ manifested in a definite historical act is an intensely personal thing. III. Consider, too, THE JOY OF THE WATER DRAWERS. The well is the meeting-place in these hot lands, where the solitary shepherds from the pastures and the maidens from the black camels' hair tents meet in the cool evening, and ringing laughter and cheery talk go round. Or the allusion may be rather to the joy, as of escape from death, with which some exhausted travellers press towards the palm trees on the horizon that tell of a spring in the desert, and when they have reached it, crowd to the fountain and drink greedily, no matter how hot and muddy it may be. So jubilant is the heart of the man whose soul is filled and feasted with the God of his salvation, and the salvation of his God. Such a man has all the sources and motives for joy which the heart can ask. (*Ibid.*) *Salvation: how to get it:*—People have given many answers to the question, If God be the fountain of salvation, how are we to get the water? If I may say so, pumps of all sorts have been tried, and there has been much weary working of arms at the handles, and much jangling of buckets and nothing brought up. The old word is true, with a new application to all who try in any shape to procure salvation by any work of their own: "Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep." But there is no need for all this profitless work. It is as foolish as it would be to spend money and pains in sinking a well in some mountainous country, where every hillside is seamed with watercourses, and all that is needed is to put one end of any kind of wooden spout into the "burn" and your vessels under the other. The well of salvation is an artesian well that needs no machinery to raise the water, but only pitchers to receive it as it rises. (*Ibid.*) *Christ's ordinances:*—I. WHAT IS UNDERSTOOD BY A MEANS OF SALVATION. It is that by and through which the Lord Jesus doth by His spirit convey grace and salvation into a soul. These means are some outward, some inward; some ordinary, others extraordinary. II. WHAT THESE MEANS OF SALVATION ARE. 1. The inward means is faith (Heb. iv. 2). This ordinarily requires an outward means to work it by. But being wrought, it is the great inward means of communication betwixt Christ and the soul. 2. Extraordinary means are whatsoever the Lord in His sovereign wisdom is pleased to make use of extraordinarily for conveying grace into the hearts of His elect, as He did a voice from heaven for the conversion of Paul. 3. The outward and ordinary means are the Lord's own ordinances (Rom. x. 14, 15). (1) In general, all the ordinances of God without exception, which He has set up in His Church for that end. (2) The most special means of grace and salvation are the Word, sacraments, and prayer. III. WHAT MAKES ANY ORDINANCE A MEANS OF GRACE, a well of salvation, out of which one may in faith look to draw water for his soul, or get spiritual good by. 1. No ordinance whatsoever can avail without a particular blessing; for the efficacy of ordinances is not natural, or from themselves. 2. Men's institutions or ordinances, in respect of God, are forbidden, and condemned by the Lord's word, namely, in the second commandment. 3. Men's use of them is not only useless, but worse, not only to no good purpose, but to ill purpose. That which makes any ordinance a means of grace or salvation, is Divine institution only (Matt. xxviii. 20). Therefore the first question in all ordinances ought to be, Whose is this image and superscription? IV. TO WHOM THE LORD'S ORDINANCES ARE MADE EFFECTUAL. 1. Not to all who partake of them. "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Many come to these wells who never taste of the water. I think it an unwarrantable expression, that all God's ordinances do attain their end, in the salvation or damnation of all that come under them; for damnation is not the end of any of God's ordinances, but salvation. 2. But to all the elect they are effectual, unto whom they come (Acts xiii. 48; John x. 26). V. WHENCE THE EFFICACY OF ORDINANCES PROCEEDS. It does not proceed from any virtue in themselves, or in him that administers them, but from the Spirit of the Lord working in them and by them (1 Cor. iii. 7). (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *The wells of salvation:*—I. THE WATER. The entire text refers

to the great work of God in saving sinners by the obedience and death of His Son. 1. Water is essential to life. 2. Water is purifying in its influence. 3. It has refreshing and fertilising properties. In this country where water abounds we can hardly appreciate this. In the East a draught of cold water was frequently invaluable. It was not only valuable to the body of man, but fertilising to the earth. In this part of the world we have too much water, and our ingenuity is taxed to drain the land, but in the East ingenuity would be stretched to irrigate it. 4. It is a thing of universal adaptation. There are some persons who cannot take milk, others cannot take different kinds of food, and some cannot take vegetables to any amount; and so on. But you never found any one who could do without water. It is a fact that not only can none of the human race do without it, but all the human race can take it. In like manner, the Gospel is for every class and condition of men. II. THE WELLS OF SALVATION. Wherever the pure Gospel is preached, it may be considered one of the wells of salvation. 1. Properly speaking, the Deity is the well of salvation. Christ is the great medium, the great procuring cause, the great efficient cause, and the Holy Ghost is the water of life. 2. Again, the Scriptures of truth may be considered wells of salvation. We moreover observe that in an emphatic manner, all through the Holy Scriptures of revealed truth, Christ is preached, and they are thus wells of salvation. 3. Further, Christ is essentially and emphatically the well of salvation. III. THE DRAWING OF THE WATER. 1. If you want to draw water, you must come near to the well. If you want to understand something about Christ, you must come to the Bible; you must listen to the Gospel faithfully preached, or, rather, you must come to Christ Jesus Himself. 2. There must be a personal application. 3. This drawing of the water must be continuous. That is a remarkable passage in 1 Pet. ii. 4—"To whom coming" "Coming" denotes continued application. We must not only come for justification and sanctification to Christ, but we must continue to come. IV. THE JOY. "With joy," &c. No wonder when you consider—1. The unrestricted freeness of the Gospel. 2. The gratuitousness of this great blessing. 3. That this joy inspires a glorious hope of eternal bliss. (*Hugh Allen, M.A.*) *A discovery of God's mercy in Christ*:—Let us consider the feelings which a discovery of God's mercy in Christ awakens in the breasts of believers. I. IT GIVES JOY TO THE BELIEVING SINNER WHEN HE FIRST DISCOVERS IT. II. IT YIELDS JOY TO HIM THROUGH HIS WHOLE LIFE AFTERWARDS. (*G. Innes.*) *Wells of salvation*:—I. THE METAPHOR BY WHICH SALVATION IS HERE DESCRIBED. "Wells of salvation." Water is a favourite emblem in the sacred Scriptures for setting forth the blessings of salvation, especially in the writings of the Old Testament prophets. Salvation, like a well, is—1. Invisible in its source. God prepares the water for the wells in hidden springs. Man can make a well, but he cannot make a spring; so men may form systems of religion of their own, but they are only wells without water. Salvation is a well of God's own construction, and He alone from His own hidden resources can supply the life-giving water. There is much mystery in the source of an ordinary well of water, yet we do not allow our inability to fully understand it to present an insuperable barrier in the way of accepting its great blessings; let us exercise the same common sense in our treatment of the wells of salvation. 2. Inexhaustible in its supply. A stream may be dried up, a river may fail to flow, a cistern may be exhausted, but a well is fed from hidden deep springs. In the Gospel of Christ there is enough for each, enough for all, enough for evermore. 3. Inestimable in its service. II. THE MEANS BY WHICH SALVATION IS TO BE OBTAINED. "With joy shall ye draw," &c. It is not enough for the thirsty to draw near to a well, not enough to look into it, and listen to the music of its waters—an effort must be made, it must be appropriated. 1. We must "draw." God provides the well, but we must use the hand of faith; by the rope of effort we must let down the pitcher of desire—and as we draw the blessing up, we shall not thank the instruments by which we obtain the water, but we shall thank Him who provided it so freely for us. 2. We must drink. Not enough to draw the water to the edge of the well, not enough to lift it to the lips, the water must be drunk as well as drawn. III. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH SALVATION IS TO BE RECEIVED. "With joy," &c. The teaching of our text harmonises with the inductions of reason, and with the dictates of common sense. For how else could we draw water out of the wells of salvation? Will not the sufferer go gladly to the physician who has the ability and willingness to heal? Will not the fainting traveller go with joy to the well he discovers close by? (*F. W. Brown.*)

*Drawing water from the wells of salvation.*—The question naturally arising from these words is, What will make us draw water with joy from these wells? In general we might remark, that these being styled the wells of salvation is a sufficient reason for this joy, provided it is kept properly in view. But more particularly, I remark—I. That these wells must be KEPT OPEN for this purpose. The Church of Christ, because devoted to Him, and accessible to none other, is like a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Not so the ordinances of grace: they are accessible to all. To keep these open, ministers must labour, travail as in birth, preach the Word, be instant in season, out of season. Pointed careful attention on the part of the hearers, accompanied with fervent prayer, must keep them open. II. They must be KEPT PURE, living, running clear from the throne. No admixture to foul them must be allowed. No addition of ours, nothing kept back. III. These waters must be TASTED. IV. We must HIGHLY VALUE these wells, if we would draw water from them with joy. V. A RENEWED APPLICATION to these wells is necessary to our spiritual comfort. We must continue hungering and thirsting after righteousness. This application may be made at all times, and in every state. In the public and private and secret exercises of religion, in health and sickness, in the prison or the palace, wherever God is, public ordinances must be preferred. Application: (1) To those who are employed in drawing water for others; and who, in order to this, should draw for themselves, that they may be successful in their work. Do we make it our study to speak from the heart to the heart? (2) To those who think these wells are dry to them. What is the reason of this? Has it proceeded from the ministry? Have you expected from them what you should have from their Master? Have you never thought on your own misimprovement? Have you prayed that these wells might be opened to you? (3) To those who have drawn, or think they have with joy drawn water from the wells of salvation. How ardent will your desires be. He that drinks of this water will not thirst again. Inordinate desires after the world will be quenched—they will be subdued. And here the fullest satisfaction will be obtained. (*A. Brown.*) *The wells of salvation.*—I. THE WELLS OF SALVATION. The value of the water yielded by these wells is found in the saving effects to be met with in those who come hither to draw and to drink. These waters impart strength to the worker, courage to the timid, joy to the mourner, refreshment to the weary, and satisfaction to the dry and the thirsty. There is no evil in the spirit that this water will not cure. It would be a world's wonder if God's own Spirit could not make man's spirit as lively and happy as its inherent limits will allow; as happy for man as God has been happy in Himself from eternity. Observe now that the great salvation which is in God—nay, which is God in us by His Spirit—finds its way outwards to thirsty drinkers through many outlets and not through one only. There are as many of these precious wells as there are distinctly revealed truths on the page of Scripture. Every promise of blessing, every call to duty, every story of God's dealings with Israel and the nations, every prediction, every verse of sacred song, every miracle and parable of Christ, every word, indeed, that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, is, through the Spirit, a well of salvation. In a transferred sense, there are as many wells of salvation as there are living Christians on earth at a given time. The heart that draws water from the wells above-mentioned, becomes itself a well of water springing up into everlasting life. Every Christian worker is, in an especial sense, a well of this kind. II. THE JOYFUL DRINKING OF THE WATER found in these wells. 1. The drawer of water from any well of salvation is any one anywhere who chooses. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." 2. The drawing and drinking impulse is the inward thirst of spirit, which, in a general form, characterises all mankind, and shows itself in spiritual minds in the form of thirst for this water in particular. "Let him that is athirst come." 3. The drawing power is communicated by the Holy Spirit acting in His character as the promised Comforter and helper of our infirmities. In one point of view He is the power through which we draw and drink, as in another aspect He is the water we work with in this way for the refreshment of our souls and their true life. 4. The drawing apparatus includes all outward means available for help in our endeavours after the truth expressed in this or in that part of revelation, parallel passages containing like ideas or identical expressions, sound and able expositions, and along with these the lives and deeds of our Lord's faithful and enlightened followers. The intimation in hand lays special stress upon the joy with which the drawing of this water is begun and

kept up. This joy comes of the thought that the water is pure, life-giving, and refreshing; of the ease with which the drawing machinery is used when all is right with the man who works it, and when the hallowed practice is maintained; of the fulness and constancy of the stream which flows toward us, after it has been drawn up from the depths of the well that is being worked at the time; and of the exhilarating effects of the water when taken freely. The joy prompts and helps the work of drawing. The drawing enlarges and maintains the joy. (*David Lowe.*) *The wells of salvation*.—I. THE PREPARED WELLS. A well differs from a spring in this: a spring is a natural outlet for the waters in the earth; a well is an artificial one made by man. The well is the result of design. So the wells of salvation represent a Divine design. These wells are the varied "means of grace" provided by God for our highest welfare. Two cautions deserve our serious thought. 1. We must not ignore, or neglect, any of these wells, for God in wisdom has caused them to be dug. 2. We must not substitute for these wells any cisterns of mere human digging. II. THE REFRESHING WATERS of these wells of salvation. Jesus Himself called it "living water." It is elsewhere called "the water of life"—a very expressive way of representing that salvation which one receives through the appointed means of grace. For—1. Like living water, this salvation is very refreshing to the thirsty soul. 2. Like water, this salvation cleanses. 3. Like water, this salvation is free. 4. And this water is inexhaustible. III. THE JOYFUL DRAWING. (*E. H. Witman.*) *The wells of salvation*.—I. THE WELLS. God, in carrying on His government, has seen it wise to act usually through agencies and means. He has provided means for carrying out His great and gracious purposes in redemption. These are here presented to us as "wells." II. THE DRAWING OUT OF THESE WELLS. I. The existence of the means of grace is not enough. 2. We never will appropriate those blessings until impelled by a sense of need. III. THE JOY. There are many things in Christ fitted to inspire joy. I. His adaptation to the wants of the sinner. 2. His fulness. 3. He is an eternal Christ. 4. There is cause of rejoicing in the terms on which He is tendered. The Gospel is brought within the reach of the poorest, the most abject, the most hopeless. Its language is not "Do," or "Give," but "Take." And if Christ be so free, is it any wonder if the sinner should appropriate Him with joy? Application: (1) What a wilderness this land would be without its Sabbaths, its Bibles, its sermons, its communions! (2) The danger of polluted wells. We dare not mingle anything with Christ. (3) If we have Christ in the ordinances, let us strive to partake of His fulness. (*T. Macaulahan, LL.D.*) *The means of grace to be diligently used*.—Drawing water is an employment which requires strength, labour, and diligence, to which some means or instruments of conveyance are indispensably requisite. From these and other circumstances attending this operation we learn the import of the spiritual exercise here intended. The blessings communicated by the Holy Ghost are obtained by diligent application of the mind to prayer, attentive reading, hearing, and meditation; and by rightly disposing and digesting the subjects read, heard, and contemplated, so as believingly to apply them for the great purposes of spiritual improvement. (*R. Macculloch.*) *The wells of salvation*.—The plural is used because God is as many wells, inexhaustible. (*W. Day, M.A.*) *Wells of salvation: the Word of God*.—A young girl, going to be servant in a grand house, was discovered one day in the servants' hall reading her Bible. Her mistress, richly attired in satin, with dazzling jewels, stood amazed at the sight of her poor domestic, who had but one spare evening a month, employing it in the study of Scripture. "Maggie," she said, "what are you doing with that Book? It is not right that you should read it to-night. You should be out, girl." The mistress, though thoroughly worldly, yet had a kind heart, and put her hand on the shrinking girl. Maggie looked up with sweet and steadfast eyes. "This is enjoyment, ma'am," she said timidly. *Wells of salvation: the house of God*.—The camel, weary with his hundred miles' travel across the burning sands, eats a few dried leaves, drinks at the well, lies down on the hot earth, and rolls about awhile, and is ready for another dash across the arid plain. So the tired burden-bearer comes to the house of God, drinks from the fountain of life, and is renewed in soul and body too. (*King's Highway.*)

Vers. 4-6. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord.—*Congregational praise*.—I. WHO ARE HERE CALLED UPON TO PRAISE GOD. The

inhabitants of Zion and Jerusalem, whom God had in a peculiar manner protected from Sennacherib's violence (ver. 6). Those that have received distinguishing favours from God ought to be most forward and zealous in praising Him. The Gospel Church is Zion; Christ is Zion's King; those that have a place and name in that should lay out themselves to diffuse the knowledge of Christ, and to bring many to Him. II. HOW THEY MUST PRAISE THE LORD. 1. By prayer. "Call upon His name." As giving thanks for former mercy is a decent way of begging further mercy, so begging further mercy is graciously accepted as a thankful acknowledgment of the mercies we have received. 2. By preaching and writing we must speak to others concerning Him—not only "call upon His name," but (as the margin reads it) "proclaim His name"; let others know something more from us than they did before concerning God, and those things whereby He has made Himself known. "Declare His doings"—His "counsels," so some read it. The work of redemption is according to the counsel of His will, and in that and other wonderful works that He hath done, we must take notice of His "thoughts which are to usward." Declare these "among the people"—among the heathen, that they may be brought into communion with Israel, and the God of Israel. When the apostles preached the Gospel to "all nations, beginning at Jerusalem," then this Scripture was fulfilled, that His doings should be declared among the people, and that what He hath done should be known in all the earth. 3. By a holy exultation and transport of joy. "Cry out and shout." III. FOR WHAT THEY MUST PRAISE THE LORD. 1. Because He hath glorified Himself. "His name is exalted," is become more illustrious and conspicuous, and every good man rejoiceth in that. 2. Because He hath magnified His people. He "hath done excellent things" for them, which makes them look great and considerable. 3. Because He is, and will be, great among them. (*M. Henry.*)

Ver. 6. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion.—*Rapturous enthusiasm should characterise religion*:—Here is a call for enthusiasm, rapture, and what would generally be denominated madness. Still, the words are here, and they are perfectly clear as to their meaning and purpose, and a reason is given for the cry and for the shout; that reason is—"for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." Men have been infuriated by earthly deliverances, and rightly so, and brought into paroxysms of thankfulness and joy: why not so in their religious natures? It is recorded by Plutarch that when the Romans delivered a certain people from the tyranny of the Macedonians and the Spartans, the cry of the delivered men was so great that it dissipated the very air, and birds flying across that plane of the hemisphere fell down amazed. Have we ever rent the air with our cries and shouts of delight and thankfulness? Our Christianity may have been formal, and our atheism may have been the atheism of respectability. Respectability can never be earnest. It is limited by a smaller word. If Sydney Smith said the Church is dying of dignity, we may apply the rebuke to ourselves, and ask if we are not falling into torpor through the opiate of respectability. Are we called to silence? Who can describe the feeling of those who were imprisoned during the Indian Mutiny? Is there not a page in the history of that rebellion which makes every human heart thrill with excitement? We remember how the Europeans were shut up, being beleaguered and invested, and within a hand-breadth of extinction; and we remember hearing of the deliverers' approach, and of those who were suffering catching the strains of music; they heard the pibroch and the slogan, and their hearts came again, and every soldier was a hero, and every woman a saint, and as the deliverers came on could you have said to those who had been shut up in terror and darkness, Now restrain yourselves; avoid everything sensational, and maintain a decorous and proper attitude in all things—what answer would they have returned to your inane and unseasonable address? We must pass through a certain class of circumstances before we can understand the feelings of those who express gratitude for deliverance. The singing of the Church should be loud, joyous, and sweet; all instruments should accompany it: now the clash of bells, now the blare of trumpets, now the lilt of lutes, and now the throb of drums; strong men, gentle women, merry children should unite their voices in one glad burst of religious joy. Thank God for music. That will unite the Church when theology will divide it. There is no disputable argument in music. The vanity of opinion is not touched by music. The demon of heresy is left without a chance in music. Pedantic criticism is ignored. The heart has it all its own way. All is harmony.



All is praise. All is love. If ever preaching be displaced or superseded, may it be by music! (*J. Parker, D.D.*) "*Thou inhabitant of Zion*":—The Hebrew is feminine: the appeal is to a woman's heart—Cry out and shout, thou daughter of Zion! Without the womanly element the Church is without charm, and without the Divinest passion. The woman must lead us, in song, in music, in praise, and by the contagion of her enthusiasm must warm others into responsive and co-operative zeal. (*Ibid.*) *God's presence with His people*:—Among the ancient people of God, Jehovah vouchsafed His immediate and manifest presence, both in the continuance of His visible glory between the cherubim, and, upon extraordinary occasions, in an extraordinary manner. Such miraculous indications of the Divine presence are not to be expected in these latter days. Now that God has blessed us with a revelation, so clear, so completely suited to our necessities, and in all its doctrines and precepts so manifestly Divine, that our own consciences cannot but acknowledge it as the truth, He has withdrawn those miraculous tokens of His favour by which He upheld the confidence of His ancient people, requiring us to walk by faith and not by sight. The glory of the spiritual Zion does not consist in outward manifestations of the Godhead, but in the real though invisible presence of the King of Zion, according to His gracious promise, "Lo, I am with you alway." He is present by His Spirit in the hearts of all His faithful followers. What is implied in this promise of the Holy One of Israel in the midst of Zion? 1. That God is ever with His people to strengthen and sustain them. 2. God, through Christ, is ever present with His people, to succour and defend them. 3. Jehovah is ever present with His people to lead and direct them. 4. God is ever with His people to comfort them. 5. Jehovah is ever present with His people to command a blessing upon the appointed means of His grace. Without this, the Scriptures are a dead letter. (*W. Ramsay.*) *The Church of the living God*:—Civilised countries have many institutions of a voluntary kind for useful purposes. There is, however, an institution in the world, where men are laid under direct obligation to Him who has established the institution, namely, the Church of God, in relation to which the earnest appeal in the text is made. I. THIS CHURCH PRESENTS TO US THE WAY, UNDER GOD'S HAND, TO TRUE PERSONAL GOODNESS. Men devise many recipes to correct evils and excite to virtue. But Zion accomplishes all these results by one simple method. To be in the Church of God is to be in the way of all goodness. Well may the inhabitants of Zion rejoice, for all spiritual blessings of God's kingdom are given to it. II. Another logical conclusion follows, namely, that ALL OF US OUGHT TO BE IN THAT ZION. We are to be in it, not because the Church itself demands it; not because the minister calls for it; not because the influences around us have inculcated it. We are to belong to the Church because God, who founded the Church and created us, has laid this obligation upon us. And we are not to be simply visitors to His Church, or occasional attendants, and especially not to be patrons. We are to be inhabitants, dwelling in it; being in it with our whole souls, and complying with the obligations that are incumbent upon its inhabitants, if we would be pure men. And this is no unreasonable command. 1. The way in which the word came is both significant and instructive. 2. Another consideration is that, "Great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of her." That is the culminating and crowning glory of God's Zion. Practical reflections—1. We must see that this Zion is a home of great dignity. It is more than a home, it is God's kingdom. 2. If this be God's Zion, then what have we to do to be in His Zion and to feel the pleasures incumbent upon members of His Zion? We are to obey Him. It is His presence, His power, His relation to us, that give sanctity to God's house and service. 3. Let me speak a word to any who are without God and without hope of eternal life. This King summons you from rebellion; He summons you to peace and goodwill to Him. (*J. Hall, D.D.*) *The character, privilege, and duty of the people of God*:—I. THE CHARACTER here given of the people of God, couched in Old Testament language, in that they are called inhabitants of Zion. To understand the meaning of the words, "inhabitant of Zion," as describing the people of God in every age, we should first remember that Zion was literally a hill in the land of Judea. There was a hill in the southern part of the promised land, on which, or on part of which, the city of Jerusalem was built, and this hill had two peaks, the one called Zion proper, and the other called Mount Moriah, and while Jerusalem stood on one of these peaks, or Zion proper, the temple was built by appointment on the other of these peaks, or Mount Moriah, but the whole together was called the hill of Zion, or

Mount Zion, and accordingly in the 2nd Psalm we read, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion," and again, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion," plainly showing that this was a hill in the land of Judea. But, as I have said, on one peak or top of this hill the temple of Solomon was placed, and hence the word "Zion" came by a common figure of speech to be transferred from the mountain to the temple, the most prominent feature on the mountain, and in this sense I think we have it in the 87th Psalm, "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." Understanding, then, by the word "Zion" the temple, an "inhabitant of Zion" now calls up the idea of a person who lives in and about the temple; and, indeed, the will of God was, that all His ancient people should live as much as may be in and about the temple. But we must remember that the temple was intended to be a type of the human nature of our Lord, or of God in our nature (John ii. 19-21). An inhabitant of Zion is one who is much versant with Christ. II. THE PRIVILEGE connected with this character. "Great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." The Holy One of Israel, or the God that went out and in among the people of Israel, the God that brought them out of the land of Egypt, and through a variety of vicissitudes landed them at last in the Canaan of promise, was no other than the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. x. 9). But it is particularly the privilege of all the inhabitants of Zion, that they have the protection of Him at all times who is the Almighty, and who is, therefore, able to prevail against all opposition. "Great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." These last words convey the idea of a garrison, which, being in the very centre of a place fortified, contains armed men ready to run out from this central point, whenever they are called or required. So Christ, the Holy One, is in the midst of the Church, in the midst of the believer individually, because quite prepared to run out to any point where His people are weak and unprotected. If any of God's people be poor in this world, they need not have recourse to unlawful methods to secure for them and their families bread to eat, and raiment to put on, for their Heavenly Father knows they need these things, and He will give them to them, in the use of the lawful means put in their power. It intimates God reconciled in Christ to provide for their souls. He will provide for them the means of grace. But once more, it makes part of the privilege of God's people, that they are to see the greatness of the glory of God ultimately. Now God says that the very greatness of His glory shines out in the work of redemption—that there is more of that great invisible God brought out to intelligent creatures, by the work of redemption, than by any work which God created. III. THE DUTY that God expects of His people, in consequence of their understanding this. "Cry out and shout." And here we are taught—1. That courage is our duty—boldness. "Cry out and shout." Why? Because there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. 2. Cheerfulness. 3. Holding forth the Word of life. Concluding remarks—1. How very far below their privilege do some professing Christians live! 2. Privilege always goes before duty. 3. The words are spoken to individuals. (*J. Muir, D.D.*) *Loyal joy*:—Speaking of the early days of Queen Mary's reign, Mr. Froude says: "When the lords with the mayor and heralds went to the Cross at Cheapside to proclaim Mary as Queen, there was no reason to complain of a silent audience. Pembroke stood out to read, and could but utter one sentence before his voice was lost in the shout of joy which thundered into the air. 'God save the Queen,' rang out from ten thousands of throats. 'God save the Queen,' cried Pembroke himself when he had done, and flung up his jewelled cap and tossed his purse among the crowd. The glad news spread like lightning through London, and the pent-up hearts of the citizens poured themselves out in a torrent of exultation. Above the human cries, the long-silent church-bells clashed again into life: first began St. Paul's, where happy chance had saved them from destruction; then, one by one, every peal which had been spared caught up the sound; and through the summer evening and night, and all the next day, the metal tongues from tower and steeple gave voice to England's gladness."

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## CHAPTER XIII.

**VERS. 1-5. The burden of Babylon.**—*The prophet's burden.*—Whenever we find the word "burden" in this association it means oracle, a speech of doom; it is never connected with blessing, hope, enlarged opportunity, or expanded liberty; it always means that judgment is swiftly coming, and may at any moment burst upon the thing that is doomed. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The power to see.*—"Which Isaiah did see." How did he see it? The word "see" needs to be defined every day. Blind men may see. We do not see with the eyes only, else truly we should see very little; the whole body becomes an eye when it is full of light, and they who are holiest see farthest. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Men see morally, intellectually, sympathetically, as well as visually. How could Isaiah see this burden of Babylon when it did not fall upon the proud city for two centuries? Is there, then, no annihilation of time and space? Are we the mean prisoners we thought ourselves to be? Is it so, that we are caged round by invisible iron, and sealed down by some oppressive power, or blinded by some arbitrary or cruel shadow? We might see more if we looked in the right direction; we might be masters of the centuries if we lived with God. Isaiah is never weary of saying that he "saw" what he affirms. He does not describe it as having been seen by some other man; having written his record he signs it, or having begun to deliver his prophecy he writes it as a man writes his will; he begins by asserting that it is his testament, his own very witness, for he was there, saw it, and he accepts the responsibility of every declaration. (*Ibid.*) *"Babylon" stands for the spirit of the world.*—In the New Testament, Babylon, more than any other city, stood for the personification of the forces of the world against God. In the history of Israel Babylon was the scourge of God to them. They were as grain under the teeth of the threshing-machine. In the Captivity the Jews felt the weight of Babylon's cruelty, so that in the prophetic literature of the Exile, Babylon became the type of oppression and of the insolence of material force. Thought is carried back to primitive times in the Book of Genesis, in which Babylon is pictured in the vain and arrogant attempt to rival God: "Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." So deeply had the experience of Babylon's cruelty entered into the heart of Israel that even in the New Testament, St. John, in the Book of Revelation, uses the word "Babylon" to describe the material power of Rome. He could not get a better word than just the old word "Babylon" to represent the overwhelming force of the great Roman Empire, with its legions of soldiers, with its policy which made the whole world a network of nerves running back to their sensitive centre in the haughty city on the Tiber. St. John saw past the glitter and the conquest, and recognised in pagan Rome the mighty Babylon which lifts her impious head against God. To him she was the "scarlet woman"; he heard her say in the pride of her heart, as the prophet had heard Babylon say, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow." Thus the very name "Babylon" came to take on the religious signification of the spirit of the world; it stood for the dead weight of the material which resists the spirit. (*Hugh Black, M.A.*) *The doom of Babylon.*—Here the prophet pronounces doom upon the bloated empire which seemed to stand so secure, and notes the evidence of weakness in spite of apparent prosperity and careless trust in material resources. Disregard of human rights, lusts, and selfishness and pride of life, and the impious atheism which disregarded all this he declared would all exact their inevitable price. Cruelty and oppression would react upon the tyrant after their usual historic fashion. The huge accumulations on which they rested would only attract the foe, would weaken her hands in her hour of trial, and make her, in spite of her wealth, an easy prey to the spoiler. To Babylon would come a time when she would have more money than men. It is a picture of absolute ruin which the prophet gives, when the great city would be depopulated (ver. 12). (*Ibid.*) *The Babylonian spirit* has not left the world, and every great civilisation (for it is not confined to one) is menaced in the same way by the temptation of forgetfulness of God, cruelty of sheer force, insolence of pride, and the empty trust of wealth. Our foes are the old foes with a new face on them. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 12. **I will make a man more precious than fine gold.**—*Dearth of men a judgment from God.*—When God caused His scythe to swing through the harvests of Babylon it was not expected that a single ear would be left in the devastated field. Thus the utterance is a menace, a judgment; it is not part of a lecture upon the dignity of human nature, it is an illustration of the vastness of the sweep of the judgments of God. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The worth of man.*—Our text is a promise in the guise of a threat. It is a threat to one nation, but a promise to mankind. 1. A true prophetic insight led to the insertion of this poem in the story of the troubles of Assyria. Babylon was in her full career of conquest when Assyria was trembling to her fall. But the history of Babylon was already written; in that contempt of man, which at the first her pride and lust of possession revealed, was hidden her own doom. The nation so lavish of human life was to die utterly out; the empire which sets no value on men, for lack of men shall perish. 2. How often has this story been repeated! The Italian Campagna was once the home of a multitude of farmers; the conquests of Rome demanded that legions should be hurled against the barbarian tribes. Because there were not men to till the ground, the Campagna has become a foul marshland, the haunt of fevers, desolate and uninhabitable. Spain sent out her brave and stalwart sons to ravage the lands of the Indians, to seize on Mexican and Peruvian gold; and Spain has never since been able to produce and nourish the men who should enable her to hold her place among the foremost nations. 3. There are other ways in which want of regard for men is evinced beside that of conquest, and the doom is ever the same. "Peace hath her victories no less renowned than war"; the victories are, alas! too often equally immoral, equally fatal. In the heat of business competition, professed philanthropists, and men personally humane—these two expressions do not always mean the same thing—become as reckless of lives as the general in the field. We feel a man to be more precious than gold in the face of sickness and suffering; if we did but habitually recognise it, much sickness and suffering would be spared. The ladders are reared against a burning house; one after another of the inmates is rescued; and when the fire is at its fiercest, and all are supposed to be out of danger, the frightened face of a child appears at an upper window. There are tears among the crowd, and wringing of hands. "A thousand pounds," says some one, "to him who will rescue that child!" A few years after, the child is an engine-driver, and, drowsy through long hours of work, he misreads a signal, wrecks his train, and dies, himself the involuntary instrument of an appalling calamity. And it may be that the very man who offered the reward, and would have doubled it, made it fivefold, for the saving of the child, is a director of the railway company whose increasing exaction of toil from its servants has been the cause of the disaster. And we all are responsible for these things; we keep up the pressure which compels directors, managers, merchants, to work their business at full strain. We humane Englishmen need to be scourged into habitual practical humanity. God has, by His judgments, to "make a man more precious than fine gold." 4. In our discussions of what we call "the population question," there is a great deal of unconscious inhumanity which will assuredly entail its curse upon our country. The population of these islands is ever pressing more and more on the means of the people's support. In two ways the pressure may be lightened. Emigration is one of them. But we might do much by the amendment of our laws, by alteration of our social customs and personal habits, by a check on extravagant expenditure, and by a juster distribution of the strain of living, to lighten the pressure at home. It is an anxious question whether we are encouraging emigration in the best and wisest mode. Consider whom we are sending out and the result on our future. 5. Our text is prophetic, moreover, of the doom and discipline of the exclusive spirit. Tennyson has given us a parable of this in the "Palace of Art." Browning, too, in his story of Paracelsus, the gifted man who degenerated into a quack, has marked it as one of the sins of that strangely complex soul that he would be a philanthropist, but without sympathy, without dependence upon others. No life of pride or self-sufficiency or exclusiveness is possible to us, either in the Church or the nation. Nothing on earth is valuable when man has lost his value. The worth of wealth is what you can do with it for your fellows. The loftiest prince would gladly mate with the humblest beggar were they cast alone on some desert island. 6. How wonderful is the fulfilment of our text in the Gospel! It is the worth of lost humanity which is revealed to us in the redemption by

Christ. Christ will not let us love Him if we love not our brethren for whom He died. If men are not more precious to us than gold, Christ becomes to us of none effect. 7. The passion which Christian humaneness becomes in the heart of Christians is the final earthly fulfilment of our text. The first feeling of the saved man is gratitude for the grace of God which saved him; and it is a feeling that abides. To it is added, in the maturity of Christian life, an abounding confidence that the grace which saved him can save any and every man. (A. Mackennal, B.A.) *The value of human life*:—Probably it is not true that human life is held more dear in times of war; but some sense of the value of the lives sacrificed is apt to dawn upon the people after the war is over, when the nation finds its resources wasted, and the people sit desolate in their homes, waiting for the strong and the brave who shall return no more. It is a hard school in which to learn this lesson of the preciousness of man; but if it can be learned in no other way it may well be enforced upon the world, even by such fiery tuition. (W. Gladden, D.D.) “*How much is he worth?*”—One who listens to the talk of the street and the shops, might easily get the impression that the value of man is a subject of general interest. “*How much is he worth?*” is a question often heard. What answers do you hear? He is worth five thousand dollars; ten thousand; a million; ten millions. And of one and another it is said with a mixture of pity and contempt, “*He is not worth anything!*” Before the war men and women were actually bought and sold for money. How much is he or she worth, was then in some quarters a question simply commercial; a question to which a perfectly literal answer could be given. May it not be well to go a little deeper than the common usage goes into the meaning of this phrase, and ask, with all seriousness, not concerning this man or that man, but concerning man, any man, every man, “*How much is he worth?*” I. **MAN IS WORTH MORE THAN HIS INSTITUTIONS.** Many persons have supposed that the chief end of man was to support certain institutions. We get many a hint of this error in our study of the people whose history is contained in the Bible. They thought that their ceremonial law was vastly more sacred than the men who worshipped by means of it. If their ritual obstructed human growth, crippled virtue, or killed charity, no matter; these must stand back and let the ritual be exalted. And when Christ told them that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath—that men were of more account than all this ritual machinery, they were astonished and scandalised; they called Him a blasphemer. This is no singular phenomenon. History is full of the outworking of this tendency. All over the world, all along the ages, men have been made the slaves of systems. When Christ came, His teachings were so entirely out of harmony with this notion that the people were fairly bewildered by them. What has been said of religious systems is equally true of political systems. There is now and always has been a prevalent notion that people were made for governments, and not governments for people; that it is more important that certain dynasties should reign, or that certain political institutions should be kept intact, or that certain parties should remain in power, or that certain policies should be adopted, than that men should be free and wise and good and prosperous. It is not true that human institutions are of no value; they are often of great value. But they are not ends; they are instruments. It follows that those systems are best which best assist the development of manhood. II. **MAN IS WORTH MORE THAN HIS COSTLIEST POSSESSIONS.** This is another of those truths, often on our lips, but not more than half believed. Evidence of this is visible in the respect paid to wealth, even when it is joined to one who is but a caricature of manhood; even when it is the spoil that has been won by the debasement of manhood. How plain are the proofs before our faces every day that the multitudes do not believe a man to be more precious than gold! It is not the rich alone whose judgment in this matter goes astray; the poor fall into the same error. They say that money does not make the man, say it angrily and bitterly, not seldom; but their conduct often shows that they think, after all, that money does make the man. Their envy of the rich convicts them. Are there not in our own conduct, sometimes, clear illustrations of this fact? Do we not often find ourselves preferring gold to manhood; labouring more diligently to enlarge our possessions than to improve ourselves? It is not true that property is of no consequence; man's belongings are good just in proportion as they assist in the development of his character. III. **IT IS BECAUSE OF HIS KINSHIP TO GOD THAT MAN IS OF SUCH ILLUSTRIOUS WORTH.** And nothing seems more certain than

that these powers may, by disuse or misuse, be impaired and finally lost. And so cut off by his own act from the source of all light and love, he is deserted by all generous impulses, by all holy aspirations, and is left to grovel in the mire of selfishness and carnality. "How much was he worth when he died?" some man may ask. What if the seer must answer: "He was the heir of immortality, but he sold his birthright for a song." (*Ibid.*) *The end of civilisation* is not money, but men. (*Hugh Black, M.A.*) *The true history of a man* is the history not of his wars and conquests, not even of his commerce; the true history of a man is the history of his conscience, the history of his moral development; for only that can give permanence and security to his other achievements in science, art, invention, thought. (*Ibid.*) *Faulty civilisation*.—If, in Bacon's phrase, the "breed and disposition of the people be not stout," its civilisation is a dismal failure. (*Ibid.*) *Christianity dignifies man: agnosticism tends to degrade him*.—In the teaching of Christ man is so dignified by his connection with God and by his immortal destiny, that every one who really believes this creed must feel himself condemned if he treats his brother ill. But strip man, as agnosticism does, of all the greatness and mystery with which Christianity invests him—cease to believe that he comes from God, that he is akin to beings greater than himself who care for him, and that his soul is of infinite worth because it has before it an unending development—and how long will it be possible to cherish for him the reverence which wins him consideration and help? The brevity of man's existence gives him, according to the present teaching of agnosticism, a pathetic claim to instant help; but who knows whether in a society given over to unbelief the argument might not tell the other way, the selfish heart reasoning that sufferings which must end so soon do not matter? It was in the generation preceding the French Revolution that atheistic philosophy took its rise. The prophets of the time were predicting an age of peace and brotherhood, when selfish passion should disappear and cruelty and wrong no more vex the world. But, when their teaching had done its work, its fruit appeared in the Revolution itself, whose unspeakable inhumanities afforded our race such glances into the dark depths of its own nature as can never be forgotten. It is painful to recall that Rousseau himself, the most eloquent and, in some respects, the noblest apostle of the new faith, while preaching universal brotherhood, sent his own children one by one, as they were born, to the Foundling Hospital, to save himself the trouble and expense of their support. The Revolution did much destructive work for which the hour had come; but it was a gigantic proof that the love necessary for the work of reconstruction must be sought in a superhuman source. (*J. Stalker, D.D.*) *John Ruskin on the value of manhood*.—With this accords the great lesson of John Ruskin's teaching and of his life—one of the greatest of Englishmen, greatest of all as a political teacher, with somewhat of the passion and power of a prophet. He never wearied of insisting upon this distinction between money and men. It is at the root of all his economical writings. He has been rated as a fanatic, as opposed to machinery and railways; and it is not necessary to accept his teachings on money on all points: all this is but a misunderstanding of him by unthinking and casual readers. The best of his thought is just a protest against the prevailing materialistic creed. He lived and died protesting that man is more precious than discoveries or engineering appliances or electrical contrivances. He said in his noble language: "It may be discovered that the true bases of wealth are spiritual and not in rock but in flesh. Perhaps even the time will come when it will be seen that the consumption of all wealth is in producing as many as possible full-blooded, bright-eyed human creatures. In some far-away extremity I can even imagine that England can cast all thoughts of possessing wealth back to barbaric nations, and that while the suns of Indus may flash from the turban of the slave, she as a Christian mother may at last attain to the virtues and treasures of the heathen one, and be able to lead forth her sons, saying, 'These are my jewels.'" (*Hugh Black, M.A.*) *Men more valuable than money*.—

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates and men decay.

(*O. Goldsmith.*)

*Money for men*.—The preacher was promising a day of trouble for great Babylon. "Behold," he cried, "the day of the Lord cometh, cruel," &c. Then he came

to the very abyss and extremity of their desolation. Bad enough to have the land shorn of its harvests, and all the standing grain trampled under the feet of war-horses; bad enough to have the consuming fire lay hold upon its houses; bad enough to have pride turned into shame, wealth into poverty, power into captivity. But, thus far, hope was left, for men were left. Leave us men, and we may live. Leave us men, and you may do your worst; the day will pass, and to-morrow we will repair the damage, and begin over again, and get our revenge upon you yet. But there shall be no men. The widows and fatherless children shall search about the ruined streets, and a man shall be as rare a sight as a purse of gold. The text sets the emphasis, not on money, but on men. And that is Christianity. That is what the Master taught. What we all need, whether we have great possessions or small possessions, is to be interested in men. The part of a Christian man or woman is to set about making somebody's life better. The best good is got when one helps one; when a man goes to his neighbour and gets acquainted with him, and becomes his personal friend, and sympathises with him, and uplifts him. You won't have to go very far to find somebody who is worse off than you are. Take that somebody up. Interest yourself in that unhappy life. Perhaps it will take money; perhaps it will take time; perhaps it will take yourself. Give yourself, anyhow, and as much else as you need to. But, above all, be generously interested. One of the most helpful people I know lives in a back street, in an unpleasant neighbourhood, in a small house. Everybody in that neighbourhood knows her, and she knows them and their children. They go to her in their troubles, and she gives them her sympathy. As for money, she would give that too if she had any to give. She gives herself. The whole street is better because she lives in it. But if she had the means which some have, what would she do, I wonder? Would she fall before the temptation of a comfortable life? Would she get, perhaps, to thinking that because she had plenty of butter on her bread, so had everybody else? and because she was contented, all the mutterings of discontented people were but needless grumblings? Anyhow, it is true that the kindest, most thoughtful, most helpful people, quickest to bear the hardest inconveniences for a neighbour, readiest to lift up those that are down, are the poor. It is not your money that we want so much as your interest. We want your own personal, hand to hand and heart to heart endeavour. The best use that can be made of money is to use it for the uplifting of men. (*George Hodges, D.D.*) *Christ discovered the human soul*:—I have heard that one of the diamond-fields of South Africa was discovered on this wise. A traveller one day entered the valley and drew near to a settler's door, at which a boy was amusing himself by throwing stones. One of the stones fell at the stranger's feet, who picked it up and was in the act of laughingly returning it, when something flashed from it which stopped his hand and made his heart beat fast. It was a diamond. The child was playing with it as a common stone; the peasant's foot had spurned it; the cart-wheel had crushed it; till the man who knew saw it and recognised its value. Was it not the same careless treatment the soul was receiving when Jesus arrived in the world and discovered it? A harlot's soul, sunk in the mud and filth of iniquity! why, a Pharisee would not stain his fingers to find it. A child's soul! the scribes used to discuss in their schools whether or not a child had a soul at all. (*J. Stalker, D.D.*) *Manhood more than belongings*:—Have you ever seen the Apollo Belvidere? It is the statue of a man, chiselled out of marble, one of the noblest figures that art has ever produced. Do you think that this statue would be made any nobler or more beautiful if men should put gold rings on its fingers and gold bracelets on its wrists, and strings of gold beads upon its neck, and should trick it out with ribbons and buttons and fringes? Would not these tawdry ornaments detract from the simple dignity and majesty of that model of manly grace and strength? Well, the accidents of wealth and rank and office and station cannot add much more of ornament or value to a true man than could trinkets like these to the beauty of the Belvidere Apollo. His manhood itself, to all clear insight, is something infinitely grander and diviner than these belongings. (*W. Gladden, D.D.*) *The wealth of manhood*:—A Highland chieftain on a visit to England was taunted with the poverty of his country, at the table of his host, the occasion being when the large silver candlesticks were lighted in the spacious hall of the English castle, and in a gust of mistaken patriotism (common enough in a Scot) the Highlander declared he had seen better candlesticks in his own castle in Scotland. A wager was put

up, and he could not draw back. The laird's brother, who understood the terrific fix his brother was in, placed at the table on either side a gigantic Highlander holding in his right hand a drawn sword and in his left a blazing torch, and ere the strangers had recovered from their surprise, he said, "Behold the chandeliers of my brother's house! Not one of these men knows any law but loyalty. Would you compare to these the riches of gold? How say you, cavaliers, is your wager won or lost?" (*H. Black, M.A.*)

Ver. 17. Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them.—*The Medes* care not for gold, but for blood, though it be the blood of boys and infants. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *The Medes and gold*:—"Ye Medes and others who now hear me, I will know that you have not accompanied me in this expedition with a view of acquiring wealth."—Speech of Cyrus to his army. (*Xenophon, Cyrop. V.*) *The Medes*:—"The worst terror that can assail us is the terror of forces, whose character we cannot fathom, who will not stop to parley, who do not understand our language nor our bribes. It was such a power with which the resourceful and luxurious Babylon was threatened. With money the Babylonians did all they wished to do, and believed everything else to be possible. They had subsidised kings, bought over enemies, seduced the peoples of the earth. The foe whom God now sent them was impervious to this influence. From their pure highlands came down upon corrupt civilisation a simple people, whose banner was a leathern apron, whose goal was not booty nor ease but power and mastery, who came not to rob but to displace. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*)

Vers. 19-22. Babylon . . . shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.—*The re-entries of nature*:—All this we may say is historical and local. On the other hand, all this is moral and suggestive. This process may take place in the Babylon of the mind. The greatest mind is only safe whilst it worships. The most magnificent intellectual temple is only secure from the judgment and whirlwind of heaven in proportion as its altar is defended from the approach of every unworthy suppliant. If we hand over God's altar, whether mental or ecclesiastical, to wrong custodians, or devote either to forbidden purposes, then make way for God's judgments: wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and the houses that were full of beauty and colour and charm shall be full of doleful creatures; and the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces. This may happen to any one of us. Beware of arrogance, pride, worldliness, self-sufficiency; beware of the betrayal of trusts: nature will re-enter if we be unfaithful. We speak of our wisdom in putting cautionary covenants into all our legal documents, and especially a man assures himself that he is doubly safe when he has secured the right of re-entry under certain breaches of agreement; he says to himself with complacency, That is justifiable; I have arranged that in the event of certain things failing I shall re-enter. Nature always puts that clause into her covenants. She re-enters in a moment. If the gardener is too late by one day with his spade or seed or other attention, nature begins to re-enter; and if he tarry for a week he will find that nature has made great advances into the property. It is so with education, with the keeping up of intelligence, with the maintenance of healthy discipline; relax a month, and nature re-enters, and nature plays the spoiler. Nature is not a thrifty, careful husbandman. Nature has a function of desolation; she will grow weeds in your richest flower-beds if you neglect them for a day. God re-enters by the spirit of judgment and by the visitations of anger. Herein His providence is but in harmony with the kingdom which He has instituted within the sphere which we call husbandry, and even within the sphere which we denominate by education or discipline. It is one government. Neglect your music for a month, and you will find at the end that nature has re-entered, and you are not wanted; you have not brought with you the wedding-garment of preparation up to date. There must be no intermission; the last line must be filled in. Nature will not have things done in the bulk, in the gross: nature will not allow us simply to write the name; she will weave her webwork all round the garment if we have neglected the borders, and paid attention to only the middle parts. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Babylon: an Arab superstition*:—It is said that at this very day the Bedouin or wandering Arab has a superstitious fear of passing a single night on the site of Babylon, and that the natives of the country believe it to be inhabited by demons in the form



of goats. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *Satyrs* :—There seems to have been an ancient belief among the Jews themselves that demons took the form of goats—appeared as satyrs in fact. (*Ibid.*) *Satyrs* :—The word which most versions and commentators agree with the LXX. in rendering “demons” or “satyrs” is used in Lev. xvii. 7 and 2 Chron. xi. 15 for demons which the Jews worshipped (*Ibid.*)

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## CHAPTER XIV.

**VER. 1. For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob. — God's mercy and Israel's converts.** :—I. THE PRINCIPLE OF GOD'S MORAL GOVERNMENT—Mercy. This people had grievously sinned. 1. They had sinned against light. The direct revelation of heaven had been given to them as a nation. 2. They rebelled amid privileges. The Mighty God interfered to protect them from their foes. 3. They had sinned in spite of rebukes and punishments. The rebellious people had been carried captive into a heathen nation. II. THE CONSTANCY OF DIVINE PURPOSES—“I will yet choose,” &c. Notwithstanding all their rebellion I will yet have mercy on them. Nothing can separate from the love of God. III. THE RESTORATIVE BLESSEDNESS OF RELIGION. When God takes a man in hand, He restores him. In paradise he was the image and associate of God. Salvation will make him nothing more. Heaven will contain additional elements of joy, but the man will be restored. IV. THE CONTAGION OF ENTHUSIASM. When the Jews should return, many of the heathen, leaving their own country and their idols, would return along with them. “And the strangers shall be joined with them.” This was part of God's design in the Captivity. It was not only to punish His people for their sin, but also to render them a blessing to others. God often appoints the afflictions of His people for His own glory, and we must not mourn but rejoice if we are counted worthy of forwarding His cause. V. THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF RELIGION. It commands affection and regard. It is our duty to render it attractive so as to win others. (*Homilist.*) *God's compassion to Israel* :—We have here *in nuce* the comforting substance of chaps. xl.-lxvi. Babylon falls in order that Israel may rise. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*)

**Ver. 3. The Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow. — Sorrow's crown.** :—I. SORROW IS THE COMMON LOT. Though nobody is always sorrowful, there is in every life many a time when the mind is sore and the heart bruised. Yet people with a sore heart often sing; they find relief in breathing a hymn of prayerful trust. How beautiful is a good man under affliction! A child is often sore in mind because he is not understood and has not the heart-felt sympathy of those who direct him. Women also are sorrowful. Though a man be in the most fortunate state of life he will have something to bruise his heart. I have heard of a lady whose husband was the worship of both her mind and heart; and when he was killed in a railway accident, her grief was so terrible that in a moment she seemed ten years older. A short time afterwards, she lost her children, and later on, through the failure of a bank, her fortune disappeared; but she endured these misfortunes with calmness, and her minister once asked, “How is it that you can bear up so well after the loss of your children and your money?” She replied, “In the death of my husband the greatest wound came the first.” It is unwise to meet sorrow half-way. But there is one sorrow that we should seek and cultivate; it is the sorrow that we are not more godly. There is another sorrow which is worth having; it is that pain of heart which feels for the man or woman who is wounded in the conflict of life. In the ancient world, sorrow was considered to be God's curse, but the early Christians saw that God meant it as a sacred discipline; and therefore when sorrow came to them, they called it “tribulation,” using the word and image to set forth an elevating truth, namely, the separation of the evil in them from the good. II. Let us notice ONE OR TWO PERSONAL SORROWS IN WHICH SOME OF YOU ARE MORE OR LESS CONCERNED. 1. If you are sore in mind because you have done wrong, let your first thought be one of gratitude, that God can and does forgive your sins. 2. Many good people are sore in mind through a physical or temporal trouble. What is more unpleasant than to hear a cart-wheel screeching every time it turns? So, you

have in your lot something like a screeching wheel, and every move makes you feel the affliction. But the oil of Divine grace will cure it. III. THE CROWN OF SORROW IS TRUSTING GOD. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him," &c. IV. Let us learn THE OBJECT OF SORROW. It is to teach us to be patient and kindly. If you put roses into a cracked pot of commonest clay, it will breathe forth perfume; and from the most prickly plant, the thorn, we gather the sweetest flowers. So if the peace of God perfume your sorrowing heart, the thorns and briars of your affliction shall make your life bright with the flowers of godliness and charity. Bear your sorrow with true courage and sublime cheerfulness, not only for your own sake, but for our sake who look on you; for we wish to learn the way to bear our pain. (*W. Birch.*) *God an island when fortunes are wrecked*:—Let me tell you of a man who went home one day, and sitting down in his arm-chair, put his hand on his brow as if in great trouble. His little child went up to him, saying, "Father, what's the matter?" Looking down upon her with eyes of despair, he replied, "Ah, little Mary, I'm ruined!" She said, "Ruined, father, what's that?" He answered, "Why, my child, I'm like a man in a boat on the sea, and during a storm the boat has upset, and he is cast on a desolate island." She climbed on his knee, stroking his face, and after awhile, exclaimed, "Well, but, father, you know, you have only lost the boat; you haven't lost yourself, have you?" With tears in his eyes, he said, "Ah, no, thank God! I have only lost the boat; my heart and my life remain!" Then she asked, "Father, what's the name of the island?" He replied, "That is the worst of it, Mary; I don't know." She said, "But, father, I know; yes, I know the name of the island you are on; why, father, it is a nice island!" The wretched man tried to smile, and drawing the dear little face to his breast, said, "Mary, dear, tell me the name of the island!" She replied, "Oh, father, don't you know? you are dull to-night! why, father, the name of the island is God!" The sorrowful man was very still, and little Mary looking up in his face, put her arms round his neck, saying, "Poor father, what makes you cry? Why don't you go upstairs and tell God about it?" Then he gently lifted the dear child down, and went to tell out his heart's sorrow to God. It is true his business had fallen but a Divine hand upheld him. (*Ibid.*) *Trusting God in affliction*:—A coloured preacher was in the habit of exhorting his people when they were in affliction to "Truss de Lord." When they were in sore distress, he had only one remedy, "Brudder, truss de Lord!" One day, however, while the old parson was crossing a river, the boat upset, and being unable to swim, he made a great splutter and screamed like a madman. After much trouble, he was got out and brought safely to the river bank, when one of his congregation said, "Massa Preacher, why didn't you truss de Lord; why did you holler and scream when you were in de river; why didn't you truss de Lord, and be patient?" The dark minister exclaimed, "Ah, you know, brudder, it is truss de Lord on de land, not on de water." Of course, anybody can trust in the Lord when they are on the land of peace and comfort; but it needs Christian faith and fortitude to be contented in the waters of affliction. (*Ibid.*) *The Christian attitude towards trouble*:—Christians who give up their special religious work because they are in sorrow, may be likened to rusty nails in a bag under the counter of the ironmonger's shop; while the man who keeps on doing his best, believing that God is with him, is like a nail in a sure place, ready to bear all the weight that is hung on it. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 4-23. **Thou shalt take up this proverb against the King of Babylon.**—*The "proverb against the King of Babylon"*:—Lowth is generally thought not to speak with exaggeration when he calls it the finest [song] of its kind extant in any language. It is a song of triumph in the form of a dirge, and therefore involves an under-current of sarcasm or irony. (*Sir E Strachey, Bart.*) *An ode of triumph*:—This ode, if it is to be admired as it deserves, must be read as a whole: its perfection as a work of art, its picturesque imagery, the delicate and subtle vein of irony by which it is penetrated—it is called a "taunt-song"—will not endure partial quotation or paraphrase. The line of thought is as follows. In the first strophe (vers. 4-8), the prophet declares exultingly how at length the tyrant is stilled, the earth is at peace; only the sound of rejoicing is heard. In the second (vers. 9-11), he accompanies in thought the Shade of the King of Babylon as it journeys to the Underworld, and imagines the ironical greeting which there meets it from the lips of the other kings—still, as on earth, supposed to be invested with the panoply of State. The third strophe (vers. 12-15) depicts

the abasement of the Babylonian monarch in its full magnitude: he who would have joined the ranks of the gods, is cast down to the inmost recesses of the pit. In the fourth and last strophe (ver. 16-20), the prophet's thought passes to the battlefield—from the feeble Shade to the unburied, dishonoured corpse: the passers-by express their amazement at the contrast which its fate presents to that of other kings after their death; it is excluded from the royal burial-place, flung aside as a worthless bough, hidden amongst the bodies of slain, common soldiers. The prophet concludes with an epilogue, spoken in his own person, and re-asserting emphatically the final and irretrievable ruin of the great city (vers. 21-23). The best commentary on this prophecy is the long and impassioned invective against Babylon contained in Jer. 1. 1-li. 58. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *Destruction of the King of Babylon*:—The Babylonian monarchy bade fair to be an absolute, universal, and perpetual one, and in these pretensions vied with the Almighty; it is, therefore, very justly, not only brought down, but exulted over when it is down. (*M. Henry.*) “*The golden city*” (ver. 4) is a graphical description of that city, which was renowned for its immense riches and incomparable splendour. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Deliverance from an evil dominion*:—If the nations rejoice at the overthrow of a haughty, tyrannical prince, and the re-establishment of tranquillity and liberty, how much greater ought to be the triumph of those who are delivered from the dominion of divers impetuous lusts, and enjoy the earnest of spiritual and eternal rest! (*Ibid.*) “*Hell*” (ver. 9), as always in the Old Testament—the Greek Hades; not a place of torment, but the “meeting-place of all living” (*Job. xxx. 23*). The prophet's representation is based upon the ideas current among the people. See Bishop Lowth's “*Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*,” Lecture vii. The same idea is elaborated in greater detail by Ezekiel, chap. xxxii. 17-32. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *An image of the soul*:—The mythological idea of Hades proceeds on the twofold truth, that what and how man has been in this world is not obliterated in the other world, but becomes essentially manifest, and that there is an immaterial self-formation of the soul in which all that the individual man has become through his own self-determination under God-given relations is reflected as in a mirror, and that in an abiding figure. This image of the soul, to which the dead body is related as the shattered form of a mould, is the shadowy corporeity of the inhabitants of Hades, in which they appear essentially, although in the condition of spirits, as what they were in this life. (*F. Delitzsch.*) “*Hell*” is moved as a city is moved when a great king is brought prisoner thither, and everyone runs out of his house to see him. (*W. Day, M.A.*) *Lucifer* (ver. 12):—In his splendour [the King of Babylon] is likened to the morning star, which was worshipped by the Babylonians under the name of Istar. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Impious expectations disappointed* (vers. 13-15):—That he should go to Sheol at all was a fate never contemplated by his soaring and self-deifying pride. (*Ibid.*) *Pride and ambition know no bounds* (ver. 14). (*R. Macculloch.*) “*The bitter*” (ver. 23), Heb. *kippōd*. The word occurs also in chap. xxxiv. 11; Zeph. ii. 14. It has been rendered otter, tortoise, owl, beaver, porcupine (R.V.). No one of the renderings proposed is satisfactory. “*Bitter*” is freer from objection than any other bird which might be proposed. It is a solitary bird, and loves such haunts as would be supplied by the marshes which were found in districts of Edom and Babylon and Nineveh, as the fruit of the desolation sent on them. It feeds at night, and hides during the day among the long grass and rushes of its favourite habitats. (*J. Duns, D.D., F.R.S.E.*) “*The besom of destruction*” (ver. 23):—When a people have nothing among them but dirt and filth, and will not be made clean with the besom of reformation, what can they expect but to be swept off the face of the earth with “the besom of destruction”? (*M. Henry.*) *The Church's exultation over her foes*:—Surely, in some such terms as these, the Church shall one day exult over all her foes, and especially over the great apostate power of Babylon the Great, the City of the Seven Hills. And still more, over the cast out prince of this world, of whom the King of Babylon and other princes of this world have been the types and representatives. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

Ver. 9. *Hell from beneath is moved for thee.*—*The first five minutes after death*:—There is a very well-known story told of a man who had served his king and country in many a distant land, and in many a strange experience, coming back home, and talking to his friends of the wonderful sights which he

had seen, and the wonderful experiences which he had gone through. And when they remarked to him on the sort of wonders he had experienced and known, he checked them with saying, "There is something more wonderful than anything I have yet known, which I still have to experience," and when they asked him what it was, he said, "It is the first five minutes after death." The first five minutes after death! It was upon what happens in the first five minutes after death that the prophet was exercising himself here in this particular prophecy. (*Davey Biggs, D.D.*) *Life beyond the grave*.—1. The prophet believed that for those who pass through the gate of death there would be recognition in the strange life beyond the grave. He believed that those who were inhabiting that world before other individuals entered into it would know them, would be there ready to greet them, greet them as in this case with horror, with dismay, with, as it were, congratulations that what had been tyrannical in the world of life before death had now, as it were, found its level, the opportunity of tyranny gone. The prophet pictures the expectation that there was in the hearts of those who had known what it was to be cruelly oppressed in this world when their oppressor came to join them. He shows that the attitude of those who were within the grave in the unseen world was one of expectation. 2. There is memory there, memory not only of our past selves, but about other people; memory, too, of those living on the earth. (*Ibid.*) *Recognition beyond the grave*.—We know that what was only conjecture in the mind of the prophet when he painted hell stirring up the dead to meet Belshazzar, King of Babylon, has become certainly through the revelation given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. I do not know how anybody can read through the parable of the rich man and Lazarus and not feel that, whatever the intention was with which the parable was spoken, incidentally our Lord does teach us that in the life beyond the grave the personality which we have known here in this life continues. As personality shows itself in self-consciousness, so our Lord shows that the rich man and Lazarus are conscious of their own existence. There is mutual recognition too. The rich man has not any doubt whatever who it is in whose bosom Lazarus was reposing; and I suppose at the very least fifteen centuries parted them. In the same mysterious way Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration knew that it was Moses and Elijah who were talking with the Messiah. There is a wonderful power of recognition of even those whom we have never met. We shall know, and our Lord Jesus Christ wishes us to know that we shall know, the great people in the past to whom we owe such great debts. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 24. Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass.—*God's infinite intelligence*.—To think and to purpose are the attributes of all rational beings, whether created or uncreated. I. God is such an infinitely perfect being, that His thoughts and purposes are CO-ETERNAL WITH HIMSELF. God cannot possibly exist without His thoughts and purposes. A child at school in France, was asked whether God reasoned or not. The child paused awhile, and answered, "No; God is too perfect to reason. He knows everything without reasoning." Newton himself could not have given a better answer. Everything that exists in God now, has existed in Him from eternity. II. As His thoughts and purposes flow exclusively from Himself, they are ABSOLUTE; they are, primarily considered, unconditional. This is a necessity that does not militate, in the least degree, against the accountability of man. They must have been absolute, or no being could possibly have existed. III. The thoughts and purposes of the Almighty are INFINITELY GLORIOUS; in other words, are infinitely worthy of Himself. It is in the fulfilment of His own thoughts and purposes that He develops all the beauty of His own perfections; it is in the development of all the beauty of His own perfections, that He confers every good on the creature. Take two axioms in divinity. All good is from God—all evil is from the creature. Do justice to these truths, and they will, as two keys, unlock some of the most difficult passages in Scripture. IV. The purpose of God is REplete with LOVE AND TENDERNESS. The sovereign purpose of God, properly speaking, involves nothing but good. Evil is to be traced to another source. But what does it comprise chiefly? A Saviour. We were suffered to fall into the deepest guilt, that God might display His glory to the utmost in our salvation. (*W. Howells.*) *God's purposes must be fulfilled*.—The wheels in a watch or a clock move contrary one to another, some one way, and some another, yet all serve the intent of the workman, to show the time, or to make the clock to strike. So in the world

the providence of God may seem to run cross to His promises. One man takes this way, another runs that way. Good men go one way, wicked men another. Yet all in conclusion accomplish the will, and centre in the purpose of God, the great Creator of all things. (*R. Sibbes, D.D.*)

Vers. 29-32. Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina.—*Philistia* was the south-west coast of the land of Canaan, to the whole of which it afterwards gave its name in the Greek form of Palestine, and was nominally included in the tribe of Judah. It was originally inhabited by the Avites, who were expelled by the Capthorim, a race of Egyptian origin, but supposed to have come immediately from Crete or Cyprus, and who, under the name of Philistines, continued as a distinct, and for the most part independent nation, in spite of the efforts of Israel to subdue them. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *The Philistines* were very formidable enemies to Israel in the days of Samuel and of Saul. The strong kings, David, Solomon, and Jehoshaphat, kept them in subjection, but in the days of Jehoram they invaded Judah (2 Sam. v. 17-25, xxi. 15; 2 Chron. xvii. 11, xxi. 16, 17). Uzziah again repressed them, and crippled their power, dismantling their walled cities, and building fortresses of his own to command them (2 Chron. xxvi. 6, 7); and no doubt they continued tributary during the still vigorous government of his successor Jotham. But during the weak reign of Ahaz, they “invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah”; and not only invaded, but settled themselves in them and their neighbouring villages (2 Chron. xxviii. 18): and to this state of things Isaiah addresses himself in this prophecy. (*Ibid.*) *The rod of the taskmaster* is Isaiah’s frequent image for the control of a dependent and tributary nation: all Philistia had rejoiced when the rod of David and of Uzziah fell broken from the hands of Ahaz, and expressed their joy by wasting or taking possession of their former master’s lands; but Isaiah warns them that the old root of Israel, which from the days of Samson had sent forth many a rod with a serpent’s life like the rod of Moses, would soon again produce a basilisk with its royal crest, its inevitable spring, and its mortal bite, to take vengeance on his enemies. (*Ibid.*) *Hezekiah and the Messiah*:—The basilisk is Hezekiah, and the flying dragon is the Messiah (such is the explanation of the Targum); or, what is the same thing, the former is the Davidic kingdom of the immediate future, and the latter the Davidic kingdom of the ultimate future. The figure may appear inappropriate, because the serpent is a symbol of evil; but it is not a symbol merely of creaturely evil, but also of the Divine curse; the curse, however, is the energy of penal justice, and as the executor of this justice as a judgment of God on Philistia, the Davidic king is here called a serpent in a climax rising through three stages. Perhaps the choice of the figure was suggested by Gen. xlix. 17; for the saying concerning Dan was fulfilled in Samson the Danite, the sworn enemy of the Philistines. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *The law of conquests and exterminations*:—If the spread of civilisation, knowledge, justice, virtue, religion, and whatever else distinguishes men from beasts, is a good and not an evil, then it is good for men to use all the means which are really necessary to effect that end, even though some of them be never so rough and unpleasing; and it is not less base in public than in private morals to shrink from the responsibility of ourselves doing that which we know it is good to have done. If a weak, effeminate, degenerate nation can be improved by subjection to a stronger, manlier, more virtuous nation, then it is not only the right but the duty of the latter to bring it into subjection, whenever the indications of God’s providence, be they of peace or war, show that the time has come. And if the nation is not merely degenerate but hopelessly corrupt, then it is not only the right but the duty of some worthier nation to destroy it, and rid the world of its abominations. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *The Gospel a means of national salvation*:—The Gospel has given to us, in modern Christendom, means of reclaiming nations who would have been irreclaimable by any measures which Greeks or Romans or even Jews could apply; and we are bound to act with corresponding gentleness and forbearance. (*Ibid.*) “*The firstborn of the poor*” (ver. 30) seems to be a Hebrew idiom for the “really, eminently poor,” like that of “Son of Man” to express the man. Or the prophet may mean that the first of the next generation, the children of the present depressed Israelites, shall be delivered from the miseries which the Philistines are now inflicting on their fathers. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 32. What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation?—*God's work in founding Zion*:—The kingdom of Judah was low and broken; foreign invasions and intestine divisions had made it so. In this state of things God takes notice of the joy and triumphing of the Philistines. To take them off from their pride and boasting He lets them know that from the people whom they despised their desolation was at hand, though they seemed to be perplexed and forsaken for a season (vers. 29–31). I. There is AN INQUIRY. “What shall one answer,” &c. They come to make inquiry after the work of God among His people, and it is fit that an answer be given to them. Two things are observable in this interrogation. 1. The nations about will be diligently inquiring after God's dispensations among His people. There are certain affections and principles that are active in the nations, that will make them restless, and always put them upon this inquiry. The people of God, on one account or other, shall be in all seasons a separated people. No sooner, then, is any people, or portion of them, thus dedicated to God, but all the nations about, and those amongst them not engaged in the same way with them, instantly look on them as utterly severed from them, having other ways, ends, and interests than they; being built up wholly on another account and foundation. They reckon not of them as a people and a nation. The conclusion they make concerning them is, that of Haman (Esth. iii. 8). (1) They are full of enmity against them. (2) A second principle, whereby they are put upon their inquiries, is fear. They fear them, and therefore will know how things stand with them, and what are the works of God amongst them (Hab. iii. 7; Psa. xlvi. 1–6). Fear is solicitous and inquiring; it will leave nothing unsearched, unlooked into; it would find the inside and bottom of everything, wherein it is concerned. Though the more it finds, the more it is increased; yet the greater still are its inquiries, fearing more what it knows not than what it knows. 2. The issues of God's dispensations amongst His people shall be so evident and glorious, that every one, any one, though never so weak, if not blinded by prejudice, shall be able to give a convincing answer concerning them to the inquiries of men. II. There is THE RESOLUTION GIVEN OF THE INQUIRY. Hereof are two parts—(1) What God hath done. (2) What His people shall, or ought to do. Wrap up at any time the work of God and the duty of His people together, and they will be a sufficient answer to any man's inquiry after the state of things among them. 1. The great design of God in His mighty works and dispensations is the establishment of His people, and their proper interest, in their several generations. To make this clear some few things are previously to be considered—(1) The proper interest of the people of God is to glorify Him in their several places, stations, and generations: none of us are to live unto ourselves. (2) God is the only proper and infallible judge, in what state and condition His people will best and most glorify His name, in their several generations. (3) Providential dispensations are discoveries of the wisdom of God in disposing of the condition of His people, so as they may best glorify Him. These things being premised, it is easy to give light and evidence to the assertion laid down. 2. It is the duty of God's preserved remnant, laying aside all other aims and contrivances, to betake themselves to the work of God, founding Zion, and preserving the common interest of His people. “God hath founded Zion, and the poor of the people shall trust therein,” or betake themselves unto it. We are apt to wander on hills and mountains, every one walking in the imagination of his own heart, forgetting our resting-place. When God was bringing the power of the Babylonian upon His people, the prophet Jeremiah could neither persuade the whole nation to submit to his government, nor many individuals among them to fall to him in particular. And when the time of their deliverance from that captivity was accomplished, how hardly were they persuaded to embrace the liberty tendered! (*J. Owen, D.D.*) *God's care for His people*:—1. The great things God doth for His people are, and cannot but be, taken notice of by their neighbours (Psa. cxxvi. 2). 2. Messengers will be sent to inquire concerning them. Jacob and Israel have long been a people distinguished from all others, and dignified with uncommon favours; and therefore, some for good-will, others for ill-will, and all for curiosity, are inquisitive concerning them. 3. It concerns us always to be ready to “give a reason of the hope” that we have in the providence of God, as well as in His grace, in answer to every one that asks it, “with meekness and fear.” 4. The issue of God's dealings with His people shall be so manifestly glorious that any one, every one, shall be able to give an account of them to those that inquire concerning them.

(*M. Henry.*) *The Church founded for a refuge.*—At first sight the prediction which closes the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah seems of temporary interest only, and to speak of judgments which within a very few years were destined to fall upon one of the most inveterate enemies of God's ancient people; and yet I cannot but think those commentators right who, following the opinion of divers of the fathers of the Church, have found in the passage an allusion to the Gospel and Church of Christ. I. That the prophecy would be one of **PRESSING AND IMMEDIATE INTEREST TO THE CONTEMPORARIES OF THE PROPHET** is obvious from the manner in which it is ushered in: "In the year that King Ahaz died was this burden" (or, as we should nowadays say, this denunciation of wrath) against the Philistines. After bidding the inhabitants of Palestine howl for the judgments that were impending, Isaiah, speaking as he was moved by the Holy Ghost, makes the inquiry and gives the answer of the text. It was usual for neighbouring nations, who were friends and allies, to send ambassadors, and congratulate each other on success. When, therefore, the coming triumph over the Philistines should be known abroad, and the envoys of friendly states should inquire of Judah into the circumstances of his success, "let this answer," said the prophet, "suffice: that the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it." II. No one can read that promise and not feel that it was **INTENDED TO HAVE AN AMPLER SCOPE** for its fulfilment than in the personal security of a handful of Jewish peasants; the whole turn of expression is redolent of Gospel times. Such words were never fully verified till Christ, the Son of David, had founded the Christian Church, and made His gracious offer to a world enslaved in the most cruel of all bondage: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (*F. E. Paget, D.D.*) *The Church's heavenly origin and beneficent mission.*—I. "The Lord hath founded Zion"; **THIS IS THE GUARANTEE OF HIS LOVE AND HER STABILITY.** The strongest, most fundamental title of protection is creation. Even among ourselves, no one frames an object to destroy it; he who makes, makes that he may preserve. And if this be so in human nature, shall there be nothing to compare with it in the Divine? God, indeed, who is eternal, can require no successor to whom to devise His purposes of love; but all the claims that the thing framed can have on Him who framed it, hold with tenfold force when the object is not, as in our humbler works, the mere apposition of pre-existing materials, in which nothing is ours except the order of arrangement, but is itself, alike in matter and in form, the direct offspring of His own inexhaustible power and goodness. 1. Behold, then, how as His own "God loved the world"; how as not only His own, but His own in pain and anguish, and endeared to His inmost heart as such, God hath loved His Church. He spoke to bid the one, He died to make the other, exist. 2. In this Church of His is His own honour pledged. He hath not covenanted with the world that now is to immortalise it; but He has passed His own word for the perpetuity of His Church. Nothing so framed was ever framed to perish; He has infused into it His own Spirit, and His Spirit is life. 3. Is not the Church in its ultimate perfection set forth as the very reward of all the sorrows of its Lord; and shall He be defrauded of His recompense? 4. There is more than creation to bind the Church to Christ, more than promise, more than reward; there is communion, oneness, identification. A man may desert his child; he cannot desert himself. With such a union there can be no separation; if Christ be immortal, the Church is so; when He dies she shall perish, but not till then. II. "The poor of her people shall trust in it"—or, as the margin has it, shall betake themselves unto it: **THIS IS ONE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH'S MISSION UPON EARTH**—the care, the teaching, the education, the guidance of the poor. (*W. Archer Butler, D.D.*) *God the Protector of His Church.*—We tell our Lord God that if He will have His Church, He must keep it Himself, for we cannot do it; and it is well for us that we cannot, else we should be the proudest asses under heaven. (*M. Luther.*)

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## CHAPTER XV.

**VERS. 1-9. The burden of Moab.**—*The Moabite stone*.—From the inscription of Mesha (c. 900 B.C.), found at Dibon in 1869, and commonly known as the “Moabite stone,” we learn that the Moabites spoke a language differing only dialectically from Hebrew; and it is probable also that, in matters of material prosperity and civilisation, Moab stood hardly upon an inferior level to Israel itself. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *The prophet's pity for Moab*.—There is no prophecy in the Book of Isaiah in which the heart of the prophet is so painfully moved by what his spirit beholds and his mouth must prophesy. All that he prophesies is felt as deeply by him as if he belonged to the poor people whose messenger of misfortune he is compelled to be. (*F. Delitzsch.*) **In the night.**—*Ar and Kir of Moab*.—The seizing of them laid the whole country open, and made all the wealth of it an easy prey to the victorious army. 1. Great changes, and very dismal ones, may be made in a very little time. Here are two cities lost in a night, though that is the time of quietness. Let us, therefore, lie down as those who know not what a night may bring forth. 2. As the country feeds the cities, so the cities protect the country, and neither can say to the other, “I have no need of thee.” (*M. Henry.*) *God works in the night-time*.—1. Man has but a little day to work in, but God's working hours never cease; man becomes weary with his day's work, and lies down to rest, and whilst he is in slumber destruction swiftly overtakes him, so that the morning looks upon a branch cut off, a city laid to waste and brought to silence. 2. Men should diligently consider this in musing upon the judgments of providence. They cannot always be awake; they cannot always be upon the walls defending the fortress; they must retire for a time to renew their strength, and whilst they are resting the enemy acquires additional power, and comes down upon their boasted masonry, and hurls it to the dust. 3. Only the Christian man has confidence in the night-time. He says, He that keepeth me will not slumber nor sleep. 4. God is against evil-workers, and it delights Him to trouble them by nightly visits, so that in the morning they cannot recall their own plans and purposes, or give an account of that which has happened whilst their eyes have been closed in sleep. 5. Have we any safety in the darkness? Have we made no provision for the night-time? If not, then woe will fall upon us, and when the morning comes it will rise upon a scene of desolation. Remember what God said to the fool in the parable who was counting his riches, and forecasting the happy years which his soul was to enjoy—“Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee.” 6. Ponder deeply upon the moral of night; the darkness should instruct us, remind us of our exhaustion, helplessness, and dependence upon others for security and rest, and should, above all things, lead us to put our confidence in Him to whom the darkness and the light are both alike. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

**Ver. 2. He is gone up to Bajith, and to Dibon, the high places, to weep.**—*The helplessness of heathen gods*.—We have a picture of men going to old altars, and finding there nothing but silence. Bajith may be regarded as the temple of the Moabite god. 1. So they were reduced to a state of helplessness; their very gods had forsaken them, and had thus revealed their own character as deities. It is under such circumstances—namely, of desertion and sorrow—that men find out what their religion is really worth. The Lord taunts all the heathen nations because their gods forsook them in the hour of calamity. One prophet exclaims, “Thy calf hath cast thee off, O Samaria.” The Lord Himself is represented as going up and down throughout the temples of heathenism, mocking and taunting the gods with which they were filled, because they were merely ornamental or decorative gods, and were utterly without power to assuage the sorrow of the human heart. 2. Whilst, however, all this is true of heathenism, there is a sense in which even Christian men may go back to old altars and find them forsaken. The Lord, the living One, the Father of the universe, is not pledged to abide at the altar forever to await the return of the prodigal. In the very first book of the Bible we read, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man.” There is a day of grace, so measurement can be determined with sufficient nearness to excite alarm, lest its golden hours should be lost. When the door is once shut it will not be opened again. Men may so live that when they go to the sanctuary itself, where the sweetest Gospel is preached in all its purity and



nobleness, they find no comfort in the place that is devoted to consolation. The fault is to be found in themselves; they have sinned away their opportunities, they have enclosed themselves within walls of adamant, they have betaken themselves to the worship of their own vanity and the pursuit of their own selfish purposes, so that when they return to the house of God they find that the Lord has abandoned His temple. "They shall call upon Me, and I will not answer." This is more than silence; it is silence aggravated, silence intensified, silence increased into burdensomeness. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Signs of mourning*:—The sorrow of those who mourn is represented by a very graphic figure:—"On all their heads shall be baldness, and every beard cut off." The primary reference is probably to some sacrificial ceremony. At a very early period baldness was regarded as a symbol of intensest sorrow amongst Eastern nations. Baldness was forbidden to Israel, for the probable reason that it was identified with the sacrificial worship of heathen deities. The picture of lamentation is continued in the third verse. In Eastern countries, when men were afflicted with great sorrow, they betook themselves to the flat roofs of their houses, and there publicly and loudly wailed on account of their agony. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 5. My heart shall cry out for Moab.—*The burden of souls*:—Too often have God's servants spoken with dry eyes and hard voices of the doom of the ungodly; and have only made them more obdurate and determined. We never need so much brokenness of spirit as when we utter God's judgments against sin. In his autobiography, Finney says, "Here I must introduce the name of a man whom I shall have occasion to mention frequently, Mr. Abel Clary. He was the son of a very excellent man, and an elder of the Church where I was converted. He had been licensed to preach; but his spirit of prayer was such, he was so burdened with the souls of men, that he was not able to preach much, his whole time and strength being given to prayer. The burden of his soul would frequently be so great that he was unable to stand, and he would writhe and groan in agony. I was well acquainted with him, and knew something of the wonderful spirit of prayer that was upon him. . . . The pastor told me afterwards that he found that in the six weeks I was in that church five hundred souls had been converted." (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The prophet's distress concerning Moab* (see also chap. xvi. 9):—These are the men who prevail with men. In the early part of the sixteenth century there was a great religious awakening in Ulster, which began under a minister named Glendinning. He was of very meagre natural gifts, but would spend many days and nights alone with God, and seems to have been greatly burdened with the souls of men and their state before God. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that, under his pleading, multitudes of hearers were brought into great anxiety and terror of conscience. They looked on themselves as altogether lost. They were stricken into a swoon by the power of God's Word. A dozen in one day were carried out of doors as dead. These were not women, but some of the boldest spirits of the neighbourhood, "some who had formerly not feared with their swords to put the whole market town into a fray." This revival changed the whole character of northern Ireland. Would that God might lay on our hearts a similar burden for our Churches and our land! (*Ibid.*)

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## CHAPTER XVI.

VER. 1. Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land.—*A message to Moab*:—The fugitives are supposed to have found a temporary home in Edom. The verse may be spoken by the prophet, or (as Prof. Cheyne suggests) it may proceed from the Moabite chiefs themselves, exhorting one another to take this step. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *Tribute demanded of Moab*:—A very terrible humiliation had already been inflicted on Moab in the reign of Jehoram, King of Israel (2 Kings iii. 4, 25). During Ahab's reign, Moab had been compelled to pay a very heavy annual tribute, even 100,000 lambs and 100,000 rams. Refusal to pay led to war from time to time; war resulting, however, invariably in the defeat of the Moabites. In such circumstances the prophet urges upon

Moab the wisdom of paying this tribute without trouble or demur. (*Buchanan Blake, B.D.*) *Gospel submission* :—It is applicable to the great Gospel duty of submission to Christ, as the Ruler of the land and our Ruler. 1. Send Him the lamb, the best you have, yourselves a living sacrifice. 2. When you come to God, the great Ruler, come in the name of the Lamb, the Lamb of God. 3. Those that will not submit to Christ, nor be gathered unto the shadow of His wings, shall be as a bird that wanders from her nest (ver. 2), that shall either be snatched up by the next bird of prey, or shall wander endlessly in continual frights. Those that will not yield to the fear of God shall be made to yield to the fear of everything else. (*M. Henry.*)

**Ver. 2. As a wandering bird, cast out of the nest.**—*The unrest of the sinner* :—The picture represents the distress and bewilderment of the wrong-doer. He does not know whether to go back to the old door and knock at it in the hope that it may be opened to him again by some kindly hand, or to flee away into the land of darkness and silence. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

**Ver. 4. Let Mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab.**—*God's outcasts in Moab* :—An injunction is given to Moab to shelter the Jewish fugitives. I. GOD OWNS HIS PEOPLE WHEN ALL THE WORLD FORSAKES OR OPPOSES THEM. No doubt Sennacherib thought the "outcasts" to be his victims, his prey; but God claims a personal interest in them, watches over them when they wander, supplies them in their need, and protects them by His guardian providence. They are His: His as the subjects of His government; His as the objects of His regard; His as the children of His grace. II. GOD RAISES UP FRIENDS AND COMFORTERS FOR HIS CHURCH IN STRANGE AND UNEXPECTED QUARTERS. Here He provides for them a shelter before the storm comes on, and makes Moab, one of the most powerful of the Church's enemies, a near and a present friend. God proves to Moab that it was their interest to do so, because the Jews would soon be in a condition to requite the favour, when their country should be invaded, and their daughters should wander without a home (ver. 2). The providence of God often makes the hostile feelings of bad men the occasion of good to the righteous. III. GOD CAN OVERRULE CALAMITIES, WHICH THREATEN NOTHING BUT DISASTER TO HIS CHURCH, INTO THE MEANS OF CONFIRMING FAITH AND HOPE. God's outcasts in Moab learned many a useful lesson there, and when they returned it was to uphold the government of Hezekiah, and to promote the welfare of the people with whom they had sojourned. "And the throne shall be established in mercy, and He shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David" (ver. 5). Sennacherib's invasion, which scattered his subjects in exile, threatened the overthrow of Hezekiah, but it really tended to establish him, for never was his kingdom more secure than after the overthrow of the Assyrian army. The same thing obtains in the experience of the Christian. As the birds sing most sweetly after a tempest; as torches shine brighter for shaking; as the flowers shed forth their fragrance at the close of a troubled day, so the graces of a Christian, his faith, his patience, and his hope, are matured by the trials that threatened their utter extinction. In the kingdom of Christ, a kingdom which is established in mercy, you find perpetual progress amidst perpetual storm, and a noon tide of brightness often succeeds the darkest night. IV. AMIDST ALL WANDERINGS GOD WOULD HAVE HIS PEOPLE REMEMBER THEIR DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER, AND PREPARE FOR RETURN. They were to dwell in Moab, but only for a season, and always to bear the heart of a stranger. It is a great thing in days of worldly compliance and conformity, when every one seems to live as if he were to live here always, to have in exercise a better hope, and for Christians to preserve the distinctness of their character. The Divine hand that created our frame and put life into it, has provided us with other resources than are found in feeble self, or in creatures feeble as ourselves. Besides this earth and these lower skies, there is an invisible world, and a kingdom of spirits. Let Christians seek to be in the world, but not of it. (*Homiletic Magazine.*)

**Ver. 5. In mercy shall the throne be established.**—*The moral purpose of judgment* is never concealed in the Divine writings. God is always seeking to bring about the time when in mercy His throne shall be established, and when there shall sit upon it in truth one who will represent the ideal judgment and blessing of God. The fifth verse might be rendered, "In mercy

shall a throne be established, and One shall sit upon it in truth." The prophet has constantly kept before his mind the image of an ideal king. The ideal was partially fulfilled in Hezekiah, yet only partially; the prophet was sure One was coming who would fulfil it in its utmost meaning, and he steadfastly kept his eye on the bright day when God's throne should be established among the nations, and His sceptre should be extended over all. God does not exist merely to destroy, nor does He rule only in order that He may humble and crush; His purpose is one of equity, righteousness, blessing, cultivation. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 12. **He shall come to his sanctuary to pray.**—*Fruitless supplications* :—This line in this dark picture reminds us of two facts in the life of the men of our own time, who see clearly the folly of idolatry. I. IN TIMES OF SORROW THEY ARE OFTEN SEEN IN THE SANCTUARY. II. MANY OF THE SUPPLICATIONS THAT ARE OFFERED IN THE SANCTUARY ARE OFFERED IN VAIN. How is this to be explained? In such ways as these—1. Many of the suppliants have little or no faith, and faith is the essential condition of blessing. 2. Many of the suppliants are not really in earnest, and lukewarmness is an offence to the Divine Being. 3. Many of the suppliants are not really penitent. (*W. Manning.*)

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## CHAPTER XVII.

VERS. 1-5. **The burden of Damascus. . . The fortress also shall cease from Ephraim.**—*The oracle concerning Damascus and Israel*.—The curse pronounced upon it [Damascene-Syria] falls also upon the kingdom of Israel, because it has allied itself with the heathen Damascus against their brethren in the south and the Davidic kingdom. From the reign of Hezekiah we are here carried back to the reign of Ahaz, and indeed back far beyond the death-year of Ahaz (chap. xiv. 28) to the boundary line of the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz, soon after the conclusion of the league which aimed at Judah's destruction, by which revenge was taken for the similar league of Asa with Benhadad against Israel (1 Kings xv. 9). When Isaiah incorporated this oracle in his collection, its threats against the kingdoms of Damascus and Israel had long been fulfilled. Assyria had punished both of them, and Assyria had also been punished, as the fourth strophe (vers. 12-14) of the oracle sets forth. The oracle, therefore, stands here on account of its universal contents, which are instructive for all time. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *The fall of Damascus* :—When cities do not pray they go down. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The loss of faculty as a judgment* :—It is possible for a man to moralise about the fate of a city, and forget that the principle of the text is aimed at all life. Life poorly handled means loss of life; faculty fallen into desuetude means faculty fallen into death. (*Ibid.*) *The cities of Aroer* represent the land to the east of the Jordan, in which the judgment on Israel, executed by Tiglath-pileser, began. There were, in fact, two Aroers; an old Amorite Aroer, which fell to the tribe of Reuben, situated on the Arnon (Deut. ii. 36, iii. 12, and elsewhere); and an old Ammonite Aroer, which fell to the tribe of Gad—Aroer before Rabba (Rabbath Ammon, Josh. xiii. 25). The site of the ruins of the former is Arâir, on the high northern bank of the Mûgîb; the situation of the latter has not yet been ascertained with certainty. The "cities of Aroer" are these two Aroers along with the cities on the east of Jordan like them, just as the "Orions" in chap. xiii. 10, are Orion and stars like it. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*)

Ver. 6. **Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it.**—*Autumn: the diminutions of life* :—The prophet is here predicting a season of national calamity. He represents the condition of the people under the figure of an autumnal scene. Armed hosts from the north have invaded the country like a sharp wind. The substance of its inhabitants has been carried away before their rapacity, "as when the harvest-man gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm." With this difference, however, that it has been destroyed by the violence of strangers, instead of being garnered for the use of those who had tilled the soil; and the sickle is the sword. The population is thinned, like the trees in the waning part of the year. Only that the wrath of man, unlike the severity of nature,

has no benevolent purpose in it. The comforts and blessings of life are shaken down as faded leaves. Only it is without any sign from experience, that they shall be replaced by a new spring. A desolated prospect rises before his sight. "Two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough; four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof." The Word of the Lord was a "burden" in those days, and he felt its weight upon his own heart as he held it over the heads of his people. He comforted himself at least with the thought that the visitation itself, if not his warning, would bring them to a more faithful mind (vers. 7, 8). There lies in the text, apart from its historical reference, this general truth,—that circumstances of decline and destitution are suited to wean the heart from its vanities. In the day of adversity men "consider." And when time and fortune have made the enjoyments of the world fewer, and thrown a longer shadow and a paler tint upon those that remain, the soul naturally remembers its truer and more enduring portions. 1. With some the change relates to their worldly goods and the general prosperity of their affairs. 2. A second class of diminutions concerns the bodily ease and health. 3. The third instance of diminutions to which our attention is called, is found in the encroachments of age. 4. One more instance of destitution is when companions and friends drop off like the foliage of summer, and we are more and more frequently bereft. (*N. L. Frothingham.*)

Vers. 7, 8. **At that day shall a man look to his Maker.**—*Sanctified affliction*.:—We are led to consider the designs of God in the afflictions of His people. I. TO RECALL THEIR WANDERING HEARTS TO HIMSELF. "A man will look to his Maker—1. With a suppliant eye, to find in Him sources of consolation and a rock of defence such as the world cannot furnish (Psa. cxxiii. 1, 2; Jonah ii. 1). 2. With a penitent eye (Luke xxii. 62; Zech. xii. 10). 3. With a confiding and believing eye (chap. viii. 17). 4. With a rejoicing eye (Rom. v. 11; Hab. iii. 18). II. TO RAISE THEIR ESTIMATE OF THE HOLINESS OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER AND THE RECTITUDE OF THE DIVINE DISPENSATIONS. "Shall have respect unto the Holy One of Israel." III. TO SEPARATE THEM FROM ALL SINFUL AND IDOLATROUS DEPENDENCES. "He shall not look," &c. IV. TO ENDEAR THE MERCY THAT MINGLES WITH THE TRIALS. This appears—1. In the moderate degree in which God's people are corrected, compared with the final and exterminating judgments which fall upon the wicked. Damascus was to be utterly destroyed (ver. 1), but a remnant was to be left to Israel (ver. 5). God's people always see that He has afflicted them less than they deserve (Lam. iii. 22). 2. In the alleviations of their trials. 3. In the triumphant issue of the whole. (*S. Thodey.*)

Vers. 10, 11. **Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation.**—*Forgetfulness of God punished*.:—I. THE MAGNITUDE OF THE SIN HERE SPOKEN OF. Forgetfulness of God. 1. What is this forgetfulness of God? It has been defined as "such a habitual inattention to His existence and character, as leads the individual under its influence to a mode of thinking, feeling, and acting, which would be consistent only on the supposition that there were no God, or that God is a very different Being from what the Scriptures represent Him to be." 2. It is a startling sin. Everything around us is designed and fitted to remind us of God. The Bible unfolds the moral character of God. Sharp dispensations of providence remind us of His existence. Preachers enforce His claims. Each returning Sabbath, with its closed shutters, the sound of the church-going bell, and the voice of praise from the lips of the pious, says, Worship God. But many would rather think about anything, or nothing, than about God. 3. It is a fearfully prevalent sin. 4. It is an ungrateful sin (chap. i. 2, 3). 5. It is a highly punishable sin. Many people imagine that none are sinners but those who openly sin. But what of the moral man, who does his duty towards his fellow-men, but who forgets God? II. THE RESULTS OF THIS FORGETFULNESS OF GOD. 1. Dwarfed powers. Men cannot, if they wish, be totally inactive. If activity be not devoted to God, it will be devoted to the world, to "planting pleasant plants." 2. Secular knowledge is a pleasant plant. 3. Wealth is a pleasant plant. 4. Ambition is a pleasant plant. 5. Amusement is a pleasant plant. 6. Hence observe the ultimate result of this conduct. "The harvest shall be a heap," &c. Sooner or later men reap what they sow. Sin and suffering are bound together by an unbreakable chain. "The gods are just," says Shakespeare, "and of our pleasant

vices make instruments to scourge us." (Gal. vi. 7, 8.) Men break God's physical laws, and they suffer in their bodies and circumstances. They violate His moral laws, and personal debasement ensues. George Eliot says, "That is the bitterness of all—to wear the yoke of our own wrong-doing." (*H. Woodcock.*) *Evils of forgetting God*.—I. FORGETFULNESS OF GOD IS AN EVIL WHICH TOO GENERALLY PREVAILS AMONG MEN. The text does not so much charge with positive wickedness (though it is implied) as forgetfulness of God, which supposes folly, because He is the God of salvation, and the Rock of strength. Consider these relations—1. The God of thy salvation. (1) He is infinitely able to save His creatures, whether the salvation required be temporal, spiritual, or eternal. (2) He is always willing to save them. How inexcusable is man! How criminal to forget, to be unmindful of Him! 2. The Rock of thy strength. Here we may build, and the fabric will never be shaken. Here we may shelter, as in the cleft of a rock, and no evil shall prevail against us. For so helpless and weak a creature as man to have such a refuge, such a support, and to be unmindful of it, how great is his folly! But when may we be said to forget, and to be unmindful of God? When we live without thinking of Him—without praying to Him—without seeking His glory—without surrendering our souls, bodies, and all our cares into His hands. II. THE ATTENTION THUS DRAWN FROM GOD AND HIS SERVICE IS TRANSFERRED TO WORLDLY AND SENSUAL PLEASURES. The soul of man in this case strives to supply its want of happiness from the world: "therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants." Infinitely varied are the objects of the attention or culture of men, but they all proceed from the above principle, or rather have the same end in view. Some seek their pleasure in learning, others in the arts, riches, honours, employments, amusements. But they are "strange slips," not natural, not designed to answer the intended purpose. The sons of men are determined to prove what the world can do for them. "In the day they make their plant to grow, and in the morning their seed to flourish." They shall in some measure succeed. But—III. DISAPPOINTMENT AND SORROW ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF SUCH CONDUCT. "The harvest shall be a heap," &c. (*J. Walker, D.D.*) *Prosperity in the seeming only*:—These occasional sun-gleams may foretoken the thunderstorm. God can mock, God can lead the bullock to the knife by the way of a fat pasture. There is, therefore, a promise here, but the promise is limited. You shall have mushroom growths, you shall see wonderful things within the span of a single day; but what shall the harvest be? The meaning is, we may be infatuated by appearances, by immediate successes, by flowers and strange slips growing up within the compass of one little day. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *God's righteousness in His dealings with men*:—Happily, this is only one aspect of the Divine government; we are entitled to reverse this text, and say, Because thou hast remembered the God of thy salvation, and hast been mindful of the Rock of thy strength, therefore shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses burst out with new wine. Thou hast not withheld from God the gladness and the service of thine heart, and He will not withhold from thee the music and the rapture and the abundance of harvest. The way of the Lord is equal. (*Ibid.*) *Pleasant plants and strange slips*:—They made for themselves all kinds of sensuous cults in conformity with their heathen inclination. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *The temporary success of an evil alliance*:—The foreign slip has shot up like a hothouse plant, i.e., the alliance has rapidly become a happy agreement, and has also already shot forth a blossom, which is the common plan directed against Judah. (*Ibid.*) *Lives of disappointment*:—The world is full of people who are engaged in planting their slips. Fortunes, luxurious homes, great reputations—such are some of the slips; but what disappointment succeeds—"desperate sorrow." The egg turns out to be rottenness; the fair landscape a Sahara, from which the mirage is gone; the beautiful globe of changing colour, only a drop of dirty soap-and-water. We remember the story of Faust, who sold himself to Satan, but the day of bitter reaping came. We remember the cry of Byron over his wasted years; of Laurence Oliphant, the bright versatile son of Piccadilly, who in his varied career had tasted life in many of its brightest aspects; of Solomon, whose Ecclesiastes is one long record of slip-planting. Nothing less than God, our Maker, can suffice the souls which He has made. Apart from Him life may at first promise well, but the end, inevitably, will be desperate sorrow. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) **THE HARVEST SHALL BE A HEAP.—The harvest of sorrow**:—A harvest field is a suggestive place. I. TO EVERY LIFE THERE IS A HARVEST, EITHER OF JOY

OR OF SORROW. Life on earth is introductory and probationary. It is but the seed-time for eternity. All our actions, words, thoughts, have a bearing upon the future. God is our moral Governor, as well as our loving Father. We are, therefore, accountable to Him for the disposal of every moment of our existence. Belonging to a depraved and fallen race, we are necessarily sinners; but this has been provided for. To every life there is a harvest. When? Sometimes in this world. Both the righteous and the wicked reap on earth to a certain degree that which they have sown. But still it is most strictly true that the great and final harvest commences when life on earth terminates and life in eternity begins. This great fact invests life with unspeakable grandeur. Every day and hour we are preparing for the realities of eternity. This should moderate our expectations concerning the present life. That which is probationary is necessarily incomplete. We should, therefore, expect trials and disappointments. II. THE HARVEST OF SORROW MAY, IN EVERY CASE, BE TRACED TO ONE GREAT CAUSE—forgetfulness of God. The ruin of the Ten Tribes is traced to this (vers. 10, 11). Jeremiah brings the same charge against them (Jer. ii. 12, 13). Hosea also says (Hos. viii. 14), "For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples." At first, it seems impossible that they could ever have done this. Had they not the history of the great and eventful past? Did they not know they were depending on Him for everything they enjoyed? Surely, those who had such a God should never have forgotten Him. The fact stated in the text is one of deep significance. It shows us the desperate wickedness of the human heart. The Israelites were so estranged from Jehovah that they acted as though He did not exist. It is so in every such case. Forgetfulness of God always leads to this terrible result. No one can be unmindful of Him with impunity. Forgetfulness of God produces in the heart such feelings and induces men to follow such a line of conduct, that their lives must be a failure. It is, however, worthy of notice, that these persons are as anxious to be happy during life, and at its end, as any of their fellows. They do not resign themselves to despair. On the contrary, they fancy that all is well. Their hearts beat high with hope. True, they have not the help and protection which the Lord's people enjoy, but they do all they can to supply its place. The people of Israel did all they could to make their position a strong one. They made an alliance with Syria, and thought, with her help, they would be able to overcome their foes. So men in the present day, who forget God, avail themselves of the dictates of worldly prudence. In the day they make their plant to grow, and in the evening they make their seed to flourish. Here we have an affecting description of the anxiety and feverish effort of the men that know not God. We may plant pleasant plants, we may set strange slips, but they will not compensate us for the absence of the plants of righteousness. He who forgets the God of his salvation, and is unmindful of the Rock of his strength, must be without His favour, and at last must reap a harvest of grief and desperate sorrow. III. THE HARVEST OF SORROW INVOLVES THE SOUL IN UTTER AND IRREMEDIALE RUIIN. It is no slight matter—it is the loss of all things—the failure of every effort—the disappointment of every hope, the destruction of every joy, the development and perpetuation of every sorrow. The language of the prophet is very striking. The common idea of harvest is that of a joyous nature. But here we have an idea of the very opposite character. The harvest is a heap. There is no golden grain worthy of being housed in everlasting habitations. The soul sees with amazement that all her efforts have been fruitless, and cries, "Is this all; has my life on earth produced nothing more than this?" And the answer is, "Nothing more; and that which it has produced is only fit for the burning." (*H. B. Ingram.*) *God's love in the deprivations of life* :—There is only one way of getting at some men. Once we could have appealed to their higher nature; once they were subject to the pleasure and the eloquence of reason; once they had a conscience tender, sensitive, responsive; now they are spiritually dead, no conscience, no reason, no unselfishness; the whole nature has gone down in volume and in quality into a terrible emaciation: what shall be done? Smite their harvest! then like beasts they will miss their food. God does not delight in this; it is the poorest violence, it is the feeblest department of His providence; but He knows that it is the only providence some men can understand. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Reclamation by punishment* :—God got you back to the Church through inflammation, through fever, through paralysis, through pain, through loss, through desolation; you came back over the graveyard. No matter, said God; when He got you into His house again He said, *This My*

son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. It is in the reclamation, not in the punishment, that God takes pleasure. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 12-14. Woe to the multitude of many people.—*A short triumph*.—These verses read the doom of those that spoil and rob the people of God. If the Syrians and Israelites invade and plunder Judah—if the Assyrian army take God's people captive, and lay their country waste,—let them know that ruin will be their portion. They are here brought in—I. TRIUMPHING OVER THE PEOPLE OF GOD. They rely upon their numbers. They are very noisy, like the noise of the seas; they talk big, hector and threaten. II. TRIUMPHED OVER BY THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD. God can dispirit the enemies of His Church, when they are most courageous and confident, and dissipate them when they seem most closely consolidated. This shall be done suddenly (ver. 14). (*M. Henry.*) *The punishment of the wicked*.—I. THE STRIKING CONTRASTS WHICH THE DAY OF VISITATION REVEALS RESPECTING THE CONDUCT AND POSITION OF THE WICKED. Verse 12 shows us the vast and varied host in fancied security; we have a magnificent picture of a state of might, pomp, vainglory, self-confidence; but ere we reach the end of verse 13, we see it scattered. We see the same contrast in everyday life; wicked men secure, strong, boastful—the next moment utterly cast down (Psa. lxxiii. 18-20); or, by the near approach of death, transformed into the subjects of a pitiable despair. II. THE RESISTLESS EXECUTION OF THE SENTENCE OF DOOM. III. THE SWIFTESS WITH WHICH THE SENTENCE OF DOOM IS EXECUTED (ver. 14). It is true that the punishment of the wicked often seems to be delayed (Eccles. viii. 11); but—1. Sin and punishment are inseparable. 2. Whenever the punishment comes it is sudden. Such is the blinding and delusive power of cherished sin that its penalty always finds the sinner unprepared to receive it; it is always a surprise and a shock to him. Conclusion—(1) Nations and armies cannot successfully evade the penalties of their sins; how much less can the individual sinner do so! (2) The certainty of the punishment of all unrepented sin should lead us seriously to reflect upon the attitude we are assuming before God. (3) The subject should lead to repentance, but not to despair (Psa. cxxx. 7). (*W. Manning.*)

Ver. 14. Behold at evening-tide trouble.—*The night*.—God fights some battles between evening and morning. The black night is the field of war. The darkness fights for God. The night is needed for more than rest. How busy the angels are on the fields of darkness! Men are fetched at night by the invisible constable. Who reckons the night when he adds up his time? It may go for nothing to us because of our unconsciousness, but God sleeps not. Speaking of the wicked we may apply the figure of night so as to find in it terror and fear, sorrow and judgment, and death; speaking of the good man, we may say, Dry thy tears, thou foolish unbelieving weeper, or shed them gratefully to get rid of a needless burden; for sorrow endureth but for a night, joy cometh in the morning: take in the black guest, do what thou canst for him, he is sent of God for holy purposes; he can live but for a night, thou mightest afford to be kind to him; it were but one night in a long life. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

VERS. 1-3. Woe to the land shadowing with wings.—*The Ethiopians*.—The people here peculiarly described are the Ethiopians, and the prophet prophesies the effect on Ethiopia of the judgment concerning Assyria which Jehovah executes, as Drechsler has convincingly proved, and as is now universally recognised. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *Ethiopia*.—What land is it of which the prophet speaks? It is no doubt Ethiopia itself, a great kingdom in the olden time. For although he says "beyond the rivers of Ethiopia," that is the Blue Nile, and the White Nile, and the Astaboras, the meaning is perhaps more accurately "beside" those rivers. In any event the ancient land of Ethiopia reached out to the south far beyond the confluence of those rivers in the mighty Nile, including probably all upper Egypt beyond Philae, Nubia, and the northern portion of modern

Abyssinia. It was a fertile country, very rich in gold, ivory, ebony, frankincense, and precious stones. A country thickly inhabited by a stalwart well-formed race, "men of stature" the prophet calls them, who if they were black were yet comely. It was a mighty kingdom for many centuries, a rival of Egypt, sometimes its enemy, and apparently even its conqueror; a kingdom able to make war against the Assyrians, and a kingdom, too, carrying on a great trade by means of abundant merchandise with many people. (*A. Ritchie.*) "*The land shadowing with wings*":—1. Full of poetic suggestion is the expression "shadowing with wings." The thought is of tender protection, as the mother-bird hovers over and shields her young. The Psalmist is never tired of crying out to God, "Hide me under the covering of Thy wings." It was right that Israel and Judah should cry thus to Jehovah for protection, but not that they should look to the shadowing wings of Ethiopia. Just as it was pathetically true that in later times our Lord should say of the Holy City, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not"—so seven hundred years earlier it was true that Judah would not seek refuge under the wings of the Lord, but under the shadowing of Egypt and the covering of Ethiopia. 2. In the Revised Version we have the passage rendered, "Ah, the land of the rustling of wings." Some of the old commentators find in this an allusion to the multitude of bees and the swarms of flies in Ethiopia, so that there the hum of wings was never absent. More picturesque is another suggestion, that the reference is to the ever plashing waters of the rivers, hurrying along with swift current, in rapids and through cataracts until the broad bosom of father Nile was reached. The swish and lapping of the rushing waters seemed to the poet like the noise made by the swift flight of many birds, beating the air with strong pinions, as they sweep on towards the horizon. 3. If we turn to the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament, we read the text thus: "Woe to you, ye wings of the land of ships." What are the wings of the land of ships but the many sails whereby those ships flit hither and thither? One sees before him a new picture. The graceful dahabiehs with their long yards and triangular sails, dotting the water everywhere, and naturally suggesting great sea-birds, with outspread wings, shining in the starlight white and ghostly on the calm surface of the mysterious river which is Egypt's life. 4. Some of the more acute Hebrew scholars point out that it is possible to understand the prophet's language in yet another way: "Woe to the land where the shadow falleth both ways," that is, of course, near the Equator, where sometimes the shadows stretch out to the south and sometimes to the north, according to the time of the year. If we understand our text so, it is natural to see in it an allusion to the fickleness of the Ethiopians, a nation which Judah vainly trusted in, since to-day it would be found an ally and to-morrow an enemy. (*Ibid.*) *The prophet's charge to the Ethiopian ambassadors*:—Ethiopia (Heb., "Cush") corresponds generally to the modern Soudan (*i.e.*, the blacks). Egypt and Ethiopia were at this time ruled by Tirhakah (704-685). His ambassadors are in Jerusalem offering an alliance against the Assyrian; and the prophet sends them back to their people with the words, "Go, ye swift messengers," &c. Jehovah needs no help against His enemies. (*A. B. Davidson, LL.D.*) *Note*:—Full stop at "waters" (ver. 2), and omit "saying." The prophet speaks: "Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation tall and smooth . . . a nation all-powerful and subduing, whose land rivers divide (intersect)." "Smooth" may refer to the glancing, bronzed skin of the people. (*Ibid.*) *Vessels of bulrushes*:—It is well known that timber proper for building ships was very scarce in Egypt: to supply this deficiency, the Egyptians used bulrushes, or a reed called papyrus, of which they made vessels fit for sailing. Ships and boats built of this sort of materials, being extremely light, and drawing very little water, were admirably suited to traverse the Nile, along the banks of which there were doubtless many morasses and shoals. They were also very convenient and easy to be managed at the water-falls, where they might be carried with no great difficulty to smooth water. From such circumstances as these, we may conclude, that they would sail exceeding fast, and afford a very speedy conveyance of all kinds of intelligence from one part of the country to another, and from Egypt to neighbouring nations. In them, therefore, ambassadors or messengers were often sent to different places with various kinds of information, after having received their orders in terms such as these, "Go, ye swift messengers."



(*R. Macculloch.*) They were made for folding together, so that they could be carried past the cataracts. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*)

Ver. 3. All ye inhabitants of the world . . . see ye.—*Missionary exertion*.—Our whole hope of success rests on the prophecies of the Word of God, declaring it to be His will. We must first accurately examine what is the object we have in view, for if it be not in unison with the prophets it must be disappointed. I. THE LANGUAGE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT ON THIS SUBJECT. What does that give us reason to expect under the present dispensation? An elect Church, though in one sense it is called an universal Church, because it is gathered out of all nations on the earth. II. THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CHURCH AS STRENGTHENING THIS ARGUMENT. For long years the Gospel has been preached, and what is the result? But is it not written in the Scriptures that all flesh shall see the salvation of God, &c.? Do we not, then, rightly expect the conversion of all the people on the earth? Yes, it is written, and shall come to pass. But the means are also written, and the time. What are the means? What is the time? "All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye!" When? "When He lifeth up an ensign on the mountains, and when He bloweth a trumpet, hear ye!" I will read you an extract from a missionary sermon preached by Dr. Buchanan shortly before his death: "The ensign to be lifted up is the Jewish Church restored to Zion; and the Gospel trumpet is to be sounded by Jewish missionaries, for to them is reserved the evangelising of the heathen." But before this will be the coming of the Son of God. (*Hugh M'Neile, M.A.*)

Vers. 4, 5. For so the Lord said unto me, I will take My rest.—*The rest of providence*.—Although much diversity of opinion exists among commentators in regard to the primary design of the prophecy from which this passage is taken, there can be but one sentiment as to the sublime moral which it teaches concerning the mode in which the Almighty conducts His government. There are times, probably, in every man's life, when he feels the temptations to scepticism unusually strong. They are the times of personal suffering, or of prosperous iniquity. I. How often has the sincere Christian mourned in bitterness of spirit, BECAUSE NO IMMEDIATE ANSWER SEEMED GIVEN TO HIS PRAYERS. In such circumstances, the assurance that providence is only taking its rest and considering, is in the highest degree consolatory. It is not in judgment, but in tender mercy, that God apparently suspends His answer to His people's prayers. Thus does He exercise their faith, and the trial of it is more precious than gold. Thus does He convince them of their needs, and the conviction leads them to greater self-abandonment. Thus does He call forth in them the feeling of Christian sympathy for those who are similarly tried, and this is better for them than heart's desire. Thus does He give unto them those experiences which, it is not improbable, may contribute to their felicity in heaven itself. II. A second example of providence taking its rest, is to be seen in THE COMPARATIVELY SLOW AND LIMITED PROGRESS WHICH THE BLESSED GOSPEL OF CHRIST HAS YET MADE IN THE WORLD. The march of His administration is not the less sublime, because it is occasionally invisible. III. Providence takes its rest WHEN SENTENCE AGAINST THE EVIL WORKS OF MEN IS NOT EXECUTED SPEEDILY. When the mystery of God is finished, His ways will appear at once marvellous and right. This "rest of providence" is beautifully illustrated by similitudes taken from nature—"a clear heat upon herbs, and a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest." You have observed, on a fine summer day, the sunshine resting calmly on the corn-field, or the dew covering the plants at eventide. All is peaceful and serene. It seems as if the winds had forgotten to blow, or the thunder to utter its voice. Thus calmly and silently does the Almighty "rest in His dwelling-place," till the time comes for interposition. The patience of God is a demonstration of His power, and His slowness to wrath a testimony to His infinite wisdom. The metaphor in ver. 5 is to be regarded as a continuation of the preceding one, and may be understood as intimating the utter disappointment of those plans which wicked men form against God, and which He so forbearingly allows them to mature. "Afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, He shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning-hooks, and take away and cut down the branches." The meaning is, that at the very moment when the likelihood is, humanly speaking, greatest, that their projects shall be successful, He will awake

to overturn them. Conclusion—I. The passage under consideration, while it ought to alarm the enemies, may well enough bring comfort to the people of God. Let them look up for their redemption draweth nigh. 2. On the other hand, let not the impudent flatter themselves into security because their Lord delayeth His coming. (*J. L. Adamson.*) *Stillness*.—“A figure of perfect stillness.” (*A. B. Davidson.*) *The arrest of evil men*.—It is as though Jehovah were quietly looking on, and permitting the Assyrians to do their worst. So far from arresting them, He seems even to favour their plans. He is to them, as the dew to the growth of plants. But before the bud is formed, He arises to cut them off. This probably refers to the fatal blow which overwhelmed Sennacherib’s army in a single night. The gratitude of surrounding nations for so great a deliverance would cause them to bring sacrifices to Jehovah’s temple (ver. 7). (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *God’s secret words*.—How striking are those secret words, whispered by God to His favoured servant, “The Lord said unto me.” It was as though He had called Isaiah aside, and spoken to him confidentially of matters which must not be uttered to uncircumcised ears. It was thus that God spake of old to Abraham and Moses. And in modern days it is remarkable, in reading the journals of George Fox, to find how conscious he was of similar confidences reposed in him by his ever-present and faithful Friend. (*Ibid.*) *God resting in His dwelling-place*.—I. THE DWELLING-PLACE OF GOD AND HIS REPOSE. Let me ask where the queen rests in her love? You must pass and press beyond the regalia, beyond the throne-room, beyond the council, beyond the levee, there in the family, amidst her children, in a charmed family circle,—there she rests in love. And has not God such a circle, such a dwelling-place, and home? “The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him.” God has revealed to us this great thing, that He, too, lives in the sympathies and affections of His intelligent creatures. God’s Church is His dwelling-place. God descends to dwell in us, as we ascend to dwell in Him. I have been struck with a thought like this, when I have been on some quiet village hill, or in the deeps of some country forest, when, beneath me, or away from me, all the villagers were in the booths of some fair. I saw it, perhaps, at my feet, or heard the sounds dying away on my ear. So it is, as we rise to rest in God. At our feet the uproar—the vice—the vanity—of the Babel booths—the dissoluteness and the song,—but with us deep peace, and quiet, and the rest of heart and soul, and the prospect of the glory and the vistas beyond; it is even so, as the world lies beneath us, and above us spreads the calm—when the soul possesses God, and God sinks into the soul—what does the soul look out upon? what does the soul look down upon? what does the soul look in upon? the soul one with God. II. “I WILL CONSIDER.” “So the Lord said unto me, I will take My rest.” Exceedingly sublime are all those magnificent passages in which the calm of the Divine mind is contrasted with the passion and the agitation of human affairs. This is the connection of the preceding verses (chap. xvii. 12, 13). It is amidst that turbulence of the oceans of the population that God says, “I will take My rest, and consider.” III. THE ILLUSTRATIONS OF DIVINE CONSIDERATION, the loving and beautiful result. (*E. Paxton Hood.*) *God’s all-sufficiency*.—There is that in God which is a shelter and refreshment to His people in all weathers, and arms them against the inconveniences of every change. Is the weather cool? There is that in His favour that will warm them. Is it hot? There is that in His favour that will cool them. Great men have their winter house and their summer house (Amos iii. 15); but they that are at home with God have both in Him. (*M. Henry.*) *When the bud is perfect*.—*The flower-bud*.—B—U—D—bud. Beauty; use; design, shall be our three points. I. BEAUTY. Among the many kinds of beauty nature gives us, three are very noticeable—I. Beauty of form. 2. Beauty of colour. 3. Beauty of scent. And to these man has added—4. Beauty of association. II. USE. 1. Food. In the economy of nature flowers are useful as food for insect and bird and man. Groundsel for the birds of the air! The honeysuckle really belongs to, and is the early home of, a green moth, brown round the edges, with transparent wings. It also belongs to a caterpillar, which afterwards becomes a brown and white and dull blue butterfly. And so list after list might be given of flowers upon which the insect world feeds, and by which it is nourished. Again, it is from flowers that the bees collect the honey! Thus the flowers may be said literally to feed man. 2. Medicine. 3. Fruit. Flowering is a stage on the way to fruit. What Christian graces will you have to show when the time of the ingathering comes? III. DESIGN.

Nature works on a plan. Who made the plan, the design? There cannot be a plan without someone to plan; nor a design without a designer. The Christian looks from nature to nature's God. (*C. H. Grundy, M.A.*)

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## CHAPTER XIX.

**VER. 1. The burden of Egypt.**—*The prophecies concerning Egypt*:—The kingdom to which all the three prophecies (chaps. xviii., xix., xx.) refer is the same, namely, the Egypto-Ethiopian kingdom; but it is so dealt with that chap. xviii. refers to the ruling people, chap. xix. to the ruled people, and chap. xx. embraces them both together. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *Egypt interwoven with the history of the kingdom of God*:—The reason why the prophecy occupies itself so particularly with Egypt is that no people of the earth was so closely interwoven with the history of the kingdom of God from the patriarchal time as Egypt. (*Ibid.*) *The oracle concerning Egypt: promise as well as threatening*:—Because, as the Thora impresses it, Israel must never forget that it long resided in Egypt, and there grew great, and enjoyed much good; so prophecy, when it comes to speak to Egypt, is not less zealous in promising than in threatening. Accordingly, the Isaianic oracle falls into two distinct halves; one threatening, vers. 1-15, and one promising, vers. 18-25; and between judgment and salvation there stands the terror in vers. 16, 17, as the bridge from the former to the latter. (*Ibid.*) **Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud.**—*The way of the Lord*:—Here is one way in which the Lord comes, namely, "upon a swift cloud" (ver. 1). The intimation is one of mystery. No man can tell which way the Lord will come to-day. Let us keep our eyes upon every point of the horizon; let us distribute the watchmen wisely and assign to each his sphere of observation; for by what door the Lord may enter the field of vision no man can tell,—by a political event, by some new movement in foreign policy, by the discovery of new riches in the earth, by great shocks which try men's strength, by grim sorrow, by cruel death, by judgments that have no name, by mercies tender as the tenderest love, by compassions all tears, by providences that are surprises of gladness: watch all these doors, for by any one of them the Lord may come into the nation, the family, the heart of the individual. This Divine policy, if it may be so named, baffles the watchers who trust to their own sagacity. If men will say they will circumvent God and know all the ways of His providence, behold God forsakes all ways that are familiar and that lie within the calculation of the human mind; and He startles those who watch with light from unexpected quarters, with shakings and tremblings never before felt in the vibrations of history. "Clouds and darkness are round about Him"; the cloud that appears to be nothing but vapour may enshrine the Deity; the bush, yesterday so common that any bird might have alighted upon it, to-day burns with unseen, infinite energy. The Lord will come by what way He pleases,—now as if from the depths of the earth, and now as from the heights of heaven; blessed is that servant who is ready to receive Him and to welcome Him to the heart's hospitality of love. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

**Ver. 2. And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians.**—*Divine providence in civil strife*:—This method of administration, we say, obtains and prevails in all ages. This is the meaning of many a controversy, of many a quarrel, of many a dissension, in cabinets, in families, in nations. Men are surprised that they should turn upon their brothers with disdain, and even with cruel hatred. It is indeed matter of surprise and great sorrow, and if looked at within narrow limits it would seem to be a reflection upon Providence; but when does God ask to be judged within the four corners of human imagination or criticism? He not only does the deed, He does it within a field which He Himself has measured, and within the range of declarations which have about them all the mystery and graciousness of evangelical prophecies. We must, therefore, look not only at the incident, but at all its surroundings and to all its issues. When we are puzzled by household difficulties, by commercial perplexities, by unions that only exist for a moment and then dissolve or are turned into sourness and alienation, we must never forget that there is One who rules over all. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 11. *How say ye . . . I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings?—On the pride of birth:—*The charge which the prophet makes upon the Egyptian nobles may, with some justice, be extended to those in modern times who are perpetually reminding the world, directly or indirectly, of the dignity of their ancestors; and who, because they have no living merit to boast of, are ever shringing themselves in the glories of the dead. 1. Not only does the world set a high value upon illustrious birth, but it commonly obtains the preference over talents and virtues. There must be a certain rule of precedence in society, an arrangement of those pretensions we all exhibit for public notice and respect; and those causes which confer superiority must be obvious and not liable to be mistaken; not chemical distinctions, discoverable upon analysis, but natural marks, perceptible to the eye. Such, in some degree, are wealth and birth, the notoriety of which is much greater than that of talents and virtues. 2. But how comes birth to be respected at all? History teaches us to connect courage to one name, and counsel to another; to connect them even to an eye or a look; and it is difficult to behold the son or the descendant of an eminent man without deluding ourselves into an idea that some share of the virtues as well as some trait of the features has been transmitted from one to the other. A person placed in a liberal situation of life, above the necessity of increasing his fortune, is supposed to have derived from education a cultivated understanding and correct moral taste; to be careful of reputation and worthy of trust; and, when a family has been long in this situation, we associate these qualities to them much more strongly, and are apt to conceive that a certain propriety of sentiment has been transmitted, with hereditaments and lands, from one generation to another. It is therefore well to recollect that the reverence mankind pay to birth is founded upon its supposed connection with great and amiable qualities; that it is unjust to inhale the incense without possessing the attributes to which it is offered up; and that no disapprobation is so complete as that which succeeds to detected imposture and misplaced regard. 3. Pride of birth, in common with every other species of pride, is utterly incompatible with the Christian character, the very essence of which is lowliness of spirit, and, in common with every other species of pride, is marked by narrow and erroneous views of human nature. The peculiar objections to it are, that birth may frequently prove a source of the most serious misfortunes; that, at a certain period of depravity, it gives splendour to shame, and inflames the contempt of mankind; that it justifies the painful suspicion of being beloved from name, and not from nature; that, considered singly by itself, without the virtues which sometimes do, and are always expected to, accompany it, it is of all causes of self-approbation the least rational and just. 4. Though pride be the excess of self-approbation, it can only rest ultimately upon the approbation of others. It is always upon the esteem of others, present and future, or upon a title to it, conceived to be extremely strong, that pride is founded. A proud man may not possess esteem, but he must believe that he does possess it, or shall possess it, during life, or after death, or that he deserves to possess it; for, if he conceives himself justly contemptible, he must cease to be proud. Now, all pride proceeds from a wrong notion of the method by which the approbation of others is secured; from a misappreciation of ourselves, and of the sagacity of mankind, who are so far from adopting a man's standard of himself as their own, that they commonly value a human being inversely as he values himself. It proceeds from an ignorance of that captivating modesty which lulls rivalry to sleep, and gives all the benevolent affections their free influence upon the judgment. Pride, then, is only another name for ignorance, because it takes the most shortsighted and inefficacious means to effect its object. 5. Travellers tell us that there is a tree, the roots of which afford bread or poison, according as they are managed and prepared. Such is the doubtful nature of illustrious birth: it may be a blessing or a curse, the source of virtue or the cradle of shame; eminence it must ever give, eminence of infamy or eminence of good. God forbid we should not think of ancient days, if thus doing we can add virtue or happiness; forbid us to stifle that solemn pleasure which we feel in gazing at the dead, if that solemn pleasure teach us to live aright. If you will look upon nobleness of birth as a promise to be fulfilled and a debt to be paid to society; if you will recompense mankind, by your personal merit, for their fervent love to your name and fathers, and think exalted birth a solemn pledge for exalted virtue, a covenant for honourable labour and unspotted faith, an oath taken

to the shades of the dead, never to pollute their blood or sully their fame; if you hasten to fix this admiration of words and sounds upon some more solid foundation, to reflect more lustre on your race than you take from it, and to be the chief of the people in thought and action as well as by chance and law—then think for ever on the greatness of your name, and the splendour of your father's fathers; and when a prophet shall ask you, yea, when more than a prophet, when God shall ask you, "How have ye said upon earth, I am the son of wise counsellors and ancient kings?" ye may answer, "We have so said, not ignorant that all things on earth are the shadows of a shadow, and the dust of the dust; but hoping like them to walk in the pure and perfect law of Him who made us, and to do the good and righteous things which our fathers have done of old time, that we may draw down upon us Thy blessings, and finally partake of that dear and unknown world which Thy blessed Son has promised us in Thy name." (*Sydney Smith, M.A.*)

Ver. 18. **The language of Canaan.**—*Converting grace*, by changing the heart, changeth the language; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. (*M. Henry.*) *The language of Canaan*:—1. To speak the language of Canaan is to discourse on sacred subjects in a manner peculiar to those who enjoy Divine revelation, and are taught of God. 2. It is to treat of spiritual matters in that dialect which is best suited to their nature and importance, and which hath been employed for this purpose by patriarchs and prophets, by Jesus Christ Himself, His apostles and disciples in all ages. 3. This language of the people of God hath in it somewhat peculiar, whereby it may be distinguished from all other kinds of speech. It is quite free from vanity, detraction, falsehood, impurity, and folly, with which all other conversation is more or less tainted; whilst much is said concerning the only true God, the great Messiah, the promises, ordinances, and commandments of Jehovah, with many other such delightful topics. (*R. Macculloch.*)

Ver. 20. **He shall send them a Saviour and a great one.**—*A Saviour and a great one*:—The literal coincidences between the promise of a "saviour" and a "great one," and the titles of Alexander the Great and Ptolemy the Saviour are noticeable and interesting. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *Alexander the Great* delivered them from the grievous Persian yoke, and he and his successors greatly favoured the people and improved the country. He settled a great many Jews in Alexandria, giving them equal privileges with the Macedonians; and this Hebrew immigration was still further promoted by Ptolemy Soter, so that Philo reckoned that in his time there were a million Jews in the country. The temple of Onias, the LXX. version of the Bible, the books of the Apocrypha, the philosophy and theology of Philo, indicate not only what these Jews were in themselves, but enable us to infer with certainty how great must have been their example and influence in humanising the Egyptians, and bringing them to the knowledge and worship of the true God. And still more were these results apparent, still more amply was this prophecy fulfilled, when Alexandria became one of the great centres of the Christian Church. (*Ibid.*) *Who was the great Saviour promised to Egypt?*—Even if the language of this verse by itself might seem to point to a particular deliverer, the comprehensive language of the context would forbid its reference to any such exclusively. If the chapter is a prophecy not of a single event but of a great progressive change to be wrought in the condition of Egypt by the introduction of the true religion, the promise of the verse before us must be, that when they cried God would send them a deliverer, a promise verified not once but often, not by Ptolemy or Alexander only, but by others, and in the highest sense by Christ Himself. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *The Messiah a great Saviour*:—I. GREAT IN HIS PERSON. "God over all, blessed for ever." II. GREAT IN THE CHARACTER HE SUSTAINS. III. GREAT IN THE WORKS HE PERFORMS. IV. GREAT IN THE SALVATION HE BESTOWS. V. GREAT IN THE GLORY TO WHICH HE IS NOW EXALTED. (*R. Macculloch.*) *A great Saviour provided*:—An old Mexican monk, in his dingy cell, once painted an allegorical picture, representing a beautiful maiden standing on an island, with only room for her feet to rest upon, while all around dashed and surged a lake of fire. The angry flames almost touched her, and yet she smiled, all unconscious of danger. More dreadful still, on each billow's crest rides a malignant fiend, and they are closing around the seemingly defenceless girl, seeking to fasten chains about her limbs, that they

may drag her into the burning lake. The maiden still smiles serenely, for she sees them not. A golden cord of grace, descending from above, is twined amidst her sunny hair, but death appears ready to cut the slender thread. A hand of help is reaching down to her, which she must take, or be lost in the fiery abyss. A company of attending angels anxiously await her decision, and this group completes the picture. This is no fancy sketch of the old painter's brain, but it is your condition unless you have laid hold on Christ Jesus to deliver you. (J. N. Norton.)

Vers. 23-25. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria.—*Israel, Egypt, and Assyria* :—Israel is no longer alone God's people, God's creation, God's inheritance, but Egypt and Assyria are each a third sharer with Israel. In order to express this, Israel's three names of honour are mixed together, and each of three peoples receives one of the precious names, of which "inheritance" is assigned to Israel as pointing back to the beginning of its history. This essential equalisation of the heathen peoples with Israel is no degradation to the latter; for although henceforth there exists no essential distinction of the peoples in their relation to God, it is nevertheless always Israel's God who attains recognition, and Israel is the people which, according to the promise, has become the medium of blessing to the earth. (F. Delitzsch.) *The significance of the prophecy* :—These nations represent to the prophet the heathen world which was "eventually to be incorporated in the kingdom of God. The prediction can never be realised for those nations, because they have ceased to exist; but it will yet be realised in that great peace of the world, which is the hope of all the nations of mankind." (C. A. Briggs, D.D.) *A forecast of the triumph of Christianity* :—Never had the faith of the prophet soared so high or approached so near to the conception of a universal religion. (Prof. Robertson Smith.) *The holy triple alliance* :—The two great powers which have hitherto met only as foes are to meet in the worship of Jehovah. And in consequence of this there is to be fellowship between them. And this is brought about by the little central state. Israel has reached the grand end of its calling; it becomes a blessing to the whole circuit of the earth. It is a grand prophecy destined to find its full accomplishment in the latter days. I. IT IS GOD'S PURPOSE TO PERFECT THE RACE THROUGH INTERNATIONAL INTERCOURSE AND FRIENDSHIP. Chronic national antagonism is not Heaven's design. Neither is the design of God respecting the various peoples that they should dwell in a state of isolation. The Divine purpose is manifestly that the several nations shall complete each other through sympathy and reciprocity. 1. Geography indicates this. The good things of nature are not all found in any one land; reciprocity is designed and necessitated by the very dispositions of soil and climate. 2. Ethnology also gives a reason for national sympathy and intercourse. No one national type includes all perfections. The nations need one another. History shows us the solidarity of the race and how wonderfully any one people is enriched by the contributions of the rest. Take our own nation. In our gardens are the flowers and fruits of all climates. In a thousand ways our neighbours have contributed to make us what we are. The Italians and French taught us silk-weaving. The Flemings taught us our fine woollen trade. The Venetians showed us how to make glass. A German erected our first paper-mill. A Dutchman began our potteries. The Genoese taught us to build ships. And so history reveals that through successive generations the several nations have enriched each other in art, industry, literature, jurisprudence, language, philosophy, government, and religion. The thought of God is the brotherhood of man, and all things prove it. II. THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST IS THE SUPREME UNIFYING POWER OF THE RACE. In the fulness of its meaning this is what our text signifies. The lesson here for us is that the marriage of nations will take place where other marriages are celebrated—at the altar of God. In other words, the unifying power of the race is the highest religious faith—the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1. Some suppose that the ameliorative reconciling influence will be found in commerce. But there are malign influences which defeat the benign influences of trade. 2. Others think that the principle of unity will be found in the cultivation of cosmopolitan literature. The influence of great literature is pacifying, but it must also be remembered that such literature feeds patriotism, which is a peril. 3. Many build great hopes on science. Science reveals the unity of nature, but it teaches also that all nature is full of strife, and civilisation itself is built on antagonism. It is only as a great

faith changes the spirit of man that discords will resolve themselves into harmonies.

III. GOD HAS IN A VERY SPECIAL MEASURE COMMITTED UNTO US THE VERY EDIFYING GOSPEL OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. To a large extent England in this age occupies the position that Israel occupied of old—it is our special calling to bring all nations to the obedience of the faith. As Palestine came between Egypt and Assyria so this island comes in a wonderful manner between the Old World and the New. God gave spiritual gifts in a remarkable degree to Israel, and God has given us richly the treasure of His Gospel. God has also given to us special powers for the diffusion of the Gospel. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *The missionary religion*.—This was the glorious vision of the statesman-prophet, a new world arising out of the confusions and struggles of the old, a redeemed humanity, of which these now extinct peoples are the symbol, united by the benediction of God. I. WE MUST NOT READ INTO THESE WORDS ANY COMPROMISE WITH THE RELIGION OF EGYPT AND ASSYRIA. He did not mean that the faith of Israel was the third with the faiths of the Nile and the Euphrates. Perhaps the most insidious foe of the missionary spirit is the suggestion that Christianity is only one among many religions and rival creeds. It is contradicted by all the facts of Scripture and of human experience. The study of comparative religion so far from blinding us to the gleams of truth and the broken lights of heathenism, enables us to feel more deeply how faint and broken they are. The stars are invisible to us in the glory of the noon. Yet if we descend into some deep pit we lose the daylight and we see the stars. So in all ages some elect souls, sunk in the deep and horrible pit of heathenism, have seen shining far above them the pure, peaceful stars of God. Their faint light has not been enough to live by, not enough for guidance or hope, only enough to reach the remoteness of heaven and God, enough for aspiration and to keep alive the great questions of human existence and destiny. Some of our modern teachers have gone down into the deep pit, and they have forgotten that they themselves are the children of the day. We solemnly deny that any religion is suited to any people, either East or West, which cannot give cleansing to the conscience, or power to the will, or peace to the heart, which is silent where it should speak most clearly, which can cast no light beyond the grave, which does not honour womanhood and protect childhood. Heathenism is man seeking God. The Gospel is God coming down to seek man. In its essence the Gospel is unchangeable, yet there is much in our religion which is capable of adaptation to the conditions, tastes, and temperaments of different races. II. We see in our text THE WIPING OUT OF NATIONAL PREJUDICES AND RACIAL ANIMOSITIES IN A COMMON SALVATION. Egypt was the ancient foe and oppressor of Israel. The pages of Isaiah are full of warnings against the broken reed of Egypt. The prophet saw the gathering storm and knew that Assyria should scatter the nation and destroy the city and the temple. Yet he spoke of both as resting with Israel under the blessing of God. But, more than that, the known world of Isaiah's day was bounded on the west by Egypt and on the east by Assyria. They stand for the world, because they were then the confines of the world. Six centuries later the world of St. Paul was larger still. Our world is the whole world, but it has not outgrown the love or the promise or the duty. This larger outlook rests upon three chief grounds. 1. The brotherhood of man. 2. All the great redemptive facts are for humanity. 3. The purposes of God are for mankind. III. It only remains to ask whether this promise of a redeemed humanity is only a dream, and a glowing but unsubstantial vision, or IS IT A DIVINE REALITY? If it rested upon an obscure word in an ancient prophecy we might fear to press it. But it is the burden of Scripture. It was the vision of Christ as He rejoiced in spirit and cried, "And if I be lifted up I will draw all men unto Me." But it is the method of God to use human instruments. He accepts the tribute of His people's love, and He makes the wrath of man to praise Him. (*J. H. Shakespeare. M.A.*) *God's purposes worked out*.—1. God intends that each single nation of the earth shall make the most of itself for the good of all other nations. 2. God is ruling over all the nations, and is working out His great and glorious purposes through them. (*D. Gregg, LL.D.*) *God's converting grace*.—These are mysterious words, which certainly have not been fulfilled. There was a partial fulfilment of them on the day of Pentecost, when we learn that Medes, Parthians, Elamites, together with dwellers in Mesopotamia, joined with those of Egypt, Libya, Cyrene, and Judea, in acknowledging the power of the exalted Saviour, and the mighty baptism of the Holy Spirit. But just beyond the veil which hides the immediate

future, we are doubtless destined to see greater things than these. In any case, we may take the prophet's words as illustrating the truth, that none are beyond the pale of Divine mercy; that God can change persecutors into apostles, and that the elements that make men bad will, beneath converting grace, be the constituents of strong and holy lives. God rejoices to take those who have been strong in the service of Satan, and make them lowly and devoted servants of the Cross. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Isaiah's wide outlook and cosmopolitan sympathies*:—We shall never do the Jewish religion justice till we pay attention to what its greatest prophets thought of the outside world, how they sympathised with this, and in what way they proposed to make it subject to their own faith. 1. There is something in the very manner of Isaiah's treatment of foreign nations which causes the old charges of exclusiveness to sink in our throats. Isaiah treats these foreigners at least as men. Take his prophecies on Egypt or on Tyre or on Babylon—nations which were the hereditary enemies of his nation—and you find him speaking of their natural misfortunes, their social decays, their national follies and disasters, with the same pity and with the same purely moral considerations, with which he has treated his own land. When news of those far-away sorrows comes to Jerusalem, it moves this large-hearted prophet to mourning and tears. He breathes out to distant lands elegies as beautiful as he has poured upon Jerusalem. He shows as intelligent an interest in their social evolutions as he does in those of the Jewish State. He gives a picture of the industry and politics of Egypt as careful as his pictures of the fashions and statecraft of Judah. In short, as you read his prophecies upon foreign nations, you perceive that before the eyes of this man humanity, broken and scattered in his days as it was, rose up one great whole, every part of which was subject to the same laws of righteousness, and deserved from the prophet of God the same love and pity. To some few tribes he says decisively that they shall certainly be wiped out, but even them he does not address in contempt or in hatred. The large empire of Egypt, the great commercial power of Tyre, he speaks of in language of respect and admiration; but that does not prevent him from putting the plain issue to them which he put to his own countrymen: If you are unrighteous, intemperate, impure—lying diplomats and dishonest rulers, you shall certainly perish before Assyria. If you are righteous, temperate, pure, if you do trust in truth and God, nothing can move you. 2. But he who thus treated all nations with the same strict measures of justice and the same fulness of pity with which he treated his own, was surely not far from extending to the world the religious privileges which he has so frequently identified with Jerusalem. In his old age, at least, Isaiah looked forward to the time when the particular religious opportunities of the Jew should be the inheritance of humanity. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *The dominating influence of national righteousness*:—The moral is this: When the leading nation of the world is true to God and His principles, knowing no compromise and no hesitation; when it lives these principles, incorporates them into its laws and institutions, builds them into the code by which it governs its international relations, makes them part of its foreign policy, and, so far as it has it in its power, insists upon other nations honouring them and administering their affairs by them—it is always sure to win the day, and to rule as a mighty influence among all the nations of the world, and to lift them up toward the level of its own high civilisation. (*D. Gregg, LL.D.*) *A transformed world*:—No one who has seen the lovely Bay of Naples can ever forget it. The magnificent stretch of waters, the twenty or thirty miles of memorable coast that girdle it, the vast city with its painted palaces, its domes and spires, Vesuvius with nodding plume of fire and vapour, and over all the sky blue as Aaron's mantle. Now, geologists tell us that that lovely bay is really the crater of an extinct volcano. In primitive ages it was a vast and awful abyss of flame and fury, but the fires died down, the lava ceased to flow, the smoke rolled away, the glorious sea overflowed the crater, and now the lovely waters sleep and dream, reflecting the lights and colours of the sky. This world, for ages, has been a veritable mouth of hell. But its fires are slackening, its wrath abates, its darkness is less dense, its desolations and miseries come to a perpetual end, and truth and justice, mercy and kindness, are covering it as the great deep profound. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *One Gospel for all*:—God's Gospel is made not for Englishmen, but for all men. Many think the Gospel is a very beautiful thing—if you would only keep it at home; but the moment you try to apply it to anybody else, it will not suit them. Try it upon the negro; he is too low. Try it upon the Hindoo; he is



too high. Each of these must have a religion of his own; one would not suit them all. The rice that forms a suitable food for the natives of hot climates is not suitable for the bleak north. The food that is suitable for the north, the clothing and house suitable for the north, are not suitable for the tropics, and so with religion. "A man looked into the eye of an Anglo-Saxon," says William Arthur, "and found it blue, and into the eye of a negro and found it black, and he said, 'These are different organisations; you are not so bewildered as to think you can enlighten both these eyes with the same sun. You must have a sun for each of them; you must have different suns, you see, because the eyes are differently organised.'" Very well, that is exceedingly fine in theory, but try it—try whether the sun which God put in the heaven will not illuminate the pale eye of the northerner and the dark eye of the southerner. (*Sunday School Chronicle.*) *The universal language*:—When Haydn was prevailed upon to visit England for the first time, Mozart said to him, "You have no training for the great world, and you speak too few languages." Haydn replied, "My language is understood by all the world." The power of the name of Jesus is, however, more universal in its appeal than the power of great music. (*Ibid.*)

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## CHAPTER XX.

**VER. 1. In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod.**—*The purpose of the chapter*:—Judah, alarmed by the capture of Samaria, and the rapid extension of the Assyrian invasion, looked for assistance from Egypt. And the aim of this brief chapter is to recall king and people from any such reliance, by the announcement that the King of Assyria would shortly prevail against Egypt, and lead into captivity multitudes of prisoners. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The date of the prophecy* is assured. The expedition mentioned took place in 711 B.C., and is minutely related in two of Sargon's own inscriptions. See Schrader, *Cuneiform Inscriptions*, vol. ii. (*Cambridge Bible for Schools.*) *The Tartan, Assyrian, turtanu, i.e., Commander-in-chief.* (*A. B. Davidson, LL.D.*)

**Ver. 2. Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins.**—*Isaiah stripped and barefooted*:—Owing to the great importance which is attributed to clothing from the standpoint of Oriental culture and manners, any one who appears without the upper garment is already regarded as naked and bare. Isaiah has to lay off the garment of the preacher of repentance and of the mourner, so that only his tunic remains; and in this dress, and moreover barefooted, he has to appear in public. It is the costume of a man who had been robbed and disgraced, of a beggar, it may be, or a prisoner of war. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *God's appointment magnifies mean things*:—The appointment of God renders those things and actions which in themselves seem mean and contemptible, momentous and useful: it stamps them with real dignity and importance, and makes them truly instructive. View the ceremonial institutions of the Old Testament, such as circumcision, abstinence from particular kinds of food and of raiment, uncleanness contracted by touching certain objects, and sprinkling the tabernacle with blood, and they appear trifling and ridiculous. Contemplate them again as the ordinances of God, infinitely wise and gracious, and you may discern their excellence and extensive utility. Look at our prophet as he is here described, and you see an odd appearance; but consider him acting by Divine commission, that he might represent to his countrymen the future naked and destitute condition to which those nations were to be reduced in whom they foolishly placed their confidence, and every circumstance acquires new consequence. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Isaiah's obedience*:—When we are in the way of our duty we must trust God both with our credit and with our safety. (*M. Henry.*) *God's purpose dignifies what might otherwise be scandalous*:—If the dress was scandalous, yet the design was glorious. (*Ibid.*)

**Ver. 5. They shall be . . . ashamed of . . . their expectation.**—*Unreasonable expectations*:—A great deal of the discomfort, a large proportion of the disappointments of the world, may be traced to unreasonable expectations

—to the fact that men will persist in expecting what they have no right to expect at all, or to expect in that precise form or degree. Indeed, so many of the expectations cherished in this world are so vain and unreasonable, involving those who entertain them in such necessary disappointment, that some one has sardonically observed, “Blessed is the man who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed.” But, while we would not take so gloomy a view of human life as this, we cannot help feeling that much of the worry and mortification of life may be accounted for by our expecting what we have no right to expect. We all suffer from the same complaint, in larger or lesser degree. The symptoms differ in different individuals; the disease is radically the same. Young and old, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, masters and servants, buyers and sellers, husbands and wives, parents and children, pastors and people—all, in some way or other, and to some extent or other, are the victims of unreasonable expectations. Life with all of them would be a brighter, smoother, pleasanter thing, if they expected less. As we grow older we ought to grow wiser in this respect. Having regard only to the ordinary intercourse and social relationships of life—how many complaints would be hushed, how much irritation would be allayed, how much needless mortification be averted, how much resentment cease, how many fancied slights and injuries appear inconsiderable, if, instead of brooding over our rights, which we imagine have been withheld or invaded, we were to sit down, and quietly, dispassionately consider what, living in a world like this, we might, on the whole, reasonably expect. If we were thus to inquire we should find that we were getting more than we deserved; and that, for the most part, we were being treated by others quite as fairly, honourably, and tenderly as we were in the habit of treating them. (*T. M. Morris.*)

*Unreasonable expectations in relation to religion:*—The subject of unreasonable expectations is of almost illimitable extent, and in further dwelling upon it I would limit my remarks to three points—

**I. THE THINGS WHICH GOD’S PEOPLE UNREASONABLY EXPECT.** Nothing can be more plain than that our expectations as Christians should be limited by the teaching and promise of God’s Word. We are safe so long as we rest in the promise of God.

1. It is unreasonable to expect that you can place yourselves in any false position, form any unworthy association, engage in any questionable occupation, and be saved from the natural consequences of so doing. Lot was a very good man, but he made a very great mistake. If, in your legitimate business,—if, in sustaining any of the just relationships of life, you meet with danger or temptation, you may reasonably expect that God will grant you all the necessary assistance and protection. But if the danger or temptation be of your own seeking, it is likely that God will teach you wisdom by leaving you to endure the consequences of your rashness or perversity. It is unreasonable for you to expect that you can touch pitch and not be defiled, take fire in your bosom and not be burned, nourish a viper and not be stung.

2. It is unreasonable to expect that you should grow in grace, or realise any very high degree of enjoyment in the Divine life, if all the while you are neglecting or insufficiently using the means of growth, the sources of enjoyment which are placed within your reach.

3. It is unreasonable to expect in Christian life what our Master expressly warns us against expecting. Many seem disappointed because they do not find the way of Christian pilgrimage perfectly smooth and pleasant from its commencement to its close. Your Master tells you plainly that you have to lay your account with suffering and trial, with disappointment and danger. The Christian life is never represented as one of ease and self-indulgence, but rather as a state of warfare. You are treading in the footsteps of those who, in uninterrupted succession, have walked in the same rough way.

4. I might easily enumerate many other unreasonable expectations in which Christians are tempted to indulge. It is unreasonable to expect results from unassisted human nature which can only flow from Divine grace. It is unreasonable to expect from an attempted conformity to the law what can only be secured by a simple dependence on the Gospel. It is unreasonable to expect that we shall find on earth what can be only realised in heaven, or that we can derive from any inferior and created source what can only be found in the centre and sum of all excellency, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

**II. THE THINGS WHICH ARE UNREASONABLY EXPECTED OF GOD’S PEOPLE.**

1. There are those who make it a matter of reproach against religion, and prefer it as an excuse for their unbelief, that the Gospel, the religion of the Cross, does not come up in sundry particulars to their idea of what a religion which claims man’s acceptance and confidence

ought to be. Such objections we may dismiss as the fruit of unreasonable expectations, for all, save the most shallow and pretentious of such objectors, are ready to confess that there are "more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in their philosophy." 2. There are those who do not go so far as to object against religion as unreasonable, who seem to resent it as an injury that any measure of mystery should attach to any of the statements of Scripture. In reply to this, several things may be said. It might be said that, taking into account what this revelation professes to be, it was reasonable to expect that the truths communicated, while intelligible on the one side, should lose themselves in mystery on the other. And it might be further remarked, in reference to many of those who thus object, that they make but very little use of such light as they confessedly have. Is it not the part of reason first of all to inquire whether the Bible be an authentic and authoritative revelation from heaven to earth, and then, if its claims to be so regarded are substantiated to the satisfaction of reason, is it not the very part and office of reason to sit submissively at the feet of the Divine Teacher and learn of Him? 3. There are many who but very slightly interest themselves in the truth which Christians hold, who seem to take much pleasure in narrowly scrutinising the lives which Christians live. The real or alleged inconsistencies of professing Christians do not afford any ground of reasonable objection against the Gospel, or any valid excuse for its continued rejection. In judging of any practical system, we must have reference to what it professes to be, and to accomplish. If you confine attention to those who are the sincere and genuine followers of the Lamb, it is unreasonable to expect that they should manifest in this world an absolute perfection of character. Such perfection, we believe, can be only realised when this body of sin and death shall have been laid aside. III. THE THINGS WHICH THOSE WHO ARE NOT GOD'S PEOPLE UNREASONABLY EXPECT FOR THEMSELVES. 1. It is unreasonable to expect that anything which the world contains can meet the need, or satisfy the desire, of man's immortal soul. 2. It is unreasonable to expect that in religion any one can serve two masters. No such thing as neutrality is possible in religion, and, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as indecision. 3. It is unreasonable to expect that sinful men can satisfy the requirements of the law, and avert its penalty, by any obedience they can render, by any penance they can endure. 4. It is unreasonable to expect that those who, enjoying Gospel light, die despising Gospel grace, will be in any wise benefited by the uncovenanted mercies of God. 5. It is unreasonable to expect that you can spend a sinful, worldly life, and then have a comfortable death and a happy eternity. 6. It is unreasonable to expect that, because you pass muster in this world, and occupy a moderately creditable position among your fellow-men, that therefore you will do moderately well in another world; and that, if you do not shine forth conspicuously with the best, you will go through the gates into the city, unnoticed among the crowd. 7. It is unreasonable to expect that, because sentence is not speedily executed against an evil work, that therefore it never will be; and that, because the present order of things has continued so long, that therefore it will continue for ever. (*Ibid.*)

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## CHAPTER XXI.

VERB. 1-10. *The burden of the desert of the sea.*—*The desert of the sea* :—This enigmatical name for Babylon was no doubt suggested by the actual character of the country in which the city stood. It was an endless breadth or succession of undulations "like the sea," without any cultivation or even any tree: low, level, and full of great marshes; and which used to be overflowed by the Euphrates, till the whole plain became a sea, before the river was banked in by Semiramis, as Herodotus says. But the prophet may allude also to the social and spiritual desert which Babylon was to the nations over which its authority extended, and especially to the captive Israelite; and perhaps, at the same time, to the multitude of the armies which it poured forth like the waters of the sea. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *The prophecy against Babylon* :—It is a magnificent specimen of Hebrew poetry in its abrupt energy and passionate intensity. The prophet

is, or imagines himself to be, in Babylon. Suddenly he sees a storm of invasion sweeping down through the desert, which fills him with alarm. Out of the rolling whirlwind troops of armed warriors flash into distinctness. A splendid banquet is being held in the great Chaldean city; the tables are set, the carpets are spread; they eat, they drink, the revel is at its height. Suddenly a wild cry is heard, "Arise, ye princes, anoint the shield!"—in other words, the foe is at hand. "Spring up from the banquet, smear with oil the leathern coverings of your shields that the blows of the enemy may slide off from them in battle." The clang of arms disturbs the Babylonian feast. The prophet sitting, as it were an illuminated spirit, as a watchman upon the tower calls aloud to ask the cause of the terror. What is it that the watchman sees? The watchman, with deep, impatient groan, as of a lion, complains that he sees nothing; that he has been set there, apparently for no purpose, all day and all night long. But even as he speaks there suddenly arises an awful need for his look-out. From the land of storm and desolation, the desert between the Persian Gulf and Babylon, he sees a huge and motley host, some mounted on horses, some on asses, some on camels, plunging forward through the night. It is the host of Cyrus on his march against Babylon. In the advent of that Persian host he sees the downfall of the dynasty of Nebuchadnezzar and the liberation of Judah from her exile. On the instant, as though secure of victory, he cries out, "Babylon is fallen." And he, that is, Cyrus the Persian king, a monotheist though he be, a worshipper of fire and the sun, has dashed in pieces all the graven images of the city of Nimrod. Then he cries to his fellow-exiles in Babylonian captivity, "O my people, crushed and trodden down"—literally, "O my grain, and the son of my threshing-floor"—"this is my prophecy for you; it is a prophecy of victory for your champions; it is a prophecy of deliverance for yourselves." (*Dean Farrar, D.D.*) *The Persian advance on Babylon* (vers. 7, 9):—It is a slight but obvious coincidence of prophecy and history that Xenophon represents the Persians advancing by two and two. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *The Persian aversion to images*:—The allusion to idols (ver. 9) is not intended merely to remind us that the conquest was a triumph of the true God over false ones, but to bring into view the well-known aversion of the Persians to all images. Herodotus says they not only thought it unlawful to use images, but imputed folly to those who did it. Here is another incidental but remarkable coincidence of prophecy even with profane history. (*Ibid.*) "*The burden of the desert of the sea*":—There is a burden in all vast things; they oppress the soul. The firmament gives it; the mountain gives it; the prairie gives it. But I think nothing gives it like looking on the sea. The sea suggests something which the others do not—a sense of desertness. In the other cases the vastness is broken to the eye. The firmament has its stars; the mountain has its peaks; the prairie has its flowers; but the sea, where it is open sea, has nothing. It seems a strange thing that the prophet, in making the sea a symbol of life's burden, should have selected its aspect of loneliness. Why not take its storms? Because the heaviest burden of life is not its storms but its solitude. There are no moments so painful as our island moments. One half of our search for pleasure is to avoid self-reflection. The pain of solitary responsibility is too much for us. It drives the middle-aged man into fast living, and the middle-aged woman into gay living. I cannot bear to hear the discord of my own past. It appals me; it overwhelms me; I fly to the crowd to escape my unaccompanied shadow. (*G. Matheson, D.D.*)

**Ver. 5. Anoint the shield.**—"Anoint the shield":—The ancient shields being mostly of stout leather stretched over a frame or rim of metal or wood, it was necessary to rub them with oil, lest they should become hard and crack, or lest they should become so rigid that an arrow or spear might easily penetrate them. Shields of this kind are still much in use, and still require the same treatment, in Western Asia; and we have ourselves frequently seen them on sale in the bazaars, and in use among the Arabs, the Kurds, and the Caucasians. (*J. Kitto, D.D.*) *Things that did not happen*:—What is a shield? It is a very peculiar part of God's armour. It is not a strength in calamity; it is something which prevents calamity from coming. My strength is my power to bear; but my shield is my escape from bearing. My strength lifts me when the blow falls; my shield catches the blow before it falls. My strength supports what is; my shield wards off what might have been. I have often praised God for the strength; but I have seldom anointed the shield. I have recognised a thousand times

His songs in the night; but I have not sufficiently thanked Him that the night itself has not been deeper. (*G. Matheson, D.D.*)

Ver. 10. **O My threshing, and the corn of My floor.—God's threshing:—**Babylon is the instrument employed by the Divine wrath to thresh with. But love takes part also in the work of threshing, and restrains the action of wrath. A picture likely to give comfort to the grain lying for threshing on the floor, *i.e.*, to the people of Israel which, mowed down as it were and removed from its native soil, had been banished to Babylon, and there subjected to a tyrannical rule. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *Comfort for God's afflicted people:—*I. **THE CHURCH IS GOD'S FLOOR**, in which the most valuable fruits and products of this earth are, as it were, gathered together and laid up. II. **TRUE BELIEVERS ARE THE CORN OF GOD'S FLOOR.** Hypocrites are but as the chaff and straw, which take up a deal of room, but are of small value, with which the wheat is now mixed, but from which it shall be shortly and for ever separated. III. **THE CORN OF GOD'S FLOOR MUST EXPECT TO BE THRESHED** by afflictions and persecutions. IV. **EVEN THEN, GOD OWNS IT FOR HIS THRESHING—**it is His still; nay, the threshing of it is by His appointment and under His restraint and direction. The threshers could have no power against it but what is given them from above. (*M. Henry.*)

Vers. 11, 12. **The burden of Dumah.—The burden of Dumah:—**Like Moab, Edom had once formed part of David's dominions, but in the days of disruption and weakness both had rebelled. What about Edom now? When Moab was so soon to fall—when the Assyrian was spreading devastation all around—what was to be Edom's fate? The prophet hears the appeal addressed to him as God's watchman and with anxious repetition. The words, "Watchman, what of the night? How much of the night has passed?" contain the cry of perplexity and a demand for light and guidance. But the answer is an oracle of silence. Not yet is Edom to be told what is God's will concerning her future. She is assured that there will be alternations of light and darkness for her as for all in the time of their probation. Meanwhile, patience is to have its perfect work; and after a little while she may inquire again. A later prophecy shows the work of Divine judgment on this land. (*Buchanan Blake, B.D.*) *Dumah:—*It lay to the south of Palestine, thus bordering on the inheritance of Judah. It was a wild mountainous district, inhabited by a race whose character reflected the rugged nature of their surroundings. They were constantly at war with their neighbours, especially the Jews, and spent a large portion of their time making inroads into southern Palestine for the sake of plunder and conquest. On account of these invasions, and also because they joined the Chaldeans against the Jews, the most sweeping denunciations were pronounced against them. In course of time these denunciations were followed by disasters, in consequence of which the Edomites became a vanquished people, and were finally incorporated with the Jewish nation. Then, when at a later period the whole of that region passed into the hands of the Greeks and Romans, it became known by the Greek name of Idumea—Dumah being the old Hebrew name. Hence the "burden of Dumah" means the prophecy concerning the fate of Idumea or Edom. (*D. Merson, M.A., B.D.*) *The oracle of Dumah:—*The land of Edom pleads for some vision to her also. Judah is to be rescued. The prophet has seen the Persian host in its varied array—troops of chariots and horsemen crashing through the brazen gates of idolatrous Babylon, extinguishing its feasts in blood, issuing from it with the cry of victory. It is good news for Judah, but what shall it be for Edom? It is as if the voice of Esau cried out once more, "Hast Thou but one blessing, O my Father. Bless me, even me also, O my Father." And as the prophet stands in imagination on the peak of the hill, he hears a voice calling to him out of Seir, the stronghold of the Edomites, a sharp, agitated cry, "Watchman, how far in the night? Watchman, what hour of the night? Does the darkness still linger, is the morning near?" Well might Edom be in terror; the sons of Esau had behaved to Judah in her hour of affliction with malignant hatred which had wounded her to the heart. In Obadiah, in Amos, in Ezekiel, in Jeremiah, you may read traces of their crime. When the Jews fled before the advances of Nebuchadnezzar, the Edomites, true to their miserable destiny, their hand against every man and every man's hand against them, had cruelly massacred and intercepted the helpless fugitives, and had urged Nebuchadnezzar

to destroy the Holy City. It is to this that the sad Psalmist of the Exile alludes when he says: "Remember, O Lord, against the children of Edom, in the day of Jerusalem, how they cried, 'Down with it, down with it, even to the ground.'" Naturally, therefore, in the approaching hour of Judah's emancipation, the prophet has not much comfort to bestow on these cruel and treacherous sons of the desert. All he can say to the Edomites at first is a riddling message of which not much can be made. But then, after this stern and dubious answer, as though somewhat relenting, the watchman cries, "If ye wish to inquire again, inquire ye," and then, very briefly, "Return, come." In other words, "The oracle for you, sons of Edom, is no vaticination about a mere earthly future." It may be summed up in two words—in the warning, "Repent," and in the invitation, "Come." (*Dean Farrar, D.D.*)

*Edomites and Jews: a hostile world attacking the Church*.—It may help us to the true meaning of this question, if we keep in mind the relation in which the Edomites stood to the Jews. That relation was one of the closest, if we have respect to origin or birth; but if we have respect to friendship, then the feelings existing between them were of the most hostile kind. Descended from a common stock, they kept alive the family animosities. The Edomites, who were the descendants of Esau, hated the Israelites on account of the deceitful conduct of Jacob their father. The sight of the prosperity of the sons of Jacob perpetuated the old grudge in the breast of the less favoured sons of Esau; and their seasons of adversity were made the occasions of bitter sneers. These two nations have become associated in our minds, the one with the people of God, the other with their enemies. The sons of Jacob were chosen, in preference to the sons of Esau, to be the medium of carrying the Divine blessings to all nations. The Edomites were in consequence filled with envy and hatred towards their brethren, lost no opportunity of attacking them in the most envenomed spirit, and thus they may justly be regarded as a type of the hostile world attacking the Church of God. Here, then, we seem to have a clue to the interpretation of the passage before us. If we regard the Jewish nation as a type of the Church or people of God, and the Edomites as a type of the hostile world, we have here a question addressed to the Church by the world, and we have the Church's reply. (*D. Merson, M.A., B.D.*)

*Eastern watchmen*.—It was the custom in the regions of the East in ancient times, to erect lofty watch-towers, so high as to be above all surrounding buildings, and to place watchmen on them, who should observe all that came within their view and report accordingly. The design of this custom was to prevent the approach of an enemy unforeseen. The watchman in his lofty tower observed in the distance the gathering of armies and the mustering of hosts; he could see in the far-off horizon the glistening of weapons and the waving of the banners of war; and then he gave warning and the people prepared for the event. There is very frequent allusion to this custom in the Scriptures; and it is in reference to it, that the ministers of the Church of God are described as the Lord's "watchmen." It is their duty to stand upon the walls and upon the watch-towers of the Church that they may see the approaching danger, and to give warning, that the people perish not (*Isa. lxii. 6; Ezek. xxxiii. 2, &c.*). (*M. H. Seymour, M.A.*)

*Watchman*.—A different word from that in verse 6, and signifying not one who spies or looks out, but one who guards or keeps (*Psa. cxxx. 6*). (*Prof. Driver, D.D.*)

*The burden* is in two respects—1. Of the prophets that bear it. The Word of the Lord is a heavy burden till they are delivered of it; there is no rest to the surcharged conscience. The ministry is a matter of both honour and burden. Are there none that catch at honour, but will not meddle with the burden? 2. Of the people that were to suffer it. The judgments of God are heavy on whomsoever they light. It is true of them what the philosopher said of himself, *Perieram nisi perissem*,—they are undone that are not undone. Security is the very suburbs of hell. An insensible heart is the devil's anvil, he fashioneth all sins on it, and the blows are not felt. (*T. Adams.*)

*The burden of Dumah*.—

I. THE CHARACTER HERE GIVEN OF THE PROPHET. II. THE IMPORTUNITY OF THE PEOPLE APPLYING TO HIM. III. HIS ANSWER. 1. We may tender the prophet's answer to any who would perplex themselves or others with inquiries respecting the existing state of this world's affairs. 2. The wicked, walking after their own lusts and counsels, sometimes, in a scoffing manner, inquire of ministers, "What of the night? What think ye of my state and prospects? What of the truth of religion? What of the uses and importance of godliness? My wickedness thrives, and you said that it would be my ruin; my vices are pleasant, and you

said that they would be bitter ; my mind is at ease, and you said that I should be harassed in conscience. Where is the truth of your words ? where the severity of judgment ?—what evidence of a day of retribution ? ” The awful answer again is, “ the morning cometh, and also the night. ” 3. The prophet’s answer was given to persons in trouble ; and thus applied, its import is various. To some who demand of us, in seasons of their distress, “ Watchman, what of the night ? ” the answer is, Time is fast passing, and your sorrows are fast passing with it. To others, “ The morning cometh, ” but as yet it is profound night to you, many and heavy sorrows still await you. Your spiritual condition is such, that our Heavenly Father will seek to bring you to Himself by many grievous visitations ; hateful indeed, to the natural will, but most salutary for the soul’s health. Or else, perhaps, as you have approved yourselves to God in the season of prosperity, it is the Divine pleasure to make experiment of you in the fiery furnace of adversity, to see whether “ tribulation can separate you from the love of Christ. ” To others again, the answer is, It is the seventh hour, the midnight of your affliction is already past, and if passed by a little only, you have already suffered the extreme of your earthly portion of endurance ; all that follows shall be comparatively light, and work for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, if in patience ye possess your souls. (*A. Williams, M.A.*)

*The watchman’s report and advice* :—I. WHO IS THE WATCHMAN REFERRED TO ? II. THE INQUIRY INSITUATED. 1. The whole state of the world demands of the servants of God that they should prayerfully and diligently regard the signs and movements of the times. 2. There are personal inquiries which ought to press upon all who are rightly impressed with a sense of their responsibility to God. “ How is the period of my probation passing ? What is the progress of the night, which is to be succeeded by a morrow which knows no change or ending ? How speeds the night in which my soul’s salvation is to be determined ? ”

III. THE WATCHMAN’S REPORT IN ANSWER TO THE QUESTION. “ The morning cometh, and also the night. ” This report is most comprehensive, and may convey the following ideas—1. That there will be nothing settled or permanent : changes may be expected. (1) There has always been a mixture of light and darkness in the Church—in its perceptions of truth, and in the events connected with it. (2) So in the case of the individual Christian, in times of sorrow and distress : darkness has appeared to compass his path ; yet he has not been without gleams of comfort and light. 2. But the report without doubt is designed to indicate a period of coming joy to believers, of misery and woe to the wicked—to the one the morning cometh, to the other night. 3. There is one other observation in the watchman’s report worthy of attention, namely, that the morning and the night are said to come together ; “ the morning cometh, and also the night. ” It may seem strange to many that these periods should be said to come simultaneously. But if you look at the characters to whom they thus come, the difficulty is removed. That which will be a time of light and comfort to the righteous, will be one of darkness and dismay to the ungodly. Indeed, it is partly so in the present imperfect state of things. The very blessings of the impenitent are turned into curses ; their day of mercy and grace becomes a night of darkness and calamity ; whilst, on the other hand, all that appear night and trouble to the people of God, are means of increased light and joy to them. Their sorrow is turned into joy ; their tribulation worketh patience and experience and hope.

IV. THE ADVICE WHICH THE WATCHMAN GIVES IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE REPORT. 1. Inquiry is the first duty recommended. We look for nothing, and expect nothing so long as there is indifference. It was the great sin of God’s professing people of old, that “ they would not consider. ” It is only when we can excite a spirit of serious inquiry that we can hope for lasting good from our efforts. 2. But to diligent inquiry, return to God is recommended. All inquiry in fact is for this purpose, and it would be useless if it did not issue in an actual return to your Father. 3. The prophet closes with one more observation, and it is used by way of encouragement—“ Come. ” (*T. Dealtry, D.D.*)

*The watchman’s report and advice* :—I. THE WATCHMAN’S REPORT. 1. As it may be supposed to respect the public affairs of our country. 2. The state of virtue and piety among us. II. THE WATCHMAN’S ADVICE. The doom of Dumah was not inevitably fixed ; she would yet be indulged with a morning of opportunities ; and the only sure ground of hope was in a returning to God. We have as a nation something of Dumah’s morning—some farther space for reflection and repentance. It must be of the greatest moment to know what an offended God

expects. "Inquire; return; come." The inquiring, returning, coming, so kindly and seasonably urged on Dumah, in her night, are recommended to us on every ground, whether human or Divine. 1. Nothing can be more fit and proper in itself. 2. It is the subject of a Divine command. 3. In the patience and forbearance of God, and in the wonderful method He has devised for the pardon and salvation of a guilty people, we have a loud call and a most powerful motive to "inquire, return, and come." 4. And there are important and happy consequences resulting from a sinful people's inquiring, returning, and coming to God. (*N. Hill.*) "Watchman, what of the night?"—I. CONSIDER THE QUESTION. 1. Some ask the report of the night with utter carelessness as to the reply. 2. Some ask in contempt. 3. Some ask in horror and anguish of heart. II. WHAT IS STILL THE DUTY OF HIM WHO HOLDS THE MOMENTOUS POSITION OF WATCHMAN IN THE CITY OF GOD? 1. He did not turn away from the question, in whatever spirit it was asked. 2. He uttered with equal assurance a threat and a promise. 3. He pressed the necessity of care in the study and earnest inquiry after the nature of the truth. 4. He summed up all by an anxious, a cordial, and a reiterated invitation to repentance and reconciliation with an offended but pardoning God. Thus, the single verse might be regarded as an abstract of the duties of the ministerial office. (*W. Archer Butler, D.D.*) *The world's challenge and the Church's response*:—I. This is THE WORLD'S CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCH. From the midst of that darkness which, by reason of the limitation of our knowledge, encompasses us all; and from the midst of that double darkness which enwraps those who are untouched and unchanged by the love of Christ Jesus, this challenge is continually coming to the Church. This is—1. The cry of scepticism. The scepticism of our day is, in some instances, evidently the error of noble but misguided spirits, who, having discovered that in some matters of belief concerning which they had thought themselves very sure, they were wholly in the wrong, and having in other cases been baffled in the search for certainty, have too hastily given up all hope of obtaining satisfaction and rest with respect to many of the most momentous questions of human life. There is, however, a shallower scepticism. It addresses the Church in tones of equal incredulity, but breathing the spirit of vanity, hostility, and contempt. 2. The cry of the world's worldliness. Men who are living for this life only, ask the question. There is a terribly close connection between worldliness and scepticism of the scoffing and contemptuous sort. The tendency of a life in which there is no regard for God and eternity, is to produce an unbelief far more blighting than that disbelief which is the result of misguided thinking. And with all the wild recklessness or supercilious scorn or stolid indifference of old times, they ask, "What of the night? You prophets of darkness, who take so gloomy a view of the condition of the world, who warn us of a perpetual darkness for those who live so heedlessly, what of the night? You who profess to believe that your religion can do such great things, where are the signs of its power, and of the accomplishment of its work? What signs of the dissipation of the darkness of which you speak, and of the coming of the day?" 3. The cry of the world's agony. From the darkness of the sin which is shutting out of the life all joy and purity and hope, from the woe which is crushing them, men make their appeal to the Church of God. They ask for the causes of this darkness and for the means by which it may be removed. But there are many who are conscious that the agony they feel is attributable to their sin; and in the sense of their alienation from God they ask of the Church, pleadingly, What of the night? It is not simply the apprehension of darkness, but the consciousness of it, the darkness of being sinful. "Oh tell us if there be forgiveness, peace, purity, and rest, for guilty, storm-tossed, polluted, and wearied hearts!" 4. The cry of the world's hope. Many have felt the dawn of a new day in their own hearts, and now they continually pray, "Thy kingdom come." Although they have light within, they see the darkness around them. But because of what they have themselves experienced, they cannot despair of the case of humanity. II. THE RESPONSE WITH WHICH THE CHURCH IS ENTRUSTED, and which she is bound urgently and confidently to deliver. "The morning cometh, and also the night." 1. The Church's message to the world is a message of mingled mercy and severity, of joyous and of sad import. We look at what Christianity has done and is doing in the world; and the result of the examination is a deep and growing conviction that the evidences of Christianity never were so strong or convincing as to-day. (1) And this is our answer to scepticism. Account for Christianity. See what



it has done for nations, what for a single life! (2) This, too, is our answer to the cry of the worldly. However blind men may be to the fact, however incapable of reading the signs of the times, assuredly the course of human history proclaims "the morning cometh"; the morning of a day which shall reveal the falseness of every mode of life which involves forgetfulness of God; the morning of a day when every heart unconsecrated to God shall declare its dissatisfaction, and when every cherished lust of wrong shall reveal its insatiable appetite, by the cry, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." (3) And this is the message of the Church to the agonised: "The morning cometh" of the day when the wounds of humanity shall be for ever healed; when the sorrow of men shall be turned into joy. We see signs of this already, in the present amelioration of man's condition which Christianity produces. (4) And in the brightness of that morning, which many signs proclaim cometh for the world, the hopeful shall find all, and more than all, for which their hearts have ever yearned, and more than all of which their imagination ever dreamed. 2. But alas! if it be true that the morning cometh, it is not less necessary that we should add, "and also the night." The dawning of the day of Christ will leave some in profounder darkness. 3. Therefore, we close with the urgent personal appeal of the prophet: "If ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come." Let this be the commencement of an earnest inquiry as to the claims of Christianity, and we do not fear for the result. Let the value of the world be estimated, and compared with the value of the favour and the life of God; and there can be but one issue. Let this be the day of earnest seeking for the light, the peace and the pardon of God; and the agony of a troubled heart and the burden of a guilty conscience shall be taken away, and the spirit shall know the life and liberty of Christ Jesus. "Inquire ye," and in this truth as it is in Jesus ye shall find all you need. (*T. Stephenson.*) *The burden of Dumah*:—I. ENDEAVOUR TO EXPLAIN IT. II. EXHIBIT THE LESSONS WHICH IT TEACHES; or, apply it to the friends and the foes of God. 1. We have an illustration of the conduct of a taunting world; a world often disposed not to reason, but to make derision of religion; a world always finding occasions, in some peculiar state of the Church, or in some aspect of religion, for the exhibition of irony or scorn. 2. We have in the response of the watchman, "The morning cometh," an illustration of the times of light and prosperity in the Church destined to succeed those of calamity. We may apply it to the individual Christian in the midst of calamity. Thus, too, it is of the Church universal. In her darkest hours, it was true that brighter days were to dawn. So it is now. The night of sin is to be succeeded by a long bright day. There is one thing only that is certain in the future history of this world—its conversion to God and to the true religion. 3. In like manner we have an illustration of a third important fact—the night of calamity that is coming on a sinful and scoffing world. 4. There remains one other idea. That is, if you—the despiser—will inquire in a humble manner; if you will come with proper reverence, and will turn from your sins, light will stream along your path; and the sun of prosperity will ride up your sky, and pour down his noontide radiance upon you also. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) "Watchman, what of the night?"—I. THE WATCHMAN AS TYPICAL OF EVERY TRUE AMBASSADOR OF THE CROSS. 1. He occupied vantage ground. He was selected for the office; placed in an appropriate position—where, unhindered, he could carry on his observations. 2. He possessed knowledge of the ground he surveyed, a mere enthusiast would not do, nor a novice, nor an enemy; a patriot would be the best, with a clear head and a warm heart. 3. He would expect implicit obedience to his cries. If he said "All well!" people might rest; if, "To arms!" people must be up. Apply these points to the office of the Christian ministry. II. THE INQUIRER OF THE WATCHMAN AS TYPICAL OF THE ANXIOUS SEEKER AFTER SALVATION. 1. He was painfully conscious of the darkness. Every awakened sinner feels the darkness of ignorance, and danger, and guilt, and wonders what of the night—how, and when will it end? 2. He was anxiously desirous of the light. The anxious seeker after salvation longs for the Light of the world—the light of the glorious Gospel to shine into his heart. III. THE ANSWER OF THE WATCHMAN AS TYPICAL OF THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE SOUL IN RELIGION. 1. The morning cometh—the morning of day, of newness of life, of glorious opportunity. 2. "Also the night." The day will not last for ever, let us work while it is called day. (*F. W. Brown.*) *The world's interrogation and the Church's response*:—I. WHEN NIGHT HANGS HEAVILY ON THE CHURCH, IT HANGS STILL MORE HEAVILY ON THE WORLD. The Assyrian oppression lay like a cloud on

Judah, but in lying on Judah it projected a still heavier cloud upon Edom. The world is so bound up with the Church that, consciously or unconsciously, it rises with the Church's rising, falls with the Church's falling, rejoices in the Church's freedom, pines in the Church's bondage, is lightened by the Church's sunshine, is shadowed by the Church's clouds. And this, take the world in what aspect you may, as the world of society, the world of business, the world of pleasure. What is the practical lesson? Do not leave the Church because the Church may be wrapped in adversity; if you do, a deeper adversity is awaiting you in the quarter to which you repair. And the same law holds good in a wider sense. We are compassed with mystery. Some persons, impatient with the obscurities of faith, take refuge in the greater obscurities of unbelief. Restless under the clouds of Judah, they seek relief amidst the heavier clouds of Edom. There never was a greater mistake than to suppose that because Christianity is bound up with problems, the abandonment of belief is the abandonment of mystery.

II. And the fact is, the world realises this; for note as the next thought we deduce from the passage, **THAT IN THE MIDST OF THIS COMMON NIGHT, ENVELOPING BOTH CHURCH AND WORLD, THE WORLD TURNS TO THE CHURCH FOR LIGHT.** It is very suggestive that in the general pressure of the general gloom the Edomite is represented as appealing to the Jew, a representative of the Jewish God. Was there none to consult nearer home? Where were the seers of Idumea? Through all ages the principle is the same. Ever, in the midst of the cloud that surrounds us all, the world puts its questions to the Church. Sometimes, indeed, the question is ironical. Sometimes it is curious. Often, however, the question is earnest.

III. And thus we come up to the next plain lesson, **THAT WHEN THE WORLD QUESTIONS THE CHURCH, THE CHURCH MUST BE READY TO ANSWER.** That implies—

1. That the Church has an answer to give. It is conceivable that, in some cases, professing Christian men may have no answer. When the question comes, they are nonplussed; it embarrasses, puzzles them. What is the reason? With one class, want of perception of the difficulty. And for another class, the reason may be that, while feeling the pressure of the difficulty, they have not obtained a solution for themselves. Wherefore, when face to face with the world's questions, let us see to it that we have material for an answer.
2. And let us give the answer we have. Let the possession of truth be followed by the communication of it, as often as opportunity arises.
- IV. And yet, let it always be remembered that **WHILE THE CHURCH SHOULD BE READY TO ANSWER THE WORLD'S QUESTIONINGS, THE NATURE OF THE ANSWER MUST BE CONDITIONED BY THE MORAL STATE OF THE QUESTIONER.** Look once more at the prophet. So long as the attitude of Edom is an attitude of general inquiry, the prophet has only a general statement. "The morning cometh," he says, "and also the night." It is when this attitude of general inquiry passes into the attitude of personal repentance, that he promises a personal and particular revelation corresponding. "Cleanse your hearts," he says, "reform your ways, turn to the Lord, and then come back again, and I will tell you more." And here we turn from the duty and responsibility of those that are questioned to the spirit and character of those that question them. You ask if sorrow will pass, doubt dissolve, providence unfold itself, Scripture become plain, heaven be won. Our answer is, "Yes—in the experience of some"; whether in your experience we cannot say, until we know more. If yours is the sensitive conscience, the tender heart, the submissive will, if you sorrow for sin, if you turn to righteousness, if you cleave to God, then we can tell. For you the night is departing, but if the night is not vanishing in your own heart, it is useless, it is trifling, to ask how the night goes elsewhere. How apt are some men to divert attention from the state of matters within by directing it to the state of matters without—the prospects of neighbours, the words of Scripture, the controversies of the Church, the mysteries of Providence! He who will know of the doctrine must do the will. (*W. A. Gray.*) *The coming dawn* (A Christmas homily) (with Rom. xiii. 12):—"The night is far spent; the day is at hand." But for the fact which Christmas commemorates, we should have no reply to that question save one: "Though the morning cometh, the night cometh also." It is only the advent of Christ, and the prophecy latent in that advent, which enable us to add in the full assurance of faith: "The night is far spent, and the day which has no night is at hand." 1. That you may see that both these answers to the question which the world and the Church have so long been asking are true, and in what sense they are true, let us consider how far St. Paul's answer to it has been fulfilled; whether the day which he

foresaw did not really come, but also whether this day was not followed by a night and the promise of its dawn overcast. When he stood on his watch-tower and surveyed the horizon, he had much reason to believe that the night of heathenism was far spent; that the day of the Lord, the day on which Christ would take to Himself His great power and rule in all the earth, was close at hand. But as we look back on the period to which he looked forward with such confident hope, we can see that the end was not yet, although it seemed so near; that, though a morning came, a night came also. The apostolic day, or age, was hardly over before the night came rushing back; and in a few centuries the dogmas and superstitions, the vices and crimes, of heathenism were to be found in the very Church itself, where, alas, too many of them still linger. Yet even in "the dark ages" there was a remnant who had light in their dwellings, and did not altogether lose hope. And when the day of the Reformation dawned on Europe, Luther and his compeers had little doubt that the true day of the Lord had come at last, that a light had arisen which would speedily renew the face of the earth. And a day had come, but not the great day of Christ. The end was not even yet. Over its larger spaces, even Europe still lies in darkness, the darkness of superstition, or sensuality, or indifference; while in Africa, Asia with its teeming millions, and South America, we can discern only distant and twinkling points of light which are all but lost in the surrounding darkness. So that when we in our turn ask, "Watchman, what of the night? Is it almost gone? Will it soon pass?" we, too, can often hear none but the old reply, "If a morning is coming, so also is a night." We try to hope, but the verdict of history is against us. Analogy is against us. How long it took to make the world! how slowly it was built up, inch by inch, before it was ready for the foot of man! And how intolerably slow is man's growth and development! Reason and experience are against us. Think what the world is like,—how nation makes war on nation, and class on class, how common and unblushing vice is even among those who should be best fortified against it by education and position, how much of our virtue is but a prudent and calculating selfishness! Think how hard we ourselves know it to be to wean even one heart from selfishness and self-indulgence, and to fix it in the love and pursuit of whatsoever is true and fair, good and kind; how slowly we advance in godliness even when we have the grace of God to help us and are working together with Him! And then tell me whether you must not say, "The dawn may be coming, but as surely as the day comes, the night will come also; many days and many nights must still pass, many alternations of light and darkness must sweep across the face of the earth, before the great day of the Lord can arise and shine upon us." 2. If that be your conclusion I have good tidings for you. The very meaning and message of advent is, that all these mornings and evenings are gradually leading in the day of the Lord; that He is preparing for the coming of His kingdom in the darkness as well as in the light, by every night through which we pass as well as every day, by every disappointment and every postponement of hope as well as by every fulfilment. Many forms of wrong, cruelty, and vice are impossible now which were possible, and even common, before the Son of God and Son of man dwelt among us; nay, even before the Reformation carried through Europe a light by which such deeds of darkness were repressed. The individual man may stand little higher, whether in wisdom or in goodness, than of old; but the number of men capable of high thoughts, noble aims, and lives devoted to the service of truth and righteousness, is incomparably larger. The world took long to make, and may take still longer to re-make; but its re-creation in the image of God is just as certain as its creation. The darkness of ignorance and superstition may still lie heavily over the larger spaces of the world; but the points of light are rapidly increasing. As we count time, the end is not yet; but as God counts time, the end is not far off. (*S. Coz, D.D.*) *National responsibility*.—The prophet has here nothing to predict; his function is only to repeat the oft unheeded warning that all things in this universe of God go on by unchanging law and in regular succession; "the morning," as in the apparent revolution of the sun round the earth, so also in the revolutions of states and kingdoms and empires, "the morning cometh, and also the night." Like causes produce like events; the course of providence may be foretold from the action of those with whom it deals. And what is history, but the exhibition of this great but much neglected truth? *e.g.*, Egypt, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome. In each case we may distinctly trace their more or less speedy downfall to the operation of the same eternal law of justice; requiting

on each the iniquities of each, and making those iniquities the very causes of their overthrow. What likelihood, then, is there of the same principle not being carried out again; of its not being carried out in the case of nations and kingdoms in which we feel more than an antiquarian interest? To them, too, will come, as the morning, so also the night. It is, of course, most difficult to appraise the fortunes, to calculate the probable destiny of any nation of which we ourselves form component parts. The human mind, like the human eye, must see things somewhat at a distance in order to get them into due perspective and appreciate their exact proportions. But this difficulty does not affect our power of evaluating the principles of conduct on which we see men or nations act. Those principles are broad and clearly marked, and it is easy to perceive how far justice and right-dealing, truth and soberness, self-devotion for the common good and real, not mock, philanthropy are practised: or, on the other side, how far oppression and cowardice, luxury and vice, falsehood and selfishness, are the real rulers of the nation. It was the true function of the Hebrew prophets to rouse the conscience of the nation to what they spake. If, then, we wish to acquire some idea of the probable future of the great empire to which we belong, it will be well carefully to review the aspects of life prevailing in it, and to see in what way the eternal obligations of the Divine law are observed, or how far they are despised and violated. (*Archbishop Reichel, D.D.*) "Watchman, what of the night?"—I. GOOD MEN SUFFERING. The pious Jews were now in deepest sorrow. It was their night. The good have often a night. Physical suffering, secular difficulties, social bereavements, spiritual temptations, conscious imperfections, often turn the sky of a good man into night. II. WICKED MEN TAUNTING. The voice from Mount Seir was, "What of the night?" The language is sarcastic and contemptuous. The wicked, instead of sympathising with the good in their sufferings, often treat them with heartless ridicule. The spirit is seen now in various questions that are addressed to the Church. (1) Where is your superior happiness? (2) Where are the triumphs of your cause? (3) Where is your spiritual superiority to other men? III. THE GREAT GOD SPEAKING TO BOT. "The morning cometh, and also the night." 1. His voice to the good. "The morning cometh." There is a morning for the Church on this earth. There is a morning to the good in eternity. 2. The voice to the wicked. "The night cometh." Where is Edom now? The night cometh, sinner: the shadows are gathering already," &c. (*Homilist.*) "What of the night?"—I. "Watchman, what of the night" of SENSE AND SIN? "The morning cometh"—the morning of sinlessness. "Also the night." Sin now, sin then; sin on sin, sin for ever and ever! II. "Watchman, what of the night" of SUFFERING AND SORROW? "The morning cometh." "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." "Also the night"—the night of eternal suffering and sorrow. III. "Watchman, what of the night" of MOCKING AND MYSTERY? "The morning cometh," when the mocking mystery will vanish "They shall see His face." "Also the night"—"the outer darkness," the black profound, where the soul wanders for ever Christless, restless, lost. IV. "Watchman, what of the night" of SOLITUDE AND SEPARATION? In this world we have never met. Men of science tell us that there are in this universe no two atoms in real contact. "The morning cometh," the morning of meeting for the first time in the never-parting of the revelation of God. "Now we see in a mirror darkly," &c. "Also the night," the night of a separation eternal. Let another natural law be traced in this spiritual world. If you took away all contrary and opposing forces from a propelled cannon-ball, and if you secured a perfect vacuum in boundless space, by *vis inertiae*, the ball would go on for ever. If this is the first law of motion in mechanics, it is as really the first law of motion in the wrath of God on an eternally-separated lost soul. (*J. Bailey, M.A.*) *Visions of the day and night*:—The great beauty and power of the Word of God lies in this, that it is never obsolete and never out of date. I. THE QUESTION in our text. Night is the emblem of ignorance, sorrow, sin, crime, danger, and disaster; as in the natural night there are different degrees of light and shade, of gloom and darkness, so it is with the spiritual night. II. THE ANSWER. "The morning cometh." 1. To nations. 2. To individuals. It comes to the awakened and accepted sinner in the form of pardon and deliverance from the power and burden of sin and guilt. It comes to others in the form of deliverance from some secret, instinctive, but crushing sorrow, which has pressed the poor heart down for years; which has made them, some from physical and some from spiritual weakness, walk for a long period

in gloom and darkness, crying, "Oh! when will it end?" 3. The morning cometh to others in declining years; to the aged, the afflicted, the dying. 4. "And the night cometh," when the long-abused love and compassion, and patience of God shall be at length exhausted; when the plea of mercy shall be exchanged for the penalty of justice, and the shield of the Advocate give way to the sword of the Avenger. It cometh to nations; it cometh to individuals. (*G. Davenport.*) *Alternations of morning and night*.—The morning cometh in the appearing of Messiah, the Prince; and also the night of the exclusion of the Jews. The morning cometh, in the spread of the Gospel among the Gentile nations; and also the night, in the tenfold persecutions which wasted the Church. The morning cometh, in the reign of Constantine the Great over the Roman empire; and also the night of Arian blasphemy and persecution. The morning cometh, in the reformation of religion from popery; and also the night of a fearful falling away. The morning cometh, more bright and glorious than all which have preceded, in the glory of the latter days; and also the night of another falling away before the general judgment. And then shall a morning burst upon the universe, which shall never be overcast. (*W. Taylor.*) *The burden of Dumah*.—I. THE WORLD'S QUESTION. In the first instance it is a question put by the Edomites of Mount Seir to Israel's watchman. It is worth noting that a people animated with such hostile feelings should thus open up communication with the objects of their hostility. Two explanations might be given. It may be they asked the question tauntingly in a spirit of mockery, or they may have asked it earnestly in a spirit of anxious inquiry. Either of these views will fit the historical conditions. 1. If we adopt the first, we must suppose the Jews to be in captivity and the Edomites prospering, and we know from history that they did prosper during the Babylonish captivity. At that time they got possession of a portion of Jewish territory in southern Palestine, having been permitted to settle there as a reward for their services to the Babylonians during the struggle that preceded the captivity. While occupying this new settlement, their fortunes rose, and in the exuberance of success they retaliated on their now oppressed brethren, as much as to say, You who boasted of being the special favourites of Heaven, where is now your God? Your night of oppression has continued long enough, is there any sign of deliverance? Surely it is time for your God to show His hand! The picture is something like this: On Mount Seir, the highest eminence in the land, the Edomites are convened, elated by their fleeting prosperity; while in a foreign land are the captive Jews, groaning under the yoke of the oppressor, and their watchman or prophet standing on his watchtower, eager to catch the first ray of deliverance. From the one to the other passes the taunting call, "Watchman, what of the night?" And the watchman returns the reply, "The morning is coming, and also the night. Do not deceive yourselves, ye taunting Edomites, your momentary prosperity will become a night of gloom and our present calamities will be followed by a glorious day. The morning of deliverance will come to the captive Jews, but the night of desolation to the mocking Edomites." The question is still thrown out by the unbeliever with a fling of scorn, "Watchman, what of the night?" "Tell us what progress you are making," &c. There are not wanting in these days men who affect to throw discredit on Christian and missionary effort. Look, say they, how little has been accomplished by these means in the past, and how much remains to be done. Instead of the Gospel, let us try civilisation, the spread of commerce, and the wider diffusion of knowledge, and the morning will soon dawn. Now, if this were so, it would indeed be a serious charge. But what are the facts? Let it be conceded that the visible marks of Christian progress are not overwhelming; at the same time no one who will cast his eyes over the earth can fail to see that the nations most advanced in civilisation and what is called modern culture are also the most Christian. 2. Let us think of the question as being asked in a spirit of anxious inquiry. In this case, the once captive Jews must be regarded as a prosperous people, living in their own land, and the once prosperous Edomites as an oppressed people. In their distress they cry to those whom they previously mocked. But their cry has a different meaning now that the tables have been turned. "What of the night" now means an earnest desire to know how long their calamities are likely to last. As if they had said, It has been a night of dire adversity with us, tell us, you who are a watchman in Zion, is that night nearly past? We have suffered much, and are longing for relief. Are our sufferings nearly at an end? If this view is adopted, it is still a question

addressed by the world to the Church; no longer, however, in mockery, but in a spirit of anxious inquiry. There do come times in the history of godless nations and individuals, when, in the midst of trouble, they are constrained to pay homage to the Church, and call upon her for advice. There are in the Bible several instances of the wicked consulting God's ministers in times of calamity. And have we not seen examples of men calling on God in the hour of calamity, who never bowed a knee to Him in the hour of their prosperity? When such a question is asked with a true motive, that of itself is an indication to the watchman that the morning is coming. It is the duty of the spiritual watchman to declare to the people the whole counsel of the King, to discern wisely the signs of the times, so as to be able to impart the needed instruction.

II. THE CHURCH'S REPLY, whether the question is asked by way of taunt or in an earnest spirit. In either case, the inquirer is assured that the morning of a glorious deliverance will come to the oppressed Church, while a night of awful desolation will fall upon her foes.

1. This prophecy was unmistakably fulfilled in the after history of the Edomites. The morning did come, as the watchman said, and for a short period the Edomites were a flourishing people in the land of Seir; but they refused to inquire, they did not return, they wandered further on the path of righteousness, and the long night of desolation overtook them. The prophecy regarding it, in Isaiah xxxiv. 12, 13, has been literally fulfilled. And this is the inevitable doom of those who will not improve the day of their merciful visitation—"the night cometh."

2. But while the watchman's message to the enemies of the Gospel is one of woe and warning, he has a message of encouragement to the people of God. "The morning cometh." Night and morning! Unlike pair, and yet they go hand in hand. What will be morning to some will be night to others.

3. Yet again, the watchman says, "If ye will inquire, inquire ye." Addressed originally to the inquiring Edomites, the words still apply to their modern successors whether they put their questions in jest or in earnest. The inquiring spirit here meets with no rebuff, for it is a healthy sign. History records instances of men who studied the Christian evidences in order to refute them, and ended by becoming devoted Christians. Religion, so far from shunning investigation, rather invites it. And if there is a sure solution of his perplexities awaiting the critical investigator, there is also an answer that will satisfy the inquirer after salvation.

4. There is another class of persons to whom the watchman's commission extends. To them he says, "return"—a word which may be taken to refer to backsliders.

5. The text contains one other word—a word of encouragement to all. This word is, "come"; a word that Jesus, when on earth, was never weary of uttering, and which He has left behind Him as the Church's invitation-call to Gospel privileges. (*D. Merson, M.A., B.D.*)

*The night-watch in Mount Seir*:—The double question and the doubting reply are well suited to the changing aspects of nature in a mountain land. To the inhabitants of such countries, inquiries for the winds and the clouds, the morning and the night, are as familiar as the words of daily salutation. And the variable condition of human society, the advance and decline of nations, the concealments and revelations of Providence, are well illustrated by the darkness and the day, the shadows and the sunshine among mountains. Such was the history of the Hebrew nation under the especial guidance of Divine providence in ancient times. Such has been and still is the history of peoples and opinions in the European world. The good and the glorious days of Samuel, and David, and Solomon, and Hezekiah, were followed by the dark and evil days of Saul, and Jeroboam, and Ahab, and Manasseh. Athanasius and Augustine, Luther and Calvin, Cranmer and Knox, Whitefield and Wesley, the great champions of truth and reformation, found their dark shadow and counterpart in Arius and Pelagius, Loyola and the Inquisition, Voltaire and the French Revolution. The bright dawn of a better day has always been overcast with dark and angry clouds. And yet the providence of God is wiser and mightier than the policies of man. The night which comes with the morning is partial and temporary, although it seems for a time to devour the day and cut off the hopes of mankind. In the darkest periods of human history, we need only the clear vision of faith to see the day approaching. It is ever God's way to bring light out of darkness, joy out of sorrow, rest out of weariness, for the waiting and longing soul. (*D. March, D.D.*)

*Sin the great silencer*:—The word Dumah means "silence," "the land of silent desolation." It is a very suggestive thought. Sin is the great silencer. The end of sin is silence. Assuredly that was true in the case of Edom. It was true of it at the time when the prophet spoke, it

was to be true of it still more completely in the ages to follow. Travellers tell us that if we want to know how Providence can turn a fruitful land into barrenness, and make a defenced city a heap, for the iniquity of the inhabitants thereof, we have only to look at Edom, with its hills and plains picked clean of every vestige of vegetation, and its ruined palaces, once the home of busy men, now the haunt of vultures and the lair of scorpions, all human sound gone—the voice of mirth, the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, the voice of the bride ! But why go to Edom for an illustration ? Look nearer home. Go to any city churchyard. Pass through the iron gates that divide those strangely contrasted crowds, the throng of the living and the congregation of the dead. How still ! Everything may be orderly, everything trim—winding walks, flowery borders, spreading shrubs, grassy mounds, carven monuments white and clean, but all so still, no sound nor motion anywhere, save the wind that shudders through the yew trees, and the measured chime of the steeple-clock as it tolls its hourly reminder that we too shall be still, still as the throngs beneath. What makes that stillness ? Sin. Sin is the great silencer, and death is the climax of the silence that it makes. (*W. A. Gray.*) *The silence of God* :—It is really a terrible answer, for there can be nothing so terrible for us on earth as to know that God has nothing to say to us. “O, my God !” cried Martin Luther, “smite me with famine, with want, with pestilence, with all the sore diseases on earth, rather than Thou be silent to me.” Yet God is sometimes thus silent to wicked men and to wicked nations ; He is so for their punishment. “Ephraim is turned unto idols. Let him alone.” (*Dean Farrar, D.D.*) *Mount Seir ; false confidences* :—Be not too confident in thy Mount Seir ! Every wicked soul has her Mount Seir to trust in ; they that have no assurance of rest in heaven, have their refuges and mountains of help on earth. David so returns it upon the wicked (*Psa. xi. 1*). “In the Lord put I my trust : how then say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain ?” Why should I seek to foreign helps, that have settled myself in the bosom of rest itself ? Riches are a Mount Seir to the covetous ; they rest on them. Honour is a Mount Seir to the ambitious, against all the besiegings of rivals. Sensuality to the voluptuous, against all the disturbances of a clamorous conscience. Pride, fraud, drunkenness, are a Mount Seir to the lovers of them ; but alas, how unsafe ! If stronger against, and further removed from the hand of man, yet nearer to God’s hand in heaven ; though we acknowledge no place *procul à Jove*, or *procul à fulmine*,—far from God, or from His thunder. But we say, it is not the safest sailing on the top of the mast ; to live on the mountainous height of a temporal estate is neither wise nor happy. Men standing in the shade of humble valleys, look up and wonder at the height of hills, and think it goodly living there, as Peter thought Tabor ; but when with weary limbs they have ascended, and find the beams of the sun melting their spirits, or the cold blasts of wind making their sinews stark, flashes of lightning or cracks of thunder soonest endangering their advanced heads, then they confess, checking their proud conceit, the low valley is safest ; for the fruitful dews that fall first on the hills stay least while there, but run down to the valleys. And though on such a promontory a man further sees, and is further seen, yet in the valley, where he sees less, he enjoys more. Take heed, then, lest to raise thy Mount Seir high, thou dejectest thy soul. If we build our houses by unrighteousness, and our chambers without equity, though as strong as Mount Seir, they shall not be able to stand in the earthquake of judgment. God so threatens Jehoiakim (*Jer. xxii. 15*). Think not your houses to be fortresses, when your souls are unarmed of Christian weapons—faith and obedience. (*T. Adams.*) *Edomite-scorners* :—I will single you out four sorts of these Edomites, scorners,—for I justly parallel them—1. Atheists : such as have voluntarily, violently, extinguished to themselves the sunlight of the Scripture, moonlight of the creature, nay, the sparks and cinders of nature, that the more securely, as unseen and unchidden of their own hearts, they might prodigally act the works of darkness. 2. Epicures : that deny not a God and a day of judgment, but put it far off (*Amos vi. 3*), with, Give me the present, take thou the hope of future joys. 3. Libertines : that neither affirm no night, nor put it far off, but only the strength of sin prevails over all ; and, come sorrow, death, grave, hell, they must have their pleasures. 4. Common profane persons : that will suffer themselves to wear God’s livery, though they serve the devil. (*Ibid.*) *Watchman, what of the night?*—*The duty of examining the signs of the times* :—I. The first thing which, in reference to this inquiry, the words before us suggest, is, that IT IS OF THE LORD HIMSELF

THE INQUIRY MUST BE MADE. His eye alone seeth under the whole heaven ; and He only knoweth the end from the beginning. Nothing can be more utterly fallacious than any mere calculation of human probabilities in regard to the future progress of Divine truth—in regard to the course it may be destined to run. When Jesus of Nazareth had been put to an ignominious death, His few and obscure disciples dispersed in terror, and when the handful of peasants and fishermen who had been the companions of His ministry were shut up, unnoticed and unknown, in an upper chamber at Jerusalem, who could have foreseen that the blast of the trumpet, blown by this small and feeble band, was to shake down the mighty Jericho of that universal heathenism which then overspread and enslaved the benighted earth ? When, fifteen hundred years thereafter, a poor, emaciated Augustinian monk was wearing himself out in his gloomy cell in the terrible conflict of an awakened conscience, which all his self-righteous austerities could not satisfy or soothe, who could have foreseen that in that single man the Lord was training a soldier, who should confront, single-handed, the gigantic power of the man of sin, and liberate the half of Europe from his galling and destructive yoke ? But if human sagacity would thus have been baffled on the one hand by unlooked-for triumphs to the cause of truth, would it not have been equally confounded on the other by unexpected defeats ? When the day of Gospel light was breaking forth in such glorious splendour upon the world in apostolic times, who would have ventured to anticipate that so bright a day was to be succeeded by the dark ages, the long, dismal, dreary centuries during which the few remaining witnesses prophesied in sackcloth, amid bonds and stripes, and imprisonments, and death ? Again, when the Lutheran Reformation, like a strong wind out of the clear north, was sweeping off from the nations the dense cloud of papal superstition, and revealing once more to their wondering eyes the long-hidden Sun of righteousness, who would have thought that the horrid cloud would again return to spread its murky folds over so many of its ancient fields, and that men, choosing darkness rather than the light, would love to have it so ? It is to the Lord we must turn if we desire to know what is in the womb of time. II. However discouraging the aspect of things may, in many points, appear, "THE MORNING COMETH"—a day of unprecedented brilliancy and joy, when the kingdom and dominion under the whole heaven shall be given to the Son of man, and when, emancipated from the strife and turmoil of incessant wars, and enjoying and exhibiting a foretaste and emblem of the heavenly state, the rest of Zion shall be glorious. III. WE MUST REJOICE WITH TREMBLING, FOR WHILE THE MORNING COMETH, THERE COMETH ALSO THE NIGHT. When the year of recompense for the controversy of Zion shall have come, it will be a night to her adversaries and oppressors ; but to Zion herself it will be a bright and glorious day. (*R. Buchanan, D.D.*) *The watchman's office* :—I. A watchman must be DULY AUTHORISED AND APPOINTED TO THE STATION. It is not left to any man to mount the watch-tower at pleasure—to take his round through the streets—or to challenge the citizens, except he can show a regular commission for the service. Ezekiel, with all his zeal for his country, and love to his own people, could not occupy the post of a watchman among them till the God of Israel made him one (*Ezek. iii. 17*). Thus a call, a commission, is indispensably necessary to the exercise of any office in the Church of Christ, especially of the office of the ministry. But when the call is given and the appointment conferred, the watchman ought, without gainsaying, to repair to his box. II. A watchman ought to be SAGACIOUS AND QUICK-SIGHTED. A simpleton, or a blind man (*Luke vi. 39*), would be altogether unfit for a watchman. He could neither descry the enemy as he approached the city, nor penetrate his mischievous designs, nor alarm the citizens of the impending danger. The ministers of Christ are accordingly represented in the Revelation as "full of eyes" ; and they have need of all the eyes ascribed to them, that they may take heed to themselves, and watch over others. III. VIGILANT. An indolent and sleepy watchman is a most dangerous officer in a city, especially in a period of warfare. For, while men sleep, the enemy may occupy the gates, or mount the walls. The ministers of Christ ought to be very vigilant in watching over the people ; and other officers are to exert themselves in watching along with them. For, "while men sleep," the enemy sows his tares of error, of heresy, and division. IV. SPIRITED. A spirited watchman, ever upon the alert, to detect the disorderly, and to suppress them in their first appearances, is an eminent blessing in his station. By the spirited exertions of an active watchman, much disorder and tumult in the streets of a city may be prevented, especially during



the night. So ought the minister of Christ to display a firm and spirited determination to suppress disorder and vice of every kind, although it should cost him much trouble, and the strife of tongues against him, in accomplishing his object. It is also part of the constitutional duty of every good citizen, to assist the watchman, by all the means in his power, to suppress riot, and check the unruly. Let private Church-members attend to this. V. Watchmen ought to be **STEADY**. They are to occupy their station, to maintain their post, and in no instance to neglect their duty. The ministers of Christ, in like manner, are to "be steadfast, unmovable," &c. (1 Cor. xv. 58). They are "to watch, to stand fast in the faith, to quit themselves like men and to be strong." VI. Watchmen are to be **COURAGEOUS**. A coward would, of all others, be a most unfit person for a watchman, especially in the night, and when the enemy was at the gates. Such ought unquestionably to be a prominent qualification of the minister of Christ, and of all who bear rule in the Church along with him. A trimming, truckling, temporising humour, to please men, and a dread of giving offence in the discharge of positive duty, is altogether unsuitable to the condition of those whose chief attention is to please and honour **God**. VII. Watchmen are to be **FAITHFUL**. They are neither to betray their trust, by conniving with the disorderly, nor to expose the city, by keeping silence, while they perceive danger approaching. This part of the watchman's character may be often perverted, as, indeed, what part of it may not? Men may make a great noise and parade about being faithful and honest, who, in truth, have nothing so much at heart, as to gratify their own vanity, interest, pride, humour, or favourite plans of action. But the faithfulness intended by this particular chiefly respects plain and honest dealing with the consciences of men. The faithful servant of the Lord is to warn the transgressor of the error of his ways, and of the danger of persisting in error. VIII. Watchmen are to be **FRANK IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE**, either to inform the citizen of the hour of the night, or to guide him on his way. The watchmen of the Old Testament gave the time of night under that dispensation, and laid themselves out to collect every information (1 Pet. i. 11). The watchmen of the New Testament are to continue the inquiry into the mind of the Spirit; that they may tell what of the night—what is the part of prophecy which applies to the present times—and what the signs of the breaking light of the coming glory. Such is a very tender and useful department of the spiritual watchman. He is to guide the bewildered—to encourage and protect such as apprehend themselves in danger—and to tell them, to the best of his information, concerning the Friend of sinners. (*W. Taylor.*) *Aspects of the times*:—I. The Christian man has still before him **THE UNBELIEF AND IRRELIGION OF THE NIGHT**, and yet there are streaks of sunny dawn. II. The Christian man has **MUCH IN HIS OWN HISTORY THAT SPEAKS OF THE NIGHT**, and yet there is morning there too. III. The Christian man sees that **IN NATIONS WHERE THE PURE GOSPEL OF CHRIST PERVADES THE PEOPLE, WE HAVE THE HOPE OF THE WORLD**. IV. **THE CHRISTLESS MAN MAY ASK, "WHAT OF THE NIGHT?"** as well as the Christian. (*W. M. Statham.*) *A momentous inquiry*:—I. Let us see how this inquiry will apply to **THE WORLD IN GENERAL**. The world commenced with a bright and sinless morning. But early in the history of our race, the power of the tempter was so successfully wielded, that the bright morning was succeeded by a day of dark clouds and desolating storms. With the growth of the world's population the overspreading darkness grew until God could bear with the wickedness of the world no more. After the deluge the world started anew from another head. Old crimes, old corruptions, quickly regained their sway. Long centuries came and passed away. The moral heavens grew darker as time rolled by, and as the world's inhabitants increased in numbers. Here and there only was there a ray of light shining amid the abounding darkness. Outside of Judea there was not much to dispel the darkness. Greece, somewhat enlightened, furnished a Socrates and a Plato. But Greece, because of her crimes and vices, soon went down to ruin. The once magnificent empires, Egypt, Assyria, Greece, and Rome, were alike involved in the moral night of error and sin, and their greatness, once so commanding, and their glory, once so brilliant, have passed away. Indeed, in all succeeding ages, and among all the peoples of the earth, the darkness has prevailed. What prospect is there for this sin-darkened world? We may respond in the words of the prophet: "The morning cometh." The long night of captivity, of error, of wrong, of violence shall give place to the glorious day, wherein the ransomed of the Lord everywhere shall rejoice in that liberty with which God makes His people free. II. How will the inquiry of our text apply to **ISAIAH'S**

TIME? It was indeed for the chosen people a time of darkness. The Jews were captives in Babylon. Isaiah had a grander vision and saw another morning. He saw the breaking day, and told of the advent of the promised Messiah, who was to be the light and the glory of the world. The vision which Isaiah saw we also are permitted to see. We see the complete fulfilment of many of the predictions of the prophet. And there are the signs, which will not fail, that his grandest visions will be realised. III. How will this inquiry, "Watchman, what of the night?" apply to OUR OWN TIMES? 1. Glance for a moment at the progress that has been made in our times in science and in art. 2. Ours has been a time of moral progress. 3. The religious progress of the world is remarkable. 4. All around us are signs of improvement. IV. How will this inquiry, "Watchman, what of the night?" apply to OURSELVES PERSONALLY? 1. There is the night of scepticism, or partial scepticism, in which some are involved. To the earnest and sincere inquirer the response must be, "The morning cometh." 2. There is a night of worldliness. For the worldly the morning waiteth. Christ stands at the door and knocks. He is the light and the life of men. 3. There is a night of penitential sorrow. For every awakened, penitent, and believing one the morning cometh. 4. There is the night of suffering. The morning cometh, when the wounds of the sorrowing shall be healed, and when their sorrow shall be turned into joy. 5. The Christian worker may sometimes inquire, "Watchman, what of the night?" Learn to labour faithfully and to wait. 6. While the morning cometh for all who willingly hear and obey the Gospel, the night also cometh for the disobedient and unbelieving. (*D. D. Currie.*) *Heathen darkness and Gospel light*:—1. There is something to encourage us in the interest now taken in missions as compared with a century ago. We can fairly point to what is done for missions as a proof of the vitality and the power of Christian principles, evidence at once of the influence which Christianity exerts on its disciples, and earnest of its ultimate triumph. 2. But looking at the dark night of heathendom in answer to the question, What of the night? it is scarcely possible to present its condition in colours that are too dark. We speak of the wickedness of our home population, and bad enough it is; but if you remember how much is done to discourage it; how a healthy public opinion rebukes it; how Christianity grapples with it, and creates an atmosphere which is inimical to its existence, so that those who practise it are made to feel ashamed; and when you consider, on the other hand, how in many parts of heathendom wickedness is actually deified, how the very gods they worship are incarnations of vice, and personifications of every evil passion; how in many instances licentiousness and cruelty are enjoined as part of their religious rites,—when you think of all that, you can understand that the wickedness at home is nothing compared with that which exists in heathen lands. To some minds the most affecting consideration of all is the dishonour done to the Almighty by their religious beliefs and ceremonies. 3. But is the Gospel an appropriate remedy for the evils of which we speak? You want the world to be brought back to God, and nothing but the Gospel of Christ will suffice for that. Let men say what they will, the world is not to-day what it was when Christianity dawned upon it. Then it was wrapt in total darkness—a darkness that might be felt. Now the light of the Gospel is penetrating the darkest parts of the earth, and many nations of the world are being permeated with and moulded by the influence which it exerts. Moreover, it is advancing. 4. When the Church enters on her work with the zeal and enthusiasm which it ought to excite; when she drains her resources, and strains every nerve to secure success; when she prays, and labours, and toils for it; when she gives the bulk of her property to it; when she sends out her noblest sons, and puts forth her best energies, then, perhaps, she may begin to talk about expecting the conversion of the world! Think of what Christ has done for you, and then bestir yourselves to take an active interest in this stupendous work, and to make some sacrifices for its extension. (*W. Landels, D.D.*) **INQUIRE ye: return, come.—Inquire; return; come:—**I. INQUIRE. 1. Where? Where should a people inquire, but at their God? (chap. viii. 19, 20). 2. How? With humility, reverence, and desire of knowledge. 3. When? In the morning of thy years. The devil is a false sexton, and sets the clock too slow, that the night comes ere we be aware. Tarry not, then, till your piles of usuries, heaps of deceits, mountains of blasphemies, have caused God to hide Himself, and will not be found. There is a *sera nimis hora*, time too late, which Esau fell unluckily into, when "he sought the blessing with tears, and could not find it." II. RETURN from your sins by repentance. III. COME

home to God by obedience. (*T. Adams.*) *Destiny determined by conduct*.—For ourselves, what need we of oracles? Our future will be in all essential things exactly as we make it. The sunshine or the shadow of our lives is less in our surroundings than ourselves. The oracle of God to man is not silence; St. Paul gave it long ago, "God will render to every man according to his works," &c. (Rom. ii. 6-11). (*Dean Farrar, D.D.*)

Vers. 13-17. **The burden upon Arabia.**—*Arabia*.—The term "Arabia," in the Old Testament, is not used in such a wide sense as in modern English, and denotes merely a particular tribe, having its home in the northern part of what is now known as the Arabian peninsula, and mentioned in Ezek. xxvii. 20, 21, by the side of Dedan and Kedar as engaged in commerce with Tyre. Isaiah sees a tide of invasion about to overflow the region inhabited by these tribes, and addresses the Dedanite caravans, warning them that they will have to turn aside from their customary routes and seek concealment in the "forest." In verse 14, he sees in imagination the natives of Tema bringing food and water to the fugitive traders. Tema was the name of a tribe settled in the same neighbourhood, about 250 miles S.E. of Edom, on the route between Damascus and Mecca, in a locality in which some interesting inscriptions have recently been discovered. Within a year, the prophet concludes, the glory of the wealthy pastoral (chap. lx. 7) tribe of Kedar—here used so as to include by implication its less influential neighbours—will be past, and of its warriors only an insignificant remnant will survive. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *The Bedawin*.—These were the carriers of the world's commerce in the days before railways were introduced. As country after country was feeling the consequences of the advance of Nineveh, these merchantmen would be the first to hear the news with alarm, and in many cases to give timely assistance. But these weakly defended caravans would not stand long before the armies of Sargon. (*B. Blake, B.D.*)

Vers. 16, 17. **Within a year, according to the years of an hireling, and all the glory of Kedar shall fall.**—*End of the year: a warning and a lesson*.—**I. A TERRIBLE THREATENING.** We have here a prophecy of the fall of a nation, which had held a proud position by reason of prowess and skill in war. But glory founded on physical strength, upon wealth, or upon power, may speedily fade away. With all the study of economics we seem to know but little even now, and we have found, many times of late, how trifling a matter may lead to the overthrow of existing engagements and conditions. Much less stable is the glory of a nation built upon the strength of its arms. A nation's glory is safe only when it is founded upon righteousness and obedience to God. **II. A TIME FIXED.** "Within a year." How different the feeling in looking back over a year and looking forward! The retrospect—how short a time, how quickly passed, how little done, and yet what changes have taken place! How the number of the mighty have diminished! The prospect—what a long time, what hopes we have, what possibilities are in it! To us as a nation, to us in our families, to us as persons. Are we prepared for them? The fall of the glory of Kedar was announced to come within the year. Forbearance must have its limits. A boundary to life, to sin, to indulgence; but within a given period the time of reckoning must be fixed. **III. THE ATTITUDE WE SHOULD ADOPT.** Standing on the threshold of a new year, let us consider our position. Certain it is that some will fall "within the year." Men shall be diminished. Let our influence, by example and precept, be exerted to found our national glory, not upon our skill in arms, on our insular position, on our wealth, but upon true obedience to God. The number of those who form the glory of the Church will be diminished this year. Are the younger people preparing themselves to fill the vacant places? There is a warning here, that those who trust in aught but in Jehovah will find their glory naught but folly. There is also encouragement. "The God of Israel hath spoken it." To him that walketh uprightly and serveth God humbly, shall glory be revealed from day to day, until the full glory of God is revealed to us in the life beyond. (*Frank Mabin.*) "*According to the years of an hireling*":—In a year's time, calculated as exactly as is the custom between employers and employed, Kedar's freedom, military strength, numbers, and wealth shall have vanished. (*F. Delitzsch.*) "*The number of archers*":—They [the sons of Kedar] are numbered here, not by heads, but by bows, so specifying the fighting men—a mode of numbering common, e.g., among the Indians of America. (*Ibid.*)

“*Within a year*” :—A sensible person said he could never covet the office of chief magistrate of London, because that honour continued only one year. Might not the idea be justly extended to all the honours and enjoyments of this life? None of them are permanent. (*Anon.*)

## CHAPTER XXII.

**VER. 1. The burden of the valley of vision.**—“*The valley of vision*” :—This expression is applied to Jerusalem, where Jehovah was pleased to give visions concerning His will to His servants. (*B. Blake, B.D.*) *The valley of vision* :—It is quite in place, in so far as round Jerusalem there are mountains, and the very city, which in relation to the country occupied an elevated position, in relation to the mountains of the immediate neighbourhood appeared to stand on a low level. Because of this twofold aspect Jerusalem is called (Jer. xxi. 13) the “inhabitant of the valley,” and immediately on the back of this the “rock of the plain,” and (Jer. xvii. 3) the “mountain in the fields,” whereas (Zeph. i. 11) not all Jerusalem, but a part of it (probably the ravine of the Tyropæum) is called the mortar, or as we say, basin. If we add to this that Isaiah’s house was situated in the lower city, and that therefore the point of view from which the epithet was applied was there, the expression is perfectly appropriate. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *Jerusalem, the valley of vision* :—Furthermore, the epithet is intended to be more than geographical. A valley is a lonely, quiet depression, shut in and cut off by mountains. Similarly is Jerusalem the sheltered, peaceful place, closed against the world, which Jehovah has chosen in order to show there to His prophets the secrets of His government of the world. (*Ibid.*) *The valley of vision spiritualised* :—Where Bibles and ministers are, there is a valley of vision, from which is expected fruit accordingly. (*M. Henry.*) *The inextinguishable sin of Jerusalem* :—The key to this passage (vers. 1-14)—the most lurid and minatory of all Isaiah’s prophecies—is the irreconcilable antagonism between the mood of the prophet and the state of public feeling around him. In a time of universal mirth and festivity he alone is overwhelmed with grief and refuses to be comforted. In the rejoicings of the populace he reads the evidence of their hopeless impenitence and insensibility, and he concludes his discourse by expressing the conviction that at last they have sinned beyond the possibility of pardon. The circumstances recall our Lord’s lamentation over Jerusalem on the day of His triumphal entry. (*J. Skinner, D.D.*) *The historical allusion* :—It may be regarded as certain that the prophecy belongs to the period of Sennacherib’s invasion (701), although it is difficult to select a moment when all the elements of the highly complex situation with which it deals might have been combined. There is just one incident that seems to meet the requirements of the case, namely, the raising of the blockade of Jerusalem, in consequence of Hezekiah’s ignominious submission to the terms of Sennacherib. It must be noted that this was not the last episode in that memorable campaign. The real crisis came a little later when the Assyrian king endeavoured by threats to extort the entire surrender of the capital. It was only at that juncture that Hezekiah unreservedly accepted the policy of implicit trust in Jehovah which Isaiah had all along urged on him; and it was then that the prophet stepped to the front with an absolute and unconditional assurance that Jerusalem should not be violated. That the earlier deliverance should have caused an outbreak of popular joy is intelligible enough; as it is also intelligible that Isaiah should have kept his eye fixed on the dangers yet ahead. The allusions to the recent blockade are amply accounted for, and the prophet’s expectation of a terrible disaster yet in store is obviously based on his view of the continued and aggravated impenitence of his countrymen. (*Ibid.*) **What alleth thee now?**—*A mad holiday* :—In these words we can hear the old man addressing his fickle child, whose changefulness by this time he knew so well. We see him standing at his door watching this ghastly holiday. “What are you rejoicing at in such an hour as this, when you have not even the bravery of your soldiers to celebrate, when you are without that pride which has brought songs from the lips of a defeated people as they learned that their sons had fallen with their faces to

the foe, and has made even the wounds of the dead borne through the gate lips of triumph, calling to festival?" (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *A new year's question* :—I. It specially designates "THEE." There is an identity in human experience. But there is at the same time an intense personality in each one of us, secrets in our experience—secret struggles, failures, motives, emotions. II. A SPECIFIC TIME—"NOW." Not the past—or the future—but the present. III. THE AILMENT. IV. THE QUERY is suggestive, as though the prophet's inquiries were made with a view to a remedy. What is the specific for the ailment? Wealth, &c.? No! personal salvation. (*Preachers' Magazine.*)

**Ver. 11. Ye have not looked unto the Maker thereof.—A godless prudence :—** They take measures to supply the city with water during its siege, and to cut it off, if possible, from the besiegers. "Why," as it is written in the history which gives us the fulfilment of this prophecy, "should the kings of Assyria come and find much water?" Where this fails everything fails, for water, next to the air we breathe, is the first necessity of human life. There are, it seems, certain streams or pools of water fed with springs outside the city, and these they manage to divert, so that they flow now away from the besiegers and in favour of the besieged. The city has two walls, and between these two—the inner and the outer—a ditch or trench is dug, and the water of the old pool made to flow into it, forming at once as a moat some kind of protection for the inner wall, should the outer be broken down, and also a supply for the use of the inhabitants. All this was right and reasonable, and no blame could be laid upon the authorities for taking these precautions. But there is blame in this, that notwithstanding they are the Lord's chosen people, and have ever been taught that they owe all they have to Him, yet they do not recognise Him as the bountiful Lord and gracious Giver. (*J. W. Lance.*) *Man's use of God's gifts* :—We have here a kind of type and pattern of the infirmity so common to human nature, namely, forgetfulness of God in the use and appropriation of those things which He has provided for us. I. Look, e.g., at the Divine provisions in THE GREAT STORE-HOUSES OF NATURE. See how by invention and discovery we turn these to account, perceiving in some instances forces which, though old, are new to us, and in others ingeniously applying old and well-known forces to new purposes in the advancement of civilisation and for the comfort and convenience of life. It is written concerning man in the Book of Psalms, "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands." II. Let us take up the more familiar theme of DAILY PROVIDENCE. We can see God in clouds, we can hear Him in the wind; He is sometimes near to us in the earthquake and the fire, as well as in the still small voice; but we often fail to see Him in those common mercies which are yet new every morning and fresh every evening. Consider that loaf of bread on your table. It should be to you a revelation; and that it may be so, find out its genesis. It was flour yesterday or the day before, and it came, perhaps, from France, or Spain, or America, where it was grown as wheat—came to you across the ocean, God's own highway in the wilderness of waters. Long ago He fashioned those grains of wheat, and put into them such force of life that a handful or less, found in an Egyptian mummy three thousand years old, when planted in English soil, have grown and brought forth thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold. "Give us this day our daily bread," simplest of all prayers as it seems, is really asking that nature's forces may continue to be filled and sustained by Him who made them; and that the industries of life may go on working harmoniously with the gracious providence of God, for without these links human and Divine in the great golden chain, our daily bread would cease. III. IN RELIGION, too, we may see how the Divine gifts have been used, and, alas! too often abused, in blind forgetfulness of the Divine Giver. Man is a creature who can no more do without "religion" than he can do without money, without clothing, without houses, or without food. But though naturally religious, it does not follow that he is godly. We may make to ourselves a religion without God. One of the charges brought by the apostle Paul against those who had formed the most elaborate and complex religious systems was, that they did not "like to retain God in their knowledge." The religious faculty, God-given, in some sort they exercised, but they lost sight of Him the Giver. They lost His unity among their myriad gods and goddesses, and so Israel's mission was to declare, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." They lost sight, too, of His justice; for though they said, "The gods

are just," yet when we read the story of their lives, their vices, and their crimes, every idea of justice is shocked and revolted; and as to these gods, they that make them are like unto them. It may be, too, that in our own theologies we have not been in this respect free from fault. Even in Christian theology the "Theos," the personal God, may have been too much lost sight of. It may be, as is sometimes charged upon us, that we think of God as a "bundle of attributes," rather than as a living Father revealed to us in the Christ. IV. IN CHRISTIAN ORDINANCES let us always see the Giver. Unless we do so, use in them there is none. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 12-14. **And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping . . . And behold joy and gladness.**—*A call to repentance.*—I. THE CALL TO REPENTANCE (ver. 12). 1. The day here referred to was a season of abounding iniquity. 2. A day of sore trouble (vers. 4, 5). II. THE RECEPTION IT MET WITH (ver. 13). There is no room to suppose that they had given no attention to the message delivered by the prophet. It would rather appear that they had attended to it with accuracy, nay, studied its meaning on purpose to counteract it; for a contrast so minutely exact, a scheme of contradiction so completely adjusted, could hardly have been stumbled upon by mere accident. And indeed the latter part of the verse puts this beyond all doubt, "Let us eat and drink," said they, "for to-morrow we shall die." We are not to imagine that these words were spoken seriously, by one of those presumptuous and boasting rebels. The most daring amongst them must have been conscious that the aspect of the king of terrors, at their most sumptuous entertainments, would leave them no appetite either for flesh or wine. They meant it as a scoff, a witty saying, for turning into ridicule the warning they had received, but which they did not believe. It is common enough to condemn the same faults in others which we easily forgive, nay, cherish in ourselves. III. THE ALARMING DENUNCIATION OF WRATH against those perverse and obstinate transgressors (ver. 14). IV. IMPROVEMENT. What concern have we in these things? (1 Cor. x. 11). God is always the same. And therefore, in His past acts of government, as they are explained by His Word, we behold a plan of righteous administration, from whence we may learn, with some degree of certainty, what kind of treatment, in similar circumstances, we ourselves have reason to expect. (*H. Blair, D.D.*) *God's call to repentance.*—The awful state of Jerusalem forces this truth upon our minds—that no privileges, civil or religious, can give immunity to a depraved and guilty people, from the threatened judgments of an angry God. In how many instances do the circumstances and the conduct of the ancient Jews strikingly resemble ours! I. THE DUTY TO WHICH GOD CALLS US. We are called to "weeping and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth"—these expressions being indicative of the ancient forms of mourning. We are called by our calamities to it; we are called by our God. II. THE CONDUCT WHICH IS DISPLAYED. "And behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine: let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die"—a sensualist notion, which may be taken here either as the language of despair—"Since we must die to-morrow, let us eat and drink to-day"; or, in the way of sneering—"They say we shall die; let us eat and drink then, and enjoy as much as we can of the good things of this life." III. THE THREATENING WHICH IS DENOUNCED (ver. 14). God's threatenings are not idle declamations. (*G. B. Macdonald.*) *Judah's great folly.*—They were entering on the terrible issues of the struggle with Assyria with as light a heart as the Parisians did on the Franco-German war. They were spending, as it were, the night before the battle in the revelry of drunken mirth, as the Saxons spent the night before the battle of Hastings. (*E. H. Plumptre, D.D.*)

Vers. 15-19. **Shebna.**—*Shebna.*—In the councils of Hezekiah there was a strong party favourable to an alliance between Judah and Egypt. At the head of the party stood Shebna. He occupied a post corresponding to that of our prime minister, and was treasurer, or chief adviser of the king. His tenure of office bode no good to Jerusalem: his pro-Egyptian policy, like the pro-Assyrian policy of Ahaz, was utterly displeasing to Jehovah, and alien to the best traditions of David's house. Against this policy Isaiah is specially commissioned to raise his voice. In the discharge of this mission he singles out Shebna, a stranger apparently, who had by ambition raised himself to high office, and was devoid

of religious principle. He had been securing honour for himself, establishing his family in the land, as he thought, and, as the custom was, hewing out for himself a sepulchre. But from that high office he would soon be disgracefully ousted, when king and people would alike come to see the unworthy character of an Egyptian alliance. And it is worthy of remark that this prophecy was speedily fulfilled. For when the Rabshakeh is met by Hezekiah's messengers, Shebna does not occupy the first place. (*B. Blake, B.D.*) *The prophecy concerning Shebna*.—This prophecy illustrates the influence wielded by Isaiah in the domestic politics of Judah. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *Shebna a foreigner*.—To judge from the form of his name he was probably a Syrian. (*Ibid.*) *Shebna's vain expectation*.—In the rock of [the east slope of Zion] from the top downwards the tombs of the kings were hewn. So high a position does Shebna occupy, and so great does he think himself, that he hopes after his death to be laid to rest among kings, and by no means far down. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *Shebna's tomb*.—The mention of the height of Shebna's new tomb is supposed to indicate his extreme pretension to pomp and dignity. The ancients, not excepting the Jews, attached much more importance than we do to everything connected with the burial of the dead, because they were so much less able to distinguish the human person from the earthly body, or to apprehend the substantial reality of the former apart from the latter. Our burials symbolise, and express our faith in, immortality and a resurrection; but the Jews shared more or less the common feeling of antiquity that there was some real connection between a man's due obsequies and his state after death. Still their faith, though obscure, was in the main spiritual and elevating, when held as it was by David, Hezekiah, or Job. But the worldly and sense-bound man then, as indeed he does now, contemplated the costly preparations for his burial, and for the preservation of his embalmed and entombed body, as the last possible act of regard for that sensual existence which he alone cared for. It was but the consistent maintenance to the last of his sensual creed, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*)

Ver 18. He will surely violently turn and toss thee like a ball.—*Shebna's doom*.—To this unfamilied intruder, who had sought to establish himself in Jerusalem, after the manner of those days, by hewing himself a great sepulchre, Isaiah brought sentence of violent banishment: "Behold, Jehovah will be hurling, hurling thee away, thou big man, and crumpling, crumpling thee together. He will roll, roll thee on, thou rolling-stone, like a ball thrown out on broad, level ground; there shalt thou die, and there shall be the chariots of thy glory, thou shame of the house of thy lord. And I thrust thee from thy post, and from thy station do they pull thee down." This vagabond was not to die in his bed, nor to be gathered in his big tomb to the people on whom he had foisted himself. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *Shebna's doom*.—For him, like Cain, there was a land of Nod; and upon it he was to find a vagabond's death. (*Ibid.*) *Shebna's ejection*.—The ideas suggested are those of violence, rapidity, and distance. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *Retribution*.—Those that, when they are in power, turn and toss others, will be justly turned and tossed themselves when their day shall come to fall. Many that have thought themselves fastened like a nail may come to be tossed like a ball, for here have we no continuing city. Shebna thought his place too strait for him, he had no room to thrive; God will, therefore, send him into "a large country," where he shall have room to wander, but never find the way back again. (*M. Henry.*) *The irresistibility of God's judgments*.—Learn—I. THE EASE WITH WHICH GOD EFFECTS HIS JUDGMENTS. II. THE UTTER USELESSNESS OF ANY RESISTANCE TO THE DIVINE JUDGMENTS. As surely as a ball must follow the line of projection, so surely must we go whither the judgments of God carry us. III. THE AWFULNESS OF FALLING INTO THE HANDS OF THE LIVING GOD. (*W. Manning.*)

Vers. 20-25. My servant Eliakim.—"My servant Eliakim".—Who was he? Nobody can tell. Where else is he referred to in Holy Writ? Probably nowhere. Was he then a man without renown? That depends upon what you mean by renown, for he is indicated in the text by terms which imply infinite fame. Say "Eliakim," and nobody knows him; say "My servant Eliakim," and obscurity rises up into eminence unrivalled and never to be surpassed. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Renown, nominal and moral*.—Renown, then, may be

nominal, or it may be moral. Nominal renown is a thing that comes and goes, a coloured cloud, a bubble on the river, a noise in the air, nothing that is substantial, nothing that is beneficent in itself; but moral renown, the renown of goodness, the fame of character, the reputation associated with deeds of sacrifice or valour—that is a renown which lives in heaven. (*Ibid.*) *Eliakim and Christ*.—The language here used about Eliakim finds its perfect fulfilment only in Him whose supreme prerogative it is so to open that no man can shut, even Jesus Christ. (*B. Blake, B.D.*) *The power of the keys* (ver. 22) consists not merely in supervision of the royal chambers, but also in the decision as to who was and who was not to be received into the king's service. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *Eliakim: the nail and the throne*.—A nation's rulers (*Zech. x. 4*) stand in the same relation to the community as a tent-peg to the tent which it holds firmly and keeps up. As the tent-peg is driven into the ground in such a way that a person can, if necessary, sit on it, so by development of the metaphor the peg is changed into a seat of honour. As a splendid chair adorns a room, so Eliakim graces his hitherto undistinguished family. The closely connected thought, that the members of his family in order to attain to honours would sit on this chair, is expressed by a different figure. Eliakim is once more presented to us as a "nail," now, however, as a high one, somewhat like a pole on which coats are hung up, or as a peg driven into the wall at a distance from the ground. On this pole or peg they hang—*i.e.*, one hangs or there hangs—the whole heavy lot (as in chap. viii. 7) of the family of Eliakim. The prophet proceeds to split up this family into its male and female components, as the juxtaposition of masculine and feminine nouns shows. (*Ibid.*) *The kingdom and government of the glorious Messiah typified by Eliakim's preferment and promotion*.—I. ELIAKIM'S CALL unto his honourable employment, whereby is represented Christ's call unto His mediatory work and office (ver. 20). Christ did not run unsent. II. THE BADGES OF HONOUR bestowed upon Him in consequence of His call (vers. 21, 22). 1. He is clothed with a royal robe. So Christ is clothed (*Rev. i.*) with a garment down to the foot, that serves to cover and adorn Himself and all His members. 2. He is strengthened with a girdle, a girdle of truth and faithfulness; He is always ready girded for the execution of His work. 3. He hath the keys of the house committed to Him, and the sole government; He opens, and none shuts, &c. The keys of the heart, and the keys of hell and death are in His hand. III. HIS CONFIRMATION IN HIS HONOURABLE OFFICE AND STATION. He is "fastened as a nail in a sure place." Christ is nailed in His mediatory work and office by an eternal decree (*Psa. ii. 7*), and by the oath of God (*Psa. cx. 4*); and all the powers of hell and earth shall never loose this nail. IV. We are here told to WHAT ADVANTAGE HE SHOULD DISCHARGE HIS TRUST. "He shall be for a glorious throne to His Father's house." God manifested in the flesh is the throne of grace to which we are called to come with boldness; and this may well be called "a glorious throne," because there is, in this dispensation of grace, the brightest display of the glory of God. Christ is the ornament of His Father's house, the brightness of His glory, and the brightest crown that ever adorned the human nature. V. CHRIST'S PRE-EMINENCE IN GOD'S FAMILY, and the dependence of all the domestics upon Him (ver. 24). 1. The designation given unto the Church of God; "the house of the God and Father of Christ." 2. The nature and quality of the house; there is "glory" in it. 3. The high and honourable station that Christ hath in His Father's house; He is the great Master-household, and the whole family is committed to Him, and is said to "hang upon Him as a nail fastened in a sure place." 4. The common consent of the whole family unto His management; they shall hang upon Him all the glory, &c.; *i.e.*, the Father of the family, and the whole offspring of the house, concur amicably that He should have the sole management. 5. Some account of the furniture of the house, committed to the management of the great New Testament Eliakim. (1) The glory. (2) The offspring and issue. (3) The vessels of small quantity, from vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons. By which we are to understand believers, for they are the children of God, and the seed of Christ by regeneration; and likewise called "vessels," because they are the recipient subjects of Divine grace, which is the wine, milk, and honey of the house. (*E. Erskine.*)

Ver. 23. **And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place.**—*The fastening hold of Christ*.—The fastening force of Christ upon the soul of humanity is seen—I. IN HIS HOLD UPON THE GENERAL MIND OF THE WORLD. Who, through-



out the history of the ages, have laid such a firm grip upon mankind as Christ has? It is true that Buddha, Zoroaster, Confucius, Mohammed, have had—and still have—a firm hold on millions of souls. Some of them have a far wider influence than that of Christ, but they are not fastened so firmly. 1. Philosophy shows this. Their systems—if systems they can be called—only appeal to certain faculties in human nature; Christ grasps the entire man—intellect, imagination, conscience, hope, fear, love. 2. History shows this. Heathenism does not encroach upon Christianity. Christians are not converted to Zoroaster, Confucius, &c., but their followers are converted to Christianity every day. Heathendom is contracting, Christendom is extending on all hands. Its language, its literature, its institutions, are pushing themselves everywhere. The “nail” is made so fast, that to extract it would be to tear the world to pieces. II. IN HIS HOLD UPON THE CONSECRATED MIND OF HIS DISCIPLES. His hold here is far firmer than His hold on the general mind. He goes deeper into humanity, He takes hold of the entire soul, and makes it captive. Or, to change the figure, He strikes His roots into every faculty of the soul. He becomes to the human spirit in this case what the sap is to the tree. You must tear the soul to pieces—nay, you must annihilate it—before you can extract this “nail.” (*Homilist.*)

*A nail in a sure place.*—I. THE LESSON OF THE NAIL; that little things may be very important things. We read when David prepared for the building of the temple, “he prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of the gates.” So all preparation for training, for education, for the formation of character, is a kind of holy iron, hereafter to be fashioned into nails for the “sure place.” And if you turn to Ezra ix. 8, you will find the good man even makes this a matter of prayer, that “God would give him a nail in His holy place”—that is, that he and his might have a place of security, however insignificant it might be; for a nail, small as it is, speaks of security, it fastens things. There is an old proverb which says how, “for want of a nail the shoe was lost, for want of a shoe the horse was lost, for want of a horse the rider was lost.” II. THE SURE PLACE. From which you learn, that even things good in themselves must be in a good place, in order that they may be of any good. For instance—1. Good words, in order that they may do good, need good memories; and the good memory is the “sure place.” 2. A good example in a fruitful life is “a nail in a sure place.” 3. Faith fixed on a good object is “a nail in a sure place.” Faith is not always good; people may believe lies. If you look to Christ and trust in Him there will be the “nail in the sure place.” III. THE LESSON OF THE FASTENING. 1. In order to the fastening a nail needs guiding. You will need strength, help, and guidance from God. 2. Fastened. Some things, once fixed, are fixed for ever. What a dreadful thing it is, to think that this applies, so far as we are able to say and to see, to bad things! Habit fixes a man like “a nail in a sure place,” fixes his ways of thought and life so that it seems as if he is immovable; for every time we repeat a wrong thing, it is driven farther and farther into our life. See to it, as you value your happiness for time and eternity, that, if you are fastened as “a nail in a sure place,” it shall be a good place. 3. In a good place, fastened. “Be steadfast, unmovable”: act in such a manner that the bad people shall never have any hopes of getting you over on their side, or of drawing you out of your sure place. (*Ibid.*)

*Nails in Eastern houses.*—These nails, or pegs, when employed in houses, were not driven into the walls after the building was finished, but were worked in while the building was going up. The strong hooks, or spikes, thus secured in the mortar answered the double purpose of clamp-irons to hold the walls together, and of nails on which anything could be hung. (*J. N. Norton.*)

*The nail in a sure place.*—The promise concerning Eliakim amounts to this: “I will so build him up into My spiritual temple (so the Almighty may be supposed to say), that he himself may be securely fixed in it, and that others also may safely depend on him for help and counsel.” As Eliakim was a type of Christ, we have in this similitude an instructive lesson, both of our duty and our happiness. On Him we must hang our hopes and interests, both with respect to our own salvation, and to the peace and prosperity of the Church. I. Eliakim was a type of Christ IN BEING THE SUCCESSOR OF ONE WHO HAD PROVED HIMSELF UNWORTHY OF HIS OFFICE. As the haughty and unprincipled Shebna gave place to a man whom no selfish interests could possibly influence, so were the corrupt and evil-minded rulers of the Jewish nation to be set aside at the appearance of the Messiah who was to govern the world in righteousness. II. Again, Eliakim was a type of Christ, IN THE AUTHORITY ENTRUSTED TO HIM. As the successor of the faithless

Shebna was honoured by having "the key of the house of David laid upon his shoulder," in token of the unlimited authority which he was thenceforth to exercise, so was the Lord Jesus to be entrusted with "all power in heaven and earth"; and we find Him adopting the same lofty terms to describe His own regal attributes (Rev. iii. 7). III. A third particular in which Eliakim may be considered as a type of Christ, is IN THE BENEFITS AND BLESSINGS SECURED BY HIS JUSTITIOUS RULE. Eliakim, we are told, was "a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah," but the benefits of the wisest administration of man are few and insignificant, when compared with those which are secured to the world by the glorious reign of the Prince of Peace. (*Ibid.*)

**Ver. 24. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house.—Eliakim's family.**—The vessels, large and small, are figures of the various members of Eliakim's family. As vessels of every kind are suspended upon a nail, so will Eliakim's connections, rich and poor alike, support themselves upon his new dignity. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *Oriental display of wealth*.—A large part of the wealth of the ancients consisted of gold and silver vessels, and in changes of showy raiment, of which they made an ostentatious display, by hanging them on the spikes along the walls. It was also common to suspend in houses and temples, suits of armour, swords, shields, and helmets; the spoils of war, or the heirlooms of honoured ancestors (Song Sol. iv. 4). (*J. N. Norton.*) *Christ the sole Manager of the Church*.—I. THE CHURCH IS THE HOUSE OF GOD (chap. ii. 2, 3; Heb. iii. 6; 1 Pet. ii. 5). 1. He is the Founder of the house. 2. The Purchaser. 3. The sole Proprietor. 4. Here He hath His abode. Hence, it must be a very glorious structure. The plan of it was laid by infinite wisdom from all eternity (Prov. ix. 1). (1) The foundation of the house is glorious. (2) The form. (3) The door (John x. 9). (4) The pillars (Prov. ix. 1). These are the perfections of the Divine nature as they are manifested in Christ. (5) The ordinances. II. CHRIST IS CONSTITUTED THE GREAT MANAGER OF HIS FATHER'S HOUSE. 1. In the council of peace, from eternity, He was chosen to be the Builder of the house (Zech. vi. 12, 13). 2. He is the everlasting Father of the family (chap. ix. 6). 3. The great Oracle and Counsellor (chap. ix. 6). 4. The great Priest (Heb. x. 21). 5. The great Lord-Treasurer, yea, the treasury (Col. i. 19; John i. 16). 6. The great Lord-Steward or Dispenser. 7. The Lawgiver. III. CHRIST IS FIXED IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE HOUSE OF GOD, as a nail in a sure place. 1. There is an irreversible decree passed in heaven that He should be the sole Manager and Governor of the house (Psa. ii. 6, 7). 2. He is fixed in the administration of the house with the solemnity of a covenant transaction (Psa. lxxxix. 3). 3. With the solemnity of an oath taken by the great Jehovah. 4. In His oath He pledges the most dazzling perfection of His nature. He will as soon cease to be a holy God, as suffer His Son's authority in His house to be overturned. 5. He is fixed in the management by a solemn call and investiture. 6. By an actual possession of the throne (Phil. ii. 9-11). 7. By a complete victory over all His and His Church's enemies, so that none of them are capable to give Him the least disturbance. IV. THE WHOLE HOUSE, WITH ALL ITS APPURTENANCES, HANGS OR DEPENDS UPON THIS BLESSED NAIL THAT IS FASTENED IN A SURE PLACE. 1. All the glory of the house hangs upon our Lord Jesus Christ. (1) God's presence in a Church makes her glorious. It is owing to Christ that the tabernacle of God is with men. (2) The revelation of the mind and will of God in the Scriptures of truth, is the glory of the Church. Christ is the Alpha and Omega of the whole Scriptures. (3) A faithful ministry is the glory of a Church. (See Eph. iv. 11-13.) (4) The ordinances of the Gospel, dispensed in purity by faithful ministers of Christ, are the glory of a Church. Well, all hang upon the great Manager, such as word and sacrament, prayer and praise. (5) The judicatories of a Church, higher and lower, constituted in His name, and moulded according to His appointment for the government and for the exercise of the keys of discipline, are the glory of a Church. All this glory hangs upon the nail fastened in a sure place, for He it is that gives the keys of the kingdom of heaven unto His office-bearers, and promises that "what they bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and what they loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven"; and where they assemble in courts for discipline, He "will be in the midst of them." (6) The covenants of a Church are her glory; God's covenant of grace and promise, and their covenants of duty and gratitude. The covenant, and

all the blessings and promises of it, hang upon this blessed nail; they are all in Him, and "in Him yea and amen." Our covenants for duty, obedience, and gratitude, hang upon this blessed nail. When men engage to duty in a legal way, they do only make to themselves ropes of sand. All our funds of grace lie in Him. (7) The multitude of real converts is the glory of a Church. Of His own will He begets us by the word of grace. (8) The purity, holiness, and faithfulness of Church members are the glory of a Church. This glory hangs upon this blessed nail; for it is by virtue of their union with Him, that they derive sanctifying influence from Him. 2. The offspring and issue of the house are also said to hang upon Christ. By the offspring and issue I understand all true believers. (1) Their very being, as they are new creatures, hangs upon Him (Eph. ii. 10). (2) Hence, their life hangs upon Christ. The second Adam is a quickening Spirit. (3) Have the offspring and issue of the house anything of the light of saving knowledge of God? This hangs upon Christ; for He is the true Sun of Righteousness. (4) The offspring and issue of the house of God enjoy a glorious liberty. This hangs upon Christ; for "if the Son makes us free, then are we free indeed." (5) They have all the best robe put upon them, when they return from the far country to their Father. Christ is the "end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." (6) Have they anything of the beauty of holiness? Christ is made unto them sanctification. (7) Have they strength for work or warfare? They are "strong in the Lord." (8) Are they heirs of God and of glory? They are "joint-heirs with Jesus Christ."

3. The vessels of the house hang upon this nail fastened in a sure place, from vessels of cups to vessels of flagons. (1) By the vessels of the house we are to understand believers (2 Tim. ii. 20, 21; Acts ix. 15). (2) These vessels are of different sizes. In God's family there are saints of different stature. V. THE REASONS OF THE DOCTRINE. Why is Christ constituted sole Manager of His Father's house? why doth He hang the offspring and issue, and all the vessels, upon Him, as upon a nail fastened in a sure place? 1. He only had ability for bearing such a weight. 2. Christ voluntarily undertook it. 3. Hereby a new revenue of glory is brought in to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 4. Hereby all men are brought to honour the Son, as they honour the Father. 5. This was for the safety and comfort of the saints and children of God. VI. THE APPLICATION OF THE DOCTRINE. (*E. Erskine.*) "*Vessels of cups*".—A word to weak believers who are designated "vessels of cups." 1. It is a high privilege to occupy the least room in the house of our God. 2. God has service for the least vessel of His house, as well as for the largest. 3. The least vessel is God's property, and He will not disown, but maintain His property, and own it before men and angels, saying, "They are Mine," in the day when He makes up His jewels. 4. The bands, by which you hang upon the nail fastened in a sure place, are as strong as those by which the vessels of flagons are secured; for He has said as to both, "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." 5. The weakest measure of grace is a pledge of more; for "to him that hath shall be given." 6. Although you are not to envy or grudge at God's bounty or liberality to others, in making them vessels of flagons, yet you may and ought earnestly to covet more grace than you have yet received. (*Ibid.*) *The vessels of flagons, i.e.,* believers of a higher stature. 1. Be not proud of grace received, but walk humbly with your God. "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" 2. Instead of despising others that are not come your length, study to be helpful and serviceable unto them. The vessels of cups are ordinarily filled out of the flagons; so study to impart and communicate of your grace, of your faith, love, hope, knowledge, and other graces, unto those that are weak in grace. The strong children in a family are helpful to the young and weak. 3. Whatever grace you have received, be not confident therein, like Peter; but be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and let the life you live be by faith in the Son of God. (*Ibid.*) *Christ the glory of His Father's house*.—By Christ's Father's house is meant His Church. I. ON CHRIST JESUS HANGS ALL THE GLORY OF THE REDEMPTION OF HIS FATHER'S HOUSE. II. ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST HANGS ALL THE GLORY OF THE INSTRUCTION OF HIS FATHER'S HOUSE. There is a two-fold light which the Lord Jesus imparts to the members of His Father's house. There is the light of His Word, those Scriptures which testify of Him as "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." The Scriptures, however, are not, of themselves, sufficient for spiritual illumination. The light of the Spirit must accompany the truth revealed in the Word, that it may become effectual for salvation. The

Holy Spirit is the fruit of the Redeemer's purchase. It is His glorious office to take of the things of Christ and show these to the soul. It is in the light of the Divine Word and Spirit that we discern aright the way of acceptance and the path of duty. III. ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST HANGS ALL THE GLORY OF THE RENOVATION OF HIS FATHER'S HOUSE. When He ascended on high, He received gifts for men; even the seven Spirits before the throne—the Holy Ghost, in His quickening, renewing, and sanctifying grace. These gifts are bestowed, let it be carefully noted, in virtue of the believer's union with the Lord Jesus Christ, through the instrumentality of living faith. IV. ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST HANGS ALL THE GLORY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF HIS FATHER'S HOUSE. They are under law to Christ as the sole Ruler of the house. We must take order from Him; for "One is our Master, even Christ." V. ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST HANGS ALL THE GLORY OF THE VICTORIES OF HIS FATHER'S HOUSE. The Christian Church, both collectively and in its individual members, is in an enemy's country on this side heaven. It is the Christian's solace to be assured that he has not been sent a warfare on his own charges. Apart from the clear and full revelations of Scripture, no subject of human contemplation is so saddening as death. He, on whom hangs all the glory of His Father's house, is Himself the Resurrection and the Life. Conclusion—Let us seriously inquire whether we are members of that house. Mere external relationship to it will avail us nothing. We must be united in the bonds of faith and love to the Lord Jesus. (*J. Smyth, D.D.*) *The glory of the Mediator*:—The idea in the text seems to embrace this statement: That every attribute belonging to God is concentrated in the Saviour, as "God manifest in the flesh," and that the Father is most glorified when we give in our services all the glory to His Son. I. UPON HIM HANGS ALL THE GLORY OF HIS FATHER'S HOUSE OF CREATION. "By Him were all things made, and without Him was not anything made that was made." II. UPON HIM HANGS ALL THE GLORY OF HIS FATHER'S HOUSE OF PROVIDENCE. And what is providence but creation continued, in upholding, governing, and guiding all things to accomplish their predestined end? Jesus Christ is on the throne; every painful feeling is anticipated, every tear is bottled, every anxiety alleviated, every distress sanctified. He is our Saviour, our Friend, our Refuge and Strength. III. UPON HIM HANGS ALL THE GLORY OF HIS FATHER'S HOUSE OF GRACE. Christ's kingdom is a spiritual one, set up within the believer's soul. IV. UPON HIM HANGS ALL THE GLORY OF HIS FATHER'S HOUSE OF HEAVEN. "I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing"; and thus the ransomed and renewed universe will "hang upon Him all the glory of His Father's house." (*F. Newman, D.D.*)

Ver. 25. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed.—*Elevation is only held on good character*:—Even God who drove in the nail can take it out again. No nail once driven in can do without God, saying, I am driven in now, so I care not what may happen. The highest lives in obedience; the strongest man becomes weaker than the weakest when he ceases to pray. Genius cannot keep a man in a high moral elevation. His genius will soon be discovered to be but cleverness, not the blooming out of a life that is hidden in the very mystery of God. Leader of the people! even thou mayest be dispossessed of thy leadership. Great statesmen are in the hands of God. Journalists, thinkers, the advance-guard of every name, all these hold their position on their good conduct. Let them be good and faithful servants; let there be no selfishness in their ambition, no vain conceit because of the influence with which God hath clothed them; even the nail that is fastened in the sure place may be removed, the very beam in which it finds a place may be cut in two and burned in unquenchable fire. So, then, we are nothing but in God. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Nepotism*:—Eliakim comes to ruin in the exercise of the plenary power attaching to his office by giving way to nepotism. His family makes a wrong use of him, and with an unwarrantable amount of good nature he makes a wrong use of his official position for their benefit. He therefore comes down headlong, and with him all the heavy burden which the peg sustains, *i.e.*, all his relations, who, by being far too eager to make the most of their good fortune, have brought him to ruin. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *Eliakim and Shebna: a couple of tragedies*:—We have not one, but a couple of

tragedies. Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, follows Shebna, the son of Nobody. The fate of the overburdened nail is as grievous as that of the rolling stone. It is easy to pass this prophecy over as a trivial incident; but when we have carefully analysed each verse, restored to the words their exact shade of signification, and set them in their proper contrasts, we perceive the outlines of two social dramas, which it requires very little imagination to invest with engrossing moral interest. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*)

## CHAPTER XXIII.

**VERB. 1-18. The burden of Tyre.**—*The prophecy against Tyre: lessons*:—The Tarshish of this chapter is Spain. Chittim is the island of Cyprus. The word “merchant” is the same word that is rendered in other places “Canaanite.” The Canaanites were the most energetically commercial men of their time. To be a merchant was to be a Canaanite; to be a Canaanite was to be a merchant, substantially. I. The world must come, however slowly, to recognise the fact that **RULERS THEMSELVES ARE RULED**; that the Lord reigneth. There can only be one Supreme. What a glorious dawn is that which will shine above the eastern hills when the world begins to feel that it is reigned over, governed, guided in all its march of progress. The world grows warmer under that recognition. At first the recognition is terrible enough, but it becomes more and more beneficent as things shape themselves. II. The world must come to recognise the fact that **EVEN EMPIRES ARE DEPENDENT UPON CHARACTER FOR THEIR EXISTENCE**. For Tyre we may substitute London, Paris, New York, or the countries which they indicate. It is only the letter of this chapter which is ancient; the principle is energetic evermore. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The prophet's attitude towards cities and states*:—When the Spirit of God is in a man he cares for no city, how great soever it may be, though he himself may not have whereon to lay his head. There is, however, a spirit in him which makes him greater than all the capitals of the world were they added to one another and constituted into one great avenue of capitals, each house in all the vista crowned or starred with a sceptre thrust from every window. The Galilean fishermen cared nothing for the pomp of Jerusalem; old prophets with ragged mantles on their stooping shoulders hurled Divinest judgment against proud kings. (*Ibid.*) *The Church's love of worldly patronage*:—The Church has lost this prophetic inspiration, and now she bows down to worldly greatness and tells with delight that a chariot and pair has driven up to her front door. To what a cant of indignity has she sunk, even in her very speech! She is now an influential Church, a respectable Church, an intelligent Church, a Church possessed of exceptional advantages, and most careful about her reputation! So the world pays its copper tribute, and says to the Church, Behave yourself! let us do what we like, and you sing your hymns and go up to heaven like any other vapour. Where are the men who can do without food, clothing, shelter? Where are the men who would spurn any offer of patronage?—sons of thunder, sons of judgment; men who never sit down to eat, but snatch their apple as they hasten along the road that they may keep their next appointment to thunder judgment upon unrighteousness, and break in pieces with an iron rod the vessel of impurity. (*Ibid.*) *Tyre*:—Tyre's celebrity dates first from the time of David. In the Assyrian era, however, Tyre had already attained to a kind of supremacy over the rest of the Phœnician cities. It lay on the coast, rather more than twenty miles from Sidon; but being hard pressed by enemies, it had transferred the real seat of its trade and wealth to a rocky island, three miles farther north, and only 1200 paces from the mainland. The strait that separated this insular Tyre (*Týros*) from ancient Tyre (*Παλαίτυρος*) was, upon the whole, shallow, and the ship channel in the neighbourhood of the island was only about eighteen feet deep, so that a siege of insular Tyre by Alexander was carried out by the erection of a mole. Luther refers the prophecy to this attack by Alexander. But earlier than this event was the struggle of Tyre with Assyria and Babylon, and first of all the question arises, Which of these two struggles has the prophecy in view? In consequence of new disclosures, for which we are indebted to Assyriology,

the question has entered a new phase. Down to the present, however, it still permits of only a hypothetical and unsatisfactory solution. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *The Phœnicians* were simply carriers and middle-men. In all time there is no instance of a nation so wholly given over to buying and selling, who frequented even the battlefields of the world that they might strip the dead and purchase the captive. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*)

**Ver. 3. The harvest of the river.**—*The harvest of the river*:—The valley of the Nile was the field for sowing and reaping. The ships of Tyre trafficked far and wide, and by purchase or by barter the corn supplies of Egypt were fetched in to fill the barns and granaries of the merchant city, and were thence re-sold with profit to many nations. The harvest of the Nile most accurately describes and stands for all the resources and the wealth of Egypt, which depend entirely upon the Nile. This river brings down from the mountains of Abyssinia a great quantity of decayed vegetable matter and rich alluvial deposit, which in flood time it spreads over the land. A failure in the rise of the Nile means famine in Egypt, and it was lately computed that one foot difference in the height of the annual flood makes a difference of £2,000,000 to the income of the country. So little in this respect have things changed since the days of Isaiah. (*P. T. Bainbrigg, M.A.*) *The harvest of the river*:—We need not, however, restrict the term to the importation of corn. The harvest of the river was the merchandise of the world, which the ships of Tarshish conveyed to the city of the isle—Tyre. The harvest of the river, then, is the commerce of the city built upon its banks. God is equally the God of the harvest of the river as He is the God of the harvest of the field, and though He made the country He ordained that men should form themselves into communities and dwell together in cities, and He has laid down laws for their guidance as members of a great society which must be followed, that order may be maintained and prosperity achieved. The merchant is as much engaged in doing God's work as the farmer is. There may not be so much romance and poetry about his occupation. But God may be glorified in the fires as well as in the green fields and the pleasant woods. It is He who assigns to every man his proper place—implants within him a desire to do his duty in his appointed sphere of action, and so contrives that while a man does his duty and provides for his own interest and welfare, he by so doing contributes at the same time to the happiness and well-being of all. (*W. Rogers, M.A.*) *God the great World-Provider*:—When the Shah of Persia some few years ago visited this country, he was taken through the docks down the river, and while contemplating the great harvest reposing on its bosom, and witnessing the crowds of people eager to see the Eastern potentate and to do him honour, he asked a pertinent question of the nobleman who accompanied him. It was this: "How are these vast multitudes fed?" It is a question which showed the thoughtful intelligence of the barbarian, but it is one which few pause to ask, and which few are able to answer, because few look beyond the surface and attempt to unravel the great mystery by which we are enshrouded, and recognise the agency of the invisible One in all the affairs of men. (*Ibid.*)

**Ver. 4. The sea hath spoken, even the strength of the sea.**—*The voice of the sea*:—God, through the wildly wailing winds, and loudly surging waves, has often uttered a voice of warning and of woe to cities filled with corruption and vice. And how, too, through these winds and waves, has the sea spoken in its strength to crushed and broken hearts, when its surface has been thickly strewn with shattered wrecks, and the floating and sinking bodies of its helpless victims. I. But the sea often speaks to us in other language than this, addressing us, as it does, through the eye as well as the ear, and CALLING UPON US TO ADORE AND LOVE GOD for the beauty with which He clothes and overhangs it, and for the blessings which, by means of the sea, He conveys to us, no less than to tremble and bow down before Him in view of the vastness and the majestic grandeur of the ocean in its more excited and terrific moods. II. The sea hath spoken, even the strength of the sea, by ITS VASTNESS AND THE FORCE AND GRANDEUR OF ITS MOVEMENTS. III. The sea hath spoken, too, and will, we trust, thus ever speak, through THE ELECTRIC WIRE, which here and there lies far down in its lowest depths, and which, in coming years, will be more widely extended abroad. IV. Yet again the sea hath spoken, in that IT APPEALS TO OUR KIND CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY AND INTEREST in behalf of those who, as seamen, go forth upon the

deep. V. When the sea in its strength thus speaks to us, with the voice of wailing, lamentation, and woe, HOW OUGHT WE TO PRAY FOR SEAMEN AND THOSE CONNECTED WITH THEM, with all the power of faith which God shall give us, that He would save them from a watery grave, or, if they thus perish, that He would comfort those who mourn their loss, and that in the day in which the earth and the sea shall give up the dead that are in them, they may all together enter the haven of eternal rest. So, too, should we ever pray that the time may soon come when the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto God, and the isles shall wait for His law. (*C. Rockwell.*) *The violent in the serene*.—The sea, as a rule, is tranquil. Yet what awful power it possesses when it is aroused to fury! Blocks of stone weighing over thirteen tons have been known to be hurled by it a distance of more than thirty feet, and blocks of three tons to more than one hundred yards. Jetties and bridges are dashed about like toys. The entire harbour of Fécamp was destroyed by its rage, and the mass of earth torn from the north side of Cape la Héve was estimated at more than 300,000 square yards. Yet these are only among the trifling achievements of the sea when it passes from its peaceful to its furious mood. Violence often slumbers under an appearance of serenity. A crowd of joyous holiday-makers to-day may become to-morrow a foaming mob of insurrectionists! (*Scientific Illustrations and Symbols.*) *Power of the sea*.—That part of Hoy Head, in Orkney, which is called the Brow of the Brae, is one sheer unbroken crag of 1150 feet. The Orcadians told me that in a hurricane they have seen an Atlantic wave strike this headland in such volume and with such power, that it has rushed half-way up the cliff, throwing itself in its great but impotent rage to the height of nearly 600 feet. Hurled by such a sea against such a crag, a man-of-war, though built of the strongest oak, and bound with the toughest iron, would be shattered like a ship of glass. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *The sea*.—He that will learn to pray, let him go to sea. (*George Herbert.*)

Ver. 8. Tyre, the crowning city, whose merchants are princes.—*Tyre, "the crowning city"*.—The speaker cannot drop his satire: he has got accustomed to it now; he is in his best vein of mockery. The crowning city was Tyre because she distributed crowns to the Phœnician colonies,—so to say, she kept a whole cupboard full of crowns, and took one out after another, and gave to the little colonies that they might play at being kingdoms (Ezek. xxvii. 23-25). (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The ancient estimate of trade*.—This passage reveals to us the estimation in which merchants were held in ancient time. Tyre was celebrated for her commerce. Her traders were renowned because of their wealth. The treasure they amassed gave them rank and position. They were influential and honoured. Trade was not regarded in old time as a menial, but a noble pursuit. The ambitious entered into it as a means to gratify their ambition. It furnished them with a field in which to exercise their faculties and develop their powers. Subsequently the sword gave rank and power,—valour, and not ability, lifted men to thrones: but before the feudal age, in the ancient time, and among the older civilisations, "merchants were princes, and traffickers were the honourable of the earth." (*W. H. Murray.*) *The origin of commerce*.—It is not difficult to ascertain the origin of commerce. It was born of men's necessities, and was characterised by the spirit of accommodation. Its birth dates back to the first family that existed on the earth. One had what another needed, and for it he had something to give in exchange. From this mutual need sprang trade. It was a family institution, a method by which the several members of the household could benefit themselves and each other. As families increased and population multiplied, trade enlarged the circle of its operations, became more complex and multifarious in its action and agents, and at length grew to be a vast system of exchange; the means of universal accommodation by which every person in the community received and bestowed benefits, and acquired the facilities of a larger and happier life. But it still kept its original significance and family spirit. Such was the origin of trade. There was nothing selfish about it; it was not mercenary, it was benevolent and humane. Centuries later, when it had become a profession, and its agents a class among other classes, there was nothing in its parentage of which it need be ashamed, no reason why those who were engaged in it should not be called "the honourable of the earth." (*Ibid.*) *Trade gave birth to our modern cities*.—If we would realise more fully the noble part that merchants have played in the history of the world, and the close relation that commerce has always sustained to human

progress, we have only to investigate the origin of cities and consider the forces that pushed them upward in their growth. It was trade that gave birth to our modern cities; a knot of traders beneath the walls of a castle, feeding the castle and protected by it, adding booth to booth and house to house,—so cities arose, so have they been builded. The same is true to-day. Commercial facilities and necessities are the forces that build our cities. They represent the material forces and results of civilisation. Each city is a hive, and ships and railways are the bees that bring honey to the hive, bringing it from all the world. They fly everywhere,—these bees with sails and wheels for wings,—their flight girdles the earth, and the rush and roar of their going and returning fill the whole air. Now, cities represent progress. In them you see the results of human invention and skill. Here the artist brings his canvas and the sculptor his marble. Here the loom is represented by the finest fabrics, and architecture lifts the pillars of her power. In cities oratory finds her school, and eloquence her platform; music her applause, and the poet his wreath. Every city is a record, a testimony, an advertisement. In its congregated forces and results you behold the people who built it. (*Ibid.*) *Commerce and discovery*.—Nor would it be well to overlook the use that God has made of commerce in relation to discoveries. The pioneers of civilisation have been ships and traders. The race has, as it were, sailed to its triumphs. (*Ibid.*) *God in commerce*.—I. GOD'S PLAN IS TO GIVE EVERY MAN WHAT HE NEEDS, PHYSICALLY, MENTALLY, AND SPIRITUALLY. II. TO RE-ESTABLISH THE FAMILY RELATION AMONG MEN. (*Ibid.*) *God's design in commerce*.—It is not that individuals may be enriched,—that is only an accidental result, one of the minor consequences; the real object on the part of God, the great result to be achieved, is and will be this: that every man on the face of the whole earth may be supplied with what he needs, in body, mind, and spirit, to the end that he may stand at last clothed in the original beauty and excellence, the likeness of which has for so many ages been lost from the earth. (*Ibid.*) *Merchants*.—I. MANY MERCHANTS ARE MUCH TRIED WITH LIMITED CAPITAL. II. MANY MERCHANTS ARE TEMPTED TO OVERCARE AND ANXIETY. III. MERCHANTS ARE TEMPTED SOMETIMES TO NEGLECT THEIR HOME DUTIES. IV. MANY MERCHANTS ARE TEMPTED TO MAKE FINANCIAL GAIN OF MORE IMPORTANCE THAN THE SOUL. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *The folly of reckless speculation*.—If ever tempted into reckless speculation, preach to your soul a sermon from the text: "As a partridge sitteth on eggs and hatcheth them not, so riches got by fraud; a man shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at the end he shall be a fool." (*Ibid.*) *Rivalry in business*.—Go where you will, in town or country, you will find half a dozen shops struggling for a custom that would only keep up one. And so they are forced to undersell one another; and, when they have got down the prices all they can by fair means, they are forced to get them lower by foul, and to sand the sugar, and sloeleaf the tea, and put, Satan—that prompts them on—knows what, into the bread; and then they don't thrive—they can't thrive. God's curse must be on them. They began by trying to oust each other and eat each other up, and, while they are eating up their neighbours, their neighbours eat them up, and so they all come to ruin together. (*C. Kingsley, M.A.*)

Ver. 9. **The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory.**—*God abases pride*.—In this message there is a revelation of the Divine method in dealing with men and nations. For here the Divine purpose is to show how stained is all human pride, and how contemptible are those whose honour comes from men only. What God brings about is a gradual uncovering of things, a discovering of their true character, and therefore the manifestation of the utter unsoundness and instability of anything not based on the Divine will. (*B. Blake, B.D.*) *God exalts the humble and abases the proud*.—A philosopher, being asked how God was employed, gave for answer, "In exalting the humble and abasing the proud." The reply was good, and agreeable to Scripture. (*R. Macculloch.*) *The great sin of pride*.—Other sins are violations of the law of God, this acteth in direct opposition to His very existence and sovereignty; it not only despiseth His commandment, but it arraigneth the dispensations of His providence and grace, and proves the fruitful source of all other transgressions. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 15. **Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years.**—*Tyre forgotten seventy years*.—Tyre shall be forgotten "seventy years, like the days of one king";—a Hebrew



idiom, obscure to us, though probably plain enough to Isaiah's hearers; but of which the most probable sense is, that the round number here, as elsewhere, indicates an indefinite, though considerable time, and that the prophet either farther limits this by a phrase equivalent to "for about a whole generation," or else implies that the seventy years—the long time of oblivion—shall be as monotonous, and perhaps as short to look back upon, as those of a single reign. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*)

Vers. 17, 18. And it shall come to pass, after the end of seventy years, that the Lord will visit Tyre.—*The revival of Tyre*.—In the fourth and last strophe, the prophet dwells upon the revival of Tyre in the ideal future. After seventy years of enforced retirement and quiescence, Tyre will resume her previous activity, but with the significant change that her gains will now be consecrated to Jehovah, supplying food and stately clothing to the people of Israel who dwell in His immediate presence (ver. 18). The figure under which Isaiah expresses this thought, appears to us a strange one; but it is suggested by the reflection that devotion to gain as such, unrelieved by any ennobling principle, is an unworthy occupation, which may easily degenerate into spiritual prostitution. The prophet, having once made use of the figure, retains it to the end. Disengaged from its singular garb, the truth which he enunciates is an important one. Tyre was pre-eminently, in Isaiah's day, the representative of the spirit of commerce: and the prophet here anticipates the time when this spirit may be elevated and purified. Isaiah pictures to himself the future growth of religion among the different nations with which he was acquainted under figures consonant to the peculiarities of each; in the case of Tyre, it takes the form of a purification of the base spirit of commerce; the old occupation of Tyre is not discarded, it is only purged of its worldliness, and ennobled. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *The mercenary spirit a prostitution of the soul*.—In so far as commercial activity, thinking only of earthly advantage, does not recognise a God-appointed limit, and carries on a promiscuous traffic with all the world, it is a prostitution of the soul. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *Phœnician harlotry*.—Moreover, at markets and fairs, especially Phœnician ones, prostitution of the body was an old custom. (*Ibid.*) *Commercial harlotry*.—The harlot converts into a matter of traffic what should be a sacred relationship: so trade brings men together merely as buyers and sellers, not as brethren; and consequently rapidly degenerates from self-interest into selfishness, unless it be perpetually counterbalanced by other and nobler aims in the man. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*)

Ver. 18. And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord.—*Mercantile life*.—I. We are reminded that THE MARKET IS A DIVINE INSTITUTION. In this chapter it is not commerce that is doomed to destruction but commercialists. When one thinks of the innate tendency of human nature to exchange commodities, a tendency discoverable even in children and barbarians: the distribution of the necessaries of human subsistence and progress over every zone of the globe, each zone supplying a something which the other does not, and the provisions of each zone, if not essential to human life, essential to human civilisation and comfort; the facilities which nature has provided in rivers, and oceans, and winds for conveying these commodities from one part of the globe to another, and the fact that the social unity and happiness of mankind can only be advanced by the principle of mutual inter-dependence, and that commerce is essential to this—it is impossible to escape the conclusion that trade is of Divine appointment. The principle is as old as the race, as wide as the world, as operative as life itself. II. The chapter reminds us that THE MARKET IS UNDER THE SCRUTINY OF THE RIGHTEOUS GOVERNOR OF THE WORLD. Though the Tyrian traders pursued their daily race for wealth, and indulged in the luxuries which their wealth could supply, utterly regardless of God, He was not regardless of them. So now, God is as truly in the market as in the temple, and as truly demands worship at the stall of the one, as at the altar of the other. III. The chapter reminds us that MERCANTILE PROSPERITY IS NO GUARANTEE FOR THE SAFETY OF A COUNTRY. If commercial prosperity could have saved a people, Tyre would have remained. But where is Tyre now? As she rose in wealth, she sank in vice. "Righteousness alone exalteth a nation." IV. The chapter reminds us that THE MARKET SHOULD BE SUBSERVIENT TO THE TEMPLE. This indeed is the grand subject of our text. (*Homilist.*) *True religion in Tyre*.—The prophecy does not mean

that this would take place immediately after the rebuilding, but subsequently to the seventy years of its desolation. After the return of the Jews from Babylon they penetrated different countries and everywhere endeavoured to proselyte their inhabitants. That the Christian religion was established at Tyre, is not only indicated by the fact that Paul found several of his disciples there on his way to Jerusalem (Acts xxi. 3, 4), but from the statement of subsequent historians. Eusebius says, that when the Church of God was founded in Tyre "much of its wealth was consecrated to God." And Jerome says, "We have seen churches built to the Lord in Tyre." So not only has the prophecy of its destruction been fulfilled, but the prophecy in the text, namely, its restoration and consecration to God, has also to some extent been realised. (*Ibid.*)

*Business*:—In relation to this subject there are several popular errors. 1. One is, that which makes business an end in itself. The pursuit of wealth for its own sake eats up the soul and reduces the man to a grub, it may be a bloated and a decorated grub, still a grub. 2. Another error is the using of the market as a means of ultimate retirement. What is this but to grasp at a shadow? The man who spends his best energies and days in accumulating riches becomes utterly unfit for the enjoyment of a retired life. 3. Another error is the regarding business and religion as antagonistic elements. Man is a moral being, and everywhere and everywhen his moral obligation meets him. There is no more opposition between business and religion than there is between the body and the soul. It is by the body only that the soul can be truly developed. 4. There is yet another error that is noteworthy, that of making religion subservient to business. There are men who make gain of godliness. (*Ibid.*)

*The subserviency of the market to the temple*:—The market should be subordinate to the temple. This will appear if we consider the following things—

I. THE RELATION OF MAN TO BOTH. 1. His relation to the market or to business is material. But his spiritual part is related to religion. It hungers for spiritual knowledge, for moral holiness, for communion with God. It does not live by bread alone. Now, as the spiritual part of man is confessedly of more value than the material, should not that work which is necessary for the latter be made subservient to the interest of the former? 2. Again, his relation to the market is temporary. How short is man's mercantile life! But his relation to spiritual engagements is abiding. Ought not the market, therefore, to be rendered subservient to the interests of the temple?

II. THE ADAPTATION OF THE MARKET TO THE PROMOTION OF PERSONAL RELIGION. 1. Commerce is suited to promote religious discipline. Neither inactivity nor exclusive solitude is favourable to spiritual development. The duties of the market properly discharged tend to quicken, test, and strengthen the eternal principles of virtue. Those principles, like trees, always require the open air, and oftentimes storms to deepen their roots, and strengthen their fibres. In the market, man has his integrity, patience, faith in God put to the test. 2. Not only is the market a good scene for spiritual discipline, but for spiritual intercourse as well. In it there is not only the exchange of material commodities, but an exchange of thoughts and emotions and purposes. Mind flows into mind, and the souls of nations mingle their ideas. What an immense influence for good or ill can men exert in the market! One impious mind in the market may pour its poisonous influence far into the civilised world. On the other hand, what an opportunity has the godly man for spiritual usefulness! The apostles often went into the market-place to preach because of its opportunities for diffusing the truth. It seems that the Author of our being made an exchange of temporal commodities necessary for us in order that we may exchange the spiritual commodities of true thoughts and high purposes. 3. Once more, it is one of the best scenes for the practical display of religious truth. When does piety appear to the best advantage? On its knees in the closet? No one sees it there. In the temple, in the presence of the great congregation, going out in song and sigh? No. But in the market, a thing of life and strength. The man who stands firm in the market to principles in the midst of temptation, who stoops not to the mean, the greedy and the false, but who governs his spirit with calmness amidst the annoyances and disturbances of commercial life, gives a far better revelation of genuine religion than is contained in the grandest sermon ever preached. The British market is almost the heart of the world: give to it a holy and healthy pulsation, and its sanitary influence shall be felt afar.

Conclusion—1. The principles of righteousness should govern us in the discharge of commercial duties. 2. Spiritual prosperity is the only true test of commercial success. The more a

man succeeds in the accumulation of wealth apart from the growth of his soul, the more really disastrous is his business. He becomes a moral bankrupt. Nay, more, the real man is lost—lost in the clerk, the shopkeeper, the merchant. (*Ibid.*) *Undue devotion to business*:—There are too many people in England on whose gravestones the French epitaph might be written, “He was born a man and died a grocer.” (*R. W. Dale, LL.D.*)

## CHAPTER XXIV.

**Vers. 1-5. Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty.**—“*The earth*,” not the “land” (R.V. marg.) of Judah or Palestine. “The prophecy leaps far beyond all particular or national conditions.” (*J. Skinner, D.D.*) *The sources and consequences of anarchy*:—I. **THE FATAL CONSEQUENCES OF ANARCHY.** Of these we may be convinced, by viewing the greatness of the blessings which anarchy destroys. Happy the prince, happy the people, when lawful government is well established, wisely administered, duly honoured, and cheerfully obeyed! The persons, characters, and properties of the innocent are protected; good order is preserved; and the duties of every different situation, employment, and rank are faithfully discharged. The political body is healthy and safe. Distinguished genius and penetration, improved in wisdom by careful attention and long experience, are as eyes to the community: while the hands of the mechanic and labourer supply its necessities. These blessings are interrupted when the power of such a government is suspended; and, when it is destroyed, they cease. Anarchy, by levelling all ranks, transgresses a great law of nature, and of the God of nature; and stops a chief source of social happiness. Where abilities, dispositions, situations, and enjoyments differ, power and influence cannot be equal. A land, where there is no order, is a land of darkness and of the shadow of death. A community, which hath no eyes and guides, must wander and perish in the paths of destruction and misery. II. **THE SOURCES OF ANARCHY,** in rulers, or subjects, transgressing the laws, and neglecting the maxims, which reason or revelation prescribes, for securing the happiness and peace of society. 1. Anarchy is occasioned by violating the laws which prescribe patriotism, public spirit, love of liberty, and regard to the rights of mankind. 2. Neglect of the maxims of wisdom, taught by reason or Scripture, is sometimes the immediate, and sometimes the remote, source of anarchy. 3. Anarchy is occasioned, and the power of preventing or removing it diminished, by rulers and subjects transgressing the precepts of industry and frugality. 4. Anarchy is occasioned by neglect of the laws of reason and revelation, which prescribe peaceableness and union. Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation. 5. Anarchy is occasioned by transgressing the great laws of religion. Religion produces the most perfect union: for it inspires, with the same general principle of action, supreme regard to the glory of God, unfeigned affection to our neighbour, and a willingness to sacrifice, whatever in its own nature opposes, or, through peculiar circumstances, becomes incompatible with these. (*J. Erskine, D.D.*) *National desolation*:—I. **THE NATURE OF THE CALAMITY WHICH SHOULD COME UPON THE LAND**—the emptiness or desolation of the earth. This is one of the rods which God holds over the heads of people, to make them stand in fear of Him (Lev. xxvi. 19; Deut. xxviii. 38). II. **THE AUTHOR OR EFFICIENT CAUSE OF SUCH DESOLATION** is God. It does not happen by any blind chance. III. **THE MEANS OR SECOND CAUSES** whereby God makes a land waste. Pestilence, sword, fire, unseasonable weather, noxious creatures, &c. IV. **THE MERITORIOUS CAUSE** (ver. 5). (*W. Reading, M.A.*)

**Ver. 2. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest.**—*The mutual assimilation of minister and people*:—The minister makes the people and the people make the minister. I. **THE MINISTER'S INFLUENCE.** 1. As a preacher and teacher—upon the conceptions of truth and duty, the understanding of the Word of God, and the practical conduct of the people. 2. As a man, in his own example and life. 3. As a pastor, in his pastoral intercourse with his flock. 4. As a public leader of reforms, &c. II. **THE PEOPLE'S INFLUENCE.**

1. In getting him audience. Giving him their own ears and attention and gathering in others. 2. In making him eloquent. Gladstone says, "Eloquence is pouring back on an audience in a shower what is first received from the audience in vapour." 3. In making him spiritual. They can encourage him to spiritual growth and culture; to earnest and edifying preaching. They can pray for him and help him to feel that they want and wish only spiritual food. 4. In making him a power for good. Aristotle says, "Truth is what a thing is in itself, in its relations and in the medium through which it is viewed." Goethe says, "Before we complain of the writing as obscure we must first examine if all be clear within." In the twilight a very plain manuscript is illegible. So the attitude of a hearer largely limits the power of a preacher; the co-operation of a Church member may indefinitely increase the effectiveness of a pastor's work. (*Homiletic Review.*)

*Preachers affected by their congregations*.—A few years ago, after a minister had been preaching in a Wesleyan chapel not far from my house, one of the older officials of the circuit began to talk to him of the glories of a past generation, and said with some fervour, "Ah, sir, there were great preachers in those days." "Yes," was the reply of the minister, "and there were great hearers in those days." The answer was a wise and just one. If preachers form and discipline their congregations, it is equally true that congregations form and discipline their preachers. (*R. W. Dale, LL.D.*)

**As with the buyer, so with the seller.**—*Buying and selling* are of very ancient date. The earliest instance we read of occurs in the history of Abraham. The purchase made was a burying-place; and is connected with the death of Sarah, Abraham's wife. Various nations and states have distinguished themselves at different times by their trade and commerce. In ancient times we may enumerate Arabia, Egypt, and especially Tyre—the crowning city where "merchants were princes—where traffickers were the honourable of the earth." In more modern times we may mention Greece, Rome, Venice, the Hanse, Spain, Portugal, and above all Great Britain. Well might Napoleon Buonaparte call us a nation of shopkeepers. (*R. W. Overbury.*)

*The relative duties of buyers and sellers*.—I. POINT OUT SOME OF THE EVILS BY WHICH THE RELATION BETWEEN BUYER AND SELLER IS VIOLATED. This relation is violated by every violation of those two important principles that lie at the foundation of all society—justice and truth. Justice consists in giving every one his due; and truth or veracity in keeping our engagements, and avoiding lying and dissimulation. These principles and the relative duties arising out of them are violated—1. By the practice of any and every kind of fraud in the transaction of business. 2. By the contracting of debts without any reasonable prospect of being able to pay them. (1) But what is an individual to do who in the course of regular business finds himself, through the fluctuation to which every branch of trade is liable, insolvent at the end of the year? If he be a man of an honourable character and standing in trade, he will not want friends who are willing to lend him a sufficient sum to extricate him from his present difficulties, and to enable him to make a fresh trial under the blessing of God to succeed in that line of business which he has hitherto followed. But if, after having renewed the attempt, Divine providence does not see fit to succeed his endeavours, then from a false shame of appearing what he is in worldly circumstances before his fellow-men, to keep on in business till he involve many others in ruin is most unjustifiable. (2) Further, if an individual who has failed in another's debt, should at any future time possess the means of paying his debts, we hold it that justice requires that he should so pay them. 3. Another way in which the relation between buyers and sellers is violated is, by making ourselves responsible for the debts of others, when we are not in possession of sufficient capital to warrant it. 4. By the very prevalent practice of underselling. Where does the injury fall? First, upon the poor operatives, who labour day and night by the sweat of their brow, to furnish conveniences and luxuries for the higher ranks of society, whilst their labour is remunerated at a price that hardly keeps them and their families from starving. The other party upon whom the injury falls is other tradesmen in the same line, who, shrinking from the use of such unscrupulous and oppressive means of realising large profits, lose either a part or the whole of their custom. II. SHOW THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT. 1. In a secular view. The permanent prosperity of our trade, and consequently the temporal welfare of society depend upon the principles which pervade our business transactions. Every deviation from right principles inflicts injury somewhere, and in proportion to the extent of that deviation contributes to augment the

sum of national distress. Nations, as such, are punished in this life—individuals hereafter. An invisible Being, too little recognised in the marts of trade, presides over our national affairs, and distributes or withholds national blessings in proportion as the principles of eternal truth and justice are practically acknowledged. 2. In a religious view. It has been well said, that “a Christian is the highest style of man.” (1) A man who cares not by what means he obtains money, provided he succeeds in making a fortune, cannot be a Christian. The character and doom of such are too plainly written in Scripture to be mistaken for a single moment. (2) We do not, perhaps, sufficiently reflect that the predominance of the love of gain is equally incompatible with true piety; although a feeling of justice and benevolence, joined with self-respect, may lead us to abhor and reject all that is dishonourable in business. (3) Nor must we omit to observe, that whilst the habitual predominance of a worldly spirit is incompatible with personal piety, the too great prevalence of it is highly injurious. It either lifts a man up with vanity and pride, or it depresses him with anxiety and care; both of which unfit him for the service of God. In proportion as the spirit of the world prevails over the people of God, it stints their piety and usefulness, and counteracts the end for which they are constituted “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people,”—“that ye should show forth the praises of Him, who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.” (*Ibid.*)

**Ver. 5. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof.**—*The earth polluted by sin.*—The inhabitants of the earth pollute it by their sins: the children of Israel defiled God’s land by filling His inheritance with the carcasses of their abominable things, with their idolatries, with their wicked inventions and corrupt ways. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Transgression.*—“They have transgressed the laws” of nature, of conscience, and of nations—the ceremonial, judicial, and moral laws, delivered to them by Jehovah Himself. These laws, stamped by the sacred authority of the one great Lawgiver, which they ought to have religiously observed, they presumptuously transgressed, omitting to do what He required and committing what He had forbidden. (*Ibid.*) *The earth cursed for man’s sake.*—The Bible gives no support to the theory that matter itself is evil. God created all things; “and God saw everything that He had made; and, behold, it was very good.” When, therefore, we read in the Bible that the earth is cursed, we read that it is cursed for man’s sake; when we read of its desolation, it is as the effect of man’s crime. (*G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *The everlasting covenant.*—The covenant is that with Noah, and the law that against bloodshed (Gen ix. 5, 6). (*A. B. Davidson, LL.D.*)

**Ver. 15. Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires.**—*Glorifying the Lord in the fires.*—The suffering child of God will glorify Him in the fires—**I. BY ACKNOWLEDGING HIS POWER.** The same Almighty One who fed Elijah, in the terrible days of dearth, and who delivered Daniel from the power of the lions, still watches over and provides for His people. **II. BY RECOGNISING HIS WISDOM.** He knows (as no short-sighted mortal can) when it is safe for us to enjoy prosperity, and when it is needful for our soul’s health to endure disappointment and trouble. **III. BY A FRANK ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF HIS GOODNESS.** If our Heavenly Father had ceased to feel an interest in our welfare, He would not have employed the means to do us good. (*J. N. Norton.*) *The Lord glorified by His suffering people.*—**I. WHO ARE EXPECTED TO GLORIFY THE LORD.** If “to glorify” is exemplified in 1 Chron. xxix. 10–18—1. Then the wicked cannot do that (Job xx. 5). 2. But the Church triumphant does (Rev. vii. 11, 12). 3. And the Church militant ought to have this one aim. Let us take as an example, St. Paul (Phil. iii. 10–14). **II. WHAT THE FIRES ARE IN WHICH WE GLORIFY GOD.** 1. Determined self-humiliation, &c.; duties unpleasant, but religious. 2. Personal troubles are often perplexing. Faith is given, not to annihilate these, but to endure them. 3. Others’ trials. 4. Our bodily afflictions. 5. Amongst the hottest “fires” are fiery darts. Paul was thus tried. 6. Enmity against our beloved Church. Foes within and without. 7. Fear of death. **III. BUT ONE IS EVER PRESENT IN THE FIRES.** 1. In them once, alone. 2. Leads others safely through. **IV. THE FIRES ARE BURNING BY GOD’S PERMISSION.** Like powerful remedies of surgeon or physician. 1. To manifest His chosen. 2. To purify. 3. To strengthen. Opposition invigorates. (*W. W. Tyler.*) *How to honour God in trouble.*—“Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye

do, do all to the glory of God." What an extensive admonition is this! And yet even this does not include the whole of God's claim upon us. We are required to honour Him, not only in all we do, but in all we suffer. I. THE STATE HERE SUPPOSED. "In the fires." Stripped of metaphor, the passage supposes a state of suffering. In this state we may be found—1. As men. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." 2. As Christians. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." II. THE DUTY HERE ENJOINED. "Glorify ye the Lord in the fires." The glory of God is essential or declarative. We cannot add to the former. But, "the heavens declare the glory of God." All His works praise Him. How? By the impressions and displays of His perfections; by showing us what He is, and what He deserves. Thus, Christians are appointed to "show forth the praises"—virtues—excellences—"of Him who hath called them," &c.; which is done by their language and their lives. Hence, we glorify God in our afflictions when we verbally and practically acknowledge—1. His agency. 2. His rectitude. He is "righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works." 3. His wisdom. 4. His goodness. 5. His power. III. THE REASONS. 1. Because you have the finest opportunity. The scene naturally awakens attention. Nothing is so impressive as the graces of a Christian in trouble. 2. The obligations you are under to the blessed God. 3. Hope should influence you. "Verily there is a reward for the righteous." (*W. Jay.*) *Glorifying God in affliction* :— "There never was such affliction as mine," said a poor sufferer, restlessly tossing on a sick-bed, in a city hospital. "I don't think there ever was such a racking pain." "Once," was faintly uttered from the next bed. The first speaker paused for a moment, and then began, in a still more impatient tone: "Nobody knows what I pass through; nobody ever suffered more pain." "One," was again whispered from the adjoining bed. "I take it you mean yourself, poor soul! but—" "Oh! not myself—not myself," exclaimed the other, her pale face flushing as if some wrong had been offered, not to herself but to another. There was a short pause, and then the sweet, gentle voice uttered the sacred words, "When they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand: and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head. And when they came unto a place called Golgotha, they gave Him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall. And they crucified Him. And, about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying: My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The voice ceased, and the nurse handed a cup of barley water, flavoured with a grateful acid, to the lips of both sufferers. "Thank you, nurse," said the last speaker. "They gave Him gall to eat, and vinegar to drink." "She is talking about Jesus," said the other sick woman, "but talking about His sufferings can't mend mine." "But it lightens hers," said the nurse. "I wonder how?" "Hush!" said the nurse. The gentle voice began: "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Verily, even in the midst of affliction and suffering God's true children will learn to glorify Him. (*J. N. Norton.*) *Galileo's recognition of God in his blindness* :—How touching that saying of blind Galileo, "It has pleased God that it shall be so, and it must please me too." (*Ibid.*) "The fires" :—The term "fires" is a local designation meaning the east, as the land of sunrise, or of dawning light, and so standing in opposition to the west, which is represented in the next clause as "the isles of the sea." The deliverance is one that calls for a chorus of praise from one end of the earth to the other. (*T. W. Chambers, D.D.*)

Ver. 17. Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee.—*Fear, and the pit, and the snare* :—The expressions here used seem to have formed a proverbial saying, as appears from their being repeated by the prophet Jeremiah (xlviii. 43, 44). They allude to the different methods of taking wild beasts that were anciently in use. The fear, or terror, was a line strung with feathers of different colours, which was so constructed as to flutter in the air and to make a terrifying noise, that frightened the beasts into the pit, or the snare, that was prepared for them. The pit was dugged deep in the ground, and covered over with boughs or turf, in order to deceive them, that they might fall into it unawares. The snare was composed of nets, enclosing a large space of ground that the wild beasts were known to haunt, which was drawn gradually narrower, until they

were at last entangled and shut up. Our prophet, addressing himself to the inhabitants of the earth, declares, that calamities corresponding to each of these ways of destroying wild beasts, were to seize upon them, and that they should be so ordered, that those who escaped one sort would be arrested by another. (*R. Macculloch.*)

**Vers. 18-20. The foundations of the earth do shake.**—*The religious improvement of earthquakes* (preached in 1756):—The works of Creation and Providence were undoubtedly intended for the notice and contemplation of mankind, especially when God “comes out of His place,” that is, departs from the usual and stated course of His providence to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquities; then it becomes us to observe the operation of His hands with fear and reverence. To this the Psalmist repeatedly calls us: “Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath made in the earth.” “Come, and see the works of God; He is terrible in His doing toward the children of men.” This world is a state of discipline for another; therefore chastisements of various kinds and degrees are to be enumerated among the ordinary works of Providence—pain, sickness, losses, bereavements, disappointments. But when these are found too weak and ineffectual for their reformation; or when, from their being so frequent and common, men begin to think them things of course, and not to acknowledge the Divine hand in them; then the universal Ruler uses such signal and extraordinary executioners of His vengeance, as cannot but rouse a slumbering world, and render it sensible of His agency. These extraordinary ministers of His vengeance are generally these four: the Famine, Sword, Pestilence, and Earthquakes. I. Let the majestic and terrible phenomenon of earthquakes put you in mind of **THE MAJESTY AND POWER OF GOD, AND THE DREADFULNESS OF HIS DISPLEASURE.** II. This desolating judgment may justly lead you to reflect upon **THE SINFULNESS OF OUR WORLD.** III. This melancholy event may carry your minds gratefully to reflect upon **THE PECULIAR KINDNESS OF HEAVEN towards our country, in that it was not involved in the same destruction.** IV. That which I would particularly suggest to your thoughts from the devastations of the late earthquake, is **THE LAST UNIVERSAL DESTRUCTION OF OUR WORLD AT THE FINAL JUDGMENT.** Of this, an earthquake is both a confirmation to human reason, and a lively representation. (*S. Davies, M.A.*) “*Removed like a cottage*” (ver. 20):—“Swayeth to and fro like a hammock.” Such is the more literal rendering. The hammock (the same word as in chap. i. 8) is still used throughout the East by the night-watchers of vineyards. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*)

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## CHAPTER XXV.

**VER. 1. O Lord, Thou art my God.**—This chapter looks as pleasantly upon the Church as the former looked dreadfully upon the world. (*M. Henry.*) *Calm after storm*:—We can only understand the highest, sweetest meaning of this chapter in proportion as we enter into the spirit of the chapter which precedes it. That chapter is full of clouds, and darkness, and judgment. The very terribleness of God is a reason for putting trust in Him. Probably this view of the Divine attributes has not always been sufficiently vivid to our spiritual consciousness. We have thought of God, and have become afraid; whereas when we hear Him thundering, and see Him scattering His arrows of lightning round about Him, and behold Him pouring contempt upon the mighty who have defied Him, we should say, See! God is love. What does He strike? No little child, no patient woman, no broken heart, no face that is steeped in tears of contrition. On what does His fist fall?—on arrogance, on haughtiness, on self-conceit, on self-completeness. He turns the proud away with an answer of scorn to their prayer of patronage. God is only terrible to evil. That is the reason why His terribleness should be an encouragement and an allurement to souls that know their sin and plead for pardon at the Cross. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Song of assurance*:—I. **THE AFFINITY THAT IS CLAIMED.** “O Jehovah, Thou art my God.” This affinity was predetermined by God the Father; it is exhibited in the most conspicuous manner in the person of God the Son; it is revealed,

beyond the possibility of doubt, to the heart of God's elect by God the Holy Ghost.

**II. THE WONDERS ACKNOWLEDGED.** "Thou hast done wonderful things." I will only select three out of myriads: His vicarious work, the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the deliverance of precious souls individually by conversion to God.

**III. THE ETERNAL FIRST CAUSE AVOWED.** "Thy counsels of old." (*J. Irons.*) *The faithfulness of God*:—That Divine perfection which the prophet celebrates is a fountain of consolation to every one that "thirsts after righteousness."

**I. ENUMERATE SEVERAL PAST INSTANCES OF THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.**

1. Connected with the history of the deluge.
2. His conduct towards the people of Israel.
3. His promise to the father of the faithful, that "in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed,"—a promise afterwards repeatedly confirmed by prophets.
4. In the fulness of time, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, &c. (*Gal. iv. 4, 5*). Having thus produced an instance of the faithfulness of God from each of the several kingdoms of nature, providence, and grace, I proceed to—

**II. DEDUCE SUCH INFERENCES AS THE SUBJECT APPEARS TO SUGGEST.**

1. We should cherish gratitude.
2. It is the privilege of devout Christians to maintain unshaken confidence in God—with reference both to the Church of Christ and the circumstances of individual believers.

(1) Of the perpetuity and future prosperity of the Church we are not permitted to doubt.

(2) Since the Lord is faithful, let the Christian who is in a state of poverty, remember that his Saviour hath said, "Take no thought saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed. . . . Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things," &c. (3) Since God is faithful, let those who feel the strength of indwelling sin in their hearts, remember that it is promised, "sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." (4) To fearful Christians the subject is also calculated to administer great relief. It should inspire a cheerful and affectionate confidence. (5) In short, this illustrious attribute presents an asylum, whatever storms you are called upon in the path of duty to endure.

3. The subject should awaken salutary fear. For the faithfulness of God to His word and purpose is an attribute no less to be dreaded by the impenitent than valued by believers. (*T. Sims, M.A.*) "*My God*":—Thou art my God, who hast invited me to sacred intercourse with Thee; who hast inclined me to surrender myself and all my concerns into Thy hands, and to choose Thee for my God. Thou art my Father, who hast nourished and brought me up among Thy children. Thou art my Friend, who hast loaded me with a rich profusion of favours. Thou art the Portion that I have chosen, in the possession of which I shall enjoy the most permanent felicity. Thou art my God, and therefore my happiness shall be complete. I humbly claim from Thy all-sufficiency the supply of all my wants; from Thy wisdom, direction and conduct; from Thy power, assistance and protection; from Thy love, refreshment and consolation; from Thy mercy, forgiveness and blessing; from Thy faithfulness, stability and support; and from Thy patience, forbearance and long-suffering. I cheerfully resign myself and all my interests to Thy direction and disposal; and, with dutiful affection, I consecrate all my powers and faculties to Thy honour, whose I am, and whom I serve, that they may be employed in promoting Thy glory. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Exalting the Lord*.—To exalt the Lord our God is—

1. To proclaim the glorious honour of His majesty.
2. To extol the exceeding riches of His grace.
3. To magnify His transcendent excellences.
4. To celebrate, with affectionate gratitude, His wonderful lovingkindness. (*Ibid.*)

**Ver. 4. For Thou hast been a strength to the poor.—"Poor" and "needy":**—Among the names applied to God's people there are three which were destined to play an enormous part in the history of religion. In the English version these appear as two: "poor and needy"; but in the original they are three. In chap. xxv. 4: "Thou hast been a stronghold to the poor and a stronghold to the needy," "poor" renders a Hebrew word, "dāl," literally, "waving, tottering, infirm," then "slender" or "lean," then "poor" in fortune and estate; "needy" literally renders the Hebrew "ebhyôn," Latin "egenus." In chap. xxvi. 6: "The foot of the poor and the steps of the needy," "needy" renders "dāl," while "poor" renders "ānī," a passive form—"forced, afflicted, oppressed," then "wretched," whether under persecution, poverty, loneliness, or exile, and so "tamed, mild, meek." These three words, in their root ideas of "infirmity," "need," and positive "affliction," cover among



them every aspect of physical poverty and distress. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *Poverty in the East*.—In the East poverty scarcely ever means physical disadvantage alone; in its train there follow higher disabilities. A poor Eastern cannot be certain of fair play in the courts of the land. He is very often a wronged man, with a fire of righteous anger burning in his breast. Again, and more important, misfortune is to the quick, religious instinct of the Oriental a sign of God's estrangement. With us misfortune is so often only the cruelty, sometimes real, sometimes imagined, of the rich; the unemployed vents his wrath at the capitalist, the tramp shakes his fist after the carriage on the highway. In the East they do not forget to curse the rich, but they remember as well to humble themselves beneath the hand of God. With an unfortunate Oriental the conviction is supreme, God is angry with me; I have lost His favour. His soul eagerly longs for God. (*Ibid.*) *Israel's poverty of heart*.—These were four aspects of Israel's poverty of heart: a hunger for pardon, a hunger for justice, a hunger for home, and a hunger for God. (*Ibid.*) **A refuge from the storm.**—*A refuge from the storm*.—The conditions of our earth, and its varied phenomena, are employed by the sacred writers to represent many circumstances of human life. Troubles, especially when heavy and expressive of Divine displeasure, are represented in Holy Scripture as storms. **I. THIS IS A WORLD WHERE STORMS OFTEN GATHER, AND TEMPESTS ON THIS PLANET ARE NEVER OUT OF PLACE.** The storm has its mission as well as the calm. Among men, adversity of all kinds is a powerful agent in accomplishing necessary spiritual operations. **II. THIS IS A TIME OF STORMS, AND TEMPESTS HERE ARE NOT OUT OF SEASON.** The days of man upon earth are as the winter of his life. Death is the seed-time, and immortality is the spring and summer and harvest. When the spring and summer have come, snow and hail are out of season; but during the winter of our being, hail and snow and rain are in season. **III. EVERY STORM IS RAISED AND GUIDED UNDER THE EYE AND HAND OF GOD.** The stormy wind does not surprise Him. He determined that it should blow at such a moment, from such a quarter, with such a force, and with particular effects. Neither does it master Him. The stormy wind simply accomplishes His word. **IV. THE OBJECT OF EVERY STORM IS GOOD, ALTHOUGH THE PRESENT EXPERIENCE OF IT IS NOT JOYOUS, BUT GRIEVOUS.** Hence the need of a refuge to the man of God. Have you marked how frequently God is spoken of as "a refuge"? **V. A PLACE TO BE A REFUGE MUST BE OUT OF THE STORM, OR, IF IN THE MIDST OF IT, MUST BE STRONGER THAN THE STORM.** But how is it that we children of men come to take refuge in God? The Gospel reaches us with its wooing voice. In the mediation of Jesus, in His sympathy, love, and power we find refuge. And we come to make all the covenants and promises of God distinct refuges. There is a harbour or haven at every point of danger. Do you come to poverty? There are promises to the poor. Are you a widow? There are promises to the widow. And all the hopes which these covenants awaken become in turn so many refuges. In this world, quietness of mind and heart is a thing utterly impossible to a man who does not rest in his God. If you feel the need of a refuge, you may in that sorrow which another professes to despise find the very refuge which you seek in your God. And why? Say that your sensitiveness springs from weakness. Well, God has sympathy with your weakness. (*S. Martin.*)

**Vers. 6-9. A feast of fat things.**—*The Gospel feast*.—**I. THE FEAST.** 1. Spiritual blessings are here, as in other places, set forth under the emblem of a feast (Prov. ix. 2-5; Luke xiv. 16-24; Matt. xxii. 4). In Christ, and in His Gospel, provision is made for our refreshment in various respects. (1) Truth is afforded for the understanding. (2) Beauty (the amiable perfections of God and Christ), goodness, love, hope, joy. (3) Provision is also made for the sustenance of the Divine life in the soul (John vi. 32, 33, 47-57). (4) In the Gospel there is not barely provision, but "a feast"; abundant provision. A rich variety of truths, and clear and satisfactory discoveries concerning them. Abundant mercy, to remove the most aggravated guilt, and to give assurance of pardon, reconciliation, and peace. Abundant grace, to purify from all defilement, and enrich with holiness and comfort. There is most agreeable, rich, and delightful provision. But, for whom? For those who have their spiritual taste rectified, and have spiritual discernment (1 Cor. ii. 14). "A feast of fat things." Bishop Lowth reads, "of delicacies"; "of fat things full of marrow," or, "of delicacies exquisitely rich." The truths of the Gospel are enlarging, ennobling, and con-

solving to the mind ; the grace of it enriching, invigorating, and comforting to the spirit ; its doctrines, precepts, promises, exhortations, sweet and precious. Cheering, exhilarating provision. "Wines on the lees" ; or, old wines (Lowth). The truths of the Gospel give the fullest satisfaction and comfort to believers. "Well refined." Refined from every impure and carnal mixture. 2. But where is the feast made ? "In this mountain." This is said in allusion to Judæa, a mountainous country, and especially to Jerusalem and Mount Zion, where this provision was first made. There Christ died and rose again, the Spirit was first poured out, the Gospel first preached, and the Christian Church first formed. But the Christian Church itself is often figuratively described under the terms, Jerusalem and Mount Zion (Heb. xii. 22). 3. Do we further inquire, for whom this feast is made, and on what terms such may partake of it ? It is made "for all people," on the terms of repentance and faith. 4. To this feast we are invited. But we neither know by nature our want of these blessings, nor the worth of them, nor the way of attaining them. To remedy this evil we have—II. A GRACIOUS PROMISE. "He will destroy the face," &c. The "face of the covering" is put by a hypallage, for the "covering of the face." The expression has a reference to the veil that was upon the face of Moses, or to that of the tabernacle and temple, both emblematical of the obscurity of that dispensation. But much darker was the dispensation the heathen were under. The veil of unbelief is also intended (Rom. xi. 32) ; and that of prejudice. These veils are removed by the plain and powerful preaching of the Gospel (2 Cor. iii. 12, 13). By the circulation of the Scriptures. By the "spirit of wisdom and revelation" (Eph. i. 17–19). By the "heart turning to the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 16), and faith in Jesus (John xii. 46). Here we have a manifest prophecy of the illumination and conversion of both Jews and Gentiles, and of the universal spread of religion. III. THE EFFECT PRODUCED (ver. 8). The Messiah, who is the "light of the world," is the "light of life." 1. "He will swallow up death in victory." (1) Spiritual death, introduced by the sin of Adam, is swallowed up in victory. Hence, "he that hath the Son hath life ; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (2) Temporal death. 2. "The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces." He will remove sufferings and sorrows, and the causes of them for ever (Rev. xxi. 4). 3. "And the rebuke of His people," &c. This implies, that the people of God have been, and will be more or less, under reproach, in all ages, till the glorious period here spoken of arrive. IV. THE JOY AND TRIUMPH OF GOD'S PEOPLE (ver. 9). Their enemies now reproach them, "Where is your God ?" But what will then be the reply of the Lord's people ? "Lo, this is our God" ; we have trusted, hoped, waited for Him, and now He hath saved us. Henceforth we shall have the everlasting fruition of His glorious presence. The presence of God shall remain with the Church (ver. 10). (*J. Benson, D.D.*) *A feast of fatness* :—This prophecy spans the Gospel dispensation. First, it presents to us the Gospel dispensation in its present state of grace. The prophet says "In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things." By "this mountain" the prophet intends Mount Zion ; and from the literal Mount Zion it was that the Word of the Lord went forth, being preached in the first instance by the forerunner of Christ, and then by the incarnate Son of God Himself. And all the blessings which have flowed to the Church and to the world have come to us from Jerusalem—that Jerusalem which is the type of the Christian Church. And you will observe that this Gospel dispensation, with its blessings and its privileges, is spoken of under the familiar image of a feast. This imagery is eminently calculated to present to us an idea of the fulness of the grace of the Gospel. It is not as if God was offering provision to starving men just enough, as we should say in common parlance, to keep body and soul together. It is not a scanty provision : it is not a provision simply of bread and water. Now, in order to see what is meant let us apply this, in the first place, to the Gospel dispensation in its bearing upon sinners to whom the invitation is first addressed. You mark, in the first verse, that it is a feast of fat things. It is a feast of wine in the very best condition—wine which is old, settled upon its lees, and which by reason of its age has now attained its very best and choicest flavour. Now, let us observe how aptly this illustrates the provision of the Gospel in its aspect to those to whom the message and the invitation are still addressed. When we, for instance, as ministers, are called upon to deliver this invitation under any circumstances, we feel that we are entirely unhampered by any limitation as to persons, or by any limitation as to the question of sufficiency and adaptation to those who are

invited. It is not, I mean, a scanty hospitality which God has provided. It is not such that he who has to deliver the invitation in this church, or anywhere else in the midst of the streets of London, has to consider, "Well, the Gospel is only intended for a certain class of sinners; the Gospel is only intended for a certain kind of sins; and before I deliver this invitation I have to decide whether this is a case which it will suit,—whether this is a case which is included in the provision that is made,—whether I may not be deceiving and disappointing this man." No such thing. It is a feast; it is a feast of fat things; and it is a feast of the very choicest wines. What does all this mean when we strip off the imagery,—when we look at this not as a beautiful piece of prophetic poetry, but in its reality, in its actual bearing upon men to whom the Gospel is addressed? It means to say that there is abundant rich provision for every sinner. It means to say that God in His love has provided for the case of every man. It means that the blessings of salvation which we have to offer in Jesus Christ are not scanty blessings,—that they are not such blessings as leave us any doubt as to whether they will meet the case of this particular man, but that the salvation which is in Christ is a feast, and a feast of fat things. And then, again, take the aspect of this Gospel towards those who have already received the invitation, and who are, so to say, sitting down at the feast table. Every believing man who is in Christ is as a man sitting down at a perpetual feast. Every day is, in this sense, a feast day to him. Every day is a day upon which he is to be feeding upon Christ, and to be nourishing his soul with the rich and costly blessings of salvation. Better to have the feeblest faith than to be an unbeliever. But is this the condition in which God would have His believing people to be? I say, no such thing. God intends that you should receive, and receive without doubting, and receive without reserve, when you come to Christ, the fullness and the freeness of His grace. He intends that you should believe Him when He says "Thy sins are forgiven." He does not expect of you that you should be content with saying "Ah, at some time or other God will forgive my sins: there is hope that my sins will be forgiven." He intends to make you feel, and desires to have you realise from day to day, that it is not simply bread and water, but that it is wine and milk. There is this unbroken continuity between what we call "grace" and what we very properly call "glory." You observe how this appears clearly in the end of the passage, because the prophet flows from one thing into the other as naturally as possible. What I want you particularly to mark, as one of the chief things I would impress upon you, is how, beginning with this Word of the Lord in Jerusalem—beginning with the taking away of the veil from off the faces of all people—beginning with the invitation to repent and believe and receive the remission of sins through our Lord Jesus Christ—the prophet goes on to what we find ultimately to be at the very end of the dispensation; how naturally, as if there was no break, as if it was just one flow of grace until, if I may so express it, the river of grace is lost in the vast expanse of the ocean of glory. There seems to be no chasm. Indeed, wherever there is in any young man or in any old man, in any woman or in any child, a work of grace—real, saving grace—that is the beginning, and glory with all its details and all its blessedness, all its companionships and all its occupations, will be nothing more than the full efflorescence and the full development and the full consummation of that work of grace which is begun. Well now, you see, these are blended together in the text; and the apostle says that God will in that day fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah, and that He will "swallow up death in victory." He will not do it before. Death is not swallowed up in victory, even when the triumphant Christian dies. But the apostle says, interpreting the words of the prophet, "Then shall be brought to pass the saying which is written"; that is, when the voice of the archangel shall be heard, and the trumpet shall sound, and when the graves shall give up their dead, and when they that have gone down to the grave in a natural body, in dishonour, in corruption, in feebleness, shall be raised in power and in incorruption and in glory,— "then shall be brought to pass the saying which is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." And this is to be followed by the fulfilment of the declaration of the prophet, interpreted by the figure of the Apocalypse. God is then to wipe away all tears. Tears, as we know, on earth, have many sources. There are the tears of penitence: we shall have to shed them no longer. There are the tears of anguish on account of temporal sorrow and bereavement and bodily suffering: we shall have to shed them no more. There are the tears of anxiety amid all the pressing cares of life. There are the tears of despondency and disappointment. We shall have to

shed them no more. There is another source of tears while we are yet in the body. You and I have often shed tears from another cause—tears of joy. And why do we shed tears of joy? Because the joy is sometimes so sudden, it is so deep, it is so great, it so thoroughly overmasters us and transports us, that the feeble body cannot bear it; and the result is that tears course down our cheeks, and, as we say not infrequently, we “weep for joy.” There will be no weeping for joy after the resurrection. Because, though we shall have the joy, we shall be capacitated to bear it: we shall have the joy, even the joy of our Lord, but our whole nature will be strong enough to enjoy that joy, and so there will be no more tears. (*J. C. Miller, D.D.*) “*In this mountain*.”—A poet’s imagination and a prophet’s clear vision of the goal to which God will lead humanity are both at their highest in this great song of the future, whose winged words make music even in a translation. No doubt it starts from the comparatively small fact of the restoration of the exiled nation to its own land. But it soars far beyond that. It sees all mankind associated with them in sharing its blessings. It is the vision of God’s ideal for humanity. That makes it the more remarkable that the prophet, with this wide outlook, should insist with such emphasis on the fact that it has a local centre. That phrase “in this mountain” is three times repeated in the hymn; two of the instances have lying side by side with them the expressions “all people” and “all nations,” as if to bring together the local origin and the universal extent of the blessings promised. The sweet waters that are to pour through the world well up from a spring opened “in this mountain.” The beams that are to lighten every land stream out from a light blazing there. The world’s hopes for that golden age which poets have sung, and towards which earnest social reformers have worked, and of which this prophet was sure, rest on a definite fact, done in a definite place, at a definite time. Isaiah knew the place, but what was to be done, or when it was to be he knew not. You and I ought to be wiser. History has taught us that Jesus Christ fulfils the visioned good that inspired the prophet’s brilliant words. We might say, with allowable licence, that “this mountain,” in which the Lord does the good things that this song magnifies, is not so much Zion as Calvary. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The source of the world’s hope*.—I. WHERE DOES THE WORLD’S FOOD COME FROM? Physiologists can tell, by studying the dentition and the digestive apparatus of an animal, what it is meant to live upon, whether vegetables or flesh, or a mingled diet of both. And you can tell by studying yourself, what, or whom, you are meant to live upon. Look at these hearts of yours with their yearnings, their clamant needs. Will any human love satisfy the heart-hunger of the poorest of us? No! Look at these tumultuous wills of ours that fancy they want to be independent, and really want an absolute master whom it is blessedness to obey. The very make of our being, our heart, will, mind, desires, passions, longings, all with one voice proclaim that the only food for a man is God. Jesus Christ brings the food that we need. “In this mountain is prepared a feast . . . for all nations.” Notice, that although it does not appear on the surface, and to English readers, this world’s festival, in which every want is met, and every appetite satisfied, is a feast on a sacrifice. Would that the earnest men, who are trying to cure the world’s evils and still the world’s wants, and are leaving Jesus Christ and His religion out of their programme, would ask themselves whether there is not something deeper in the hunger of humanity than their ovens can ever bake bread for. II. WHERE DOES THE UNVEILING THAT GIVES LIGHT TO THE WORLD COME FROM? My text emphatically repeats, “in this mountain.” The pathetic picture that is implied here, of a dark pall that lies over the whole world, suggests the idea of mourning, but still more emphatically that of obscurity and gloom. The veil prevents vision and shuts out light, and that is the picture of humanity as it presents itself before this prophet—a world of men entangled in the folds of a dark pall that lay over their heads, and swathed them round about, and prevented them from seeing; shut them up in darkness and entangled their feet, so that they stumbled in the gloom. It is a pathetic picture, but it does not go beyond the realities of the case. There is a universal fact of human experience which answers to the figure, and that is sin. That is the black thing whose ebon folds hamper us, and darken us, and shut out the visions of God and blessedness, and all the glorious blue above us. The weak point of all these schemes and methods to which I have referred for helping humanity out of the slough, and making men happier, is that they underestimate the fact of sin. There is only one thing that deals radically with the fact of human transgression; and that is the sacrifice of

Christ on Calvary, and its result, the inspiration of the Spirit of life that was in Jesus Christ, breathed into us from the throne itself. III. WHERE DOES THE LIFE THAT DESTROYS DEATH COME FROM? "He will swallow up death in victory." Or, as probably the word more correctly means, "He will swallow up death for ever." None of the other panaceas for the world's evils even attempt to deal with that "shadow feared of man" that sits at the end of all our paths. Jesus Christ has dealt with it. (*Ibid.*) *Needy man and his moral provision*.—I. HUMANITY IS MORALLY FAMISHING—CHRISTIANITY HAS PROVISIONS. "A feast of fat things," &c. The feverish restlessness and the earnest racing after something not yet attained, show the hungry and thirsty state of the soul. Christianity has the provisions, which are—1. Adequate: "for all people." 2. Varied: "wines and fat things full of marrow." 3. Pleasant: "wines on the lees well refined." II. HUMANITY IS MORALLY BENIGHTED—CHRISTIANITY HAS ILLUMINATION. "He will destroy in this mountain," &c. Men are enwrapped in moral gloom; they have their "understanding darkened" (Eph. iv. 18). "The veil is upon their hearts" (2 Cor. iii. 15). Physical darkness is bad enough, intellectual darkness is worse, moral darkness is the worst of all. It is a blindness to the greatest Being, the greatest obligations, and the greatest interests. Christianity has moral light. Christ is "the light of the world." Indeed, Christianity gives the three conditions of moral vision:—the visual faculty; opens the eyes of conscience; the medium, which is truth; and the object, which is God, &c. III. HUMANITY IS MORALLY DEAD—CHRISTIANITY HAS LIFE. "He will swallow up death in victory." Men are "dead in trespasses and sins." The valley of dry bones is a picture of moral humanity. Insensibility, utter subjection to external forces, and offensiveness, are some of the characteristics of death. Christianity has life. Its truths with a trumpet's blast call men up from their moral graves. Its spirit is quickening. "You hath He quickened," &c. IV. HUMANITY IS MORALLY UNHAPPY—CHRISTIANITY HAS BLESSEDNESS. There are tears on "all faces." Go to the heathen world, and there is nothing but moral wretchedness. The whole moral creation groaneth: conflicting passions, remorseful reflections, foreboding apprehensions, make the world miserable. Christianity provides blessedness. V. HUMANITY IS MORALLY REPROACHED—CHRISTIANITY HAS HONOUR. "And the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth." Man morally rebukes himself; he is rebuked by his fellow-man; he is rebuked by his Maker. He is under "condemnation." And the rebuke is just. Christianity removes this. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." It exalts man to the highest honour. (*Homilist.*) *Veils removed and souls feasted*.—I. THE PLACE SPECIFIED. "In this mountain." Mountains are often spoken of in the Scriptures, and wonderful things were done on some of them. The ark rested on a mountain; Abraham offered up his son Isaac on a mountain, &c. The Church may be compared to a mountain—1. Because of its conspicuousness. 2. Because of its exposure to storms. 3. Because of its stability. 4. Because it is beautiful and beneficial. Mountains break the monotony of the landscape, are good for shelter, and rich with valuable substances. The Church is a thing of moral beauty, and should be rich in faith, love, and zeal. II. THE BUSINESS TO BE DONE IN THIS MOUNTAIN. Face coverings and veils have to be destroyed. People have to be prepared for a feast: and with veiled faces and muffled mouths they can neither see nor eat. The coverings which sin has thrown over all people are—1. Ignorance. Sin made Adam so ignorant that he tried to hide himself from the presence of an omnipresent and omniscient God by creeping among the trees in the Garden of Eden. And his children are also as ignorant of God. 2. Shame and slavish fear. This drives men from God as it did their first father. 3. Unbelief; causing men to reject Christ, and to stagger at God's promises. From thousands of minds such coverings, thick and strong though they be, have been torn and destroyed. III. THE FEAST THAT IS TO FOLLOW. The Church is not a place of amusement merely, or a lecture room, but the soul's feasting place, where all the dainties of Heaven can be had. At a feast there is generally found—1. Variety. 2. Plenty. God's stores can never be exhausted. 3. Good company is expected. At this feast you have God's nobility on earth, princes and princesses, kings and priests, and you are favoured with the presence of the King of kings Himself. Nowhere out of Heaven can the company be more select. 4. Here all is gratis. ("V" in *Homilist.*) *The marriage feast between Christ and His Church*.—These words are prophetic, and cannot have a perfect performance all at once, but they shall

be performed gradually. I will show why Christ, with His benefits, prerogatives, graces, and comforts, is compared to a feast. I. In regard of **THE CHOICE OF THE THINGS**. In a feast all things are of the best; so are the things we have in Christ. They are the best of everything. Pardon for sin is a pardon of pardon. The title we have for Heaven, through Him, is a sure title. The joy we have by Him is the joy of all joys. The liberty and freedom from sin, which He purchased for us by His death, is perfect freedom. The riches of grace we have by Him are the only lasting and durable riches. II. There is **VARIETY**. In Christ there is variety answerable to all our wants. Are we foolish? He is wisdom. Have we guilt in our consciences? He is righteousness, and this righteousness is imputed unto us, &c. III. There is **FULL SUFFICIENCY**. There is abundance of grace, and excellency and sufficiency in Christ. IV. A feast is for **COMPANY**. This is a marriage feast, at which we are contracted to Christ. Of all feasts, marriage feasts are most sumptuous. V. For a feast ye have **THE CHOICEST GARMENTS**, as at the marriage of the Lamb, "white and fine linen" (Rev. xix. 8). VI. THIS WAS SIGNIFIED IN OLD TIME BY THE JEWS. 1. In the Feast of the Passover. 2. Manna was a type of Christ. 3. The hard rock in the wilderness, when it was struck with the rod of Moses, presently water gushed out in abundance, which preserved life to the Israelites; so Christ, the rock of our salvation, when His precious side was gored with the bloody lance upon the Cross, the blood gushed out, and in such a manner and such abundance, that by the shedding thereof our souls are preserved alive. 4. All the former feasts in times past were but types of this. 5. In the sacrament you have a feast, a feast of varieties, not only bread, but wine—to shew the variety and fullness of comfort in Christ. VII. Because there can be no feast where the greatest enemy is in force, **HE SWALLOWS UP DEATH IN VICTORY**. (*R. Sibbes, D.D.*) *The Gospel feast*:—In the single circumstance that the feast foretold by the prophet was to be a feast "to all people," there is an obvious reference to the Gospel dispensation; for feasts among the Jews were more or less exclusive, and in no instance, not even on occasions of the most intense interest and joy, were they made accessible to the Gentiles by open and indiscriminate invitation. Besides, in the subsequent context, there is a prediction respecting the conquest of death by believers, which is quoted by St. Paul (1 Cor. xv.), and is directly applied by him to that most blessed and triumphant result of the death of Christ. This quotation gives to the whole prediction a New Testament aspect. I. **WHO IS REPRESENTED AS MAKING THIS FEAST**. "The Lord of hosts." This is one of God's names, which calls up the majesty of His nature. He dwells amidst the bright angels, controls the stormiest tide of battle, prescribes their courses to the great lights of the firmament; yet though thus almighty, independent, supreme, He makes a feast for guilty, polluted man. Nor is it a feast in the ordinary sense of the term. As the world is now constituted, He may be said to have spread out such a feast in the riches of that universe which He has so skilfully contrived, and so munificently adorned. There is a feast in its aspects of beauty and grandeur—in its vastness and variety—in its perfection and magnificence—in its wondrous laws and minute provisions. Still more; there is a feast in the comforts, the privileges, and pleasures of civilised life—in the means of acquiring knowledge—in the protection of righteous laws—in the blessings of the domestic constitution—in the progress of nations—and in the triumphs of reason. But far different is the feast foretold in the text. It is a spiritual feast; a feast for the undeserving; a feast which required important arrangements to be made before it could be provided. II. **THE SCENE OF ENTERTAINMENT**. "On this mountain." "This mountain" means Zion or Jerusalem, which was the select scene of Divine manifestation and worship to the chosen people. Zion came to be identified with the Church of God; and in the Old Testament it is frequently employed as synonymous with it. It is emphatically styled "the mountain of the Lord's house." Its great distinction consisted in this—it was the scene where the Divine presence was manifested in a visible glory, and where answers were vouchsafed to the prayers of the faithful. In one sense, the feast might be said to have been prepared at the period the prediction of the text was announced. As the believing Jews waited on the spiritual services of the temple, they partook of this feast. Truths of unspeakable importance occupied their attention; their minds were elevated, comforted and soothed by them; and, as they descended from the sacred hill, again to engage in the ordinary duties and cares of life, it must have been with refreshed and joyful hearts, with conscious satisfaction, and with a settled tran-

quillity. The full revelation of the Gospel, however, was more appropriately and emphatically the time of festivity. Now this full revelation might be said to have been made on Zion or in Jerusalem. It was in the temple of Zion that the infant Redeemer was first recognised by aged Simeon; there He was dedicated to the Lord by His mother, Mary. From time to time, He appeared within its gates, addressing the people; while, on one memorable occasion, He asserted His authority as its master by driving forth the dove-merchants and the money-changers, by whom it had been recklessly profaned. There, too, it is to be remembered, was the scene of His last suffering—there He shed the blood of atonement, and there He abolished death by dying. When He had left our world, it was in Jerusalem that His apostles first began to preach; it was “in an upper room” there that they met with one accord, and engaged in prayer, the Spirit came plentifully down, and by means of one sermon, three thousand converts were added to the Church. Jerusalem continued to be the scene of amazing triumphs. The city of the prophets was shaken to its centre; the feast of grace was spread out; the invitation was freely announced; multitudes from distant heathen lands heard the Gospel sound, and crowded to the scene of entertainment. There is a peculiarity respecting this feast which requires to be considered. It is not, like other feasts, restricted as to time or place; it is a feast for all times and for all places. III. THE FEAST ITSELF. It is a feast of best things. We consider this figurative language as strikingly descriptive of the peculiar blessings the Gospel offers to guilty, ruined man. This provision grows by distribution; like the miraculous loaves in the Gospel, the fragments after every participation are more abundant than the original supply. IV. THE GUESTS FOR WHOM THE FEAST IS MADE. “All people.” There is no distinction, and there is no limit. This feast presents a striking contrast with the feasts usually made by men. When men invite to a feast, they select a class—kindred, friends, or, perhaps more frequently, rich neighbours. But the feast foretold in the text, is to be a feast “for all people.” The vastness of its extent strikingly illustrates the power and the mercy of the Divine Entertainer. Conclusion:—There is one question of immense importance, Have you accepted the invitation to come to this feast? (*A. Bennie, M.A.*) *God cheer for Christmas*:—God, in the verse before us, has been pleased to describe the provisions of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Other interpretations are all flat and stale, and utterly unworthy of such expressions as those before us. When we behold the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed, offered up upon the chosen mountain, we then discover a fulness of meaning in these gracious words of sacred hospitality. Our Lord Himself was very fond of describing His Gospel under the self-same image as that which is here employed. I. THE FEAST. It is described as consisting of viands of the best, nay, of the best of the best. They are fat things, but they are also fat things full of marrow. Wines are provided of the most delicious and invigorating kind, wines on the lees, which retain their aroma, their strength, and their flavour; but these are most ancient and rare, having been so long kept that they have become well refined; by long standing they have purified, clarified themselves, and brought themselves to the highest degree of brightness and excellence. 1. Let us survey the blessings of the Gospel, and observe that they are fat things, and fat things full of marrow. (1) Complete justification. (2) Adoption. (3) Every child of God is the object of eternal love, without beginning and without end. (4) Union to Christ. (5) Resurrection and everlasting life. 2. Changing the run of the thought, and yet really keeping to the same subject, let me now bring before you the goblets of wine. These we shall consider as symbolising the joys of the Gospel. (1) One of the dearest joys of the Christian life is a sense of perfect peace with God. (2) A sense of security. (3) Communion with God. (4) The pleasures of hope, a hope most sure and steadfast, most bright and glorious. (5) These joys of the believer are ancient in their origin. Old wines are intended by “wines well refined”; they have stood long on the lees, have drawn out all the virtue from them, and have been cleared of all the coarser material. (6) The fulness of their excellence, because the wine on the lees holds its flavour, and retains its aroma; and there is a fulness and richness about the blessings of Divine grace which endure them to our hearts. (7) Their refined nature. Gospel joys are elevating. (8) How absolutely peerless are the provisions of grace. II. THE BANQUETING-HALL. “In this mountain.” There is a reference here to three things—the same symbol bearing three interpretations. 1. Literally, the mountain upon which Jerusalem

is built. The reference is here to the hill of the Lord upon which Jerusalem stood; the great transaction which was fulfilled at Jerusalem upon Calvary hath made to all nations a great feast. 2. Frequently Jerusalem is used as the symbol of the Church of God, and it is within the pale of the Church that the great feast of the Lord is made unto all nations. The mountain sometimes means the Church of God exalted to its latter-day glory. III. THE HOST OF THE FEAST. In the Gospel banquet there is not a single dish brought by man. I know some would like to bring a little with them to the banquet, something at least by way of trimming and adornment, so that they might have a share of the honour; but it must not be, the Lord of hosts makes the feast, and He will not even permit the guests to bring their own wedding garments—they must stop at the door and put on the robe which the Lord has provided, for salvation is all grace from first to last. The Lord provides sovereignly as “Lord of hosts,” and all-sufficiently as Jehovah. It needed the all-sufficiency of God to provide a feast for hungry sinners. If God spread the feast it is not to be despised. If He provide the feast, let Him have the glory of it. IV. THE GUESTS. “For all people.” This includes not merely the chosen people, the Jews, whose were the oracles, but it encompasses the poor uncircumcised Gentiles, who by Jesus are brought nigh. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *A rich feast for hungry souls*:—The prophets of old prophesied of the grace of Christ which should come unto us (1 Pet. i. 10); and of these none more than our evangelical prophet. I. THE MAKER AND MASTER OF THE FEAST, the Lord Himself. It is a royal feast, with which the King of Zion entertains His own subjects. Particularly, it is the Lord Christ, the Son of God, who, pitying the famished condition of poor sinners, was at the expense of this costly feast for them; for the Maker of it is the same who swallows up death in victory (ver. 8). A warlike title is ascribed to Him, the “Lord of hosts,” for there is a banner in Christ’s banqueting-house; and this feast looks both backward and forward to a war. II. THE GUESTS FOR WHOM THIS FEAST IS PROVIDED. It is made for “all people.” The invitation is given to all who come in its way, without distinction or exception of any sort of persons. III. THE GUEST-CHAMBER WHERE THIS FEAST IS HELD. “In this mountain,” namely, Mount Zion, that is, the Church. IV. THE MATTER OF THE FEAST. A feast imports abundance and variety of good entertainment; and here nothing is wanting which is suitable for hungry souls. In this valley of the world lying in wickedness, there is nothing for the soul to feed on but carrion, nothing but what would be loathed, except by those who were never used to better: but in this mountain, there is a “feast of fat things,” things most relishing to those who taste them, most nourishing to those who feed on them; and these are “full of marrow,” most satisfying to the soul. In this valley of the world there is nothing but muddy waters, which can never quench the thirst of the soul, but must ruin it with the dregs ever cleaving to them; but here, on this mountain, are “wines on the lees well refined.” (T. Boston, D.D.) *The feast prepared by Jesus Christ*:—I. SHOW THE ABSOLUTE NEED THERE IS OF THIS PROVISION. A lost world, by Adam’s fall, the great prodigal, was reduced to a starving condition. The King of Heaven set down Adam, and his posterity in him, to a well-covered table in paradise, in this lower world, making a covenant of friendship with him, and with them in him. But man being drawn into rebellion against God, Adam and all his posterity were driven out of the guest-chamber, the family was broken and scattered, having nothing left them. 1. In point of need, Adam left us with hungry hearts, like the prodigal (Luke xv. 16). Every one finds himself not self-sufficient, and therefore his soul cleaves to something without itself to satisfy it. He left us also with thirsty consciences, scorched and burnt up with heat. 2. In point of supply, he left us without any prospect, for all communication with Heaven was stopped. War was declared against the rebels, so that there could be no transportation of provisions from thence. Adam’s sons, abandoned of Heaven, fell a-begging at the world’s door, if so be they might find rest and satisfaction in the creature. The natural man is born weeping, lives seeking, and will die disappointed, if not brought to the feast of fat things. II. EXPLAIN WHAT THE PROVISION IS WHICH CHRIST HAS PREPARED FOR THE SOULS OF SUCH A FAMISHED WORLD. This, in a word, is His precious self; the Maker of the feast is the matter of it. III. CONSIDER WHAT SORT OF A FEAST IT IS. 1. It is a feast upon a sacrifice (1 Cor. v. 7, 8). 2. It is a covenant feast (Heb. xiii. 20, 21). 3. It is a marriage feast (Matt. xxii. 1-4). The Lord Christ is the Bridegroom, and the captive daughter of Zion the bride. 4. It is a feast



which has a respect to war. The Lord of hosts made it. It looks backward to that terrible encounter which Christ had with the law, with death, with hell, and the grave, upon the account of His ransomed ones, and that glorious victory which He obtained over them, by which He wrought the deliverance of His people. It is provided for and presented to His people to animate and strengthen them for the spiritual warfare against the devil, the world, and the flesh; and none can truly partake of it, but those who are resolved on that battle, and are determined to pursue it, till they obtain the complete victory at death. 5. It is a weaning feast. There is a time prefixed in the decree of God, at which all who are His shall, by converting grace, be weaned from their natural food. **IV. CONFIRM THAT ALL PEOPLE WHO WILL COME, MAY COME, AND PARTAKE OF THIS FEAST.** 1. Christ invites all without distinction, even the worst of sinners, to this spiritual feast. 2. For what end does Jesus send out His messengers with a commission to invite all to come, if they were not welcome? (Matt. xxii. 9). 3. He takes it heinously amiss when any refuse to come. **V. PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT.** (*Ibid.*) *The Gospel feast* :—In this sacred feast there is—**I. VAST ABUNDANCE.** The unsearchable riches, and all the fulness, that it hath pleased the Father should dwell in Jesus Christ. Here the saints receive large measures of knowledge; such degrees of holiness as shall gradually carry them forward to be perfect as their Father in Heaven is perfect; and such plentiful consolations as shall fill them with joy unspeakable and full of glory. **II. RICH VARIETY.** Pardon of sin, &c. The Holy Spirit to renew, sanctify, comfort, &c.; strength for the performance of duty, support under affliction, &c. Here is the milk of the Word for babes, strong meat for them whose senses are exercised to discern both good and evil, the water of life for such as are thirsty, the bread of life for those that are hungry, and the choicest fruits for them that are weak and languishing. **III. MOST EXCELLENT PROVISION.** “Fat things, full of marrow,” &c. **IV.** These are joined with **GREAT FESTIVITY AND JOY** among those who partake of the feast. (*R. Macculloch.*)

Vers. 7, 8. **And He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people.**—*The removal of the covering* :—**I. THE GOSPEL DESTROYS THE COVERING WHICH HIDES THE TRUE NATURE OF MAN.** The covering of sin has ever concealed the nature, the nobility of nature, the capabilities of nature, and the possibilities of nature in mankind. The covering is thick and coarse. Ignorance, brutality, discord, war, barbaric customs, plunder, and gross immoralities are the threads of the textile. They are so closely woven that the very features of human nature are hidden. Take off the covering. You have seen the earth when winter has possessed its vales, its forests, its gardens, and its fields. The frost has ploughed the ground. The sleet has destroyed every vestige of verdure. Even the ivy leaf is covered with the snow. Spring will destroy that covering, and life will shoot up from the roots to the highest boughs. So the advent of Christ introduced revivifying influences, and the true nature of man is discovered in kind words and deeds of goodness. Our forefathers never thought that nature had concealed such precious ores in the hearts of the mountains. A few years ago even we had no conception that down deep in the bosom of the earth wells of oil waited to be drawn to the surface. The covering has been taken away since, and these valuables have seen the light. Jesus Christ sunk shafts through the outward crust of sin, and brought forth precious ores to be smelted in the furnace of His love, moulded in His example, and circulated through the ages. **II. THE GOSPEL DESTROYS THE COVERING WHICH HIDES THE TRUE NATURE OF GOD.** Communion with the source of peace was broken by the first shadow of guilt. Man in the dark is seized with fear of the God who made him. This fear grows into dislike, and dislike into indifference, and indifference into defiance. The fool desirerth in his heart that there might be no God, and the dislike grows into a positive refusal of entertaining God in his thoughts. But sin has not succeeded to remove all traces of God from the human mind. The sinner cannot altogether close his eyes and ears to those manifestations and voices which force the idea of God upon him. Under the covert of sin conceptions of Him are entertained at variance with His nature, and in opposition to His dealings. Christ came to reveal the Father. The power of reconciliation is in that word. **III. THE GOSPEL DESTROYS THE COVERING WHICH HIDES THE TRUE AFFINITY BETWEEN MAN AND MAN.** “Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.” The basis of the Church is union with the Father. We meet in Him before we meet in

one another. National prejudice and society caste, family feuds and personal animosity will perish under the influence of the Cross; humanity will be raised into union with the Father, and "God will be all and in all." IV. THE GOSPEL WILL DESTROY THAT WHICH HIDES THE FUTURE. "He will swallow up death in victory." It was a new declaration when One said, "I am the resurrection and the life." (*T. Davies, M.A.*)

**Ver. 8. He will swallow up death in victory.**—*Death swallowed up in victory*:—I. THE TEXT SETS CHRIST BEFORE US IN THE ATTITUDE OF A CONQUEROR OVER DEATH. "He shall swallow up death in victory," it is said, and again in Hosea, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction"; whilst still more strikingly in Timothy, we read, "But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." But what is the kind of death of which the advent of Christ was to be the swallowing up? Not spiritual death, for how many are lying under its power now—many who have seen the day of Christ—but who yet have neither rejoiced in its light, nor yielded to its power! Neither does it ever attain to His covenant undertakings to swallow up death eternal. This too has its permitted victims, as well as the death spiritual, the one being, in fact, both the sequence and the penalty of the other. It is manifest, therefore, that the expression is to be limited to the death of the body—that death, which on account of the first transgression, was to pass upon all men, the penalty and the fruit of sin. Now this death is to be swallowed up—quenched, absorbed, as the original word implies—just as something which the sea might bury in its depths, or the fire decompose into its elemental forms. II. BUT HOW IS THIS SWALLOWING UP OF DEATH BY CHRIST EFFECTED? To this we have a full answer returned by the apostle Paul. "The sting of death," he says, "is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Here it is first assumed that death has a sting, that there is a pungency of dread and horror arising from the contemplation of death, merely as a penalty, as something indissolubly linked with evil beyond itself, and a sense of the deserved frown of God. Hence, in order to show that Christ had made a conquest over death, we must show that He was victorious over the sting of death, and hath swallowed up sin in victory. 1. And this He did in His life. In this way did Christ obtain His victory over sin—obtained it too, not by the putting forth of the hidden powers of Godhead, not by any invoked succours which would be given at His bidding from the angelic world, but by means within the reach of the humblest of His followers to command. Thus, in the destroyed sting of death, was laid the foundation for its final abolition. Mortality was no longer the terrible thing to look upon it once was. Believers are bound up in the Saviour's conquests. "Because I live, ye shall live also; because I have overcome, ye shall overcome also; sin shall have no dominion over you, because I withstood its power in the wilderness, because death and the sting of death have been swallowed up in victory." 2. Again, Christ is said to swallow up death, because He has discharged the obligations of that law to which death owes all its authority. As death could have had no sting if it had not been for sin, so sin could have had no existence, if it had not been for the law. "The law is the strength of sin," says the Word. Why? Because where no law is, there is no transgression. "The law entered that the offence might abound." And this law never relaxes, never can relax. Holy, it can endure no blemish; just, it can tolerate no remission of penalties; good, it will not encourage disobedience in the many by misplaced compassions to the few; and they who are under this law must be eternally under it. Hope for us there is none, nor yet help, unless we can be redeemed from its curse, released from its thrall, discharged from its obligations by One who shall both magnify its claims and make it honourable; and Christ has done all this, and in doing it, He swallows up death, at least death as death, for the strength of this last enemy is now departed from him. The law which was Satan's only title-deed thereto, is nailed to the Cross. It is all Emmanuel's land now—earth and paradise, seen and unscen, life and immortality. "He hath swallowed up death in victory." 3. And then, once more, we must include the grave as part of the conquered things spoken of in the text. Like death it has its victory—an all but universal victory. Distinctions it knows not, age it regards not: it is the house appointed for all living.

“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him.” “O grave!” says the apostle, “where is thy victory?” Where, when thy keys are in the hands of the Saviour, when thy dust is a guarded deposit, when the bodies of the faithful committed unto thee are century by century throwing off their gross materialism, in order that in the regeneration of a glorified and spiritual body they may stand at the latter day upon the earth? For, that the prophet’s ken looked thus far, is evident from what he says a little further on in the next chapter, “Thy dead men,” &c. (xxvi. 19). Thus shall Christ swallow up death in victory; and it is added, the “Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.” The same forbidden tree whose mortal taste brought death into our world, brought therewith all our woe. If we had not known death, we had not known tears. The whole “body of sin will be destroyed”; the glorified spirit can neither falter nor fall again: all corrective discipline will be over: there will be neither lessons to learn, nor infirmities to subdue, nor murmurings to keep down, nor mistaken attachments to correct. No erring spirit will ever seek to escape from those holy mansions, neither can any graces languish which are fed from that eternal spring, but the whole company of the redeemed, sanctified throughout by the power of an Almighty Spirit, and made one with Christ through the blood of the everlasting covenant, shall wait in devout ministrations on the King of saints in a service that shall know no weariness, and in a kingdom that shall know no end. “He shall swallow up death in victory, and wipe away all tears from off all faces.” And now let us glance at one or two practical conclusions to be derived from our subject. 1. Thus, one effect of it should be to fortify us against the fear of death. This fear, I have said is an instinct with us—is incorporated as it were upon our lapsed and fallen nature; it is not necessarily connected with any anticipation of what is to follow, but springs from an apparently universal feeling that death is a punishment for sin; that originally man was not made to die, that some wrong has been done to the beneficent purposes of the Creator of which our dying is the bitter fruit. Then it is a part of Christ’s victory to have the rule not only over death, but over all that region of the invisible to which death leads. 2. Again, our subject should suggest to us the wisdom of instant submission to the Saviour’s authority. A twofold end would seem to be contemplated in giving this absolute dominion over death, namely, that He should be omnipotent to conquer as well as mighty to save—a terror to His enemies as well as a protector to His friends, and one or other of these we all are. The whole world of responsible beings is divided into those who are under the sceptre, and those who are under the rod. But why should we make a foe of Him who hath assumed universal empire only that He might be our friend, only that nothing might be wanting to the completeness of His own work? 3. Is it needful that I should remind you that this blessed promise we have been considering, like all our Advent promises, belongs to believers, and to believers only? As there is a death which Christ has not swallowed up, so there are tears which the Lord God has not promised to wipe away, but which in righteous displeasure at His despaired compassions, He will leave to flow on for ever. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *Victory in death*:—I. He who hath swallowed up death in victory is THE LORD GOD. II. THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE PROMISE. But for God’s eternal purpose in Christ Jesus, every son and daughter of Adam must have drunk for ever of the cup of wrath which is without mixture, as a just reward for their enmity to God. III. THE PERSONS AND THEIR CHARACTERS or descriptions that shall say, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us,” &c. (*F. Silver.*) *Light in darkness*:—I. THE TRUTH ASSERTED. “He will swallow up death in victory.” The redemption of Jesus Christ deals with both parts of man’s nature, his soul and his body. But the application of redemption to the body is as yet deferred. There is—1. The removal of all sorrow. “The Lord God shall wipe away,” &c. 2. There shall be the removal of the rebuke of God’s people; by which I would understand death, which surely is the greatest reproach which God’s people now lie under. II. THE HYMN OF TRIUMPH which is sung by the risen saints at the time referred to in our text. “And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us,” &c. It is impossible for us fully to enter into the triumphant feeling contained in this verse, whilst we are ourselves in the valley of humiliation and woe. The language is the language of victory, and that we have not yet received. There are parts, however, in this hymn which we may already join in. The language of our text

is the language of present realisation of expected triumph. "Lo, this is our God." There is the manifestation of Jehovah. "We have waited for Him." In times past "we have waited for Him." In sorrow, in distress, in agony of spirit, "we have waited for Him." When death has entered our family, and when bitter grief has entered our hearts, "we have waited for Him." And the darkness, the mist, and the cloud have all cleared away. "We have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." The double truth, then, presented to us in our text is the assertion of coming victory and the assurance of the joy which shall be ours when that victory is achieved. (*E. Bailey, M.A.*)

*Death swallowed up* :—How can those who are in the mountain banquet-house be happy while death is ravaging down below? The Lord says in reference to that, that He "will swallow up death in victory." We must not amend that expression—"swallow up." There is a sound in it which is equal to an annotation. We hear a splash in the infinite Atlantic, and the thing that is sunk has gone for ever. It was but a stone. Death is to be not mitigated, relieved, thrown into perspective which the mind can gaze upon without agony; it is to be swallowed up. Let it go! Death has no friends. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

*The graciousness of death* :—Yet in another aspect how gracious has death been in human history! What pain he has relieved; what injuries he has thrust into the silent tomb; what tumult and controversy he has ended. Men have found an altar at the tomb, a house of reconciliation in the graveyard, music for the heart in the toll and throb of the last knell. Even death must have his tribute. (*Ibid.*)

*Victory over death* :—There are four degrees of this victory. I. THE FIRST WAS OBTAINED BY CHRIST IN HIS OWN PERSON, in single combat with death and hell. Christ taking upon Himself our sins, death assaults Him with all his strength and terror, and appears, at first, to get the better. It kills Him and lays Him in the grave. But as Samson arose by night, and carried away the "gates of Gaza, bars and all," so Christ, though shut up in the grave, and a great stone rolled upon it, arose in the night, and carried away the gates and bars of death and the grave, and bare them to the top of Mount Zion, to be His footstool in heaven. II. The second degree of this victory is THE ALTERING OF ITS NATURE TO ALL GOD'S PEOPLE. Before, it was a passage into prison; now, it is a passage out of prison. It was the way to darkness, misery, despair, and torment; now, it is the way to light, peace, triumph, and immortal joy. Before, it was loss, as he who died lost all his possessions; now, it is gain. III. The third degree is THE ALTERING OF OUR JUDGMENTS, AFFECTIONS, AND APPREHENSIONS CONCERNING DEATH, which is often strikingly seen in the dying experience of believers. IV. The last is in the GENERAL RESURRECTION. "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written." (*The Evangelist.*)

*Christ's victory* :—I. THE HOLY AND HONOURABLE VICTOR. "He," the King of glory; "He," the Lord Christ; "He," the Father's co-equal and co-eternal Son; "He," who is called in the 6th verse, "the Lord of hosts"; "He," who, though He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross," that He might obtain the victory over death specified in the text. 1. The victories of His life and death in His own person. (1) His single-handed combat with the tempter. (2) We find Him attacked by the devil's sharpshooters—the Sadducees, the scribes, and the Pharisees. (3) Our glorious Victor now enters the very territory of "the king of terrors," that He may vanquish him in his own dominions. (4) Let us advance from this point, just to mark His victorious proceedings in the invincible operations of His grace; for, you must know, when He comes down on earth to carry on the triumphs of His redemption, He finds all the persons for whom He shed His precious blood, "dead in trespasses and sins"; and "He will swallow up" that "death in victory." (5) This glorious Victor will carry on a civil war in the hearts of His people. II. THE INTERESTS SECURED BY THESE VICTORIES. 1. The interests of the tribes of Israel, and we may just write upon these interests one sweet passage of Scripture: "So all Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." 2. Moreover, the official character of Christ is herein honoured, and that is an interest peculiarly His own. 3. While the honour of Christ is to be maintained by His victory, and emblazoned before all worlds, the relationship existing between Him and His Church is dear to His heart. III. THE SACRED, THE SWEET PEACE, EVERLASTINGLY SETTLED BY THE VICTORIES OF OUR GLORIOUS VICTOR. Sovereigns generally profess that the object of their

fighting is to settle peace upon honourable terms, so that it shall not be easily disturbed; and they do not care for proclaiming peace until it has been settled upon such terms that it is not likely again to be easily broken. Now, our glorious Conqueror has settled peace for His whole Church; nay, He Himself has become her peace. (*J. Irons.*) *The progressive march of death's Conqueror*:—In nature God is constantly "swallowing up death in victory." In spring He opens a million graves and floods the world with life. Indeed everywhere He makes death the minister of life. Death generates, nurtures, and develops life. But the text points us to His victory over the mortality of man, and let us trace the march of the triumphant Conqueror in this direction. I. WE SEE HIS FIRST CONQUEST IN THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST. The strongest victim death ever had was Christ. The Jewish Sanhedrim co-operated with the Roman power and did all they could to keep his Victim in the grave. But the Conqueror of death appeared, invaded the territory of mortality, broke open the prison doors, snapped the fetters, and led the prisoner out into a new and triumphant life. II. WE SEE HIS NEXT CONQUEST IN DESTROYING IN HUMANITY THE FEAR OF DEATH. The essence, the sting, the power of death, are not in the mere article of dissolution of soul and body, but in the thoughts and feelings of men regarding the event. To overcome, therefore, in the human mind all terrible thoughts and apprehensive feelings concerning death, is the most effective way to triumph over it. III. WE SEE HIS CROWNING CONQUEST IN THE GENERAL RESURRECTION. 1. There is nothing incredible in the general resurrection. 2. There are circumstances that render the event exceedingly probable. 3. The declarations of God render it absolutely certain. (*Homilist.*) *Death*:—I. THE ENEMY is so formidable that he is justly termed "the king of terrors." The conquerors of the earth have themselves been conquered by this universal destroyer. Though he is nature's destruction, and consequently nature's aversion, nature knows no method of resisting his violence. You cannot avoid the approaches of this enemy; but you may prevent them from issuing in your destruction. II. THE CONQUEROR OF DEATH. The dignity of His person, and the greatness of His power capacitate Him for this conquest. The Prince of life, who had life in Himself; who had power to lay down His life, and power to take it up again; He, and He alone, could conquer death. III. THE WONDERS OF THIS CONQUEST. That our Lord might fairly and in the open field encounter the king of terrors, He came into the first Adam's world, where this formidable foe had carried his conquests far and near, and where none was found able to withstand him. He came into it an infant of days. This gave death and hell a strange, though but seeming, advantage over Him. They flattered themselves that they should be able to destroy Him, while a helpless infant. They attempted it. They murdered all the other infants in Bethlehem, from two years old and under. The Child Jesus alone, who came to fight with death, and triumph over hell and the grave, escaped their hands. Death and hell, though foiled in their first onset, do not despair. He appeared "in the likeness of sinful flesh." Hence, they flattered themselves that, though they had not destroyed Him, when an infant, by the sword of Herod, they might destroy Him, when become a man, by enticing Him into sin, which gives to death its destroying power. The prince of this world tempts Him to despair, to presumption, to self-murder, to worship the devil. But, though he set upon Him with all his power and policy, he could find no corruption in Him, to kindle by his temptation. Had He appeared, which He one day will do, as the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person, death and hell would have fled from Him. But He came to this world, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." The powers of darkness hoped that the toils, the anguish and perplexity which He endured, would sink and discourage Him, or would lead Him to leave His work unfinished. Here again they are disappointed. What occasioned the most exquisite anguish, did not occasion one irregular desire, or one repining thought. By a few years' obedience, performed in such trying circumstances, He brought in an everlasting righteousness, and accomplished what all the angels of heaven could not have done in millions of ages. God made Him sin for us (2 Cor. v. 21). The Prince of life is laid in a grave. There His enemies hope to detain Him. But the joy of the wicked was short. He, who, by dying, had fully paid our debts, in being raised from the dead receives a public and ample discharge. Such was the wonderful victory obtained by Jesus. For believers is this victory obtained. IV. THE COMPLETENESS OF CHRIST'S CONQUEST OVER DEATH. 1. The great things

which He accomplished on earth. (1) There was not one criminal action, one sinful word, one irregular thought or desire, of which His people were guilty, which He did not expiate. (2) Jesus hath not left one precept, one jot or tittle of the law unfulfilled. The law is friendly to the believer, for the believer's best Friend and Head has done it infinite honour. (3) Christ hath redeemed His people from every part of the curse. (4) The devil hath the power of death; and there is not one devil who was not overcome and led in triumph by Christ on the Cross, where the powers of darkness certainly thought to have triumphed over Him (Heb. ii. 14). (5) Christ, by His righteousness, hath obtained the power to overrule death and the grave, with all that precedes, accompanies, or follows them, for the spiritual and everlasting good of His people, in a blessed subordination to His own glory.

2. The completeness of Christ's conquest over death, as demonstrated by His exaltation and His glory. He was raised from the dead by His God and Father, as a just God and a Saviour. God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name above every name. The height of His exaltation speaks the greatness of His victory. Had it been otherwise, He would not have been invested with a full authority, and a sufficient power to raise from the dead, in glory, all the bodies of His saints, wheresoever they have died, or how long soever they have been buried in the grave; and to change their bodies also, who shall be found alive, at His second coming. The second coming of Christ will be the fullest demonstration that He hath completely conquered death. (*J. Erskine, D.D.*) *Victory over death.*—I. I propose to make some REMARKS ON THIS SINGULAR EXPRESSION,—“He will swallow up death in victory.” The very sound of the words conveys the idea of a terrible conflict. A poor expiring worm of the dust is the occasion and subject of the contest. But, while we awaken and humble ourselves by just views of the formidable nature of death, let us rise to confidence by observing how the expression of the text brings into this conflict the infinite zeal of Deity. The effect, in the experience of dying Christians, must be an abundant sensation of victory.

II. Let us inquire BY WHAT METHODS THE WISE AND MERCIFUL GOD RAISES HIS PEOPLE TO THE POSSESSION OF VICTORY OVER DEATH. 1. This is done by a clear and powerful revelation of the glory of God. 2. By a powerful application of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to the conscience. Such has been the uniform experience of Christian martyrs, grappling with Satan, and with death in every terrific form (Rev. xii. 11; 1 Cor. xv. 55–57). 3. The heavens are opened over every dying believer. Your God swallows up death in victory by showing you the fair fields, rivers, fruits, of His paradise in the heavens. 4. He discovers to you the vanity of all earthly objects, He impresses you with the unavoidable imperfection and misery of your sojourning condition. In that new birth, which brings the sinner near to God through Christ, the soul rises into a new world, and is no longer capable of grossly idolising earthly objects, as it once did. At the same time, the true enjoyment of lawful, created things commences. 5. In order to the final triumph, the Lord grants to His people a blessed finishing of their sanctified desires, respecting objects within time. This fulfilment of desires within time, relates either to particular points of inward, spiritual attainment, or to subjects of special concern respecting the cause and kingdom of Christ upon earth; and, in some cases, to blessings and deliverances, bestowed in reference to individuals with whom the Christian is peculiarly connected. 6. That this work of God may become perfect, the soul is raised up above the pains of the body. 7. The uncouth strangeness of the world of spirits is taken off, by faith's piercing views of the invisible God; the Mediator reigning in human flesh; the character of redeemed spirits; and of spotless angelic beings, with whom the Christian, about to be unloosed from earth, feels a kindred alliance.

III. THE DIFFERENT PERIODS AND SITUATIONS IN WHICH VICTORY OVER DEATH IS ENJOYED BY THE SAINTS OF THE MOST HIGH. 1. This blessed victory is enjoyed, by a gradual anticipation, from the day of their effectual calling and conversion to God. 2. This anticipated enjoyment of victory is tenderly and powerfully impressed on the Christian soul by sympathy with his dying friends and brethren. 3. At length the solemn, appointed period arrives. It is the happiness of the established Christian to know that no new, untried course is now to be sought for. He has only to go over his old exercises of faith, resignation, patience, and spiritual desire. 4. This victory over death is enjoyed by the soul during the period of its separation from the body. 5. We now advance to that scene of victory, which the tongues of men and of angels

cannot describe (1 John iii. 2). Application:—From this subject various duties open to view, which peculiarly bind those who are in any degree assured that they are in the way towards such victory (2 Pet. iii. 14). (*J. Love, D.D.*)

*Victory over death*:—I. CONSIDER THE VICTORY BY WHICH DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP. The words refer to that encounter which the Redeemer had with the king of terrors, when He suffered in the room of sinners. Here, among other things, the following, in an especial manner, deserve our attention. 1. His exhausting the power of death by submitting to its stroke. When He died, it was under the pressure of Divine wrath; but that sacrifice was sufficient, and no more can be demanded. The stroke by which the Redeemer fell left no remaining strength in His enemy. 2. His manifesting, by His resurrection, that He was completely delivered from its dominion. 3. His enabling His people to overcome the fear of death. 4. His preserving His people safe in death, so that they are not hurt by its sting when their bodies must submit to its power. 5. His delivering His people completely from every remains of its power, by the resurrection of their bodies at the last day. II. THE HAPPY CONSEQUENCE of this victory in the swallowing up of death. The phrase “swallowing up” is expressive of the most complete destruction. 1. Death is swallowed up in the victory of Christ, so as that it can never appear as an enemy to hurt Himself. The guilt with which He was charged as the surety of sinners gave death all its power over the Redeemer. By expiating that guilt, however, the power of death is taken away. 2. Death is swallowed up in the victory of Christ, inasmuch as it is by this victory deprived of all power to hurt any of His people. There is now no death of which the people of God have cause to be afraid. (1) Death cannot separate believers from God. (2) Death cannot deprive believers of the society of their brethren in Christ. (3) Death cannot rob the children of God of their spiritual privileges. (4) Death cannot prevent believers from the full enjoyment of that happiness and glory which Christ hath purchased and prepared for them in the heavenly state. (*G. Campbell.*)

*Jesus victorious over death*:—I. THE COMBATANTS; the two mightiest that ever encountered. Upon the one hand is death, with his devouring mouth, a champion who never yet could find his match among the children of men, till the great “HE,” in the text, entered the lists against him, even Jesus Christ, who being man, was capable of feeling the force of death; but being the Lord of hosts also (ver. 6), could not but be conqueror at length. II. THE ENCOUNTER OF THE COMBATANTS, implied in these words, “He will swallow up death in victory.” Though death could not then reach Him the deadly blow, it pursued Him, shot out its poisonous arrows against Him all along, till they came to a close engagement on the Cross, where it wrestled Him down even into the grave, the proper place of its dominion. So the Mediator got the first fall. III. THE ISSUE OF THE BATTLE. Death, who in all other battles wins whatever party loses, loses the day here; the victory is on the side of the slain Mediator. The slain Saviour again revives, gets up upon death, stands conqueror over it, even in its own territories, breaks the bars of the grave, takes away the sting it fought with against Him, and puts it and all its forces to the rout; so that it can never show its face against Him any more (Rom. vi. 9). IV. THE MEDIATOR’S PURSUIT OF THE VICTORY, till it be complete for those that are His, as well as for Himself. The vanquished enemy has yet many strongholds in his hand, and he keeps many of the redeemed ones as prisoners, that they cannot stir; others of them though they can stir, yet can go nowhere, but they must drag the bands of death after them. But the Mediator will pursue the victory till He totally abolish it out of His kingdom, that there shall no more of it be seen there for ever, as a thing that is swallowed up is seen no more at all. (*T. Boston, D.D.*)

*Jesus victorious over death*:—I. THE BATTLE. 1. Under what character has the Lord of life fought this battle? (1) As the Head and Representative of the elect world. (2) As their Redeemer and Deliverer (Hos. xiii. 14). The prey could not be taken from the Mighty One, without both price and power. (3) As a Captain or General at the head of His people (Heb. ii. 10). 2. The attack made upon Him by death. (1) Death brings up its strength against Him, i.e., the law. (2) Meanwhile he that has the power of death (Heb. ii. 14) advances against Him; Satan sets upon Him in the wilderness with most grievous temptations. (3) The congregation of men dead in trespasses and sins stir up themselves against Him (Isa. liii. 3). Judas betrays Him, the Jews gape on Him like a lion, crying, Crucify Him; Pilate condemns Him; He is scourged, crowned

with thorns, smitten on the crowned head; His body, racked till it was all out of joint, nailed to the Cross, hangs there mocked, and pierced with a spear. (4) Death comes with its sting upon Him, and pierces Him to the heart, and casts Him down dead. II. THE VICTORY CHRIST OBTAINED. 1. How it was obtained. (1) By His death. This was the decisive stroke. "That through death He might destroy death, and him that had the power of death." It was such a victory as Samson's last victory over the Philistines, when he pulled down the house, and died himself with the Philistines in the fall of it; and therefore He cried upon the Cross, "It is finished." (2) By His resurrection. 2. What sort of victory it is Jesus hath obtained over death. (1) A dear-bought victory; it cost the glorious Conqueror His precious life. (2) A complete victory in respect of Himself, though not yet in respect of His members (Rom. vi. 9). (3) A glorious victory, saints and angels singing the triumphant song. (4) An everlasting victory. Death's power is irrecoverably broken. III. THE PURSUIT. 1. Christ looses the bands of spiritual death. 2. He looses the band of legal death. 3. He destroys the body of death in the believer. (1) It is crucified, and its destruction is ensured in the conversion of the soul to God (Rom. vi. 6; Gal. v. 24). (2) It is weakened and mortified more and more, in the gradual advances of sanctification (Rom. viii. 13). (3) At the death of the body, the body of death is utterly destroyed. 4. He dries up all the sorrows of death. 5. He brings all His people safe through the valley of the shadow of death. 6. Now, death has nothing of Christ's but the bodies of the saints, not a foot of ground in His kingdom but the grave; and these He will also wrest out of his hand at the resurrection. 7. In consequence of the absolute victory over death, it shall be shut up, and confined for the ages of eternity to the lower regions (Rev. xx. 14). IV. PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT. 1. Be lively Christians, as those that are alive from the dead through Jesus Christ. 2. Join issue with the Conqueror in pursuing the victory in your own souls. 3. Join issue with the Conqueror in pursuing the victory in the world, especially in the places where ye live. 4. Believe this truth with application in all your endeavours after holiness. 5. Be weaned from the world, and long for the day when death shall be swallowed up in victory. (*Ibid.*) *Death abolished*:—We shall have no more to do with death than we have with the cloak-room at a governor's or president's levee. We stop at such cloak-room, and leave in charge of a servant our overcoat, our overshoes, our outward apparel, that we may not be impeded in the brilliant round of the drawing-room. Well, when we go out of this world we are going to a King's banquet, and to a reception of monarchs, and at the door of the tomb we leave the cloak of flesh, and the wrappings with which we meet the storms of this world. At the close of an earthly reception, under the brush and broom of the porter, the coat or hat may be handed to us better than when we resigned it, and the cloak of humanity will finally be returned to us improved, and brightened, and purified, and glorified. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *The resurrection of the dead*:—The far-up cloud, higher than the hawk flies, higher than the eagle flies, what is it made of? Drops of water from the Hudson, other drops from the East River, other drops from a stagnant pool out on Newark flats—up yonder there, embodied in a cloud, and the sun kindles it. If God can make such a lustrous cloud out of water-drops, many of them soiled and impure and fetched from miles away, can He not transport the fragments of a human body from the earth, and out of them build a radiant body? (*Ibid.*) *The Messiah the Victor over death*:—What is very curious is that most of the Hebrew seers saw in their Messiah the Victor over death. And what makes it curious is that the Jews did not, as a rule, look forward to a life beyond the grave. The life eternal, the life which, as a mere incident in its career, can match itself against death and conquer it, was unknown to them; they were not conscious of it even when they possessed it. To only a few rare souls was this great truth, this great hope revealed, and that only in their rarest and most exalted moments. To obey the commandments of God, to render the service He demanded of them, and to enjoy His favour here and now was enough for them. Even the prophets themselves were mainly taken up either with this present life, with its urgent tasks and duties; or, if they travelled beyond it, it was the future life of the nation on earth on which they speculated, and on the discipline by which it was to be purified and broadened till it embraced the whole family of man. But when they looked forward to the advent of the Messiah, all the horizon



of their thought were enlarged. Whatever might change and perish, He must remain, to be for ever the Lord and Friend of men. (*S. Coz, D.D.*) *The Jewish prevision of immortality*:—And this prevision of immortality does not seem to have been a mere inspiration, a secret revealed to them by the Spirit of all wisdom and knowledge. Apparently, it was also the result of a logical process, an inference from moral facts with which they were familiar. For all the prophets held that the Messiah would come to redeem men—first the Jew, but also the Gentile—from their sins, to establish them in the service and to draw them into the family of God. But death is simply the wage and fruit of sin. To redeem from sin is, therefore, to abolish death, to pluck it up by the root, to cut it off at the fountain-head. This appears, so far as we can trace it, to have been the foundation of their hope in the Christ as the Conqueror of death. And hence, in proportion as they were sure that He would save men from their sins, they were the more fully persuaded that, in overcoming sin, He would also overcome and annihilate death. No one of the goodly fellowship has given a nobler utterance to this animating and sustaining hope than the prophet Isaiah in the words, “And He shall destroy in this mountain,” &c. (*Ibid.*) *The veil and web of death destroyed by Christ*:—The prophet speaks of death as “a veil” which dims the perceptions of men, or even blinds their eyes to facts which it is essential to their welfare that they should know; and as “a web” in which their active powers are entangled and paralysed; and he declares that in the day on which God, instead of asking feasts and sacrifices of men, shall Himself provide a sacrifice and feast for the world, this blinding veil, this fettering and thwarting net, shall be finally and utterly destroyed. “He shall destroy death for ever.” How true these figurative descriptions of death are to human experience, what a fine poetic insight and firm imaginative grasp they disclose—as of one with both eye and hand on the fact—is obvious at a glance, and becomes the more obvious the more we meditate upon them. Always the veil which darkens the eyes is also a web which entangles the feet, as we have only to watch the motions of any blind man to know. Failing sight and impaired activity go together of necessity; while blindness involves, at least, a partial paralysis of all the active powers. As to be without God is to be without hope, so to be without the hope of immortality is to suffer a mental eclipse which cannot fail to limit our scope and impair our moral energies. We have only to consider the moral conditions, the moral collapse of men and nations, from whom the future life has been hidden, or over whom it had no practical power, to learn how terribly, in the absence of this hope, the moral ideal is degraded and the moral energies enfeebled. I am far from denying that even men to whom this life is all have risen, by a marvellous and most admirable feat of wisdom and natural goodness, into the conviction that to be wise is better than to be rich, to be good better than to be wise, to live for others better than to live for one’s self. But not only are such men as these rare and heroic exceptions to the general strain, but even they themselves, admirable as their spirit may be, can know no settled cheerfulness, no abiding peace. Human life is and must be full of injustice, as well as misery, to those who do not believe in a hereafter in which all wrongs are to be righted, all sorrows turned into joy, all loss into gain. And when they bury their dead out of their sight, with what bitter and hopeless pangs must their hearts be torn! how horrible must be the darkness, unbroken and unrelieved, which settles down upon them! (*Ibid.*) *Imperfect conceptions of Christ’s victory over death — their effect on practical life*:—Nor even now that Christ has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light, is there any misconception of this Divine achievement into which we fall that does not become a veil, dimming our eyes, and a web, entangling our feet. 1. Those, for instance, who while professing to entertain this great hope, practically put it away from them, and who therefore sacrifice the future to the present;—is not the veil still on their hearts, the web about their feet? 2. So, again, in a less but sufficiently obvious degree with those who so misconceive of life and death as to sacrifice the present to the future; who miss or forego all the sweet and wholesome uses of the world because they have not learned, what yet the Gospel plainly teaches, that wisely to use and enjoy this present world is the best of all preparations for the world to come. 3. And even those who, despite the Gospel teaching, will think of dissolution as death rather than as victory over death, or as separating and alienating them from the dear ones of whom they have lost sight, rather than as bringing their

“lost ones” nearer to their true life and binding them to them by closer because by invisible and spiritual ties,—even these have their eyes still dimmed by the veil which Christ came to lift, and their feet still entangled in the net from which He came to deliver their feet. (*Ibid.*) *Has Christ destroyed death?*—Death, as a mere phenomenon, was in the world before sin; and therefore, as a mere phenomenon, it may and does remain in the world after sin has been taken away. But are we, who have discourse of reason, even if we have not the more piercing insight of faith, such victims of the visible and the apparent that we cannot distinguish between substance and phenomena, between the mere act of dissolution, which seems to be the inevitable condition of higher spiritual development, and all that makes death really death to us? (*Ibid.*) *Christ's victory over death*.—Of this victory over all that is worthy to be called death Christ has given us two proofs on which our faith may lean; one in His transfiguration, and the other in His resurrection from the dead. (*Ibid.*) *Victory over death and sorrow*.—“He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces”—a passage of which the poet Burns said that he “could never read it without weeping.” I. THE PROMISE OF SWALLOWING UP DEATH IN VICTORY. This promise, as well as that which follows it, may have a primary allusion to the resuscitation of the Jewish people after their captivity, but this is only an allusion, as in Hos. xiii. 14. What the ultimate meaning is we learn from the glowing words of St. Paul: “So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption,” &c. It was a glorious promise when first given, but its full meaning was not known, nor will it be completely understood till it shall be actually fulfilled. Yet the revelations of the Gospel enable us to form an enlarged idea of what that fulfilment will be. 1. The death of our Lord Jesus Christ, as an expiation for sin and a homage to the claims of law, has removed, to His people, that which chiefly makes death terrible. That with man, the lord of the inferior creatures, the body should die just as they do, is sufficiently humbling. Yet, serious as this is, it is not the most solemn feature of the case. “After death the judgment,” and, to a godless soul, how terrible that audit! But to a believer sin is forgiven. “The strength of sin is the law.” But the law is satisfied, yea, magnified by the Redeemer's expiatory work. Peace may now, therefore, take the place of that apprehension which before was the only alternative to senseless unconcern. 2. As the Saviour's death not only obtains deliverance for believers from guilt and condemnation, but is the channel by which grace “reigns through righteousness unto eternal life,” death becomes to them the gateway of life and the passage to Heaven. Here God educates them by the discipline of life, and often of the chamber of sickness, for His kingdom and the receiving of the promise. Then He calls them home to the possession of it, and it is death which brings the summons. 3. Still the earthly house lies in ruins. Death seems as yet to triumph there. But even those ruins are to be built again. II. THE WIPING AWAY THE TEARS OF SORROW. The two things are intimately related, and the second springs out of the first. Death is one of the prolific causes of sorrow. Whilst unreconciled to God, the thought of mortality, if a man thinks seriously of the great problems of his being at all, casts a dark shadow over his anticipations of the future. And even among Christians the separations which death occasions are a frequent cause of sadness. (*E. T. Prust.*) *Christ the Conqueror of death*.—Tennyson tells, in the “*Idylls of the King*,” of a knight who fought with death. And when he had overcome him and pierced through his ghastly trappings, “there issued the bright face of a blooming boy.” So Christ has conquered death for us, and, penetrating its terror, has brought, not death, but “life and immortality to light.” (*Sunday School Chronicle.*) *Fear of death removed*.—Whitfield, the prince of sacred orators, was preaching to a crowd concerning the love of God: its height, its breadth, its infinity. A poor, ignorant, neglected child heard him, and drank in all he said with open eyes and open heart. Some little time afterwards the poor girl was smitten with a deadly disease. A Christian visited her bed of straw. “Child,” said he, “are you afraid to die?” “No,” she replied, “I am not afraid to die, I want to go to Mr. Whitfield's God.” (*P. Norton.*) *D. L. Moody on death*.—Mr. Moody once said, “Some day you will read in the papers that D. L. Moody, of East Northfield, is dead. Don't you believe a word of it! At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now. I shall have gone up higher, that is all; gone out of this old clay tenement into a house that is immortal, a body that death cannot touch, that sin cannot taint,

a body like unto His own glorious body." *Robert Hall's death*.—Mrs. Hall, observing a change on the countenance of her husband, became alarmed, and exclaimed, "This cannot be dying!" He replied, "It is death; it is death—death!" Mrs. Hall then asked him, "Are you comfortable in your mind?" He immediately answered, "Very comfortable—very comfortable!" And exclaimed, "Come, Lord Jesus, come—" He hesitated, as if incapable of bringing out the last word. One of his daughters anticipated him by saying "Quickly," on which her departing father gave her a look expressive of the most complacent delight. (*King's Highway*.) **THE LORD GOD WILL WIPE AWAY TEARS FROM OFF ALL FACES.**—*The lake of tears*.—It would be a sum for an arithmetician to tell the size of the lake that all the tears shed by humanity would have made. I. Let us notice **THE TEARS ON SOME FACES**. 1. How many little children weep when they might have been made to rejoice! We often expect more from children than they have either wisdom or strength to perform. Many a child weeps himself to sleep when he might have sung had he been rightly treated. 2. There have been rivers of tears upon the faces of the wives of our country. 3. There are many tears shed by widows. 4. There are the tears of the bereaved. 5. Then there are the tears of that class of people that the world does not like to talk of—the "unfortunate." 6. And then there are many who were once members of our Churches, who have wandered out of the way; and there has been no kind hand to fetch them back. 7. Remember the tears caused by the crushing weight of the mountain of poverty. Charity organisations are excellent systems, but it is unwise to overdo it. Because there are so many deceivers, it does not prove that there are not some who suffer. Let us be just to the poor. 8. There are many tears shed by women whose faces are very plain. They are passed by in favour of those who have better figures and prettier faces. 9. A large proportion also of those about us are crippled, and they often are neglected. II. **THE TEARS OF THE WORLD HAVE NOT BEEN SHED IN VAIN.** The tears of slavery have brought about freedom; the tears of ignorance have been the cause of education being placed within the reach of every healthy child in our land; the tears caused by pestilence have compelled us to cleanse our towns and villages; and the tears shed under the scourge of oppression have given to us freedom of conscience. The tears of poverty have given to us the desire to alleviate it. The tears of pain and sickness have brought about our splendid medical system—the hospitals and dispensaries of our country. Tears often lead to joy. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy often cometh to us in the morning. III. **THE TEARS OF AFFLICTION AND TRIAL ARE NEEDFUL.** If affliction had not been necessary, Christ would have borne it upon His own head. Afflictions are to us like sand-paper, to make us smooth and polished to take our place in the society of Heaven. Trials are to us as the testing of iron. A heavier weight is placed upon the iron in the workshop than it has to bear in its service outside; and so a heavy weight is placed upon you here. IV. **THE TENDER HAND.** It is the hand of a Father, of a Lover, of a Saviour, of a Friend; it is the hand of the Lord God! (*W. Birch*.) *Man born to trouble*.—There is a fable that when Affliction was listening to the roar of the sea, she stretched out a willow-branch and brought to the shore a beautiful body. As it lay upon the sand, Jupiter passed by, and, entranced with its beauty, he breathed into the body life and motion, and called it man. There was very soon a discussion as to whom this man should belong. Affliction said, "I am the cause of his creation"; Earth answered, "I furnished the materials"; and Jupiter urged, "I gave him animation." The gods assembled in solemn council, and it was decided that Affliction should possess the man whilst he lived; that Death should then receive his body, and Jupiter possess his spirit. This is the fable—pretty well-nigh true. (*Ibid.*) *God's power to wipe away tears*.—Of all the qualities we assign to the Author and Director of nature, by far the most enviable is to be able "to wipe away all tears from all eyes." (*Robert Burns*.)

Ver. 9. **And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God.**—*Waiting for God in times of darkness*.—Isaiah is thinking, first of all, of Hezekiah's victory over Sennacherib. It was no ordinary day which saw the discomfiture of the Assyrian host before the walls of Jerusalem. We can scarcely understand the terror and dismay with which a religious Jew must have watched the growth of those mighty Oriental despotisms which, rising one

after another in the great valley of the Euphrates and the Tigris, aspired to nothing less than the conquest of the known world. The victory of a conqueror like Sennacherib meant the extinction of national life and personal liberty in the conquered people; it meant often enough violent transportation from their homes, separation from their families, with all the degrading and penal accompaniments of complete subjugation. It meant this by the conquered pagan cities; for Jerusalem it meant this and more. The knowledge and self-worship of God maintained by institutions of Divine appointment, maintained only in that little corner of the wide world, were linked to the fortunes of the Jewish state, and in the victory of Sennacherib would be involved not merely political humiliation, but religious darkness. When, then, his armies advanced across the continent again and again, making of a city a heap, and of a fenced city a ruin, and at last appeared before Jerusalem, when the blast of the terrible ones was as a storm against the wall, there was natural dismay in every religious and patriotic soul. It seemed as though a veil or covering, like that which was spread over the holy things in the Jewish ritual, was being spread more and more completely over all nations at each step of the Assyrian monarch's advance, and in those hours of darkness all true-hearted men in Jerusalem waited for God. He had delivered them from the Egyptian slavery. He had given them the realm of David and Solomon. He who had done so much for them would not desert them now. In His own way, at His own time, He would rebuke this insolent enemy of His truth and His people, and this passionate longing for His intervention quickened the eye and melted the heart of Jerusalem when at last it came. The destruction of Sennacherib's host was one of those supreme moments in the history of a people which can never be lived over again by posterity. The sense of deliverance was proportionated to the agony which had preceded it. To Isaiah and his contemporaries it seemed as though a canopy of thick darkness was lifted from the face of the world, as though the recollections of slaughter and death were entirely swallowed up in the absorbing sense of deliverance, as though the tears of the city had been wiped away and the rebuke of God's people was taken from earth, and therefore from the heart of Israel there burst forth a welcome proportionated to the anxious longing that had preceded it: "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him; He will save us." (*H. P. Liddon, D.D.*)

*God in history*:—The recognition of God's presence in the great turning-points of human history is in all ages natural to religious minds. God, of course, is here in quiet times, when all goes smoothly, as though it were regulated by unchangeable law. But His presence is brought before the imagination more vividly when all seems at stake, when the ordinary human resources of confidence and hope are clearly giving way, when nothing but a sudden, sharp turn in what looks like the predestined course of events can avert some fatal catastrophe. This is what was felt by our ancestors in the days of the Spanish Armada. This is what was felt in every religious mind throughout Europe when the power of the First Napoleon was broken, first at Leipsic, and then at Waterloo. (*Ibid.*)

*A forecast of the last judgment*:—But beyond the immediate present Isaiah sees, it may be indistinctly, into a distant future. The judgment of Assyria, like that upon Egypt in a previous age, like that upon Babylon afterwards, foreshadowed some universal judgment, some judgment upon all the enemies of God. The visible Divine action upon a small scale was itself a revelation of the principles upon which the world is governed, and which one day will be seen to have governed it in the widest and most inclusive sense, and thus Isaiah's prediction of the song which would be sung by Israel at the defeat of Sennacherib is a prediction of the song which will be sung by the redeemed when Christ our Lord comes to judgment. (*Ibid.*)

*Christ our God*:—But between the days of Hezekiah and the final judgment, there is another event ever close to the thought of the prophet—the appearance of the great Deliverer in the midst of human history. "Lo, this is our God." Christ is not for us Christians merely or chiefly the preacher or herald of a religion of which another being, distinct from Himself, is the object. The Gospel creed does not run thus, "There is no God but God, and Christ is His prophet." The Author and Founder of Christianity, He is also at the same time its subject and its substance. We may say, with truth, that Christ is Christianity. (*Ibid.*)

*Waiting for God*:—I. Contemplate THE GLORIOUS OBJECT we are here invited to behold. "Lo, this is our God." The words express strong emotions of pleasure, admiration, and joy, arising from the merciful interpositions made in

behalf of His people, whereby Jehovah manifested Himself present among them. Though God is invisible to our bodily eyes, we behold Him when we sensibly discern those visible effects which cannot be produced by any other than His omnipotent arm. There subsists between Him and us a reciprocal endearing relation, a mutual tender affection, a continued delightful intercourse, a most agreeable concord, and an intimate union of interest and design.

II. Consider THE BECOMING EXERCISE in which the Church was employed. "We have waited for Him." The repetition of the words plainly intimates the great earnestness and persevering diligence with which the saints had waited upon the Lord their God. This duty includes—1. Earnest desire. 2. Lively expectation. 3. Holy serenity of mind (Lam. iii. 26; Isa. xxx. 15). This sacred tranquillity of soul represses those uneasy disquietudes and tumultuous thoughts, which disturb the mind, and unfit for the right performance of this or any other duty. It composes the soul attentively to observe every symptom of the Divine approach, every appearance from which may be deduced favourable consequences, and every opportunity that ought to be diligently improved. It gives a seasonable check to that precipitation and haste which springs from uneasiness at our present condition, and from hurtful anxiety about immediate deliverance. III. Attend to THE ASSURED CONFIDENCE in God which the Church expressed in these words: "He will save us." In every age they have viewed the Lord as their Saviour. Salvation from the hands of their enemies, which was doubtless primarily intended in the words before us, is employed as an image, to shadow out a salvation of an infinitely higher and more important nature.

IV. Examine THE CONSEQUENT RESOLUTION adopted by the Church. "We will be glad, and rejoice in His salvation." In this salvation, which is admirably suited to our character and circumstances, we ought to be glad and rejoice. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Third Sunday in Advent*.—(1) In this lesson there is an interlacement of praise and prophecy. (2) The words "we have waited for Him," describe the posture of the Church at all times, but especially at this season. In the Old Testament, the Jews waited for the first coming of Christ. The light of the first prophecy became wider and brighter as the fulfilment drew nigh. The Church waits for the second coming. I. WHAT DOES WAITING IMPLY? 1. Faith. Christians believe in the promise of His coming (1 Cor. i. 7). Those who have reduced the Christian creed to its smallest dimensions have included in it the belief in Christ's second coming as Judge. 2. Desire (2 Tim. iv. 8; Rev. xxii. 20; Phil. iii. 20; Rom. viii. 19). 3. Patience (James v. 7). 4. Preparation. II. WHY WAIT SO LONG? 1. The question was discussed in the Middle Ages. Why was the Incarnation so long delayed? Why was not the remedy at once applied to the disease? It is not for us to question the ways of God; but, although we accept them in the spirit of faith, yet, having done so, we should reverently exercise our reason, so far as we can, upon matters of faith. 2. One reason for this delay of the Incarnation is drawn from the condition of man. He had to be humiliated by a sense of his sinfulness in order that he might feel his need of a Deliverer. The remedy has not only to be vouchsafed, but to be accepted, and for this human pride must be broken down. We see the same providence in individual sinners as in a microcosm. God allows the prodigal to pursue his downward course until he is brought to his senses, and misery brings him to the turning-point. 3. All delays in the approaches of God are for the sake of man that he might prepare to receive Him. The ministry of the Baptist is a visible setting forth of this need of preparation. III. WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR? "Lo, this is our God," &c. 1. That there is a primary reference to wonderful interventions of God on behalf of His people, whether in contemporary or subsequent deliverances, is admitted. Whatever may be the historic application, it cannot be more than a type of the full accomplishment of the prophecy in the Person of Christ. He alone "swallows up death in victory"; and "wipes away tears from off all faces." 2. The text is fulfilled by the Incarnation. "This is our God." It points to the mystery that our Lord is a Divine Person, and that therefore He can "save us." This stirs the hymn of joy, "We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." This is no mere temporal deliverance, but freedom from the powers of darkness—the salvation of the soul, pardon for sin, gift of grace, hope of glory; these deep inward gifts awaken such chords of praise in the redeemed, that all joy and thanksgiving for earthly deliverances are but a faint prelude to their exultation. The great mystery, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us"; the great truth, "Unto

you is born a Saviour"; the great experience, "Ye were sometime darkness, now are ye light in the Lord";—by these is fulfilled the blessed promise, that the veil of darkness and the wail of sorrow through Christ shall be done away, and the voice of rejoicing and salvation be in the tabernacles of the righteous.

IV. LESSONS. 1. The text impresses on us the right use of Advent as a season of preparation for the coming of Christ. 2. This preparation to consist in repentance for sin, and faith in Christ. 3. The words of the text express the joy of an earnest Christmas Communion. "This is our God; we have waited for Him"; for "he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me" (John vi. 57). 4. They express also a true belief in the Incarnation, that realisation of the Divine and human united for ever in the One Person of the Son of God, which thrilled the soul of St. Thomas when he cried out, "My Lord and my God!" (*The Thinker.*)

*Waiting for God*:—Interwoven with all human experiences there is the consciousness of a conflict, an oppression, a captivity. But men expect deliverance. If it were not so, effort would be paralysed, and history would end. This hope is not illusive; the God who has implanted in the hearts of all men an anticipation of deliverance is a God who will give deliverance. But deliverances do not come when men desire them, hope for them, expect them. Often there is long delay.

I. GOD KEEPS MEN WAITING. 1. Let us notice how true this is of the history of our race. The race is wrestling with a mighty sorrow. We look through the ages, and we see that every age has its burden of woe. We go among the diverse peoples of mankind, and we find that there is not a tribe which does not exhibit tokens of the strife. The eternal God has spoken, and His voice has told the world that the secret of the world's sorrow and strife and pain is the world's sin. And the honest conscience echoes back the truth of God. But the same Voice which tells the world of sin, tells also of a Saviour. But how long man had to wait before his hope was realised! And, even now that Christ has come, His advent proves to be, not some grand final stroke of triumph, but only the beginning of another waiting that, perhaps, must be longer still.

2. How true is this principle with respect to the history of the Church. God is fashioning to Himself a new race out of the ruins of the old. But think how the Church has had to wait. 3. How true is this same principle of the history of the nations. Each nation reproduces, on a smaller scale, the history of the race; and each has its burden and evil, each has its hope. But the nations likewise wait for their deliverance from thrall and pain. How impressive an example of waiting is the history of the Jews! Our England, too, is only gradually emerging from what it has been to what it shall be. So of the various nationalities of Europe, of the swarming multitudes of Asia, of the tribes of dark Africa, and the rest—who would dare to think that the goal of their history is reached? 4. But this principle is still further true in regard to individual men. Men of science, like Galileo; men of enterprise, like Columbus; men of letters, like Milton—these, who have done the most permanent work for the world, have often not been duly recognised as benefactors till they were gone. Does not our own spiritual history illustrate the same truth? How long it is, sometimes, before we reach a settled peace, an unquestioning faith; how long before we gain an established strength of purity, and are made perfect in love!

II. WHY DOES GOD KEEP MEN WAITING? 1. It is in accord with God's universal way of working, so far as we know. We could conceive of a universe in which everything should be immediate and final; but that is certainly not the method of our universe. The records of geology tell of the earth's slow development; the researches of biology attest the gradual unfolding of life; the annals of history show civilisation, science, and culture only progressing by degrees. So when God, in His providential and spiritual dealings with men, keeps them waiting, this is only in harmony with His general method and plan of work. 2. We must remember the bearing, on this subject, of man's own free will. Even when on God's part all is ready, this sometimes interferes to cause a long delay. 3. Great moral purposes are served by God's law of waiting. It accomplishes a threefold result: it is for the discipline of effort, of patience, of faith. Of course, we may fail to abide the test; but if we yield ourselves to it rightly, God's principle of delay tends to the working out of one or more of these results. III. THE WAITING DOES END SOME TIME. Otherwise, the problem would be insoluble, the instincts of man's own nature would belie themselves, and the very government of God itself would be purposeless. And while, unless man's own perverseness frustrates God's designs, the waiting will end some

time, it is suggested by these words of Isaiah that the deliverance, when it does come, will be a glad surprise. It is said that the poet Cowper, so much of whose life had been passed in bitter bondage, and who died at last in despair, wore on his face after death an expression of astonished joy. So it is true of the lesser deliverances of life, that God surprises His people at last with the swift removal of their fears, and with His more abundant benediction. And of the great deliverance which the day of God shall usher in at last, it is said, "As the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west; so shall be the coming of the Son of Man" (Matt. xxiv. 27)—so sudden, so swift, so full! What a psalm shall then be sung over a transfigured world! (*T. F. Lockyer, B.A.*)

*Connection between the confidence and the character of the true Christian:—*

**I. NOTHING WILL INSPIRE US WITH JOY AND CONFIDENCE IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT BUT A REAL INTEREST IN JESUS CHRIST.** I might go further, and say, that nothing but a good hope of an interest in Christ can give us real, abiding, exalted enjoyment in this life. **II. NONE WILL IN THAT DAY HAVE A REAL INTEREST IN JESUS CHRIST, AND CONSEQUENTLY WILL REJOICE IN HIS SALVATION, BUT THOSE WHO ARE NOW WAITING FOR HIS COMING.** This expression of "waiting for Christ," or other expressions of a like meaning, are frequently used in the New Testament, as descriptive of the character of Christians. 1. To "wait for Christ," implies a firm belief of His second coming, and of the infinitely momentous consequences which will follow that event. The true Christian is one who "walks by faith, and not by sight." 2. To "wait for Christ" implies a constant endeavour to be prepared for that event. 3. It implies a "patient continuance in well-doing." (*E. Cooper.*)

*Nativity:—***I. THE PERSON HERE CELEBRATED:** who is made known to us in the prophet's description of Him, by His actions and by His names. The greatest wonder in this subject is the dignity of the Person who should submit to redeem His Church. **II. THE EXPECTATION OF HIS COMING.** However strange it may appear, it is certainly true, that a Saviour was expected both by Jews and heathens, however they might be mistaken with regard to some particular circumstances. **III. THE WORKS THE SAVIOUR WAS TO PERFORM AT HIS COMING.** The particulars are recounted in the course of the chapter (vers. 4, 6-8). **IV. With this hope we are to COMFORT OURSELVES AND ONE ANOTHER.** "We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." The day of His nativity was a blessed day: but what will that other day be? That will be our nativity; for then only we may be said to live, when the last enemy is conquered. When He shall appear again, He will appear as our life, and we shall be clothed with His immortality. (*W. Jones, M.A.*)

*The glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:—***I. THIS MAY BE SAID OF THE INCARNATION OF GOD.** Emmanuel, God with us, in one word conveys the same truth. Christ came not fortuitously; He came not in a passing current of compassion; but with full, unshaken continuity of purpose (Gal. iv. 4, 5). **II. IN THE ABIDING PRESENCE OF HIS SPIRIT** can we most joyously exclaim, "Lo, this is our God." **III. Another intermediate sense** in which we may consider Christ as coming to us—intermediate between His offering Himself up, and the bestowal of the influences of His Spirit—is **THE FREE OFFER OF HIS GRACE IN THE GOSPEL.** **IV. IN HIS EXECUTION OF JUDGMENT IN TIME.**

**1.** Truly of Jerusalem might it be said, that not one stone was left upon another; and now she is not Jerusalem; though called still the Holy City, where is her glory? Where are her children? **2.** On antichrist, too, the first shoot of present judgment has arisen. **3.** Christ also comes to judgment in time, by many of what appeared to be temporal accidents. **4.** And in His afflictions and deprivations He often judges the abuse of a possession, or deficient appreciation of it, and often in mercy executes this temporal judgment, in order that its effects upon the awakened conscience may obviate, and cause to be avoided, that dreadful punishment which knows no reversion. **V.** In one sense, Christ has still to come. **HE HAS TO COME TO FINAL JUDGMENT.** (*I. Hutchin, M.A.*)

*National thanksgiving:—***I.** Let us consider **WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY WAITING FOR GOD.** 1. Almost innumerable instances might be referred to wherein the Jewish nation did evidently wait for God to be their salvation. 2. The same may be observed with regard to mankind in general. (1) The inseparable difficulties attending our situation as dependent creatures are sometimes of so severe and pressing a nature, attended with such intricate consequences, and even in the eye of human wisdom so plainly productive of fatal events, that reason will naturally show us the necessity of applying for relief from a power

more unlimited than our own, and cannot, when properly improved, but teach us to make our appeal to that Supreme Being who disposeth all things according to the infallible counsel of His will. (2) And if we attend to the satisfactory instructions of revelation, this will not only show us the necessity of such a dependence, but also make us sensible of its usefulness and advantage. II. IN WHAT RESPECTS WE MAY BE SAID TO HAVE WAITED FOR GOD. III. THE NATURE OF THAT SALVATION WHICH HE HAS WROUGHT FOR US, and the beneficial tendency of such a deliverance. IV. SOME USEFUL REFLECTIONS. 1. It is our duty to acknowledge those favourable interpositions of Omnipotence, by which either national calamities are removed or national distress prevented. 2. It would be highly base and ungrateful not to rejoice in His salvation which He has so seasonably enabled us to obtain. 3. Consider what abundant advantages may arise, if we do not foolishly neglect to improve it, from the blessing of peace. (R. P. Finch, M.A.)

Ver. 10. Moab shall be trodden down under Him.—*God's judgments as manure*.—After the process of primary ploughing has been completed our fields are covered with some appropriate manure, that the earth may be enriched, and larger crops gathered into our barns. In the world at large which is God's husbandry, His judgments, which deface and destroy countries and nations, are clearly intended, in their remoter influence, to effect the subsequent fruitfulness of those very spots: and the products of righteousness, in larger abundance, have been gathered among those people where the full measure of Divine vengeance had been previously poured. "When His judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants will learn righteousness." (W. Clayton.) *The ground manured*.—Our text will furnish us with an occasion to establish and illustrate the fact that Divine vengeance shall overwhelm the enemies of the Church; and from their disgraceful ruin shall result advantage to the cause, and glory to the perfections of Deity. I. GOD HAS REVEALED HIS WRATH FROM HEAVEN AGAINST ALL UNGODLINESS AND UNRIGHTOUSNESS OF MEN; and although slack in executing His threatenings, as some men count slackness, the expected day of the Lord's vengeance will certainly and suddenly arrive. 1. However exalted among the great ones of the earth offenders have been, the just displeasure of God has been displayed, and vengeance has overwhelmed them. 2. As no person, however elevated, is exempt from the judicial control of the Most High; so no part of the world is found where this truth has not been proclaimed. 3. In every successive age have these truths received an awful confirmation. II. THESE SIGNAL PROOFS OF GOD'S DISPLEASURE PROMOTE THE BEST INTERESTS OF ZION, and consequently redound to His glory. 1. A large accession to the Church on earth is stated to be the immediate consequence of the ruin of Moab (chap. xxvi. 1, 2). In a degree infinitely more astonishing shall the final destruction of Zion's foes precede the period of her destined perfection on earth. 2. It is pleasant to see the strength and establishment of Zion resulting from the demolition of the schemes which were formed for her ruin. 3. The rich and abundant fruitfulness of the Church—the field which God blesseth—is advanced by these displays of His vindictive wrath. III. CONCLUSION. 1. We are taught to whose culture we are exclusively indebted, if these fruits of righteousness are in our case the results of beholding God's judgments. Manure spread on the ground will only render weeds, its natural product, of more luxuriant and disgusting growth; nor will the Divine judgments, but for the subsequent care and cultivation of the Great Husbandman, promote the salutary change which is desired. 2. Do not our minds, necessarily, when contemplating any species of suffering, revert to Him who was bruised or threshed for our sakes; who, bearing the indignation of the Lord because we had sinned against Him, was trodden down as mire in the streets by ungodly men, and finally suffered without the camp; and to those also who, being conformed to His death, were esteemed the off-scouring of all men, of whom the world was not worthy? 3. Estimate aright the invaluable privilege of being interested in the cultivating care of the great Husbandman. (*Ibid.*) *Moab*.—As the name "British" in our own revolutionary war became equivalent to "hostile," without losing its specific sense, so might the prophets threaten Moab with God's vengeance, without meaning to exclude from the denunciation other like-minded enemies. (J. A. Alexander, U.S.A.)



Ver. 11. And He shall spread forth His hands in the midst of them.—*Explanation*:—In ver. 11a the figure is Moab, vainly struggling to save himself in the water of the dungpit; in 11b “he” is, of course, Jehovah, who frustrates the efforts made by Moab. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *Swimming to save*:—This text represents God as a strong swimmer, striking out to push down iniquity and save the souls of men. I. OUR RACE IS IN A SINKING CONDITION. You sometimes hear people talking of what they consider the most beautiful words in our language. One man says it is “home,” another man says it is “mother,” another says it is “Jesus”; but I will tell you the bitterest word in all our language, the word saturated with the most trouble, the word that accounts for all the loathsomeness and the pang, and the outrage, and the harrowing; and that word is “Sin.” Give it a fair chance, and it will swamp you, body, mind, and soul for ever. II. THEN WHAT DO WE WANT? A SWIMMER, a strong, swift swimmer! In my text we have Him announced. 1. You have noticed that when a swimmer goes out to rescue any one he puts off his heavy apparel. And when Christ stepped forth to save us He shook off the sandals of heaven, and His feet were free; He laid aside the robe of eternal royalty, and His arms were free; then He stepped down into the wave of our transgression, and it came up over His wounded feet, and it came above the spear-stab in His side—ay, it dashed to the lacerated temple, the high-water mark of His anguish. Then, rising above the flood, “He stretched forth His hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim.” 2. If you have ever watched a swimmer, you notice that his whole body is brought into play. The arms are flexed, the hands drive the water back, the knees are active, the head is tossed back to escape strangulation, the whole body is in propulsion. And when Christ sprang out into the deep to save us He threw His entire nature in it. We were so far out on the sea, and so deep down in the waves, and so far out from the shore, that nothing short of an entire God could save us. 3. If any one is going to rescue the drowning, he must be independent, self-reliant, able to go alone. When Christ sprang out into the sea to deliver us, He had no life-buoy. “Of the people there was none to help.” “All forsook Him and fled.” Oh, it was not a flotilla that sailed down and saved us. It was one Person, independent and alone. 4. When one is in peril, help must come very quickly, or it will be of no use. That is just the kind of relief the sinner wants. The case is urgent, imminent, instantaneous. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*)

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

VERS. 1-10. In that day shall this song be sung.—*Periods of restoration*:—If it be demanded, what period of time is this which the prophet speaks of? we must answer, that it is the time when the people, who for their provocations were thrown into the furnace of affliction, and had continued in it till they were purged from their sins, were delivered from it, and restored to the favour of God, and the enjoyment of His former mercies. Of which restoration there are three kinds or degrees plainly spoken of by the prophet Isaiah. 1. The Jews’ return from the land of their captivity, especially that of Babylon. 2. The restoration of the family and kingdom of David in the person of the Messiah. 3. The perfect felicity of that kingdom in a state of future glory. (*W. Reading, M.A.*) *Three elements in prophecy*:—All true prophecy seems to have in it three elements: conviction, imagination, inspiration. The seer speaks first of all from his knowledge of, and experience with, the inherent vitality of right and righteousness. He is sure that the good in the world is destined to conquer the evil. Then when he attempts to tell how this victory is to be brought about he uses his imagination. He employs metaphors and figures which from the necessities of the case may not be literally fulfilled. And then, in addition to this, his prophecies have in them a certain comprehensiveness of plan and structure, and a certain organic relation to history, such as can be revealed only by the Divine Maker of history Himself. It took a man of large parts to see above the wreck and ruin, and through the darkness of his age, such visions of hope and promise as Isaiah saw. Everywhere around him were sensuality and

oppression. The Church of the true God had been almost swallowed up by the foul dragon of paganism. And yet the prophet, with his eye upon the future, beheld a day when this song was to be sung in the land of Judah: the song of salvation. Sure he was that God must triumph, and with the poet's instinct he clothed his assurance in the language of metaphor, and set it to the rhythm of song. (*C. A. Dickinson.*) *The triumph of goodness*:—1. Those who study this song in the light of succeeding history find in it the picture of the ultimate triumph of the Church. The central figure is the strong city, the walls and bulwarks of which are salvation, and through whose open gates the righteous nation which keepeth the truth is allowed to enter. This picture reminds us at once of that vision of the new Jerusalem which fell upon the eyes of the seer of Patmos many years after, and which was evidently the type and symbol of the perfected kingdom of Christ. To attempt to give to this strong city and this new Jerusalem a literal and material significance is to involve ourselves in inextricable difficulties. 2. There are two views concerning the progress and ultimate triumph of Christianity in the world. In some respects these views are the same; in others they differ radically. (1) The first theory is that there is to be in the near or remote future a sudden, visible appearance of Christ in the clouds of heaven to take His place upon the throne of David at the earthly Jerusalem, where He will reign with His saints for a thousand years. Meanwhile the world is to come more and more under the Satanic influence. (2) The other theory is that of a gradual development under the spiritual forces which began to be dominant in the world on the day of Pentecost, when Christ, according to His own promise, began His reign in His new kingdom. This I believe to be the true view: the one which Christ Himself propounded when He said His kingdom should be like the seed that should "grow" up. 3. I am well aware that those who claim that the world is fast ripening in evil for its final catastrophe can point to many facts which seem to substantiate their theory. But just here, it seems to me, comes in one of their greatest mistakes. There is, of course, danger of generalising too much, but there is certainly great danger of allowing some near fact to blind the eyes to the great general truth which lies beyond it; to hold the sixpence so near the eye that we cannot see the sun. There is danger of confining our thoughts so exclusively to certain specific texts as to get a wrong conception of the real truth of which these special texts may be only a small part. Now, what are some of the signs that we are living to-day in an age of conquest? (1) Take that law of decay which you find written upon evil everywhere, whether in the individual or the nation. "He bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, He layeth it low." Rome in her arrogance was the first great organised power to make war against the new kingdom. But Rome fell, and over the ruins of her pagan temples the Christian walks to-day. France posed as the haughty oppressor of the weak and unfortunate, as the instigator of the horrors of St. Bartholomew's day, and following close upon her dreadful sin came the death and desolation of the Revolution. Our own great nation allowed to ripen in her very heart the malignant curse of slavery, and for her sin was obliged to suffer the pangs of a civil war. These are only a few of the conspicuous illustrations of the great truth that righteousness is surely, though perhaps slowly, vindicating her everlasting strength. (2) I might call your attention to the other side of this conquest: to the rapid increase in the present days of that strong City whose walls are salvation. I might show you a whole library filled with missionary literature which tells that the kingdom of the new King has extended its bounds into almost every habitable part of the earth. I might point you to the Year-Books of our Churches, and show you what armies of men and women are yearly marching through the gates of the strong City. I might show you how the spirit of the Cross, having taken possession of the civilised nations of the world, has materialised into churches and hospitals and asylums and charitable institutions and temperance guilds and myriads of Christian homes. (3) But further, I might speak of another phase of this conquest. "When Thy judgments are in the earth," says the prophet, "the inhabitants of the earth will learn righteousness." These Divine judgments appear as a subtle tonic atmosphere pervading the whole world, and, like the ozone of the mountains, invigorating almost unconsciously every age and generation. (4) The influence of the Gospel is pervasive. In a certain sense we have a right to say that a community is a Christian community even though but a small minority of its inhabitants profess to accept Christ as their personal Saviour. The spirit of Christ is in that community;

the leaven of the Gospel is leavening it. The new kingdom is established there, and even they who deny allegiance to it are in many ways better than they who are without it. The principles of Jesus Christ are the standard principles of morality throughout Christendom to-day, and men are inevitably judging themselves and being judged by others according to these standards. 4. I believe that we are in the midst of mighty spiritual forces which are working successfully for the redemption of this world from sin; and I have two great incentives to spur me on to earnest effort. (1) The one is faith in humanity and Christ. I say humanity and Christ, because I believe they are one. That, to me, is the meaning of His incarnation. The mighty forces of righteousness are moving with their slow, crushing power as the steam roller moves over the newly macadamised road, breaking and levelling everything before it, that the chariot of the King may ride smoothly on to its destination. But this is only a part of the truth. The other part is that the new kingdom is open to all. (2) The other thing which spurs me on is hope—that blessed hope which the apostle had of the glorious consummation of this age of conquest. (*Ibid.*) We have a strong city.—*A city the emblem of security*:—To understand this figure of a city we must remember what a city was in the earlier ages; i.e., a portion of land separate from the general surface, in which the people of a locality gathered, and put their homes into a condition of safety by building walls of immense strength, which should both resist the attacks of enemies and, to a great extent, defy the ravages of time. Such a city, then, was the emblem of security. (*R. H. Davies.*) *The song of salvation*:—I. THE GROUND OF REJOICING. Salvation; and consequently eternal security. “We have a strong city.” All God’s people are represented as citizens; the whole sainthood is represented as a corporate assemblage of people possessed of peculiar privileges, connected with an eternal condition, and as such are to dwell in some region of safety and bliss. Here they find not such an abode. Here they have “no continuing city, but seek one to come.” And, when they shall be gathered together in the presence of their Lord, they will constitute the body to form a city. II. THE CHARACTER OF THOSE WHO ARE TO PARTAKE OF THESE BLESSINGS. “The righteous nation which keepeth the truth.” (*Ibid.*) *Salvation, i.e., freedom and safety.* The original sense of the word rendered “salvation” (as Arabic shows) is breadth, largeness, absence of constraint. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *Saving health*:—(1) Political theorists have been fond of picturing an ideal State, the government of which would be perfect. (2) The ideal State in the mind of the average Hebrew was limited to his own race, but in the writings of the inspired palmists and prophets it could not be so restricted, but widened itself out so as to embrace the whole world. Thus was the way prepared for the grand conception of the kingdom of heaven as first proclaimed and then established by the Son of God. (3) But it is a difficult thing, except in moments of great exaltation, to put much intensity of feeling into a conception so vast. It was a great deal easier to conceive an ideal State than an ideal world, and an ideal city was still more manageable for the imagination. We need not wonder, then, that even after the great proclamation about all the kingdoms of the world becoming the kingdom of God, the seer of Patmos should fondly return to the thought of the city, and revel in anticipating the advent of the New Jerusalem. Nor shall we be astonished that the prophets, though they had the wider outlook, should even in their moods of highest exaltation cling fondly to the thought of a holy city as the best picture, the more serviceable that it was a miniature of the coming kingdom of God. (4) In these early days of insecurity, the first requisite of a city was strength. So it is natural that this should be the feature on which the prophet here lays special stress. But wherein does its strength lie? He speaks not of ramparts or forts, of fleets or armies, but of salvation as the bulwarks of the city. We find this word salvation in other places translated by the more suggestive rendering “health,” or “saving health.” 1. The first thought suggested in this connection is that the city should be a clean place to live in, healthy from end to end and in every corner, each house in it a fitting abode for sons of God and daughters of the King. When we pass from the sanitation of the city to the saving health of the citizen, we think first of his body, and recognise the necessity of having all the conditions as conducive as possible to its health. 2. But clearly we cannot stop there. We must have the “mens sana in corpore sano”; hence the need of universal education, to secure intellectual sanity. 3. Nor may we end here, for moral sanity, a sound conscience, is even still more important. The nation must be a righteous nation.

4. Clearly, there must be sanitation for the will before we have reached saving health; and inasmuch as the will is swayed by desire, the sanitation must reach the heart. What sanitary measures could we here summon to our aid? The purest water will not cleanse the heart; the most bracing air will have no effect upon the soul. There must be a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, and some breath of God for inspiration to the soul. 5. And here we reach the prophet's highest, dominating thought. "In that day," the passage begins. What day? Look back (xxv. 9). "It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him, and He will save us." And look forward (ver. 4). "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." "Lord, Thou wilt ordain peace for us; for Thou also hast wrought all our works in us" (ver. 12). This introduces us to one of the most important questions of the day. There are many, sound and strong on the subject of righteousness, who yet fail to realise that righteousness is so bound up with saving truth—that truth of God and His salvation through Jesus Christ His Son, and by His Holy Spirit breathed in human hearts, which they sometimes offensively set aside as mere dogma—that the one cannot be had where it does not exist already, and cannot be retained long where it does without the other. "Open ye the gates that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in." 6. How can we open or help to open these gates of national strength and saving health? For individual action the answer would be such as this: First, by loving truth and keeping righteousness ourselves; next, by doing all we can to help others to a life of godliness and righteousness; further, by earnest and frequent prayer to Him who gave of old the promise, "I will open to you the two-leaved gates"; and lastly, by the faithful exercise of the privileges of citizens, seeing to it that in the forming of our opinions, in the giving of our votes, in the use of all our influence, not selfish interest, or class interest, or even party interest, but the interests of righteousness and truth be the determining factor. But individual action is not enough. We must combine; we must bring our united force to bear. And here the main reliance must be on the Church of Christ, on which is laid the responsibility of carrying on His great work of salvation. (*J. M. Gibson, D.D.*) *Our strong city*:—There are three things here—I. THE CITY. No doubt the prophet was thinking of the literal Jerusalem, but the city is ideal, as is shown by the bulwarks which defend, and by the qualifications which permit entrance. And so we must pass beyond the literalities of Palestine, and must not apply the symbol to any visible institution or organisation if we are to come to the depth and greatness of the meaning of these words. No Church which is organised amongst men can be the New Testament representation of this strong city. And if the explanation is to be looked for in that direction at all, it can only be the invisible aggregate of ransomed souls which is regarded as being the Zion of the prophecy. But, perhaps, even that is too definite and hard. And we are rather to think of the unseen but existent order of things or polity to which men here on earth may belong, and which will one day, after shocks and convulsions that shatter all which is merely institutional and human, be manifested still more gloriously. The central thought that was moving in the prophet's mind is of the indestructible vitality of the true Israel, and the order which it represented, of which Jerusalem on its rock was but to him a symbol. And thus for us the lesson is that, apart altogether from the existing and visible order of things in which we dwell, there is a polity to which we may belong, for "ye are come unto Mount Zion, the city of the living God," and that order is indestructible. There is a lesson for us, in times of fluctuation, of change of opinion, of shaking of institutions, and of new social, economical, and political questions, threatening day by day to reorganise society. "We have a strong city"; and whatever may come—and much destructive will come, and much that is venerable and antique, rooted in men's prejudices, and having survived through and oppressed the centuries, will have to go, but God's polity, His form of human society, of which the perfect ideal and antitype, so to speak, lies concealed in the heavens, is everlasting. And for Christian men in revolutionary epochs the only worthy temper is the calm, triumphant expectation that through all the dust, contradiction, and distraction the fair city of God will be brought nearer and made more manifest to man. To this city—existent, immortal, and waiting to be revealed—you and I may belong to-day. II. THE DEFENCES. "Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." This "evangelical prophet" is distinguished by the fulness and depth which he attaches to that word "salvation." He all but anticipates the New

Testament completeness and fulness of meaning, and lifts it from all merely material associations of earthly or transitory deliverance into the sphere in which we are accustomed to regard it as especially moving. By "salvation" he means, and we mean, not only negative but positive blessings. Negatively, it includes the removal of every conceivable or endurable evil, whether they be evils of sin or evils of sorrow; and positively, the investiture with every possible good that humanity is capable of, whether it be good of goodness or good of happiness. This is what the prophet tells us is the wall and bulwark of his ideal city. Mark the eloquent omission of the name of the builder of the wall. "God" is a supplement. Salvation "will He appoint for walls and bulwarks." No need to say who it is that fings such a fortification around the city. There is only one hand that can trace the lines of such walls; only one hand that can pile their stones; only one that can lay them, as the walls of Jericho were laid, in the blood of His first-born Son. "Salvation will He appoint for walls and bulwarks," *i.e.d.*, in a highly imaginative and picturesque form, that the defence of the city is God Himself. The fact of salvation is the wall and the bulwark. And the consciousness of the fact is for our poor hearts one of our best defences against both the evil of sin and the evil of sorrow. So, let us walk by the faith that is always confident, though it depends on an unseen hand. "Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks," and if we realise, as we ought to do, His purpose and His power to keep us safe, and the actual operation of His hand keeping us safe at every moment, we shall not ask that these defences shall be supplemented by the poor feeble earthworks that sense can throw up.

III. THE CITIZENS. Our text is part of a "song," and is not to be interpreted in the cold-blooded fashion that might suit prose. A voice, coming from whom we know not, breaks in upon the first strain with a command, addressed to whom we know not. "Open ye the gates"—the city thus far being supposed to be empty,—"that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in." The central idea there is just this, "Thy people shall be all righteous." The one qualification for entrance into the city is absolute purity. Now, that is true in regard of our present imperfect denizenship within the city; and it is true in regard to men's passing into it, in its perfect and final form. They used to say that Venice glass was so made that any poison poured into it shivered the vessel. Any drop of sin poured into your cup of communion with God shatters the cup and spills the wine. Whosoever thinks himself a citizen of that great city, if he falls into transgression, and soils the cleanness of his hands, and ruffles the calm of his pure heart by self-willed sinfulness, will wake to find himself not within the battlements, but lying wounded, robbed, solitary, in the pitiless desert. "The nation which keepeth the truth,"—that does not mean adherence to any revelation, or true creed, or the like. The word which is employed means, not truth of thought, but truth of character; and might, perhaps, be better represented by the more familiar word in such a connection, "faithfulness." A man who is true to God, that keeps up a faithful relation to Him who is faithful to us, he, and only he, will tread and abide in the city. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The walls and bulwarks of a city*.—Accepting the vague but universal idea that there is an abundance of sin of every sort massed together in any great city, our inquiry concerns the main lines of work by which the welfare of the city may be promoted. To the eye of the prophet there comes a vision of a strong city; and the walls and bulwarks of that strength is said to be salvation—that is, the strength and safety of a city is in the men and women in it who are saved through the atoning sacrifice of Christ. I know there are many to turn a deaf ear to any such claim as this. They reject it as being too sweeping. They say that there are many sources from which the life-giving waters come. Let us take a look at some of these things which are supposed to give safety. I. And perhaps the first thing to be mentioned is LAW. It need not be any highly moral or religious enactment, but simply plain, every-day, matter-of-fact law. The city needs it. People in the simplicity of country life, where there is an abundance of room, can get on without much law. But the city needs law. And no one will deny the beneficent effect of righteous laws. It must be said, however, that the good effect of law is very much diminished by the many bad laws which are enacted. Are we claiming too much when we say that largely the efficiency of law is due to the Christian men and women who are in the city? Righteous laws follow in the train of progress made by Christianity. The bulwark which at first seemed to stand out alone and distinct becomes identified with that bulwark in the vision of the prophet whose foundation-stone, as well as its lofty

capstone, is salvation. II. We are led on to speak of another bulwark for the city. It is a BENEFICENT AND POWERFUL PUBLIC OPINION. But again, I assert that very largely all this safety is due to the presence in the city of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is the public conscience itself, and where did it come from but through Christianity? III. But again, look at another so-called secular bulwark. Call it THRIFT, the genius of success, the ability to get on in the world. Thrift is consistent with pure selfishness. Find a society in which everybody is only thrifty, where no man cares for his neighbour, where the human heart feels nothing of the flow of generosity and love, and, while you may be able to point to fine and well-kept houses, neat little cottages, well-dressed, clean children, you are really looking upon a hollow, lifeless sham. I do not want to live there. A sea of poverty with a little stream from Calvary flowing into it would be far better. Just a touch of human sympathy and love would transform the whole. (J. C. Cronin.)

*A song of salvation*.—I. What is the PERIOD referred to? A day which was to be remarkable for the destruction of the Church's enemies, for the salvation of her friends, and for the glorious extension of the Gospel through all the nations of the earth. II. What is the SUBJECT of this song? "We have a strong city: salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." The inviolable security of the Church was to be the subject. III. WHERE is this song to be sung? "in the land of Judah." It was sung when the great salvation was accomplished by the one offering of Christ upon the Cross; and the risen Saviour said to His disciples, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature"; and the tidings were sent abroad; and the Gospel, which was first preached at Jerusalem, was sounded forth into all lands. And we cannot but indulge the confident persuasion, that among the Jews, though they are for the present cast out, this song shall be sung in due time, which shall be "as life from the dead." But as that people have long since been cut off because of their unbelief, we remark, that the words will apply to others also; "for he is not a Jew which is one outwardly," &c.; "we are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit," &c. So that this song comes down to us. (G. Clayton.)

*The Church not in danger*.—I. THE FIGURATIVE DESCRIPTION WHICH IS HERE GIVEN OF THE CHURCH. 1. It is a city; from which metaphor we obtain three ideas respecting it—(1) Its amplitude. It is not a family, or a village, or a hamlet, or a provincial town; but a city. It includes as its inhabitants all the good, both in heaven and in earth, who form "an exceeding great multitude." The dimensions of this city are such as comport with the largeness of the Father's designs, the transcendent value of the Saviour's merits, the variety and immensity of the Holy Spirit's influences. (2) Its order. No city ever flourished long without rule. Christ is the King of this city, and He establishes His laws in the midst of it. (3) Its magnificence. We are not to look for the magnificence of the Church in outward splendour and glory, but in its sanctity—its holy principles and practices. 2. But this city has an important appellation;—it is "a strong city." And this will appear, if you consider—(1) The foundation on which it rests. "Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." (2) The protection it enjoys. God Himself dwells in this city; and His presence is our stay and our defence. All His attributes and promises are connected with this safety. (3) The principles by which its unity is cemented. Unity is strength. And the unity subsisting between the members of this city is so strong as not to be dissolved by any earthly power. The principles by which the members of the Church of Christ are united are these two—truth and love. "We have a strong city." (4) The rude assaults it has sustained, uninjured. We hardly know the strength of anything till it is put to the test. The Church has been exposed to the opposition of earth and the fury of hell. II. ITS IMPREGNABLE SAFETY. How do I know that this city shall continue, and its interests be advanced, until its glory is consummated? Why, for this reason: "Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." 1. Hostility is implied. 2. The means of preservation and defence are amply provided. 3. It implies a glorious issue. All these means shall prove effectual. III. HOW MAY WE HAVE A SATISFACTORY ASSURANCE THAT WE HAVE PERSONALLY AN INTEREST IN THIS CITY OF THE GREAT KING? You may have this—1. If you have chosen Jesus Christ as the ground of your dependence for salvation. 2. If you are visibly incorporated with the inhabitants of this city. 3. If you are enabled to exemplify the distinguishing character of those who are citizens of Zion. 4. If you find that you have truly merged all your interests in the interests of the Church, and have identified your happiness with her successes. 5. If you find your

thoughts and affections much engaged on that future state of which the Church on earth is but a type. Conclusion—1. Let me call upon you to be thankful to God, who has afforded you such an asylum. 2. Let me invite you to enter this city. 3. Let us dismiss our fears, when we have once got within the walls of this city. 4. Endeavour to bring as many as you can to be inhabitants of that Zion, the privileges of which you enjoy. (*Ibid.*) *The saving arm of God a sure defence to the Church of Christ against all her enemies*.—I. Mention some of those ENEMIES against whom the Church is fortified. 1. She is fortified against all the attempts of Satan. 2. A wicked world is always disposed to take part with Satan against her. 3. The Church has enemies within her own walls; and is often in the greatest perils by false brethren. 4. The Church has enemies even in the hearts of her best friends and sincerest members. That principle of corruption that is not totally subdued in the best Christians, as it is inimical to God, must also be inimical to the Church; and, as far as it prevails, its effects must be always hurtful to her. II. Speak of that SALVATION which God has promised to appoint for walls and bulwarks to the Church. 1. Salvation bears an evident relation to misery and danger. 2. It is but a partial salvation that she can hope to enjoy in this world. 3. But her salvation shall one day be complete. From every salvation that God has already wrought, faith draws encouragement; considering it as a pledge of what He will work in time to come. III. CONSIDER WHAT ABOUT THE CHURCH IS SECURED AGAINST THE ATTEMPTS OF ENEMIES BY THE SALVATION OF GOD. She may lose much of what may appear to a carnal eye as most valuable to her. But in the eye of the Church herself, and of all her genuine children, all this is perfectly consistent with the all-sufficiency of that salvation by which she is defended. All is still safe that is necessary either to her being or her well-being, and all that is essential to the happiness of any of her citizens. 1. Her foundation is always safe. She is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone.” 2. Her existence is always safe. The Church may be driven into the wilderness; but she shall never be driven out of the world. 3. Her particular citizens are all safe, under the protection of God’s saving arm. 4. Her privileges and immunities are all safe. These having been purchased for her by the blood of Christ, and bestowed upon her by His God and Father, are also preserved by Divine power and grace; and none shall ever be suffered to deprive her of them. 5. Her treasures are all safe. She has a twofold treasure: a treasure of grace, and a treasure of truth. Both these are lodged in the hand of Christ. 6. Her real interests are all safe and secure: and that to such a degree, that neither shall she suffer any harm, in the issue,—nor shall her enemies gain any advantage, by all their apparent success. 7. In a word, her eternal inheritance is perfectly safe and secure. IV. Conclude with some IMPROVEMENT of what has been said. 1. The Church of Christ has but little occasion for the favour and protection of earthly princes, and little cause to regret the want of it. 2. It is neither upon ordinances nor instruments, upon her own endeavours nor those of her members, nor upon any created assistance that the Church of Christ ought to depend for safety or prosperity. 3. Neither the Church of God, nor any particular Christian, has anything to fear from the number, the power, the policy, or even the success of their enemies. 4. This subject informs us what it is that really brings the Church of Christ into danger. Nothing but her own sin can bring her into real danger; because this, and nothing else, tends to deprive her of her protection, or to cause her defence to depart from her. 5. We may here see plentiful encouragement to every member of the Church, as well as to those who bear office in her, to continue strenuous and undaunted, in opposing every enemy, in defending every privilege that God has bestowed upon the Church, every ordinance that He has instituted in her, and every truth that He has revealed to her. 6. We have here an ample fund of consolation to all those who are affected with the low condition of the Church of God in our day. (*J. Young.*) *The city of salvation*.—In the Scriptures we read of some very strong cities, that are now levelled with the dust. But the “city” mentioned in the text is stronger than all the rest. The state of nature may be called the city of destruction; and the state of grace, the strong city, or the city of salvation. I. THE NAME of this city. “Salvation.” It is a very old name, it has had this name a great many thousands of years; it has never changed its name; it is a durable name; it is an unchangeable name. II. What KIND of a city it is. 1. It is a large city. It would hold all the inhabitants of the earth for thousands of generations. 2. It is a free city. The

Lord Jesus Christ welcomes you to come and live in it. 3. It is a wealthy city. The treasures of free grace are in the city of salvation. 4. It is a healthy city. They breathe good air who live in it. The Physician is the Lord Jesus Christ, who heals every disease. 5. It is a happy city. 6. This city will last for ever. Where is Babylon? Where is Tyre? Where is Nineveh? Where are the cities of Egypt? Those mighty cities are levelled with the dust, but this city will last through all eternity. III. The BUILDER of this city. The Lord Jesus Christ. In London there is a constant succession of streets for many miles in length, and the whole was built by man. IV. Who are the INHABITANTS of this city? They are good men, women, and children. 1. They are called "saints." The word "saint" means a holy person. 2. Another name given to the inhabitants of this city is righteous. 3. Another name is believers. 4. Another name is sons and daughters. V. The WATCHMEN of the city. There are watchmen placed upon the walls of Zion—parental watchmen, teaching watchmen, and ministerial watchmen. VI. The GUARDS of the city. Angels guard you while you sleep and while you are awake. They are wise guards; powerful guards; affectionate guards. VII. The WAY which leads to this city. The road of repentance. VIII. The WALL of this city. It is so high that no enemy can scale it; it is so strong that no enemy can break or injure it. IX. The FOUNDATION of this city. The righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. X. The STREETS of this city. There are some very remarkable streets. 1. The high street of Faith. This street runs from one end of the city to the other. In almost every town and city, we find a street of this name—"High Street." But there is no such street, as this high street of faith; it is a very long and beautiful street. It connects the gate of conversion and the gate of Heaven. This high street is frequented by all who live by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. 2. The street of Humility. It lies alongside the high street of faith. 3. The street of Obedience. The inhabitants are very partial to this street. This street is divided into ten parts. The ten parts are the ten commandments. This is a very broad street. "Thy commandments are exceeding broad." It is a remarkably clean street. 4. A fourth street is Worship street. XI. We may now take a view of the SCHOOLS of the city. 1. Providence. 2. Revelation. 3. Affliction. 4. Experience. XII. Come and see the PALACES of the city. When any one gets to London, they want to see the palace of the king. I will show nobler palaces than palaces of earthly kings. These palaces are ordinances; such as prayer, praise, reading and hearing the Holy Gospel, baptism and the Lord's Supper, meditation and self-examination. Consider the reason why they are called palaces. A palace is a place where the king is to be seen. It is a place where petitions are presented; where the king bestows wealth and great gifts. Here petitions are presented and received; here King Jesus bestows wealth and honour. It is a place for conversing with the king; and here we may converse with Jesus. In a palace grand feasts are held; so in the ordinances noble feasts are provided for souls immortal, where they may eat abundantly of heavenly provisions. XIII. The ARMOURY of the city. A beautiful piece is hanging up called the helmet—the helmet of salvation. Not far from the helmet is a breastplate—the breastplate of righteousness. Near the breastplate is a girdle or sash, with this inscription—truth. The next piece of armour is a pair of shoes with this name—"preparation of the Gospel of peace." Next is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." The shield of faith. XIV. The GARDEN of the city. 1. The walks in the garden. The walks of meditation and holy fellowship. 2. The fountains. The Lord Jesus Christ is the principal fountain. There is another fountain, called the consolation of the Holy Ghost; the water is delicious. All the inhabitants drink of it. 3. The flowers. There are the flowers of the promises and doctrines; they are odoriferous flowers, and never failing. 4. The trees. The tree of knowledge; not the tree of knowledge which was in Eden, but of knowledge and wisdom. There is not a poisonous tree in the garden. The tree of life, the Lord Jesus Christ, is there—"whose leaves are for the healing of the nations." XV. The BANK of this city. The name of this bank is written on the door; it is—the covenant of grace. It is so free, all may come and apply; and all who apply, receive. The bank, too, is very rich; and it is free for the poorest sinner. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Proprietor, and He is willing to give to poor sinners as much as they need. This bank cannot fail; it cannot break. Whatever is drawn out during the day, it is as full again at night. It is full of "the unsearchable riches of Christ." XVI. There is a GATE through



which the inhabitants of the city pass, when they enter Heaven. It is the gate of death. There is a valley leading to the gate called the valley of the shadow of death. It is illuminated with the light of the Sun of Righteousness. Pious children pass through that valley, leaning on the arm of Jesus. (*A. Fletcher, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. Open ye the gates.—*A bunch of keys* (to children):—1. The gate of healing. What would you say is the key of that gate? Is it not our need? What, *e.g.*, would give you admission into any hospital? Would it not be your need of the help that could be obtained there? Just so is it with Jesus, the good Physician. We have no claim except His own exceeding love and our exceeding need. There are no incurables so far as the Lord Jesus is concerned.

2. The door of hope. The key for that is promise. You may read about it in the "Pilgrim's Progress" (Christian and Hopeful in Doubting Castle).

3. The door of help. The key is sympathy. Sympathy, as the meaning of the word implies, understands the situation. "Thou shalt not oppress a stranger," was one of God's commands to the Israelites, "for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." That was sympathy as the key to the door of help. They knew what it was to be strangers in a strange land, and therefore they could understand how a stranger among themselves would feel, how he would appreciate a friendly spirit, and how sensitive he would be to any coldness of treatment. Is it not His sympathy that makes Jesus the perfect Saviour?

4. The door of communion. For that we need two keys, just as in your house doors two keys are required to open them—the key that turns the lock and the key that lifts the latch. Prayer and obedience are the two keys.

5. The door of change, that door that stands at the end of "the well-trodden path to the grave." What is the key for this door? We have none. God keeps it in His own hands. (*J. S. Mavor, M.A.*)

The righteous nation which keepeth the truth.—*Truth, and its influence upon society*:—Truth was not intended to be brought before the world by the God of truth for the mere purpose of influencing individual character. Hence we find the passage before us inviting not separate men in their respective capacities, but the righteous nation to enter in that keepeth the truth.

I. WHEN THE TRUTH SPREADS THROUGH SOCIETY IT WILL GIVE NEW VIEWS OF MORAL OBLIGATION. Looking at society as it stands at present where the truth has made but little way, we find those views of moral obligation that are adopted and acted upon, accommodated to the selfishness of individuals, and society has but little place in their consideration. But let the truth as it is in Christ influence society, and they will then begin to feel that the great source of moral obligation is not what they owe to themselves but what they owe to God.

II. If we find, therefore, that our sense of moral obligation is influenced by these higher considerations when we come to the truth, we have, in the next place, to look at THE WORKING OF TRUTH UNDER THIS HIGH SENSE OF MORAL RESPONSIBILITY TO GOD. There is an enlargement of feeling from the man to his own family—from his own family to his own relatives—from his own relatives to his own social circle—from his own social circle to his nation—from his nation to the body of nations round him—there is an enlargement of feeling in the still widening circle to regions beyond these—an enlargement of feeling that carries the mind onward in a morally spiritual expansion to the whole human race, and after the feelings of the man under the power of truth have been thus far extended, his feelings experience still a desire for further enlargement. He looks unto another and an eternal world and feels that there is a fellowship due to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to angels that seek to learn from his condition the manifold wisdom of God. And while his mind is thus enlarged under the working of truth, there is the reflection back again of truth in all the peace that it propagates, in all the glories that it conveys, in all the safety that it confers, in all the spirituality that it kindles, in all the communion which it permits between the creature and God, which will be found to tell upon the man, so that instead of living in a sphere of selfishness where his light burns but dimly, and where the discoveries of the power of truth are very limited, he feels that he lives in a blaze of spiritual illumination, and when he finds so many kindred souls sympathise with him, and striking up an anthem to God, whence all has come, he feels that he is a greater man, a happier man, a holier man, than if he were to stand aloof even in solitary perfection in his insulated condition, to worship God alone. Instead of a community of nations, we find a community of parties, and each frowning upon the other, and each watching the other with a

unworthy yet a constant and an anxious jealousy. But when the truth does begin to operate upon the condition of the nations generally, how will their temporal circumstances be changed! What a rising of a new spirit in the human community! If we find truth thus raising our sense of moral obligation, if we find truth thus calculated to open so many sources of happiness, let us look to the source whence this mighty element derives all its power. It is not the truth itself regarded merely as conveyed by so many propositions that can accomplish this mighty wonder. But it is the truth applying these propositions by the Spirit of glory and of God. Looking, therefore, to all these views of truth upon society, we have another great reason to induce us to endeavour to "buy the truth, and sell it not." (*J. Burnet.*) *National responsibility* (with Prov. xiv. 34):—From these and suchlike passages it is evident that nations may be and ought to be righteous and truth-keeping, and that nations which are of this character occupy the highest position in relation to other nations, and in the estimation of Him by whom kings reign, and to whom national as well as individual homage is due. That nations can possess such a moral character, and render such homage is denied by those who do not admit that nations, in their corporate capacity, are subjects of God's moral government. They hold that nations or states are impersonal, that they have no will and no conscience, and that therefore no responsibility attaches to national action, if indeed there can be such action at all. This is a serious mistake, and one which cannot but prove most pernicious in its influence and consequences. For nothing can be clearer, alike from the teaching of God's Word and the facts of universal history, than that nations are responsible subjects of Divine government; that they are dealt with by God according to their character and conduct, punished when they do evil, and blessed and prospered when they do well (Jer. xviii. 7-10). (*Original Secession Magazine.*) *National righteousness*:—I. Let us inquire WHAT THAT RIGHTEOUSNESS IS which should characterise a nation, and by which a nation is exalted. How does it manifest itself? 1. This righteousness has as its root—its essence—the foundation principle of all true religion—"the fear of God," in the hearts of the people, of rulers and ruled. This must be the prevailing character of the persons of whom it is composed. 2. It includes, as one of its leading elements, the due observance of the worship of God, according to the rules laid down in the Divine Word. 3. It includes a national keeping of the truth. 4. It includes the regulation of all national affairs, in the departments of legislation and administration, by the principles of God's Word, which should be the rule of faith and practice to the nation as well as to the Church, the family, and the individual. 5. It includes the prevalence of Christian morality, or righteous dealings between man and man in the business of life, and the practice of all those moral virtues by which society is sweetened and adorned. II. HOW RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTS A NATION. A twofold exaltation results from national righteousness—exaltation in the estimation of men, of other nations, and exaltation in the estimation of God. III. HOW THIS NATION-EXALTING RIGHTEOUSNESS MAY BE AND OUGHT TO BE PROMOTED. 1. By attending to the cultivation of personal godliness. 2. By attending to the duties of family religion. 3. By diffusing the Word of God and stirring up the people to read and study it for themselves in secret and private, and by securing that it be taught in all our schools. 4. By the faithful preaching of the Gospel by ministers of religion. 5. By the forth-putting of all legitimate moral efforts to counteract and suppress whatever is contrary thereto. 6. With all such means must be mingled fervent prayer for the blessing of God, which can alone make them efficacious for the advancement of the cause of righteousness. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 3, 4. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee.*—*Perfect peace*:—The Scriptures are full of priceless secrets, and here is one of them—the secret of trust in God as revealed to us in Jesus Christ, as the sole method and means of that peace which we all desire. "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace"; or, as the original expresses it still more forcibly in its Semitic simplicity, "Thou shalt keep him in peace, peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee." It is not the promise of freedom from sorrow; it is not, by any means, a promise of success or prosperity on earth: but it is a promise of that inward peace—of that heart's ease in the breast—with which sorrow itself is a tolerable burden, and without which prosperity itself is a questionable boon. The existence or the absence of peace in our hearts is no slight indication of our true condition, for, as peace must exist with the righteous even in the midst of adversity, it cannot exist

in the hearts of the wicked, however smiling, however prosperous their lot. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." There is, I know, a false, as well as a true peace. There is the simulated contentment of a hard indifference. There is the cynical self-complacency of a moral blindness. There is the deep infatuation of a false security. There is the dull stupefaction of an obstinate despair. But who will call this peace? The carelessness of a traveller by night, who knows not that he is walking all the time along the edge of a frightful precipice—is that peace? For, just as we must not be deceived by the false semblance, or by voices which cry "Peace, peace," when there is no peace, so let us neither be robbed of the deep reality by external appearances, or by passing troubles.

1. Take, for instance, the case of personal anxieties. Most—perhaps every one—of us suffer from these anxieties for ourselves; anxieties about our families; anxieties for the present; anxieties of a still deeper kind about the future. Though we are children of God, yet the cares of life come to us which come to all. They are the necessary incentive to our efforts. They are the necessary impulse to make us treasure elsewhere than on earth our hopes. But, oh, how differently do they happen to the Christian and to the sinner! But to be absorbed in merely private agitations is the characteristic of a mean soul, and the lives of many men who rise far above these personal and domestic egotisms are yet deeply troubled by the world's agitation and unrest, by the perils of institutions to which they are devoted, by the perplexities of nations which they love. We have heard how Augustus, the ruler of the world, constantly moaned in his sleep for the loss of his three legions. We remember how the sad English queen, who lies with her great sister in this Abbey, said that when she died the word "Calais" would be found written on her heart. We have known how, in his later days, the good and great Lord Falkland fell into deep melancholy, ever murmuring the words "Peace, peace," because his heart bled with the bleeding wounds of his country. We recall how the wasted form and shattered hopes of William Pitt were laid, in a season dark and perilous, at the feet of his great father, Chatham, with the same pomp, in the same consecrated mould, and how, grieved to the soul with the news of Austerlitz, he died, with broken exclamations about the perils of his country. Well, we should not be human if we did not suffer thus with those whom we see suffer. We may say to the fools, "Deal not so madly," and to the ungodly, "Lift not up your horn on high"; but the issues of all these things we must leave humbly, calmly, trustfully, with God. The earth is not ours, nor the inhabitants of it; neither do we hold up the pillars of it. Let us not think much of our own importance. Ah, yes, for the anxieties of the statesmen, and the churchmen, and the patriot, here again is the remedy. We know that the angels of the Churches and the angels of the nations gaze on the face of God. Troubled was the life of David, yet he could say, calmly and humbly, "God sitteth above the water-floods, and God remaineth a King for ever." 2. Again, the lives of how many of us are troubled by the strife of tongues! And yet even amid these flights of barbed arrows; amid these clouds of poisonous insects; amid these insolences of anonymous slander, what peace—what perfect peace—may we find if our minds be stayed on God. "Let them say what they will," said a good man, now gone into his rest, "they cannot hurt me; I am too near the great white throne for that." Yes, "Thou shalt hide them privily by Thine own presence from the provoking of all men. Thou shalt keep them secretly in Thy tabernacle from the strife of tongues." "Thou shalt keep him in peace, peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee." 3. There is yet another, the heaviest of all life's troubles in which this promise of peace comes to us like music heard over the stormy waters. It is when we are most overwhelmed with shame and sorrow for the past,—when our sins have taken such hold upon us that we are not able to look up. Who shall count the number of the men whose lives are ruined by the consequences of the past, but who, even in the midst of that ruin, are far more embittered by shame than by calamity, and who feel the sickness or the downfall far less than they feel the remorseful accusing of the evil conscience. It is the lost Heaven which torments no less surely than the present hell. In Michael Angelo's great picture of the last judgment, one of the evil spirits has seized upon a doomed transgressor, and is dragging him downwards; and as he drags him in down-rushing flight the demon is driving his furious teeth into the sinner's flesh; but, with a touch of marvellous spiritual insight, the great painter has represented the poor wretch as wholly unconscious of that agony—as so unaware of it that his clasped hands and his eyes gazing upwards in agony on his

offended Lord, show that, in the absorbing sense of having forfeited the blessing of the forgiven, he has no anguish left to thrill at the torture of the condemned. Yes, it is the worst sting of misery to have once been happy,—the worst pang of shame to have once been innocent,—the most fearful aggravation of punishment that men do not forget the Heavens from which they fall. Look at the white water-lily, in its delicate fragrance, as it lifts from its circle of green floating leaves the immaculate purity of its soft sweet flower. Its roots are in the black mud; its resting-place is on the stagnant wave. Not from its mean or even foul surroundings—not assuredly from the blackness of the mud, or the stagnation of the wave—did it draw that pure beauty and that breathing beneficence, but from some principle of life within. And cannot He who gave to the fair blossom its idea of sweetness draw forth from us, the souls whom He made when He breathed into our nostrils the breath of life—oh, though we have debased those souls with the stagnancy of idleness, and blackened them with the mud of sin—cannot our God still bring forth from those souls that He has made His own sweetness and purity again? He can, if we trust in Him. The alchemy of His love can transmute dross to gold, and, though our sins be as scarlet, the blood of His dear Son can wash them white as snow. Let the very depth of your remorse, if God grants you to feel remorse for a shameful and sinful past—let the very depth of this remorse be your protection from despair. Seek God, and that remorse may be but the darkness which is deepest before the dawn. (*Dean Farrar, D.D.*) *Peace* is the balance of a thousand forces in that centre of all things—the human heart; and, if we regard the question apart from revelation, such a balance seems quite unattainable. History discovers the successive generations plagued by inquietudes—mental, moral, and political. And the most popular philosophy in the world, taking for its basis the common experience of mankind, teaches that peace is logically impossible; that all nature is full of blind and endless striving; that existence means desire, and desire means misery; that thus the world and life are fundamentally and essentially evil, and there is no escape from discontent, except in insensibility and extinction. In opposition to all this, revelation teaches that the world is a cosmos, not a chaos; that human nature is intrinsically noble and only accidentally base; and that the Lord Jesus Christ waits to restore the lost balance in the hearts of all who trust in Him, bringing their life into accord with the infinite music of God's perfect universe. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *Perfect peace*:—Let us trace the method of God's operation in securing to us the peace which passeth all understanding. I. THERE IS THE ANTAGONISM BETWEEN OUR CONSCIENCE AND HISTORY. We recall all we have been and done, and of how little in past years can an instructed conscience approve! From a certain historical character came the sad outburst: "My whole life has been one great mistake"; and this confession is wrung from all when the law comes home and we know ourselves as we are known of God. Not simply an intellectual mistake to be condoned on grounds of infirmity, but a profound moral mistake also, for which we are and ought to be accountable. Now there can be no rational peace until we are freed from this dead, accusing past. Here Christ becomes most precious to all who believe. This peace in Christ is of the noblest. The law of Heaven is not relaxed one jot or tittle. Neither is the tone of conscience lowered to ensure us peace, but, on the contrary, He who gives us a new heart gives us a new conscience; conscience in evangelical penitence becomes more acute and authoritative than ever, and yet in its utmost majesty and tenderness is satisfied with God's reconciling work and word in Jesus Christ. And yet how few pardoned ones have entered into the enjoyment of "perfect" peace! "Being justified by faith, let us have peace with God." II. THE SECOND SERIOUS ANTAGONISM OF LIFE IS THAT BETWEEN OUR FLESH AND SPIRIT. The apostle describes this feud in language which brings the sad fact home irresistibly. "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." This is the fundamental, fatal discord. There can be no true peace until this internecine war ends in the utter breaking down and final extinction of the law in our members. The supremacy of the flesh would not ensure rest; such triumphant usurpation would bring all hell with it. Any alliance between the rival powers is also impossible. They greatly err who argue that the law in the members and the law of the mind are simply disturbed polarities of our nature between which harmony may be established; that they correspond to the antithetical laws we find in creation, and whose just mutual action is altogether beneficent.

That conflict of the soul in which all other fightings—elemental, national, or social—have their origin, and out of which spring the manifold miseries of human life, is not the result of powers, properties, and laws altogether good and pure having fallen through ignorance and accident into displacement and misrelation, and needing only the correction of culture; but our nature has lost its purity, that is, its homogeneity; an exotic element, an alien power, an abnormal law has found place within us, working our destruction, and this the grace of God only can master and extirpate. Christ pours into us the light, energy, joy of His own glorious nature, breaking the tyranny of the law in the members, giving ascendancy to the law of the mind, and thus brings back the paradisiacal calm. Perfect peace goes with perfect purity. III. A FURTHER ANTAGONISM OF LIFE IS THAT BETWEEN FEELING AND REASON. One of the most painful and perplexing phases of life is the conflict between instinct and logic; our reflective reason contradicting our spontaneous reason on many of the greatest questions of existence. A primitive intuition apprehends the goodness of the Supreme, but the intellect pondering this sad world cannot confirm the intuition. A constitutional principle prompts us to prayer, implies the intervention of God in all our affairs and the validity of supplication, yet our dialectics often disown our devotions, and it seems as unphilosophical to pray as it is natural. Our consciousness assures us of our freedom and responsibility, giving grandeur to thought and life; but science contradicts consciousness, degrading us into mere mechanism. The fact of immortality is a truth found in the depth of our mind, a glorious instinctive hope lending the colour of gold to all the sphere; but science is at variance with sentiment; and we look into the black grave with dismay. If we dare trust that feeling in us which is at once deep, noble, and positive, we could welcome all the glorious articles of the creed and rest in them with unmixed delight, but reason enters another verdict, and we are overwhelmed in the dilemma. Here, once more, Christ is our peace, giving us rest by giving us light. We are far from asserting that the New Testament formally harmonises syllogism and sentiment, that it demonstrates agreement between intuitionism and rationalism; but it suspends the bitter polemic by mightily reinforcing the brightest convictions and aspirations of our nature. It shows us the greatest, wisest, holiest Teacher the world has ever seen—He who spake as never man spake—giving direct and ample authentication to the grand creed of the heart; and this is surely an adequate reason for waiting in hope the final solution of the apparent antagonism between feeling and philosophy. Here also many who believe in Christ have not the “perfect” peace. We argue these questions away from Christ, and our soul is troubled. “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me.” It is perfectly quiet at the centre of the whirlwind. Jesus Christ is the centre of the whirlwind of modern controversy, and whilst our lame interpretations of the universe, our little systems of philosophy put forth with so much pride and hope, are being driven about and driven away like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor, with Christ at the centre reason finds lasting quiet. IV. THE FINAL ANTAGONISM OF LIFE IS THAT OF CHARACTER AND CIRCUMSTANCE. No sooner are we what we ought to be than we painfully feel the world is not what it ought to be, and the more nearly we are right the more we realise how deeply the world is wrong, and how hard a thing it is to carry into effect high principles and convictions. Life is one long severe trial. We are tried in every possible way—in principle, temper, affection, and faith. Here again, however, Christ becomes our peace by giving us power. He makes us to share in His own triumphant spirit and might, thus enabling us to overcome the trial and temptation, the allurements and sorrow of life. We are filled with wisdom, love, power and joy as He was. How few in the friction and strain of this worldly life attain this “perfect peace”! We have solicitude, fretfulness, misgiving, and sorrow. And we explain this to ourselves by regarding our circumstances as specially harsh and afflictive, which is an explanation very wide of the truth. The blame of our lack of peace is not to be laid on our severe environment, but on the inner defect of power which, in its turn, is caused by our qualified faith. If we fully identified ourselves with the world-conquering Christ we should know no more irascibility or fear, but in fiery trials prove abiding equanimity and imperturbation. (*Ibid.*) *The blessing attendant upon having the mind stayed on God*:—I. THE STATE OF MIND HERE SPOKEN OF. The soul may be said to trust, or stay, upon anything, when it relies upon it for its present comfort and future salvation. The soul that possesses the blessing here spoken

of, has for the object of its trust and stay the Lord Jehovah. It confides in His name and character as revealed in the Scriptures of truth: it relies upon His promises of mercy and grace declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord; and derives its support and consolation from viewing God as "in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." This confidence in the Almighty stands opposed to various false refuges and deceitful grounds of confidence. 1. It is opposed to that confidence which men are often apt to place in an arm of flesh, in human wisdom, experience, power, interest, &c. 2. This affiance in the Lord Jehovah is likewise directly opposite to all reliance on our own services and performances. 3. This trust in Jehovah is very different from confidence placed in any feelings, or what are usually termed frames of mind. These are, at best, very uncertain, often very deceitful. II. THE PROMISE OR BLESSING HERE SPOKEN OF. "Perfect peace." 1. There is an energetic simplicity in the original expression: it is "peace, peace"; intimating that the soul which steadfastly reposes itself on God, may expect every kind of peace as its portion. Whether you understand by the word, reconciliation with God, amity with men, composure in the conscience, resignation to the appointments of providence, rest from the turbulency of sinful passions and appetites, or finally, that everlasting state of rest and felicity which remains for the people of God;—in all these senses peace is the happy lot of those whose minds are stayed on God. 2. But the thing especially intended here seems to be composure of mind, as opposed to distraction or disquietude. 3. This may be properly termed, "perfect peace," not because it actually excludes every degree of disquietude from the soul; nor, as if in the measure in which it is enjoyed, it never met with any interruption; but it is perfect peace, when compared with any satisfaction or composure of mind which this world, or anything in it, can administer, and as proceeding from Him from whom cometh every good and every perfect gift; as being the best preparative for, and support under, the troubles of life, and, probably, the choicest foretaste that can be communicated to us of the peace of God's eternal kingdom. 4. This blessing will be enjoyed, this peace will be experienced in the soul, in proportion to the degree of its confidence in God. III. ENFORCE THE EXHORTATION here given. "Trust ye in the Lord for ever": to which is subjoined the encouraging declaration, "for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Such an exhortation as this supposes their state to be distressing and dangerous, and that either through ignorance they are likely to betake themselves to false refuges, or through fear may be deterred from venturing upon what they believe to be the true one. 1. God calls upon you to do this. 2. Whatever your wants and necessities may be, you will thus obtain a rich and full supply of them. 3. Take the precious promises which He has caused to be recorded for this purpose. 4. Examples might also be produced from Scripture, in abundance, of those who looked unto Him and were lightened. (*S. Knight, M.A.*) *Peace out of trust*:—I. AN EXPRESSION OF CONFIDENCE IN GOD. It is characteristic of Jehovah—1. That He seeks the trust of His people. Heathen gods, all gods that are the mere creations of men's minds or hands, seek the service of things; they want our gifts; they claim, not the man, but that which the man only has. Jehovah seeks the service of love and trust. 2. That He rewards the trust of His people. And this He does—(1) By giving them the perfect peace, which is inward peace. (2) By giving them the outward peace of circumstances, so far as may be consistent with higher than individual ends. If we can see that the true issue of the discipline of life is character; then we shall see that the very highest reward God can give us is that soul-triumph over surrounding circumstances, that soul-mastery over the very self, which goes into the expressive word "peace." Outward things are to us according as we are within us. II. AN APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE FOR CONTINUITY IN THEIR TRUST IN GOD. "Trust ye in the Lord for ever," &c. We cannot keep on trusting if our trust is in things; for the "fashion of this world passeth away." We cannot keep on trusting if our trust is in man; "for the pain of living is our disappointment in our best-loved friends." We can keep on trusting in God. His very name implies a basis of confidence. (*Weekly Pulpit.*) *The inhabitant of the Rock*:—If we may suppose the invocation of the preceding verses to be addressed to the watchers at the gate of the strong city, it is perhaps not too fanciful to suppose that the invitation in my text is the watchers' answer, pointing the way by which men may pass into the city. At all events, I take it as by no means accidental that immediately upon

the statement of the Old Testament law that righteousness alone admits to the presence of God, there follows so clear and emphatic an anticipation of the great New Testament Gospel that faith is the condition of righteousness, and that immediately after hearing that only "the righteous nation which keepeth the truth" can enter there, we hear the merciful call, "Trust ye in the Lord for ever."

**I. THE INSIGHT INTO THE TRUE NATURE OF TRUST OR FAITH GIVEN BY THE WORD EMPLOYED HERE.** The literal meaning of the expression here rendered "to trust" is to lean upon anything. And that is the trust of the Old Testament; the faith of the New. **II. THE STEADFAST PEACEFULNESS OF TRUST.** (See R.V. margin.) It is the steadfast mind, steadfast because it trusts, which God keeps in the deepest peace that is expressed by the reduplication of the word. And if we break up that complex thought into its elements, it just comes to this—

1. Trust makes steadfastness. No man can steady his life except by clinging to a holdfast without himself. 2. The steadfast mind is rewarded in that it is kept of God. The real fixity and solidity of a human character comes more surely and fully through trust in God than by any other means; on the other hand, it is true that, in order to receive the full blessed effects of trust into our characters and lives, we must persistently and doggedly keep on in the attitude of confidence. 3. Then, still further, this faithful, steadfast heart and mind, kept by God, is a mind filled with deepest peace. There is something very beautiful in the prophet's abandoning the attempt to find any adjective of quality which adequately characterises the peace of which he has been speaking. He falls back upon the expedient which is the confession of the impotence of human speech worthily to portray its subject when he simply says, "Thou shalt keep in peace, peace . . . because he trusteth in Thee." The reduplication expresses the depth, the completeness of the tranquillity which flows into the heart. Such continuity, wave after wave, or rather ripple after ripple, is possible even for us. For the possession of this deep, unbroken peace does not depend on the absence of conflict, of distraction, trouble, or sorrow, but on the presence of God.

**III. THE WORTHINESS OF THE DIVINE NAME TO EVOKE, AND THE POWER OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER TO REWARD THE TRUST.** "In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." 1. The words feebly rendered in the A.V., "everlasting strength," are literally "the Rock of Ages"; and this verse is the source of that hallowed figure which, by one of the greatest of our English hymns, is made familiar and immortal to all English-speaking people. 2. But there is another peculiarity about the words, and that is that here we have, for one of the only two times in which the expression occurs in Scripture, the great name of Jehovah reduplicated. "In Jah Jehovah is the Rock of Ages." In the former verse the prophet had given up in despair the attempt to characterise the peace which God gave, and fallen back upon the expedient of naming it twice over. In this verse, with similar eloquence of reticence, he abandons the attempt to describe or characterise that great name, and once more, in adoration, contents himself with twice taking it upon his lips, in order to impress what he cannot express, the majesty and the sufficiency of that name. What, then, is the force of that name?

(1) Jehovah, in its literal grammatical signification, puts emphasis upon the absolute, underived, and therefore unlimited, unconditioned, unchangeable, eternal being of God. "I am that I am." In that name is the Rock of Ages. (2) That mighty name, by its place in the history of revelation, conveys to us still further thoughts, for it is the name of the God who entered into covenant with His ancient people, and remains bound by His covenant to bless us. 3. The metaphor needs no expansion. We understand that it conveys the idea of unchangeable defence. **IV. THE SUMMONS TO TRUST.** We know not whose voice it is that is heard in the last words of my text, but we know to whose ears it is addressed. It is to all. "Trust ye in the Lord for ever." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

*Peace* :—Peace has ever been praised and desired by the majority of mankind. It is generally supposed to be near, to be possible; but it moves before or follows men like the shadow of themselves, which cannot overtake them, which they cannot overtake. The schoolboy sees it in release from his lessons and his school. The man of mid-life sees it in his childhood, and by the fireside of an honoured successful age. But when old he looks back with regret to the appetite for repose which accompanied an active life. There is no more peace in twilight than at noon. In the morning we say, "Would God it were evening"; and in the evening, "Would God it were morning." **I. THERE IS MUCH PEACE WHICH IS IMPERFECT.** 1. There is the peace of ignorance. The child plays by the coffin

of its mother. The peasant fool stands quietly beneath the tree which draws the lightning stroke. But this peace, we need not stop long to see, passes away. We learn, our eyes are opened, and we regret or shudder at our insensibility.

2. There is the peace of corruption. Dead bodies make no stir, ask no questions, have no doubts. Dead minds are quiet and peaceable enough. Their peace is that of quiet, painless stagnation; but we cannot call it perfect.

3. There is the dependent peace: when we leave other people to think and act for us. This is pleasing enough till they make some fatal irremediable mistake. It is bad enough to lose a few bank notes; but it is a far more serious thing to find that your conscience-keeper has embezzled your soul.

4. There is the peace of success. When the action is over then comes reaction. The peace it gives is not perfect. It needs patching and polishing as soon as it is obtained. It entails labour and involves additional anxiety.

5. All these kinds of mock peace die out, or break down, or run dry. If not that, they hinder our being what we might be; they keep us down.

II. WHAT WE ASSOCIATE MOST WITH THE WORD PEACE. It is the opposite to war. It is freedom from disorder, disturbance. But it is by no means idleness. The time of peace is the time of work. The surest advance and most abundant plenty may be made in the time of the profoundest peace. There is most life where there is least disorder. It is thus in nature. What can be more quiet than a field of wheat on a still summer day? and yet an important work is going on then; there God is making bread for man. Again, what suggests more repose than a silent, cloudless night? And yet the globe on which we stand, and the brightest of the stars we see, and which seem so still, are really whirling through space at a prodigious speed. Their perfect peace is perfect fulfilment of the will of God.

III. IS THERE SUCH A THING FOR US—PEACE WHICH CAN NEVER BE DESTROYED, NEVER DIE OUT? "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee." On Thee—there is the point. On God Himself. We are not the masters of this world, or time. We can neither make nor destroy it. By quietly doing our own work we do our share, and the Great Master will look after us and the rest. Peace is found only along with Him, by staying upon Him. Those who do the work He plainly sets them need not be distressed about the main chance and the great end and course of life. The sailor who has confidence in his captain and pilot is at peace; he knows the ship is in good hands. So if we would believe that we were in good hands ourselves, how full of comfort we should be. An explorer is searching for a new country. He sails over the seas, here and there, in vain; he is deceived by low-lying clouds which look like land, but are dispersed as he approaches them. At last, after many disappointments, he spies the shore, sails to it, finds he is not mistaken this time; he sets his foot upon the beach, he sees new trees, animals, plants. He returns to his ship, night comes and he can perceive nothing. Nevertheless the discovery is made; the sought-for land is found. There is an end to his surmises, expectations, guesses, watchings. The land is found, though he leave or lose sight of it. He has fulfilled his object; it is a fact; it is there. So the man who has been beating about in vain in the waves of this troublesome world, looking for peace, steering this way and that, but has at last laid hold of the great immovable fact that peace is in God, and not to be got from himself or his fellow-creatures, may often seem solitary and disturbed; but he has made the discovery, and all is well. (*H. Jones, M.A.*)

*The sustaining power of faith*.—I. THE SOURCE OF FAITH IS DIVINE. "Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

1. Faith is Divine in its inception. God is author and object thereof.

2. Faith is Divine in its inspiration. Trust in God is not a single act, but a condition of restfulness. There are occasions when special acts are called forth, but these are the trials of faith. When Abraham was called to offer up Isaac on Moriah, God proved him there.

II. THE SEAT OF FAITH IS MENTAL. "Whose mind (or thought) is stayed on Thee." Mr. Ruskin says, "The power, whether of painter or poet, to describe rightly what he calls an ideal thing depends upon its being to him not an ideal but a real thing. No man ever did, or ever will, work well but either from actual sight or sight of faith." The sight of faith is no less keen, or complete, or perfect, than actual sight. There are many thoughts which agitate the human heart—faith is the solution of these.

1. One thought is our acceptance before God. We are perplexed by many aspects of this all-important subject. Take one of them—how can the death of Jesus Christ atone for our sins? Faith alone can make the matter plain. How is it done? By taking



the mind to God to be saved by the acceptance of this great truth. Faith never says, How is it? but, Let it be. God Himself is the solution of the difficulty.

2. Thoughts concerning our guidance in life. We are the creatures of circumstances, and often fail to see their bearing. Faith brings forth tranquillising influences, and speaks with firmness. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." All wrongs will be avenged. All stolen possessions will be restored. Therefore, take no thought for the morrow: He who measures the minutes fills them with mercies.

III. THE INFLUENCE OF FAITH IS SUSTAINING. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose thought is stayed on Thee." 1. Faith is our strength in duty. To do the right is not always easy. We are often tempted to do as other people do, and sometimes we are chided because we do not follow the way of the world. Whatever may be the temptation to do wrong, or whatever may be the adverse criticism for doing right, trust in God will sustain us in the effort. 2. Faith is our stay in trouble. 3. Faith is our prospect in death. Charles Wesley said, "Satisfied! Satisfied!" Benjamin Abbot said, "I see Heaven opening out before me." Baron Humboldt was full of peace, and said, "How sweet these rays; they beckon me up to Heaven." Robert Wilkinson exclaimed, "The lovely beauty! the happiness of paradise." Mrs. Hemans bade this world adieu by saying, "The visions cannot be told; the mountain-tops are gleaming from peak to peak." We believe in the same Saviour. God will be with us in the person of the Good Shepherd to lead us safely home. Why do the gracious impressions received by many, while listening to the Gospel, die out? Because they are not sustained by faith. (*T. Davies, M.A.*)

*The source of true peace*:—I. A STATE OF MIND to be described. "Whose mind is stayed on Thee." This is an act that includes in it—1. A renunciation of dependence on the creature. 2. The exercise of filial dependence on God. 3. This is a frame of mind exercised on evangelical principles. It is the shadow of that throne where the Saviour appears as the Lamb in the midst of it beneath which true faith causes us to repose. II. A GRACIOUS ASSURANCE to be considered. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace." This does not refer to external peace, but to mental peace and serenity in trying circumstances; and this is very great. 1. Reflect on the Author of it. "Thou wilt,"—the very Being on whom the soul reposes, who is the Lord God all-sufficient. 2. Consider the extent of this peace. As the Redeemer once said to all the elements of nature that were convulsed, "Peace, be still; and there was a great calm"; thus He speaks to all the agitated and perturbed powers of the human mind. III. AN INTIMATE CONNECTION to be established. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee." This connection is established—1. By the dictates of reason. It is reasonable to expect that he who reposes on a rock should feel himself immovable. 2. In the promise of Scripture. 3. In the experience that trust in man has often been deceived; but the benefits of having the mind reposed on the infinite and eternal God can be attested by thousands. (*C. Gilbert.*)

*Confidence in God composing the mind*:—I. WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY STAYING THE MIND ON GOD. It simply means relying upon Him or trusting in Him. II. THIS STAYING OF THE MIND ON GOD KEEPS IT IN PEACE. 1. This alone can calm the mind when convinced of sin, and searching in dreadful distress for pardon. 2. This confidence also calms the mind under delays. 3. This confidence composes the mind in the events of life, and this is the thing principally intended. III. THE PEACE THAT FLOWS FROM THIS TRUST IN GOD IS SAID TO BE PERFECT. It is not indeed absolutely so, as if it were incapable of addition; but it is so—1. Comparatively. What is every other peace to this? What is the delusion of the Pharisee, the stupidity and carelessness of the sinner, the corn and wine of the worldling—what is everything else, compared with this peace? 2. In relation to this confidence. It is true this peace rises and falls; but it is only because this confidence varies. (*W. Jay.*)

*Peace the result of confidence in God*:—I. THE BLESSING HERE DESCRIBED. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace." We take it for granted that the prophet is referring to the blessings of the Gospel. Christ is called, by this same prophet, the Prince of Peace; and apart from Him, true peace of mind can never be attained. 1. The word peace at once suggests the cessation of hostilities. It is true there never was any hostility in the mind of God towards man. But when we look at the aspect of man towards God, we see him in an attitude of rebellion. It became necessary that some means should be adopted by which his enmity might be destroyed, and reconciliation effected. The wondrous

plan, devised in the mind of God for the accomplishment of this purpose, was the sacrifice of His own dear Son, who thus became our Mediator between God and man. 2. The peace which God bestows arises not merely from a consciousness of pardon and restoration to the Divine favour, it springs further from the calming influence which He exerts on the mind by the transforming of the affections from things earthly to things heavenly. 3. But the peace which God bestows is a "perfect peace"; by which we understand peace, ever-flowing like a river, broad, deep, and calm,—peace, including all spiritual blessings, and available under every circumstance of Christian trial. 4. Mark the expression, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace." It is not a mere transitory feeling, a sun-flash on the storm presently to be lost behind the cloud, but an abiding principle, which God keeps for His people and in His people, that they may be preserved from dismay whatever may befall them. II. THE MEANS F ATTAINING IT. Who is the happy possessor of this inestimable blessing of peace? He whose mind is stayed upon God, because he trusteth in Him. We cannot take a single step in religion without trust, or faith. As this trust is essential to the first acquirement of peace, so is it equally necessary to its continued possession. It is enjoyed only so long as the mind is "stayed" upon God. But all men have not peace; and some never will have peace. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." There is no peace to them who stay their minds on the world, on worldly objects and worldly pleasures. There is no peace to them who keep away from Christ. (*W. J. Brock, B.A.*) *Trust in God brings peace*.—That almost every man is disappointed in his search after happiness is apparent from the clamorous complaints which are always to be heard; from the restless discontent which is hourly to be observed, and from the incessant pursuit of new objects, which employ almost every moment of every man's life. As men differ in age or disposition, they are exposed to different delusions in this important inquiry. I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THIS TRUST IN GOD, TO WHICH PERFECT PEACE IS PROMISED? Trust, when it is used on common occasions, implies a kind of resignation to the honesty or abilities of another. Our trust in God ought to differ from every other trust, as infinity differs from an atom. It ought to transcend every other degree of confidence, as its object is exalted above every degree of created excellence. We know that He is infinite in wisdom, in power, and in goodness; that therefore He designs the happiness of all His creatures; that He cannot but know the proper means by which this end may be obtained; and that, in the use of these means, as He cannot be mistaken, because He is omniscient, so He cannot be defeated, because He is almighty. He therefore that trusts in God will no longer be distracted in his search after happiness; for he will find it in a firm belief, that whatever evils are suffered to befall him, will finally contribute to his felicity. II. HOW THIS TRUST IS TO BE ATTAINED. There is a fallacious and precipitate trust in God—a trust which, as it is not founded upon God's promises, will, in the end, be disappointed. Trust in God, that trust to which perfect peace is promised, is to be obtained only by repentance, obedience, and supplication. (*John Taylor, LL.D.*) *The source of peace*.—In considering the great event of the Saviour's first advent, there is one circumstance of which we should never lose sight—the peculiar character in which He then came to earth. He was pleased to veil His more awful attributes behind His humanity; and, instead of showing Himself as our future Judge, to reveal Himself as our "Prince of Peace." Hence this is the peculiar characteristic of the Gospel, that in looking to it the sinner finds it to be a message of peace. And not only this, but he finds, as he proceeds in the knowledge of "the truth as it is in Jesus," that whilst glory is the prospect which it holds out for eternity, in time it corresponds with what might well be called the Redeemer's dying legacy to His Church: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." I. WHAT IS MEANT BY HAVING OUR MIND STAYED ON GOD? Nothing is more evident than the fact that man always needs some one on whom to lean. But there are cases in which it must appear peculiarly necessary to stay our minds on the Lord, because there are cases in which man can absolutely do nothing to help us. Look at the various sorrows, the various doubts, the various fears by which we are liable to be assailed, and say whether any but a Divine power can assist us there. Our natural state being enmity with God, we are, whilst still unconverted, more inclined to forget Him or flee from Him, than to draw near to Him and depend on Him for assistance or protection. But the believer has been led by the Holy Spirit to see how

ruinous is his alienation from God. He has therefore turned to the God against whom he had sinned; he has entrusted himself to the mercy and faithfulness of God; and, having done so, he feels that it is a little matter to trust to Him for support and comfort in that conflict here, which a few years or hours may change into the triumphs of eternity. The more advanced he is, the more humble will he be; and in the hour of trial, instead of depending on his former attainments, or looking to be upheld by his past experience, he will continue, at each fresh assault of his enemy, to look for strength according to his day.

**II. THE BLESSING PROMISED TO HIM WHOSE MIND IS THUS STAYED ON THE LORD.** "Perfect peace." 1. Peace with God (Rom. v. 1). 2. Peace of conscience. 3. Peace with the world. I do not say that the world has peace with him. But the Christian has received the spirit of gentleness and love. (*R. M. Kyle, B.A.*) *Peace the perfect and assured portion of the believer*:—There is a sweetness in the very word "peace"; it fills the mind with a number of pleasing thoughts, and even by its very sound seems to convey something which attracts and charms us. But if the mere sound of peace be thus pleasing, how much more so must be the substance. Peace is what every one may be said to prize, and to be in search of. Why is it so seldom found? Because we are always seeking peace, and saying peace, where there is no peace; we seek it anywhere, and in anything, rather than in Him, and from Him, who alone can give it.

**I. THE CHARACTER BROUGHT BEFORE US IN THE TEXT IS THAT OF THE MAN WHOSE MIND IS STAYED ON GOD.** The word "stayed" denotes—1. Firmness. It is that kind of leaning or resting which shows full confidence in the strength of the foundation which has been chosen. 2. Calmness and quietness. 3. An unchanging trust; a resolution of the soul to abide by its choice under all circumstances; a fixed adherence to its God.

**II. THE BLESSING PROMISED AND SECURED TO THOSE TO WHOM THE CHARACTER REALLY BELONGS.** "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace." 1. The blessing itself: "perfect peace." Perfect, because—(1) Present. He who gives it is about our path and about our bed. (2) Future. (3) Eternal. 2. The way in which this blessing is said to be secured to every believer. The Lord, on whom his mind is stayed, will keep him in it.

**III. THE GRACIOUS FULFILMENT OF HIS WORD IN THE CASE OF HIM WHOSE REMAINS HAVE SO LATELY GONE DOWN INTO SILENCE.** (*F. Lear, B.D.*) *Peace for the careworn*:—In the description given of the state of the ungodly in Rom. iii., the apostle Paul says: "The way of peace have they not known." There are many ways in this world—ways of sin, of disappointment, of pleasure, of death, of misery, but beside all these there is "the way of peace."

**I. THE PERSON WHO IS KEPT IN PEACE.** He is a person whose mind is stayed on God, and who trusts in God. A man's self, and sin, and pleasure, and false religion, and vain hopes are every one of them troubled waves in one common ocean of disquietude, and no soul can stay itself upon these, though many souls have sought to be stayed upon them. Mark the mighty Rock on which such an one lieth down and findeth repose. That rock is God. Yet it is a most certain fact that our God is a consuming fire, out of Christ. Ah, you say, some of you, "I trust in God," but you know not the God you trust in. What is the sole object of faith? It is the God-man.

**II. THE POWER WHICH KEEPS THE BELIEVER IN PEACE.** (Not the power of his own faith, as some would think at first sight; not the power of his own effort, struggling to obtain confidence, as some would suppose; but the power of God.)

**III. THE PEACE IN WHICH SUCH A PERSON IS KEPT.** It is called here "perfect peace." It is like the Redeemer with His head on the pillow, with His eyes closed, with His mind in conscious repose and sleep, in the midst of the wild storm at night upon the lake of Galilee, when the waves beat upon the trembling vessel, and the clouds rolled over head, threatening to beat the waves still higher, and engulf them all. He slept secure and peaceful amidst the storm. So does the soul of the believer, afterwards, that statheth itself upon God. Upon what lay that peaceful head of Jesus but on the unseen arm and bosom of God? Men said of Christ mockingly, "He trusted in God." He did trust in God, as the most exalted believer, and far more than the most exalted believer; and in that simplicity of faith, amidst contending elements He was kept in peace, sleeping amidst the storm. So with the believer. And he that thus trusteth in God findeth not only that peace in life; for death to him, what is it? It is as a peaceful sunset. (*H. G. Guinness.*) *Hindrances to a mind stayed on God*:—There are two hindrances to a steady mind. 1. The loving of unlawful things. 2. The loving of lawful things with inordinate affection. (*J. Summerfield, M.A.*) *Perfect peace*:—**I. THE**

**PROMISED GIFT.** "Peace." Not freedom from sorrow, not assured prosperity, not a certainty of success, but inward tranquillity, ease of heart, without which even prosperity would be a burden. Not the simulated contentment of indifference. Not the cynical self-complacency of moral blindness. Not the dull stupefaction of despair. There is peace—1. Amid personal anxieties. These come to God's people as well as to the world. But the effects they produce in each are very different. 2. Amid the contests of the world. The nations are at strife. Good is at war with evil. The noblest institutions are threatened. Lawlessness stalks forth threatening all that is true. But the Christian has peace in his dwellings. 3. Amid the struggles of sin and the assaults of the evil one. The remorse of sin, the anxieties of sin, all disturb the soul, but here is peace. 4. In the conflicting emotions of sickness, the pain of death, and the realities of a future world. **II. THE CONDITION EXACTED.** Faith. "Whose mind is stayed on Thee." This act assures us of the promise—1. Because it is the carrying out of the Divine requirement. It is God's own condition, God's own plan, and unless that is complied with no man can hope to obtain the fulfilment of the promise. 2. Because it is in itself a calming, sanctifying act. The man who casts all his cares upon God, feels no responsibility resting on himself. He who leaves his sins on Christ ceases to trouble about the consequences of those sins, so far as he himself is concerned. The man who leaves all events in the hands of One who knows all, feels that whatever happens all is for the best. How can such feel anything but peace? The great thing wanting is the power to place such unreserved confidence on an unseen Being. **III. THE SAFE ASSURANCE.** "Thou wilt keep." Here is a sure ground of confidence—the promise and power of the Author and Ruler of the universe. "Thou." 1. Here is the source of all strength; He is therefore able. 2. Here is the source of all love; He is therefore willing. 3. He is the supplier of all comfort, the refuge of all the oppressed. If peace exists at all, surely it can be obtained from Him. (*Homilist.*) *The song of a city and the pearl of peace.*—**I. WHAT IS THIS PERFECT PEACE?** 1. This "peace, peace" means, an absence of all war, and of all alarm of war. 2. This perfect peace reigns over all things within its circle. 3. No perfect peace can be enjoyed unless every secret cause of fear is met and removed. 4. Peace in a city would not be consistent with the stoppage of commerce. Where there is perfect peace with God, commerce prospers between the soul and Heaven. Good men commune with the good, and thereby their sense of peace increases. If you have perfect peace, you have fellowship with all the saints; personal jealousies, sectarian bitternesses, and unholy emulations are all laid aside. 5. It consists in rest of the soul; a perfect resignation to the Divine will; sweet confidence in God; a blessed contentment. 6. It means freedom from everything like despondency. 7. There we are kept from everything like rashness. **II. WHO ALONE CAN GIVE US THIS PEACE AND PRESERVE IT IN US?** How does the Lord keep His people in peace? 1. By a special operation upon the mind in the time of trial (ver. 12). 2. By the operation of certain considerations intended by His infinite wisdom to work in that manner. 3. By the distinct operations of His providence. **III. WHO SHALL OBTAIN THIS PEACE?** The whole of our being is stayed upon God in order to this peace. **IV. WHY IS IT THAT THE LORD WILL KEEP THAT MAN IN PERFECT PEACE WHO STAYS HIMSELF ON HIM?** "Because he trusteth in Thee." That means surely—1. That in faith there is a tendency to create and nourish peace. 2. His faith is rewarded by peace. 3. This peace comes out of faith because it is faith's way of proclaiming itself. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Peace not from nature, but from God.*—Man alone of all created beings of whom we know anything seems strangely out of harmony with the circumstances with which he is surrounded, and the conditions of his existence. Everything around us, and much within us, seems specially designed to militate against the possibility of peace. 1. If man is to be at peace, why does he hold his very life, and everything else that he values best, on the most precarious tenure? The lower animals are exposed to nothing like the same number of uncertainties; they, for the most part, live out their own appointed span of existence, while, on the other hand, their incapacity for reflection saves them those gloomy apprehensions of possible disaster, and that still sadder certain anticipation of ultimate dissolution, which cast so dark a shadow over the experience of man just because he can and must think. Man's affections are immeasurably more intense than theirs, and yet he knows what they do not, that at any moment he may be robbed of all he loves most; thus the very strength of his affections militates against

his peace. They seem incapable of care, and what they need usually comes to them without any laborious provision. He has to exercise forethought and skill, and to expend much patient labour before he can hope to obtain so much as the bare necessities of life; and even then he cannot make sure of these, owing to the apparent caprices of nature. 2. And the worst of it is that these are not the only causes of our disquiet and unrest. There are disturbing influences within as well as without. Peace is broken by inward war, the conflict of one element of our nature with another. 3. All this shows us that either we are to be denied even such a peace as the animals apparently enjoy, and that their condition in this respect is to be vastly preferable to ours, or else that some higher provision must have been made for inducing this feature in our experience—some provision that they know nothing about, and that does not lie upon the surface of outward nature; some provision that has to be otherwise made known than by the ordinary phenomena of the outer world. And this is one of the most cogent amongst many proofs, that a supernatural revelation is absolutely necessary to supplement the phenomena of the world known to sense, unless nature is to be found guilty of strange and anomalous inconsistencies. The "God of peace" knows that we need peace, and He has provided it for us. He who has blessed His lower creatures with a restful uncarefulness, that renders existence not only tolerable, but pleasant to them, has not left His highest creature to be the victim of his own greatness, and to be tossed about aimlessly upon a sea of troubles, until at last the inevitable shipwreck comes upon the pitiless shoals of death. Our great Father, God, dwells Himself in an atmosphere of eternal calm, and His love makes Him desire to share His peace with us—"the peace of God which passeth all understanding." (*W. Hay Aitken, M.A.*)

*Peace*.—Let us ask, What is it that hinders peace? in order that we may better understand the things that belong to our peace. Here, I think, we shall discover three distinct sources of mental disturbance by which man is affected—three distinct and terrible discords that mar the harmony of human life until they are resolved by redemption. Man is, to begin with, out of peace with God; he is, in consequence, out of peace with nature, or the order of things with which he is surrounded; and, in the third place, he is out of peace with himself. These other discords which break in upon and destroy his peace are dependent upon and spring from the first. It is because man is not at peace with God that he finds himself at war with nature, and the victim of internal feuds. The conditions of his existence in this material world seem of a kind to militate against his peace; but this is only so when they are viewed apart from any higher and ultimate object to which they may be designed by infinite benevolence to contribute. Once let me see that the trials and uncertainties of life are intended to enforce upon my attention the true character of my present position and its relations to the future, and I no longer quarrel with them. I confess that I am a stranger and a sojourner, and I see wisdom and love in the very circumstances which impress this upon my mind. And even so is it with those moral discords that disturb my peace within. They spring from the controversy that exists between man and God. Here we see how the Gospel is adapted to the deepest needs of the human heart, and how skilfully it is designed to deal with cause and effect in their own proper order in the moral sphere. The Gospel is primarily a proclamation of peace between God and man, a revelation of a wondrous method of reconciliation. (*Ibid.*)

*The way of peace*.—The text contains the open secret of a spiritual life, which is peace, and discloses the sure way of attaining it. The person spoken of is one whose mind is stayed on God. The man has become fixed upon this centre, and he cannot be moved therefrom. To this man God is omnipotent, omniscient, and all-loving. God commands his entire nature. There is a prevalent disposition amongst men to be stayed upon themselves, but the Scriptures declare that "he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." A self-centred man is always a weak man. There is another class of men who desire to be stayed upon riches. But God says, "Labour not to be rich, for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle towards Heaven" (1 Tim. vi. 9, 10). The man referred to in the text, if he have money, does not stay himself upon it. This man does not stay himself on his fellow-men. There is a prevalent disposition amongst men to pin their confidence to some human sleeve, and when that proves unfaithful, as it often does, such people are thrown into confusion. Peace flows alone from trust in God. But faith never stands alone. Peace never stands alone in the heart

of man. Trust brings peace, but it brings other graces besides. Trust does not put a man to sleep. It does not alienate a man from the source of power. It does not scatter a man. It unites him and unites him to God. It animates him. It sets him in motion. The ear of the trusting disciple lies close to the mouth of his beloved Master, whose words are the sweetest messages that can possibly break upon his consciousness. The feet of faith tremble with desire to run upon the errands of its Lord. Obedience is the corollary of faith. Without obedience, peace would become discord in the soul. Trust stirs us to industry and success in prayer; it makes us cheerful and faithful in obedience; it makes us patient in affliction; it makes us resolute in trials; it consoles us in desertions; it makes us fruitful in life, and triumphantly victorious in death. (L. R. Foote, D.D.)

*Trust gives steadfastness*.—How can a willow be stiffened into an iron pillar? Only—if I might use such a violent metaphor—when it receives into its substance the iron particles that it draws from the soil in which it is rooted. How can a bit of thistle-down be kept motionless amidst the tempest? Only by being glued to something that is fixed. What do men do with light things on deck when the ship is pitching? Lash them to a fixed point. Lash yourselves to God by simple trust, and then you will partake of His serene immutability in such fashion as it is possible for the creature to participate in the attributes of the Creator. (A. Maclaren, D.D.)

*Perfect peace a medium of revelation*.—When you have a really calm sea, what rare things the placid waters reveal! Sculptured coral, whorled shells, iridescent fish, pearls—snowflakes of the deep not one moment white but white for ever, gems whose strange fire the floods cannot quench, with glorious plants and blossoms, as if the silver water mirrored the flowers of Heaven as well as its stars. And what rare things the unstirred sea reflects! The ambient blue, with all its treasures of light and colour; the devious coast, with all its fantasy of rock forestry and mountain. But let one ripple pass over the glassy tide, and the matchless spectacle is sadly marred. So in “perfect” peace we realise the glory of our own being, the glory of higher worlds, as no language can tell; but the first ripple of passion, or care, or doubt, spoils the magic of the picture and the joy. (W. L. Watkinson.)

*The human soul needs support*.—When the mind leans for strength upon itself it cannot be at peace. Conflicting thoughts are ever passing through the brain, and we need something solid on which to stay ourselves. The mind may be compared to ivy, which, if it is to grow vigorous, needs to cling to an upright support. The mind may be also likened to a lever, which without a fulcrum is almost useless; and to a ladder, which when placed upright will fall, but when stayed against a building is steady and strong enough to bear your weight. (W. Birch.)

*Perfect peace in peril*.—A respected brother in the ministry once told me that he was at Villa Franca in Italy, when a shock of an earthquake was felt. The various members of a family with which he then was all showed alarm or uneasiness in different ways, with the exception of one, who merely smiled at perceiving the effect produced on them. That one was a dying man—in about a week after he died in the Lord—and he knew that the time of his departure was at hand. It mattered little to him whether he were summoned by the slow wasting hectic, or by the crush of an earthquake. His mind was stayed on the Lord, and was therefore kept in perfect peace under circumstances which would have made most of us tremble. (R. M. Kyle, B.A.)

*Membership in the ideal city*.—Ver. 3 (see R.V. margin) states the conditions of membership in the ideal Zion; a “steadfast mind” may share the “peace” which the ideal city is to enjoy. (Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.)

*Freedom from care*.—A ship is made to go in the water, and no matter how deep the sea nor how wild the tempest, all goes well so long as the water does not get into the ship. The problem of managing a ship is, not to keep the ship out of the water, but to keep the water out of the ship. The problem of true Christian living is, not to keep ourselves out of cares and trials and temptations, but to keep the cares and temptations from getting into our souls. (J. R. Miller, D.D.)

*God between the soul and circumstances*.—A great difference comes into the life when, instead of putting circumstances between ourselves and God, we put God between ourselves and circumstances. Then when annoyance and fret, unkind speeches and unjust treatment, worries about money and helpers and procedure accumulate, they seem like the passage of crowds up and down a London thoroughfare, whilst we sit quietly within and pursue our work behind the double windows, that render the room almost impervious to sound. Happy the soul which has learned to

live inside the film of God's invisible protection, poured around it by the Spirit of peace! (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Mr. Gladstone's text*:—It is said that Mr. Gladstone, for forty years, had on the wall of his bedroom this text: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." These were the first words on which the great statesman's eyes opened every morning, and they were one of the sources of his calm strength. (*Sunday School Chronicle.*) *Trust in God reasonable*:—George M'Donald says somewhere that it is more absurd to trust God by halves than it is not to believe in Him at all. *Stonewall Jackson's faith*:—At a battle in the American Civil War, a general asked Stonewall Jackson how it was he kept so cool while the bullets literally rained about him. Jackson instantly became grave, and earnestly answered, "My religious belief teaches me to feel as safe in battle as in bed. God has fixed the time of my death. I do not concern myself about that, but to be always ready." After a pause, he added, looking his questioner in the face, "That is the way all men should live, and then all would be equally brave." *Worry*:—Every time a man worries, physiologists say, he changes a portion of his nervous system. Sometimes the change is serious; sometimes it is permanent; sometimes it is fatal. What worry does for the body, it does also for the spirit. It is the destruction of energy, the ruin of that serenity which is half of power, and the fruitful cause of a large part of life's failures. The bicycle is useful because, on a level or a down grade, it relieves a man not only of the weight of his burdens, but even of his own weight, and he can put all his strength into the matter of getting along. Now that is precisely what the Christian's trust will do for him. God never intended that we should carry the burdens He lays upon us. He never intended even that we should carry the burden of our own evil nature and sinful tendencies. He is willing, nay, eager, to carry them all for us, emancipating all our strength for pure progress. (*A. R. Wells.*)

Ver. 4. Trust ye in the Lord for ever.—*Trusting in the Lord*:—I. THE DUTY ITSELF. 1. It implies an acquiescence or submission to the will of God, whatever it may be—trusting in Him, assured that He is doing, and will do, what is right. This was the spirit of Eli of old, who, though under great family trial, still said, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good." This was the spirit of the patriarch Job, who under all his trials could say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." 2. It implies also an application to the Lord, with confidence that the application will not be in vain. Perhaps the best passage I can give you upon this subject will be that which contains the character given of Hezekiah. In 2 Kings xviii. 5, we are told, "He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses." There was habitual confidence in the Lord, which led Hezekiah to apply to the Lord in his hours of trial; and therefore, when he was in danger of being besieged, he instantly felt that his whole confidence must be in the Lord! So he took the letter, and in close communion with God read aloud that letter, trusting that the Lord would deliver him from all the threatenings which the letter contained. 3. Closely connected with these two explanations is that which I may call dependence and expectation; so that we may say, in our hours of anxiety, "Jehovah-jireh, the Lord will provide." All this is perfectly compatible with the energetic use of means for deliverance out of our trials. Indeed, wherever there is the neglect of means, there is simple presumption. 4. Notice, again, in the description of the duty set before us in the text, that it is to endure for ever. We read here, "Trust in the Lord for ever." This involves both time and circumstances. II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT. The text tells us, "For in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength"; or, "The Lord Jehovah is the Rock of Ages." The encouragement, therefore, is based on the everlasting strength of God. (*H. M. Villiers, M.A.*) *Trust in God*:—I. AS A RELIGIOUS DUTY. God, in our view, either in His wisdom, power, grace, love, or fidelity, must always be the object of religious trust and confidence; and I think it will be found that all these great qualities and perfections in God are peculiarly exercised for the benefit and happiness of believers. It is not merely in these abstract qualities that the Christian is to trust, but in their exercise and development, for his own benefit and advantage. II. WHAT IS ESSENTIAL TO THE EXERCISE OF TRUST IN GOD. 1. It will be essential for you to cultivate scriptural knowledge. The more the

mind is brought under the illumination of the Spirit and the Word of God—the more we are in the habit of connecting time with eternity, taking a large and extended view of both—the more we consult the nature of Divine providence, as developed in the history of His ancient people, in every age of the world, and the manner of His dealings with them—the better we become acquainted with the nature and spirit of His own work, the work of religion in the human heart, and, certainly, the more confidence we shall be enabled to exercise in God. We are very often brought into a state of darkness, doubt, perplexity, bondage, and suffering, for the want merely of enlightened and scriptural views of God, and the method of His dealings with His church. 2. Another state is also necessary—that is, living in a reconciled state with God. III. THE EXTENT TO WHICH WE OUGHT TO CARRY THIS CONFIDENCE IN GOD. And first of all we may say, we ought to trust Him with everything. But then, there is this remark to be made—that we ought to engage in nothing that is unlawful and sinful; for we cannot trust God with that which is evil. Let us not classify events, and consider some little and some great, some to be reposed on God and others not. The fact is, we ought to take everything to Him in the spirit of humble prayer and confidence, imploring His blessing upon it. Let me remark, too, that we ought to trust God for everything, as well as with everything. (*J. Dixon, D.D.*) *Unchanging trust in an unchanging God*:—The grandest and profoundest truths of the Old and New Testament with regard to the Divine nature are always presented as the bases of exhortations to conduct and to emotion. There is no such thing in Scripture as an aimless revelation of the Divine character. That great “for” of my text links together the two clauses. I. Observe THE NAME OF JEHOVAH here given as the ground of invitation to our trust. “In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength,” or “the Rock of Ages.” The expression that is here employed, the singular reduplication of the name, which only occurs in one other place in Scripture, is no doubt intended to emphasise the idea that underlies the name. We find here the same singular appellation which occurs in one of the Psalms, where we read of God as “riding in the Heavens by His name Jah.” So here the name appears as “Jah, Jehovah”—the former name being, as I suppose, the abbreviated form of the latter, and the purpose of employing both being to call attention emphatically to the name and what it means. What does it mean? It speaks—(1) Of unchangeableness. (2) Of a sure asylum and safe dwelling-place and inexpugnable fortress into which we may all retreat. “His place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks,” and high above all possibility of escalade and safe from all fear of assault or of change they may dwell who dwell in the secret place of the Most High. (3) And besides the thought of a safe asylum is the other thought of a rock for a foundation; who builds on it builds secure. II. THE TRUST which corresponds to, and lays hold of the Rock. “Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is the Rock of Ages.” The word which is here rendered “trust” is an extremely graphic and significant one, and teaches us a great deal more of the meaning and essence of the act of faith than many more elaborate treatises would do. It simply means “to depend.” Charles Wesley, in his great hymn, has, with the Christian poet’s unerring instinct, laid his finger on the precise meaning of the word when he says—

Hangs my helpless soul on Thee.

Incongruous as the metaphor hanging on the rock may seem, it conveys to us the true idea of the trust which is peace and life. But did you ever notice that in our use of the word “depend” we have two different expressions, which convey two different though kindred meanings? To be dependent on gives a different shade of signification from to depend on. The former acknowledges inferiority, takes a position of receptivity, and recognises that from another, who is conceived as being above us, there flow down upon us all good things, strengths, and graces that we may require. So, in this hanging upon God, there is the consciousness of utter emptiness in myself and of my need of receiving all that I can have or want from His full hand. But in faith or trust we hang on God in that other sense too. We are not only consciously dependent upon Him, as conscious of our emptiness and of His fulness, but we depend upon Him, as being calmly and completely certain of Him and of His being and doing all that we need. In other words, trust is reliance. Dependence and reliance are both metaphors. Both picture resting one’s whole weight on some person or thing beyond one’s self,



but dependence pictures the weight as hanging from and upheld by a fixed point above, and reliance pictures it as reposing on and upheld by a fixed point beneath; and each sets forth in graphic fashion the act of the soul which Old and New Testament alike regard as the condition of vital union with God. That trust is reasonable. People pit faith against reason, as if the two things were antagonists. Faith is the outcome of reason. The only difference between it and reason, in the narrow sense of the word, is that faith has got longer sight than reason, and can see into what is dark to it. There is nothing so reasonable as to trust utterly in Him whose name is Jehovah, and in whom is the Rock of Ages. III. **THE PERPETUITY OF THE CONFIDENCE** which corresponds with the eternity of the Rock. "Trust ye in the Lord for ever." It is a commandment and a promise. An unchanging God ought to secure an unchanging trust. "For ever!" Amid all the fluctuations of our minds and dispositions, there ought to be this one steadfast attitude of our spirits kept up continuously through a whole life. "For ever!" Whatever may happen in the way of changing conditions and altered circumstances, for the same unchanging purpose brings all changes. The same diurnal motion brings day and night. The same annual revolution brings summer and winter. It is the same unchanging purpose of the steadfast God that creates the wintry darkness through which the orb of our lives has to pass, and the long summer hours of sunshine. But my text, like all God's commandments, carries a promise hidden in its bosom. All that build on the Rock of Ages build imperishable homes, which last as long as the Rock on which they are founded. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Strong by trusting the strong*:—Readers of Darwin will recall the description he gives of a marine plant which rises from a depth of one hundred and fifty to two hundred feet, and floats on the surface of the water in the midst of the great breakers of the Western Ocean. The stem of this plant is less than an inch through; yet it grows and thrives and holds its own against the fierce smittings and pressures of breakers which no masses of rock, however hard, could long withstand. What is the secret of this marvellous resistance and endurance? How can this little, slender plant face the fury of the elements so successfully, and, in spite of storms and tempests, keep its hold, and perpetuate itself from century to century? It reaches down into the still depths, where it fixes its grasp, after the fashion of the instinct that has been put into it, to the naked rocks; and no commotion of the upper waters can shake it loose. (*Weekly Pulpit.*)

Ver. 8. **Yea, in the way of Thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for Thee.**—*God's people waiting for Him in the way of His judgments*:—I. **THE WORDS CONTAIN A SOLEMN PROTESTATION**—a protestation, on the part of these faithful people of the Lord, to Himself, in reference to His "judgments." "Yea," say they, "Verily Thou, O Divine Searcher of hearts, knowest that we lie not, when we declare that in the way of Thy judgments we have waited for Thee." What a happy state of mind and heart is this! There may be a multiplication of observances, fastings, solemn assemblies, where, on the part of multitudes, there is nothing but form. II. **THESE GODLY JEWS SPEAK TO THE LORD OF HIS "JUDGMENTS."** If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without Thy knowledge and permission, how much more is Thy agency to be traced in those mighty desolations that have moved the earth, and come down with such appalling fury on the land of Thine own people! III. **THESE GODLY PEOPLE, IN THEIR SINNING AND CHASTENED LAND, SPEAK TO GOD OF "THE WAY" OF HIS JUDGMENTS.** We read of Jehovah's "way" in a gracious sense—His way of mercy to lost sinners—the wondrous and glorious path along which He has passed, and is still passing, in saving sinners of our fallen race through the atonement of His own beloved incarnate Son (Psa. lxxvii. 1, 2). Blessed, most blessed, are they who are Divinely taught this "way" of the Lord! A far other "way" of Judah's God is that to which her mourning children refer in the verse before us. It is His judicial way—the wrathful way in which He is provoked to "come out of His place," and move towards highly favoured but deeply sinning and guilty lands. IV. **Let us contemplate and imitate the exercise of this "small remnant," of the fearers of the Lord in the land of Judah. THEY WAITED FOR HIM IN THE WAY OF HIS JUDGMENTS.** What are the elements which should enter into the exercise to which we are this day called? 1. Solemn recognition of God. 2. Solemn adoration of this high and holy Lord God. 3. Justification of God. 4. Humiliation of soul before God. 5. Pouring out the heart in earnest supplica-

tion before the Lord. (*W. Mackray, M.A.*) *The right improvement of public or private calamities*:—I. IN EVERY AFFLICTIVE DISPENSATION OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE IT BECOMES US TO RECOGNISE THE HAND OF THE LORD. They are “Thy” judgments. In doing this we imitate the example of the wise and good in every age. II. EVERY CALAMITY, WHETHER PRIVATE OR PUBLIC, SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MANIFESTATION OF THE DIVINE DISPLEASURE AGAINST SIN. They are Thy “judgments.” III. IN EVERY CALAMITY THE MIND OF THE BELIEVER SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO GOD. “The desire of our soul is to Thy name, and to the remembrance of Thee.” 1. This part of the passage expresses the most anxious solicitude that the Divine glory might be promoted by all the dispensations of His providence towards the children of men. 2. This part of our text seems to intimate also to whom the afflicted believer should apply for support. “The desire of our soul is to Thy name, and to the remembrance of Thee.” 3. This part of our text exhibits the believer finding a source of encouragement under present trouble, or in the anticipation of future difficulties, in a reference to his former experience of the power, the faithfulness and grace of his covenant God. “The desire of our soul is to the remembrance of Thee.” IV. IN CIRCUMSTANCES OF AFFLICTION, WHETHER PRIVATE OR PUBLIC, IT IS THE DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF THE BELIEVER TO BE FOUND WAITING UPON GOD. “In the way of Thy judgments have we waited for Thee, O God.” The verb “to wait,” as used in the text, denotes desire, expectation, patience, and perseverance. Learn—1. That it is an evil thing and bitter to sin against God. 2. The infinite value of that system, which opens the way for the sinful creature to return to God, with the certain hope of being pardoned, adopted, and eternally blessed. 3. Let the sinner be exhorted to seek that Divine blessing which turns the curse into a blessing. 4. Let the believer labour to live in the exercise of the high and glorious privilege—waiting on God. (*Essex Congregational Remembrancer.*) *Christians, and their communion with God* (with ver. 9):—I. THERE IS, IN THE PEOPLE OF GOD, A PRINCIPLE OF COMMUNION WITH GOD. 1. This is where their spiritual life begins. 2. This is where the life of the real Christian grows. 3. It becomes to the believer the tenor of his life to please God. 4. This principle of communion with God becomes the very flower of our lives. 5. This is the hunger and thirst of the Christian. 6. This proves that there has been a Divine renewal wrought in us. 7. This proves your sonship. 8. This proves your holiness, too, in a measure, for like will to like. 9. This proves your heavenliness, too, for that same desire which draws you to God is drawing you to Heaven. II. THIS PRINCIPLE DISPLAYS ITSELF AND WORKS IN VARIOUS WAYS. “Yea, in the way of Thy judgments,” &c. We are longing for God, and it is dark and cloudy. What shall we do then? 1. Why, wait for Him. Sometimes, the way of God’s judgments may mean the appointed way, the regular way. Whenever thou hast a great trouble, expect a great mercy. 2. This communion leads to desiring, “The desire of our soul,” &c. 3. Your desire is to remember the Lord. “And to the remembrance of Thee.” I wish that I had a memory that was so narrow that it could only hold the things of God. 4. This principle of communion shows itself in a personal yearning. The eighth verse is in the plural, the ninth in the singular. 5. This principle of communion takes one other form, that of personal seeking. “Yea, with my spirit within me,” &c. III. THE LORD TAKES PLEASURE IN THIS COMMUNION WITH HIS PEOPLE (ver. 20). (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) The desire of our soul is to Thy name.—*The desire of the renewed soul*:—What is personal religion, and what is personal evidence of it? One single word in my text is a key to all—“desire.” The sum and substance of a believer’s longings towards God is to know more of God, to enjoy more of God, to live more upon the fulness of the Son of God, and to become abstracted from all but God Himself. A sound creed is contained in these three things: I am a guilty wretch, deserving hell; Jesus is everything I want, for time and for eternity; I am His, and He is mine. Now, keeping this in view, let us descant upon—I. THE OBJECT OF THE REGENERATED SOUL’S DESIRE. Look at this as it relates to the Holy Three in One. The soul may be longing for another sight of his Bible. But why? Because he longs to meet with God there. He may be longing to hear another Gospel sermon. Why? Because it sets forth the perfections of the God he loves, and therefore he expects to meet Him there. He may be longing for another ordinance day. Why? Because Jesus is often made known to him in “breaking of bread.” And so whatever means and ordinances are used, whatever externals are laid before the child of God and employed by him, it is not these

that will satisfy him. It is God in them. I pass on to show—II. WHAT WEANING WORK IS ESSENTIAL TO THIS. Until there is a great deal of weaning in the Christian's experience there will not be a very great deal of spirituality. III. THE NEGOTIATIONS THAT ARISE OUT OF THIS. If the earnest desire of my soul is after the enjoyment of God, I cannot grow careless about using means. (*J. Irons.*)

Ver. 9. With my soul have I desired Thee in the night.—*The religious craving and seeking of the soul at night* :—There is no work so momentous, so influential, as the work of the soul in the sleepless hours of night. Busy in calling up departed friends and interchanging thoughts again, busy in recalling the past and foreboding the future, busy in reflections concerning itself and its God. In these words we have—I. The soul's religious LONGING in the night. The soul has many instinctive cravings, cravings for knowledge, for beauty, for order, for society; but its deepest hunger is for God. "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." For what in God does it hunger? 1. For the assurance of His love. We are so formed that we crave the possession of the object of our love. Were all the works of God ours, we should be hungry without Him. He who gives His strongest love to us gives Himself. 2. For revelations of His mind. It yearns for ideas from the great Fountain of intelligence and love. II. The soul's religious SEARCHING in the night. "With my spirit within me will I seek Thee early." The soul seeking for God implies—I. A consciousness that it has not got Him. All have God's works everywhere, God's influence everywhere, God's presence everywhere; but only a few have Himself, the assurance of His love. Hence the searching. 2. A belief that He may be obtained. We may all have God as our portion by seeking Him in Christ. Men hunger for some things they can never get—wealth, power, social influence, the distinctions of genius, &c. But all who hunger for God obtain Him. Conclusion—God is the great want of the soul. Without Him what are we? Planets detached from the sun, wandering stars for whom are reserved blackness and anarchy. "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee?" &c. (*Homilist.*) *Death and judgment* :—The judgments recorded in the Old Testament by the special inspiration of God, showing them to be, as common centres, retribution on the sons of men, are intended to lead us to the belief in that final judgment after death of which we read in the New Testament. These early judgments of nations and states were the shadows, "the going before," of that awful time when all mankind shall appear to receive the sentence with its eternal consequences for good or evil. Now, here we see the power of religion in sustaining the soul of man under the awfulness of Divine retribution and the expectations of God's anger on the sons of the world; we see the expression, by those who have passed through such a time, set before us as indications of the mind we are to cherish and the hopes we may entertain in view of that final judgment, and it shows the power of religious faith to maintain the soul in peace against the two greatest fears which darken the soul of man. 1. The fear of death. How nature shrinks from what seems to be an annihilation of this life! 2. Yet there is a greater fear than this—the thought of meeting God in the solitary going forth into what seems the dark night. It was not always so with man's soul. He did not fear God in his original creation. But as soon as sin was committed observe the change; he shrank from the thought and the presence—from the approaching sound of the Divine appearance. That was the effect of one sin, and since that sin has spread through the whole of nature and has caused sinfulness to taint the whole being of men. Men shrink from their fellow-creatures when they are better than themselves. Those children who have committed faults shrink from their parents' eyes, however fond they may be of them. Men shrink from themselves when conscious of their own sin, and often it leads them to commit self-murder. Now, religious faith raises a man above these two dark fears haunting the soul, produces peace, and kindles brightest hopes. (*T. T. Carter, M.A.*) *The desire of the soul in spiritual darkness* :—Night appears to be a time peculiarly favourable to devotion. Its solemn stillness helps to free the mind from that perpetual din which the cares of the world will bring around it; and the stars looking down from Heaven upon us shine as if they would attract us up to God. I shall not speak of night natural at all, although there may be a great deal of room for poetic thought and expression. I. I shall speak to CONFIRMED CHRISTIANS; and I shall bring one or two remarks to bear upon their case, if they are in darkness. 1. The Christian man has not always a bright, shining sun; he has

seasons of darkness and night. It is a great truth, that the true religion of the living God is calculated to give a man happiness below as well as bliss above. But, notwithstanding, experience tells us that if the course of the just be "as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day," yet sometimes that light is eclipsed. (1) Sometimes it is night over the whole Church at once. Of course each Christian participates in it. (2) At other times this darkness over the soul of the Christian rises from temporal distresses. (3) "But oh!" says another, "you have not described my night. I have not much amiss in business; and I would not care if I had—but I have a night in my spirit." "Oh," says one, "I have not a single evidence of my Christianity now. I was a child of God, I know; but something tells me that I am none of His now." 2. A Christian man's religion will keep its colour in the night. "With my soul have I desired Thee in the night." What a mighty deal of silver-slipper religion we have in this world. Men will follow Christ when every one cries "Hosanna!" But they will not go with Him in the night. There is many a Christian whose piety did not burn much when he was in prosperity, but it will be known in adversity. 3. All that the Christian wants in the night is his God. "With desire have I desired Thee in the night." By day there are many things that a Christian will desire besides his Lord; but in the night he wants nothing but his God. 4. There are times when all the saint can do is to desire. We have a vast number of evidences of piety: some are practical, some experimental, some doctrinal; and the more evidences a man has of his piety the better. We like a number of signatures, to make a deed more valid, if possible. We like to invest property in a great number of trustees, in order that it may be all the safer; and so we love to have many evidences. But there are seasons when a Christian cannot get any. He can scarcely get one witness to come and attest his godliness. But there is one witness that very seldom is gagged, and that is, "I have desired Thee—I have desired Thee in the night." II. Speak to NEWLY AWAKENED SOULS. 1. The first question they would ask is this—How am I to know that my desires are proofs of a work of grace in my soul? (1) You may tell whether your desires are of God by their constancy. (2) By their efficacy. If your desires lead you into real "works meet for repentance," then they come from God. (3) By their urgency. 2. But you say, "If I have desired God, why have not I obtained my desire before now?" (1) You have hardly a right to ask the question; for God has a right to grant your petition or not as He pleases. But since thine anxiety has dictated the question, let my anxiety attempt to answer it. (2) Perhaps God has not granted thy desire because He wishes thine own profit thereby. He designs to show thee more of the desperate wickedness of thine heart, that in future thou mayest fear to trust it; He wants thee to see more of the blackness of darkness and of the horrible pit of sin, that like a burnt child thou mayest shun the fire for ever. He lets thee go down into the dungeon, that thou mayest prize liberty the better when it comes. And He is keeping thee waiting, moreover, that thy longings may be quickened. (3) Besides, God keeps thee waiting, perhaps, in order that He may display the riches of His grace more fully to thee at the last. I believe that some of us who were kept by God a long while before we found Him, loved Him better perhaps than we should have done if we had received Him directly; and we can preach better to others, we can speak more of His lovingkindness and tender merc. (4) One thought more. Perhaps it has come already. I fancy some of you think you will have a kind of electric shock—that a sort of galvanism, or something or other, will pass through you, such as you never had before. Do not be expecting any miracles now. If you will not think you are pardoned till you get a vision you will have to wait many a year. 3. But there is one more serious inquiry: and it is, Will God grant my desire at last? Yes, poor soul, verily He will. It is quite impossible that you should have desired God and should be lost. (C. H. Spurgeon.) With my spirit within me will I seek Thee early.—*Seeking God early*:—1. Early, in the morning of life, which is the most proper season for this employment, your faculties being then most active and vigorous. 2. Early, in preference to all other objects which solicit your attention, seeking first, and above all things, the kingdom of God and His righteousness. 3. Early, in every day of life, after you are refreshed with rest; before you engage in company, in business, or amusement; determined, with the man according to God's own heart, that your voice the Lord shall hear in the morning. (R. Macculloch.) When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will

learn righteousness.—*The judgments of God*.—I. THE AUTHOR OF THOSE JUDGMENTS WITH WHICH WE ARE VISITED; THE ENDS FOR WHICH THEY ARE SENT; AND THEIR FITNESS TO INSTRUCT US IN RIGHTEOUSNESS. 1. Judgments come from God. Judgments that would crush us when proceeding from any other source, can be borne when viewed as coming from the hand of God. 2. But why does God visit us with judgments? Not that He delights in the miseries of His creatures. "He afflicteth not willingly, nor grieveth the children of men." He would rather "draw them by the cords of love"; and "by His goodness lead them to repentance." 3. A few plain considerations are sufficient to show that the judgments of God have a natural tendency to awaken men from their security and to teach them righteousness. Man is a depraved and corrupted creature. The very multitude of Divine favours hides the hand which confers them, and makes us forget our Benefactor; intoxicated and blinded by enjoyment, in the bosom of peace and abundance, piety languishes, our passions are inflamed, and we cease to "hunger and thirst after righteousness." In this situation, what does the mercy, the compassion of our Father, require from Him? To visit us with His judgments. Then we see the impotence of the idols which have seduced us; conscience wakes from its lethargy, and retraces to us in accents awfully impressive all our wanderings from God and righteousness. (1) The judgments of God deeply affect us and lead us to repentance, because they are rarer than mercies. (2) The judgments of God address powerfully that passion which has most influence on the greater part of mankind—the passion of fear. (3) These judgments of God lead to righteousness because they teach in that most compendious and efficacious mode, by example. On beholding them we feel that the threatenings of God are not a mere dead letter, which need fill us with no dismay. (4) Judgments lead to righteousness because they present God in such a character that even the most stout-hearted sinners tremble to oppose Him. When He comes to plead with them, clothed with grace and compassion, they may abuse these attributes to their destruction; but to sport with Him when "He maketh His way in the whirlwind and the storm"; when He comes armed with the thunders of omnipotence, and dressed in the robes of vengeance, requires a depravity worse than diabolical; since, on such occasions, even "devils tremble." But although judgments have thus a natural tendency to lead men to God, although they have often in an eminent degree taught righteousness, yet have they invariably this effect? Alas, no! there are some who can resist judgment as well as mercies. II. INQUIRE WHY THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD DO NOT ALWAYS HAVE THIS HAPPY EFFECT, which they are designed and calculated to produce. Judgments are frequently rendered useless because of our insensibility. (*H. Kollock, D.D.*) *The judgments of God*.—I. THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD ARE DESIGNED BY HIM, AND IN THEIR OWN NATURE DO TEND TO TEACH THE INHABITANTS OF THE WORLD TRUE REPENTANCE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS. 1. They are apt to work on our minds a stronger conviction of the providence of God. 2. They most powerfully awaken in us the thoughts of the great day of judgment. II. INQUIRE WHETHER THEY DO ALWAYS PRODUCE THIS EFFECT. And here experience acquaints us that there is something in the corruption and acquired wickedness of some men's hearts that baffles this as well as other methods of God's dealing with them: they are so far from repenting and learning righteousness by the corrections of God that they many times add impiety to their immoralities, and deny that He concerns Himself in the government of the world. III. EXHORT YOU TO LEARN RIGHTEOUSNESS FROM THE PRESENT JUDGMENTS OF GOD. (*T. Manningham, D.D.*) *The judgments of God*.—By the term, "judgments of God," the Scriptures sometimes denote the decisions, whether favourable or adverse, which God passes upon the conduct of men. But more frequently this phrase is employed to denote the effect of such decisions when they are unfavourable—to denote those remarkable punishments by which the Almighty chastises the wickedness of guilty individuals and the crimes of guilty nations. In the course of God's providential procedure, we often see His judgments; we see misfortune and distress following so closely and visibly the conduct of men, that we can have no doubt whatever concerning the connection that, by His appointment, subsists between them. But there are many cases where the precise object of the Divine visitation is unknown. In such cases it would therefore be rash and uncharitable to interpret particularly, and with reference to individuals, the views of Divine judgment when affecting a multitude. It is enough for us to know that these judgments, whatever be their kind, their nature, or their degree,

are instruments of God's government of His moral and rational offspring, and that the inhabitants of the earth may learn from them lessons of righteousness. I. The judgments of God, whatever their form and degree, are found powerfully to excite SENTIMENTS OF WARM PIETY and DEEP DEVOTION toward that God from whom these judgments proceed. There are various principles of our constitution, by which the judgments of Heaven contribute to a salutary effect upon the minds of a thoughtless world. Unexpected revolutions, either in the natural or moral world, naturally arrest our attention. They demonstrate, in the most sensible manner, to our consciences, our own weakness, and the incompetency of our powers, either to produce or control the changing events around us; and to every mind that is not totally enfeebled and darkened, through corruption, such revolutions suggest with irresistible force the notion of a powerful Supreme Ruler; they alarm our fears at His displays, and awaken all those sentiments (this is at least their natural tendency, or ought to be their constant effect) of humility and penitence, which form the beginning of a pious and devout temper. And we learn from Scripture that this is not only the tendency of the Divine judgments when rightly improved, but often the very purpose for which they were sent by the providence of God. II. If, then, the judgments of God be both fitted and designed to awaken us to the ways of His providence, HOW SHOULD WE LABOUR TO REGARD AND IMPROVE THEM! (*G. H. Baird, D.D.*) *National judgments*.—I. THAT THIS COUNTRY HAS BEEN VISITED BY THE JUDGMENTS OF

God. 1. Our nation has, indeed, been a scene of many and extraordinary mercies. The rise and establishment of free institutions, and that wonderful balance of constitution which has prevented both the extremes of government,—royal despotism on the one hand, and popular anarchy on the other,—deserve our grateful recognition. Our own soil has long been a stranger to the desolating ravages of war, and the shouts and confused noise of battle have been heard only at a distance. The discoveries of science and the attainments of art have been unparalleled; and useful knowledge has been diffused to an unexampled extent over the various classes of society. We have had the benefits of a Divine religion, reformed from the corruptions which had accumulated with the course of ages; we have had an almost universal diffusion of the pure Word of God, the inspired oracles of truth. "The lines are fallen to us in pleasant places; yea, we have a goodly heritage!" 2. Yet it is also true that the judgments of God have been abroad in the land. That mighty hand is the hand of God; that mysterious and invisible power is the power of God. There is indeed a sinful and fatal disposition abroad, to account for things only by speaking of fortune and chance, or by referring, at most, to the passions and principles of those human agents by whom the management of national interests is conducted. This forgetfulness of the Most High, amounting to a practical atheism, and spread widely over the habits of men, is one of the worst signs of the times in which we live. II. WHETHER, BY THE INHABITANTS OF THIS COUNTRY, A RIGHT IMPROVEMENT OF ITS VISITATIONS HAS BEEN MADE. "When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." We do not imagine this to be a positive assertion, that the learning of righteousness is the invariable consequence of the Divine judgments, but a statement that such ought to be their result. If it be true that the Divine judgments are poured forth in consequence of transgression, it must be clear that the right conduct to be pursued by those who feel them is to repent and to reform. III. THE REFLECTIONS BY WHICH AN IMMEDIATE IMPROVEMENT OF PAST VISITATIONS IS FORCIBLY URGED. 1. Consider what must be expected as the public consequences of continued impenitence and transgression. (1) The removal of religious privileges is an event scarcely to be doubted; and it seems but just and right that when the means of spiritual guidance and blessing have been for a protracted period undervalued and abused, they should be withdrawn (*Rev. ii. 5*). (2) The removal of religious privileges will be the harbinger of national desolation. 2. Consider what will doubtless be the results of the desired amendment and repentance. "Iniquity shall not be our ruin." New glories will then arise upon our land. (*James Parsons.*) *Instruction from the judgment of God*.—It is an act of righteousness to give every one their own; to God, the things that are God's; to do right to all men, and a man's self also. I. PIETY TOWARDS GOD consists in these six particulars—1. Reverence and awful regard of the Divine majesty. 2. The admiring and adoring Him, in His height, excellency, and perfection. 3. Love and delight in Him, because of His grace and goodness and free communication;

with thankfulness for His benefits. 4. Trust in God, because of His faithfulness; and to give Him credit, because of His approved truth and goodness. 5. Submission to Him, because of His superiority and sovereignty. 6. Duty and service, because of His dominion and property. II. **RIGHTEOUSNESS TOWARDS MEN.** That doth comprehend in it good behaviour and equal dealings. 1. In general, it doth take in the obedience and subjection that all inferiors owe to their superiors and governors. 2. That fairness and complacency which ought to be between all those that converse upon terms of equality. 3. That tenderness that ought to be used towards inferiors, or in a worse condition than ourselves. 4. Thankfulness, where we are beholden. 5. Uprightness with all with whom we have to do. (1) In our speeches, truth and honesty. (2) Fidelity, where we are credited and trusted. (3) Performance of our engagements and undertakings. (4) Candour in all our judgments and censures. (5) Fair and benign representations of men, and handsome constructions and interpretations; always being ready to take things in the best sense; and to interpret other men's words, as we would they should interpret ours. (6) Lowliness and courtesy in our transactions with others. (7) Clearness and integrity in all our converse. (8) Moderation in our demand of reparation, in case of wrong received. (9) Gentleness and calmness, in case of provocation. (10) Clemency and compassion towards those that have done us evil. (11) Bounty and charity towards those that are in necessity. (12) Love and goodwill towards all men. III. **RIGHTEOUSNESS TO OURSELVES.** 1. It doth comprehend in it modesty and humility: that is the soul's temper. 2. Sobriety: that is the mind's balance. 3. Temperance and chastity: that is the body's security. More particularly—(1) The mind equally poised, free from vanity, conceit, intoxication; and the body ordered according to the rules of reason and virtue. (2) The soul discharged of corroding envy and biting malice; and the body gently used. For as we should not live to feed the beast, which is done by epicurism, and giving way to sensual pleasure: so are we to be merciful to our bodies. 4. The whole man at heart's ease, through Christian courage and resolution; reposing in God's protection and providence; charging ourselves only with the use of lawful means; and when we have done our duty, leaving the success to God, acknowledging our dependence upon Him, and the need of His blessing. These are instances of righteousness, wherein the inhabitants of the world are to be instructed, when God's judgments are upon the earth. (*B. Whichcote, D.D.*) *The judgments of God.*—1. The judgments of God ought to drive the open transgressor of God's law from his sins and criminal indulgences. 2. The judgments of God ought to stimulate every individual, who is destitute of personal religion, to attend to his spiritual interests without a moment's delay. Religion is a personal concern, and essential to extensive usefulness and real happiness. 3. The judgments of God ought to excite in every Christian more of the spirit and exercise of prayer both for himself and others. (*Alex. Harvey.*) *Fast-day sermon.*—The faculties of man are too limited to comprehend the nature of the Divine judgments. The direction of events in the moral government of the world baffles his investigation. With respect to individuals, those afflictions are improperly called "judgments" which may be merely instances of trial or discipline, or even of highly beneficial example. Yet we can seldom err in calling those evils which visit a nation by the name of "judgments." We may justly consider them as the penalty and correctives of a people's sin. For, as such collective bodies may have national iniquities of a flagrant kind, and as they can exist in that collective capacity of sinning as nations only in this world, we may conclude that such wide visitations of evil are nothing less than national chastisements, or a general penal discipline of the people so afflicted. Still their object is always some ultimate good. 1. The perversion of great wealth in a life of dissipation and voluptuousness, idleness and uselessness, as it is a spectacle by no means uncommon, so is it a most offensive and insulting sight in the eyes of Him "who maketh poor and who maketh rich." 2. This leads me to another crying sin, that seems to pervade all the ranks of modern society,—“the love of money”: that which the apostle calls “the root of all evil,” and, by another name, the most offensive to a jealous God, who claims for Himself and His service the powers of the mind, the strength of the body, and the yearnings of the heart, namely, “idolatry.” It is habitual covetousness, which early blights and mildews the tender shoots of religion in the breast, hardens every finer feeling, and concentrates every thought and care and wish upon self. 3. Another alarming sin of our country is pride. 4. This leads me

next to our ingratitude. 5. The virtual unbelief, the practical infidelity of the present day. National sins are, after all, the collective vices of individuals; and every man has his own peculiar sins, which must weigh also upon his country's welfare. For the removal, therefore, of present, and the prevention of future judgments, we must look to the correction of individual character. (*A. B. Evans, D.D.*)

*Affliction a school of instruction*.—I. Let us consider **WHAT THAT IS WHICH MUST INSTRUCT US**. Our sufferings and afflictions. And they are here described in a threefold notion. 1. In their nature and propriety; what, and whose they are. They are no other than God's "judgments." 2. By their time and season; that is implied in this particle of time, "when." 3. By the circumstance of place, where they are inflicted. That which God makes the school of correction; "the earth." Are our afflictions God's "judgments"? Then—1. They are deserved by us; God doth justly inflict them upon us. 2. They are wisely ordained. 3. They are proportioned in a just and holy manner, with a due measure and moderation. II. **THE LESSON WE MUST LEARN BY THEM**. "Righteousness." 1. Who are the scholars? They are the inhabitants of the world. 2. What is their duty? They must be learners. 3. What is their lesson? They must learn righteousness. (*Bishop Brownrig.*)

*The teaching of ordinary life*.—Persons are apt too much to separate spirituality of mind from the teaching of ordinary life, and the lessons which the facts of this world convey. Undoubtedly the mind may be spiritualised without this teaching, and even before it can be had; at the same time, in the case of the great majority of men, the spiritual temper is not attained without this teaching. (*J. B. Mozley, D.D.*)

*The world a great monitor*.—The world is the great tempter, but at the same time it is the great monitor. It is the great saddener, the great warner, the great prophet. (*Ibid.*)

*God's judgments best awaken sinners*.—I. I shall endeavour to confirm the truth of **THE GENERAL OBSERVATION IN THE TEXT**, of the good effects of God's judgments upon mankind. 1. The end and design of God, in His judgments, is to do good to men; to make the bad good, and the good better. God has told us, in His Holy Word, that He is love, and that fury is not in Him. Now, it is demonstration that from love nothing but love can flow. 2. The judgments of God have a natural tendency and efficacy to convert and reform sinners, and to perfect the righteous. The two predominant and ruling passions in human nature are the fear of evil and the desire of happiness; and nothing is more proper to work upon these, and direct them to and fix them upon their right object, than the judgments of God. 3. And that thus it has been in fact I come now to prove by examples. The Ninevites were so terrified with the threatening of the prophet Jonah that they repented, and escaped the judgment. The same did Ahab upon the threatening of Elijah, and had the same success, &c. II. **THE PARTICULAR EXAMPLE OF THE GOOD EFFECT THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD HAD UPON THOSE WHOM THE PROPHET PERSONATES, AND IN WHOSE NAME HE SPEAKS IN THE TEXT**. In which expressions we have the description and characters of the most sincere, excellent, and acceptable conversion of the soul to God; which are—1. To turn the whole bent and force of our desire wholly to God alone. 2. To turn the attention and application of our soul inward, to God dwelling within us, by endeavouring to live in a constant sense of His presence, and in a continual seeking Him and lifting up our hearts to Him in prayer. (*Val. Nalson.*)

*God's relation to evil*.—There is a very dark side to human history: calamity, disappointment, disease, death are facts and factors in human history that no one of us can deny. And the minds of men have always been attempting a solution of this dark aspect of human experience. There have been three solutions which have been suggested: (1) We have been told that this is the work of chance, that man is forced up and down on the capricious waves of fate. (2) A second attempt at solution has been made by those who tell us that there are two powers in the universe, one good and one evil: that to the good power all benevolent developments of human history are to be traced; that to the evil power all malevolent activities are to be traced, and that there is no telling which is the stronger, the benevolent or the malignant—that now it seems as though the good triumphed, and now it seems as though the evil triumphed; and so the old Persians embraced what has been called the dual theory, Ormuzd and Ahriman, the good and the evil. (3) The Holy Scriptures teach us quite another solution, and it is the only one that brings comfort to a human soul. That solution is, that human history is the unfolding of the plan of God; that in the darker and in the brighter aspects of human experience God is still ruling; that He governs absolutely; that there



is a moral purpose in things evil: that success comes out of failure, and prosperity out of adversity, and that therefore we are to rejoice evermore, because He occupies the throne; and when clouds and darkness are round about Him, be assured that, within the clouds and behind the darkness, righteousness and judgment inhabit that throne. (*A. T. Pierson, D.D.*) *The Divine sovereignty*:—If you take the Bible, and study this subject from Genesis to Revelation, it will grow upon you how magnificently awful is this sovereignty of God. Take the ten plagues of Egypt; they were an early lesson in human history about this sovereignty of God, that reaches through all things as well as to all creatures. In these ten plagues, for instance, we have examples of God's control over the forces of nature. In those same plagues we have illustrations of God's control over animated nature. And we have illustrated God's control over those subtle and mysterious influences that we cannot define, and the nature of which we do not understand, but which lie at the bottom of disease—the murrain among cattle, the boils and the blains, the death of the firstborn. Now, if we pass along in this remarkable history we shall next meet, in Exodus xxxiii., the declaration, "I will send the hornet before you, and drive out the people of the land of Canaan, that ye may take possession." We go still further, and we read, in the Book of the Psalms, that He "called for the famine"; as though the famine were an obedient servant, summoned to the Master's presence, to go forth and do the Master's bidding. In these Psalms we are likewise told that He makes the winds His messengers, and the flames of fire His ministers. In Isaiah liv. we are told distinctly, "I have created the waster to destroy." We pass to the Book of Jonah, and Jonah is a revelation of the sovereignty of God in human affairs. For instance, we are told here, in four separate places, how the Lord had "prepared a great fish" to swallow Jonah, and He "spake unto the fish." "The Lord prepared a gourd," and made it to come up over Jonah. "The Lord prepared a worm," that it might smite the gourd. The Lord "prepared a vehement east wind," that it might smite upon the head of Jonah. Notice the comprehensiveness of these declarations. God controls the wind, which is not an intelligent form of life; God controls the gourd, which belongs to the vegetable kingdom; God controls the worm that is among the insects; God controls the great fish that is among those that swim the waters. Turn now to the Book of Joel, i. 4. And what does he say in ii. 25? "And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, My great army which I sent among you." There is no more sublimely awful verse in the whole Old Testament than that—"My great army which I sent among you." And just think what an army is this going forth in four detachments one after the other! The student of history will observe that about three times in a century there comes among men some form of disease with regard to which science is utterly ignorant and impotent. No one knows how to prevent it, no one knows how to cure the disasters which it engenders. And it is another remarkable fact, that just as soon as science begins to have a limited control over these forms of scourge a new plague develops about which they know nothing; simply showing that Almighty God has not surrendered the throne of the universe, nor given up His control even over the malignant and destructive forces of nature. If God did not keep the scourges of nature doing their work, the human race would rot in its own iniquity. (*Ibid.*) *God's judgments and their lessons*:—What are we to understand by "judgments of God"? Judgments are the activities of a judge, and a judge is one that scans the conduct of men, and visits it accordingly. We do not say, of course, that every individual instance of suffering from this chastisement is an individual instance of judgment for personal sin. We are bound up in society, and it is impossible that a scourge shall come down upon the human family that does not involve the good as well as the wicked; for we are dependent upon one another, and intimately associated in social life. Why are these judgments of God visited? 1. There is judgment on the sin of dirt, on the sin of physical uncleanness, unwholesome habits, unwholesome diet, clothing, habitation; and for that reason the most of these scourges originate in those districts where humanity is most thickly congregated, and where all sanitary laws are set at defiance. 2. There are God's judgments on moral iniquity. 3. These scourges are God's judgments on the sin of greed and selfishness. Think how many forms of social evil there are in the various communities that are upheld by the greed and selfishness of man. 4. There are two sorts of judgments: one the temporal, which is corrective and preventive; the other the eternal, which

is punitive and retributive only. It is to the former that the reference is made—these judgments that are “in the earth,” not in the next world or in the next life. And these judgments are designed not to be retributive, but to be corrective of iniquity and preventive of further sin. Therefore, just as soon as these judgments come upon the people, they should begin to inquire what laws of God have been violated that ought to be obeyed. (*Ibid.*) *The God of judgment*:—In the Catskill Mountains, about a quarter of a century ago, an infidel got up on one of those heights, and, in the presence of some atheistic companions, defied the God of heaven to show Himself in battle. He swung his sword to and fro, and challenged the Almighty to meet him in single combat. The Almighty paid no attention to him, of course; but He just commissioned a little gnat, so small that it could scarcely be seen by a microscope, to lodge in his windpipe and choke him to death. (*Ibid.*) *God's judgment on American slavery*:—It reigned in the United States of America for a hundred years. It was defended by almost the entire body of preachers in the southern States—defended and upheld, and its extension vindicated and advocated. And then God brought an awful war of four years' duration upon the United States, and Mr. Lincoln, that heroic man in the midst of that country, made this significant announcement: “It would not surprise me if, in view of the long-continued oppression of the slave in this country, it should please Almighty God that this war shall not cease until the life of one freeman has been exacted for the life of every slave that has been sacrificed during these hundred years.” And the cost of that American war was 500,000 people killed, 300,000 people maimed, 300,000 women made widows, 700,000 children made orphans, and 3000 millions of dollars, or 600 million sterling expended. God's judgment on the sin of greed and selfishness! (*Ibid.*) *Pestilence and prayer*:—Minnesota is the centre of the great western granary of the world. There came down upon those splendid fields that extend over thousands of acres, without even the division of a fence, an awful scourge, known as the grasshopper scourge. Nothing could be done by man to remove the scourge. The grasshoppers laid their eggs, and the next year, as soon as the wheat appeared, the destructive insect appeared alongside of it, and the utmost zeal and effort of the farmers failed even to abate this dreadful pestilence. The governor of Minnesota, who was a very high-toned Christian gentleman, called upon the people of the State to observe a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer for the removal of the plague. Secular papers, and especially the infidel papers, scouted the idea of reaching this natural visitation of insects by an appeal to God. They made the thing as ridiculous as they could make it, but still the Christian people assembled in their places of prayer, and many came together on the appointed day. Spring came, the wheat began to appear in the furrow, and the grasshopper appeared alongside of the wheat; and then the secular papers, that had scorned the idea of prayer to Almighty God, said, “Where is the result of your day of prayer, and fasting, and humiliation?” The grasshoppers developed, but at the same time there developed a parasite that attached itself to the grasshopper and accomplished two results. In the first place, it made the grasshopper impotent to harm the wheat; and in the second place—which was more important—it made the grasshopper impotent to reproduce itself. And from that year there has been no scourge of grasshoppers in the State of Minnesota. And so the righteous have seen it and rejoiced, and all iniquity has stopped her mouth in the presence of the manifest interposition of God. (*Ibid.*)

**Vers. 10, 11.** Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness.—*Insensibility of the wicked*:—God has written, and spread before mankind, three large books, all of which are legible and intelligible to such as have eyes to see and a disposition of mind to read them with attention. These are, the books of Nature, of Scripture, and of Providence. None of these books should be despised, overlooked, or neglected. To this last our attention is called by the words of the text. **I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN LEARNING RIGHTEOUSNESS.** It is true righteousness which is here meant. 1. Not hypocritical righteousness, like that of many of the Pharisees. 2. Not ceremonial righteousness, like that of most of the Jews, who confided in circumcision and other ceremonies of their law. 3. Not partial and inconstant righteousness, such as the tithing of “mint, and anise, and cummin,” and the neglecting of “the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith” (Matt. xxiii. 23). 4. Not merely

external righteousness, such as that of St. Paul before his illumination, and that of all unawakened sinners. 5. Not our own righteousness (Phil. iii. 9); a righteousness proceeding from and terminating in ourselves, performed by the mere strength of nature, and in obedience to an outward law; which implies neither forgiveness of the past, nor renovation for the present, nor holiness for the future, but leaves the soul under guilt, and in its natural state of depravity and weakness.

6. True righteousness is intended: that which was possessed by "righteous Abel" and others. It is that righteousness through which "grace reigns unto eternal life" (Rom. v. 21). This righteousness must be learned by experience and practice. We must be heartily convinced of our unrighteousness, humbled on that account, and brought to repentance. We must cordially embrace Christ by faith. Consider the vast importance of learning righteousness in this sense. All other learning, as of sciences, arts, gaining wealth, or power, or honour, is, compared to this, insignificant. This is the end of all providential dispensations, and especially of God's judgments in the earth: to teach us righteousness.

**II. WHEN IT IS REASONABLE TO EXPECT MANKIND WILL LEARN RIGHTEOUSNESS.** "When Thy judgments are in the earth." The judgments of God in Scripture often mean His ordinances, or His laws (Psa. cxix. 7; Ezek. v. 6-8, 10). These, if attended to, would teach us righteousness. But, alas! they are neglected or abused. It becomes, therefore, necessary God should give us judgments of another kind, and such as are here chiefly meant, as the sword, the famine, and the pestilence (Ezek. vii. 15, xiv. 12-21). These visitations cause thoughtfulness. They cause a spirit of prayer for Divine light and grace; the rectifying of our mistaken views of God's government of the world, and of the nature and obligation of holiness; the acknowledgment of His righteousness in thus correcting us; humiliation and contrition; hatred to sin, the evil of which we are now so severely taught; reformation of life; deadness to the world, the vanity and misery of which we now see and feel. They cause us to seek all our happiness in God, as the only certain source of felicity, and they cause subjection to His will; these judgments naturally tending to subdue us. They actually do produce this effect on the people of God, and on persons disposed to be His people (vers. 8, 9). It is, moreover, highly reasonable they should have this effect. Those thus chastised may hereby see that God governs the world, and that He does not connive at sin, but severely punishes it; and that "it is an evil thing and bitter to forsake the Lord God," whether as individuals, families, or as a nation. But it may be asked, Will not gentler methods answer the same end? To answer this inquiry brings me to show—

**III. IF THEY DO NOT LEARN RIGHTEOUSNESS THEN, THERE IS REASON TO FEAR THEY NEVER WILL** (ver. 10). (*J. Benson, D.D.*) *Man's wickedness provokes God's wrath:—I. SINNERS WALK CONTRARY TO GOD, and refuse to comply with the means used for their reformation, and to answer the intentions of them.* 1. Favour is showed to them. Yet it is all in vain. They will not learn righteousness; will not be led to repentance by the goodness of God. 2. They live in a "land of uprightness," where religion is professed and is in reputation, and the Word of God preached, and where they have many good examples set them; yet there they will deal unjustly, and go on forwardly in their evil ways. They that do wickedly deal unjustly both with God and man, and with their own souls. God's majesty appears in all the dispensations of His providence, but they regard it not, and therefore study not to answer the ends of those dispensations. 3. God lifts up His hand to give them warning, that they may, by repentance and prayer, make their peace with Him; but they take no notice of it, are not aware that God is angry with them, or coming forth against them; "they will not see"—and none so blind as those that will not see—who ascribe that to chance or common fate which is manifestly a Divine rebuke. **II. GOD WILL AT LENGTH BE TOO HARD FOR THEM.** When He judgeth He will overcome. "They will not see, but they shall see." They will not see the evil of sin, and particularly the sin of hating and persecuting the people of God; but they shall see, by the tokens of God's displeasure against them for it, and the deliverances in which God will plead His people's cause, that what is done against them He takes as done against Himself, and will reckon for it accordingly. "They shall see" that they have done God's people a great deal of wrong, and therefore shall "be ashamed" of their enmity, and envy towards them, and their ill usage of such as deserved better treatment. (*Matthew Henry.*)

**Ver. 11. Lord, when Thy hand is lifted up they will not see.—***Man's blindness to the Divine working*.—Modern scepticism seeks to undefine the Deity; and yet, feeling that man must have a god of some sort, it deifies nature, and invests matter and the laws of the universe with the attributes of Divinity. This is no new form of scepticism. The same evil existed among the Jews in the days of Isaiah. To this the prophet emphatically refers in our text. The lifting up of the hand refers to the gracious and loving tokens He had given of Himself; but a wilful blindness hid the Divine glory from the people.

**I. MAN'S BLINDNESS TO THE DIVINE WORKING**—1. In the realm of matter. There are men who, while they behold and admire the work, care not to see or own the Worker. 2. In the realm of history. Men who look at events, whether small or great, in the lives of individuals or of nations, and are content to account for them by alluding simply to second causes, without caring to trace the hand of God, are guilty of the sin to which the text refers. National sins bring national judgments. One wicked king is often employed to scourge another, and when the scourger has done his work, then he himself in turn is also scourged. One wicked nation is employed to punish another for its sins, to humble its pride, and to check its guilty ambition. 3. In the realm of spirit. A vile and wicked person enters the sanctuary. His character is notoriously bad. He takes his seat in the pew beside you. During the service, God by His Spirit comes down upon him with mighty power. In answer to his prayer he experiences a renewal of heart. He announces the fact to you. And yet you think little or nothing about it. This does not affect you half as much as if you were told that you had made a hundred pounds by some fortunate speculation. Look at the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane. The case is unique. Innocence is in agony. A merciful God pours the sorrows of abandonment and death into the soul of our holy Substitute. Yet His friends, His disciples, for whom He suffers, are fast asleep. But the disciples are only types of other men.

**II. THE CAUSES OF THIS BLINDNESS.** 1. Ignorance. The heathen, having no direct written revelation, are in darkness, and know not the truth. But their blindness to the supernatural can scarcely be pronounced wilful or criminal; it must be regarded as the fruit of ignorance. But as ignorance cannot be pleaded in our case, with our fulness of light, our blindness is wilful. 2. Indifference. 3. Absorption of thought in other things. 4. Pride of intellect. This reason reveals itself in the undue homage rendered to human reason. "Thus saith the Lord" must give way to "Thus saith human reason." 5. Pride of heart. It develops itself in an obstinate refusal to submit to the authority of God. **III. THE REMOVAL OF THIS BLINDNESS.** "They shall see, and be ashamed," &c. 1. Sometimes men are brought to see by sad calamities and sore judgments. 2. Men are also brought to see by the agency of the Holy Spirit. 3. Many will see God in the hour of death. At the moment of dissolution, who will venture to say what strange visions of the supernatural will people the whole scene around them? Every object then will seem full of God. 4. In the day of judgment all men shall see. God will vindicate Himself, and overthrow the unbelief of His deniers by a personal revelation of Himself. 5. The result of all this unveiling will be shame and envy. (1) Whether the discovery of God is made here or hereafter, shame must inevitably be the result. In the one case it will be the shame of the penitent returning to God, full of conscious guilt; in the other it will be the shame of utter despair. It is to the latter our text refers. It is the shame of those who shall discover that they have wronged God, when there is no possibility of repairing the wrong. When the man discovers in the light of the future how full everything is of God, how God pervades all, he will be covered with shame—shame at his folly in resisting evidences so clear and conclusive; shame for having denied and rejected so reasonable and so elevating a system as Christianity; shame for having espoused so unreasonable and so degrading a theory as infidelity. (2) Another result will be envy. They shall "be ashamed for their envy at the people." In the margin it is rendered, "Ashamed of their envy toward Thy people." It seems a startling truth, that the wicked, at some future period of their history, shall have such an insight into the glorious inheritance of the good as to have a clear conception of what they themselves might have obtained by grace, and of what they have lost by sin. This solemn truth is alluded to several times in the sacred Scriptures. Our Saviour saith, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth when ye shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." The rich

man saw Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. When the unbelieving shall see the glorious portion of those who have believed, and contrast it with their own degrading wretchedness, they will envy the glorified, and be ashamed of that very envy. (*R. Roberts.*)

**Ver. 12. Lord, Thou wilt ordain peace for us.—God ordaining peace:—**The expression seems to allude to the action of a commander-in-chief in the army, who marshals his soldiers according to the plan he had formed, and assigns to each the proper station which he is to occupy in carrying into execution his projected enterprises. It plainly intimates the lively hope which they felt that the supreme Disposer of all persons and events would be graciously pleased to assign for them both outward and inward tranquillity. (*R. Macculloch.*) *National peace the gift of God* (1814):—**I. WHAT THERE IS IN THE RESTORATION OF PEACE, GENERALLY CONSIDERED, TO EXCITE OUR GRATITUDE.** 1. The first consequence of peace which naturally presents itself to our attention is, that the effusion of human blood is stayed. 2. The injurious effects produced by war upon the human character afford another reason for thanksgiving on the return of peace. It is impossible that a state of warfare should be long continued without greatly deteriorating, in some important respects, both individual and national character. War is unfriendly to humanity. Tender as the heart may naturally be, the frequent recurrence of scenes of suffering tends to harden it. During the state of warfare, too, communities are usually distracted by intestine dissensions; and political strife gives birth to no virtues. Another effect of war is, that, when long-continued, it embitters the animosities of nations, and tends to confirm those national antipathies which, if unchecked by peace, would settle into a confirmed and malignant hatred. 3. A third reason for gratitude with reference to the peace is, that it has been produced by the signal triumph of a righteous cause. Peace is not always a blessing. In some cases it is only a term for the stillness, the quiet of desolation and death. Peace is often the result of the superiority acquired by the aggressor. The cause of right does not always at once prevail. 4. We rejoice in peace as the completion of a course of providential dispensations highly conducive to the instruction of the world. **II. WHAT THERE IS IN THE PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES OF THIS COUNTRY TO WARRANT US IN CONSIDERING THE BLESSING AS OF SPECIAL AND PARTICULAR VALUE.** 1. We have preserved our national honour. 2. The peace was seasonable. 3. The peace may be considered indicative of the Divine favour and approbation. 4. We see a particular reason to be thankful for peace, as it will increase our means of promoting the kingdom of Christ in the world, and thus establish our national prosperity by continuing to us the blessing of God. **III. THE REASON OF OUR THANKFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GOD.** He is the giver of the blessing of peace. "Thou hast ordained peace for us." This is a most important principle; and if our hearts be not firmly grounded in it, our thanksgivings are mockery; for why do we thank Him, if we ascribe the work to second causes? (*R. Watson.*) *Peace from God:—*A tourist writes of a spring as sweet as any that ever gushed from sunny hillside, which one day he found by the sea when the tides had ebbed away. Taking his cup he tasted the water and it was sweet. Soon the sea came again and poured its bitter surf over the little spring, hiding it out of sight. When the tide ebbed away again, the tourist stood once more by the spring to see if the brackish waves had left their bitterness in its waters; but they were sweet as ever. This is a picture of the peace in the heart of the Christian when floods of bitter sorrow and trial sweep over his life. From secret wells the sweet waters flow, crystal and fresh as ever. They have their source in the heart of God. (*J. R. Miller, D.D.*)

**Vers. 13, 14. Other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us.—The captivity and the return:—**About five hundred years before the birth of Christ an event occurred which stands almost alone in the world's history. After a long period of exile a whole nation, at least so much of it as was disposed, was freely permitted to return to its own land. The despotic king under whose sceptre they were then living not only issued an edict to that effect, but gave up the sacred vessels of the Holy House which had been brought away as trophies by previous monarchs, empowered the leader of the host to draw on the royal treasury for whatever might be necessary to refurnish the Holy House, and supplied him liberally with money, corn, wine, and oil for the homeward journey. For three days that mighty host of returning exiles rested in their tents on the banks of the

**Ahava.** A solemn and sacred fast succeeded. Then came the marshalling of the enormous caravan. At last, on the dawning of the fifteenth morning from their first setting out, they began in real earnest their homeward march. Four long and wearisome months did that great caravan of exiles creep on towards their beloved land. At the beginning of the fifth month, with their ranks greatly swelled by others who had joined them during their progress, they stood in sight of Jerusalem. The song now broke forth, "We have a strong city: salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks"; to which a chorus of many thousand voices responded, "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth truth may enter in." Then followed the declaration of the first voices, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." So the mighty song of praise rolled on, until, with all voices blending as the voice of many waters, the words were heard, "O Jehovah our God! other lords beside Thee have ruled over us; but henceforth Thee, Thy name only, will we celebrate. They are dead, they shall not live; they are shades, they shall not rise; because Thou hast visited and destroyed them, and hast made all their memory to perish." In effect these words describe the whole history of that nation in its exile, and its purpose now it had come back to Judah. (*J. J. Goadby.*)

**Bondage and freedom:—**A nation is, after all, only an aggregate of single units; and that which is thus declared of a whole nation was equally true of each separate man of whom that nation was composed. It is the history and purpose of a single soul. I. Here is an illustration of THE MANIFOLD BONDAGE OF THE SOUL. The Jews had bowed before many idols. They had served under many kings. Each idol and king had ruled them according to the caprice of the hiero hants or viziers. There are also many lords who rule over the souls of men; whose dominion is capricious, despotic, and even destructive. 1. There is worldliness, one of the hardest of tyrants. 2. Closely akin to worldliness is frivolity; the disposition which shows itself in a strong dislike to anything grave in thought, or speech, or life; a vague belief, so far as frivolity can entertain belief, that the chief end in life is to be amused. 3. Others are in the thralls of doubt. One man doubts concerning all goodness whatsoever. He has been bitterly deceived by some unworthy man who had won his confidence, and he refuses to believe now that disinterestedness is possible in any quarter. Another man doubts whether it be possible to discover truth amidst such a wrangle of apparently conflicting opinions upon it. Perhaps he has allowed his mind to be biassed in one direction, and has never seriously set himself to get free from his bias. Or, he may never have struggled after the truth with any deep and true wrestling of soul. A third has doubts concerning evangelic Christianity. A fourth doubts of the possibility of his own salvation. 4. There are other forms of tyranny over the soul; e.g., the slavery of that which is known to be sin. The particular kind of sin differs with different men. 5. Does it not become of unspeakable interest to know if deliverance can actually be secured; by whom it is to be effected, and by what means; and what are the signs that freedom has been actually obtained? To all these questions the song of the liberated exiles points to the sufficient answer. "O Jehovah our God! other lords beside Thee have ruled over us," &c. II. Jehovah was the Author of the Jews' liberation: GOD ALONE EFFECTS THE DELIVERANCE OF THE SOUL. 1. He conceived the plan of that redemption, not as a temporary expedient, a Divine after-thought, but as an "eternal purpose which He purposed in His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." 2. The method of this deliverance is also depicted in the words of the exiles. "Thou hast visited and destroyed them." "Visited," that is, searched out with the keenest scrutiny, examined, exposed. How, then, does God "visit" these tyrants of man's soul? He reveals their true character to those who are under their dominion. God lays bare the worthlessness and the wickedness of worldliness, frivolity, and sin. Sometimes He does this by the force of contrast, bringing in close proximity the brightness of an opposite life to the life which we ourselves are living. Sometimes He awakens a seed of Divine truth that has long been buried in our hearts. Sometimes the revelation is made by creating a sense of satiety, or of nausea. Sometimes the change is produced by incidents of God's good providence. But the one great means which Divine wisdom has set apart for the spiritual liberation of man is—the Gospel of His love. 3. There are, therefore, certain criteria by which men may surely know that they have actually entered this condition of freedom. One is, their relation to the past. The Jews did not forget the hard usage they had received from those idol

priests and capricious tyrants who had "ruled them with a rod of iron." But the grave closed over their oppressors, one after another. They were extinct tyrants; "shades," not men; powerless phantoms, fallen to rise no more. They were remembered, but as dead men. Nor can any one who has obtained spiritual deliverance utterly forget the past. The recollection of what that past was flits across the mind, like a cloud over the face of the sun at noonday. But there is no desire to return to that condition. The past has lost its power of attraction, and has become hateful. The old tyrants are dead; and so long as we keep ourselves in the love of God they shall live no more. There is, further, the soul's relation to the future. "But henceforth Thee, Thy name only, will we celebrate." Whatever allegiance may have been rendered to others in the past, the allegiance is now to be given alone to God. We have also the idea of service. The "celebration" is incomplete without this, the worship a solemn and offensive pretence. But he who worships most sincerely is certain to live most uprightly. He is bound to faithful service by the strongest of all ties—the tie of a grateful love. 4. "But," says some one, "is not this mere poetic exaggeration? Where are the proofs that this freedom has actually been won?" Where? In every age of the Church's history, from the day when publicans and sinners crowded about the pathway of the Divine Redeemer, until this hour. The Gospel is not an exhausted force. It is "the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth." (*Ibid.*) *The moral history of the soul*:—Here we have the soul under the sway—I. OF MANY DEITIES. "Other lords beside Thee." The Jews in Babylon had knelt at the shrine of many false deities, and rendered allegiance to a succession of kings. Many "lords" had ruled them. This is true of all souls in an unregenerate state. Who is the real Lord or God of the soul? Unhesitatingly and emphatically, the chief love. Whatever man loves most, is his spiritual monarch, the deity of his life. The chief love of some is money. The chief love of others is pleasure—sensual indulgence. "Their god is their belly." The chief love of others is power. Ambition is their god. II. OF ONE GOD. "By Thee only will we make mention of Thy name," or, as some render it, "Henceforth Thee, Thy name, will we celebrate." They had left heathen altars, and come back to the altar of Jehovah. What a blessed change from many masters to one, and therefore free from spiritual distraction. From worthless masters to the supremely good, and therefore realising all that the soul craves for or requires. 1. The rule of this one God is the rule of right. 2. The rule of peace. From the moral constitution of man no peace of soul can be experienced under the sway of any other. Under no other will the various sympathies flow into one channel, the faculties blend in harmonious action, the heart fix itself in a centre. 3. The rule of growth. Can vegetation grow and flourish under the reign of stars, however numerous or brilliant? No; it must have the empire of the sun. And can the soul advance under the sway of any infinite powers, however illustrious? No; it must have the rule of God, the "Sun of Righteousness." Here we have the soul—III. PASSING FROM THE SWAY OF THE MANY TO THE ONE. It is that great moral experience which is represented in the New Testament as a new birth, a resurrection, a conversion, a repentance, &c. (*Homilist.*) *Confession, resolution, and dependence*:—I. CONFESSION. "O Lord our God, other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us." There are two things connected with this confession; one is recollection, and the other adoration. II. RESOLUTION. "Henceforth we will make mention of Thy name." God's name is His character,—what He is in Himself, and what He is to His people. And it is a name not to be ashamed of: it is connected with every thing that is excellent, glorious, and sacred. It is a "name that is above every name." Not only so, it is a name you need not be afraid of with a slavish fear; but you may well be afraid of it with a holy fear. It is a name that you ought to love with all your hearts! III. DEPENDENCE. "By Thee only will we make mention of Thy name"; as much as if it was said, We are full of sin, but Thou art full of grace and mercy; we are not worthy to take Thy name upon our lips—to stand before Thee, or to enter into covenant with Thee, but we do it depending upon Thee, and upon Thee alone. (*T. Mortimer, B.D.*)

Ver. 15. Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord.—*The increase of the true Israel*:—On the first preaching of the Gospel, the Lord greatly increased the nation of them that are Israelites indeed. In following ages the Lord still continued to increase them: hence the remarkable words of an ancient apologist for Christianity (Tertullian), who openly told the heathen "that this despised

sect had filled their cities and provinces, their councils and camps, the palace and the senate-house, and what not,—that such was their multitude that should they have withdrawn themselves into some remote part of the world the empire would have been depopulated and left in dismal solitude and silence.” (*R. Macculloch.*)

**Ver. 16. Lord, in trouble have they visited Thee.—God a harbour of refuge.**—It is a blessed loss that makes us find our God! What we gain is infinitely more than what we have lost. What a mercy that God is willing to hear us in the time of trouble, that all our putting-off and rejection of Him do not make Him put us off! I remember one who wished to hire a conveyance to go to a certain town, and he went to the place where he could hire it, and asked the price; he thought that it was too much, so he went round the town to other people, and found that he could not get it any cheaper; but when he came back to the place visited first, the man said to him, “Oh, no, no! I will not let my horses to you. You have been round to everybody else, and now you come back to me because you cannot get what you want elsewhere; I will have nothing to do with you.” That is man’s way of dealing with his fellow-man; but it is not the Lord’s method of dealing with us. When you and I have gone round to everybody else, the Lord still welcomes us when we come back to Him. Yes, just as harbours of refuge are meant for ships in distress that would not have put in there except for the storm and danger, such is the mercy of the Lord God in Jesus Christ. If you are forced to accept it, you are still welcome to it. If you are driven to it by stress of weather, you may come in, for the harbour was made for just such as you are. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

**Ver. 19. Thy dead men shall live.—The Jewish hope of resurrection.**—Granted the pardon, the justice, the temple, and the God which the returning exiles now enjoyed, the possession of these only makes more painful the shortness of life itself. This life is too shallow and too frail a vessel to hold peace and righteousness and worship and the love of God. St. Paul has said, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” What avails it to have been pardoned, to have regained the Holy Land and the face of God, if the dear dead are left behind in graves of exile, and all the living must soon pass into that captivity (Hezekiah’s expression for death, chap. xxxviii. 12) from which there is no return? It must have been thoughts like these which led to the expression of one of the most abrupt and powerful of the few hopes of the resurrection which the Old Testament contains. This hope, which lightens chap. xxv. 7, 8, bursts through again—without logical connection with the context—in verses 14–19 of chap. xxvi. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *The resurrection of the life to come* :—I. THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODIES OF BELIEVERS. “Thy dead men shall live,” &c. II. THE EFFICIENT CAUSE OF THE RESURRECTION. “Thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.” In Eastern countries the dew is extremely heavy and almost entirely supplies the place of rain. It is frequently referred to in Scripture (Psa. cxxxiii. 3; Hos. xiv. 5). The “dew” means the influence of the Holy Spirit, which is the great efficient cause of the raising of the bodies of believers; not the primary cause—that is the atonement made by our Lord Jesus. But the text adds, “The earth shall cast out the dead.” The word “cast out” means to travail. The earth shall put forth them that are now buried. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together; but when the Spirit shall come forth with His mighty influence, the earth shall be no longer able to retain its dead. III. THE JOY OF THIS RESURRECTION. Without doubt the joy of departed saints is exceeding great; but the joy will be so much greater at the resurrection that the Church may with propriety sing in concert, “Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust.” They will then see the full glory of Christ established; they will see sin and Satan in chains; they will see hell subdued, death quite swallowed up. (*R. W. Sibthorp.*) *The dust of death* :—If one has seen a place of graves in the East, he will appreciate the elements of this figure, which takes “dust” for death and “dew” for life. With our damp graveyards mould has become the traditional trappings of death; but where under the hot Eastern sun things do not rot into lower forms of life, but crumble into sapless powder, that will not keep a worm in life, dust is the natural symbol of death. When they die, men go not to feed fat the mould, but “down into the dust”; and there the foot of the living falls silent, and his voice is choked,



and the light is thickened and in retreat, as if it were creeping away to die. The only creatures the visitor starts are timid, unclean bats, that flutter and whisper about him like the ghosts of the dead. There are no flowers in an Eastern cemetery; and the withered branches and other ornaments are thickly powdered with the same dust that chokes and silences and darkens all. Hence the Semitic conception of the underworld was dominated by dust. It was not water nor fire nor frost nor altogether darkness which made the infernal prison horrible, but that upon its floors and rafters, hewn from the roots and ribs of the primeval mountains, dust lay deep and choking. Amid all the horrors he imagined for the dead, Dante did not include one more awful than the horror of dust. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *Dew for dust* :—For dust there is dew, and even to graveyards the morning comes that brings dew and light together. As, when the dawn comes, the drooping flowers of yesterday are seen erect and lustrous with the dew, every spike a crown of glory, so also shall be the resurrection of the dead. (*Ibid.*) *Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust.*—*The Divine call to moral grovellers* :—This call may be addressed—I. To the SENSUALIST. All his thoughts and activities are directed to the pampering of his animal appetites and the gratification of his animal lusts. To such the word may be fairly addressed, “Arise from the dust.” Why live in mud, when you ought and might live in “heavenly places”? II. To the WORLDLING. By a worldling, I mean a man who gives his heart and energies and time to the accumulation of wealth; a man who has no idea of worth but money; no idea of dignity apart from material parade and possessions; a man whose inspiration in everything is love of gold. Such a man is literally in the dust. He is a grub. Now, to such a man the call comes with power: “Arise from the dust; break away from that wretched materialism that imprisons thy spirit.” A man’s life “consisteth not in the abundance of the things of this world.” CONCLUSION. All unregenerate men are in the dust. “He that is born of the flesh, is flesh”—is flesh in experience, in character, known by his compeers only by fleshly or material characteristics. “He that is born of the Spirit, is spirit”—the spirit has been liberated from the bondage of the flesh, called up to his true regal position, and is known hence on, not by material features, but by high mental and moral characteristics. (*Homilist.*) *Souls sleeping in the dust* :—There are two senses in which men may be considered dead while yet living inhabitants of the earth. (1) They may be civilly dead: utterly deprived of all political rights and privileges. To this the prophet refers undoubtedly. Ezekiel in a vision saw them as a “valley of dry bones.” Here is a call for the restoration. “Thy dead men shall live”—live politically, restored to their own country, reinstated in all their rights, placed again amongst the nations of the earth. (2) Another sense in which men may be considered dead whilst living inhabitants of the earth is spiritually. Observe then—I. THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION of unregenerate men. They “dwell in the dust.” 1. Scientific materialists are in the dust. All their attention is taken up with material substances, combinations, forces, operations, laws. They have no world outside beyond the tangible and the visible. 2. Mercenary worldlings are in the dust. 3. Voluptuous sensualists are in the dust. 4. Ceremonial religionists are in the dust. II. THE URGENT CALL MADE on unregenerate men. “Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust.” But why awake? 1. Because the sleep is injurious. Physical sleep is refreshing, but spiritual sleep is pernicious; it enervates the powers; it is a disease that wastes and destroys. 2. Because the sleep is sinful. It is a sin against our constitution, against the ordination of Heaven, against the well-being of the universe. 3. Because it is perilous. In their dreams they feel that they are “increasing in goods and have need of nothing, whereas they are poor and wretched, blind and naked.” (*Ibid.*) *Dwelling in the dust* :—I. AN INVOCATION OR ADDRESS. “Ye that dwell in dust.” To whom is this designation applicable, and to whom does it in point of fact apply? 1. All men, without exception, may be described as dwelling in dust. They live in houses of clay; their foundation is in the dust; they are crushed before the moth. They are made of the earth, earthy. 2. This address is still more descriptive of mankind, as it refers to their sin and guilt in the sight of God. They are sunk in the depths of abject servitude. 3. But it is not to sinners in their natural state that the words of our text are addressed. God directs them to His chosen people, and says even unto them, “Ye that dwell in dust.” Nor is the expression inappropriate. For humble and lowly is the spiritual estate even of the believer. His home is in Heaven, his treasure is there, his heart is there, his Redeemer is there;

and though he wishes to be in thought and feeling continually there, the opposing influences of sin, Satan, the world, and the flesh, retard his efforts, and cloud the sunshine of his joys with ever-recurring darkness. Is it not strange that an heir of immortality, a participant in Christ's everlasting redemption, a member of the Saviour's ever-living body, a being who is destined for eternal glory should drink the cup of humiliation and suffering in the dust? There is another sense in which God's people may be described by this epithet. They dwell in dust, inasmuch as their life in this world is a life of affliction. 4. But, lastly, the address contained in our text refers literally to those who dwell in the dust—who reside in the cold and cheerless tomb. II. A SUMMONS OR COMMAND. "Awake and sing." The passage is not addressed to all who dwell in dust, as the context clearly shows, but only to those who are God's chosen and willing people. There is a night of death that has no morning, but it is yet future, distant, and unseen. All who are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth, they that have done evil as well as they that have done good. But it is only to the righteous that the voice of Omnipotence shall say, Awake and sing! Brightly and beautifully on them will dawn the resurrection morning. III. THE REASON WHY GOD COMMANDS THEM THAT DWELL IN DUST TO AWAKE AND SING. It is because their dew is as the dew of herbs. Dew in countries such as Judea, where rain seldom falls, is the grand agent that fertilises, fructifies, and waters the earth. They that dwell in dust have their dew. Their dew is the beneficent law of Heaven, which seals them up in the grave, until such time as the fructifying influence of the Spirit shall quicken them into a resurrection life. IV. THE RESULT OF THE COMMAND, Awake and sing. The earth shall cast out the dead. The subject presents to us—1. A ground of comfort amidst all the distresses of life. 2. A most powerful motive to holiness and duty. (*A. Nisbet.*) Thy dew is as the dew of herbs.—*Resurrection preservation*:—I. AGAINST DECOMPOSITION. One of the great difficulties connected with the resurrection is the fact that the bodies of the dead decompose, and that oftentimes some of their parts go to make up the growth of plants and animals. But is not this difficulty removed by the law of the text; the law that governs the reproduction of plants, and which is so forcibly presented by the apostle in his argument to the Corinthians for the resurrection of the dead? II. AGAINST DEPORTATION. Other dangers threaten the bodies of the dead. Being on the surface of the earth and mingled with its particles, they must necessarily be moved about. The winds may waft them to other regions; birds or animals or men may carry them abroad; the rivers may float them in their rapid currents; the ocean may heave them on its mighty billows. How then shall they be preserved? God has purposely made many of the seeds so that they are wafted on the winds, not that they may be destroyed, but may be brought into better positions for their preservation and subsequent prosperity. And shall we disbelieve the fact that the great God who performs these wonders in the ordinary operations of nature, is able and willing so to control winds, and birds, and beasts, and living men, and flowing rivers, and heaving oceans, as to preserve and carry to safer or better places the germs of those bodies which He has taught us shall rise at the resurrection of the last day? III. AGAINST INTERMINGLING OR LOSS OF IDENTITY. Take the many hundreds of plants that exist about us—there are computed to be more than 80,000 kinds on the globe—with their millions of seeds. The God of nature never mixes them up. Whatever may be true about the amalgamation of growing plants, when their seeds or germs are perfected it is impossible so to mix them as to confound them. And think you that the God who works such wonders of infallible certainty in the identification of the untold millions of these varieties of plant seeds, every year and through so many centuries, however they may be mixed up, cannot or will not, even when He has promised it, preserve the identity of each different human body, so that it shall be enstamped with all the characteristics of its own individuality, though it be mingled with so many other human bodies through so many centuries? IV. AGAINST DESTRUCTION BY EXTERNAL FORCES. The seeds of many species resist the destructive power, not only of cold but of great heat, and of drought and moisture, in a wonderful manner, not only through the lapse of one season, but of centuries. And as God does thus preserve these inferior and feebler creations of His, amid such great and long continued action of the elements of destruction, will He not much rather preserve against all accidents and all assaults of the forces of destruction, those nobler creations of His for whose use and control the inferior things of earth were made

and preserved? V. AGAINST THE "GNAWING TOOTH" OF TIME. So far as the law of life has been developed, it is evident that mere lapse of time has no effect to destroy life, so long as circumstances are favourable to its continuation. Some Celtic tombs were discovered not very long since in France, which had been filled nearly two thousand years ago. Under the head of each corpse was found a tile, and under each tile a circular hole covered with cement, and containing a few seeds. These seeds were planted, "they soon vegetated; and the heliotrope, the trefoil, and the corn-flower were seen rising to life again, and expanding their flowers in the light of spring with admirable display, after their seeds had slept two thousand years beneath the pillows of the dead in the dust of the tomb." Can we believe less of the power and willingness of God, with reference to the preservation through the onstretching centuries, of the bodies of men whom He made in His own image, and whom He rescued from destruction by the death of His well-beloved Son, who "is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept"? VI. AGAINST PREMATURE DEVELOPMENT. But, says a persistent objector, if all these things are true, why do we not have some evidence of it; why do we not find such occasionally appearing in the body? We know that there are plants in tropical countries called "air plants," which grow from the sustenance they receive out of the atmosphere. One species of these—the "live-for-ever" plant—grows in the temperate zone; and some of us may remember seeing these plants suspended from the beams of houses and flourishing there. Suppose a man who had never seen an oak grow, but who was told that an acorn contained the germ of an oak, should fasten that acorn by the side of his air plants to a beam of his house, or fasten ten, or twenty, or a hundred acorns there; and then, when he saw his air plants growing, and his acorns remaining dry and unsprouted, should declare to you that there was "no such fact as that oaks would grow from acorns, or that, anyhow, those acorns would never produce oaks"; what would be your reply? You would say to him, "There is a law of germination and growth belonging to those acorns; and whenever you bring them into the position where that law is met, they will grow." We are ignorant equally of the facts in what the identity or germ of a human dead body consists, and what conditions are necessary to bring it into active resurrection life; these are the affairs of the Author of existence. But we do know, that whatever it is that constitutes the identity of the dead body's existence, cannot and will not develop itself in a resurrection life power, until the great Keeper of man brings it into a position and condition where the laws of its development are fulfilled. (*N. D. Williamson.*)

Vers. 20, 21. Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers.—A *gracious invitation*:—I. THE FORM OF THE INVITATION, including in it the qualified subject. "Come, My people." God's own peculiar people, who have chosen God for their protection, and resigned up themselves sincerely to Him in the covenant, are the persons here invited, the same which He before called "the righteous nation that kept the truth" (ver. 2). He means those that remained faithful to God in Babylon. The form of invitation is full of tender compassion. "Come, My people." Like a tender father who sees a storm coming upon his children in the fields, and takes them by the hand. II. THE PRIVILEGE INVITED TO. "Enter thou into thy chambers." The Divine attributes engaged in the promises and exercised or actuated in the providences of God—these are the sanctuaries of God's people in days of trouble. III. A NEEDFUL CAUTION for the securing of this privilege to ourselves in evil times. "Shut thy doors about thee." Care must be taken that no passage be left open for the devil to creep in after us, and drive us out of our refuge; for so it falls out too often with God's people when they are at rest in God's name or promises. Satan creeps in by unbelieving doubts and puzzling objections, and beats them out of their refuge back again into trouble. IV. Note with what ARGUMENTS OR MOTIVES they are pressed to betake themselves to this refuge. 1. A supposition of a storm coming. The indignation of God will fall like a tempest; this is supposed in the text, and plainly expressed in the words following. 2. Though His indignation fall like a storm, yet it will not continue long; better days and more comfortable dispensations will follow. (*J. Flavel.*) *The righteous man's refuge*:—Doctrine—That the attributes, promises, and providences of God are the chambers of rest and security in which His people are to hide themselves when they foresee the storms of His indignation coming upon the world. Propositions—1. That there are times and seasons appointed by God for the pouring out of His indignation

upon the world. 2. That God's own people are concerned in, and ought to be affected with, those judgments. 3. That God hath a special and particular care of His people in the days of His indignation. 4. That God usually premonishes the world, especially His own people, of His judgments before they befall them. 5. That God's attributes, promises, and providences are prepared for the security of His people, in the greatest distresses that befall them in the world. 6. That none but God's people are taken into those chambers of security, or can expect His special protection in evil times. For the right stating of this proposition, three things must be heedfully regarded—(1) That all good men are not always exempted from the stroke of outward calamities. (2) That all wicked men are not always exposed to external miseries (Eccles. vii. 15). (3) But none but the people of God have right, by promise, to His special protection in evil days; that all such shall either be preserved from the stroke of calamities, or from the deadly sting, namely, eternal ruin by them. (*Ibid.*)

*Chambers for God's people* :—Let us view our chambers, and see how well God hath provided for His children in all the distresses that befall them in this world. I. The first chamber which comes to be opened as a refuge to distressed believers in a stormy day is the attribute of DIVINE POWER. 1. Consider the power of God in itself. Omnipotent, supreme, everlasting. 2. In the vast extent of its operations. You will find it working beyond the line (1) of creature-power; (2) of creature-expectation; (3) of human probability. 3. In its relation to the promises. If the power of God be the chamber, it is the promise of God which is that golden key that opens it. If we will consult the Scriptures, we shall find the almighty power of God made over to His people by promise, for many excellent ends and uses in the day of their trouble. 4. As it is continually opened by the hand of Providence, to receive and secure the people of God in all their dangers (2 Chron. xvi. 9).

II. The next chamber of Divine protection into which I shall lead you is, THE INFINITE WISDOM OF GOD—the original, essential, perfect, only wisdom. The wisdom of God makes advantage out of your troubles. 1. In fortifying your souls and bodies with suitable strength when any eminent trial is intended for you (2 Cor. i. 5). 2. The wisdom of God can, and often doth, make your very troubles and sufferings so many ordinances to strengthen your faith and fortify your patience. III. A third chamber of safety for the saints' refuge is, THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD—His sincerity, firmness, and constancy in performing His word to His people in all times and cases. Let us behold with delight the faithfulness of God making good six sorts of promises to His people in the days of their affliction and trouble, namely, the promises of—1. Preservation. 2. Support. 3. Direction. 4. Provision. 5. Deliverance. 6. Ordering and directing the event to their advantage. IV. The faithfulness of God leads into a fourth much like unto it, namely, THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF GOD. V. THE CARE OF GOD FOR HIS PEOPLE in times of trouble is the fifth chamber of rest. It is—1. A fatherly care. 2. An universal care, watching over all His people, in all ages, places, and dangers. 3. Assiduous and continual (Lam. iii. 22, 23). 4. Exceeding tender (Isa. xlix. 15). 5. Seasonable. VI. THE LOVE OF GOD is a resting-place to believing souls. (*Ibid.*)

*Trust in God's protection induces calmness* :—The heart of a good man should at all times be like the higher heavens, serene, tranquil, and clear, whatever thunders and lightnings, storms and tempests trouble and terrify the lower world. If a man have a good roof over his head, where he can sit dry and warm, what need he trouble himself to hear the winds roar, see the lightnings flash, and the rains pour down without doors? Why, this is thy privilege, Christian (Isa. xxxii. 2). (*Chrysostom.*)

*Religious retirement* :—The retreat from the world which the Scripture recommends, is temporary and not total; it is advised, not indeed that we become disjoined from the world, but that we may be the fitter for intercourse with it. I. RETIREMENT IS EMINENTLY FAVOURABLE TO SELF-EXAMINATION. It is only by a searching inquiry into the purity of his motives, and the tendencies of his actions, that the Christian can be enabled to discern and correct what in them has been amiss, and to "walk worthily of the high vocation, whereunto he hath been called." II. RETIREMENT IS FAVOURABLE TO THE CHRISTIAN, INASMUCH AS IT ENABLES HIM TO RECOVER THAT SPIRITUAL TONE OF MIND SO ESSENTIAL TO HIS HAPPINESS, which, in his unavoidable collision with the world, must necessarily have been disturbed, as well as to take off that tendency to evil which its presence always generates. As the health of the plant is affected by its soil, and the nature of the animal by the pasture on which he feeds and couches, so must the character of man catch a line from

what is immediately about him, and his mind be tinged by the circumstances in which it lives and has its being. But in solitude we are in a world of our own, where we can to a great extent command our ideas and feelings. III. RETIREMENT IS FAVOURABLE TO THE CHRISTIAN, AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PRAYER. IV. RETIREMENT IS EMINENTLY FAVOURABLE FOR THE CONTEMPLATION OF GOD. V. RETIREMENT IS FAVOURABLE FOR THE CONTEMPLATION OF THE SUFFERINGS AND LOVE OF HIM WHO HATH BROUGHT "LIFE AND IMMORTALITY TO LIGHT, THROUGH THE GOSPEL." VI. RETIREMENT IS FAVOURABLE FOR THE CONTEMPLATION OF YOUR ETERNAL DESTINY. (*Essex Congregational Remembrancer.*) *The advantages of religious retirement*:—Although man was made for action, he was also intended for contemplation. There is a time when solitude has a charm for the soul; when weary of the world, its follies and its cares, we love to be alone, and in silence to commune with our heart. Such a retirement, when devoted to pious purposes, is highly useful to man, and most acceptable to God. I. RELIGIOUS RETIREMENT TAKES OFF THE IMPRESSION WHICH THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF EVIL EXAMPLE HAS A TENDENCY TO MAKE UPON THE MIND. II. THIS DEVOUT RETIREMENT IS FAVOURABLE FOR FIXING PIOUS PURPOSES IN THE MIND AND STRENGTHENING OUR HABITS OF VIRTUE. III. BY MEANS OF RELIGIOUS RETIREMENT THOU WILT BE BROUGHT TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THYSELF. Here wisdom begins. IV. RETIREMENT AND MEDITATION WILL OPEN A SOURCE OF NEW AND BETTER ENTERTAINMENT THAN YOU MEET WITH IN THE WORLD. You will soon find that the world does not perform what it promises. The circle of earthly enjoyments is narrow, the career of sensual pleasure is soon run, and when the novelty is over, the charm is gone. But the wise man has treasures within himself. (*J. Logan, F.R.S.*) *The hour of solitude* is the hour of meditation. He communes with his heart alone. He reviews the actions of his past life. He corrects what is amiss. He rejoices in what is right, and, wiser by experience, lays the plan of his future life. The great and the noble, the wise and the learned, the pious and the good, have been lovers of serious retirement. On this field the patriot forms his schemes, the philosopher pursues his discoveries, the saint improves himself in wisdom and goodness. Solitude is the hallowed ground which religion in every age has adopted as its own. There her sacred inspiration is felt, and her holy mysteries elevate the soul; there devotion lifts up the voice; there falls the tear of contrition; there the heart pours itself forth before Him who made, and Him who redeemed it. Apart from men, you live with nature, and converse with God. (*Ibid.*) "Enter thou into thy chambers":—The "entering into the chambers" may, not improbably, allude to the command that the children of Israel should not go out during the night of the destruction of the first-born of Egypt. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *Duty of reflection on God's judgments*:—I. THE PEOPLE ADDRESSED. "My people." 1. The Lord addresses, in these words, all, in general, who profess His name, and are named from Him; who receive His Word as the rule of their faith and practice; who attend His ordinances, and use the means of grace. 2. Therefore His true people are more especially meant in this passage. But who are these? They are described by St. Peter, who, having termed them "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people," says, they "are translated out of darkness into His marvellous light." II. THE ADVICE HE GIVES THEM. "Come, My people." Come to Me, and—1. Make confession. 2. Utter your complaint. 3. Exercise trust and dependence upon Me. 4. Praise Me for My long-suffering and mercies, and devote thyself to Me afresh. "Come with Me into thy chambers." The word means retired, secret and safe places. "Let the storm which disperses others bring you nearer together, to Me and to each other" (*Henry*). Withdraw into the chambers of defence. The attributes of God are the "secret of His tabernacle" (*Psa. xxvii. 5*). His name is "a strong tower" (*Prov. xviii. 10*). III. THE REASON OF THIS ADVICE (*ver. 21*). God "comes out of His place" when He shows Himself in an extraordinary manner from heaven. The expression is borrowed from the usage of princes who come out of their palaces, either to sit in judgment, or to fight against their enemies. (*J. Benson, D.D.*) *God's care for His people*:—Suppose your child is out of doors, and you see danger—a storm gathering, or something about to cross his path that may be fatal to him, what do you do? You hasten forth. You call out with anxious voice, "Come in! Come in, my child! There is danger where you are! Make haste into the house, and stay here safe until the storm is over-past!" The great Father of the Church is not less watchful of His children.

Look at Noah's case just before the flood broke forth. Look again at Israel's case on the night of the Passover. Behold, in my text, a third instance of the Lord's fatherly care over His people. It is an instance which extends even to ourselves. I. THE DANGER POINTED OUT. The words are applicable, in some measure, to every instance of almighty vengeance. But they seem to refer to some more sweeping act of vengeance than ever yet has taken place. It is the day of judgment that we must cast our eyes upon. It is then that, in the fullest sense, "the Lord will come out of His place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity." An awful phrase that! "The Lord will come out of His place." For what is His place—the place He occupies at present? It is a mercy-seat. He sits there as a Saviour—to receive and bless applying sinners. But on that day He "will come out of His place." He will leave the mercy-seat for a throne of judgment. II. THE COUNSEL GIVEN. How tender this invitation! For such it is. Look at the first word of it. "Come"—not "go." Not "go and seek a shelter where you can"; but "Come." "Come" is an inviting word. "Come, My people"; that is a general invitation. "Enter thou into thy chambers"; that is an invitation addressed to each particularly, calling them in one by one. III. THE PROMISES IMPLIED. "Hide thyself," &c. These words are a command so worded as to convey, at the same time, three comfortable promises. 1. "Hide thyself." What is this but to assure them that by doing what He had just been telling them to do they shall be hid? We may safely view this as a promise of security to all who separate from the world and flee for refuge to a Saviour. 2. "For a little moment." Here is another comfortable hint thrown out for the believer. As soon as this short life is over with him, all danger shall be past. There will be nothing more to hide from. He will have a broad Heaven to move about in, where there are no enemies to fear, no wrath to apprehend. 3. "The indignation shall be overpast"—there is the third encouraging assurance. The clouds will be dispersed for ever; and, having put all enemies under His feet, He will bless all those that are about Him with His constant smile. (*A. Roberts, M.A.*) *Good advice for troublous times*.—I. BEFORE OR IN TIMES OF TROUBLE IT IS WELL TO DRAW NEAR TO GOD. As the hen gives her peculiar "cluck" when the hawk is in the air, to bid her chicks come and hide under her wings, so does God here give a gentle, loving note of alarm, and a gracious call of invitation. We should come—1. To spread our case before God. 2. To consider His mind about such a case. 3. To make sure of the greatest matters. The world may come and take away many of our external and temporary comforts, but we have a treasure that it never gave us, and cannot take away from us. 4. Having made sure of the great things, you may leave all the little things with God. II. IT IS WISE TO ENTER INTO THE CHAMBERS OF SECURITY WHICH GOD HAS PROVIDED FOR US. 1. The store-chamber of Divine power. 2. The council-chamber of Divine wisdom. 3. The drawing-room of Divine love. 4. The muniment-room of Divine faithfulness. 5. The strong-room of Divine immutability. 6. The best chamber of Divine salvation. III. WHEN WE ENTER THOSE CHAMBERS IT IS NECESSARY TO SHUT THE DOOR. 1. To shut out all doubt. 2. To shut ourselves in with God. IV. IT IS DELIGHTFUL TO THINK THAT THE TROUBLE WILL NOT LAST LONG. "A little moment." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 21. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place.—*Associations & judgment*.—1. Few circumstances of our life are more mysterious and few more important than the influence of associations. 2. The language suggests a subtle sympathy between the earth and the earth-born; the earth, it is suggested, has been the reluctant witness of human guilt: within her bosom she holds the memorials of human crime, and in due course, when her Creator summons her to His bar, she will confess her fatal secrets. 3. This notion of the repugnance of nature to human crime underlies the constant association of physical portents and disturbances with exceptional crimes. They strain the tolerance of nature to breaking-point; she proclaims her horror. This involuntary association emerges in the record of the Redeemer's Passion. "The darkest hour that ever dawned on sinful earth" was dark naturally, as well as morally. 4. There is something higher than rhetoric, something deeper than poetry, in the prophetic habit of bringing into their moral witness appeals, earnest to the point of passion, to the familiar features of the country. The patriot's affection is blended with the mystic's sympathy and the seer's insight (*Mic. vi. 1, 2; Jer. xxii. 29; Josh. xxiv. 26, 27*). 5. I have said that there is more in all this than rhetoric

and poetry, and my justification lies in the power over men of associations, their origin in human volition, and the witness they are able to bear to men's character and experience. The dramatic language of the prophet conveys, and perhaps, to modern ears, conceals, a truth which we can ill afford to forget. We may express it in this way. Every man is at once the author and the victim of the associations with which he invests material things; so that, if we could know what associations these possess for him, what thoughts they set in motion in his mind, what coercion they exercise upon his will, what appeals they address to his affections, we should be well informed as to his past life, and his present character. In truth, we may judge ourselves, we ought to judge ourselves, by habitual associations. What is the moral furniture of our earthly environment? Be sure it is the faithful reflection of ourselves. "To the pure," says St. Paul, "all things are pure: but to them that are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but both their mind and their conscience are defiled." The prophet suggests that associations will appear as accusing witnesses in the day of the Lord. Here they are written in cipher, and each man keeps his own key; but then the cipher shall be open and manifest. The origin of associations will be confessed. "The earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." Before us all lies exposure, inexorable and complete. 6. Associations so potent, so relentless, so minatory in their suggestiveness, may be redeemed, cleansed, transformed. The scenes we desecrated with our sins may be purged by our penitence, and reconsecrated by our sacrifice. History records the reclaiming of associations, the transmutation of the symbols and scenes of evil into the very beacons and homes of goodness. But do not underrate the cost of this great conversion. It is no light task to strip off one set of associations and to invest with another. Yet one final stage. Memories of evil may themselves become transmuted into allies of goodness. Christian history is full of this paradox. The protagonists of virtue are, not the flawless saints, but the great penitents. There are who find in their abandoned sins perpetual incitements to service, as she of whom He said, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." (*H. H. Henson, B.D.*) *The earth disclosing her blood*.—In a characteristic passage Lord Macaulay has described the impression made on observers by the rank growth of scarlet poppies on the battlefield of Landen. "During many months the ground was strewn with skulls and bones of men and horses, and with fragments of hats and shoes, saddles and holsters. The next summer the soil, fertilised by twenty thousand corpses, broke forth into millions of poppies. The traveller who, on the road from St. Tron to Tirlemont, saw that vast sheet of rich scarlet spreading from Landen to Neerwinden, could hardly help fancying that the figurative prediction of the Hebrew prophet was literally accomplished, that the earth was disclosing her blood, and refusing to cover the slain." (*Ibid.*)

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

**VER. 1.** The Lord . . . shall punish leviathan.—*The Church has formidable enemies*.—The Church has many enemies, but commonly some one that is more formidable than the rest. So Sennacherib was in his day, and Nebuchadnezzar in his, and Antiochus in his. So Pharaoh had been formerly; and he is called "leviathan," and the "dragon" (*Psa. lxxiv. 14; Isa. li. 9; Ezek. xxix. 3*). And the New Testament Church has had its leviathans; we read of a "great red dragon, ready to devour it" (*Rev. xii. 3*). Those malignant, persecuting powers are here compared to the leviathan in bulk and strength, and the mighty bustle they make in the world; to dragons, for their rage and fury; to serpents, piercing serpents, penetrating in their counsels, quick in their motions, that if they once get in their head, will soon wind in their whole body; "crossing like a bar," so the margin, standing in the way of all their neighbours and obstructing them; to crooked serpents, subtle and insinuating, but perverse and mischievous. (*M. Henry.*)

**Vers. 2, 3.** A vineyard of red wine.—*The Church a vineyard of red wine*.—The Church of God is here compared to a vineyard. The vine is a tender

plant, needing continual care; and if the vineyard is not well fenced and guarded, the enemies of the vine are sure to get in and destroy it. The Church is called "a vineyard of red wine," because the red grape happened to be the best kind grown in Palestine; and, in like manner, God's Church is to Him the best of the best, the excellent of the earth, in whom is all His delight. But what is true of the whole Church is also true of every member; the same God who keeps the vineyard also protects every vine, nay, not only so, but His care extends to every little branch, to every spreading leaf, and to every clinging tendril of that vine which He undertakes to keep night and day. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

*The vineyard of red wine.*—In what day? The day of threatening and punishment of the wicked. The Church needs encouragement amid danger and darkness. And God gives it when required. I. WHAT SHE IS. A vineyard of red wine. A common figure of the Church. It is to intimate—1. That members are separate from the world and enclosed around. 2. That they are cultivated and cared for. They differ from the world as flowers from weeds, a garden from a wilderness. 3. That they are owned. Believers are God's people, His chosen inheritance, His private property. 4. That they are profitable. A vineyard yields fruit, and so adds to the advantage of its owner. It is a vineyard of "red wine." A vineyard from which is extracted the richest juice. Everything of God's doing is not only perfect, but superior. Everything with which He supplies His people is the best. Their peace "passeth understanding." Their joy is "full of glory." II. WHAT SHE IS TO POSSESS. "I, the Lord, do keep it," &c. Here is—1. Guardianship. The Keeper gives His whole attention to its protection. How wise a guardian is God! "Lest any hurt it." His whole army of angels act as a guard with their flaming swords. 2. Provision. "I will water it." The act of watering means all the necessary provision required for the nourishment of the vines and the production of fruit. The Holy Spirit is likened to the water of life, which Christ has promised to give freely to all who ask Him. There are also His ordinances and sacraments. 3. Vigilance. "Keep it constantly"—night and day. The great God slumbers not nor sleeps. His eye is ever on His people. No foe can elude His guardianship. (*Homilist.*)

*The Church as God's vineyard.*—What a contrast between the vineyard here spoken of and that whose history was given in the fifth chapter of this prophet. That was a favoured vineyard. Everything was done for it to promote its fruitfulness; but what sort of fruit did it produce? "God looked that it should bring forth grapes; and it brought forth wild grapes." What happened then? His indignation fell upon it. By that unfruitful vineyard was represented the Jewish people. But now turn and behold the other vineyard—that which is brought before us by my text. This vineyard is the real, spiritual Church of the Redeemer.

I. THE DESCRIPTION GIVEN OF THIS VINEYARD. The spiritual Church of Jesus is "a vineyard of red wine." 1. By this "red wine" may be intended, perhaps in part, the faith of Christ's elect people. "Red wine" was in great esteem amongst ancient Jews, as appears in Prov. xxiii. 31. 2. The Lord may call His Church "a vineyard of red wine," in reference to the love she bears to Him. 3. Christ's Church is a "vineyard of red wine," because she "abounds in all the fruits of righteousness." II. THE PRIVILEGES WHICH IT IS REPRESENTED AS ENJOYING. The vineyards of the Jews were carefully kept and cultivated. The vines in the country of the Jews appear to have needed constant watering. The Lord's spiritual vineyard needs perpetual watering from above. These natural vineyards in which the Jewish land abounded required, however, something more than cultivation. A chief part of the duty of the "keepers of the vineyard" was to protect the vines from depredation. And is the spiritual vineyard less exposed? (*A. Roberts, M.A.*)

*God's care for His vineyard a subject for song.*—To them who are ready to conclude that God hath forgotten to be gracious these words may prove a source of encouragement. They—I. REPRESENT THE PEOPLE OF GOD AS A VINEYARD. As God values His vineyard for the same reasons that men value their vineyards (because of its fruit), it behoves us to inquire what sort of fruit it is which makes His vineyard valuable to Him. All the asperities of disposition and all the want of spiritual excellence, which we may suppose are designed by wild grapes, must give place to "whatsoever things are true; whatsoever things are honest; whatsoever things are just; whatsoever things are pure; whatsoever things are lovely, and whatsoever things are of good report." "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," must adorn and beautify your character. II. DESCRIB



**GOD'S CARE FOR HIS VINEYARD.** The care of God for His vineyard is manifested in two ways: by His unceasing attention to the culture and growth of these heavenly fruits, and by His unremitting vigilance in preserving it. The soil is not congenial with a plant of heavenly origin. For the heart of man is hard and unfruitful. The climate of this world is cold and variable: the atmosphere tainted with sin; and every wind of passion blights and withers the vine. If the sun of persecution and trouble smites it too often it is scorched. He, therefore, who has planted it for His own glory, and who is always glorified when it brings forth much fruit, watches over it, tends it with solicitude. There is not one moment when you who love and serve God cease to be the objects of His care, and of His renovating influence. **III. A SUBJECT FOR SONG.** This song implies, that the people of God have the knowledge and enjoyment of His care and protection. It is not the will of God that you who have repented, and are doing works meet for repentance; who have believed in Christ, and have a faith which worketh by love, should continue in doubt and uncertainty respecting your state. As the song should be appropriate to the occasion and suitable to the subject, the song which we are to sing is—1. A song of adoring admiration. 2. Of joyful gratitude. 3. Of holy confidence. 4. Of deep humility. You are called upon to be humble because you have nothing that you have not received, but also because, after having received so much, and after being laid under obligations so many and so distinguishing, you make returns so inadequate and so unsuitable. (*M. Jackson.*)

**Ver. 3. I, the Lord, do keep it.**—*The Lord the Keeper of His people*:—There is nothing to which we are naturally more prone, nothing more dangerous, nothing so difficult to eradicate as self-confidence. And yet there is nothing so delightful as to feel that we have not anything in ourselves in which we can be confident. For the moment we have arrived at that experience we are prepared to turn to Him without whom we can do nothing. **I. IN WHAT SENSE THE LORD IS THE KEEPER OF HIS PEOPLE.** 1. In one sense the Lord is the keeper of all; for “in Him all live, and move, and have their being.” And the Apostle Paul (1 Tim. iv. 10) speaks of Him as “the Saviour, or preserver, of all men, specially of those that believe.” 2. He speaks of keeping them as a city from an enemy. 3. He speaks again of keeping them as a vineyard from foxes. In Solomon’s Song ii 15 we read, “Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.” Those things which may appear gentle and innocent have a tendency to undermine the work of indwelling grace. 4. Again, the Lord speaks of keeping His people as the apple of His eye. 5. I might speak again of the fires of persecution, through which His people are called to pass. For here again the Lord is the Keeper of His people. 6. He not only defends and preserves His people, but He keeps them refreshed in seasons of drought by continual and plentiful supplies of mercy and grace. So in the text He says, “I will water it every moment.” **II. WHEN IS IT THAT HE KEEPS THEM?** “By day and by night.” He watches over them continually, in the bright day of prosperity and in the dark night of adversity. **III. HOW IS IT THAT THE LORD KEEPS HIS PEOPLE?** 1. By His angels (Heb. i. 14). 2. By His ministers; by their warning voice in public; or by that advice and reproof, and instruction which they give in private. 3. By His providential dispensations. 4. By His own omnipotent arm. His people are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” **IV. WHAT WARRANT WE HAVE AS HIS PEOPLE TO EXPECT THAT THE LORD WILL BE OUR KEEPER.** 1. The first plain proof of this is, that as His people we are not our own, but given to Christ. 2. Coupled with this, we may consider the faithfulness of Jesus (2 Thess. iii. 3). 3. Connect with this, the consideration of the love of Jesus for His people. 4. Indeed, we have as believers the warrant of the Triune Jehovah for believing that the Lord will be our keeper. Bear in mind that, until the time when knowledge shall be increased, and faith and hope end in sight and enjoyment, we shall never be aware of the full extent of our obligations to Him as the Keeper of His people. Yet, while we thankfully lay hold of the comfort which this truth is calculated to give, let us remember that our own responsibility is not overthrown. On the contrary, it is increased. For though encouraged to trust in the Lord as our keeper, there is no excuse for neglect of duty on account of our own weakness; but rather encouragement to say with the apostle, “I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me.” (*M. Villiers M.A.*) *God’s care of His vineyard*.—God takes care—I. Of the SAFETY of this vineyard. “I, the Lord, do keep

it." II. Of the FRUITFULNESS of this vineyard. "I will water it every moment," and yet it shall not be overwatered. (*M. Henry.*) *The keeper of the vineyard*:—I. THE CONTINUAL KEEPING which the Lord promises to His vineyard. 1. Do I need keeping? 2. Can I not keep myself? 3. Do I enjoy this keeping?

II. THE LORD'S CONTINUAL WATERING. 1. Do I need watering within as well as keeping without? Yes, for there is not a single grace I have that can live an hour without being divinely watered. Besides, the soil in which I am planted is very dry. Then, the atmosphere that is round about us does not naturally yield us any water. The means of grace, which are like clouds hovering over our heads, are often nothing but clouds. The beauty of the text seems to me to lie in the last two words: "I will water it every moment." 2. Have we all realised, as a matter of experience, that the Lord does water us every moment? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Kept and watered*:—God is both a wall and a well to His people. (*Ibid.*) *God's vine needs keeping*:—1. There is the arch-enemy; how he longs to lay the axe at the roots of God's vines! 2. There is a wild boar of the woods, that would fain tear us up by the roots; I mean, that wild boar of unbelief that is constantly prowling around us. How does it seek with its sharp tusks to bark our vines and fig-trees! 3. Then, the vine is often subject to injury from various kinds of insects. We have the fly of pride. 4. Then, the vine is subject to the attacks of the little foxes that Solomon speaks of,—I mean, false doctrine and sceptical teaching. 5. Besides, when we have a few grapes that are beginning to ripen there are the birds that come and try to pick the fruit,—those dark-winged thoughts of worldliness and selfishness which come to us all. (*Ibid.*) *God the Keeper of His vineyard*:—A vineyard will engross the whole of a man's time—perhaps the time of many men. The nourishing of the soil, the pruning of the branches, the syringing of the leaves, the thinning of the grapes, the support of the heavy clusters—all demand constant and assiduous care. There is a tendency in all cultivated things to go back to their original type. However it may be made to agree with the modern ideas of development and evolution, it is nevertheless a fact that the fairest results of human skill are not in themselves permanent; but tend ever backward to the rudest and simplest forms of their species—the apple-tree to the crab, the vine of Sorek to the wild vine of the hills. Therefore the keeper of the vineyard is ever engaged in fighting every tendency towards deterioration with unwavering patience. With similar care, but with much more tenderness, God is ever watching over us. With eager eyes He marks the slightest sign of deterioration—a hardening conscience; a deadening spirituality; a waning love. Any symptom of this sort fills Him with—if I may use the words—keen anxiety; and His gentle but skilful hand is at once at work to arrest the evil, restore the soul, and force it onward to new accessions of that Divine life which is our only true bliss and rest. Let us not carry the responsibility of our nurture. It is too much for us. Better far is it to devolve the care of our keeping on our faithful Creator. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *God the great Preserver*:—It is not with God as it is with carpenters and shipwrights, who make houses for other men to dwell in, vessels for others to sail in, and therefore after they are made look after them no more; God, who made all things for Himself, looks after the preservation of all. (*John Arrowsmith, D.D.*) *God's solicitude for His people*:—The tear-water, constantly flowing over our eyes, removes the grit and dust that alight on them, impairing our power of vision. The eager mother shields her children from any polluting words or influences that might approach them from child-companion or school-fellow. The physician is eagerly solicitous that no germ of disease should enter an open wound, and lays his instruments in carbolic that they may carry no spore on their keen edge. And may we not count even more certainly on Him who says, "I, the Lord, do keep it," &c. (*Christian Endeavour.*) I will water it every moment.—*A refreshing promise*:—In warm climates irrigation is essential to fertility; hence travellers see on all sides pools and watercourses, wheels and cisterns, and channels for the water to flow in. I. There is a great NECESSITY for the watering promised in the text. 1. This we might conclude from the promise itself, since there is not one superfluous word of promise in the whole Scriptures, but it becomes more evident when we reflect that all creature life is dependent upon the perpetual outgoing of Divine power. 2. Moreover, the truth is specially certain as touching the believer, for a multitude of agencies are at work to dry up the moisture of his soul. 3. Neither have we any other source of supply but the living God. "All my springs are in Thee." 4. Our need of Divine watering is clearly seen when we consider what drought, and barrenness, and death would come upon us

if His hand were withdrawn. Without watering every moment the most faithful among us would be cast forth, and be only fit for the fire; every prophet would become a Balaam, every apostle a Judas, every disciple a Demas. II. THE MANNER in which the Lord promises to water His people—"I will water it every moment." 1. Our first thought is excited by the perpetual act—"every moment." Mercy knows no pause. Grace has no canonical hours, or rather all hours are alike canonical: yea, and all moments too. 2. The Lord's watering is a renewed act. He does not water us once in great abundance, and then leave us to live upon what He has already poured out. 3. A personal act. "I will water it." III. THE CERTAINTY that the Lord will water every plant that His own right hand hath planted. Here a vast number of arguments suggest themselves, but we will content ourselves with the one ground of confidence which is found in the Lord Himself and His previous deeds of love. Our souls need supplies so great as to drain rivers of grace, but the all-sufficient God is able to meet the largest demands of the innumerable company of His people, and He will meet them to His own honour and glory for ever. Here, then, we see His truth, His power, and His all-sufficiency pledged to provide for His chosen, and we may be sure that the guarantee will stand. If we needed further confirmation we might well remember that the Lord has already watered His vineyard in a far more costly manner than it will ever need again. The Lord Jesus has watered it with a sweat of blood, and can it be supposed that He will leave it now? Hitherto the sacred promise has been fully kept, for we have been graciously preserved in spiritual life. Droughty times have befallen us, and yet our soul has not been suffered to famish; why, then, should we question the goodness of the Lord as to years to come? One thing is never to be forgotten—we are the Lord's. Therefore, if He do not water us, He will Himself be the loser. An owner of vine-lands, if he should suffer them to be parched with the drought, would derive nothing from his estate; the vineyard would be dried up, but he himself would receive no clusters. With reverence be it spoken, our Lord Himself will never see of the travail of His soul in untended vines, nor in hearts unsanctified, nor in men whose graces droop and die for want of Divine refreshings. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 4, 5. **Fury is not in Me.**—Of all the senses put upon this difficult verse there are only two which can be looked upon as natural or probable. The first may be paraphrased as follows:—It is not because I am cruel or revengeful that I thus afflict My people, but because she is a vineyard overrun with thorns or briars, on account of which I must pass through her and consume her (*i.e.*, burn them out of her). The other is this: I am no longer angry with My people; oh, that their enemies (as thorns and briars) would array themselves against Me, that I might rush upon them and consume them. (*J. A. Alexander.*) **Liberty and discipline.**—I. A BLESSED ABSENCE IN THE NATURE OF GOD. "Fury is not in Me." Fury seems to be uncontrolled and uncontrollable anger. A vessel in a storm, with its rudder gone or its screw broken, is passive in the power of winds and waves. A lion, who for hours has been disappointed of his prey, is passive under the dominion of his hunger. In both cases no influence, internal or external, is able to resist the onward course. And when a man is so in the hand of anger that no consideration from within or intercession from without can mollify him, when he is passive in its power, he is in a state of fury. But no such estate is possible to our God. His anger is always under control, and we have plentiful evidence that, in the height of His displeasure, He is accessible to intercession on behalf of His creatures. Nevertheless—II. THIS BLESSED ABSENCE IN THE NATURE OF GOD IS COMPATIBLE WITH CONTENTION WITH THE UNREPENTING. "Who would set the briars and thorns against Me in battle?" &c. Imagine a father and son at variance, the father being in the right and the son in the wrong. There are two ways of reconciliation: either the son must comply with the conditions of the father, or the father must lower his standard to the level of the son. But what a wrong would the father do to himself, his family, and society if he were to adopt this course. He ought not, will not. If the son resolves to fight it out, reconciliation is impossible. This is the relative position of God and the ungodly man. God declares His conditions, "Let the wicked forsake his way," &c. Consider what is involved in the conditions of the ungodly. Nothing less than the inversion of the whole moral law. God says, "I am Jehovah, I change not." It is a blessed impossibility. But the unrepentant man ought, can, must! If not, the fire of goodness must be

set against the briars of wickedness, a contest as hopeless, and of which the issue is as certain, as that of the devouring flame with briars and thorns. III. THE ABSENCE OF FURY IN GOD LEADS HIM TO PREFER PARDON TO PUNISHMENT, AND TO PROVIDE MEANS FOR THE FORMER. "Let him take hold of My strength," &c. Men, churches, and nations are lovers of peace in proportion as they are righteous (Psa. lxxii. 3). The preference of God for peace depends upon the very attribute of which the ungodly would rob Him—namely, His righteousness. What is God's strength? How take hold of it? When a man falls overboard at sea, the appointed means of rescue is the life-belt which is thrown to him. Seizing that, he takes hold of the strength of the vessel to save him. When the manslayer, fleeing from the avenger of blood, entered the city of refuge, he took hold of God's appointed means of shelter. God's strength is His pardoning prerogative, exercised to us through Christ, the "arm," or "strength," of the Lord. (*H. Bushnell, D.D.*) *Fury not in God*:—I. FURY IS NOT IN GOD. But how can this be? Is not fury one manifestation of His essential attributes—do we not repeatedly read of His fury—of Jerusalem being full of the fury of the Lord—of God casting the fury of His wrath upon the world—of Him rendering His anger upon His enemies with fury—of Him accomplishing His fury upon Zion—of Him causing His fury to rest on the bloody and devoted city? We are not, therefore, to think that fury is banished altogether from God's administration. There are times and occasions when this fury is discharged upon the objects of it; and there must be other times and occasions when there is no fury in Him. Now, what is the occasion upon which He disclaims all fury in our text? He is inviting men to reconciliation; and He is assuring them that if they will only take hold of His strength they shall make peace with Him. Fury will be discharged on those who reject the invitation. But we cannot say that there is any exercise of fury in God at the time of giving the invitation. There is the most visible and direct contrary. This very process was all gone through at and before the destruction of Jerusalem. It rejected the warnings and invitations of the Saviour, and at length experienced His fury. But there was no fury at the time of His giving the invitations. The tone of our Saviour's voice when He uttered, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," was not the tone of a vindictive and irritated fury. There was compassion in it—a warning and pleading earnestness that they would mind the things which belong to their peace. Let us make the application to ourselves. II. GOD IS NOT WANTING TO GLORIFY HIMSELF BY THE DEATH OF SINNERS. When God says, "Who would set the thorns and the briars against Me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together," He speaks of the ease wherewith He could accomplish His wrath upon His enemies. They would perish before Him like the moth. Why set up, then, a contest so unequal as this? God is saying in the text that this is not what He is wanting. In the language of the next verse, He would rather that this enemy of His, not yet at peace with Him, and who may therefore be likened to a briar or a thorn, should take hold of His strength, that He may make peace with Him—and as the fruit of his so doing, He shall make peace with Him. Now tell me if this do not open up a most wonderful and a most inviting view of God? It is the real attitude in which He puts Himself forth to us in the gospel of His Son. What remains for you to do? God is willing to save you: are you willing to be saved? III. THE INVITATION. "Or let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me." "Or" here is the same with "rather." Rather than that what is spoken of in the fourth verse should fall upon you. We have not far to seek for what is meant by this strength, for Isaiah himself speaks (chap. xxxiii. 6) of the strength of salvation. 1. We read of a mighty strength that had to be put forth in the work of a sinner's justification. Just in proportion to the weight and magnitude of the obstacle was the greatness of that strength which the Saviour put forth in the mighty work of moving it away. A way of redemption has been found out in the unsearchable riches of Divine wisdom, and Christ is called the wisdom of God. But the same Christ is also called the power of God. 2. But there is also a strength put forth in the work of man's regeneration. 3. When you apply to a friend for some service, some relief from distress or difficulty, you may be said to lay hold of him; and when you place firm reliance both on his ability and willingness to do the service, you may well say that your hold is upon your friend—an expression which becomes all the more appropriate should he promise to do the needful good office, in which case your hold is not upon his power only,

but upon his faithfulness. And it is even so with the promises of God in Christ Jesus—you have both a power and a promise to take hold of. (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*)

Ver. 5. Let him take hold of My strength.—*Taking hold of the Divine strength*:—I. THE INVITATION. “Let him take hold of My strength.” This becomes an imperative duty—a duty universal in its application. II. THE REASON of this invitation—“that he may make peace with Me.” 1. Observe how very unselfish it is, if we may so call it with reverence, on the part of God. It is not that He Himself may be benefited, but that the sinner might. 2. Consider, too, the cogency of this reason, resting as it does in that which all men most need, and most of us long for—“peace.” 3. Regard also the sublimity of this reason—peace with “God.” III. THE POSITIVE ASSURANCE, or the certainty of the promise. “And he shall make peace with Me.” Nothing shall prevent it. Comply with the conditions, and then all is certain. Even the greatest enemies to God among men are permitted to make peace with Him. (*W. Horwood.*) *Man seizing the strength of Omnipotence*:—Some substitute the word “protection” for “strength” here, and suppose the words refer to the horns of the altar which fugitives often laid hold of as an asylum. But the refuge of safety for any moral intelligence is nothing without God’s strength. For an insignificant creature like man to lay hold upon the strength of Omnipotence seems at first not only an absurd, but a blasphemous thought, and yet the thought is not without support in the Word of God. What meaneth the expression, “Let Me alone, Moses,” &c. ? I. It is POSSIBLE for man to lay hold on the strength of Omnipotence. In what does the real strength of a moral intelligence consist ? Not in material bulk or muscle, if he has them ; but in the leading disposition of his heart. This is the soul of strength, the sap in the oak, the steam in the engine, the *vis* in the muscle. He that can take hold of this in a man takes hold of his strength. Vanity is the leading disposition in some men ; and if you would take hold of their strength you must flatter them. By adulation you will grasp them body and soul. Greed is the leading disposition in others. Avarice controls them, works their thoughts, and concentrates their energies. Minister to this greed and you will take hold of their strength, you will have them in your hands. Philanthropy is, thank God, the leading disposition of others. Present to them the claims of down-trodden slaves, of broken-hearted widows and starving orphans, and you will take hold of their strength. Now, the leading disposition of God, if I may so say, is benevolence. He not only loves, but is love. He, therefore, who appeals to His compassion takes hold of His strength. See how Omnipotence halted as Abraham prayed. See how in Christ it stood still on the road when two blind beggars said, “Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me.” Thus let the poor sinner go stricken in penitence and appeal in all his misery to the Great Father, and he will take hold of His strength. II. It is NECESSARY for man to lay hold on the strength of Omnipotence. The only hope of sinful, dying man is to appeal to God’s compassion. “If My people which are called by My name shall humble themselves and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways ; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin.” “Ye shall seek Me and find Me when ye search for Me with all your heart.” Elijah prayed, and God unsealed the heavens for him. Stephen prayed, and the Father drew the curtains of the invisible world and revealed to him the Son of God in all His glory. (*Homilist.*) *Seizing the strength of the Almighty*:—How can a man take hold on the strength of God ? The following facts may give meaning to the phrase. I. The pleading of the PROMISE of ONE WHO IS FAITHFUL will take hold of his strength. If a man of incorruptible truthfulness were to make me a promise, and I pleaded the fulfilment of that promise, should I not, in a very emphatic sense, “take hold of his strength” in pleading it before him ? I should seize not his mere limbs or any particular faculty, but himself, his inflexible sense of truthfulness. II. The pleading of a RIGHT CLAIM to ONE WHO IS RIGHTEOUS will take hold of his strength. If you have a righteous claim upon a righteous man you lay hold of him by urging it. You do not want law with such a man to enforce your obligation. He yields it by the necessity of his nature. There are claims which all moral beings who are commanded to love God with their hearts, souls, and strength have upon Him. III. The pleading of MISERY to ONE THAT IS LOVING will take hold of his strength. Thus the cry of a babe will take hold of the strength of a father, though he be the commander of armies, or the monarch of mighty peoples. By suffering and sorrow you can

take hold of the most noble men on earth, and the most noble are the most loving. (*Ibid.*) *Strength taken hold of*:—Coriolanus was a mighty man. He is thus described by Shakespeare: "The tartness of his face sours ripe grapes. When he walks he moves like an engine, and the ground shrinks before his treading. He is able to pierce a corset with his eye, talks like a knell, and his hum is a battery. He sits in his state as a thing made for Alexander. What he bids be done is finished with his bidding. He wants nothing of a god but eternity, and a heaven to throne in." And yet his mother and wife, by appealing to the love in his nature, took hold of his strength; and hence we hear him exclaim, "Ladies, you deserve to have a temple built you. All the swords in Italy and her confederate arms could not have made this peace." (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 6. He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root.—*The future prosperity of the Church the effects of Divine influence*:—I. IN RESPECT OF NUMBER. Under the ancient dispensation, the spiritual Israel were comparatively few. But at the commencement of the Christian dispensation the wall of partition was broken down, and the boundaries of the Church were greatly enlarged. II. IN RESPECT OF SPIRITUAL VIGOUR. Others remain in a state of spiritual death. But concerning them "that come of Jacob," it is here asserted that they shall take root. III. IN RESPECT OF BEAUTY. Christ Himself, "the branch of the Lord, is beautiful and glorious" (Isa. iv. 2); and believers in Christ are made comely through His comeliness put upon them (Ezek. xvi. 14). IV. IN RESPECT OF FRUITFULNESS. Believers are denominated in Scripture, "trees of righteousness," to intimate that they should "bring forth fruit unto God." They abound "in every good word and work." V. IN RESPECT OF JOY. It is when the dews of heaven "drop upon the pastures of the wilderness" that it is said, "the little hills rejoice on every side." The abundant joy of New Testament times, especially of the times referred to in the passage before us, is often spoken of in Scripture. VI. IN RESPECT OF STABILITY. It is here promised that the Lord "shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root." The vicissitudes which take place in human affairs teach us the vanity of the world, and the perishing nature of all that seems most durable in this region of shadows. The Church of God, however, has been like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved. VII. IN RESPECT OF EXTENT. (*R. Jack.*)

Ver. 8. He stayeth His rough wind in the day of the east wind.—*The rough wind stayed*:—Here we are taught two things: that God permits calamities to come upon man, but that He restrains them in moderation for some wise and merciful design. It would by no means be difficult to trace out historic parallels illustrative of this truth, both in the history of nations and the annals of the Church. But the words of the text seem capable of a closer application to ourselves and the various calamities which so often overtake us. In Judea the east wind was extremely violent and destructive; allusions to which are not unfrequent in the sacred writings (Job xxvii. 21; Jer. xviii. 17). How many a one has struggled through years of difficulty, buoyed up with the warm hope of gaining some desired object; and just as his hopes are brightening, and the bow is expanding with promises of realisation, the east wind comes and shrouds the whole in darkness. The east wind has blighted your hopes and your joys, but the rough wind has been restrained. 1. Your trials, though great, have not been inflicted with intolerable severity; they have been dealt out to you with moderation for some wise and gracious design. 2. The moderation of our trials will appear, if we compare them with what is endured by others. What are our utmost trials in these highly favoured days compared with those of the early saints? What are our trials compared with those endured by "the noble army of martyrs"? And what are our trials compared with many of our brethren in the present day, who endure suffering and privation, and even death, in their intense love for souls, seeking to advance the Redeemer's kingdom? 3. The moderation of our trials will further appear if we contrast them with what we have deserved. (*W. J. Brock, B.A.*) *Compensations*:—God determines very exactly the measure of our tribulation, ever mingling mercy with judgment, and permitting trial no further than our moral perfecting requires. He sometimes sifts by a violent wind; but He only sifts, He does not mar and destroy. I. LIFE AT LARGE furnishes us with an illustration of the text. Through human sin the whole world has been filled with disorder and suffering. Where-

ever we look—whether in nature or the race—we witness scenes of confusion and misery. God did not threaten us in vain; the power of His displeasure has been bitterly felt throughout the whole creation. Yet are we sure that judgment has not come upon us to the uttermost. The world is dark enough to justify a very sad philosophy, and yet the regulations restrictive of evil, the restorative forces, the system of compensations, the wide spaces for positive pleasure which we find in nature and human life, show the world to be far from a condition of unmixed and hopeless evil. The fact is, the central truth of revelation, the redemption of the world by the Son of God, tells at every point. II. GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL DEALINGS WITH HIS CHILDREN illustrate abundantly the same law of mercy. It is essential to the unlearning of our errors, and the perfecting of our spirit in holiness, that we should be familiar with tribulation; but it is deeply interesting to observe the various methods by which God reduces the whirlwind to a winnowing breeze. 1. Sometimes this is effected by educating us against the day of adversity. Most likely we are totally unaware of the process; it is only when we have passed through the ordeal that the discipline of years stands revealed. Then we perceive why our mind has been specially directed to given truths; why we have been led in prayer to seek special gifts and graces; why we have formed certain friendships and associations. 2. On other occasions the force of disaster is broken by the graduation of trial. Is not this exemplified in the instance of Job? Successive messengers bring to the patriarch their sad tidings, but the crowning woe comes last. The same order has been observed in the sufferings of the Primitive Church. "So when they had further *threatened* them, they let them go" (Acts iv. 21). "And laid their hands on the Apostles, and put them in the *common prison*" (v. 18). "When they had called the apostles, and *beaten* them" (v. 40). "And they *stoned* Stephen" (vii. 59). Menaces prepared them for captivity; fetters inured them for the scourge; the scourge ascertained their royalty, and left them strong enough to claim the martyr's diadem. 3. Again, tribulation is often relieved by counterbalancing advantages. Be sure, where there is a "but" against us there are, as in the case of Naaman, several grand "buts" for us, and it will be most to our good to ponder these. In nature we constantly see this compensatory action—see the rod of God, like that of Aaron, breaking into flowers. Losing eyesight, our other faculties forthwith acquire preternatural acuteness. 4. In that law of sympathy which prevails throughout society we see once again the sword of judgment crossed by mercy's sceptre. The sick and suffering are objects of special sympathy and succour. Macaulay writes of John Bunyan: "He had several small children, and among them a daughter who was blind, and whom he loved with peculiar tenderness. He could not, he said, bear even to let the wind blow on her." III. IN GOD'S SPIRITUAL KINGDOM AND GOVERNMENT we find our last illustration of the inspiring truth we seek to inculcate. In the kingdom of grace are special equivalents for life's losses, special inspirations for the passage of flood and flame. In dark periods we acquire a special interest in the Word of God. Times of adversity bring out multitudes of precious promises, as night brings out the stars. And not only so, but in the bitter conflicts of life we gain a fuller, clearer vision of truth in general, and realise its peculiar preciousness. This fuller, richer apprehension of the mind and purpose of God imbues us with new, strange qualities, and the fire forgets its power to burn. In dark periods we also receive special measures of the grace of God. We must ever gratefully acknowledge the mercy which ameliorates the world about us and makes its conditions gentler; but we must hold firmly the truth that the rough wind is stayed in the day of His east wind, chiefly through the sanctification and exaltation of the human mind in Christ Jesus. Here we often err. We plead for the rectification and amelioration of circumstances; that our path may be smoother, our load lighter, our sky brighter. We are anxious for better health, improved trade, the restoration of friends, the reduction of life's cares, griefs and losses. We want life tempering by making our environment less exhaustive; by adjusting the world more nearly to our weakness. But this is not God's most approved method. He does not modify the universe about us so much as He raises the mind within us; giving us relief and victory in knowledge, power, faith, hope, love, and the joy which is inseparable from a soul so richly dowered. "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." Lessons—(1) We gain an affecting view of the love of God. (2) We see in this a reason for submission and gratitude.

(3) We see the justification of confidence and quietness. (4) Let us go forth again with renewed courage and hope. It is generally allowed that Dante has pictured *Inferno* more ably than *Paradiso*; and the critics explain this on the ground that the poet's gloomy genius made him more skilful in depicting a dark theme than a cheerful one. The measure of Dante's genius is rare; the kind very common indeed. Most of us are clever at painting black pictures. (*W. L. Walkinson.*) *Troubles as storms*.—Troubles are compared in Holy Scripture to storms. As storms are not constant, not the normal state of the atmosphere, so troubles, except in some cases, are but occasional. As storms disturb the ordinary course of the elements, so troubles interfere with our usual mode of life, with our duties, with our joys, with all our habits. As storms are useful in the hand of the Great Ruler, so troubles fulfil the good purpose of the Divine will. As storms are not pleasant while they last, but promote discomfort, and awaken fear and apprehension, so troubles are not for the present joyous, but grievous. As storms are often destructive in their influence, so troubles break up and break down things that we would not have touched—precious things, hoarded things, cherished things, things upon which the eye and the heart rest, things which the hand grasps firmly, things in which we rest, and on account of which we rejoice. (*S. Martin.*) *Sorrows as winds*.—I. **SORROWS ARE STRONG FORCES.** They act as winds; they are forces before which we bend and bow. II. **SORROWS HAVE THEIR APPOINTED TIME.** "In the day of the east wind." There are certain winds that blow at particular seasons. Just so sorrows have their appointed times in a man's life. There is a time to mourn. Blessed be God, in the life of Heaven's children, sorrows have their day, their morning, their noon, and their night. They are here, and the day of their residence may be long, but every hour of that day tells of the day's approaching end when the trouble will be no more. Now, it occasionally happens that people in trouble say, "This affliction could not have come upon me at a worse time." But that is never true, unless by any wilfulness you bring your own sorrows upon yourselves. If the trouble came at a time when you would not feel it at all, why, the trouble would be useless to you, and you would have to be placed in those circumstances again and again. III. **SORROWS ARE GOD'S SERVANTS.** "He stayeth His rough wind in the day of the east wind," just because the winds are His. He holdeth them in His fist so long as He pleases to hold them—and then sendeth them forth from the hollow of His hand when He pleases to send them forth, and calleth them back into His own hand when He pleases to recall them. Just so is it with troubles. (*Ibid.*) *The adaptation of trial to the state of the afflicted*.—I. **ADAPTED BY WHOM.** "He stayeth His rough wind," &c. Adapted by the Almighty Father. If God could not adapt a rough wind to a feeble nature, He would not be almighty. The very omnipotence of God involves power to do the tender and the gentle. II. **ADAPTED TO WHAT.** 1. The strength of the sufferer. There is no man who thoroughly knows his own strength—certainly not until it has been developed by circumstances. There are people who overrate it; and they will say to you that they can bear such and such a thing easily, and they look upon others, and they wonder that they should be bowed down by events of a certain class. They are placed in circumstances corresponding to those of their fellow-men, and they find that their strength is absolute weakness. Other persons say, "Oh! I could never bear such a trial." The former cannot do what he thinks he can do; the latter can do what he thinks he cannot do. Now God makes no such mistakes. He knows just what we are. "He knows our frame: He remembers that we are but dust." 2. He moderates it, moreover, according to the work which has to be accomplished. Sometimes trouble is chastening. Then trouble is intended to do a preparatory work. Or there is something that a man has to do either down here or yonder—some work for which he is not educated—and God sends a trouble to educate the man. Now God moderates affliction according to the work to be accomplished. If there be a fault to be corrected, then the trouble must have great force in it—it must be rough in its character; whereas, if it be purely educational—just simply to bring out some dormant faculty—then it need not be rough in its character, but it requires to be longer continued. 3. Adapted to the time during which this work should be finished. 4. Adapted to the power and resources, moreover, of fellow-sufferers—because in most cases others suffer with us; and you do not suppose that God does not look at the entire family when He sends sorrow unto that family. III. **HOW DOES GOD DO THIS?** Sometimes by removing one trouble before



another comes. By lightening the affliction itself, or by so strengthening the heart of the sufferer, that the affliction is relatively lighter, or by pouring through the soul of the troubled one rich and abundant consolation. IV. FOR WHAT PURPOSE DOES GOD DO THIS? He does it for present peace and joy. Moreover, for your enduring benefit, and in manifestation of Himself to you as a tender Father, "He stayeth His rough wind in the day of the east wind." Now this is the testimony of God concerning Himself; but it is also the testimony of God's children concerning Him. Isaiah could say this from his own experience and observation; and he addressed the words of our text to those who could acknowledge them to be true. Now, tell this to one another. God intends you to comfort each other, as well as to instruct and edify one another. Then we say to others of you, be not afraid of the rough wind. Those of you who have not felt it will feel it. (*Ibid.*) *A grand symbolic picture of the world*:—The critics find fault with Rubens' picture of the Crucifixion—they say he has painted Golgotha like a garden where you can scarcely see the skulls for the flowers. This may, perhaps, be a defective picture of Golgotha, but it is a grand symbolic picture of our world; the things of sadness, pain, and death being half-hidden by the flowers which mercy has caused everywhere to grow. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *God's thoughtfulness in imposing burdens*:—Let a ponderous weight drop suddenly on a machine, and the jerk brings it down with a crash; graduate the strain, and no harm is done. How easily the delicate mechanism of the moral man might be broken down! but whilst the engineer is imperfectly versed in "the theory of strains," and often sadly miscalculates the "breaking-point" of materials entering into his constructions, He who made us knows perfectly the strength and frailty of each, and with a faultless delicacy lays upon us the burdens of life. (*Ibid.*) *Life's roses and life's thorns*:—In countless ways God makes His suffering people to know that if the roses of life bear thorns, the thorns of life also bear roses. (*Ibid.*) *God's angels—judgment and mercy*:—The Jewish tradition relates that after the Fall the two angels of God—judgment and mercy—were sent forth together to do their office upon the sinning but redeemed race, and together they act to this day. Where one afflicts, the other heals. Where one makes a rent, the other plants a flower. Where one carves a wrinkle, the other kindles a smile. Where one scowls a storm, the other spreads a rainbow. Where one poises the glittering sword, the other covers our naked head with succouring wing. It is ever thus. His tender mercies are over all that His hands have made, and although we have brought upon ourselves awful sorrows, yet He so administers the world that by countless devices He softens our lot and saves us from despair. (*Ibid.*) *More affliction, more grace*:—Miss Havergal writes her mother: "More pain, dearest mother? May it be more support, more grace, more tenderness from the God of all comfort, more and more! May we not expect the 'mores' always to be in tender proportion to each other?" (*Ibid.*) *The compensatory element in life*:—Plants of great splendour have usually little fragrance, and plants of much fragrance usually little colour; birds of brilliant plumage have no music, and musical birds little glory of feather; strong animals ordinarily lack speed, swift animals strength. Now that would be a very disordered state of things in which the brilliant plant ever grieved over its defect of sweetness, and the sweet flower its lack of colour; in which the bird of paradise should lament its vocalism, and the nightingale sigh over its plumes; in which the camel should fret its slowness, and the gazelle deplore its frailty. And yet this error is common to man. We look on the side of our limitations and bereavements, quite overlooking or undervaluing the particulars in which we are rich or strong. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 9. By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged.—*God's end in sending calamities and afflictions on His people*:—Motives to enforce this duty of complying with the Lord's end, in afflicting and bringing calamities upon us. 1. Otherwise our calamities are like to continue. 2. This may increase the affliction upon you, add more weight, and put more sting into it. 3. This may multiply your afflictions, and make them come in upon you as waves and billows in a storm. 4. This may bring more grievous evils upon you than any you have yet met with. 5. The Lord may give you over and refuse to correct any more. 6. He may leave you to spiritual judgments. Outward afflictions are His rods, but these are His swords; and when upon incorrigibility under those. He takes up these, His wrath is raised to the height. 7. This is the way to be rejected of the Lord; for those that are not His to be rejected wholly, for

those that are His to be in part rejected (Jer. vii. 28, 29). 8. This provokes the Lord to bring destruction. (*D. Clarkson.*) *Mortifying sin*:—If you would subdue your iniquity and mortify your sin—1. Get mortifying apprehensions of it. 2. Get mortifying resolutions. Get your hearts resolved against sin; to prosecute it to the death; to engage all the strength you have, and can procure, in such a prosecution of it; resolve not to spare it; not to forbear it in the least; not to tolerate it, nor suffer it to have any quiet abode in any part of heart or life; not to enter into a parley or treaty with it; not to yield to any cessation, much less to make any peace with it, no more than the Israelites with those whom the Lord had devoted to destruction. 3. Get mortifying affections—affections which carry the heart from sin, or set it against it. 4. Get mortifying graces, three especially, love to God, faith in Him, and fear of Him. 5. Use mortifying means, those which the Lord has appointed for this end. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 11. It is a people of no understanding.—*A dreadful denunciation of judgment*:—I. THE JUDGMENT DENOUNCED. 1. Great desolation as to their outward state (ver 10, and former part of ver. 11). 2. Utter destruction, final ruin. "He that made them will not have mercy on them." It is the highest severity, where no Saviour is to be found, where "judgment" is executed "without mercy." And this is amplified by the consideration—(1) Partly of the inflicter of the judgment. "He that made them." They were not to fall into the hands merely of men like themselves, their fellow-creatures; but "into the hands of the living God." (2) Partly of kindness formerly received from Him. "He that made them; He that formed them"; that is, He that created them, gave them their being, or He that not only made them as His creatures, but formed them to be His servants, formed them into a State and into a Church, and so had given them their being, not only a natural one, but a civil and ecclesiastical one: He that had formerly done so much for them, vouchsafed them such choice mercies, yet now would renounce all kindness to them. II. THE CAUSE OF THE JUDGMENT TO BE INFLICTED. "It is a people of no understanding," a sottish, ignorant people, such as take no notice of anything, know not God, observe not His works, understand not their duty. Other sins, no doubt, they were chargeable with; but the Lord takes notice especially of their ignorance, and it is for that they are here threatened. Hence we take notice, that—1. Ignorance of God, His truths or ways, is no security against His judgments (Jer. x. 25). 2. The knowledge of the will and ways of God is necessary for them that expect to find favour with God. They that desire God would save them, must labour to know Him. (*E. Veal, B.D.*) *Spiritual knowledge*:—I. WHAT IS THAT KNOWLEDGE WE ARE TO SEEK AFTER. II. DIRECTIONS FOR ATTAINING IT. (*Ibid.*) *Spiritual knowledge necessary*:—1. Supposing it were certainly defined, how much knowledge, and the knowledge of what truths, were sufficient to salvation; yet no man, that is in a capacity of getting more knowledge, ought to acquiesce in just so much. 2. Men should in their seeking knowledge first study those truths which are most confessedly necessary to salvation before those which are apparently less necessary. 3. Men should labour after such a knowledge of the truth, as that they may be able to give "a reason of the hope that is in them." 4. Men should especially give themselves to the study, and labour after the knowledge of the present truths (2 Pet. i. 12), i.e., those which are the special truths of the times, and ages, and places in which men live. 5. Men should labour for such knowledge as may defend them from the errors of the times and places in which they live. 6. Men should seek especially for such knowledge, and study such truths, as have the greatest influence upon practice. 7. Every man should labour to get as much spiritual knowledge as he can, by the means of the knowledge he hath gotten, and as he can get without the neglect of other necessary duties. (*Ibid.*) *Man's forfeiture of the love of his Creator*:—I. THE RELATION OF A CREATOR STRONGLY ENGAGES GOD TO PUT FORTH ACTS OF LOVE AND FAVOUR TOWARDS HIS CREATURE. This is clear from the strength of the antithesis in these words, "He that made them will not save them": where, for the advantage of the expression, it is redoubled, "He that formed them will show them no favour." As if He should say, it may seem strange to you that your Creator, which very name speaks nothing but bowels of love and tenderness, should utterly confound and destroy you. Yet thus it must be; though the relation make it strange, yet your sins will make it true. The strength of this obligation appears in these two considerations. 1. It is

natural; and natural obligations, as well as natural operations, are always the strongest. 2. God put this obligation upon Himself; therefore it must needs be a great and a strong one: and this is clear, because the relation of a Creator is, in order of nature, antecedent to the being of the creature; which not existing, could not oblige God to create it, or assume this relation. There are three engaging things that are implied in the creature's relation to God, that oblige Him to manifest Himself in a way of goodness to it. (1) The extract or original of the creature's being, which is from God Himself. It is the nature of every artificer to tender and esteem his own work: and if God should not love His creature, it would reflect some disparagement upon His workmanship, that He should make anything which He could not own. God is not a heathen god, a Saturn, to devour His children. Now the creature's deriving its being from God, includes in it two other endearing considerations. It puts a certain likeness between God and the creature. Whatsoever comes from God, by way of creation, is good; and so, by reason of the native agreement that is between that and the will of God, there naturally does result an act of love: for where there is nothing but goodness on the creature's part, there can be nothing but love on God's. (2) The dependence of its being upon God. (3) The end of the creature's being is God's glory. Now God, that loves His own glory, must needs also respect the instrument that advances it. II. SIN DISENGAGES AND TAKES OFF GOD FROM ALL THOSE ACTS OF FAVOUR THAT THE RELATION OF A CREATOR ENGAGED HIM TO. 1. It turns that which, in itself, is an obligation of mercy, to be an aggravation of the offence. True it is, to make a creature, to give it being upon a rational ground, is an argument of love. But for a creature to sin against Him from whom it had its whole being; and that a puny creature, the first-born of nothing, a piece of creeping clay, one whom, as God created, so He might uncreate with a breath; for such a one to fly in his Creator's face, this gives a deeper dye to sin. 2. Sin disengages God from showing love to the creature, by taking away that similitude that is between God and him, which was one cause of that love. The creature, indeed, still retains that resemblance of God that consists in being; but the greatest resemblance that consists in moral perfections, this is totally lost and defaced. 3. Sin discharges God from showing love to the creature, by taking off the creature from his dependence upon God. It cannot dissolve his natural dependence (Acts xvii. 28). But our moral dependence, which is a filial reliance upon God, this it destroys. For in sin the creature quits his hold of God, and seeks to shift for himself and to find his happiness within the circle of his own endeavours. 4. Sin disengages the love of God to the creature, because it renders the creature useless, as to the end for which it was designed. The soul, by reason of sin, is unable to act spiritually; for sin has disordered the soul, and turned the force and edge of all its operations against God: so that now it can bring no glory to God by doing, but only by suffering, and being made miserable. Application—1. First use, is to obviate and take off that usual and common argument that is frequently in the mouths of the ignorant, and in the hearts of the most knowing; that certainly God would never make them to destroy them; and therefore since He has made them, they roundly conclude that He will not destroy them. God formed thee: true; but since thou hast sinned against so dear a relation, this very thing is an argument that He should destroy thee; God has imprinted His image upon thee, but sin has defaced it. Thou art God's possession, a creature designed for His use: true; but sin has made thee totally useless. Now the reasons whence men frame these kind of objections may be these two. (1) A self-love and a proneness to conceive some extraordinary perfection in themselves, which may compound for their misdemeanours. (2) Our readiness to think that God is not so exceeding jealous of His honour, but He may easily put up the breach of it without the ruin of His creature. Nay, we are even apt to doubt whether or no our sins make any breach upon it at all. 2. Second use: This may serve to inform us of the cursed provoking nature of sin. Certainly there is something in it more than ordinary, that should make the great and merciful God take a poor creature, and shake it almost into nothing, to rid His hands of it, to disown and let it fall out of His protection into endless unspeakable woe and misery. 3. Third use: This may inform us under what notion we are to make our addresses to God; not as a Creator, for so He is noways suitable to our necessities. He is offended and provoked, and we stand as outlaws and rebels to our Maker. What shall poor sinners do? whither shall they repair? Why there is yet hope: God's wisdom

has reconciled His justice to His mercy, and consequently us to Himself. And now He represents Himself under a more desirable relation, as a reconciled God. And although, under the former relation, He drives us from Him; yet, under this, He tenderly invites us to Him. (*R. South, D.D.*) *A class of sinners excluded from mercy*.—I. THE CHARACTERS HERE MENTIONED are described as persons of no understanding. But what is here meant by understanding? No one can suppose that the persons here censured and threatened were idiots or madmen. Had this been their character, they would have been incapable of sin, and consequently undeserving of punishment. The word "understanding" is obviously used in this passage, as in very many others, to signify spiritual understanding, or a knowledge of religious truth. But some may ask, if all men are naturally without spiritual understanding, and if, as the text asserts, God will not have mercy on such as sustain this character, will it not follow that He can have mercy on none? Though all men are naturally without spiritual understanding, this declaration does not refer to all. It refers to those only who, like the Jews, have long enjoyed, but have abused or neglected means of grace and opportunities of acquiring religious knowledge. II. THE TERRIBLENESS OF THIS THREATENING. There is something terrible in its very sound. But its meaning is much more terrible. It includes everything dreadful, everything which man has reason to deprecate. This threatening implies—1. That God will either deny them the common blessings of His providence, or grant them those blessings in anger, and send a curse with them. 2. That God will either deprive sinners of their religious privileges, means, and opportunities, or withhold His blessing and thus render them useless. Thus He dealt with the Jews. He still sent them messengers and instructions and warnings, but did not send a blessing with them. 3. That God will withhold from such characters the awakening, enlightening, and sanctifying influences of His Spirit. 4. That at the judgment-day God will condemn such characters to depart accursed into everlasting fire. There is no medium between mercy and condemnation. III. IT IS PERFECTLY JUST. 1. Because the persons against whom this threatening is denounced never ask for mercy, never seek the favour of God. 2. These persons have long rejected and abused the offered mercy and grace of God. 3. This threatening is just because the characters to whom it refers must be guilty of many other aggravated offences. They must have been destitute of the fear of God; for to fear Him is the beginning of wisdom. They must have refused to renounce their sins; for to depart from evil is understanding. They must have loved darkness rather than light; for they rejected the latter and chose the former; and the reason was, their deeds were evil. They must have followed and imitated sinners; for this all do who are void of understanding. They must have disobeyed God's commands; for all who obey them have a good understanding. (*E. Payson, D.D.*)

Ver. 12. Ye shall be gathered one by one.—*The one-by-one principle*:—This principle is developed—I. IN THE DEALINGS OF PROVIDENCE. II. IN THE PROVISIONS OF THE GOSPEL. III. IN THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW OF GOD. (*F. Greeves.*) *Gathered one by one*:—1. There is a country whose mysterious shores are visited each year by thousands from every continent of earth, and not one of them ever returns to detail its marvels. It is called in Scripture "a land of darkness, and the shadow of death." It is a great republic, though it has a despot for its ruler; and it is the only one in which the dream of human equality can be fully realised. There "the rich and the poor meet together," and are on a perfect level; there the cheek of beauty, the form of grace, and the withered limbs of age, are alike the banquet of the heedless worm; "there the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor; the small and the great are there, and the slave is free from his master." There, side by side, in peaceful slumber, lie "kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and the judges of the earth: both young men and maidens; old men, and children." Mysterious land! And oh! how densely peopled! But does it not throw a fearful solemnity over this thought, when we consider that to it we shall be gathered one by one? We live together; we act together; but we must die alone. Shall not this consideration lead you to remember your individuality now, and one by one to prepare for that hour by working out your salvation with fear and trembling? 2. Solemn, however, as is this gathering of the grave, it derives fresh importance from the fact, that we need not fear, and we must not hope that it will

be the last gathering. "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and we shall be raised incorruptible." What a gathering that shall be! They shall come, the dead of all generations—from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to David, from David to the Saviour, from the Saviour to us, from ourselves to the judgment; all shall come; the sea shall give up the dead that are in it, and the earth the dead that are in it, and death and hell the dead that are in them; and the whole posterity of Adam, young and old, rich and poor, countless as the sands on the seashore, or the stars of Heaven—all, without exception, shall be gathered there. But let us not forget the principle before us. Each individual of that mighty gathering will retain his own personal identity. 3. This, however, is but the opening scene of a yet more tremendous tragedy. It is but the lurid dawning of "the great and terrible day of the Lord." There shall be yet another gathering, the most momentous gathering of our race, and the last. Each one of us shall give account of himself to God. 4. Learn thus that you have an individuality. Each one of you has powers, duties, talents, responsibilities, which you cannot share with any other being in the universe of God. You may commit sin in a crowd; but when you are judged for it you must stand alone. 5. Will ye be gathered now, gathered to the Saviour's arms, "gathered one by one"? (*Ibid.*) *Gathered in death one by one*:—We often ask why should we die alone? It is not for us to give an answer for God. The Judge of all the earth will do right. Our entrance into the world is one by one; it is not unnatural that our departure should be the same. Each one's conversion, marriage, all the great events of life, are passed through, not in the mass, but each by himself, one by one. I. THE INDIVIDUALITY OF GOD'S DEALINGS WITH MEN IN THEIR HIGHEST AND MOST SOLEMN EXPERIENCES IS AN HONOUR AND A FAVOUR. Each is thus made His special care. The most precious fruit is gathered by hand. II. THE SHOCK OF BEREAVEMENT IS THUS LESSENED; a sparing mercy to those who are left to mourn. III. WARNINGS OF THE INEVITABLE HOUR ARE THUS MULTIPLIED, that survivors may prepare. (*Homiletic Review.*) "*Gathered one by one,*" i.e., ye shall be carefully gathered together, and brought safe into your own land. The words are taken from olives or apples or the like fruits, which are gathered one by one, and so laid up in some place appointed; which olives or apples or other fruit so gathered last better than they which are beaten off or shaken down from the tree. He seems to oppose this gathering one by one, to that "beating off" mentioned in this verse. (*W. Day, M.A.*)

Ver. 13. The great trumpet shall be blown.—*The Gospel trumpet*:—I. THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL IS HERE COMPARED TO THE BLOWING OF A TRUMPET. 1. This figurative expression may allude to the trumpet which sounded upon Mount Sinai, at the solemn promulgation of the law. And though the ministers of Christ must not blend the law and the Gospel together, yet they are not Gospel ministers who do not preach the law, both as a ministration of wrath and as a rule of duty. 2. The words may allude to the trump of jubilee, which was sounded throughout the land of Israel at the end of every forty-nine years, proclaiming redemption and liberty to all prisoners and slaves, and causing the following to be a year of national festivity and joy (Lev. xxv. 8–13). This interesting period having been prefigurative of our redemption by Christ, of our deliverance from the curse of the law and the dominion of sin, and of our introduction to the glorious liberty of the children of God, it is with great propriety that the proclamation of the Gospel is compared to the trump of jubilee. 3. Trumpets were also used on other occasions, which may bear some allusion to the proclamation of the Gospel. The Jews had an annual solemnity, which by way of distinction was called the feast of trumpets, and which introduced the new year (Lev. xxiii. 24). And these demonstrations of joy, like the rest of that typical dispensation, were only the shadow of good things to come; all had a reference to the promulgation of the Gospel. 4. Whatever be the immediate allusion in the text it is evident that the principal design of a trumpet is to sound an alarm; and such is the direct object of the Gospel ministry. 5. The preaching of the Gospel is compared to a "great trumpet." Great things were contained in God's law, but still greater things are made known by the Gospel. 6. The great trumpet which was sounded by the first heralds of salvation, continues still to proclaim the same good tidings. II. THE EFFECT WHICH WAS TO FOLLOW UPON THE SOUNDING OF THE GOSPEL

**TRUMPET.** "They shall come which were ready to perish." Men as sinners are in a perishing condition. But those only who see and feel their perishing condition actually "come." 1. This "coming" implies repentance towards God. 2. Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; for with this, all true repentance is invariably connected. 3. All that come unto God by a Mediator, will also come to Zion with their faces thitherward, openly professing their attachment to Christ, and devoting themselves to His service. The text, indeed, seems to be a prophecy of the union that should take place between Jews and Gentiles, under the Gospel dispensation, when they should be formed into one body, and equally participate in the blessings of salvation. The trumpet of the Gospel is still sounding in our ears, proclaiming the great jubilee, the day of salvation, and inviting us to seek the Lord in this welcome and accepted time. Have we embraced the invitation, and answered to the call? (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *The Gospel trumpet*.—I. We make TWO EXPLANATORY REMARKS. 1. The prediction primarily refers to the proclamation of Cyrus for the deliverance of the Jews from captivity. 2. This prophecy has an ulterior reference to the times of the Messiah, and the bringing of the Jews in the latter days. II. We consider THE GREATNESS AND GRANDEUR OF THE GOSPEL here represented by a great trumpet. Trumpets were of very common use among God's ancient people. They directed their journeys, animated them on the march, roused them to arms against the invader, and sounded the dreadful onset to battle, proclaimed the tidings of victory, and summoned the people to divide the spoil. The chief use of the instrument is to give strength to the human voice, that warnings or invitations might be more extensively heard. No kind of wind instrument was in more general use, and therefore no symbol could have been selected with which they were more familiarly acquainted. Their solemn assemblies were convened by its sound; and surely the greatness and the grandeur of the Gospel is hereby strikingly and significantly symbolised. 1. The greatness of the Gospel will appear from the dignity and moral grandeur of its Author. 2. From the gracious tidings it proclaims. 3. From the objects it hath already accomplished and is destined to achieve. III. We notice that THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL IS THE GREAT ORDINANCE OF GOD FOR THE SALVATION OF MEN. "The great trumpet shall be blown." Its sound shall be long and loud, so that the proclamation of "the glad tidings of great joy" shall be universal. Conclusion.—1. Let Christians appreciate their advantages and highly prize the Gospel (*Psa. lxxxix. 15*). 2. Let Gospel despisers fear, and flee for refuge to the hope set before them in the Gospel (*Heb. ii. 2*). 3. Let all rejoice in the glorious results already secured and yet to be achieved by the preaching of the Gospel. (*W. M'Queen.*) *The blast of the Gospel trumpet*.—I. THE PERIOD to which this promise or prophecy refers. "That day." In the prophetic parts of Scripture, this phrase is often to be understood of New Testament times. II. THE GREAT MEANS that God promises to employ in New Testament days for accomplishing His design among the Gentiles. "The great trumpet shall be blown." 1. The Gospel intimates to all that hear it, the offering of a great sacrifice. 2. The Gospel contains an indication of a joyful and solemn feast. 3. The Gospel is the appointed means of gathering a solemn assembly. As the silver trumpets were used for gathering the assemblies in Israel, so the Gospel is employed, according to Christ's appointment, for gathering a Church to Himself. 4. The Gospel is the great means of directing the march of the armies of the spiritual Israel, through the wilderness of this world. When the priests sounded an alarm with the trumpets, the tribes of Israel were to decamp, and set forward in their journeys, in that order which God had appointed. 5. The Gospel is the great means of calling forth the armies of the living God to that spiritual warfare in which they are engaged under Christ,—of directing their motion in the day of battle,—and of animating them to continue the combat, amidst all the dangers and terrors with which they often find themselves surrounded. The silver trumpets were also to be used to blow an alarm when Israel was called to go to war against any enemy that should oppress them in their land. 6. The Gospel proclaims an universal jubilee to all that hear it. III. THE PERSONS UPON WHOM THE SOUND OF THIS GREAT TRUMPET SHALL TAKE EFFECT are described by two circumstances. 1. They are persons ready to perish. The original word is still more emphatical—there shall come "the perishing in the land of Assyria." All mankind are, by nature, in a perishing condition. Situated in a desert land, which affords no provision but empty husks, we faint for spiritual thirst and hunger, and are ready to perish for want. Led captive by a cruel

enemy, we are ready to perish by the weight of our chains. Enslaved by a tyrannical master, and employed in the vilest drudgery, we are ready to perish through fatigue and weariness. Sunk into a fearful pit, and struggling, without a possibility of extricating ourselves, in the miry clay, we must quickly perish without supernatural help. Above all, being condemned to death by a just sentence of the Court of Heaven, we are every moment in danger of perishing by the hand of justice. 2. They are outcasts. There seems to be here an allusion to the situation of the Hebrew children in Egypt, who, by Pharaoh's inhuman decree, were all to be cast out into the river. IV. THE PLACES FROM WHICH THESE PERSONS WERE TO BE GATHERED, by the sound of the great trumpet, are also two. "The land of Assyria," and "the land of Egypt." These two countries are mentioned as examples: and what is here said of them has been verified, and will again be verified in all other countries resembling them. Perishing sinners have been gathered from every quarter. V. THE END TO BE GAINED by the blast of this trumpet among them. This also is set before us in two particulars. 1. They shall come. (1) They shall come to Christ by faith. (2) They shall come to the holy mount at Jerusalem. Jerusalem was of old the place of God's solemn worship. Every person who feels the efficacy of the Gospel becomes a genuine citizen of the New Jerusalem. And from that time forth he takes pleasure in attending upon God's ordinances; accounting a day in His courts better than a thousand. (3) They come to God Himself who dwells in the holy mount. 2. As they come, they worship. This imports—(1) Their cordial renunciation of all idolatry and false worship. (2) Their careful and diligent observance of all those ordinances by which God has required Himself to be worshipped. (3) Their carefulness to perform every act of worship in the manner that the Word of God has prescribed. (*J. Young.*) *The blowing of the great trumpet:—*

I. THE BLOWING OF THE GREAT TRUMPET. II. THE CHARACTERS IN WHOSE EARS AND HEARTS THIS GREAT TRUMPET IS TO BE BLOWN. III. THE EFFECT WHICH THE BLOWING OF THE GREAT TRUMPET PRODUCES UPON THEM. (*J. C. Philpot.*) *The great trumpet:—*I. SEE HOW A COMPARISON OF SCRIPTURE WITH SCRIPTURE WILL ENABLE US TO UNDERSTAND THE WORD "TRUMPET." II. THE BLOWING OF THE TRUMPET. III. THE RESULTS OF THAT BLOWING. (*J. H. Crowder, M.A.*) *The Gospel trumpet:—*I. THE GRANDEUR OF THE GOSPEL. "The great trumpet." It is elsewhere called a great light—a great salvation. There is a grandeur in the glorious Gospel of God which soars far beyond all finite excellency and conception. 1. The period of its introduction is called "the fulness of time." 2. The Gospel regards immediately the soul and eternity—the only two things in the world which are absolutely great. 3. The Gospel abounds with exceeding great and precious promises; it unfolds blessings that are incomprehensible in their nature and excellency. 4. Everything, compared with the Gospel, is trifling and mean. II. THE DISPENSATION OF THE GOSPEL. The great trumpet is to be "blown." 1. Who is to blow this trumpet? Men, and not angels. There is a difference here between the administration of the law and the dispensation of the Gospel. 2. How is this trumpet to be blown? Common sense says, in such a way as to answer the design of its being blown. There must be no ambiguity in our preaching. It should be blown courageously. III. WHAT IS THE CONDITION OF THOSE TO WHOM THE GOSPEL IS ADDRESSED? "Outcasts, and ready to perish." This is the figure; and what is the fact? "Remember that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise; having no hope, and without God in the world." You are not heathen; but turn to Scripture, and you will find that you are all by nature the children of wrath, even as others. IV. ITS ATTRACTION must be noticed. "They shall come." Whatever knowledge the heathen had, they were utterly unable to carry it into effect, both for want of evidence and want of authority. None of them could speak in the name of that God who calleth the things that are not as though they were. Hence, we find Plato complaining that he was unable, by all his instructions, to bring over the inhabitants of a single village. Now, go to Thessalonica, to Corinth, to Colosse, to Ephesus; survey the character of the inhabitants before they received the Gospel: it is largely described by the apostle; we cannot suppose that the devil himself could make or wish them worse. Yet the apostle stands forth, and says, "Such were some of you; ye were sometimes far off; ye were dead in trespasses and sins"; but, "you hath He quickened. Our Gospel came unto you, not in word only, but in power also; the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." Accordingly,

the Gospel is expressed evermore by images which indicate its efficacy. It is called a two-edged sword—leaven, which commences its operations in the centre, and extends them to the circumference until the whole is leavened—seed, which, though it looks dead, yet fills the earth with its fruit, thirty, sixty, a hundred-fold. This success God Himself has ensured, or we could not reckon upon it. The Gospel never leaves people as it finds them: it enlightens their understandings; it prevails on their wills; it purifies their affections; it makes them new creatures. How can we honour the Gospel so much as by showing what it can do? The trumpet is blown; but it is heard—it is answered—they “come.” 1. How do they come? With weeping and with supplication; they come eagerly, hastening, running, flying like doves to their windows when they behold the approaching storm. 2. From whence do they come? From the dark dens of ignorance—from the lurking holes of hypocrisy—from the false refuges of pharisaism—from the service of sin—from the bondage of Satan. 3. To whom do they come? Christ is the only resource. What is faith, what is religion, but the soul in motion to Him, and negotiating all its affairs with Him? V. THE EFFECT OF ITS INFLUENCE. “They shall come and worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.” We ever find this dedication of themselves to God, in connection with the spread and influence of the Gospel. “All the ends of the world shall hear, and shall turn unto God; all nations whom Thou hast made, shall come unto Thee and worship Thee; from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, in every place men shall offer incense and a pure offering.” The “holy mount” means the Church of God. And in this mount all who partake of Gospel grace, worship. They do so habitually, in the shop—in the warehouse—in the field; for “where'er they seek Him, He is found.” They do so in private. All these worship God in their families too. In His sanctuary also. CONCLUSION.—1. This Scripture has been fulfilled. Myriads in Heaven have exemplified its truth, the numbers that rejoice in it in our day are wonderful; but soon there shall be vaster accessions still. A nation shall be born in a day. Have you heard the sound of this trumpet? Have you obeyed? 2. If the sound of this peaceful trumpet is despised, I must remind you that another great trumpet will be blown. Ere long shall be heard the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet of God. 3. But, here are some who are alive to the text. You have heard the sound of this trumpet; you have come. What are you doing? Surely, you are giving thanks unto Him who has called you out of darkness into light; who has made you meet for the inheritance of the saints. Surely, you are endeavouring to bring others into the same condition. (*W. Jay.*) *The silver trumpet:*—As when the front and back doors of a barn are open, a gust of wind scatters the dust and chaff, so the Jews had been swept every whither—some wandering in Assyria, and some exiled in Egypt; but their coming back, as by the call of a trumpet, is here predicted. The passage is strongly descriptive of the exiled and perishing condition of sinful men, and of their return at the trumpet-call of the Gospel. 1. Need I stop to prove that out of God we are in exile? Who here is at home in his sins? Does he not wander about looking for a home? You have been expatriated. You are in worse than Siberian exile. The chains are harder. The mine is darker. The climate is colder. The gloom is ghastlier. “Lost in the land of Assyria!” If a man has missed his way, the more he walks the more he is lost. He starts off and goes ten miles in the wrong direction. Nor can you find your way out of this spiritual confusion. Lost, and without food. Lost, and without water. Ingenious little children sometimes tell you how, with a few letters, they can spell a very large word. With three letters I can spell “bereavement.” With three letters I can spell “disappointment.” With three letters I can spell “suffering.” With three letters I can spell “death.” With three letters I can spell “perdition.” S-i-n, Sin. That is the cause of all our trouble now. That is the cause of our trouble for the future. 2. But upon this dark background of the text a light falls. Amidst the harsh discords there sound the sweet and thrilling notes of a great trumpet. A trumpet, God-made, yet needing no giants to use it, but suited to faint lips and trembling hand and feeble lungs; so that sick Edward Payson, leaning against the pulpit, might hold it, and Frederick Robertson, worn out with ulcers and spinal complaints, might breathe through it. This Gospel trumpet is great in its power. On a still night you may hear the call of a brazen trumpet two or three miles; but this is so mighty that it is not only heard from heaven to earth, but it is to arrest the attention of all nations. (1) This trumpet is great in its sweetness. In



some musical instruments there is noise and crash and power, but no fineness of sound. Others can not only thunder, but weep and whisper and woo. Like that is the Gospel trumpet. In all tenderness and sweetness and sympathy it excels. (2) The Gospel trumpet is a trumpet of alarm. (3) It is one of recruit. War is declared. Who is on the Lord's side? There is no neutral ground. (4) The Gospel trumpet is one of assault. "Let the wicked forsake his way," &c. (5) This Gospel trumpet is also one of retreat. It is the part of good generalship sometimes to blow the trumpet of retreat. There is no need of your trying to face certain temptation; you are foolhardy to try it. Your only safety is in flight. (6) This Gospel trumpet is one of victory. (7) One of reveille. We, who are the soldiers of Christ, cannot always be marching and fighting. The evening will come; the shadows will gather; and we must go to the white tents of the grave. There we shall sleep soundly. But the night will pass along, and the first thing we shall hear will be the trumpet-call sounding the reveille of the resurrection; and we will come up and fall into a long line of light, the sword of Christian conflict gleaming in the unsetting sun. The roll shall be called, and we shall answer to our names; and then we will go to the morning repast of heaven. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*)

**Blowing of the great trumpet:**—We shall look at the text as applying to heathens as well as Jews, even to all who are ignorant of and are rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. With regard to these there are three things to be looked at—

**I. THEIR URGENT NEED.** They are described as "ready to perish." The word is literally "lost." The idea is that of a lost sheep. Or of a lost child who has left his home and wandered into the fields, or into the woods, and been overtaken by night and darkness. There is no one to care for him, no one to guide him, no one to shelter him. He is left to himself. A hundred things may happen that may be death to him. Without knowing it, he may be on the point of falling over a precipice or into a river. Now, a child or a man who has gone astray from God is ready to perish too. Still more is it true of every one who is not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is true, alas! of many even in this highly favoured land of ours. It is true of the Jews. And what shall I say of the heathen?

**II. THE HELP WANTED.** What is to be done to meet this terrible state of things? If it were a dying man—a perishing child—we should ask, Is there anything that will save the dying one—any medicine or food—anything we can give—anything we can do? And that should be our question about the perishing millions all over the world. 1. The sounding of the trumpet may be regarded as typical of the preaching of the Gospel, by which both the outcasts of Israel and the "ready to die" of all nations are to be saved. 2. But there must be some one to sound the trumpet. It cannot sound of itself. It must be "blown." And who are to do this, but those who have heard it and complied with its call themselves, and who, with hearts full of love and thankfulness, can sing, "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound"? It is as much our duty to blow the trumpet as to hear it. 3. How, then, are we to blow the trumpet? None of us are too young or feeble to sound the trumpet ourselves. In our own way we can tell the story of redeeming love. (1) The best that any of you can give is yourselves. He gives by far the largest contribution who gives himself. (2) But where you cannot give yourselves you can do something by giving your money. **III. THE SUCCESS PROMISED.** "They which were ready to perish shall come." The return from the Jewish captivity was wonderful in its own way; but more and better is in store, for "all Israel shall be saved." Already many Jews and Jewesses have been converted to Christ. And as regards the heathen world, the history of the progress of the Gospel in recent times reads almost like a chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. And yet it must be owned that anything like a complete fulfilment of the promise is still a thing of the future. What is to be done? The great trumpet must be sounded as it never has been. (*J. H. Wilson, D.D.*)

**The urgency of missions:**—Are not missions to Jews and heathens and Mohammedans hopeless? They don't want them; they won't have them. But does it not only make the case the stronger if they do not know their need and their danger, and do not ask for help? Perhaps, in some cases, they refuse help when it is offered. And what of that? As I pass along the banks of a stream, I see something in a pool. On going nearer, I see it is the body of a boy. There is no cry for help, there is no outstretched hand. He is past all that. Am I, on that account, not to give help? Is not the call all the louder and more urgent? (*Ibid.*)

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

**VERS. 1-6. Woe to the crown of pride.**—*Chapter twenty-eight* is the first of a great group of representative discourses, chaps. xxviii. to xxxii., all dealing with the relation of Judah to Assyria, and all enforcing the same political principles. (*Prof. Driver, D.D.*) *Overcome with wine*:—Words are scarcely possible with which to express greater sorrow and calamity falling on those who are overcome with wine. God is said to be against them. Their beauty and pride shall fade away. They shall err in judgment; shall have dim vision of truth and duty; shall lose all susceptibility of moral and religious impressions; shall speak with stammering tongue; shall be ensnared with all evil. Their condition shall be heart-sickening and hopeless. I. A TERRIBLE CONTRAST. Ephraim in this passage stands for the kingdom of the ten tribes: the drunkards of Ephraim for its dissipated and dissolute people; the crown of Samaria for its capital city; though there is possibly reference here to the magnificent hill on which the city stood. Its site was a "chosen one," than which, according to Rawlinson, none could be found in all Palestine of greater "combined strength, fertility, and beauty," having in these respects largely the "advantage over Jerusalem." It was, however, full of drunkards. Intemperance was not only the prevailing iniquity of the place, but a form of sin and shame which was the fruitful source of innumerable afflictions and calamities. The figure is of a people "smitten, beaten, knocked down" with wine, as with a hammer; laid prostrate and helpless on the ground in utter bewilderment, and unconscious as to what would happen to them, their homes, or their nation. This was the doom represented as a Divine judgment upon them; but really the natural and inevitable result of their being overcome with wine. Let all men be warned, especially the young. The loss of everything desirable goes with the loss of control over appetite. But the contrast is as terrible in communities, cities, and nations where drunkenness prevails! In the place of industry, indolence obtains; in the place of intelligence, ignorance abounds; in the place of thrift and comfort, poverty and wretchedness exist; in the place of honour and virtue, dishonour and vice run riot; until life becomes scarcely endurable for one who would keep his "crown of pride" and preserve the "glorious beauty" of true manhood. II. THE TERRIBLE POWER OF APPETITE. It is absolutely destructive of the whole man! It is a giant bringing his captive into complete subjection. All goes wrong with a man when he is under the influence of strong drink! He cannot walk as a man; cannot work as a man; cannot talk as a man; cannot think as a man; nor is he capable of accurate judgment in matters of small or large concern. He tramples under his feet the most sacred associations and obligations of life; he loses his love as a husband, father, son; he breaks hearts that cling to him more fondly than to aught else in all the world; he finally becomes so bound as to render it practically impossible for him to cast off his chains! All this comes not only to such as may be termed the ignorant and naturally vicious, but to the learned and naturally virtuous. Men of culture and refinement, of education and position, of inheritances and attainments, of rank and station, give way to the same indulgences and fall into the same deeps! Fathers send the consuming currents through the veins of their sons. Mothers give birth to children whose feverish bodies flame with hidden fires. III. THE DUTY OF EARNEST OPPOSITION AND FEARLESS WARFARE AGAINST INTEMPERANCE. We read here of a "residue of the people," to whom the Lord of hosts would be for a "crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty," for a "spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate." The literal meaning of this is that after the pride of the apostate tribes had fallen, they who remained true to God and to themselves should glory and delight in Jehovah as their chief privilege and honour. This was the prophecy, and it was blessedly fulfilled. When Israel was finally ruined, Judah rose to power under Hezekiah. He resisted all enticements, and in every way sought the reformation of his people. Many were held back from being overcome with wine. These were "the residue of the people," and for their sake God endued the magistrates and counsellors with the spirit of discernment and equity; also gave courage to the captains who led forth their troops from the gate of Jerusalem and forced the war even to the gates of their enemies. The lesson here is one of united and fearless opposition to intemperance, and to whatever exposes the

people to its ravages. While all practicable efforts should be made to reform those who are addicted to their cups, special care should be taken of children and youth that they may be kept from forming the drink habit. 1. The home should present no temptation on this line. 2. Each Sunday school should be a temperance society, organised and equipped for work. 3. The physical effects of intemperance should be taught in all our public schools. 4. Pastors, too, have a duty on this line. (*Justin E. Twitchell.*) *Samaria*:—The beautiful city of Samaria crowning a low hill rising from the valley is like a garland on the brow of the revellers. The crown is already faded. (*A. B. Davidson, LL.D.*) *Overcome with wine*:—Literally, "struck down." Hard drinking is compared to a combat between the toper and his drink, in which the latter is victorious. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) "*Dry drunkenness*."—Men are drunk, but not with wine; sometimes they are drunk with prosperity, with vanity, with evil thoughts, passionate desires. Men may be sober, and yet may be drunk. Men may be total abstainers from wine, and may yet go straight down to hell. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 5. In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory.—*The Christian's crown*:—There is scarcely a more striking evidence to be found of the corrupt and perverted state of the human heart than that which is furnished in the views which commonly prevail of the distinctive features of the Christian religion. The pageantry and pomp of a false religion it will admire and approbate; but the spirit of the true it has ever contemned and repelled as a spirit of weakness, fanaticism, or bigotry. The spirit which it so characterises and so contemns is what God in our text styles "a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty" to His people. The crown and the diadem are, in the eyes of the world, objects of great beauty and value. They are usually set with diamonds, and with the most brilliant and costly gems, and are worn not only as ornaments, but as the insignia of royal authority and power. Hence they are properly employed as emblems to represent that which God regards as the most precious and beautiful ornament of His people. He says He will be to them for a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty. By which He means, that He will impart to them by His grace that which shall render them more glorious in His view, and which shall be infinitely more dear and valuable to them than the most costly crown that ever monarchs wore. It is, then, the lustre of a spiritual crown, the glory of a heavenly diadem, that is to be so comely upon the people of God. But in what deep obscurity, at present, are these heirs of heavenly royalty! Would you not like to contemplate some of the characteristics of this heavenly crown, by which it is distinguished from all earthly crowns? 1. It is unfading and imperishable in its nature. The apostle calls it an incorruptible crown, and a crown of glory that fadeth not away. In the verses which precede the text the prophet opposes this crown to the blasted and fading glory which appertains to the possessions of the wicked (ver. 1). Who is there that sees not the vanity and inconstancy of all worldly glory? But it is not so with the glory that has been given to the saints. This is substantial and immortal. "The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." 2. This crown will be worn without care or peril. The crowns of earthly princes are set with thorns. But not only will it be worn without care or peril, it will have the power to satisfy every want of its possessor. 3. This is "a crown of righteousness," rightfully obtained and rightfully possessed,—indicative, on the part of the Giver, of His own perfect righteousness, and expressive of His approbation of that righteousness in which our Lord Jesus Christ has arrayed His people. How different this from those crowns which earthly princes wear; often obtained by fraud and violence and saturated with blood,—emblems of injustice and tyranny, and frequently held by power, without right! 4. It is a "crown of life" (Rev. ii. 10). It is so called for two reasons. One is, that death has no power over it; it cannot deprive us of it, neither can it in any way impart it. The other is, that it is the sure pledge of a perfect and immortal life. Life will be life in heaven, not that weak, imperfect, suffering, half-developed existence which we have here. Conclusion—1. Have we not good reason to call upon all to strive to win this crown? 2. Can Christians understand the value of this crown, or its nature, or the mode of its procurement, and not feel that obligations the most solemn bind them to the love and service of their Redeemer? (*J. W. Adams.*) *The coronation of Christian character*:—I. THE SIGNIFICATION OF THE ROYAL PROMISE in the text, "The Lord of hosts shall be as a crown," &c. 1. The salvation of

those who have attained good characters is thus certified. 2. Their satisfaction is expressed by this figure of the royal promise. 3. Their sanctification is proclaimed. They are described as without fault as they stand before the throne of God. II. THE RANKS IN THE POSSESSION OF THE ROYAL PROMISE. Christ did not deny to the mother of Zebedee's children that there were places of distinctive honour, but said they should be given to those for whom they were prepared by the Father. The same truth is taught in the parable of the ten talents. 1. All in that land are joyful. 2. No one will have the same joy as another. 3. But each one will be joyful according to his capacity. II. THE REVELATION OF THIS PERFECTION IS MADE FOR A PURPOSE. 1. It sustains the hope of the man of good character. 2. To think of this gracious promise stimulates growth. 3. It separates from all sin. He is drawn ever heavenward. (*S. H. Tyng, D.D.*) A diadem of beauty.—*A diadem of beauty*:—1. "A DIADEM" is an ornament for the head—an ornament worn by kings and queens as a badge of royalty. It used to be made of linen or silk, set with pearls and precious stones. Now it is generally a fillet or band of gold on which the monarch's crown is built. It is a splendid head-dress, the emblem of rank, power, sovereignty. Not any of us are likely ever to wear an earthly diadem of jewels and gold. But, wonderful to tell, the prophet Isaiah promises that the living God, "the Lord of hosts," shall be to His people "for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty." We, the least of God's children, may have Him for our diadem, our beauty, our glory, and our eternal joy. 2. "BEAUTY" is something we all love and prize. Even the ugliest people on the face of the earth have some notions of beauty, and try to make themselves beautiful. There are wild, savage tribes who have no churches, no schools, no altars, who never pray, and whose only heaven is their hunting-ground, yet they have ideas of beauty and are vain of personal adornment. The red Indian sticks a few feathers in his hair, puts an iron ring through his nose, ties some strings of coloured glass beads around his waist, and a chain of shells upon his wrists and neck, and then thinks himself more beautiful than any dandy in the West End of London. This love of beauty is natural. God Himself loves beauty, and has made everything beautiful. Still, there is beauty and beauty. Not a little that is only fading, quickly dimmed, and almost worthless. Much that is lasting, precious, and noble. Socrates, one of the wisest men of his day, knew little concerning the Supreme Being whom we worship as God, and nothing at all of the Gospel—for he lived and died before Jesus Christ was born. And Socrates uttered this memorable petition: "I pray Thee, O God, that I may be beautiful within." Keats says that "Beauty is truth, and truth is beauty." The Bible makes mention of "the beauty of holiness." And the prophet Isaiah tells us that the Lord of hosts shall be to His people for "a diadem of beauty." Beauty of soul is true beauty. Sin makes us ugly. Sin defaces and defiles our nature. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ"; and the Spirit of Christ will transform the heart and life of every one who receives Him. Meekness, goodness, purity, truth, love indwelling in the soul will shine out in the face, and be a "diadem of beauty." A flower is the diadem of a plant. You don't tie a flower on its stem. It grows out of it. And if the Spirit of Jesus Christ dwell in your heart, the beauty of His grace will blossom forth in your character and life. It will be not a mere outward decoration, to be put on and off on certain days, like a lady's feathers or a queen's crown; it will be always there. No wonder the Psalmist prayed, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us!" This is a beauty brighter and better than the diadem of kings. (*A. A. Ramsey.*)

Ver. 6. For a spirit of judgment.—*The spirit of judgment*:—Next to the enactment of just and wholesome laws, the due administration of them is of the highest importance to a community. If the distribution of justice in secular kingdoms, and in relation to the affairs of this life, is of so great moment, it must be of still greater importance in that society which is styled "the kingdom of heaven," and in relation to things connected with the eternal interests of men. I. THE WARRANTS AND NATURE OF ECCLESIASTICAL JUDICATURE. Religious society has its foundation in the very nature of man considered as a social being. Christ, as King of His Church, hath appointed a government in her, and committed to office-bearers, under Him, a power to execute His laws, and pronounce judgment according to them, for the preservation of order and peace, and the promoting of the interests of truth and holiness to His glory. The overlooking of the important ends to be served by the Church as a visible society is a capital error, or

at least has been the source of many hurtful mistakes in our own as well as in former times. To ecclesiastical judges belong the interpretation of the laws of Christ, by a judicial declaration of truth in opposition to prevailing error, and of duty in opposition to prevailing sins; and the application of these laws to such cases as occur. 1. Ecclesiastical judgment is spiritual, in distinction from that which is civil or secular. 2. Ecclesiastical judgment is ministerial and executive, not lordly or legislative. Christ is the sole lawgiver in His spiritual kingdom; and the proper business of the office-bearers whom He hath appointed is to interpret and carry into execution those laws which He has given forth and enrolled in His statute book. 3. It is public and authoritative. There is a right of private judgment, called by divines the judgment of discretion, which belongs to all the members of the Church, and extends to every thing connected with religion, and among others to the decisions of ecclesiastical judicatories. But there must be also lodged, in every well-ordered society, a power of pronouncing by its proper organs, a public judgment for deciding disputes and controversies which may arise, and for determining the manner in which its affairs shall be conducted. 4. It is to be exercised by select persons set apart for this purpose, and not by the community of the faithful. "In the multitude of counsellors is safety," in opposition to the danger incurred by him who relies on his own judgment, or the advice of one or two favourites; but counsellors consist of a select number taken from many. 5. It is to be exercised by them jointly, and in parity. The only monarchical power in the Church is exercised by Jesus Christ. II. THE SPIRIT WHICH IS REQUISITE FOR THE EXERCISE OF ECCLESIASTICAL JUDGMENT, and which is promised in the text. Jesus Christ is not only the exemplar, but also the foundation of all qualifications for ruling in the Church (Isa. xi. 2-4). 1. I begin with the fear of the Lord, or a deep sense of religion. This is the ground into which all the other qualities must be wrought. 2. The spirit of wisdom and understanding. A good heart and upright intentions are not enough here. Knowledge, prudence, and discernment are peculiarly requisite for the management of public affairs. Those who are invested with office in the Church must be men "full of wisdom," as well as "of the Holy Ghost." 3. The spirit of disinterestedness and impartiality. This is "the spirit of judgment"—when the individual is sunk in the public functionary—when on crossing the threshold of the sanctuary and ascending the seat of judgment he forgets self and all worldly considerations. 4. A spirit of patience and meekness. 5. The spirit of holy resolution and courage. 6. The spirit of humility and dependence on God. III. PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. The great importance of ecclesiastical discipline, and of preserving it in its scriptural purity and primitive vigour. Evangelical and vital religion cannot flourish generally or permanently in any Church where this is neglected. 2. We may see one duty incumbent on those who have devoted themselves to the public service of the Church. To preach the gospel is a principal part of their employment, but it is not the whole of it. It is possible that a person may be able to make a sermon which shall be both acceptable and edifying, and, after all, be but poorly qualified for "taking care of the Church of God." 3. We may learn what care ought to be exercised in choosing and setting apart those who are to bear office in the Church. 4. We may see the scriptural grounds of subjection to the authority, and obedience to the determinations of church rulers. These are, the Divine institutions of ecclesiastical government, the connection between it and the regal glory of Christ, and the salutary influence which it is calculated to exert upon all other Divine institutions, as well as upon the peace, unity, order, purity, and general prosperity of the Church as a visible and diffusive society. 5. Our subject suggests suitable exercise on occasion of the meeting of ecclesiastical judicatories. It was a custom in the better times of our Church to set apart a day for fasting and prayer before the meeting of a General Assembly, to entreat the Divine countenance to its deliberations. (*T. M'Crie, D.D.*)

Vers. 7, 8. But they also have erred through wine.—"Swallowed up of wine":—This is how all debasement continues, aggravates itself, and brings itself to shameful issue. No man begins at the point of being swallowed up in any evil: he approaches it almost stealthily, he touches it experimentally, he retains for a certain time his self-control in relation to it,—he will handle it, but easily, so that he can set it down again should it so please him. But at the end there is swallowing up, destruction—death is in the cup, and death must be drunk up by those who put their lips to the forbidden vessel. When Edward IV. con-

demned his own brother, George Duke of Clarence, to be killed, we are told that the duke desired to be drowned in a butt of Malmsey, and the historian well adds, "as became so stout a drunkard." To this end may men come who never dreamed of coming to it, who meant to show the world how easy it would be to toy with the devil, to touch him, set him back, smile at him, laugh at him, use him as a dog, bind him as a slave; and to all these initial usages will the devil submit himself, knowing that at some fatal unsuspected moment he will lasso the man who supposes he can take him captive, and he will carry him away to the chambers of death. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Erred through wine*:—Preaching in London, the Rev. Egerton Young, so long a missionary to the Hudson Bay Indians, said he would like to bring some of his converts to this land, but he dared not until the temperance cause was more advanced. One native preacher had been brought over, but kind friends thought that he required a little stimulant after the fatigue of the meeting, and the poor Indian had gone back with such a taste for spirits that he had to be expelled from his office, and finally died a drunken outcast. (*Australian Sunday School Teacher.*) *Intemperance a pestilence*:—No pestilence has ever destroyed so many millions of men, women, and children as intemperance; for a pestilence comes and goes, and often at long intervals, but intemperance is a fixed and permanent plague, always spreading, and always destroying our people, body and soul. (*Cardinal Manning.*) *Intemperance a peril to national life*:—On the east coast of our country the sea has been encroaching for centuries. Acre after acre of corn land has tumbled down into the waves, and churches, threatened by every high tide, are pointed out which, at the time of their erection, stood a mile from the sea. And by a similar process of encroachment and destruction fruitful sections of our national life are broken down and churned in the raging flood of this terrible curse, and places are not unknown in which the very church itself threatens to topple into ignominy and ruin. (*T. G. Selby.*) *Drunkenness degrades*:—Dr. Louis A. Banks tells how a drunkard in New Orleans was reformed. A friend of his, who was a stenographer, sat down in a corner of the saloon in which he was carousing, and made a full shorthand report of every word he said. The next morning the stenographer copied the whole thing neatly and sent it round to his office. In less than ten minutes he came tearing with his eyes fairly standing out of their sockets. "Great heavens," he gasped, "what is this?" "It's a stenographic report of your monologue at the restaurant last evening," and gave him a brief explanation. "Did I really talk like that?" he asked faintly. "I assure you it is an absolutely verbatim report," was the reply. He turned pale and walked out. He never drank another drop. (*Christian Age.*) *The degradation of drunkenness*:—It is told by Victor Hugo that in the capital of Burgundy the corporation had four silver goblets. When a prince or any distinguished person passed through their city they were offered wine in these silver goblets. The wine of Burgundy is very famous, but the people knew not only its merits, but its dangers. On the first goblet was inscribed a monkey, on the second a lion, on the third a sheep, and on the fourth a swine. This meant to denote the degrees of drunkenness which their wine produced. (*G. H. Morrison, M.A.*)

Vers. 9-13. Whom shall He teach knowledge?—*The scoffing drunkards*:—They scoff at the prophet, that intolerable moralist. They are full-grown and free; he need not teach them knowledge (xi. 9), and explain his preaching to them; they know of old what he is driving at. Are they mere weaned babes, who need to be tutored? (*F. Delitzsch.*) *The occasion of this remarkable encounter* was probably a feast held to celebrate the renunciation of allegiance to Assyria. Isaiah has surprised the drunkards over their cups, and administered some such rebuke as we read in vers. 7, 8. (*J. Skinner, D.D.*) *The angry false priests and prophets*:—What really angered these burly scorners was that the prophet treated them as though they were children only just weaned, and not as masters in Israel, giving them the most elementary instruction in the simplest words—words of one syllable, as they put it. They were weary of hearing him repeat the first rudiments of morality, and apply them to the sins and needs of the time. How dared he tutor them who were themselves teachers! How dared he treat them as babes who were grown men, distinguished men, the foremost men and statesmen of the empire! A pretty figure he made too! No one listened to him, or hardly any one. It was their advice which was taken, not his; their policy which was followed, not his. And yet he dared come to

them, day after day, with the same simple message, the same trite moralities, the same dismal warnings and rebukes! (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Isaiah's righteous indignation*:—In effect he said to them: "You mock at the simple Divine words I have been moved to speak, and lisp out your base and drunken imitations of them,—you, who should be the first to welcome and enforce the word of God. Know, then, that God will punish your sin by a people of lisping lips and an alien tongue. He has taught you, by the words you deride, where you might find rest and freedom, how you might give peace to the people who are weary of war and its calamities; but you would not hearken and do. The word of the Lord has become to you a mere 'bid and bid, forbid and forbid,' at which you jest. Know, then, that that word, which might have been a light to your path, shall blaze up into a consuming fire." (*Ibid.*) *Retribution*:—The prediction was fulfilled. The fierce Assyrians, when they heard that the Hebrews had allied themselves with Egypt, once more swept through the land. The very men who had lisped their scornful imitations of Isaiah's words, who had affected to think that he used the broken and imperfect dialect which mothers employ to their babes, were destroyed or taken captive by the Assyrian troops, whose language, while it closely resembled that of the Hebrews, had just those differences which made it sound to them like an imperfect and barbarous dialect. So terrible and so exact was the retribution that fell on their sin. (*Ibid.*) "*With another tongue*" :—They shall have change of ministry; the Assyrians do not talk piously, whiningly; they do not give precept upon precept; theirs is a terse eloquence, a bullock-like rhetoric; when they come they will make these drunkards sober by the power of terror. This is God's way in all providence; if we will not hear the gentle voice, the interpreting, persuasive, gospel voice, we shall have to listen to thunder, and feed our souls upon lightning. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, . . . your house is left unto you desolate." (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Divine wisdom*:—"That the soul be without knowledge, it is not good." A lamentable instance of this truth is exemplified in the preceding part of the chapter. I. THE CHARACTER OF THE TEACHER. God, whose wisdom is infinite, is our only teacher; for whatever others we may possess, either in the works of nature, of providence, or of grace, originate entirely from His bounty. II. THE SUBJECT OF INSTRUCTION. Two things are to be learned, namely, knowledge and doctrine; the one that we may know ourselves, the other that we may know God. III. THE PERSONS TO BE TAUGHT. "Them that are weaned," &c. We must be like little children in humility of mind and teachableness of disposition. (*J. Wright, B.A.*)

Ver. 10. For precept must be upon precept . . . line upon line.—*A drunken jibe*:—The passage is commonly used in a sense the very opposite to that in which it was originally employed. It is commonly taken as a grave description of the abundance and variety of the means of grace which God has vouchsafed to the Church; whereas it is, really, a drunken sneer at the poverty and simplicity of the means vouchsafed to the Church of Isaiah's time. No sooner do we turn to the original and study it than the case becomes clear; we see that, beyond a doubt, we not only have here a jibe at Isaiah from the lips of drunken men, but that the verse is so constructed as to imitate their thickened and difficult pronunciation. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *The Divine method of instruction*:—"Here a little, there a little." This, though it was said in scorn by the haughty revellers, is really the true, the Divine method of all instruction. What is the difference that distinguishes the musician or the painter from the mere amateur? What is it but the long-continued discipline of hand, of ear, of eye, which has made all the faculties of body and mind subservient to the purposes of the art? (*F. Temple, D.D.*) *The precept, the line and the little*:—I. THE LESSON OF THE PRECEPT is in order that we may be right and do right. God tells us the same thing over and over again. A precept is a warning, a command, which says, "Take care," "Mind," "Keep in the way." II. THE LESSON OF THE LINE. That is, in order that we may be right and do right, we must try over and over again. God helps all honest trying. An old proverb says, "God helps those who help themselves"; and another says, "Practice makes perfect." "Line upon line,"—that is the way we all learn, and have learnt all that we know or are able to do. It is so in learning to write. So it is in learning arithmetic. So in learning to draw. III. THE LESSON OF THE LITTLE. That is, in order that we may be right and do right we must not

be discouraged if we do not make great advances; we must remember that it is "here a little and there a little." How slowly most great and valuable things grow! The harvest does not spring up in a field in a night. A step at a time mounts the tallest ladder at last, but it must be a step at a time. How long an oak is before it comes to its prime; yet if they could speak they would each say "I am coming on." "Here a little and there a little" makes a learned man, a prosperous man, a useful and a good man. "Here a little and there a little" makes the perfect needle-woman, and sets the most untidy house to rights at last. How great some ships are! What holds the mighty anchor which holds the ship in a storm? A cable. And what is a cable made of? Why, of ropes coiled over ropes, and every rope made out of little threads. So it is with the habits of life, good or bad; "here a little and there a little," so trifling as they seemed at first, they become at last such mighty and unconquerable affairs. (*Anon.*)

**Christian education.**—I. THE TRUE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS TEACHING. 1. As regards Christian doctrine, it will probably be within the recollection of most of us that it formed the dullest part of our early instruction; and who can be surprised at it who recollects that, in addition to the natural repugnance of the human heart to all Divine things, the instruction was such as neither to enlighten the head, to touch the heart, or to interest the imagination? Let me express my profound conviction that the great human cause of the growth of error among our young people, and the falling off of many into perilous superstition, or no less perilous rationalism, is to be found here. Men have been contented to comprise in their religious knowledge only a few bald, bare truths, which perhaps they have received without personal inquiry from their parents, and have naturally thought it sufficient to hand down the same hereditary belief, the same bald truths, to their children after them. Truth consequently has had no aspect of reality, has been no living thing to them. Meanwhile times have changed, and the mental coldness of other days has given place to the intellectual activity of our own day. 2. Doctrinal truth is only one half, after all, if it be even that, of religious teaching. There remains the practical part of the faith; that by which, on the one side, it touches the conscience, and by which, on the other, it regulates the life. II. THE EFFECTIVE MEANS OF CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE. 1. The influence of example. 2. The influence of love, and of that confidence which springs from love. (*E. Garbett, M.A.*)

*Precept upon precept.*—Suppose you were walking from London to Brighton; well, as you go upon your way you meet with many finger-posts, or mile-stones, at distances not far apart, the finger-posts often at less than a mile apart; and they repeat the same thing—"To Brighton—To Brighton"; and the mile-stones, they say so many miles to Brighton or from Brighton. You do not feel angry at this; you do not say, "Why ever did they put up so many finger-posts, or so many mile-stones?" On the contrary, if you were in any doubt about the road, you would feel exceedingly thankful for such guides, and hardly think you could have too many. So God guides and warns. (*Anon.*) Here a little, and there a little.—"Here a little, and there a little":—We take this text because it seems to express with extraordinary conciseness a principle in God's procedure and in His ways towards man. 1. Have you considered the manner of God's revelation to His people in the olden time? Have you considered with what marvellous patience and consideration it was conducted? The will of God was not flashed, as in a moment, upon the minds of His people, but unfolded by degrees as they were able to receive it. And when through unbelief and disobedience they lost it, it was brought back to them by fresh messengers from God. Is not the Old Testament full of kind and various and gracious repetition? That is because it is the record of the Divine training and instruction of the people who were, alas! stiff-necked, and, too often, proved themselves, as the martyr Stephen told them, uncircumcised in heart and ears. 2. Obviously the same principle runs through the New Testament also. Jesus Christ did not deliver His message, or doctrine, once for all, in a studied manner. He spoke to His followers as they were able to receive. 3. I have just said those things in regard to the two testaments and the construction of the Bible, desiring to go on and try, if I can, to show that this is a principle of God all through His works, and all through His training of His people. Shallow minds are apt to think much more of bold and rapid effects; but those who have observed most widely, and reflected most deeply, know this well—that Omnipotence works slowly. It is impotence that is in a hurry. Now, what I want to put before you is that, it being so, it should be



expected, and it turns out to be true, that the supreme wisdom of God will, on the very same principle, carry on the work of human enlightenment in the truth. Now take a lesson from this earth on which we dwell. The earth was not built up suddenly. In its history, as expressed in the records that science can decipher on its caves and its seashores, there have been some sudden changes, but, far more generally, long, long processes, small in detail, but working out immense effects. Lands, slowly sunk beneath the water, slowly rose again. Ice patiently rounded off our mountains and shaped our valleys. Great strata slowly formed themselves—deposited themselves—grain by grain, during prodigious periods of time. Innumerable plants and trees flourished and died, and, after death, prepared—how deliberately—those vast coal measures that make so much of England's prosperity. Look at man. Look at that microcosm—that little world of man. How is a man built? Of body, and mind, and heart, and character. Is it not by little and little the frame grows from its first beginning? Take him after birth. See how he grows by repetitions of natural processes—repetitions—constant repetitions. A little sleep, a little food, a little exercise. Over again, a little sleep, a little food, a little exercise. And again, a little sleep, and so on. Well, so grows his mind—by observation—by comparison of objects—by comparison of objects near him—by asking questions. What a thing it is to teach a child the letters, and to teach a child to read! What a business—little by little—repeating over, and over, and over again! Now, then, raise the subject a little. Take the question of moral culture, and then we will take the subject of spiritual advancement; but no otherwise than on this principle can moral culture or spiritual advancement be attained. There are some moral natures, if I may so speak, much stronger and healthier to start with than others, just as there are physical natures that are stronger; but it is not always the very strong child that grows up the very strongest man, is it? You see some poor delicate child grow fast; and so it is with the moral nature. They gain habits of self-control, and integrity becomes inseparable from their life. There is no real moral strength till that is reached—till integrity is wrought into the character so that it cannot be taken out of it. It is inseparable from the character and life, and thus, "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little," are needed to form an honest man, that "noble work of God." And if it be so with moral progress, is it not also so with what we call spiritual advancement? Real spiritual qualities are given from heaven, but they are given upon the same principle upon which God gives moral strength, and upon which He even gives physical strength to His people. How is a Christian made? I say, by a process to which these words before me, "here a little and there a little," may be very well applied. Let us just study this a little. Let us develop this inquiry, for it is full of practical importance. And to be the clearer I will put four questions. (1) How does a Christian receive the truth through the faith of which he is purified? And I answer, not by one lesson but by many lessons. He sees his sin. The Spirit of the Lord shows you the way of pardon and peace through the blood of Jesus crucified for our sin. By and by you see that more clearly. You get a glimpse; you get another glimpse; you get a longer look; you get a steadier vision of Christ crucified. (2) How does a Christian get rid of indwelling sin? And my answer to that again is, by little and little. (3) How is it that a Christian learns practical wisdom and sobriety of mind, so much needed in this intoxicating world? Not at a bound. It is not a miraculous infusion into him of another mind than his own. It is his own mind that must be made wise; and a man can never be made wise, I think, but by repeated exposures of his folly. (4) How does a Christian gain likeness to Jesus Christ? By little and little. Have you seen a painter at work—a portrait painter, we will say? After the great outlines of the picture are placed upon the canvas, have you noticed how gradually and how minutely he produces the required likeness? A touch of the brush here, and then a pause. Then he looks at it, and looks at it; and then another touch, and then another touch. (*D. Fraser, D.D.*) "*Here a little, and there a little*":—The application of the text is, first of all, to the impressions produced by the Word of God, and the efficacy of constant religious instruction. But it is in this same way, by little and little, that all great and lasting impressions are made, and the mightiest results accomplished. Habit, which is the strongest thing in nature, and which forms a second nature, is thus produced. So it is in the invisible growth of all things, gradual and imperceptible, yet constant and sure. So it is in all the processes of nature. 1. It is by little and little that

every man's character is formed. Most persons' guilty character is made of little sins. They may be scarcely noticed at the time, but a constant succession of them makes a great weight. Christian character, too, is made up of little things. The Christian spirit must enter into all things, and then all things become great in the light of Heaven. But the Christian character may be almost spoiled by little sins, or what are called such. Almost every important thing depends upon little things often repeated. It seems a very little thing to live near to God one day; it is a very great thing; but still, to do it for one day does not seem so great a task; not so great a thing but that the Christian, by the help of God, may easily accomplish it for one day. But if this little thing were accomplished every day, every one day in the year, then the whole would be infinitely glorious. On the other hand, to a man forgetful of God it seems but a very little evil which is wrought with the character in one day, perhaps none at all, if there be no marked crime. Nevertheless, a certain number of those imperceptible advancements bring him to his destiny, both of character and retribution, for eternity. 2. It is by little and little that in such a world as this we must do the greater part of the good that we ever accomplish. He that is faithful in great things is faithful also in the least; and if he be not faithful in small things, God will not give him the opportunity to be so in large ones. What is surer than God's great promise in regard to children, that if you train them up faithfully for Him, He will take care of them and bless them and make them His? But the result of good character and heavenly habit with them depends upon the daily, familiar, minute, but ever-recurring examples set before them, and influences brought to bear upon them. But, I say, God's providence takes care of single little things also, and oftentimes makes much out of them, or hangs much upon them. Nothing can be lost that is done for God. (*G. B. Cheever, D.D.*) *Great results from a simple remark*.—It is said to have been a single remark of Rev. Chas. Simeon in regard to the blessings which had resulted from the labours of Dr. Carey in India that first arrested the attention of Henry Martyn to the cause of missions. His mind began to stir under the new thought, and a perusal of the "Life of Brainerd" fixed him in his resolution to give himself to his Redeemer in the service of preaching the Gospel to the dying heathen. (*Ibid.*) *Little ways and great service*.—Joseph Dunman kept a small seed shop in Lambeth Walk, in the midst of a crowded population of the poor. He was a faithful witness for Christ. He found many opportunities during business hours of testifying to the truth by word and by distributing tracts. He could not preach, but he felt he could invite others to hear. Every Sunday evening, for about an hour before and at the beginning of service, he used to walk up and down in front of Christ Church (Rev. Newman Hall's), and invite strangers to enter, offering them a seat and a hymn-book. During the year hundreds have thus been brought under the sound of the Gospel, of whom several have testified that they have yielded their hearts to God through him. At the after prayer-meeting he often addressed young men with simple and touching effect. His own conversion illustrated the good results of little efforts. He used to be a toll-keeper on Waterloo Bridge. The minister of Surrey Chapel, on crossing the bridge, frequently gave him a little book, and exchanged a few words with him. When the toll was given up, and he was at liberty on Sunday, he went to hear the preacher who had thus become known to him, and so he was led to Christ. He was not fifty years old when, after a few days' illness, he was called home; yet his life was long if reckoned by usefulness. (*The Christian.*)

Ver. 11. With stammering lips.—*Assyrian speech*.—"By men of strange lips" (R.V.) Jehovah will speak Assyrian to them; and with a more frightful iteration than the prophet used. (*A. B. Davidson, LL.D.*) *A great moral principle*.—We gather from Isaiah that God speaks twice to men, first in words and then by deeds, but both times very simply and plainly. (*G. A. Smith, D.D.*)

Ver. 12. This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest.—*Rest in Christ*.—That these words are to be interpreted as relating to Jesus Christ is manifest both from the preceding and subsequent context, and from the general tenor of the Word of God. The doctrine of salvation through the Messiah opens the sources of genuine happiness to believing men. This is eminently the rest,—it is here alone that they can find satis-

faction. I. THE NATURE OF THAT REST WHICH IS ENJOYED IN CHRIST. The term "rest" is here employed to denote spiritual enjoyment: it imports that unspeakable delight and satisfaction with which a believing soul reposes itself in Christ Jesus, as its portion and happiness, its all and in all. This is a rest far more refreshing than the most seasonable relief from bodily labours or temporal troubles—no created good can at all be compared with it. It exclusively deserves the name of "the" rest, as everything else which assumes the appearance of rest is ideal, and this only is real and substantial. 1. What are the sources of spiritual rest? This rest arises from—(1) A spiritual discovery of the infinite excellence of the Redeemer's person. When the enlightened believer is possessed with a sense of the glories of Christ's person, all created glory vanishes, as the stars do before the sun. (2) A view of the all-atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Consider three important particulars in the sacrifice of Christ,—its inherent and infinite merit, the authority by which it is appointed, and the public declaration which has been given of its acceptance. 2. The effects with which this rest is accompanied. (1) Pardon of sin. (2) Acceptance with God, and the enjoyment of His special favour and love. (3) Deliverance from the reigning power and dominion of sin. (4) The delightful prospect of eternal happiness in Heaven. II. THE CHARACTER OF THE PERSONS FOR WHOM THIS REST IS PROVIDED. "The weary." Under this description we may include—1. All unregenerated sinners to whom this rest is offered. They are represented as wearying themselves with very vanity (Hab. ii. 13), wearying themselves to commit iniquity (Jer. ix. 5), and as wearying God (Isa. vii. 13, xliii. 24). To all persons of this description spiritual rest is offered; but it will never be relished till the sinner is united to the Saviour. 2. We are principally to understand by the term "weary," all the children of God who are heavy laden with their spiritual burdens. They are weary—(1) With a sense of aggravated guilt. (2) With the conflict which they maintain with sin and Satan. (3) With their crying under the hidings of God's face (Psa. xiii. 1, lxxvii. 7-10). (4) With those disquieting fears of death wherewith they are harassed. (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*) *Christ the rest-giver*:—Talleyrand said, "Life is one long fatigue." Christ wishes to make it one long rest. (*Mrs. Skinner.*) *Rejecters of the Gospel admonished*:—Isaiah was one of the most eloquent of preachers, yet he could not win the ears and hearts of those to whom he spoke. It was not the fault of the preacher that Israel rejected his warnings: all the fault lay with that disobedient and gainsaying nation. The people to whom he spoke so earnestly were drunken in a double sense. (1) They were overcome with wine (vers. 7, 8). (2) They were also intoxicated with pride. The two forms of drunkenness are equally destructive. I. THE EXCELLENCE OF THE GOSPEL. This Scripture does not allude to the Gospel primarily, but to the message which Isaiah had to deliver, which was in part the command of the law and in part the promise of grace; but the same rule holds good of all the words of the Lord; and, indeed, any excellence which was found in the prophet's message is found yet more abundantly in the fuller testimony of the Gospel in Christ Jesus. 1. The excellence of that Gospel lies in its object, for—(1) It is a revelation of rest. (2) It is the cause of rest. (3) This rest is especially meant for the weary. (4) In addition to bringing us rest, the message of mercy points us to a refreshing. If the rested one should grow weary again, the Good Shepherd will give him refreshing; if he wanders, the Lord will restore him; if he grows faint He will revive him. Note, that Isaiah did not come to these people to talk about rest in dubious terms. No; he puts his finger right down on the truth, and says, "This is the rest, and this is the refreshing." So we, when we come with a message from God, come with definite teaching. Nor did he preach a rest of a selfish character. That secret something which your own heart possesses shall enable you to communicate good cheer to many a weary heart, and hope to many a desponding mind. 2. The other excellence of the Gospel lies in its manner. (1) It comes with authority. (2) It was delivered with great simplicity. Isaiah came with it, "precept upon precept," &c. It is the glory of the Gospel that it is so plain. (3) It is taught us by degrees. (4) The Gospel is repeated. (5) It is brought home to us in ways suited to our capacity. II. THE OBJECTIONS WHICH ARE TAKEN TO THE GOSPEL. 1. They are most wanton. Men object to that which promises them rest. 2. Wilful. "This is the refreshing, yet they would not hear." 3. Wicked, because they are rebellion against God, and an insult to His truth and mercy. 4. These people raised objections that were the outgrowth of their pride. They objected to the simplicity of Isaiah's preaching. They said,

"Who is he? You should not go to hear him; he talks to us as if we were children. Besides, it is the same thing over and over again." Too many wish for a map to Heaven so mysteriously drawn that they may be excused from following it. III. THE DIVINE REQUITAL OF THESE OBJECTIONS. 1. The Lord threatens them with the loss of that which they despised. In verse 20 he warns them that they shall have no rest henceforth. "For the bed is shorter," &c. 2. They shall be punished by a gradual hardening of heart (ver. 13). A fall backward is the worst kind of fall. 3. This is to be followed by a growing inability to understand (ver. 11). 4. Whatever refuge they choose for themselves shall utterly fail them (ver. 17). (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 14-22. Hear the Word of the Lord, ye scornful men.—*Isaiah's response* :—The prophet replies that when the storm does sweep over the land, as it assuredly will, these "refuges of lies" will prove no shelter to their builders; they have been tried by the plummet of honesty and righteousness and found to be so out of line that they must come down: but meanwhile, nay, from of old, Jehovah has Himself founded a really serviceable house for His people, namely, the ancient constitution and polity of which He Himself is the chief corner-stone; and the man who trusts in that foundation, believing that it really is there, will not be urged to any impatient acts of panic, whatever may be the apparent danger. (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *Scornful rulers* :—It is bad with a people when their thrones of judgment become the seats of the scornful. (*M. Henry.*) *Incongruous scorning* :—That the rulers of Jerusalem should be men of such a character is very sad. Who will be mourners in Zion if they are scorners? (*Ibid.*) *Scorners* :—I. HOW THESE SCORNFUL MEN LULLED THEMSELVES ASLEEP in carnal security, and even challenged God Almighty to do His worst (ver. 15). II. HOW GOD AWAKENS THEM OUT OF THIS SLEEP, and shows them the folly of their security. 1. He tells them upon what grounds they might be secure. He doth not disturb their false confidences till He hath first showed them a firm bottom on which they may repose themselves (ver. 16). This foundation is—(1) The promises of God in general. (2) The promise of Christ in particular (1 Pet. ii. 6-8). 2. He tells them that upon these grounds which they now built on they could not be safe, but their confidences would certainly fail them (vers. 17-21). III. HERE IS THE USE AND APPLICATION OF ALL THIS (ver. 22). (*Ibid.*) We have made lies our refuge.—*Refuges of lies* :—Let us assemble in classes the excuses of a score or more of people who have told me frankly why they had decided not to become Christians. 1. First of all, is a class who excuse themselves because the Church has stood for bigotry, narrowness, and cruelty. It is said that in all ages the Church has included hypocrites among its members. But can anything be more unfair than these excuses? Granted that Peter cursed and denied with vulgar oaths his Master, what has that to do with the beauty of Christ's character or the claim of His kingdom upon your life? Confessedly, John Calvin was simply an organised syllogism, an animated argument, bloodless as a stone. Even if he did play the traitor like Peter, and refuse to forgive his enemy and forgot the God who makes His sun rise on the evil and the good, how does his recreancy make right yours? Here is the world of business and commerce. To-morrow merchants will adulterate their goods, traders will tamper with the weights, clerks will steal money from the bank, assistants will rob their employers. Since you do not care to associate with hypocrites, withdraw to-morrow morning from business. Give up all physicians, because some are quacks. Draw down the shades over your windows, because there are spots on the sun; and give up the summer, because there are stormy days in July; and give up the fruits, because there are blemishes on the apples. 2. There is another class that emphasise the uncertainty and disagreements concerning Christianity. Since it is all so hazy, and at best only a probability, they are unwilling to commit themselves to the Christian life. It is not necessary that we should understand all doctrines, and the philosophy of duty, in order to fulfil the moral obligations. Life is governed by probability. There may be a thousand disagreements as to theology, but there is no disagreement as to what it is to be a Christian. We are asked to show the fruits of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness. 3. Others there are who urge that becoming a Christian puts restraints upon the individual, narrows the range of his enjoyments, shuts up certain highways of happiness. "I want always to feel perfectly free," exclaims the youth. "I am afraid that I might find myself somewhat cabined and confined by taking upon

myself these obligations." But becoming a Christian is simply to obey the laws of Christ. This objection is based upon a false theory of liberty. Liberty is obedience to law. It is sin that narrows the life. It is disobedience that confines men and confines them; it is loyalty to God's laws that breaks down the walls, pushes back the horizons and makes the soul a citizen of the universe. (*N. D. Hillis, D.D.*)

Vers. 16, 17. Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone.—*The stone laid in Zion*.—The prophet borrows his figure from the huge and costly foundation stones upon which the temple rested (1 Kings v. 17); and the thought which he desires to enforce is that in Zion there is an element of permanency, a constitutional fabric capable of resisting all shocks. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *Foundation stones*.—The force of the figure in this verse is much enhanced by the statements of modern travellers in relation to the immense stones still remaining at the foundation of ancient walls. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *The element of permanency* to which Isaiah here looks is, of course, the theocracy centred at Zion, and represented by the Davidic dynasty, the continuance of which had been promised long since by Nathan to David (2 Sam. vii. 13; cf. xxiii. 5; 1 Kings xi. 36). As the people of Israel, in Isaiah's view, is indestructible, so is the dynasty, which, since it was established, became the centre and pivot of the national life. (*Prof. Driver, D.D.*) *Is this prophecy Messianic?*—The element of security to which the prophet appeals is opposed to the plan of an Egyptian alliance, and hence must be something not pointing entirely to a distant future, but having some reference to present needs. But it is true that a Messianic reference is included in the terms of the prophecy, as it was included similarly in the promise of permanency to David's dynasty. (*Ibid.*) *The tried stone* (Festival of St. Simon and St. Jude).—It is the first chapter out of the six which form the "Book of Woes" (Delitzsch). The Messianic prophecy, though full of consolation, "turns its dark side"—for it has one—to the scoffing magnates of Jerusalem (ver. 14). The zeal of the prophet, manifested in this lesson, against vice and unbelief, may have led to its selection for this festival of St. Simon and St. Jude. The Church has combined them together—these two apostles—in one commemoration, perhaps, among other reasons, because they shared in an especial degree the same spirit of zeal. St. Simon was called the Zealot, it may be, because the quality of zeal was very marked in his temperament; and St. Jude has the name Thaddeus, probably for the same reason. At any rate, his Epistle is one of denunciation—a "Book of Woes" against ungodly persons. I. THE IMAGE. 1. No one person can satisfy the "majestically unique description" but Christ. The Divine purpose is spoken of as if already accomplished. Behold, I "have laid" in Zion. It was eternally decreed. It is the acme and explanation of Israel's election and history. 2. It was no new figure. Isaiah himself had spoken of Jehovah as "a stone of tumbling" (chap. viii. 14). We must go back to Jacob's parting blessing upon his sons to find the same figure in patriarchal days (Gen. xlix. 24). Joseph's history was a picture of the rejecting of "the stone" and of its final triumph. The Psalmist foretold the same vicissitude (Psa. cxviii. 22). Our Lord alluded to "the stone" as signifying Himself (Matt. xxi. 42). St. Peter, when brought before the council, denounced the Jews for setting at nought this "stone" (Acts iv. 11). The same apostle quotes the text in his first Epistle (chap. ii. 6) with a variance, and St. Paul a portion of it (Rom. ix. 33). 3. The frequency of its use or reference shows some especial fitness in the designation. At once the ideas of solidity and strength suggest themselves. Other ideas are connected with "the stone" as a figure of our Lord, by Zechariah. It is "a stone of seven eyes," meaning doubtless that the seven gifts of the Spirit rested upon Him, and setting Him before us as a Being full of light and knowledge. II. THE QUALITIES OF THE STONE. 1. A "tried" stone. We miss this in the quotation of the text in the New Testament. Both St. Peter and St. Paul cite the LXX., which omits it, and cite it freely, one of them blending it with another prophecy. The word "tried" may be interpreted also "trial-stone" or "stone of probation." Both interpretations are true of Jesus Christ. Christ was tried and "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin," and through His sufferings was not only proved, but "approved of God" (Acts ii. 22). He is also a stone which puts others to the test, like the Lydian stone, which was said to distinguish the genuine metal and to detect the presence of alloy—to separate the true from the false (Luke ii. 34). Throughout our Lord's life we see, as He

came in contact with men, this discerning of spirits, but especially during His Passion. 2. A "precious corner-stone." St. Peter says, "elect, precious"—chosen, that is, of God, and precious both in itself and in relation to the building of which it was the corner-stone. A corner-stone is the stone of junction, where the walls meet. The expression in its highest sense may indicate the union between the Divine and human natures in the One Person of the Word; or, in a less elevated sense, it may refer to the union of Jews and Gentiles in the one Body of Christ (Eph. ii. 15). 3. A "sure foundation." A foundation-stone implies a building—implies here the Church, and the "corner-stone" does the same (Eph. ii. 20, ἀκρογωνιαίος)—the stone at the extreme corner. The image is somewhat different—the one points to the base, the other to the extreme angle of the building. Christ is "Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last" (Rev. xxii. 13). There is no contradiction between the statement that the Church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles," and that "no other" foundation can be laid "than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. iii. 11). Christ is, St. Augustine explains, "Fundamentum fundamentorum." We are built upon the apostles, because through the apostles we are built upon Christ. He is a "sure" foundation, so that the gates of hell, though they may war against, yet can they not overcome the Church. The foundation is "most surely laid" by "the Lord God Himself." III. LESSONS. 1. As Christ is the foundation-stone, so each Christian is a stone built upon Him, and deriving his spiritual life from Him. St. Peter speaks of Christ as a "living stone." The apostle passes here from the metaphor to the reality. "Dead as a stone" is a common saying; but the stone which the builders rejected came forth from the tomb, not only living, but life-giving. Each Christian, "baptized into one body," and living in fellowship with Christ, is a living stone from contact with Him (1 Pet. ii. 5). See, then, that we are living in union with Christ. 2. We are not only built upon Christ, but are cemented together with other stones in the walls of the "spiritual house." We are members of a Divine society, and not isolated Christians. Hence love of the brethren is a duty which devolves upon every Christian—union with them as well as with Christ, as we are cemented together by the Spirit of the Lord. 3. Though living stones differ from ordinary stones in that the latter have no wills or powers of motion, but are simply passive in the hands of the quarryman or mason; yet the living stone depends for its vitality upon the absolute surrender of the will into the hands of God, so that it may be hewn and shaped and polished, by the trials of this life, as the Master-Builder thinks best. (*W. H. Hutchings, M.A.*) *The foundation-stone of the Church.*—I. THE CHARACTER OF JESUS CHRIST AS THE SUPPORT AND ORNAMENT OF HIS CHURCH. 1. A stone. (1) To convey the idea of stability. The hopes of God's people in all ages were to have the most substantial foundation to rest upon. (2) Because of the idea of its durability. It has endured through all ages to the present day, and it will endure to the end of time. (3) Life is also attributed by the apostles to this stone. 2. "A tried stone." Completely adapted to answer all the ends for which it is laid. 3. "A precious corner-stone." Examine its excellences. What Solomon said of true wisdom is strictly applicable here—"it is more precious than rubies." "Precious" for the situation which it occupies; because it is the bond which unites the Church of God in all ages. The patriarchal, the Levitical, the Christian Churches are all one in Christ Jesus. All the people of God, however denominated—wherever placed—in whatever age or circumstances—feel the uniting power of this corner-stone. And it binds and unites the Church militant and the Church triumphant. 4. To complete and give greater interest and solidity to the hopes of His people, it is called "a sure foundation." Observe by whom it is laid. Not by mortal hands, but by the Founder of the universe. "Sure!" How vain have been all the assaults of infidelity. II. IT IS NECESSARY THAT WE SHOULD ASCERTAIN OUR CHARACTERS, and see by those tests which God has furnished, whether we have built on this foundation. Christians are related to Christ after the analogy of stones to the foundation. And what does this imply? 1. Separation from all other purposes. Those who are thus separated are—2. Appropriated to the especial purpose for which this stone is laid in Zion, namely, the building of a spiritual house. The manner in which Solomon's temple was built, was a type of the manner in which this building is to be erected. Each stone was previously squared and polished before it was placed in its permanent situation. It is expressly said of these stones, that they were made ready before they were brought thither; so

that no sound of either hammer or axe was heard in the house. This is to teach us that every living stone, to occupy a place in the celestial temple, must be hewn out of nature's quarry, by the ministration of God's Word, by Christian communion, &c., and squared and polished before it is placed in the temple. 3. These stones are themselves endued with spiritual life. By their conjunction with Christ, they obtain a spiritual, celestial life. Do you ask, what is the ultimate design of all this? It is that all the stones may be brought together, and form a fit habitation for Deity Himself (Eph. ii. 19-22). III. THE PRINCIPLE BY WHICH WE COME TO THIS LIVING STONE, are attached to the building, and become part-takers of the privileges. "He that believeth." What is the believing here spoken of? We must look at the analogy. It is the resting of the soul on the foundation God has laid. IV. WHAT ADVANTAGES ARE TO RESULT FROM THIS TRUSTING OF THE SOUL TO CHRIST? "He that believeth shall not make haste." (S. Warren, LL.D.) *Jesus Christ the only foundation*.—I. THE PROPERTIES OF THIS FOUNDATION. 1. It is a stone; for solidity, stability, and durability. 2. A tried stone. (1) His obedience was tried, and it appeared upon trial that it was perfect and universal. His meekness was tried by the abusive treatment He met with from men. His patience and resignation to the Divine will were tried, when the bitter cup of the wrath of God was put into His hand. His love to His Father and His zeal for His honour were tried, and they were found an unquenchable flame, that glowed, without once languishing, through the whole of His life. His love to men—to sinners, to enemies, was tried; tried to the uttermost; it was put to the trial whether His own life or theirs was most dear to Him. In short, this stone was thoroughly tried by God and man, and it still remained firm without a flaw. Jesus also has been tried under the capacity of a Saviour, by millions and millions of depraved, wretched, ruined creatures, who have always found Him perfectly able, and as perfectly willing, to save to the very uttermost all that come unto God through Him. (2) It may be rendered, "a stone of trial"; or, "a trying stone"; this is the true touch-stone of men's characters. Only propose Jesus Christ to them as a Saviour, and according as they receive or reject Him, you may know their true character, and their everlasting doom. This touch-stone has discovered many glittering virtues to be but dross. The Pharisees and scribes had a high character among the Jews for piety, till this trying stone was applied to them; and then it appeared what they were. This test made strange discoveries also in the heathen world. Many of the sages of Greece and Rome had a high reputation for wisdom and virtue. But when this stone was pointed out to them as the only foundation of their hopes, they rejected it with proud disdain, and thought it much more safe to depend upon their own virtue and merit, than upon the virtue and merit of one that was crucified like a malefactor. And thus it appeared they were not truly good and virtuous. Let this touch-stone be applied likewise to the men of this generation, and it will discover a great many counterfeits. As this is a trying-stone with regard to men's present characters, so it will be also as to their final doom and everlasting state. 3. This is a precious stone. 4. This stone is a sure foundation. "Such (says Mr. Hervey) as no pressure can shake; equal, more than equal to every weight; even to sin, the heaviest load in the world. The Rock of Ages, such as never has failed, never will fail those humble penitents who cast their burden upon the Lord Redeemer; who roll all their guilt, and fix their whole hopes upon this immovable basis." The foundation is sure, because it is of Divine appointment. 5. This is a corner-stone. Jesus Christ may be called a corner-stone, to signify His peculiar importance in this spiritual building. II. THIS STONE IS A FOUNDATION. Jesus Christ must lie at the bottom of all, or the superstructure cannot stand. To join our own righteousness with His in our justification, is to form a foundation of solid stone, and hay, straw, and stubble, blended together. III. WOULD YOU THEN KNOW WHETHER YOU ARE REALLY BUILT UPON THIS SURE FOUNDATION? 1. Have you ever seen the utter insufficiency of every other foundation? You will never build upon Christ, while you can build anywhere else with hopes of safety. 2. Have you ever been sensible of the preciousness, the excellency, and the stability of this Divine foundation? If you have ever built upon Christ, it has been at once an act of the last necessity, and of the most free choice. 3. Where is your habitual dependence? Is it upon Jesus Christ alone? Or is it upon something else? 4. Have you been formed into proper stones for this spiritual kingdom? (S. Davies, M.A.) *The sure foundation*.—I. THE LORD DECLARES THAT HE HAS LAID THIS GREAT FOUNDATION. "Behold, I lay in Zion a founda-

tion." Here, as in many other parts of Scripture, the great work of the salvation of sinners is traced up to its fountain-head. II. **THE LORD DECLARES THE BLESSED PROPERTIES AND EXCELLENCE OF THIS FOUNDATION.** III. **THE LORD SETS FORTH THE BLESSEDNESS OF THOSE WHO BUILD UPON IT.** "He that believeth shall not make haste." (*W. Hancock, B.D.*) *The ground of a sinner's hope*:—In the preceding context the prophet speaks of unsafe refuges. To bring sinners to the apprehension of the Saviour, God announces the declaration of the text. I. **THE IMPORTANCE WHICH GOD ATTACHES TO THE DECLARATION WHICH HE WAS ABOUT TO MAKE.** He introduces it with the solemn assertion, "Therefore, thus saith the Lord." This is further apparent from the solemn manner in which He calls the minds of all to it. "Behold, I lay." He thus summons the attention of men and angels. It can be no trivial matter to which the infinitely wise God thus summons the attention of all. The truth is, He is about to erect a stately temple, unspeakably more glorious than either of the temples that stood once on Mount Moriah. They were only types and obscure shadows of this splendid structure. It is a temple which shall be built up for ever. The stones of it are lively stones, being the immortal souls of men. It shall be filled with the glory of the God of the whole earth. Never shall "Ichabod, the glory is departed," be written upon its walls. But to employ another figure of the same signification, God is about to build a glorious city. But what is meant by the temple and city? They refer to the Church of the living God, which is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone. The words have also a reference to sinners of mankind. God may be viewed as laying the foundation-stone of a gracious plan for redeeming them from sin and hell. II. **IT IS GOD WHO HAS LAID THE FOUNDATION IN ZION.** "I lay." None else had sufficient knowledge to discover a safe and suitable method of acceptance. Besides, He alone had it in His power to lay such a foundation. Here is matter of comfort. Had it been laid by another, how could we have had the same evidence that it was safe? Might it not have been disallowed by God? But since it is the doing of the Lord, who may prohibit us from building upon it? and who shall cast any reflection upon its security? Here a question suggests itself, and it is, When was this foundation laid? God speaks of it as if He was laying it at the time when He used these words. But it will be remembered that there is no succession of time with God. It was laid in decree from all eternity. The saints of the former dispensations sought it and relied upon it for safety. But again, this foundation was laid, in the fulness of time, by Christ's coming into the world, and offering Himself a sacrifice for sin. III. **THIS STONE IS LAID IN ZION**,—in the Church. Christ is the foundation upon which it is built. Without His mission and death no Church could have been erected. And from Him proceeded all the ordinances and institutions by which the blessings of redemption are communicated to her members. From Him likewise proceeds all the invisible grace which is necessary to gather, edify, and purify a Church. Again, it is in the ordinances and assemblies of the Church that He is chiefly to be found. IV. **THE STONE LAID FOR A FOUNDATION HAS BEEN TRIED.** Though Christ had not been tried, the fact that He was God as well as man would have been sufficient to warrant our strongest confidence in Him. But in what respects was Christ tried and proved? 1. Like Adam, His innocence was tried. His temper was severely tested. It was tried by His disciples. 2. Christ's confidence in the promises made to Him was greatly tried. God had promised that to Him would be the gathering of the people, and that the heathen and the uttermost parts of the earth would be given Him for His possession; but, instead of witnessing the fulfilment of these promises, He was rejected and despised of men; and His retinue often amounted to no more than twelve fishermen; and yet He continued to trust that all would be accomplished in due time. 3. His qualifications to act the part of our Saviour have likewise been proven. (1) His mercy has been tried. It has been proven by all who have applied to Him for deliverances of any kind; and they have always found it very tender. (2) Christ's readiness to hear prayer has been tried. (3) His power has been likewise proved. He has completely demonstrated His ability to save. What comfort is here for the awakened! In coming to Christ for peace and salvation, they incur no risk. V. **CHRIST IS A PRECIOUS CORNER-STONE.** 1. It is easy to see some reasons why He is called precious. (1) He is precious to God on account of the ineffable love that subsists between Him and the Son, who is His delight. (2) He is precious to the Father, likewise, on account of the work of redemption which the Father gave Him to do, and



which He cheerfully undertook and faithfully performed. (3) To believers He possesses transcendent excellence on account of the nature and perfections of Deity with which He is invested, and because He is a suitable and compassionate Saviour. 2. But why is He also termed a corner stone? This seems intended to teach us that Christ must be all in all in the work of our salvation. VI. CHRIST IS A SURE FOUNDATION. 1. God has laid Him for a foundation, and the foundation of the Lord standeth sure. 2. That Christ is a sure foundation is evident from the fact that He stood His trial. 3. It is manifest also, from the many promises and oaths made to Himself, and to His people, through Him. 4. In addition to all other grounds of security, be it remembered, that while our first representative was a creature, the second is the Lord from heaven, the Creator. VII. HE THAT BELIEVETH ON CHRIST SHALL NOT MAKE HASTE. This mode of expression is evidently borrowed from the idea of a house about to fall—the inmates making haste to get away from under it. When an unexpected inundation has sapped away the sand or earth on which the house was built, then there is a running to and fro: every one tries to secure his own safety, and to give warning to his relatives. And confusion and haste far greater than this will attend those who now cover themselves with lies and falsehood. There are three seasons of this haste—the season of death, the season of the resurrection, and the season of judgment. These are times of the greatest alarm and confusion to all who stumble upon the stone laid in Zion; but the case is very different with him that trusteth in the Lord. (*A. Ross, M.A.*) *God's foundation.*—I. MAN NEEDS A FOUNDATION ON WHICH TO BUILD HIS HOPES FOR TIME AND FOR ETERNITY. Because of his nature, the nature of sin, the character of God; man's duties and responsibilities; the faculties and capabilities of his immortal soul. II. MAN CANNOT LAY A SUFFICIENT FOUNDATION. The history of the world shows that humanity has ever been trying to do this. The various systems of religion. Human reason has been deified. Reliance on God's abstract mercy. Correct creeds, good works—all fail in the time of man's necessity. III. GOD HAS LAID A FOUNDATION. While men and angels would have failed, God gave His Son, a foundation for pardon, purity, peace, heaven. IV. THIS FOUNDATION HAS BEEN TRIED. 1. By persecution—Church and individual. 2. By trust—all classes, all times, under all circumstances, in life and in death. V. THE ASSURANCE OF THE TEXT. "Shall not make haste." No guilt too deep for pardon; no trial and temptation too great for consoling grace; nothing beyond the power of Christ. (*J. T. Murrish.*) *The foundation of God.*—I. THE FOUNDATION. Christ. In a very deep sense Jesus Christ is the foundation of the whole of the Divine dealings with us; and historically, since the day on which He appeared on earth, He has more and more manifestly and completely been the foundation of the whole of the history of the world. But passing these aspects, let us rather fix upon those which are more immediately in the prophet's mind. Jesus Christ is the foundation laid for all men's security against every tempest or assault. We may look at the same thought under somewhat different aspects. 1. He is the foundation for all our thinking and opinions, for all our belief and our knowledge. In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom, and whatsoever of solid fact men can grasp in their thinking in regard of all the most important things with which they come into relation, is to be found in the life and death of Jesus Christ, and in the truths which that reveals. He is the foundation of all our knowledge of God, of all our true knowledge of ourselves, of all our true knowledge of duty, of all our true knowledge of the relations between the present and the future, between man and God. And in His life, in the history of His death and resurrection, is the only foundation for any real knowledge of the awful mysteries that lie beyond the grave. Certitude is in Him. 2. He is the foundation of all restful love. 3. He is the foundation for all noble and pure living. He is the fixed pattern to which it may be conformed. Otherwise man's notions of what is virtuous and good are much at the mercy of conventional variations of opinion. 4. As the one sufficient motive for holy and beautiful living, He is the foundation. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." They that find the reason and the motive for goodness and purity in Christ's love to them and their answering love to Christ, will build a far fairer fabric of a life than any others, let them toil at the building as they may. II. THE TRIED PRECIOUSNESS OF THE FOUNDATION. Because it is a tested stone, it therefore is a precious stone. There are two kinds of testing—the testing from the assaults of enemies, and the testing by the building upon it of friends. And both these methods of proof have been applied, and it has stood

the test. **III. THE PROCESS OF BUILDING.** The metaphor seems to be abandoned in the last words of our text, but it is only apparently so. "He that believeth shall not make haste." The act of building is simple faith in Jesus Christ. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *God's foundation for man*:—This passage represents in a word just very much the contrast between God's way and man's way of doing things. Man, according to his natural ideas, is all for doing things by his own efforts. What he has and what he does he must and shall produce from himself. He must invent, he must devise, he must judge, he must plan, he must execute, and God is to be ignored. His science is to be a science from which God is excluded, and His name is not to be mentioned. His social theories are to be social theories rounded off and complete in themselves, and God is not to be allowed to touch them. His moral life is to be built up upon its own foundations, and God is not to be called in for help. God's way of doing things is the very opposite of this. In His way of doing things men also are called upon to put forth all the efforts they can, but it is in building up on the foundations He has laid for them, not in laying a foundation for themselves. He calls on them to put forth their efforts in doing what they can do, and not in attempting to do what they never can accomplish. (*Prof. J. Orr, D.D.*) *The sure foundation*:—1. If history teaches us anything, it is surely this—that **MAN NEEDS GOD TO LAY HIS FOUNDATION FOR HIM**, and that he cannot dispense with God's help. 1. In the matter of thought man is laid under this very peculiar condition—that, on the one hand, he needs a foundation of certainty in regard to the great questions and subjects of existence,—those great questions on which men's minds have tortured and perplexed themselves in all ages—the questions of God, the soul, and the hereafter, on which to build up his life; and, on the other hand, he cannot give himself this certainty. Men need a foundation of assurance on these great questions in order that their individual lives, their institutions, their societies even, may be built upon a strong and stable basis. "I dare say you feel as I do," says one of the speakers in a conversation with Socrates, "how very hard, or almost impossible, is the attainment of any certainty about questions such as these in the present life. And yet I should deem him a coward who did not prove what is said about them to the uttermost, or whose heart failed him before he had examined them on every side. For he should persevere till he has achieved one of two things: either he should discover or be taught the truth about them; or, if this is impossible, I would have him take the best and most irrefragable of human theories, and let this be the raft upon which he sails through life—not without risk, as I admit, if he cannot find some word of God which will more safely and surely carry him." 2. It is the same in regard to moral life. Men seek to build up their own moral life and the morality of their societies on a basis which shall be independent of religion; but how little they succeed, how abortive have been their efforts, all history might again be cited to prove. God lays the foundation of the true moral life in that new nature He bestows on us in Christ, in the light and power that are imparted to us through Him, and without this divinely laid foundation the builders build in vain. 3. Is it otherwise with religion, with the relation of man to God, and the state and standing of men before God? Here, too, men have ever been found, and are found still, putting forth painful efforts to secure their own peace; going about, as Paul said, to establish their own righteousness, not knowing that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Yet how hollow, and temporary, and uncertain is the peace gained by all such efforts; how far removed from the glorious certainty of reconciliation and acceptance with God which the Gospel of Jesus can impart! **II. It is the great central assertion of the Christian faith THAT GOD HAS LAID FOR MANKIND SUCH A FOUNDATION AS IT NEEDS**, and that this foundation has been laid in Jesus Christ. With Christ's coming into the world a new era began in the history of the world, a new direction was given to the thoughts of men, a new revelation of God was made to them, a new gospel of sonship was preached to them, a new light was thrown on human nature, human needs, and human destiny, new hopes and prospects were opened up for humanity. On this foundation the race has gone on building up ever since. But there are those who tell us that this is passing away—that this may have done for the past, but will not do for the future; that this foundation-stone is becoming obsolete, and that men must have done with it, and leave it behind. They must, in obedience to truth and the advance in the world's ideas, part with it. Well, the text itself does not anticipate that this stone laid by God, being planted there, will remain there without being put

to test and trial. It is not a stone which God is to lay, and no one dispute the laying of it—which God is to lay, and no one refuse to build upon it—which God is to lay, and no one contest its right to be there. III. THIS SUBJECT HAS A RELATION TO THE PREACHER. We are told in the text that it is God who is laying, and has laid, this foundation-stone on which everything is to be built up. It is the preacher's function to unite himself with this great purpose of God. His function is to exhibit and commend this foundation-stone. It is the preacher's duty to clear it of the human rubbish which from time to time may have been heaped upon it; to stand upon it himself, and to induce others to stand upon it too, and to rear their life, their work, everything, upon this foundation. IV. BUT THE TEXT BESIDES HAS A RELATION TO THE HEARER. It is a matter of infinite importance for hearers of the Gospel to recognise the preciousness and importance of this stone which God has laid; for us all that we should ourselves come to this stone and build our lives and hopes upon it. How great the comfort to those in spiritual darkness and perplexity to know that it is not left to them to lay the foundation-stone of their spiritual peace; but that God has laid it for them, and that all they have to do is to build on that sure and tried foundation! Jesus Himself has identified Himself with this stone, and has warned us that men cannot come into collision with Him and not suffer grievous spiritual harm. (*Ibid.*) *God's foundation for the stability of His Church*:—1. This foundation was planned in the eternal counsels of Jehovah. 2. It was actually laid in the incarnation and sufferings of Jesus Christ. 3. It is proclaimed in the preaching of the Gospel. (*J. Sherman.*) *True character*:—I. CHRIST IS THE FOUNDATION OF A GOOD CHARACTER. II. BELIEVING IS THE REARING OF A TRUE CHARACTER. III. GOD IS THE JUDGE OF A TRUE CHARACTER. 1. He measures it by the law of rectitude. He lays "judgment" to the line, &c. 2. He tests it by the dispensation of His government. "Hail shall sweep away," &c. Truly, "other foundation can no man lay." &c. (*Homilist.*) *A tried stone*.—*A stone of proof*:—"A tried stone," literally, a stone of proof; and that may be regarded in either of two senses or in both. 1. It is a stone of proof, because it stands every test that can be applied to it. Praise no stone until you have tested it. Laud no doctrine until you have tried it in the market-place, in the sick-chamber, in the valley of the shadow of the deepest distress; then come forward and say what the stone was worth. When you hear the last patented religion praised, pay no heed to the trivial eulogium; it is a patent that has not been put to the proof; it has done nothing for the world; it has no long, noble, dignified history behind it; it glitters, but it has not been proved in life's long night of pain and restlessness and sorrow. Herein it is true that antiquity signifies experience, uses that can be employed for purposes of inference and solid deduction. In this sense Jesus Christ was a stone of proof: He was tried morning, noon, and night, in the cold and in the heat, in all the variation of life's changeful scene; and this is the record which is made of Him by those who have followed Him throughout. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever,"—most precious when most needed, strongest when the enemy is most importunate, completest in all attribute, faculty, and grace when hell gathers itself up for final tremendous onslaught upon His dignity and worth. Is it too much to ask that those who have tested Christ and known Him to be a stone of proof should say so publicly, privately, quietly, emphatically, and gratefully? 2. Then, the second sense in which the test would hold good would be that Jesus Christ tries every character. Not only is Jesus Christ Himself tried, but He tries every man. Therefore many have left Him. He tries whether the heart is giving itself in full consecration to His service, or whether it is trifling with the occasion, yielding to the spirit of compromise and concession. In the Church there is but one badge, one symbol, one password; it is not genius, learning, intellectual capacity, profound acquisition in difficult subjects,—it is the Cross. Therefore so few men understand Christianity. He is a Christian who has no self; he has denied himself; he has said "No" to himself. This is a conquest which is only won in solitude; this is a victory of which a man need not speak, because his whole life tells the tale in simplest eloquence. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The tried stone*:—I. JESUS CHRIST IS THE FOUNDATION STONE OF THAT SYSTEM OF DOCTRINE WHICH GOD HAS REVEALED IN HIS WORD. In every age of the world too many have been found who employ all their time in laying the foundation, without being able to build thereupon with any pleasure to themselves or advantage to others. And the reason is, rather than build on the "Rock of Ages," they are for associating with the founda-

tion, stones which are only designed for the superstructure. Now, the foundation is to be laid of mere grace, in the atonement of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is the chief doctrine of Christianity, and is the basement of all the others. This foundation is impregnable. II. JESUS CHRIST IS A TRIED FOUNDATION-STONE. The word "tried" bears three meanings in Holy Scripture. Sometimes it means to elect or choose, sometimes to prove or put to the test, and sometimes to approve. Answerably to these views, Jesus Christ was, from eternity, "chosen of God" to be the basis of the Christian system, the foundation of individual faith, and the "corner stone" of His believing people in their collective and corporate character. In these capacities He has been openly, solemnly, severely experimented and put to the test. And the result of the whole has been His complete approval. 1. He has been "tried," in point of true and faithful attachment to all the great interests which we have mentioned, by the sufferings to which He subjected Himself in support of them. 2. He has been "tried" in reference to the strength and security of the fabric, by the unflinching success of all attempts to build upon it. 3. He has been "tried" by the entire failure of all attempts to undermine the foundation or shake the building. (*H. Clare.*) *Jesus Christ the tested foundation* :—This is historically true and verifiable. In science we have a process called verification. A law of nature, however strong the induction by which it is supported may seem to be, is not regarded as scientifically or perfectly established till it is brought to the test of verification—that is, until men by experiment or new experience have put it to the trial, and found that their induction holds the field. And so in a sense we may say it has been with Jesus Christ. This stone has been tested by time, and we have now centuries of verification to fall back upon. In many ways, in nearly all possible ways, this stone has been tested, and it has come victoriously out of them all. It has been tried by the upheavals of society in times of the greatest social and political convulsion. It has been tried by the fires of persecution; for often have the rage and enmity of man done their worst against it. It has been tried by error and corruption—by the faithlessness of the builders themselves, who sought to remove it from its place, and put some other stone in its stead. It has been tried in the fires of controversy, and by the corroding influences of scepticism. All that the intellect or wit of man could do has been employed to destroy it. It has been tested in a negative respect by the failure of men to find an adequate substitute for it. Men have tried from the beginning to remove this stone, and find a substitute for it. They have sought for substitutes in science, in philosophy, in culture, but they have not been able to find them. I could quote the confessions of many of our leaders of modern unbelief who think they see the old foundations going, but who sorrowfully confess that they have nothing adequate to put in the place of Christianity, or to restore to man the hopes of which they have deprived him. Finally, this stone has been tested in the most effectual way of all by men actually coming to it, and trying whether it will bear the weight they need to lean on it. And who that has thus tried the religion of Jesus experimentally has not found that it can do all, or more than all, for them that their highest spiritual life requires? (*Prof. J. Orr, D.D.*) *The tried foundation* :—I. JESUS CHRIST IS THE CORNER-STONE. 1. He is the foundation of Christianity as a theological and religious system. (1) Of all Christian doctrine. (2) Of all the authentic institutions of Christianity. He is the foundation of all the public worship of Almighty God. (3) So He is the pillar and ground of the morality of the Christian system. 2. He is the foundation of personal confidence and salvation. 3. He is the "corner stone" of the general Church—of His people in their associated character. (1) As the "corner stone" of His Church He sustains to it a natural relation. (2) He unites the various parts of the building. (3) He supports the system. "On this rock will I build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (4) He is the ornament and glory of the Church, fitly, neatly, gracefully, beautifully "framed together in Him, it groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord," and shall finally be presented "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing." II. JESUS CHRIST IS "A TRIED STONE." (*W. M. Bunting.*) *The well-tested Friend of humanity* :—Man's destiny depends upon his character. In it are the germs of Paradise and the elements of Tophet. It is our blessedness to know that He who came to give the world a new and holy character is no empirical or charlatan reformer, but one who has been thoroughly "tried" in the glorious work. I. HE HAS BEEN "TRIED" BY THE MISSION HE UNDERTOOK. He came here to give such a knowledge of the nature,

the love, the relations, and the claims of God as would effect a moral restoration of the world. Salvation consisteth in the knowledge of God. But in His God-revealing mission, how was He tried? His love, the root of all excellence, was tried in its two great branches of piety and philanthropy. In prosecuting His Divine undertaking He became so completely the victim of human and hellish malignity that He seemed to be forsaken of His Father. Was not this trying to His piety?—trying to His loving confidence in the everlasting Father? Yet He bore the test. He was tried in His philanthropy also. What had He to gain for Himself for His amazing self-sacrifice? Nothing but the Cross. And yet these sufferings, instead of cooling the ardour or dimming the lustre of this heavenly fire, made it more intense and more radiant. II. HE HAS BEEN "TRIED" BY THE RIGOROUS SCRUTINY OF HIS ENEMIES. 1. The scrutiny of His contemporaneous enemies has done so. He lived His public life under a system of keen-eyed and vigilant espionage. The eye of malignant scrutiny glared on Him at every turn. Every test that could be invented was applied in order to convict Him of wrong. But how triumphantly He passed through the ordeal! Even Pilate, who, overborne by public clamour, pronounced the sentence, confessed belief in His innocence by washing his hands in the open court. The day of Pentecost brought new and resistless testimony to His rectitude. 2. The scrutiny of His succeeding enemies has done so. He has had keen-eyed enemies from Celsus, the Epicurean who wrote his "Logos Alethes," down to the hostile critics of the present day. Strauss of Germany, and Renan of France, men of signal ability and high attainments, stand prominently amongst those who have submitted Christ to the most crucial of hostile criticism in order to prove Him unworthy of the unbounded faith of man as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. But who that has read the works of Neander, Rothe, Tholuck, Ullmann, Dorner, Lange, Henegstenberg, including not a few able French and English authors who have answered those hostile critics, does not feel that Christ has stood well the severest of these tests? III. HE HAS BEEN "TRIED" BY THE INFLUENCE HE HAS EXERTED ON HUMANITY. If every tree is to be judged by its fruits, it is natural to ask, what has been the fruit of Christ's history upon the world? And here we may raise two questions—1. What has been His influence upon His faithful followers? Ask them if Christ has been to them according to His Word. We fear not the reply. Those of His followers who have studied Him most profoundly, and followed Him most loyally, have ever uttered with the greatest emphasis, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." 2. What has been His general influence upon the world? Has His influence been as unique as His personal character revealed in the Evangelists? Undoubtedly, yes. And this wide, ever-growing influence is, on the whole, salutary. It has always been in favour of the highest intelligence, liberty, morality, social order, and true progress. He stands to-day, in the mind of humanity, more powerful and more glorious than ever! Why this? One reason is, His character answers to the highest ideal of moral excellence that rises to the souls of men. Another reason is, His spirit gives to man the highest life. Conclusion: The subject suggests—1. An encouragement to Christians. Our religion is no experiment. We are resting on one for our guidance and happiness who has borne the test of ages. 2. A warning to infidels. (1) In the light of the thoughts we have propounded does not your opposition to Christ appear impious? (2) To oppose Him is to set yourself against the heavens, against omnipotence itself. To oppose Him is futile. (3) It is inhuman. In opposing Him you are sinning against the interest of your species. Who has helped your race as Jesus has? 3. An invitation to all. Your character is your spiritual house, your spiritual world, that in which you will spend an existence either of misery or of bliss. The only true foundation of that house is Christ. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *A foundation of rock* :—When the men of Ely contemplated building their cathedral they distrusted the loose, unstable fen country; and in order to have a foundation they dug deep into the fenny soil, and laid stones and mortar and cement there in great abundance, and upon this foundation they reared their noble cathedral. It stood decade after decade, but of late years it showed signs of settling down, and men tried to remedy its precarious condition without full success. But lately they made a most important discovery, so we have read. They dug deep through the concrete foundation that had been laid of yore, and there, some twenty feet beneath it, they found rock, rock which had always been there, but which the builders had not known or found. And to-day works are on foot to unite the cathedral with the rock. When this has been done they know the cathedral will

stand. (J. A. Davies, B.D.) *Human systems no foundation for the soul*:—There have been systems offered to men as the basis of life; but time has tested them, and they have been “found wanting.” Men had not gone deep enough. Positivism, secularism, humanitarianism, and such systems fail because they do not go deep enough. They do not reach, nor build upon, the rock. And men have made foundations for themselves other than those that are laid, but find these cannot bear the weight of all the years. Time has told against their foundations; and they must dig down through them, dig deeper, and unite their lives to the “Rock of Ages.” Down through the man-laid, deceptive foundations of self-righteousness, self-will, and self-sufficiency, or of a profession of faith that has no substance in it, or of worldly and intellectual possessions, right down through these they must dig until they reach the rock, and there by faith they must fix and fasten their lives upon Christ. (*Ibid.*) *Building on the rock*:—I would rather have a mere shanty of deal boards, if it was safe on a rock, than I would have the most pretentious building if it only rested on quicksand. (John Wesley.) *The stability of Christian faith and hope*:—Macaulay once imagined that in some far distant day a “traveller from New Zealand might, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul’s.” Such may happen. Neither London, nor St. Paul’s, nor aught that is human on the earth is proof against the mouldering breath of time. How blessed the knowledge, how soul-inspiring the assurance that He on whom we are building our all for eternity will remain “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” (D. Thomas, D.D.) *Christ the one solid foundation*:—Men who stand on any other foundation than the Rock, Christ Jesus, are like birds who build their nests in trees by the side of rivers. The bird sings in the branches and the river sings below, but all the while the waters are undermining the soil about the roots, till, in some unsuspected hour, the tree falls with a crash into the stream, and then the nest is sunk, the home is gone, and the bird is a wanderer. But birds that hide their young in the clefts of the rock are undisturbed, and after every winter coming again, they find their nests awaiting them, and all their life-long brood in the same places, undisturbed by stream or storm. (H. W. Beecher.) *Jesus Christ a stone*:—Two Jews, one recently converted to Christ, the other strongly opposed to and incensed against his brother because of his renunciation of Judaism, were walking together in warm debate. Being much angered, the opponent of Christ said to his companion, “As for your Jesus of Nazareth, I think no more of Him than of this stone that is in our path.” Grieved, but not disheartened, the disciple of Christ said, as he picked up the stone and held it in his hand, “And I, too, think of Jesus Christ as a stone; but to me He is the Foundation-stone laid in Zion, the Elect stone, the Tried stone, the precious Corner-stone. But to you, my brother,” he added in deep sorrow, “Jesus is a Stone of stumbling and a Rock of offence, that may fall in judgment upon you, even as I build upon Him in safety and mercy.” (*Nye’s Anecdotes.*) He that believeth shall not make haste.—*The equanimity of the believer*:—If you observe attentively the works of God you will perceive what may be called a leisurely growth. But this ill accords with our natural inclinations. We would fain be at once what we can only become by degrees. Neither is such a remark limited in its application to matters which are wholly terrestrial. It may be said to hold good in a still greater degree when spiritual concerns are brought under review. But God, who precisely knows what is most for our advantage, has determined against any sudden transition. Many of the most brilliant promises of the Bible are made to those who “wait upon the Lord.” I. THE CHRISTIAN THRIVES BETTER FROM NOT BEING PERMITTED TO MAKE HASTE IN ACQUIREMENTS. The passage is directed against anything of hurry or bustle. It does not so much declare that the believer can never advance rapidly, as that he shall never move with that agitated step which betokens insecurity. It does not denote a sluggish pace to be unavoidable, but simply implies that what is hasty and sudden will not be allowed. And a little reflection will convince you of the advantages which result from such an arrangement. It holds good in almost everything, that what is done hastily is seldom done well. In mental acquirements the more especially, that which is speedy is likely to be showy rather than solid—so that what is gained in time is lost in strength. The case is just the same in regard of religion. Where the Spirit of God actually, and in good earnest, takes a man in hand, it will not allow him to make haste through the preliminaries of righteousness; he shall be brought down to the dust, so as to abhor himself for his countless iniquities;

he shall be reduced to the position of one who is thoroughly conscious that, unless God interfere, he must eternally perish. And it will ordinarily be after this process that the Gospel in all its beauty is expanded before him. This is for the advantage of the believer. Take the experience of Christians, and you will find that where progress has been most rapid, the commencement has been most arduous. And neither is it only at the beginning that the Christian thrives better from not being allowed to "make haste." Take him at any other stage of his course, and you will find that he advances rapidly by walking slowly. Suppose him under affliction, then patience must have its perfect work.

II. EXAMINE CERTAIN OF THE COMFORTS AND ENJOYMENTS WHICH ARE ENSURED TO THE BELIEVER BY THE PROMISE THAT HE "SHALL NOT MAKE HASTE." We reckon as chief amongst these that he has a Protector always at hand, so that in seasons of emergency he need not run to and fro in search of succour. "God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble." The believer has nothing to hasten from, for he is shielded against every assault; he has nothing to hasten to, for he is already enclosed within a rampart of security. It is only by bartering away or forgetting my rights or my duties as a Christian that I can possibly make what is termed a false step. The believer ought to take no step without prayer; and if he ask God's counsel, he shall not go wrong. Then, in respect of the termination of life, the believer may feel it far better to depart and be with the Lord. He may sometimes be tempted to long for the time when the earthly house shall be taken down, in order to be rebuilt for eternity; but he cannot forget that his times are in God's hands; that it would not be good for him to die whilst his heavenly Father sees it fit that he should live; and thus he keeps down what is impatient in desire, and makes not haste to be emancipated from the flesh. He longs, moreover, for the final triumph of Christianity, the time "when the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and His Christ." But there will be mixed with this longing no fraction of impatience (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

*The quieting antidote to haste.*—Is not this making haste, this restless hurrying, turning, questioning a quite precise picture of too many modern thoughts and lives? How many people are waveringly making haste about doctrine, duty, &c. But our Scripture is the quieting antidote. I. FAITH'S OBJECT. "He that believeth"; but he must have somewhat or some one as the object of belief. Notice faith's object as disclosed in our Scripture. 1. An object given of God. 2. An object sure. 3. Tried or tested. 4. Precious, worthy. II. THE RESULT OF FAITH. "Shall not" worryingly, nervously "make haste." 1. As to doctrine, Christ is the truth. 2. As to the forgiveness of sins, Christ's word is pledged. 3. As to the issue of things, the helm is grasped by the pieced hand. 4. As to death, the risen Christ is death's master. (*Wayland Hoyt, D.D.*) *The objective ground of faith.*—1. Two things are necessary to give stability to a man. (1) A principle of faith within his own mind. (2) An objective ground of faith, real or imaginary. The man thus believes in something. In itself it may be unreal, but to him it is a reality. Therefore he follows after it with constancy. Take away his belief in this something and he is immediately at sea, without compass or rudder, the sport of the winds and waves. And precisely in proportion to the grandeur and the durability of that on which his faith rests, and to the simplicity and entireness of his faith itself, will he be found to be steadfast and immovable, full of energy, full of hope, full of perseverance. I appeal to the history of the race. Look at all those who have been remarkable for strength and stability of character, and who swayed by the magic of their firmness the minds of others. They all believed in something: in their mission, or in their destiny, or in their wisdom, or in the power of truth, or in the progress of the race, or in the constancy of nature, or in the future of their country, or in the revelation of God. Faith it was that upheld them from first to last, that imparted a consistency and a unity to all they did, and invested them with a kind of awe as beings of another and higher order. Now, this being the case, you can easily see of what importance it is that the objective ground of faith should be something that is real, true, Divine; something that has substance in it, so that I feel I have hold of it, and am not grasping a shadow; something that lives out of myself altogether, so that I can feel independent of the ever varying phases of my own mind; something that is itself secure, and beyond the possibility of danger, so that I can feel the most perfect confidence in it. 2. And now comes the question, than which none can be more intensely interesting, at least to the earnest, awakened, thoughtful mind—Where is this objective

ground of faith to be found? Here is the answer, and mark from whom it comes, "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone." Well may it be added, "He that believeth shall not make haste." His faith will partake of the stability of the foundation on which it rests. So far as his safety is concerned that is secure. And then, so far as his own feeling or persuasion of his safety is concerned, if his faith is simple it will impart stability not merely to his state, but to his mind. It will bring an assured peace to his soul. Here, then, is the foundation. Examine it. (1) See how strong it is; there is not one element of weakness about it. It is all Divine. (2) And see how broad it is. There is room for thee to build, my brother. (3) See how accessible it is. So near, that one step will place thee on it. A single step, and thou art on the rock! (4) See how it bears the stamp of the Divine approbation. The Father laid it; the Father has further signified His approbation of the Living Stone, by making Him the headstone of the corner. And what satisfied the Father's justice may well satisfy thy conscience. Well, here is the foundation. If thou believest not, surely thou shalt not be established. (*A. L. R. Foote.*)

*The establishing power of faith* (with chap. vii. 9):—I. The first aspect in which these words may be viewed, namely, in reference to ONE'S FIRST ESTABLISHMENT IN THE PEACE OF THE GOSPEL. II. A second aspect in which they admit of being viewed is IN REFERENCE TO ONE'S CONTINUED ESTABLISHMENT IN THAT PEACE. I do not believe there is anything in the Gospel itself viewed as a system, or anything in sovereignty viewed as a principle of the Divine procedure, or anything in the believer's condition in this world viewed as a state of discipline, that renders it impossible for him, on the whole, to retain undiminished the peace in which he was first established; that necessitates his falling away in any measure from that assurance into which his early, simple, affectionate faith introduced him. The secret of any one's declension in this respect is afforded us here, "If ye believe not,"—continue not, that is, to believe; for faith is a life, a habit,— "surely ye shall not be established," continue, that is, to be established. As faith decays, so also will your feeling of stability, of security, be impaired. On the contrary, "He that believeth"—lives habitually in the exercise of faith—"shall not make haste," shall ever maintain a calm, undisturbed repose.

III. There yet remains a third aspect in which these passages may be viewed, namely, IN REFERENCE TO DUTY, OR THE WORK OF SANCTIFICATION GENERALLY. We live in a world of temptation. Do we need some mighty principle of steadfastness? What is that principle? It is faith; faith resting on Christ, and drawing strength and stability from Him; faith realising the love of God, and enjoying it actually in the soul; faith looking beyond this present scene of things, and bringing near to us another and more attractive scene. I must feel that the grasp of the eternal God is upon me. Let us have a faith like this, and under its influence we shall act our part in life, however difficult it may be—1. With calmness; for we shall do nothing rashly—we shall learn to wait. 2. With dignity; for we shall do all things as in God's sight, and under His protection; and we shall be raised immeasurably above the petty schemes and the little meannesses of the people of the world. 3. With consistency; for having once entered on what we deem the path of truth and duty, we will follow it out. (*Ibid.*)

*The equanimity of faith*:—The Hebrew word for the "making haste" means quite as accurately the being "ashamed," or, the being "confounded." Accordingly, when St. Paul is arguing with the Romans he sets forth Christ as the foundation-stone promised by Isaiah, affirming that "whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed"; and when St. Peter is exhorting the strangers he counsels them to build themselves up "as lively stones" on the redemption provided in the Gospel, quoting the verse from the prophet as if it stood thus,— "He that believeth on Him shall not be confounded." There is wonderful significance in this ambiguity, or, rather, interchangeableness of meaning. This will be our subject—the deliberateness, and, therefore, the solidity of all those who are "God's building." 1. It has really passed into a truism, as regards temporal and common affairs, that haste is dangerous, and that slowness, for the most part, is sureness. If there be one attribute in the works of the Creator Himself more universal than any other it is that of doing things by degrees, and never despising in His own government "the day of small things." Now take the case of the Christian on the highway of the Gospel. No doubt there is one sense in which he travels with the utmost velocity. In the sense of mortality we are all "making haste." But we limit you to the moral pilgrimage of the soul going



towards Heaven, with its perfection, whether of holiness or of happiness, and we are reminded by the very character of a "believer" named in the text that we must avoid hurry, or bustle, or impatience. Faith in its own nature consents to travel slowly, and agrees to the interval between the being "justified" and the being "glorified." There would remain no one behind to be the "salt of the earth" if every new convert "made haste" from the mercy-seat of repentance to the land of the palm and the crown. 2. Now we turn to the "making haste" considered rather as an affliction than as an error, and the "not making haste" rather as a privilege than as a duty. There is quite as much of a promise as there is of a counsel in the words we are considering, more especially if you couple them with the New Testament paraphrase about the being "ashamed" and the being "confounded." It is not only wrong to be impatient and neglect the duties of the passing moment, it is, moreover, very distressing and very costly. What is the reason why some person of your acquaintance never seems to be at ease in other people's company, carrying an appearance of perpetual flutter, and the crimson mounting to the face for no reason at all? That is often a symptom of ill-health; but the ill-health is generally the excess of self-consciousness—a morbid suspicion that every one is observing and pronouncing upon me. It is a great affliction, and very often beyond very much control; but we merely give it you as a sign of self-absorption and a token that there is not enough to depend upon in one's self when the features and the manners of your friend seem to be always "making haste." Apply that doctrine higher up, to the moral and spiritual nature, and you will come at the reasons for instability, for fickleness, for sudden panic, and for half the disorders of the Christian life. (*H. Christopherson.*)

*Unhasting*.—I. THE HASTE SO CONSPICUOUS IN MODERN SOCIETY. 1. In what haste men are to accumulate wealth. 2. How eager to gain public recognition. 3. The same spirit of unwise haste has entered into the Christian Church, and exercises there a baneful influence. II. The haste so conspicuous in modern society ARISES FROM SEVERAL CAUSES. 1. It may spring from ill-regulated ambition. Men are hurried on by impulse and passion, and reason oft yields to desire. 2. There is the haste of rivalry, due to the strain of competition. 3. There is the haste arising from the fear of poverty and the hardships that poverty brings. III. THE EVIL RESULTS ARE PALPABLE AND GRAVE. 1. The injurious effects physically are very obvious. The imperfect development, the impaired vitality of men are due in no small degree to the restless haste and the rapid pace of life. It has been said that nervous diseases, so common in our time and country, "scarcely exist among barbarians and semi-civilised people, and that the primary cause is civilisation, with all its recent accompaniments, the telegraph, the railway, and the periodical press, which continue to draw each year most severely on the nerves of all classes. . . and have intensified in ten thousand ways cerebral activity and worry." The same writer adds, "Our fathers in medicine of the last century, if they could be brought from their graves, would have to be told what we mean by nervousness." Doctors would render yet greater service to humanity if they were, at least occasionally, to ascend the pulpit, and taking as their text "Do thyself no harm," discourse to us from the stores of their experienced observation on the manifold and increasing bodily and mental maladies due to the overstrained activity and feverish haste of society. 2. The intellectual evils of haste are also many and serious. Through the ingenious but misleading theories thrown out in haste, with imperfect knowledge, investigators have been diverted from the right track, and discoveries delayed for many years. "Haste slowly" is wise counsel. In this age of doctrinal unrest, a much-needed counsel is: Be slow to part with the old faiths, be cautious in the acceptance of new doctrines. Close not your eyes to the light, but be ready to receive the truth from whatever quarter it may come. Remember, however, that all is not gold that glitters. 3. The moral evils of haste in the conduct of life also deserve earnest consideration. (1) The loss of opportunity for religious meditation. (2) The developed selfishness due to the ruling spirit of haste. In the common rush for the prizes and pleasures of life, the danger is that every man should think only of himself, and be careless of the claims and comfort of others. Conclusion—1. Believing in God, you will not tremble for the safety of His ark. 2. You will not be in danger of adopting hastily unspiritual methods of doing Christ's work. Tempted to unbelieving haste in the conduct of religious work, let the example of Jesus be remembered. (*A. Cowe, M.A.*) *The characteristic of our times*:—There is a great diversity

of opinion as to the character of the age in which we live. If one set of critics is to be credited, our world is rushing to perdition at an alarming pace. Other observers are sanguine and hopeful. Considering that stir and activity are preferable to stagnation and torpor, these persons see much that is really encouraging in the conflict of opinion, and are inclined to expect the birth of a new and brighter era out of the throes of the period through which we are passing. Our day is one in which men emphatically "make haste." In the passage to which the text belongs, a contrast seems to be drawn between those persons who construct some refuge of their own to protect them from the ills of life, and those others who are willing to avail themselves of that well-built and well-founded house which the Lord God hath provided for them; and then the dismay and disappointment of the one party, when their expectations are found to deceive them, are contrasted with the calm security and confidence of the other. But, we will take up, from the surface of the text, this idea—that if a man believes in God, and trusts in God, and will consent to work on the lines which God has laid down, he will be saved from that restless, worldly agitation of mind which produces so frequently such calamitous results. Let us notice, in one or two particulars, how this desirable state of things will be brought about. I. AS TO TEMPORAL MATTERS. I have been told, that as business-life is constituted now, it is impossible for a man, if he would "hold his own," to act in entire accordance with the dictates of an enlightened conscience; that competition is so keen and risks so great, and the area of labour so crowded, that a man cannot make his footing good without resorting, at least in some matters, to tricks, and evasions, and subterfuges, and misrepresentations, which shock his moral sense, and which he cannot, without much difficulty, persuade himself at first to practise. Now why do men maintain that it is an impossible thing to obey conscience in matters of business? The root lies here—in the want of full belief in God. If I believed that God went partners with the devil in the management of the world, then it would be quite consistent for me to try to appease Satan by acknowledging his co-ordinate authority, and falling in with his ways. But if I believed that God was the Ruler of the universe,—that He was continually working and continually upholding the right,—I should be saved from these sad and painful deviations from the path of rectitude; because I should be perfectly satisfied, that he who did the right, at whatever cost, and left the matter in God's hands, would be sure to be borne harmless in the end. Much of the feverish restlessness of the present day arises from a real, but unavowed and perhaps unconscious distrust of the results of honest, conscientious work. The idea is too frequently entertained, that merely to work does not answer; and that work must be supplemented and made successful by something else. This feeling is, in its root, distrust of God. II. We turn, now, to SPIRITUAL MATTERS. I know that, at a time like this, there must be discussion amongst young men on points affecting the very foundation of our holy religion. But I am not inclined to make the circumstance a subject of unmixed lamentation. "Easily gotten; soon parted with,"—applies to religion as well as to other things. At the same time, I dread that discussion which never seems to get beyond discussion. The purpose for which we are placed in the world is not that we should be for ever asking questions, and raising and solving doubts,—but that we should be living a life. But how can that be accomplished, unless we have fixed principles to start from? Do I wish to be a geometrician? I shall make very little progress if I am perpetually employed in discussing and settling, in arranging and re-arranging my axioms and definitions. And how am I to be advancing with that life which is to be the seed plot of my eternity, if I go on, month after month, year after year, unable to settle anything? Contrast with this vacillation and incertitude the condition of the man who "believeth." When a strain comes upon him, he has not to run helplessly hither and thither, seeking for principles to sustain him in the hour of trial. He has got his principles, and they are ready for use. In other words, he believes in the living God, and therefore he does not "make haste." III. THE MAN WHO BELIEVES IN A LIVING GOD WILL NOT BE FULL OF NERVOUS APPREHENSIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIANITY. Men may break themselves to pieces against the Rock of Ages, but the Rock itself will never move. (*G. Cathrop, M.A.*)

Ver. 17. Judgment also will I lay to the line.—*God's judgments*:—I. The Lord PONDERS, with most exact attention, all the distinctions of characters,

times, and circumstances; all the various motives both to lenity and severity. II. He ACTS in a manner suited to His perfect knowledge. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Mercy and judgment*:—Upon the roses of grace grow the thorns of justice. Whenever the Lord bares His arm for mercy towards believers He gives a back stroke to His enemies. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Privilege and responsibility*:—A great privilege involves a great responsibility. It is a very high favour to see the foundation which God has laid in Zion and to be exhorted to build upon it; but of those who reject that foundation vengeance will be exacted. (*Ibid.*) *Refuges of lies and what will become of them*:—I. THE LORD JUDGING MAN'S REFUGES. He says, "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet." Observe that, however carelessly we may judge ourselves, God will not so judge us. His survey is performed with the utmost accuracy. There are three ways by which we may judge whether our confidences are refuges of lies or not. (1) If they are safe hiding-places they are founded upon Christ. "Behold, I lay in Zion," &c. (2) If our confidence be a right one it comes to us through faith (*ver. 16*). If your hope is grounded upon sight, or feeling, or working, it will one day fail you. (3) A third test seems to me to be proposed in my text. "Judgment will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet." Here, then, is the test of righteousness. If our hope is sound, it is a holy, sanctifying hope, which purges us from sin, and breeds in us all that is true and good. We shall now apply these tests to certain refuges which I am sure will turn out to be refuges of lies. 1. The first is the hope which some men ground upon their own moral goodness. It will not stand trial by the first plummet; it is not based upon the foundation which God has laid. Try the second touch stone as to faith. Your hope is not based on faith in Jesus; you have no faith except in yourself. Moreover, is not this plea of moral goodness a falsehood from top to bottom? Recollect that even if your outward life may have been correct, God regards the heart, and takes account of the inner life. 2. A number of persons make a refuge for themselves out of the notion of fate. This would not endure one of the tests and assuredly not the last, for its tendency is to deny all moral obligation, and hence it is no friend to holiness. It deliberately charges God with the creature's sin, and makes out the sinner to be the injured person. 3. The third shelter of lies which many fly to is a hope based upon novel doctrines. So far as my observation goes, these modern notions go with looseness of life, with worldliness of heart, with decay of prayerfulness, and with backsliding from the living God. 4. We have another brood of men whose refuge is that they make a profession of religion. 5. Let me speak a word concerning certain who have a hope of being saved which does not sanctify them. 6. Some, too, make a refuge of their old experience. A true experience continues and grows day by day. II. PICTURE THE DESTRUCTION OF THESE REFUGES OF LIES. A man has been very comfortable in one or other of these refuges for a good number of years, but at last he is getting old, and is laid aside to think; infirmities are increasing, death is drawing nigh, and he takes a look into the dark future. He finds himself facing an eternal state, and has need of all his confidences and hopes to sustain him. Now, what happens? His spirit undergoes a great storm, and what is the result? Does he dwell in a fortress which defies the hurricane? No, his shelter is so frail that, according to the text, "the hail shall sweep away the refuges of lies." A cold, hard truth falls from Heaven like a hailstone, and crashes right through the glass roof of his false confidence. He looks up astonished, and, lo! another and another forgotten truth descends with like violence and crushes through all opposition till it smites his soul. Down falls all his comfort and peace of mind, as hailstone after hailstone pounds all his hope to pieces. "After all, I never was born again, and the Scripture hath well said, 'Ye must be born again.' I never yielded up my selfishness, and I cannot be saved unless Christ is my King. I did not really close in with Christ and cast my naked soul on Him." Another impressive picture is set before us. "The flood shall overflow his hiding-place." Imagine one who, in the time of Noah's flood, does not choose to enter into the ark, for he does not care to be tied down to God's way of deliverance. He wants a more philosophic way. Besides, he does not care to be cooped up with Noah and a handful of narrow-minded people, who shut themselves in and shut everybody else out. He has broader views, and therefore he has found a shelter on the side of the hill, in a great cave where thousands can assemble, and enjoy a liberty denied them within the pale of the ark. It is utterly preposterous to suppose the flood will ever reach so high as this elevated

cave. After a day or two of extraordinary rain the man would look down from his hiding-place and see the waters covering all the lower area, and creeping up the valleys foot by foot, and he would remark upon the abundance of rain, but scoff at the idea of a general deluge. He would be easy, hoping that the rain would cease, but as it continued he would begin to think, "I may not be quite so safe after all." Imagine his horror when the flood at last fills up the ravine, and creeps up the rocky steep. With cruel lip, seeking his destruction, the water threatens the cave wherein he thought to dwell so safely. At last it penetrates his hiding-place, it climbs to the very roof, it sweeps over his head, and his false confidence has proved his ruin. Such will be the end of all who hide themselves, but hide not in Christ. I will tell you in what fashion this overthrow will come. First, the mirth of the mind is damped with doubt. The man does not feel so easy as he used to be; he is afraid that God's Word may be true, and that things will go amiss with him. Soon the doubt has oozed into his refuge, and become a pool of fear: the man is sadly afraid, and the dread saturates and dissolves all his joy. The truth of God's Word still further comes home to his conscience, and he begins to be more and more alarmed: nor does he continue long in one stay, for he is growingly distressed, the waters are evidently advancing upon him and he cannot escape. He has come to be altogether dismayed, he hardly knows what will become of him; and within a little while, unless God's mercy shall prevent and enable him to find the true shelter, he will be drenched in despair and washed away in terror. At last he cannot believe that there is any salvation possible for him. III. THE LESSON OF WARNING. Let us build on God's foundation. He knows better than we do what is right and safe. (*Ibid.*) *God's careful tests of character*:—An ordinary builder who should be sent to examine a house would probably content himself with hastily looking to see whether the walls were perpendicular, and whether the work was of the quantity and quality specified in the contract; he could tell this pretty nearly with his eye, or by measuring with his foot; but if a very careful and scientific survey was wanted, he would then produce his plummet and his line, and try everything by the regular accepted tests of builder's work: hence our text describes the Lord as laying judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet; that is to say, He makes a deliberate trial of our confidences, compares our hopes with our conduct, our beliefs with the truth, and our expectations with the facts of the case. Oh, that we might have grace to invite such a test at once by praying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts." If the Lord will help us to know ourselves now it will save us from a sad discovery at the last. (*Ibid.*) The hall shall sweep away the refuge of lies.—*Refuges of lies*:—It is very remarkable to what an extent men will deceive themselves on the subject of religion. In connection with this subject, more than any other, we find the most remarkable cases of self-delusion: they are so very remarkable sometimes, as to appear altogether incredible. I. A false refuge in which many indulge is a SELFISH RELIGION. Selfishness in any form is in exact opposition to religion. It makes no difference as to the type which selfishness puts on. The question is, does a man make his own interest the object of pursuit? If so, such conduct is the exact opposite of that benevolence which Christ manifested, when He laid Himself out for the good of mankind and the glory of God. We should love God for what God is, and we should love our neighbours as ourselves. Where there is true religion it will manifest itself in prayer, praise, and obedience. It will manifest itself with respect to God in efforts to please Him, to honour Him, and to glorify Him, and an earnest desire to secure the love, confidence, and obedience of all men. It is not selfishness for a man to have a proper regard for his own salvation; but it is for him to regard his own salvation only, and care not for the salvation of his neighbour. Further, this is the true way for a man to secure his own salvation; by caring for the salvation of others. "Whosoever will save his life," said Christ, "shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it." II. Another refuge of lies to which mankind betake themselves is RELIGIOUS IMPULSE. This is a prevailing form of selfishness. This delusion consists in appealing to the feelings instead of to God's law as developed in the conscience and reason. Such persons as these think themselves very religious, because they feel deeply upon the subject. Let the circumstances subside which excited their feelings, and you see that they have not the root of the matter within them. III. Others have a MERE RELIGION OF OPINION, which is just the opposite of a religion of impulse. These opinions do not mould their lives. IV. Another

refuge of lies is the RELIGION OF SECTARIANISM. V. Another refuge of lies is HAVING REGARD TO WHAT IS OUTWARD, the performance of certain external actions without love to God in the heart. There are a great many men who think themselves very religious because they pay their debts. (*C. G. Finney.*) *Refuges of lies* :—It is certain that, from the time of Adam down to the present day, thousands have taken refuge from the threatenings of God's wrath beneath the lies of the Evil One. I. You say, "If I am elect I shall be saved, do what I may; but if I am not elect I must be damned, do what I will; and, therefore, there is no use in my trying to do anything." Election is not iron fate, but unutterable love. Do you act in this manner about carnal things? A friend invites you to dinner; the table is spread before you. You are asked to sit down. "Stop," you say, "does not God know everything?" "Yes," says your friend. "Well," you say, "God knows whether I shall eat this food or not: so it's all fixed, and I can't alter it; and if I am not to eat that dinner, I cannot eat it, even though I were to try to eat it: whereas, if I am to eat it, I must eat it, even though I were to rise and leave the room and try to go without it; and, therefore, I will sit still and do nothing." Would you reason thus? If not, why say, when God lays the "Bread of Life" before you, "If I am to eat of the Bread of Life, I must, do what I may; if I am not to partake of it, I cannot, do what I will; and, therefore, I will sit still and do nothing"? If Christ does not really offer to save you I have nothing further to say, but you admit He does. II. "I trust in the mercy of God." If that is all your trust it is "a refuge of lies." You answer, Is not God merciful? More merciful than you can conceive, but it will not do to trust in the mere mercy of God. God's mercy will not save you till you are inside the tower of refuge, Christ Jesus. III. "We do the best we can." What! You do the best you can? Then you are safe. If you really have done the best you could to this present hour, you are this moment as safe as the angel Gabriel. But will you solemnly declare that you have never sinned? Ah no! The best thing you can do is to look to what another has done for you, even Jesus! IV. Some are flattering themselves that they believe in Jesus Christ, and are in the road to Heaven, while they are without that faith which alone can save the soul. Let me ask you who say, "I do believe," what it is you believe that can justify you? You say, "I believe that Jesus Christ came into the world to teach us the way to Heaven." So did that young man who came to Christ of old. You answer, "I believe in the great judgment to come." So did Felix, when Paul stood before him "and reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." You answer, "I believe that Jesus was the innocent sufferer for the guilty, and that He is truly the Son of God." So did Judas. You answer, "I believe that Jesus died that He might save sinners, and rose to glory everlasting." So did Ananias and Sapphira. Do you ask, at last, what am I to believe, that I may be saved? What did that dying thief believe who went to Heaven? More than either Judas or Satan. Did he not believe that Jesus was his own Saviour, and did he not confidently trust in Him that He would bear him in everlasting remembrance, and did he not call Him "Lord"? V. "I must wait God's time." The solemn truth is, Christ is waiting for you. Did you ever read His own words? "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Is not that waiting? VI. "We know all this is true, and we mean to turn, but there is time enough yet." Oh, the unreasonableness of your course! Why would you turn by and by? 1. Because Christ beseeches you? And does not He as much beseech you now? And will you not grieve and insult Him by delaying? 2. Because God commands you? And does He not as much command you now? And are you not disobeying and defying Him by delaying? 3. Because danger threatens you? And is not death behind your back even now? (*H. Grattan Guinness.*) *Refuges of lies* :—All men know themselves to be sinners against God. They know also that, as sinners, they are in peril. Hence their anxiety to find some refuge for safety. They know they might find this in the way of forsaking sin and turning to the Lord; but they do not choose to forsake their sins. Hence there seems to be no convenient resource but to hide themselves under some refuge. It is obvious that men who resort to lies for a refuge regard those lies not as lies, but as truth. This fact leads us to raise the primary fundamental question, Have we any rule or standard which will show what is truth, and what is falsehood? Men have countless opinions about religion; how can we determine which are true and which not true? We have an infallible test. Salvation, to be real and available,

must be salvation from sin. Again, if it does not beget prayer, does not unify us with God, and bring us into fellowship and sympathy with Him, it is a lie. If it does not produce a heavenly mind, and expel a worldly mind, it is a lie. Here I must notice an objection. It is said, The Gospel does not, in fact, do for men all you claim. It does not make professed Christians heavenly minded, dead to the world, full of love, joy, and peace. I reply, Here is medicine which, applied in a given disease, will certainly cure. But it must be fairly applied. So with the Gospel. I. I will now proceed to NAME SOME THINGS THAT LACK THIS DECISIVE CHARACTERISTIC. They do not save the soul from sin. 1. An unsanctifying hope of Heaven. 2. An old experience, that is all old. 3. There are two forms of self-righteousness—the legal and the Gospel—both of which are refuges of lies. The legal depends on duty-doing—evermore trying to work out salvation by deeds of law. The Gospel form sets itself to get grace by works. 4. Universalism. II. And now TAKE NOTICE OF WHAT GOD SAYS. “The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place.” This hail is the symbol of God’s displeasure. It is fit that God should be displeased with these refuges of lies. He loves truth too well to have the least sympathy with lies. He loves the souls of men too deeply to have any patience with agencies so destructive. The waters, He declares, shall overflow the hiding-places. Every resort that leaves the soul in sin is a hiding-place. 1. All religious affectation is such, and is nothing better. 2. So of all religious formality—going through the forms of worship, being in the Church, being baptized—what avails it all unless their piety be instinct with life and that life be the soul of real holiness? 3. A great many people hide in the Church. 4. Others hide under the plea of a sinful nature. They are naturally unable to do anything. 5. Some dodge under professors of religion. (C. G. Finney.)

Ver. 20. For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it.—*The short bed and the narrow covering*:—The Jewish beds were only mattresses, laid on the floor; and the cover was a sheet, or carpet, laid over it, in which the person wrapped himself. In this adage, there is an allusion to the condition of one who, being weary and inclined to rest, goes to bed, that he may get refreshing repose. Having betaken himself to a bed that is too short for him, and having got a covering that is too narrow to wrap himself in, he is disappointed of the comfortable rest that he expected to enjoy; and, instead of getting agreeable warmth and refreshment, he becomes cold, restless, and uneasy. This painful state represents the distressed, disappointed condition of those who hide themselves under falsehood and refuges of lies, in order to obtain either temporal or spiritual deliverance. The truth of this aphorism, thus explained, was exemplified in the Jews, who resorted to other expedients for safety than Divine wisdom had ordained, and found all their expectations frustrated. (R. Macculloch.) *The growth of religious conception*:—This proverb of Isaiah about the growth of religious conception has had many applications. Again and again it has happened since Isaiah’s time that the framework of theological theory formed by the intellect has become too narrow for the growing knowledge and spirit of man; and there has followed the discomfort, the strain, the struggle, the stretching or the dissolution of conventional beliefs, and out of them the reconstruction on a larger scale of a theology that somewhat inadequately expresses the actual revelation to man of the Unseen and the Divine. The foundations of religion are ever the same—the elementary force in the heart of man, the sense of weakness, of sin, of fear; the upward reaching of man to the unattainable God, and the blessed shining downwards of God into the heart of man. But the speculations, the imagery, the language of theology have varied with human knowledge, and are varying now before our eyes. (J. M. Wilson, D.D.) *The expansion of the Jewish conception of God*:—It was in Isaiah’s age that, for the first time, the Jews became pressingly conscious of their own littleness compared with the vast nations that pressed on them from either side. They lay between the vast continental empires of Assyria and Egypt, and in the grasp of these great barbaric, almost inhuman forces, they felt themselves as nothing. There was, for the first time, a painful contrast between the political insignificance of the Jews and their boundless pretensions to the favour of Jehovah, the Lord of hosts. They were stricken with terror. But Isaiah was inspired with heavenly wisdom to see that the agony of the terror sprang rather from the theology of the Jews than from the might of their enemies, for their theology was, in brief, this—that Jehovah was the God

of the Jews only, and that the Assyrian was the foe of God. They now saw that he might be the victorious foe. To them the victory of the Assyrian would be the defeat of God and the shattering of their faith, and it seemed inevitable. It was the undivine, the material, relentlessly crushing God that they deemed Divine; it led straight to practical atheism. Now, Isaiah dared to think and to see that God was the God of the Assyrians also, that He wielded their forces in His hand, and that His one supreme aim was righteousness, and not favour to Israel; it was an extension of their theology, beyond what they could bear. It was not only latitudinarian; it was absurd. They ridiculed him and his message, and finally, it is said, they put him to death. But, nevertheless, Isaiah had a vision of a truth which the world has now made its own—that God's providence extends to all mankind, and that no nation and no Church can monopolise God's blessing and protection, and that God has one moral aim only—the growth of righteousness and the coming of His kingdom on earth. He thus extended his conception of God. (*Ibid.*) *Present day need: a larger conception of God:—*The terror of our time to those who feel it is the aggregate of the brute unspiritual powers of nature, whether of human passion or material force, in whose ceaseless whirl man seems to be a mere plaything. Our Assyria is materialism. We may learn from Isaiah how to meet it—not by denying the existence of these forces, or underrating them or their mystery, but by enlarging our conception of God. Perhaps if God would give England an Isaiah now, his message would be the consecration of natural forces, a declaration that all things are working towards a spiritual end for the coming of the kingdom of God. (*Ibid.*) *Expansion in theology and religion:—*We need to expand also our whole conception of theology and of religion, giving it a wider foundation in human nature and in facts, and thus making faith more obviously compatible with intellectual honesty. (*Ibid.*) *The lengthening of the bed,* the widening of the covering, is generally effected without a fracture or a rent. It is altered partly by the infusion of new life and meaning by the spiritual interpretation of what were thought to be physical and scientific statements, partly by the transference of emphasis from worship to life, partly by the ever-varying meaning assigned to old words and old forms. Jehovah did not cease to be Jehovah when the Jews ceased to regard Him as the God of the Jews only. (*Ibid.*) *A word of caution to the enthusiast for an enlarged and scientific theology,* and for what might seem to him a rational religion. It cannot be invented prematurely; it must grow as daylight grows, and this is a very slow and gradual process. (*Ibid.*) *The bed and its covering:—*God has so made men, that there are two things essential for their comfort, if not for their very existence, namely, sleep and clothing. Man's body is, after all, only a picture of his inner being; just what the body needs materially, that the soul needs spiritually. It requires rest, which is pictured to us in sleep. And it needs covering; the naked soul would be unhappy, noxious to the eye of God, and utterly miserable in itself. I. MEN TRY TO MAKE BEDS ON WHICH THEIR SOULS MAY REST. One of the most uncomfortable things in the world, I should think, would be a spare bed—a bed so spare that a man should not have room to stretch himself on it. But that is just the condition of all men while they are seeking a rest anywhere else but in the "rest that remaineth for the people of God."<sup>5</sup> 1. As to the present world, how many beds are there of man's own invention. (1) One man has made himself a bedstead of gold; the pillars thereof are of silver, the covering thereof is of Tyrian purple, the pillows are filled with down, such as only much fine gold could buy him; the hangings he hath embroidered with threads of gold and silver, and the curtains are drawn upon rings of ivory. Lo, this man hath ransacked creation for luxuries, and invented to himself all manner of sumptuous delights. He becomes a merchant prince, a millionaire, and he says unto himself, "Soul, take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry; thou hast much goods laid up for many years." If he makes riches his God, and seeks in them his happiness, you never find the man has money enough, his lands are still too narrow and his estate too small. The soul is wider than creation, broader than space; give it all, it would be still unsatisfied, and man would not find rest. (2) Other men have been ambitious. "Oh," says one, "if I might be famous, what would I not do? Oh, if my name might be handed down to posterity, as having done something, and having been somebody, a man of note, how satisfied would I be!" And the man has so acted, that he has at last made for himself a bed of honour. He has become famous. But did you ever read the history of famous men, or hear them tell their tale in secret? "Uneasy lies the head

that wears the crown,' even though it be the laurel coronet of honour. When the man is known, it is not enough; he asks for wider praise. (3) There is another bed on which man thinks he could rest. There is a witch, a painted harlot, who wears the richest gems in her ears, and a necklace of precious things about her neck. Her name is Madam Wanton. She keeps a house wherein she feasteth men, and maketh them drunken with the wine of pleasure, which is as honey to the taste, but is venom to the soul. This witch, when she can, entices men into her bed. (4) You may have all the vices and pleasure and mirth of this metropolis, and when you have it all, you will find it does not equal your expectation nor satisfy your desires. When the devil is bringing you one cup of spiced wine, you will be asking him next time to spice it higher; and he will flavour it to your fiery taste, but you will be dissatisfied still, until at last, if he were to bring you a cup hot as damnation, it would fall tasteless on your palate. Now think of the Christian, and see the picture reversed. In the Christian religion there is a rest that no one can enjoy elsewhere. And now let me stretch myself upon this bed. Let me think of the largest desire that heart ever had, and I find it not at all greater than this bed. I pant to be God's child, I have it here. I pant to be rich to all intents of bliss, I have the promise here, and I shall have the fruition of it hereafter. I long for perfection. Is not that a stretch indeed? And that I have, "perfect in Christ Jesus." 2. Now, think of this bed in the sense of another world. And here we may say of all the sinner's hope, that it is a bed shorter than that he can stretch himself upon it. Let conscience strain you, let death put you on the rack, and pull you out a little, and the bed is not long enough for you. You are uneasy. There is no man who has a solid peace, a perfect satisfaction in his own mind, but the man who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, trusts Him entirely for his soul's salvation, and puts his hopes and his expectations only in the Lord his God. II. MEN MUST HAVE A COVERING. And here we are told that there are some people who make a covering, but it is narrower than they can wrap themselves in it. There is one garment that never is too narrow, though the sinner be the hugest sinner that ever trod this earth, and that is the perfect righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The short bed and its scanty covering*.—You can hardly imagine a more unpleasant position for a man to find himself in. A traveller has just come a long journey, weary, footsore, cramped; he longs for "tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep." On reaching his bed, however, he finds it altogether inadequate for purposes of rest. Man has been so constituted by his Almighty Creator that sleep and clothing are essential to his existence. Angels, for aught we know to the contrary, may be eternal watchers, sleepless workers. "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." It is otherwise with man. He must sleep or die. Inability to sleep has often been the punishment inflicted by the Almighty Avenger upon the murderer, as foretaste of the pains of hell. Between him and placid sleep a great gulf has been fixed. Pausanias, from the hour Cleonice fell pierced by his sword, is a haunted man. "Sleep no more," is the dread fiat of Him who maketh inquisition for blood. The spectre of his victim, says the historian, disturbed him every night. Now, as every reader of the Bible knows well, God has seen fit to illustrate and set forth the needs of the soul by referring to the well-known wants and necessities of the body. Therefore, just as man's corporeal frame needs sleep and clothing, so the soul, the spiritual part of man, needs rest and covering, without which it can be neither happy nor safe. The prophet's complaint in the context is not that man seeks for these things if haply he may find them, but seeks for them in wrong places, and in wrong ways—fashions for himself beds which are too short to give him comfortable repose, and weaves coverings which are too narrow to conceal his spiritual nakedness. Favour me with your company while I walk forth and watch some of these spiritual bedmakers. We have not gone very far before our steps are arrested by the spectacle of a man who is fashioning for himself a golden bed. A very splendid piece of workmanship it is, and we can hardly wonder at the incredulous look and compassionate smile with which the maker turns upon us when we whisper, Too short, you'll never be able to find soul rest there! Solomon lay in just such a bed as that, and he tossed and rolled from side to side, exclaiming, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." Over the front of this bed is written a text out of the Bible: "Money answereth all things." Wait a moment: the splendid piece of upholstery is just receiving its finishing touch, the owner will



lie down on it presently, and we shall hear what he thinks of his work. Hush! what is that you say, sir? No rest, no peace! Sleep is a shy goddess, which all this magnificence cannot woo. Do you really mean to tell us that you slumbered more peacefully and soundly when, a poor apprentice lad, you lay beneath the counter of your master's shop, ere you had heaped up all these thousands of gold and silver? Ay, ay, he says, it is even so. Oh, replies one of my hearers, I think I should be happy and satisfied if I only had a little more. Keep the wolf of poverty at a respectable distance from my door, give me all the necessaries of life, and a few of its comforts, and I should be as happy as the day is long. I must be rude enough to contradict you; you would not, you do not know yourself. If your affections and desires are of the earth, earthy, you would find your appetite growing with every fresh indulgence. The human heart is like the horse-leech, ever crying, Give, give. "Did you not assure me that your ambition would be satisfied with a revenue of one hundred thousand crowns?" said Charles the Ninth, to a lordly abbot who was begging further preferment. Having been already made Bishop of Auxerre, Grand Almoner of France, and holder of numerous rich abbacies, the king thought his greed was inexcusable. How suggestive the reply of the insatiable pluralist: "True, sire, but there are some appetites which grow as you feed them." Oh, here is another dainty-looking couch, it belongs to the man of ambition, worldly ambition. This man is an enemy to all greed and avarice. He says public opinion serves the money grubber right, when it fixes on him the stigma of miser, which, being interpreted, is wretch. Thank God, he says, I can give, and spend, and lend. The accursed thirst for gold has not struck its fangs into me. No, this man despises money, but he pants for fame. Oh, he says, that I could become famous. If my name were only handed down to posterity as the great —, I should be satisfied. He thirsts for fame as the fever-stricken patient thirsts for the cool refreshing fountain. Well, after a while his wish is granted. The world gladly prepares his bed of honour, and bids her favourite lie down and rest. But, lo! the thorns are there. "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown," although it be the laurel coronet of honour and worldly fame. Oh, he says, these thorns, they pierce to the very quick—let me return to my original obscurity. I can get no rest here, the bed is too short, the covering is too narrow! Let them pursue the history of Alexander the Great; the life of Napoleon Buonaparte, of whom it was said by a companion in arms, when at the very zenith of his prosperity, "He has gained everything, and yet he is unhappy"; the life of Cardinal Wolsey, whose advice to Cromwell might well have been, as our great poet represents it, "I charge thee, fling away ambition. By that sin fell the angels; how can man then, the image of his Maker, hope to win by it?" and whose dying regret was that he had not served his God as faithfully as he had served the king who had forsaken him, and left him to die unhonoured and unwept. The truth is, the soul cannot live upon the incense of human applause any more than the body can exist upon the fumes of smoking frankincense. But look once more. See this pretty and, one would think, sleep-enticing couch, the bed of worldly pleasure. There are men who despise saving and hoarding, nor do they care to climb the slippery ladder of earthly fame. The cares of popularity are not for them. But they are seeking rest too, and they hope to find it in the pleasures of the world. "Let us eat and drink," is their maxim, "for to-morrow we die." "A short life, and a merry one," is their motto. Let us have our fill of pleasure. Let the most successful pleasure-seekers relate their experience. Suppose we take the evidence of the celebrated Chesterfield. He was no fox crying sour grapes because the fruit was out of his reach. Probably a more fortunate man, so far as this world is concerned, never lived. He was high-born, wealthy, and honoured. In almost everything he undertook he was successful. He was one of the most brilliant speakers in the House of Lords, a most accomplished gentleman, and one of the best scholars of the day. He had troops of friends, honours were showered upon him, ribbons, royal approbation, and diplomatic appointments. Prime ministers honoured him as the ablest of their supporters; princesses and peeresses gave him their smiles, and called him the greatest of men. In all history there is no greater instance of worldly success. All that the world could give of pleasure—he had good measure, shaken together, pressed down, and running over—men poured into his bosom. Did he find rest on this sumptuous couch? Hear his own testimony. "I have recently read Solomon with a kind of sympathetic feeling. I have been as wicked and vain, though not as wise, as he; but I feel the truth of his reflection, 'All

is vanity and vexation of spirit.' I have been behind the world's gaudy scenes, have smelt the tallow candles, and seen all the clumsy machinery by which the raree-show is worked, and the spectators deceived; I have no desire to repeat the nauseous dose." "I have tried both services, God and the world," said Captain Hedley Vicars, who perished gallantly leading on his regiment in the war with Russia. "For twenty-four years I lived under the yoke of sin. The retrospect of my past life is now miserable to me, and yet I thought and called it a life of pleasure. The very name, when applied to sin, makes my heart sicken; even then I could never enjoy reviewing the occupations of a single day." All who have tried this daintily spread couch assure us that soul rest comes not there. Is there a couch in all this wide world whereon man, wearied, deceived, disappointed, can find repose? There is a bed on which the sinner, were he as tall as the pole, and as broad as the earth, could not fail to find rest. Rest and peace are only to be found in God. In that dread yet sweet name is found the answer to man's sin, man's sorrow, and man's yearnings after something better, truer, and holier. Believe me, you will find that rest nowhere else. What a comfort it must be to stretch one's self upon this bed and to feel that all is well, for time and for eternity. (*W. H. Langhorne.*) *Delusive expectations*:—A proverb contains a soul of truth for every age and people. The words apply to—**I. THE WORLD'S OFFERS OF SATISFACTION TO MAN'S NATURE. II. FALSE CONFIDENCES. 1. Self.** In the expression "self-help" there is much that is commonly suggestive; but when it comes to religious interests we may soon make mistakes. Sin is too much for a man. **2. Mere formal religion.** **3. Comparison with others.** "Common sins I shudder at; the self-indulgent, disgraceful life of many I hate. I love culture; am a good husband—wife—sister—brother." God looks at the heart. **III. SELF-EXCUSES. 1. Temptation was so subtle and my nature weak.** Remember, the key of the door is inside. You must consent. Did you pray? **2. I was surrounded by bad examples and influences.** But were there no times when conscience corrected and truth attracted? no means by which you may have been fortified? **3. I have no time for piety.** If piety consisted in a succession of onerous duties this plea might stand. But it is the spirit of a life, the heart centred in Christ. **4. I have no power for self-renewal.** Have you availed yourself of impressions; allowed the attractions of Christ on your heart? **IV. VAIN HOPES. 1. After all, it may be otherwise than preachers say.** Will a man be so mad as to trust his life to a peradventure? **2. I may feel more inclined as I advance in life.** Are you likely to do so in resistance of impressions? **3. I may repent at the last.** That is, you will sin no more when you have no more power to sin. May not accident or disease suddenly overtake you? Can any one who has a spark of generosity or right feeling think such conduct a fit return to Christ? (*G. M' Michael, B.A.*)

Ver. 22. **Be ye not mockers.**—*A warning to mockers*:—Enough is recorded in the chapter before us to justify this serious admonition. **I. A SOLEMN WARNING.** "Be ye not mockers." **1. Are there no mockers in our religious assemblies? Let us pursue the inquiry.** God has given us His Word; but how is that Word regarded? (1) The Word of God denounces threatenings. But if no rousing effect is produced, can it be that the awful sentence is believed? Faith invariably produces an effect corresponding with the nature of the truth it receives: a consolatory truth yields comfort, an alarming truth creates dread; if then, by the threatenings of the Bible, you are not excited to "flee from the wrath to come," and "warned to escape the damnation of hell," how is it accounted for? Are ye not "mockers"? (2) This Word is also enriched with promises. How are these promises regarded? When the message of grace is disregarded; when its joyful tidings are heard with unconcern; when no need of the Saviour is felt, no desire of His salvation indulged; what does it prove? Are ye not "mockers"? (3) The Bible contains, likewise, a variety of precepts. But if unfeeling selfishness be the temper we cherish; if fraud and extortion be the practices we allow; if "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life" be the element we love, are we not mockers? (4) In this Holy Book sin is severely censured. But are there not persons to be found who make light of this malignant, destructive evil? **2. Who can utter the egregious folly of this? Fools mock, while God frowns.** They mock at that which cast angels down from Heaven, which excluded Adam from paradise, and which spread disorder through all the works of creation. They mock at that which is the spring of all the miseries of man—

at that which is their own disease and disgrace—at that which procures their own death, which kindles the flames of hell. As many as are guilty of this deepest folly mock at all the sorrows and suffering of the compassionate Redeemer. Can you wonder at this earnest expostulation, this solemn and faithful warning? **II. A POWERFUL ARGUMENT** to enforce the warning. It is founded on the danger which evidently attends the indulgence of this evil, and is well adapted to interest and affect the mind. “Be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong.” It implies that mockers are in “bands,” already in a state of bondage. And what is this bondage? They are “tied and bound with the chain of their sins.” Now the danger is, perpetuating this bondage; so securing the cords, and riveting the fetters, as that destruction becomes inevitable. In tracing the fatal progress of this danger, observe—1. The sin against which you are warned weakens every virtuous restraint. 2. The sin of mocking strengthens vicious propensities. This naturally results from the relaxing of restraints: as the one declines, the other gains ground. 3. This sin gives great advantage to your worst enemies. Among these are improper companions. Every compliance you grant only emboldens their demands and facilitates their conquest. But there is a worse enemy than these: “the spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience.” Resist him, and he will flee from you; but invite his attacks, by parleying with temptation, and you inevitably fall—“your bands are made strong.” 4. It exposes to peculiar marks of the displeasure of God. 5. It terminates in remediless ruin. **III. We attempt an IMPROVEMENT** of the subject, by recommending the opposite of what is reprovèd in the text. (*T. Kidd.*) *Mocking* the messengers of the Lord was Jerusalem’s measure-filling sin. (*M. Henry.*) **Lest your bands be made strong.**—*Growing bands*:—In the tropical forests of South America, where everything climbs, and everything seeks to overcome everything else, there is a curious class of plants, to which the natives give the name of lianas or bush-ropes. They are creeping plants, and twine round large trees in order to be lifted up above the dense mass of vegetation into the pure air and bright sunshine overhead. The lianas do not belong to the same family of plants; often there are great differences between their leaves and flowers; but they have this peculiarity in common, that they all climb round certain trees to reach the full, unbroken sunshine above the billowy top of the forest. When the seed of one of them, say the one known to the natives as the Sipo Matador, or Murderer Liana, is dropped by the wind or by a bird at the foot of a tree that is suitable, it begins to grow at once. At first it sends forth a slender, thread-like stem, that leans upon the tree for support. At this stage it is soft and brittle, and looks like a vein of sap flowing and hardening as it flows, and a child’s finger could snap it across with ease. But as it grows and lengthens it becomes thicker and tougher, and twines itself round the tree like a strongly twisted cable, composed of several strands. Its grasp of the tree becomes tighter the older it grows; and by and by the tree becomes strangled by its thick bands, which it would require an axe to cut. The leaves of the poor victim wither and fall off, the veins cannot circulate the sap through the branches, and thus it slowly dies and becomes a mere mass of dry, rotten wood, still clasped by its cruel enemy, which flourishes, green and vigorous, upon its decay. Ephraim was the noblest of the tribes of Israel. But it suffered certain evil habits to grow around it. It indulged in idolatry, and covetousness, and drunkenness. And these evil habits, which might at first have been given up without any great difficulty, became at last so strong that they could not be broken, and completely bound and enslaved the people. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*)

Vers. 23-29. The ploughman.—*The parable of the ploughman and the thresher*:—1. The general drift of the parable is obvious. The husbandman does not for ever vex and wound the tender bosom of the earth with the keen edge of the ploughshare or the sharp teeth of the harrow. He ploughs only that he may sow; he harrows the ground only that he may produce a level and unclodded surface on which to cast his seeds. And when he sows, he gives to every seed its appropriate place and usage. He scatters the dill and strews the cummin broadcast; but the wheat he sets, according to the Oriental fashion, in long rows, and the barley in a place specially marked out for it, so marked as to exclude the borders of the field: and here, along the edges of the field, where it is most likely to be bitten or trampled by passing beasts, he sows the less valuable spelt. And this he does because God has given him discretion. Is God, then, less wise than the

husbandman whom He has taught? So, again, when the harvest is gathered in, the wise husbandman still varies and adapts his means to his end. He does not go on threshing "for ever"; his single aim is to separate the chaff from the wheat, to save as much of the grain as he can, and to save it in the best condition he can, that it may be gathered into his garner. And he thus varies his modes of treatment, and adapts them to the several kinds of seeds, because God has given him sagacity and wisdom. Will God, then, who gave the husbandman this sagacity, be less observant of time and measure? Will He crush and waste the precious grain of His threshing-floor? 2. Nor is the historical application of the parable difficult to recover. Isaiah had to warn and admonish the chosen nation at a period in which they were utterly corrupt, when the judges took bribes and the priests mocked at the Word of the Lord, and the very prophets saw "lying visions," or pretended to see them, and the people had made a covenant with Death and Hades. He had to threaten them with disaster on disaster. So corrupt were they, however, that they made a jest of him for his fidelity to their King and God. In their drunken carousals the priests and prophets mimicked and burlesqued the simplicity and directness of his speech, and turned his warnings into a theme for laughter and derision. But even in this godless and scoffing age there was a "remnant" faithful among the faithless, who were true to God and to the Word which He sent by the prophet. Were they to be consumed in the fire of the Divine indignation against the popular sins? Or, if they were preserved, were they to stand by and see the elect nation destroyed out of its place? Was there no hope for them? none even for the nation at large? There was hope; and that they might see it and be sustained by it in the cloudy and dark day of judgment, Isaiah discloses to them, in his parable, the secret of the Divine administration, namely, that judgment is mercy, and that it prepares the way for a mercy more open and full than itself. But the prophet has a message to the faithful remnant, as well as to the nation at large. And to them his message is, that even the good grain must be threshed, that even those who are faithful to Jehovah must share in the judgments which are about to fall on the entire nation. They cannot be exempted from the misery of the time; they must suffer, as for their own sins, so also for the sins of their neighbours. But this is their comfort, that the Divine Husbandman measures out His strokes with wisdom and grace. God is but separating that which is good in those whom He loves from that which is evil and imperfect in them; and, even in this process of separation, He will not lay upon them more than they are able to bear. 3. So that, in this parable, the mystery of the Divine providence is laid open, its secret disclosed. All ploughing is for sowing; all threshing is intended for the preservation of the grain. When God chastens us, it is not because He means to destroy us, but because He has set His heart on saving us, because He has appointed us to life and not to death. Nor are the ordinances and chastenings of His providence arbitrary and without discrimination. He employs various methods, sends "sorrows of all sorts and sizes," that He may adapt Himself to every man's needs, and to all our varieties of place, time, and circumstance. "Cure sin and you cure sorrow," say the reason and conscience of the world: and the sorrow comes that the sin may be cured, adds the prophet; the very miseries that spring from evil are intended to eradicate the evil from which they spring. It was in the strength of this sublime conception of the ministry of pain and sorrow that the Hebrew prophets met the terrible miseries they were called to endure and behold. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *The spiritual sower*.—A knowledge of agriculture is almost essential to the right appreciation of many portions of the Bible. I. THE PROCESS OF SOWING IMPLIES A SOIL PREPARED FOR THE SEED. The reception of the Gospel implies preceding thought, reflection, and resolution; which may be beautifully and characteristically expressed by the agricultural term, cultivation. II. THE PROCESS OF SOWING IMPLIES SEED ADAPTED TO THE SOIL. There is a variety of seed mentioned in the text, and modern as well as ancient agriculture verifies the truth of the prophet's description. 1. Let the seed for the mind be marked as with a seal. As the ancients chose the best of their crops for seed, so let the truths selected for the mind be of the highest and holiest description. 2. Let the seed for the mind be varied. The Word of God, independent of other sources, furnishes a great variety of truths to suit the soul in every conceivable state. And the same truth is set forth in many different ways, and couched under many different figures, to fit all descriptions of minds. III. THE PROCESS OF SOWING IMPLIES A SUITABLE SEASON. Men do not sow at all times. "There's

is a time to sow, and a time to reap." So there is a season for sowing the good seed of the kingdom. Life is that season. IV. THE SOWING PROCESS IMPLIES SKILL AND FAITH. All are sowers in the moral sense. Some, however, are not skilful sowers; and what an abundance of seed they destroy! They have great privileges, high immunities, transcendently overtowering those of their fellow-men; and yet it is to be feared they will reap but a poor harvest. But it is delightful to know, that others, with few privileges, and comparatively few opportunities, are sowing in their own minds, and the minds of others, the seeds of truth; and by their skilful sowing will reap a great harvest of future glory. (*A. Gray, M.A.*)

*The discreet ploughman.*—The drift of these words is to comfort God's children in afflictions; and, because when one is sorrowful, weak, taken up and overpressed with grief, we are then unfit and incapable of instruction, the anguish of the suffering destroying our attention, He therefore says, doubling it four times, "Give ye ear," "hear My voice," "hearken ye," and "hear My voice"; wherein He insinuates that the matter He is about to deliver requires attention. 1. The only way to quiet one's heart, and pacify one in all distresses, is to hearken what God says. (1) Because God's Word will work faith, which does purify the heart, overcome the world, and quench the fiery darts of Satan. (2) It will teach a man wisdom, whence and why it comes, and that struggling with God is in vain, and that in so doing we shall have the worse. (3) It will be a means to work patience in the heart. (4) It will make us go to God and pray, and prayer will bring comfort and ease to the heart ere long. 2. All God's children must be ploughed. 3. God will make a sweet and seasonable end of afflicting His children. He doth correct us for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 4. When the Lord hath made us plain, and hath filled us with hearts to receive good seed, then is the time of rest. 5. When God hath humbled us by His Word, then He will furnish and arm us with His Word, and enable us with strength that way. Many heaths do meet with streams and floods of water, and yet are nothing the better nor more fruitful; but God's arable, the saints, are ploughed and instructed, as the Psalmist speaks: "Blessed is the man whom Thou correctest, and teachest in Thy law," &c. To have the one without the other is nothing, and does no good, but when correction and teaching go together, then one sees all the good of affliction, and why God sent it upon him. 6. Skill in husbandry is the gift of God; wisdom must come from Him. 7. All God's grain needs threshing and ploughing, and as they need it, so they shall have it. 8. The best grain shall have the sorest trial and hardest pressure. The fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, but are beaten with a staff; neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin, but beaten with a rod; but the wheat must have the wheel go on it. The meaning is an allusion unto that manner of the ancient Jews in treading their wheat, as appears by that precept: "Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox or the ass that treadeth down thy corn" (Deut. xxv. 4), for then the oxen, drawing a wheel over the wheat, did so bruise it, but not break it. 9. God Almighty knows best, and He appoints what shall be the means, time, and measure of the trials of His children. 10. God, in the chastisements, trials, and afflictions of His elect, hath wonderful wisdom and power beyond our understanding. He knows not only which is the best way to lead us to Heaven, but also He is excellent in working, to bring His counsel to pass. See it in examples. As in Joseph, appointed to be the greatest, save Pharaoh, in all Egypt. So David, after he was anointed king, in a state of honour and all pomp and pleasure, how was he vexed and ploughed with many crosses! 11. Nothing can stay Him from working, to hinder our comfort and deliverance in due time. Why? Because He is "the Lord of hosts," and all the creatures must do what He wills. (*R. Sibbes, D.D.*)

*The voice of God in the tillage of the field.*—The Scriptures are full of the fresh air of the country; it is easy to see that many of the writers of them were country people, or, if not, at least went about the world with their eyes open, and had a keen interest in those matters of the street and the field that make up the life of the people. When Moses described the Land of Promise to the Israelites it was a husbandman's description that he gave of it. It was "a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olives and honey." The Psalmists looked out upon the open face of nature, and saw in it a world eloquent of God—the dew and the rain, the valleys and the hills, the lilies and the cedars spake of Him. He made the earth soft with showers, and blessed the springing thereof. One prophet describes the evil case of the people in this way: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we

are not saved." Another calls the same people to repentance: "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap according to mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you." The great Lord Himself, standing in the midst of His works, bade men "consider the lilies of the field," and in His doctrine said, "Behold, a sower went forth to sow." And when Isaiah, in the words before us, draws out a detailed account of the operations of husbandry, in order to drive home lessons in Divine things, he was well within a long line of precedents. (*E. Medley, B.A.*) *God's processes of moral and spiritual husbandry*:—I. THERE IS AN ELEMENT OF TIMELINESS IN GOD'S WORKING. "Doth the ploughman plough continually to sow? Doth he continually open and break the clods of his ground?" That is, is the man always at one thing, for ever engaged in one line of work? Is there not order, is there not succession, are there not appointed seasons? Men do not plough at midsummer, and reap at Christmas. There is a time, a day, an hour, and the careful husbandman, who would make the most of his opportunity, must submit to this element of timeliness. He must have his spells of hard work, and his days of comparative inaction. And herein he is not exceptional, this tidal system holds good in all spheres. Is it not so very evidently in the general life of man? Is there not there a sowing-time, a most blessed spring-tide; is there not a period of watching and waiting, and anxious carefulness, and then, by and by, the harvest? Ay; and when the spring-time is neglected, then by no effort, and by no tears, can the loss be retrieved. It is so in the life of the spirit. Looking at the facts as we find them, and they are of God, is there not the element of timeliness there? There are tides of the Spirit; seasons when repentance and faith are easy; seasons when Heaven seems very near to this world, and by a step we find ourselves in the presence of Christ. There are days of the Son of Man, the dew sparkles upon the grass, the sun rises without clouds, and sheds a tender light. God and Christ, indeed, are no more real, no more actual than they always are, but they are more real to us. And then all is different, we come into another world. But what are all these facts of life but so many expressions of the higher fact, that there is an element of timeliness in the working of God Himself? The urgent lesson from this fact is this—let us work while we work, let us catch the opportunity on the wing. II. THERE IS AN ELEMENT OF VARIETY IN GOD'S WORKING. Through multiplied detail does the prophet enforce this fact. Different sorts of seed are sown in a different fashion. And a like variety obtains when the harvesting comes; one is dealt with after this manner and another after that. And has not the Creator therein given us a visible example of the methods He pursues in that great field wherein He is the husbandman, and we are the husbandry? He has no fear of precedent, He works out His end in every variety of method. The life of Christ, as that stands recorded in the Gospels, supplies the confirming illustration! Run over in your thought His dealings with Nathanael, and Peter, and Thomas, and John. See how He handled Nicodemus and Mary of Bethany. He cast truth into their minds in a different way, and wrought for the spiritual harvest just as variously. From all of which there comes the Divine voice that bids us, above all things, be simple, be natural, not striving after another type and style of experience than that which is our own. If we are true to ourselves and to our God, we shall have our own experience, that which for us is most fitting and the best. III. GOD'S WORKING IS A PROCESS. Your parable is full of method, of succession, of processes. And every ploughing-time, every sowing, and every reaping, are but visible examples of what happens in the higher field of God's activity in the spirits of men. Conscience grows, character grows; light comes slowly, there is dawn, twilight, the mellow morning, and the golden day. There is no antagonism between nature and grace, between God speaking in nature and God speaking in the life and death of His Son. (*Ibid.*) *Physical husbandry the effect and emblem of Divine teaching*:—I. THAT PHYSICAL HUSBANDRY IS THE EFFECT OF DIVINE TEACHING. How did man come to know that by depositing a seed in a soil which had been dressed after a certain fashion, that solitary seed would produce thirty, sixty, or a hundred-fold? We are familiar with the operation now, and the wonderfulness does not strike us; but, antecedently, nothing seems to us more marvellous. Whence, then, came this great agricultural truth? It is not innate, nor of necessary discovery. The text gives the most satisfactory answer: "His God doth instruct him." The point suggested, and which we wish to insist upon, is, that all true secular ideas, as well as spiritual, are from God. Christians refer true

ideas of worship to God, but not true ideas of commerce, agriculture, navigation, medicine, architecture, and the like. In fact, they do not regard God as having much to do with the practical mind of this working world. 1. Our position is suggested by *à priori* reasoning. One might justly infer that He who gave us an organisation, which so connects us with the material world as to render a certain course of conduct indispensable to our physical well-being, would give us some ideas to guide us in the matter, and the more so when we remember that the welfare of the soul itself greatly depends upon the condition of the body. 2. Our position is sustained by Scripture. There are specific examples in the Bible, of God's condescending to teach men secular work, such as the building of the ark and the tabernacle, and the passages are numerous which imply that God acts upon the general mind of mankind. 3. Our position is implied in the doctrine of providence. How does God interpose on behalf of men now? Not miraculously, but by giving us directing ideas. A good man is brought to a painful crisis in his business. He is filled with anxiety. One step will decide his commercial fate. What will help him? A true directing idea would dispel his darkness and clear his path. Or, a government is brought to a solemn crisis in its history. The fate of nations depends upon the next act. How can providence help it at that moment? By suggesting an idea that will reveal the true and safe path. Ideas are our guides in all the labyrinth walks of life, and all our true ones come from God. This doctrine should lead us—(1) To recognise God in all the true developments of mind. (2) To seek His aid in all secular undertakings. II. THAT PHYSICAL HUSBANDRY IS THE EMBLEM OF DIVINE TEACHING. The prophet here describes the operations of the husbandman in order to illustrate God's method of training humanity. Two thoughts are here implied—

1. That moral fruitfulness is the great end of God's dealings with man. What is moral fruitfulness? Right heart-qualities (Gal. v. 22, 23). 2. That to realise this end, God employs a variety of instrumentalities. Does not this subject impress us with the divinity of life? Man is the organ of Divine thought, and the object of Divine operation. Away with all frivolous ideas of life! Life is solemn and sacred. We are ever in close connection with the Infinite: He besets us "behind and before." (*Homilist*). *Breaking clods*.—I. THE VARIOUS WAYS IN WHICH GOD DEALS WITH HIS PEOPLE. 1. He ploughs the ground, *i.e.*, He breaks up the hard, natural heart. For this purpose He employs—(1) The terrors of the law. (2) Judgments in providence. 2. The second process is harrowing. "Doth He open and break the clods of His ground? When He hath made plain the face thereof," &c. The object is to bring the ploughed ground into such a condition as will best secure the proper reception of the seed. There are many clods in the human heart, too, which need to be broken. (1) The clod of prejudice. (2) Of pride. 3. The third process is that of sowing the seed. 4. The threshing. In order that the Christian may become useful as well as fit for Heaven, affliction is necessary. II. THE SKILL DISPLAYED IN THESE VARIOUS OPERATIONS. 1. The skill is not expressly referred to in connection with the ploughing. But it may nevertheless be seen. Farmers know that there is such a thing as ploughing too deep, and also ploughing too shallow. In the one case the gravel may be reached and turned up to the surface, and so render the seed to be afterwards sown comparatively useless. Or, the too cold soil may be turned up, and thus the seed sown will perish. In the other case, the proper depth of the soil is not reached, and the crop will therefore be but a thin and sickly one. So it is with God in His dealings with His people. Some natures need to be thoroughly aroused, some hearts to be opened up to their very depths, in order that the Word may take root and bring forth fruit. No superficial work will do here. And although God's messengers may and often do err, God Himself never will, for "He is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." Again, other natures need to be dealt with in a different way. They require to be dealt with gently and lovingly, and the wise Husbandman acts accordingly. 2. But the skill of the farmer is referred to in this passage in connection with the sowing of the seed. Different soils require different kinds of seed, if there is to be a good crop. So does God act too. Some souls need doctrine, others history. Some need words of Divine love and pity, others the Divine warnings and threatenings. 3. The skill of the farmer is seen, too, in employing different kinds of threshing instruments for the different kinds of grain. So also does God deal with His people. Some need only a comparatively light affliction, their natures being of such a kind that treatment of a different kind would utterly overwhelm them.

and drive them to despair. Others need to be put into the furnace seven times heated. And it is to be observed that as the bread corn, or most precious material, gets as it were the roughest treatment, so it is God's choice ones that are subjected to the greatest trials. (*D. Macaulay, M.A.*) *Inspiration in common life* :—

Observe—I. How GOD GUIDES THE LOWLIEST OF HIS CHILDREN IN ALL THE AFFAIRS OF THEIR WORLDLY LIFE. Why should we be surprised to read of inspiration in common life? 1. It arises from the fact that we distinguish between intellectual life and vulgar life, and exclude God from the latter. Inspiration is not limited to the world of scholars, scientists, painters, and musicians; God is equally in the so-called vulgar world, giving the lowliest toiler mastery in all that relates to his sphere of life. The vulgar world is vulgar no more. The whole world of human duty is one kingdom, the working out of one Divine purpose. 2. Because of our habit of distinguishing between influential life and insignificant life, and excluding God from the latter. We are not surprised to hear of God inspiring princes; it seems quite in order when God gives to Solomon supernatural enlightenment. But the ploughman seems utterly insignificant, his affairs so few and simple. But is the ploughman so utterly insignificant? The fact is, he is one of the most important characters in the world: if things go wrongly with him, they go wrongly with us all. We might do without a king; we could not do without a ploughman. 3. Because of our habit of distinguishing between sacred life and secular life, and excluding God from the latter. We readily think of God inspiring the prophet and the priest. Yet the passage before us makes us feel that the ploughman's realm is not less spiritual than that of the prophet. II. How GOD GUIDES THE LOWLIEST OF HIS CHILDREN IN ALL THE AFFAIRS OF THEIR INNER LIFE. There is a great spiritual nature in the lowliest of men. We have heard of the epitaph once put over a peasant: "Only a clod." I do not know whether that epitaph was written in a pathetic or in a cynical temper, but it was really very full of suggestion. What wonderful things are in a clod! All possibilities of music, colour, light, fragrance, are there. "So you think you know what a clod is, do you?" archly asks Schopenhauer. Indeed, we do not. It will astonish you on the morning of the resurrection to see what God will bring out of that clod. And God is ever ready to guide and save His lowly children. He makes them to know the deepest truths of revelation and spiritual life (*Matt. xi. 25, 26*). All through life God continues the same gracious guidance. "The Lord preserveth the simple." (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *Agriculture* is the most ancient of all pursuits, for Adam was a gardener, Cain a farmer, Abel a herdsman, and Cain did not go to live in a city or attempt to build one until after he had committed his great crime. It is not only the most ancient, but also the most necessary, and all other pursuits could be more readily spared than this. The most careless observer who walks through an agricultural show must be forcibly struck with the great importance of agriculture. All kinds of inventions, yea, almost all sciences, are consecrated to this pursuit—the products of the mine, the forest, the quarry, the hammer, forge, saw, and engine have been pressed into its service. How many kinds of toilers and artisans have brought their inventions and labour to make tilling the ground profitable? How many sciences wait reverently upon husbandry? For it geology ransacks the bowels of the earth; chemistry proclaims what nutriment certain plants absorb from soil, and what enrichment certain alkalies will give; botany collects her varied grasses to make possible the permanent pasture, on the principle of the survival of the fittest; astronomy smiles on it, and causes the sun to do more for its prosperity than any king, however gracious, and the clouds more than any landlord, however beneficent. (*F. Standfast.*) *The value of agricultural labour* :—How foolish and sinful it is for those who possess wealth acquired by the toil of others, and who are designated independent, to despise or oppress those on whose humble toil they are indeed most dependent. What would be the value of the broad acres, if left without culture? It is the toil of the peasant which makes them productive, and which wrings from the soil those ample revenues that sustain the proprietor in luxurious ease. Of what benefit would be those pieces of silver, gold, or paper which we call cash, without indefatigable industry producing the necessaries and comfort which money brings? Would shillings and sovereigns satisfy the cravings of hunger? No more than molten gold could assuage thirst. The painter must lay down his brush and palette, the poet his pen, the philosopher suspend his experiments, and the voice of the orator be dumb, the jewelled crown become a worthless bauble, the most stately palace



become a region of desolation, but for the labour of the agriculturist and fisherman. (*Ibid.*) *Interdependence of the man of leisure and the son of toil*:—Labour is the foundation on which the mighty fabric of human society rests, and none but the vain, proud, and foolish will overlook their obligation to the toilers. Acknowledged reciprocity of advantage should bind all classes together in one strong common bond of mutual support; for if the man of leisure is dependent on those sons of toil for the very necessity of existence, it is equally certain that to such the toilers are indebted for the social order which preserves liberty and life, for the books which inspire to intellectual elevation, and for the sciences which indefinitely expand the compass of our being. If the arch be indebted to the foundation-stone for its very existence, it could not retain its graceful sweep or strength one moment without its key-stone. (*Ibid.*) **Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow?**—*The ploughman*.—I. **OUR TEXT MAY BE ANSWERED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE.** “Yes, the ploughman does plough all day to sow.” When it is ploughing-time he keeps on at it till his work is done; if it requires one day, or two days, or twenty days to finish his fields, he continues at his task while the weather permits. 1. So doth God plough the heart of man, and herein is His patience. The team was in the field in the case of some of us very early in the morning, for our first recollections have to do with conscience and the furrows of pain which it made in our youthful mind. It is a dreadful thing to have remained an unbeliever all these years; but yet the grace of God does not stop short at a certain age. 2. The text teaches perseverance on our part. “Doth the ploughman plough all day?” Yes, he does. (1) Then if I am seeking Christ, ought I to be discouraged because I do not immediately find Him? (2) The same is true in seeking the salvation of others. Ploughing is hard work; but as there will be no harvest without it, let us put forth all our strength, and never flag till we have performed our Lord’s will, and by His Holy Spirit wrought conviction in men’s souls. Some soils are very stiff, and cling together, and the labour is heart-breaking; others are like the unreclaimed waste, full of roots and tangled bramble; they need a steam-plough, and we must pray the Lord to make us such, for we cannot leave them untilled, and therefore we must put forth more strength that the labour may be done. I heard some time ago of a minister who called to see a poor man who was dying, but he was not able to gain admittance; he called the next morning, and some idle excuse was made so that he could not see him; he called again the next morning, but he was still refused; he went on till he called twenty times in vain, but on the twenty-first occasion he was permitted to see the sufferer, and by God’s grace he saved a soul from death. “Why do you tell your child a thing twenty times?” asked some one of a mother. “Because,” said she, “I find nineteen times is not enough.” We prize that which costs us labour and service, and we shall set all the higher value upon the saved ones when the Lord grants them to our efforts. It is good for us to learn the value of our sheaves by going forth weeping to the sowing. Start close to the hedge, and go right down to the bottom of the field. Plough as close to the ditch as you can, and leave small headlands. What though there are fallen women, thieves, and drunkards in the slums around, do not neglect any of them; for if you leave a stretch of land to the weeds they will soon spread amongst the wheat. When you have gone right to the end of the field once, what shall you do next? Why, just turn round, and make for the place you started from. And when you have thus been up and down, what next? Why, up and down again. And what next? Why, up and down again. You have visited that district with tracts; do it again, fifty-two times in the year—multiply your furrows. We must learn how to continue in well-doing. II. **THE TEXT MAY BE ANSWERED IN THE NEGATIVE.** “Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow?” No, he does not always plough. After he has ploughed he breaks the clods, sows, reaps, and threshes. In the chapter before us you will see that other works of husbandry are mentioned. The ploughman has many other things to do beside ploughing. There is an advance in what he does. 1. On God’s part, there is an advance in what He does. He will not always make furrows by His chiding. He will come and cast in the precious corn of consolation, and water it with the dews of Heaven, and smile upon it with the sunlight of His grace; and there shall soon be in you, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear, and in due season you shall joy as with the joy of harvest. But what if the ploughing should never lead to sowing; what if you should be disturbed in conscience, and should go on to resist it all? Then God will make another advance, but

it will be to put up the plough, and to command the clouds that they rain no rain upon the land, and then its end is to be burned. 2. This advance is a lesson to us; for we, too, are to go forward. Don't be making furrows all day; get to your sowing. Let the ministers of Christ follow the rule of advance. Let us go from preaching the law to preaching the Gospel. You cannot get a harvest if you are afraid of disturbing the soil, nor can you save souls if you never warn them of hell fire. Still, we must not plough all day. The preaching of the law is only preparatory to the preaching of the Gospel. 3. Another lesson to those of you who are as yet hearers and nothing more. I want you to go from ploughing to something better, namely, from hearing and fearing to believing. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Spiritual husbandry*.—1. Never was seed or plant better adapted to the soil than the Word of God is adapted to universal man. 2. Since the Bible is adapted to our moral nature, it is ours to adapt our lives to its great teachings. If we find unseemly pride springing up in the soul, let us go and see the terrible effects of self-confidence by the Red Sea, as Pharaoh and his army sink into its depths; or by the plains of Babylon, as Nebuchadnezzar herds among the beasts. If you find any vice growing in rank deformity in your soul, go and look at the Deluge or the Dead Sea. If you find self-sufficiency springing up in the heart, and condemn the shortcomings of others, go and listen to the claims of God. How penetrating! far-reaching! and absolute! If everywhere around you, you see tokens and footprints of the king of terrors, in mourning garbs and joyless faces, in darkened earthly prospects, go listen to the promises of immortality, the doctrine of the resurrection. If you mark manifestations of the being of an awful Deity, go find a near, visible, and all-beneficent Deity whose presence makes the earth itself a heaven; get proofs of His love by its being shed abroad in your own heart. If you see around you all nature in bondage, groaning and waiting for its redemption, go see a new heaven and a new earth, in which shall dwell righteousness. (*F. Standfast.*) *Benevolent ploughing*.—When the plough of God's providence first cuts up a man's life, what wonder if the man should exclaim a little, yea, if he should give way to one hour's grief, and say he thought he had escaped all that kind of treatment! But the man may come to himself ere eventide and say, Plough on, Lord; I want my life to be ploughed all over that it may be sown all over, and that in every corner there may be golden grain or beautiful flowers: pity me that I exclaimed when I first felt the ploughshare, Thou knowest my frame, Thou rememberest that I am but dust, but now I recollect, I put things together, I see Thy meaning; so drive on, Thou Ploughman of eternity! (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The principal wheat*.—*The principal wheat*.—I. The prophet mentions it as a matter of wisdom on the part of the husbandman that HE KNOWS WHAT IS THE PRINCIPAL THING TO CULTIVATE, and makes it his principal care. Here let us learn a lesson. Do keep things distinct in your minds. Sort things out, and divide and distinguish between the precious and the vile. The farmer, who finds that wheat ought to be his principal crop, makes it so, and lays himself out with that end in view: learn from this to have a main object, and to give your whole mind to it. 1. This farmer was wise, because he counted that to be principal which was the most needful. His family could do without cummin, which was but a flavouring. They certainly must have wheat, for bread is the staff of life. That which is necessary he regarded as the principal thing. Is not this common sense? A creature cannot be satisfied unless he is answering the end for which he is created; and the end of every intelligent creature is, first, to glorify God, and next, to enjoy God. Other things may be desirable, but this thing is needful. Other herbs may take their place in due order, but grace is the principal wheat, and we must cultivate it. 2. This farmer was wise, because he made that to be the principal thing which was the most fit to be so. Of course, barley is useful as food, for nations have lived on barley bread, and lived healthily too; and rye has been the nutriment of millions: neither have they starved on oats and other grains. Still, give me a piece of wheaten bread, for it is the best staff for life's journey. And what is there that is so fit for the heart, the mind, the soul of man, as to know God and His Christ? Other mental foods, such as the fruits of knowledge, and the dainties of science, excellent though they may be—are inferior nutriment and unsuitable to build up the inner manhood. 3. Moreover, this farmer was wise, because he made that the principal thing which was the most profitable. Our grandfathers used to rely upon the wheat stack to pay their rent. The figure holds good with regard to spiritual religion. That is the most profitable thing. II. The husbandman

is a lesson to us because HE GIVES THIS PRINCIPAL THING THE PRINCIPAL PLACE. I find that the Hebrew is rendered by some eminent scholars, "He puts the wheat into the principal place." That little handful of cummin for the wife to flavour the cakes with he grows in a corner; and the various herbs he places in their proper borders. The barley he sets in its plot, and the rye in its acre; but if there is a good bit of rich soil he appropriates it to the principal wheat. He gives his choicest fields to that which is to be the main means of his living. Here is a lesson for you and me. Let us give to true godliness our principal powers and abilities. 1. Let us give to the things of God our best and most intense thought. 2. Be sure, also, to yield to this subject your most earnest love. 3. Towards God and His Christ also turn your most fervent desires. 4. Then, let the Lord have the attentive respect of your life. 5. We should give to this principal wheat our most earnest labours. 6. This should also take possession of us so as to lead to our greatest sacrifices. III. THE HUSBANDMAN SELECTS THE PRINCIPAL SEED-CORN WHEN HE IS SOWING HIS WHEAT. When a farmer is setting aside wheat for sowing, he does not choose the tail corn and the worst of his produce, but if he is a sensible man he likes to sow the best wheat in the world. Let me learn that if I am going to sow to the Lord and to be a Christian, I should sow the best kind of Christianity. 1. I should try to do this by believing the weightiest doctrines. I would believe not this "ism," nor that, but the unadulterated truth which Jesus taught; for a holy character will only grow by the Spirit of God out of true doctrine. 2. Next to that, we ought to sow the noblest examples. 3. We should sow the best wheat by seeing that we have the purest spirit. 4. And then, we should endeavour to live in closest communion with God. It should be our desire to rise to the highest form of spiritual life. IV. THE HUSBANDMAN GROWS THE PRINCIPAL WHEAT WITH THE PRINCIPAL CARE. It is said that the large crops in Palestine in olden time were due to the fact that they planted the wheat. They set it in lines, so that it was not checked or suffocated by its being too thick in one place, neither was there any fear of its being too thin in another. The wheat was planted, and then streams of water were turned by the foot to each particular plant. No wonder, therefore, that the land brought forth abundantly. We should give our principal care to the principal thing. Our godliness should be carried out with discretion and care. V. DO THIS, BECAUSE FROM THIS YOU MAY EXPECT YOUR PRINCIPAL CROP. If religion be the principal thing, you may look to religion for your principal reward. The harvest will come to you in various ways. You will make the greatest success in this life if you wholly live to the glory of God. The Eastern farmer's prosperity hinges on his wheat, and yours upon your devotion to God. In the world to come what a crop, what a harvest will come of serving the Lord! (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 26-29. For his God doth instruct him.—*Chastising with judgment*:—More literally, and with better significance, "And he chastiseth it with judgment; his God doth instruct him." This judgment is shown in two ways. (1) In the choice and adaptation of the mode of threshing. There were four modes in use among the Jews; first there was the wain, a very ponderous and formidable instrument brought out only for the heavier and harder kinds of fruits; then there was the cart, the wheels of which also were for the same purpose; then there was the horse or the ox, whose feet were employed to tread out the corn; and then there was the staff, an instrument corresponding with our flail. Well, says the prophet, fitches, the lighter kinds of seeds, are not threshed with a wain, nor is a cart wheel turned upon the cummin; upon these the farmer, using sound judgment, employs only a staff or flail. Bread corn requires a heavier threshing, and bread corn is therefore bruised. But (2) he does not go on threshing it for ever, nor does he continue so long turning the wheel of his cart upon it, or crushing it with his horses, that it is broken into pieces and spoiled; in the measure of his threshing no less than in its mode does he exercise discretion; in the amount which he inflicts no less than in the form which he selects. "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." (R. H. Roberts, B.A.) *Tribulation*:—Though not a parable in form, the passage is intended to be parabolically interpreted by us. The unsown land indicates human nature in its native condition; the fruit of that land after it has been sown indicates human nature taken possession of by the Word and Spirit of God. I. Just as the corn, after it has grown up from the seed sown, needs the cleansing process of threshing, so THE SOUL, AFTER IT HAS APPROPRIATED THE GRACE OF

GOD IN SALVATION THROUGH FAITH, NEEDS TO BE DISCIPLINED AND CHASTENED AND PERFECTED BY SUFFERING. It used to be a great puzzle with some of the Old Testament saints why a man of God should be subjected to trial. Perhaps their bewilderment arose out of the exceeding dimness which surrounded a future life; but the life and immortality brought to light in the Gospel has made this all clear to us, and the suggestion contained in the figure of the text, whilst it cannot be pressed too strictly, may be taken to remind us that in our first salvation we have not reached our final development. The corn is not grown for itself, it is meant for something beyond; and that beyond can only be attained through bruising. It must be beaten into its future life. Even so our salvation is only a step in the onward, heavenward progress; and into that higher kingdom we must enter through the narrow pass of tribulation. This is Christ's teaching. "Every branch in Me that beareth fruit, He purgeth it." This is brought out, too, in the words of John the Baptist regarding Christ. "I," he says, "baptize you with water, but He will baptize you in the Holy Ghost and in fire." When first we are separated from the rock of nature and raised out of the pit of corruption, we are like iron ore, having in us a vast deal of dross which must become slag and refuse, and we need the blast-furnace not only that this dross may be removed, but that we may be in a condition to run into the mould, and so take the shape which the Master desires, and be prepared for the utilities unto which He destines us. It often happens, too, that the more noble the elements which exist in a man, the more severe is the process required unto the perfecting of their possibilities. Corn wants heavier threshing than cummin, not because it is less valuable, but because its superior value gives it a greater power of resistance and makes it worth while to accept the heavier toil.

II. THE DISCIPLINE EXPERIENCED BY THE PEOPLE OF GOD WILL BE CERTAINLY SUCH AS IS BEST ADAPTED TO SECURE THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE ENDS. It is being administered and superintended by One who, whilst He sets much value upon them, is distinguished by the profoundest wisdom. And we may be sure that His wisdom will be applied to the adaptation of the discipline to the character with which He has to deal; the husbandman does not "thresh fitches with a wain, nor is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod." You look at your children and you discriminate; you say that boy has a sensitive, gentle, yielding nature, and I must be careful that I do not handle him too roughly, lest I brush the bloom off and spoil the possible beauty which, by careful training, may be made to blossom in the kingdom of God. And that lad is made of a coarser grain, which is not readily injured, and with a dash of self-will and obstinacy in it, upon which I must lay a firm and strong hand. And so, it may be, you put your arm around the one, and you have a rod for the other; and yet all the while you mean the same by both. He who is wonderful in counsel is also wonderful in working. (*R. H. Roberts, B.A.*) *The ploughman taught of God*.—Let us contemplate the method of the Divine teaching. The ploughman teaches us—

I. A LESSON OF PREPARATION. God prepared much for man before He introduced him into Eden. God would not bring His favourite creature man into a dreary, cheerless world, but into one glowing with beauty, impressive in magnificence, overflowing with goodness.

II. A LESSON OF ACTIVITY. The ploughman has passed the time of deliberation; he has decided, and decision has led to action. There is much truth in Bacon's complaint, "That some men object too much, consult too long, adventure too little, repent too soon, and seldom drive business home." This aphorism applies, alas, to too many alike in the world and the Church. Ulysses could not discover a happier method of making his foes believe in his insanity than by ploughing up the sand by the seashore. How much quick-witted invention degenerates to the same folly! Often within the Church, where heavenly wisdom ought to shine, matters are not much improved. How many are at ease in Zion! How many shirk the ploughing altogether! How many let noxious weeds grow apace! How many miss the time of open-handed sowing, and yet expect to wake up when the song of harvest-home fills the air, and to gather their own golden sheaves! There is still a sense in which the children of the world are wiser than the children of light. Many of these count years not wasted to acquire proficiency in mere vanities and trivialities over which angels well may weep.

III. A LESSON OF FRUDENCE. "God giveth him discretion." All toil that is honest, is honourable, but that is the most honourable which employs the greatest variety of our powers. How much of the service offered to pomp, pride, vanity, and fashion lacks discretion! This faculty of discretion men are called upon to

exercise daily. Prudence or discretion is a good commander-in-chief: it has won battles over the stubbornness of the soil, the inclemency of the climate, the stormy elements. If we thoughtfully and prayerfully take care of our own actions, God will take care of results. We have no right to tempt providence in any part of its wide domains. He who walks in dangerous ways will perish in them, even as Josiah—favourite of God though he was—was wounded unto death, because he pressed further against his enemies than the words of God permitted. IV. A LESSON OF ORDER. The discreet husbandman ploughs in the proper season in order that the Lord's plough, the frost, may pulverise the soil a thousand times finer than any human implement. And is not order one of the greatest of Heaven's appointed laws? The Church itself is to be an army with banners, to consist of governors and governed, some to tend, some to serve, some to hear. Evolve your heaven in due order, out of holy desires, pure affection, spiritual principle, full consecration. (*F. Standfast.*) *The need and measure of afflictive dispensations*:—I. THE NEED OF TRIAL TO THE CHILDREN OF GOD. To the wicked afflictions may come as present manifestations of Divine displeasure, and most unwelcome earnest of future judgment. And God may cause the very pleasant vices in which they indulged to become whips and scourge them. As for the children of God, however,—the corn, the fitches, and the cummin, it is not so with them. Every providential dealing of their Heavenly Father is linked with the intentions of His grace, and subserves them. The grain is beaten, the corn is bruised, that they may become useful to man, in providing him with food. Even so, afflictions may be for the good of others, as well as for the glory of God. II. THE WISE AND GRACIOUS MANNER IN WHICH GOD LAYS AFFLICTION ON HIS CHILDREN. The text beautifully exhibits the skilful and tender adaptation of means to their end. (*R. P. Buddicom, M.A.*) *Threshing*:—I. WE ALL NEED THRESHING. What is the object of threshing the grain? Is it not to separate it from the straw and the chaff? 1. About the best of men there is still a measure of chaff. There is something superfluous, something which must be removed. Either in spirit, or motive, or lack of zeal, or want of discretion, we are faulty. If before an action we are right, we err in the doing of it, or, if not, we become proud after it is over. If sin be shut out at the front door, it tries the back gate, or climbs in at the window, or comes down the chimney. Those who cannot perceive it in themselves are frequently blinded by its smoke. They are so thoroughly in the water that they do not know that it rains. 2. Threshing is useful in loosening the connection between the good corn and the husk. If it would slip out easily from its husk, the corn would only need to be shaken. But there's the rub: our soul not only lieth in the dust, but "cleaveth" to it. As the work of threshing is never done till the corn is separated altogether from the husk, so chastening and discipline have never accomplished their design till God's people give up every form of evil, and abhor all iniquity. Threshing becomes needful for the sake of our usefulness; for the wheat must come out of the husk to be of service. Eminent usefulness usually necessitates eminent affliction. 3. The threshing instrument is a prophecy of our future perfection. II. GOD'S THRESHING IS DONE WITH GREAT DISCRETION. 1. Reflect that your threshing and mine are in God's hands. Our chastening is not left to servants, much less to enemies; "we are chastened of the Lord"! How roughly some ministers, some good men and women will go to work with timid, tender souls; yet we need not fear that they will destroy the true-hearted, for, however much they may vex them, the Lord will not leave His chosen in their hands, but will overrule their mistaken severity, and preserve His own from being destroyed thereby. As the Lord has not left us in the power of man, so also He has not left us in the power of the devil. Satan may sift us as wheat, but he shall not thresh us as fitches. He may blow away the chaff from us even with his foul breath, but he shall not have the management of the Lord's corn. "The Lord preserveth the righteous." 2. The instruments used for our threshing are chosen also by the great Husbandman. The Eastern farmer has several instruments, and so has our God. No form of threshing is pleasant to the seed which bears it; indeed, each one seems to the sufferer to be peculiarly objectionable. 3. God not only selects the instruments, but He chooses the place. Farmers in the East have large threshing-floors upon which they throw the sheaves of corn or barley, and upon these they turn horses and drags; but near the house door I have often noticed in Italy a much smaller circle of hardened clay or cement, and here I have seen the peasants beating out their garden seeds in a more careful manner than would naturally be used towards the

greater heaps upon the larger area. Some saints are not afflicted in the common affairs of life, but they have peculiar sorrow in their innermost spirits: they are beaten on the smaller and more private threshing-floor; but the process is none the less effectual. 4. It is interesting to notice in the text the limit of this threshing. The husbandman is zealous to beat out the seed, but he is careful not to break it in pieces by too severe a process. In the same way the Lord has a measure in all His chastening. The wisdom of the husbandman in limiting his threshing is far exceeded in the wisdom of God by which He sets a limit to our griefs. We see that our God uses discretion in the chastisement of His people; let us use a loving prudence when we have to deal with others in that way. Be gentle as well as firm with your children; and if you have to rebuke your brother do it very tenderly. Do not drive your horses over the tender seed. III. THE THRESHING WILL NOT LAST FOR EVER. The threshing will not last all our days even here. "Bread corn is bruised, but He will not always be threshing it." Oh, no! "He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger for ever." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Threshing is not an operation which the corn requires all the year round; for the most part the flail is idle. Then, we shall soon be gone to another and better world. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

*How the Lord threshes us*:—I. IT IS NO COMPLIMENT TO US IF WE ESCAPE GREAT TRIAL. II. GOD PROPORTIONS OUR TRIALS TO WHAT WE CAN BEAR. III. GOD KEEPS TRIAL ON US UNTIL WE LET GO. The farmer shouts "whoa!" to his horses as soon as the grain has dropped from the stalk. The farmer comes with his fork and tosses up the straw, and he sees that the straw has let go the grain, and the grain is thoroughly threshed. So God. Smiting rod and turning wheel, but cease as soon as we let go. We hold on to this world with its pleasures, and riches, and emoluments, and our knuckles are so firmly set that it seems as if we could hold on for ever. God comes along with some threshing troubles, and beats us loose. IV. CHRISTIAN SORROW IS GOING TO HAVE A SURE TERMINUS. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*)

*The wisdom of God in discipline*:—Some men require very little hard usage. A tap will do, a gentle stroke, a touch that hardly amounts to a blow, a ministry that may be wrought out with the tips of the fingers. Other men require flail, and iron instrument, and harrow, and cart wheel, and rough treatment: they are differently organised, they are differently constituted. What would be thought of a man who blew up birds' nests with gunpowder? Who would not say, There is great want of proportion in that man's method of looking at things; he is expending far too much energy upon the object? So with regard to the Divine discipline. Some men could be almost brought to fulness or fruition by a smile. Of some men God says, Thou art not far from the kingdom of heaven; one little step would bring thee right home. God whispers some men into heaven. But what thunder He needs for others! God treats character according to the variety of character. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

*Chastisement not pleasant*:—There is no pleasing us in the matter of chastisement. When I was at school, with my uncle for master, it often happened that he would send me out to find a cane for him. It was not a very pleasant task, and I noticed that I never once succeeded in selecting a stick which was liked by the boy who had to feel it. Either it was too thin, or too stout; and in consequence I was threatened by the sufferers with condign punishment if I did not do better next time. I learned from that experience never to expect God's children to like the particular rod with which they are chastened. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

*Moral threshing*:—We all go through some kind of threshing process. The fact that you may be devoting your life to honourable and noble purposes will not win you any escape. Wilberforce, the Christian emancipator, was in his day derisively called "Doctor Cantwell." Thomas Babington Macaulay, the advocate of all that was good long before he became the most conspicuous historian of his day, was caricatured in one of the Quarterly Reviews as "Babble-tongue Macaulay." (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*)

*The higher nature requires the more force*:—"Bread corn is bruised." There are more blows given by the sculptor to carve a saint or angel than by the mason to square a paving-stone. (*F. Standfast.*)

*Tribulation* comes from the word "tribulum," and tribulum means a threshing instrument. Whatever the man used who was treating the growth in its latest phases was called a tribulum, and he tribulated the harvest into bread. The seed did not go from the field into the oven; it had to undergo the action of the tribulum. Watch it there: what is that seed now undergoing? Tribulation. This is the bread that came out of much tribulating, tribulation, tearing asunder, shaking, beating. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 29. The Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel.—*God's presidency over all things* :—Let us consider this point as related to—I. THE BIBLE AND ITS CONTENTS. This Book, to the secular world, is a perpetual puzzle. What amazing power it has exerted in the world, and what exalting energy! Yet it is the literature of a people comparatively insignificant, to whom we are not drawn as we have been toward the august grandeur of Roman genius, or to the poetic and philosophic Greek. It is the oldest of books, large, obscure in some things, but bold in its challenges to geologist, astronomer, and men of science; provoking discussion at a thousand points. Think of the mysteries of doctrine—the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the future life—what can we do? A tone of authority over our convictions and judgments is assumed. The thoughts of the Bible are God's thoughts. II. THE REDEMPTION OF CHRIST. This is too vast, grand, marvellous to be understood without this illuminating truth. III. IN THE SPIRITUAL SPHERE, in the soul of man. We act on man's feelings through his judgment, or upon his judgment through his sensibilities. Yet how feebly! But all these are open to the royal, inspiring Spirit of God. IV. THE METHOD AND DEVELOPMENT OF PROVIDENCE IN THE WORLD. Gathering up some of the results of this survey, we may see—1. How Christendom is builded. Coleridge speaks fitly of "the miracle of Christendom," for the tendency of society, unilluminated by the Gospel, ever has been downward. 2. We should read the future in the same light. If God be behind all the movements of history, there is no room for discouragement. At important crises He will interfere, putting forth silent forces, perhaps, but terrific in energy. 3. There is a city of God for me. His promises, thick as the fragments of the jasper floor, will all be redeemed. (*R. S. Storrs, D.D.*) *The wonderfulness of God's counsel* :—The context presents to us physical husbandry in two very different aspects. (1) As the effect of God's teaching. (2) As the emblem of God's teaching. God's counsel is wonderful in all His departments of action as Creator, Sovereign, and Redeemer. Our illustration shall be taken from the nature, formation, and propagation of the redemptive system. I. ITS NATURE IS WONDERFUL. What is it? One word, perhaps, will best describe it. Reconciliation. To see its wonderfulness think of four things. 1. That the reconciliation originates with the offended party. 2. The offended party, who seeks the reconciliation, is infinitely superior to the offender. 3. The offended party, who is infinitely superior, offers reconciliation to the lowest class of His foes. There are two great classes of enemies to God—fallen angels and fallen men; men are the inferior. Yet He passed by the angels and took hold upon the seed of Abraham. 4. The offended party, who is infinitely superior, offers reconciliation to the lowest classes of His foes at a most stupendous sacrifice. II. ITS FORMATION IS WONDERFUL. How is this system of reconciliation formed? There are two things as to the mode which show the wonderfulness of the arrangement. 1. Its gradualness. We, when we have a work to do, to which we attach importance, hurry at it, and are impatient for its accomplishment; but God, to ripen this scheme, took four thousand long years. 2. Its instruments. When we have a work to do, we select the best men we can get. God employed the agency of wicked men in the working out of His great reconciling plan. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," &c. III. ITS PROPAGATION IS WONDERFUL. Three things show the wonderfulness of its propagation. 1. The character of the persons to whom its propagation was first entrusted. To whom did He commit the ministry of this wonderful scheme? To the magnates, or the literati of His age? No, to a few poor fishermen. 2. The class of persons to whom it was first offered. The greatest sinners on earth; the sinners at Jerusalem, who imbrued their hands in the blood of His only begotten Son. 3. The pressing of it on the attention of those who frequently reject it. (*Homilist.*) *A feast for faith* :—(1) The sentiment of the text on the surface is, that the art and science and skill of man, are the gifts of God. (2) If God thus instructs man in wisdom, how wise must He be Himself! I. Let us behold THE VISION OF GOD WHICH IS PRESENTED TO US IN THE TEXT. 1. God does not work without a plan. 2. This plan is wonderful in itself, and is found to be excellent when it is carried out. (1) This is illustrated in nature. (2) In providence. (3) In personal experience. (4) In the great economy of redemption. (5) In the Gospel. This Gospel is suited to the most abject and depraved. Many preachers have had to confess the uselessness of mere moral preaching; one of them said he preached up honesty till his parish swarmed with thieves. (6) The experience of every Christian is, in some respects, different from the experience of every

other, but it is the result of God's plan. (7) The use of instrumentality. It is a wonderful design of God to use one man to be the means of the conversion of another, because the man who does the work is as much benefited as the man upon whom the work is done. (8) The grandest illustration of all will be when, at the last, God's counsels shall be perfectly fulfilled. II. SOME OF THE LESSONS FROM IT. 1. I have a word to say to those unconverted persons who have some desire after salvation. I would to God that, seeing His counsel is so wondrous, you would agree to it. It is in His counsel that sinners shall be saved by grace through believing in Christ. 2. Another word to you, the people of God. Agree to this in your own particular case. You say, "I cannot understand God's dealings with me." As if it were expected that you should! But you also add, "I cannot believe that God has good designs in it." John said that if a man did not believe God, he made God a liar, and so you who do not believe in God's wisdom make Him a fool! Do you not shrink from that? 3. I now desire to speak to my fellow-workers. When we are going to work for God do not let us be in such a mighty hurry. Let us have a well-formed plan, and let it be God's plan. 4. When we know God's plan we must carry it out. 5. Expect singular assistance. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *God's council-chamber and workshop*.—The Lord of hosts is seen by the enlightened eye, first of all in His council-chamber, and then in His great workshop. He is "wonderful in counsel"; He is "excellent in working." (*Ibid.*) *The husbandman taught by God*.—Some may remember the story of a Rugby public-school boy, who heard when studying at Oxford of the sudden death of Dr. Arnold, his old head-master, and lamented it bitterly, as indeed every one who had known him did, but turned to a companion who sat by, and remarked that, after all, he perhaps owed more personal benefit to a dearly loved school friend, then dead, than to his master's influence. "You did not know, then," said his companion, "that Dr. Arnold chose him for you, and gave him to you purposely for your sake?" This was a revelation to the youth which completely overcame him, and after which he was ready to fall down and worship his good head-master's memory. A strong feeling often exists in a manly, vigorous farmer and hard-working men employed under him to this effect at harvest-time: "We raised those good crops, we raised and thatched those fine stacks, and we deserve what we have got." Yes, you did, replies the text, for Divine providence taught and instructed you. (*C. S. Bird, M.A.*) *The Almighty the all-methodical*.—This last word of the chapter is very expressive. It literally means furtherance, help, salvation, and then the true wisdom or insight which ensures these: the wisdom which carries things through. It splendidly sums up Isaiah's Gospel to the Jews, cowering like dogs before the coming calamity: God is not mere force or vengeance. His judgments are not chaos. But "He is wonderful in counsel," and all His ways have "furtherance" or "salvation" for their end. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *Jehovah wonderful in counsel*.—In one of the squares of the Public Garden in Boston is a unique granite monument. On it are several devices symbolic of its design. On one side are the words, "To commemorate the fact that the inhaling of ether produces insensibility to pain; first proved to the world at the Massachusetts General Hospital in October, A.D. 1856." On another side is a quotation from Isaiah, "This also cometh from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." On another side are the Revelator's words, "There shall be no more pain." The monument is a testimony that relief from suffering is an outcome of the Gospel, and that the means thereto are from the Lord. (*Sermons by the Monday Club.*) *God wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working*.—When you see a plan in an architect's office that is very new and very pretty to look at, you say, "Ah! nothing has been done with it"; but when you see a plan that is smudgy and torn and almost broken through where it has been folded, you know that the man has done something with it. When Dr. Guthrie wanted his ragged-schools founded, he called on a certain minister, who said, "Well, you know, Mr. Guthrie, there is nothing very new in your scheme; I and Mr. So-and-so have been thinking over a similar plan to yours for the last twenty years." "Oh, yes," said Dr. Guthrie. "I dare say; but you have never carried it out." So some people are always thinking over some very fine plan of their own; but while the grass grows the steed starves. Now the God who plans, also works. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)



## CHAPTER XXIX.

VER. 1. Woe to Ariel.—*Ariel*.—The simplest meaning of “Ariel” is “lion of God”; but it also signifies “hearth of God” when derived from another root. In the former sense it comes to mean “a hero,” as in 2 Sam. xxiii. 20; Isa. xxxiii. 7; and in the latter it occurs in Ezek. xlili. 15, 16 for the brazen hearth of the great altar of burnt-offerings, thence commonly called “the brazen,” though the rest of it was of stone. There is no doubt that Jerusalem is pointed out by this enigmatical name; and the immediate context, as well as the expression in chap. xxxi. 9—“Jehovah, whose fire is in Zion, and His furnace in Jerusalem”—makes it probable that Isaiah intended to involve both meanings in the word, as though he had said, “Woe to the city of heroes, woe to the city of sacrifices: it shall now be put to the test what God and what man think as to both.” (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *Jerusalem, “the lion of God”*.—David, that lion of God, had first encamped against Jerusalem, and then made it the abode of his royal house, and the capital of his kingdom; so that it became itself an Ariel, the lion of God, in the land (Gen. xlix. 9, 10). (*Ibid.*) *Jerusalem, “the hearth of God”*.—By David’s pitching his camp and then bringing the sacred ark there, Jerusalem became God’s hearth. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *Ariel*.—The Rabbins combine the two explanations of the Hebrew word by supposing that the altar was itself called the lion of God, because it devoured the victims like a lion, or because the fire on it had the appearance of a lion, or because the altar (or the temple) was in shape like a lion, that is, narrow behind and broad in front. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *Ariel*.—In either case applied as a symbol of hope. “But she shall be unto Me as an Ariel,” i.e., in the extremity of her need I will enable her to verify her name (Cheyne). (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *Woe to Ariel*.—After the vicissitudes of 300 years, and in the midst of present dangers, the people of Jerusalem were still confident in the strength of their “lion of God,” and year by year came up to the public festivals to lay their accustomed offerings on the “altar of God”; though with little remembrance that it was not in the altar and the city, but in Jehovah Himself, that David put trust, and found his strength. Therefore Jehovah will bring Ariel low; the proud roar of the lion shall be changed for the weak, stridulous voice, which the art of the ventriloquising necromancer brings out of the ground; and the enemies of Jehovah shall be sacrificed and consumed on the hearth of this altar. First, His spiritual enemies among the Jews themselves, but afterwards the heathen oppressors of His people; and the lion shall recover his God-derived strength; and thus, both in adversity and in success, “it shall be unto Me as Ariel.” (*Sir E. Strachey, Bart.*) *Woe to Ariel*.—The prophet has a very startling message to deliver: that God will besiege His own city, the city of David! Before God can make her in truth His own, make her verify her name, He will have to beleaguer and reduce her. For so novel and startling an intimation the prophet pleads a precedent: “City which David” himself “beleaguered.” Once before in thy history, ere the first time thou wast made God’s own hearth, thou hadst to be besieged. As then, so now. Before thou canst again be a true Ari-El I must “beleaguer thee like David.” This reading and interpretation gives to the enigma a reason and a force which it does not otherwise possess. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) “*The city where David dwelt*”.—We consider it every way remarkable that David should be mentioned in connection with the woe about to be uttered. If it had been, “Woe unto Ariel, the city where flagrant sins are committed, the city which is overrun with idols, and filled with all kinds of abomination,” we should have seen at once the force of the sentence, and must have felt the wrath warranted by the alleged crimes. But why bring it as a chief accusation against Jerusalem—indeed, as the only charge that was to justify God in pouring out His vengeance—that it was the city where David had dwelt? We can hardly think that the definition is meant as nothing more than a statement of fact. David had long been dead; strange changes had occurred, and it would be making the essential term too insignificant to suppose it to contain only a historical reference to an assertion that no one doubted, but which is quite unconnected with the present message from God. We must rather believe that the city is characterised, “where David dwelt,” in order to show that it deserved the woe about to be denounced. This is evidently mentioned as aggravating the guiltiness of the city. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Good men increase the responsibility of a community*.—

We seem warranted in concluding that, its having been made eminent by the piety of the servants of God, by their zeal for God, and by their earnestness in preserving the purity of their worship, entails a weighty responsibility on a city or country ; so that if, in any after time, that city or country degenerate in godliness, and become, by its sins, obnoxious to vengeance, it will be one of the heaviest items in the charge brought against it, that it was dwelt in by saints so distinguished. (*Ibid.*) *National mercies*.—I. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE WOE OF JERUSALEM, AND JERUSALEM BEING THE CITY WHERE DAVID DWELT. There are other considerations, over and above the general one of the responsibility fastened on a people by the having had a king of extraordinary piety, which go to the explaining why the woe upon Jerusalem should be followed by a reference to David. David was eminent as a prophet of the Lord ; he had been commissioned to announce, in sundry most remarkable predictions, the Messiah, of whom, in many respects, he was, moreover, an illustrious type. It was true, there had been others of whom the prophet might think. There is a peculiar appositeness in the reference to David, because his writings were the very best adapted to the fixing themselves on the popular mind. These writings were the national anthems ; they were the songs to be chanted in those daily and annual solemnities which belonged to the Jews in their political as much as in their religious capacity, in which the princes were associated with the priests, so that the civil was hardly to be distinguished from the ecclesiastic. So beloved as David was of God, he must have bequeathed a blessing to the nation : for righteous kings, like righteous fathers, entail good on a nation. Indeed, it is evident, from other parts of Isaiah, that the memory of David was still a tower of strength at Jerusalem, so that, for his sake, was evil averted from the city. When Sennacherib and his hosts encamped against the city, and the heart of Hezekiah was dismayed, it was in terms such as these that God addressed Israel, "I will defend this city, to save it for Mine own sake, and for My servant David's sake." Was it not like telling the Jews that they were no longer to be borne with for the sake of David, to pronounce, "Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt" ? Was it not declaring, that the period was drawing to a close, during which the conservatism of the monarch's piety could be felt ? The prophet might be considered as showing both how just and how terrible those judgments would be. He showed their justice, because the having had amongst them such a king and prophet as David, made the Jews inexcusable in their wickedness : he showed their severity, because it was the city of David which God was about to punish.

II. MAKE AN APPLICATION OF THE SUBJECT. We pass at once to the Reformation, and substitute the reformers for David, and England for Ariel. We must consider what it was that the reformers did for us ; from what they delivered us ; and in what they instructed us. (*Ibid.*) *Ariel*.—"It will be to Me as an Ariel" (ver. 2), *i.e.*, through My help it will prove itself a hearth of God, consuming its enemies like a fiery furnace, or these enemies finding destruction in Jerusalem, like wood heaped on an altar and set ablaze. (*F. Delitzsch.*) *Love and chastisement*.—The Lord has never spared the elect. Election gives Him rights of discipline. We may inflict punishment upon those who are ours, when we may not lay the hand of chastisement upon those who do not belong to us. Love has its own law-court. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) Add ye year to year ; let the feasts come round (R.V.).—*Links in a golden chain* (from R.V.) :—Speaking of the gay temper of the Greeks, Quinet describes them as "a people who count their years by their games." In a more serious spirit the Jews counted their years by their religious festivals. We have a Christian year whose festivals celebrate the great events in the life of our Lord. We are adding year to year, the feasts come and go, and it behoves us to inquire what we are doing with them, what they are doing for us. I. THERE IS AN UNSATISFACTORY WAY OF SPENDING THE YEARS. The implied complaint of the text is that the inhabitants of Jerusalem failed to benefit by their recurring privileges, and that the lapse of time brought them nearer to destruction. The trumpet of the new year in vain called them to a new life ; the day of atonement passed leaving them with uncanceled sin ; the Feast of Tabernacles and that of Pentecost awoke in them no love, constrained them to no obedience to the Giver of the harvest. Is this not true of thousands of those over whom pass the festivals of the Christian year ? They are, indeed, all the worse for the lengthening days and multiplying opportunities.

II. THERE IS A TRUE WAY OF SPENDING THE YEARS, and that is in enjoying and improving this life in the fear of God and in the light of eternity. Victor Hugo

speaks of an old man as "a thinking ruin." Paul the aged was such a "ruin," and he had something grand to think about. (*W. L. Walkinson.*)

**Vers. 7, 8. AS a dream of a night vision.—The visions of sin :—**There are two grand truths of a most stirring import unfolded in the text. 1. That wicked men are frequently employed to execute the Divine purpose. The Almighty determined to humble Jerusalem, and He employed Sennacherib as the engine of His justice. "He makes" the wrath of man to praise Him. What a revelation is this of His absolute command over the fiercest and freest workings of the most depraved and rebellious subjects! 2. That whilst wicked men execute the Divine purpose, they frustrate their own. Sennacherib worked out the Divine result, but all his own plans and wishes were like the visions of the famished traveller on the Oriental desert, who, hungry, thirsty, and exhausted, lies down and dreams, under the rays of a tropical sun, that he is eating and drinking, but awakes and discovers, to his inexpressible distress, that both his hunger and thirst are but increased. Hell works out God's plans, and frustrates its own; Heaven works out God's plans, and fulfils its own. Let us look at the vision before us as illustrating the visions of sin. I. IT IS A DREAMY VISION. It is "as a dream of a night vision." There are waking visions. The orient creations of poetry, the bright prospects of hope, the appalling apprehensions of fear—these are visions occurring when the reflective powers of the soul are more or less active, and are, therefore, not entirely unsubstantial and vain. But the visions which occur in sleep, when the senses are closed, and the consciousness is torpid, and the reason has resigned her sway to the hands of a lawless imagination, are generally without reality. Now, the Scriptures represent the sinner as asleep. But where is the analogy between the natural sleep of the body and the moral sleep of sin? 1. Natural sleep is the ordination of God, but moral is not. 2. Natural sleep is restorative, but moral is destructive. 3. In both there is the want of activity. The inactivity of the moral sleep of the sinner is the inactivity of the moral faculty—the conscience. 4. In both there is the want of consciousness. With the sinner in his moral slumbers—God, Christ, the soul, heaven, hell, are nothing to him. II. IT IS AN APPETITIVE VISION. What is the dream of the man whom the Almighty brings under our notice in the text, who lies down to sleep under the raging desire for food and water? It is that he was eating and drinking. His imagination creates the very things for which his appetite was craving. His imagination was the servant of his strongest appetites. So it is ever with the sinner: the appetite for animal gratifications will create its visions of sensual pleasure: the appetite for worldly wealth will create its visions of fortune; the appetite for power will create its visions of social influence and applause. The sinner's imagination is ever the servant of his strongest appetites, and ever pictures to him in airy but attractive forms the objects he most strongly desires. III. IT IS AN ILLUSORY VISION. The food and water were a mirage in the visionary desert, dissipated into air as his eye opened. All the ideas of happiness entertained by the sinner are mental illusions. There are many theories of happiness practically entertained by men that are as manifestly illusive as the wildest dream. 1. Every notion of happiness is delusive that has not to do more with the soul than the senses. 2. Every notion of happiness is delusive that has not more to do with the character than the circumstances. 3. Every notion is delusive that has not more to do with the present than with the future. He that is preparing intentionally for happiness is not happy, nor can he be: the selfish motive renders it impossible. "He that seeketh his life shall lose it." Heaven is for the man that is now "blessed in his deeds," and for him only. The present is everything to us, because God is in it, and out of it starts the future. 4. Every notion is delusive that has not more to do with the absolute than the contingent. IV. IT IS A TRANSITORY VISION. In the text, the supposed dreamer was led to feel the illusion which his wayward imagination had practised upon him. "He awaketh, and his soul is empty." Every moral sleeper must awake either here or hereafter; here by disciplinary voices, or hereafter by retributive thunders. (*Homilist.*) **Dreaming :—**As the army of Sennacherib were dreaming, literally or figuratively, of a conquest which had no real existence, so are there multitudes of persons now dreaming that they are accomplishing the great object of their existence who are no more doing so than if they lay wrapped in the slumbers of the night. I propose to speak of them under three heads. All three are capable of being substituted, and often are substituted, for the real

and proper business of life. **I. PLEASURE.** 1. How comes it to pass that people can live such lives, dreaming all the while that they are fulfilling the true purpose of their existence, or, at least, without any uneasy sense that they are criminally failing to do so? (1) One cause of it is that the thing in question is pleasure. "Nothing succeeds like success." (2) Another explanation is, that many of the pleasures for which men live make great demands on their exertions. Some kinds of play are harder than work. Men, therefore, feel it difficult to believe that what bears so near a resemblance to work is not work, and that very work which they were sent into the world to do. (3) A great many of the pleasures of life are enjoyed in association with others. And amidst the exhilaration of spirits, the brisk laughter, the friendly encounters, it is very difficult to believe that a life made up largely of such occupations is not the life we were intended to live. (4) Then, a great deal of the pleasure is intimately associated with fashion. (5) The alleged innocence of the pleasures indulged in contributes also to the deception. (6) Again, it is sometimes said that, however censurable a life of pleasure may be for those in advanced life, it is innocent and even suitable for the young. 2. But it may be said, What is there to show that such a life is only a dream-like substitute for our real life? (1) It leaves our best faculties unused. (2) A life of pleasure, moreover, is a selfish life. (3) A life of pleasure also exposes to temptation. (4) A life devoted to pleasure, too, unfits men for another world.

**II. WORK.** By "work" is meant some secular occupation by which money, or its equivalent, is gained. The Bible praises work. Work keeps us from being dependent on others. It tends to the benefit of those dependent on us. And work is good as furnishing a man with the means of helping his neighbours, and of contributing to the support of the great movements in operation for lessening the suffering and the sin of the world. And work is good, as giving a man influence by means of the wealth it produces. It is also in favour of a life of diligent employment, that it keeps from much evil. And yet neither is work, any more than pleasure, the great end of man; and those who deem it so are indulging in a baseless dream. The moral value of work is to be measured by its motive and its influence. A life of excessive devotion to work is hostile to the higher life of a man. It leaves but little time for those exercises which are found so essential to a life of godliness. It indisposes for such employments. It shuts out the other world by the undue prominence it gives to this. It banishes God from the thoughts. It is a practical neglect of the soul. Others suffer also. Such a life makes us indifferent to the interests of others. **III. RELIGION.** And this time, you will perhaps say, they are likely to be right. On the contrary, there is more danger of their going wrong here than in either of the previous cases. And for this reason—that the sacred name of religion disposes men to think all is as it should be if they can persuade themselves that they are religious. Religion assumes a great variety of forms, and some of them not only worthless, but pernicious. 1. Can it be questioned that a great deal of the religion of England now is nothing more than amusement, and often amusement of the most childish nature? 2. If religion in other cases seems to go deeper, it is too often only another name for superstition, where chief importance is attached to the conventional sanctity of the persons who officiate, the garments they wear, the sacraments they administer, the postures they adopt, the seasons they observe. 3. Then there is the religion of sentiment, of which the chief object is to awaken certain emotions. 4. There is also a religion in which the intellect performs the principal function. 5. We might speak of that religion which is hereditary, where a man adopts a particular faith or worship because his ancestors did so before him. 6. We might speak of the religion of fashion, where the fashionable gathering forms the great attraction. 7. We might speak of the religious observances in which men engage to fill up time which they are forbidden by custom to employ in secular pursuits; or of the religion which is only occasional and spasmodic; or of that which consists in bustle and superficial activity. These religions all agree in being good for nothing. Some of them do harm. Religion is a life. Religion has two sides. On the one it turns toward God, on the other toward man. But all dreams must come to an end. There is a dread awaking in prospect. Think of the disappointment that will attend the awaking! Let us not be deceived by the apparent reality of the life we are leading. What can seem more real than a dream? yet what more unsubstantial? With the feeling of disappointment will be mingled one of contempt. "As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when Thou awakest, Thou shalt despise their image." We experience a sort of

resentment on finding that we have been so deceived by that which had no reality. Will there be nothing like this on awaking from a life wasted in trifling? (*D. P. Pratten, B.A.*) *The disappointments of sin*:—The general truth taught by these words is this: wrong-doing promises much, but it certainly ends in bitter disappointment. The good to be gained by sin is seen and tasted and handled only in dream. It is never actually possessed, and visible disappointment is the bitter fruit of transgression. I. THE VERY NATURE OF SIN SUGGESTS THIS FACT. 1. Sin is a wandering from the way which God has appointed for us—the way which was in His mind when He made man—the only way which has ever been in His mind as the right way. There is no adaptation in man's real nature to any way but one, and that is obedience to a Father in Heaven, the result and fruit of true love for that Father. 2. Sin is a practical withdrawing from the protection of Divine providence. It thus wounds, sometimes instantly, and always eventually, the transgressor himself. It is as when a hungry man dreameth, and awaketh, and behold, he is faint. II. LOOK AT A FEW RECOGNISED FACTS ABOUT SIN. 1. The angels who kept not their first estate left their own habitation. So far as we can understand the matter they sought freedom, but they found chains. They sought light; they found darkness. They sought happiness; they found misery,—as when a hungry man dreameth and eateth, and awaketh and finds himself famishing. 2. Our first parents, in yielding to the first temptation, sought equality with God; but they soon found themselves fallen below the natural human level. 3. The general history of sin is found in epitome in the life of every sinner. In families and Churches and nations, in societies of all kinds, we see illustrated the truth that sin everywhere, by whomsoever committed, is the occasion of most bitter disappointment. (*S. Martin.*) *Life a dream*:—Lord Brougham relates an occurrence which strikingly shows how short a thing a dream is. A person who had asked a friend to call him early in the morning, dreamed that he was taken ill, and that, after remedies had been tried in vain by those about him, a medical man was sent for who lived some miles away, and who did not arrive before some hours had elapsed. On his arrival he threw some cold water upon the face of the patient. Thereupon the sleeper awoke. The water was, in fact, applied by his friend, for the purpose of awaking him. The inference is that this apparent dream of hours was the affair of a moment. Such is human life. (*D. P. Pratten, B.A.*) *A dream*:—The figure of the dream is applied in two ways. 1. Objectively, to the vanishing of the enemy. 2. Subjectively, to his disappointment. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Disenchantment* (ver. 8):—A more vivid representation of utter disenchantment than this verse gives can scarcely be conceived. (*Ibid.*) *Disappointing fancies*:—No sooner had I shut my eyes than fancy would convey me to the streams and rivers of my native land. There, as I wandered along the verdant bank, I surveyed the clear stream with transport, and hastened to swallow the delightful draught; but alas! disappointment awakened me, and I found myself a lonely captive, perishing of thirst amid the wilds of Africa. (*Mungo Park's Journal.*)

Vers. 9-12. Stay yourselves, and wonder . . . they are drunken, but not with wine.—*Spiritual drunkenness*:—By spiritual drunkenness (ver. 9) we are probably to understand unsteadiness of conduct and a want of spiritual discernment. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *Spiritual drunkenness worse than bodily, and more prevalent*:—Drunkenness in itself is a horrible vice, and it is the mother of innumerable more. But besides this there is a spiritual drunkenness. I. THIS worse drunkenness, says the text, is SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS, SPIRITUAL INSENSIBILITY, OR INSANITY. In this respect it resembles the other drunkenness. The man who is drunk has eyes, but he cannot see; ears, but he cannot hear; a heart that has not ceased to beat, but he cannot understand. He mistakes one person and thing for another. So it is with the spiritual sort in regard to the spiritual world. Look at a few of the varieties. Drunkenness—1. From ignorance of the truth. 2. From perversion or profanation of the truth. 3. From rejection of the truth. II. WHAT IS THE QUALITY OR CURSE OF THIS SPIRITUAL DRUNKENNESS, compared with the other? Compare it—1. In regard to the drunkard's intelligence or powers of perception. 2. In regard to the drunkard's life, affections, passions, habits. 3. In regard to the drunkard's state before God, the salvation of soul and body. What shall we say, if we discover the terrific truth? (1) That the spiritual is more besetting and blinding to the spirit. (2) That it is more maddening and brutalising to the drunkard's life. What crime will the drunkard not perpetrate? But what

is the life of the spiritual drunkard who goes on in his wickedness? One lifelong defiance of God. (3) That it is a drunkenness still more infernal, more devilish, and more deadly to both soul and body. (*R. Paisley.*) *Judicial blindness*:—The Jews are represented as given over by God to a judicial blindness. Now, we regard it as a fixed principle in the interpretation of Scripture that God never does more than leave men to themselves; doing nothing directly to harden them in wickedness, or to place them out of the reach of forgiveness. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Drunken, but not with wine*:—Are there, then, other forms of insobriety and resultant demoralisation distinct from that of the familiar cup? The phrases which suggest this abnormal state are continually in our mouths. Thus, we speak of people being intoxicated with delight, with fanaticism, with political excitement, or with the spirit of gambling. Wendell Holmes speaks of people who become intoxicated with music, with poetry, with love, with religious enthusiasm. He remarks how convalescents are sometimes made tipsy by a beef steak. It is said of one that he was too intoxicated with certain good news to be able to imbibe anything else. Indeed, it is told of certain company that it was so intoxicating that some of the circle were compelled to drink to keep themselves sober. (*J. J. Ingram.*) *Intoxication*:—What are the main characteristics of intoxication? The drunken man is one who has lost his power of self-control, one to whose eye and thought the proportions and relationships of life have become disordered, one whose vigour, both physically and mentally, has become enfeebled and inefficient. He is a man who for the time being loses his true relation to the things of outer life. He is abnormal. His appetites are deranged, his engrossments disproportionate, his views beclouded or oblique. (*Ibid.*) For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep.—*The spirit of a deep sleep*:—"The Lord hath poured out," &c. That is an appalling judgment. What have been the steps which have led up to so terrible a consummation? Men do not lose their moral sensitiveness by a stroke; it is the ultimate issue of a process. Drowsiness precedes sleep; the twilight ushers in the night. We do not reach moral abysses by a precipice; we reach them by a gradient. We do not drop into bondage; we walk into it. 1. Here are the men of my text; what was the first step in the degradation? We have it clearly indicated in the thirteenth verse. If we take the thirteenth verse, and place it before verse 9, we have unfolded before us the process of degeneracy, which is re-enacted in multitudes of lives in every succeeding age. The first step towards moral benumbment is the evisceration of religious worship. Take the heart out of worship, and you will take the life out of morals. "And their fear of Me is a commandment of men which has been taught them." What does that mean? The man-made has supplanted the God-born. And what does that further mean but the intrusion of the casuist into religion? The casuist is he who turns a shining principle into a dull maxim, who makes breaches and loop-holes of escape in the great moral law, who changes the searching inwardness of religion into an easy external ordinance, who removes the fearful sense of the eternal, and makes us feel perilously at home in the small demands of his own commandments. 2. Now let us mark the progress of the degeneracy. Religious formalism issues in moral laxity. Note the analysis of the process which is given in the ninth verse. First there is dimness of moral vision. "Tarry ye, and wonder." The figure is that of a man who pulls himself up in bewilderment. He does not remember quite clearly whether this is the way, or whether he should take the next turning. Moral law does not stand out in clear bold relief. His conscience does not act readily. There is hesitancy. He "tarryes"! There is confusion. He "wonders"! "Take your pleasure and be blind." With dimness there comes wilfulness. The little truth they saw they resented. The people liked the restfulness of the dulness. There was nothing searching or self-revealing in the adulterated light. They preferred the twilight in which they can partially hide. Let us go on with the analysis. Moral dimness; moral wilfulness; what is the next step in the degeneracy? Moral stupor. "They are drunk, but not with wine. They stagger, but not with strong drink." 3. Now let us proceed to the third step in the appalling gradient. When a man has eviscerated his religion, changing its inwardness to a thin superficialness, and from this proceeds to moral laxity, I am told by the words of my text that by a judicial act of God his stupor becomes fixed. If a man will not, he shall not! Ye have taken the cup of wilfulness, and drugged yourselves into sin, and "the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep." 4. What is the next step in the awful gradient? "And

all vision is become to you as a book that is sealed." The great writings of the great books have no illuminating message. The books are sealed! What books? There is the book of conscience. "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." That book is sealed. There is the book of experience, the teachings of yesterday, the witness of history. "Ask now of the days that are past." That book is sealed. There is the book of nature. The book of nature began to be read by William Wordsworth when the atmosphere of English life had been warmed by the evangelical revival. When the evangelical is dead nature's inner significance is concealed. Let us therefore watch, with intensest vigilance, against the intrusion of all insincerity into our worship. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*)

Vers. 11, 12. The vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed.—*The universality of spiritual blindness*.—What is affirmed in these verses holds so strikingly true of God's general revelation to the world, that we deem the lesson contained in them to be not of partial, but permanent application. I. There is a COMPLAINT uttered in these verses (1) by the learned, (2) by the unlearned. 1. If a book be closed down by a material seal, then, till that seal be broken, there lies a material obstacle even in the way of him who is able to read the contents of it. Is there any hindrance in virtue of which the critics, and the grammarians, and the accomplished theologians of our age, are unable to reach the real and effective understanding of the words of this prophecy? Yes, and it is wonderful to tell, how little the mere erudition of Scripture helps the real discernment of Scripture. The learned just labour as helplessly under a want of an impression of the reality of this whole matter, as the unlearned; and if this be true of many a priest and theologian, with whom Christianity is a science, and the study of the Bible the business of their profession, what can we expect of those among the learned, who, in the pursuits of a secular philosophy, never enter into contact with the Bible, either in its doctrine or in its language, except when it is obtruded on them? To make the wisdom of the New Testament his wisdom, and its spirit his spirit, and its language his best-loved and best-understood language, there must be a higher influence upon the mind, than what lies in human art, or in human explanation. And till this is brought to pass, the doctrines of the atonement, and of regeneration, and of fellowship with the Father and the Son, and of a believer's progressive holiness, under the moral and spiritual power of the truth as it is in Jesus, will, as to his own personal experience of its meaning, remain so many empty sounds, or so many deep and hidden mysteries: and just as effectually, as if the book were held together by an iron clasp, which he has not strength to unclose, may he say of the same book lying open and legible before him, that he cannot read it, because it is sealed. 2. As for the complaint of the unlearned, it happily, in the literal sense of it, is not applicable to the great majority of our immediate countrymen, even in the very humblest walks of society. They can read the book. There may remain a seal upon its meaning to him, who, in the ordinary sense of the term, is learned, while the seal may be removed, and the meaning lie open as the light of day to him, who in the same sense is unlearned. In pressing home the truths and overtures of Christianity on the poor, we often meet with the very answer of the text, "I am not learned." They think that there is an ignorance which necessity attaches to their condition, and that this should alleviate the burden of their condemnation, in that they know not God. Now we refuse this apology altogether. The Word of the Lord is in your hands, and you can at least read it. The Gospel is preached unto you as well as unto others—and you can, at least, attend to it. II. Let us now proceed to EXPLAIN A CIRCUMSTANCE which stands associated in our text with the incapacity both of learned and unlearned to discover the meaning of God's communications—that is the spirit of deep sleep which had closed the eyes of the people, and buried in darkness and insensibility the prophets, the rulers, and the seers, as well as the humblest and most ignorant of the land. The connection between the one circumstance and the other is quite palpable. If a peasant and a philosopher were both literally asleep before me—and that so profoundly, as that no voice of mine could awaken them—then they are just in the same circumstances, with regard to any demonstration which I addressed to their understandings. Neither would it at all help the conveyance of my meaning to their mind, that while dead to all perception of the argument which issued from my lips, or even of the sound which is its vehicle, the minds of both of them

were most busily alive and active amongst the imagery of a dream—the one dreaming too, perhaps, in the style of some high intellectual pursuit, and the other dreaming in the style of some common and illiterate occupation. Such, it is possible to conceive, may be the profoundness of this lethargy, as to be unmoved by the most loud and terrifying intimations. That the vast majority of the world are, in truth, asleep to all those realities which constitute the great materials of religion, may be abundantly proved by experience. Now, the question comes to be, how is this sleep dissipated? Not, we affirm, and all experience will go with us, by the power of natural argument—not by the demonstrations of human learning, for these are just as powerless with him who understands them, as with him who makes his want of learning the pretence for putting them away. There must be a something equivalent to the communication of a new sense, ere a reality comes to be seen in those eternal things. It is true, that along the course of our ordinary existence, we are awake to the concerns of our ordinary existence. But this is not a wakefulness which goes to disturb the profoundness of our insensibility as to the concerns of a higher existence. We are in one sense awake; but in another most entirely, and, to all human appearance, most hopelessly and irrecoverably asleep. We are just in the same condition with a man who is dreaming, and so moves for the time in a pictured world of his own. And the transition is not greater from the sleeping fancies of the night to the waking certainties of our daily business, than is the transition from the day-dreams of a passing world to those substantial considerations which wield a presiding authority over the conduct of him who walketh not by the sight of that which is around him, but by the faith of the unseen things that are above him, and before him. (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*) *The voices of life*:—Here, we find the picture of the two great classes of excuses men make to-day, when duties are urged upon them. I. The first great answer of human nature to the call of duty—the first and readiest excuse which the easy-going, self-indulgent life has to offer—is this first excuse of the men of Jerusalem to the unpleasant vision of the future. It is as a book which is sealed, and he who is able to read it does not read it, simply because it is closed, or sealed. Here we have a definite excuse given, which looks plausible enough, but which only means, after all, the lack of will-power, which so frequently lodges behind some prominent excuse. **POWERLESSNESS OF WILL!** Who does not make this excuse in life? II. The other great excuse which is so freely given is the **LACK OF OPPORTUNITY**. He who has the will has not the one requisite, the one condition of success, the longed-for opportunity. The poor man with his tastes envies the rich their command over the forces of life. The struggling student by his midnight lamp, with his book borrowed from the library, sighs as he sees the elegantly bound but unopened volumes of those who have abundant opportunities but no appreciation of their hidden treasures, or will to read them. The invalid upon the bed of pain, whose life is a dream of impossible realities, cherishing noble yearnings for the strife, sees life passing by, padlocked and bound, with every aspiration chained and fettered by the hopeless impossibility of ever achieving anything. Practical lessons—1. This very incompleteness of our nature shows us the soul's rightful demand for another life without these limiting human conditions. 2. Right in the midst of these voices of life, these excuses for our failure, from whatever source these excuses come, the religion of Jesus Christ appears as a new creation of power. 3. Just when we feel that our motive power is failing us, or that we are helpless in our surroundings, and are lacking an opportunity for the exercise of our suppressed faculties, the Spirit of God, who is the Comforter of the sanctified heart of man and the Inspirer of his better nature, appears with His Divine mission, and opens the way out of dead levels and land-locked vistas, into new and unforeseen stretches of existence. What a power there is in this thought of the soul's higher deliverance by the interposing hand of the Spirit of God, lifting us out of our poor everyday life! (*W. W. Newton.*) *Bible neglect reprov'd*:—The general division of "the learned" and "the unlearned" is introduced as offering an excuse for the not understanding the revelation of God. There is diversity, indeed, in the excuse itself, but there is thorough agreement upon the point, that, from some reason or another, the Bible is unintelligible; the one class taking refuge in the alleged obscurity of Scripture, and the other in their own defective education. None are represented as actually throwing scorn upon the book, but all render it a kind of involuntary homage. And we believe that no truer description could be given of the great body of men, considered relative to the light in which they



view Scripture. If there were anything like a general suspicion that the Bible is not what it professes itself—a revelation from God, there would be nothing to surprise us in the general neglect with which it is treated; we should quite expect that if there were doubt as to the origin there would, for the most part, be indifference as to the contents; but with the great body of men its origin is no more brought into question than is the duty of preparing for eternity. And here we have a manifest inconsistency, to be accounted for only on the supposition that men have provided themselves with some specious apology. I. We shall consider, therefore, THE CASE AND APOLOGY OF THE LEARNED. There is something of truth in the representation that the Bible is a sealed book. We always regard it as a standing proof of the divinity of the volume, that it is not to be unfolded by the processes which we apply to a mere human composition, and that every attempt to enter deeply into its meaning, without the assistance of its Author, issues in nothing but conjecture and confusion. But in all these excuses, however specious, and however, in a certain sense, grounded on a truth, there is nothing to warrant that refusal to examine Holy Writ which they are invented to justify. We know of no conclusion which can be fairly drawn from the confessed mysteriousness of Scripture, and the consequent need of a superhuman interpreter, but that the volume should never be approached in our own wisdom, and never without prayer for the teaching of God's Spirit. If it would be our duty to study the volume were it not sealed, it must be equally our duty to study it when, though sealed, the way is prescribed in which it may be opened. We have only to bring this consideration into the account, and there is an end of all arguing from the obscurity of the study of Scripture. II. THE CASE AND APOLOGY OF THE UNLEARNED MAN. Here, again, the excuse is based on a truth, but nevertheless, it in no degree justifies neglect. It is of vast importance that the poor be set right in this matter, and that they be taught that there is no necessary connection, as they seem to suppose, between scholarship and salvation. It is easier for the educated man to become, what is called a skilful divine, but it is not one jot easier for him to discover and follow the narrow path of life. Indeed, if there be advantage at all, it is on the side of the unlearned. If the understanding the Bible, so as to become morally advantaged by its statements, depend on the influences of the Holy Ghost, it is clear that the learned may read much and gain no spiritual benefit, and the unlearned read little and yet be mightily profited. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Learned and unlearned*.—The passage is interesting as illustrating the diffusion of literary education in Isaiah's time (*Jer. v. 4, 5*). (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Gradual revelation*.—Sir Joshua Reynolds says that when he first visited Italy to make the acquaintance of the celebrated masterpieces of art he was much cast down. The renowned masters maintained towards him a quiet and dignified silence; they refused to confide to him their thoughts. He gazed steadfastly at the wondrous pictures whose fame had filled the world, and could not behold their glory. Persevering, however, in his studies, the pictures gradually began, one after another, to raise their veils and permit him to have an occasional peep at their rare beauty; they softly whispered to him a few of their secrets; and as he continued unwavering in his devotion, they at last flung away their reserve, showed themselves with an open face, and revealed to him the wealth of beautiful ideas that was lodged in them. (*J. C. Jones.*) *The Holy Spirit the Illuminator*.—I remember to have heard from one who was a spectator at the time, of his having once seen a little child playing upon a headland over the sea, who took a telescope from the hand of one near him, and handed it to a blind old sailor who was sitting on the cliff, and the child asked the blind man to sweep the far horizon and tell him with the glass what ships were there. The old man, however, could only turn bitterly towards the child with those sightless eyes of his; and, it seems to me, that you might as well give a telescope to a sightless man as to give the Bible to a man whom you do not suppose to possess the guidance of the Spirit. (*Bp. W. Alexander.*)

Vers. 13, 14. This people draw near Me with their mouth.—*Ritualism*.—When any form so obtrudes itself as to be a hindrance instead of a help to the worshipper, that is ritualism. (*Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone.*) *Formalism*.—All vice is said to be an abuse of virtue; all evil, good run mad. Generosity may become extravagance. So formalism really consists in the abuse of that which, up to a certain point, is absolutely necessary, which, up to a further point, may be helpful, but which, carried to an extreme, becomes a snare and a sin.

(D. Jones Hamar.) *Formalism in doctrine and life*:—That we may see clearly who the formalist is, think of this truth: that there are formalism of doctrine, and formalism of life and practice, distinguishable and yet connected. 1. Formalism of doctrine—what is that? In one of its lowest phases we frequently meet with it. Have you not come across men who say “Yes” to every assertion of truth that you make; men who make you almost angry by their persistency in declaration of agreement? There are very few of all the thousands who are not, and know they are not, servants of Christ, who take the pains to deny what they nevertheless do not really accept. What can you say to such men? You cannot argue, for they agree with you already. You cannot appeal to them, for their creed seems to compass all that you hold as true. 2. There is such a thing as formality of worship and life. Just as truth must be put into words, but the word is not the truth, so worship has to be put into some expression, but the expression is not the worship. Isaiah’s great charge against the people was that they had reversed the thing entirely. (*Ibid.*) *Formalism unsatisfying*:—What must be the creed of the formalist in worship and in life? This: that what is said to be the means of grace is grace itself; that the mechanical reading of the Bible, without any reverent, hungering spirit, communicates in some mysterious fashion heavenly truth; that the prostration of the body, while another offers prayer, brings blessing; that to sing a hymn, be its meaning felt or not, is an expression of praise; that these things, with the enduring of the infliction of half an hour’s sermon, constitute Christianity. There is too much of formalism in the best of us. What is the creed of the formal worshipper? This: “God doth not know, neither is there knowledge in the Most High”; that He who receives the humble adorations of archangels will accept from men not only the imperfect praises they can render, not only the scarce articulate waiting of the troubled spirit, panting forth its prayer for help, but the sound of song without the spirit, the utterance of petition without desire; that He who searches all hearts is deceived, as men prostrate their bodies, and accepts that as homage; or that He cares for nothing, and to mock His presence is no insult. Does that creed shape itself in accordance with your ideas of God? Yet it is just an interpretation of the practice of the man whose worship is nothing more than a form. And as it affects yourself is it satisfactory? Does it do you any good? The sin in the heart is not to be cured by any sort of outward observance. The truth of God is not to be reached by any sort of mechanical contrivance. This Book has no mysterious sanctity in its paper and print, or in the sound of its words. It is the meaning and the spirit that alone are valuable. Our faith passes on the wings of the things that are seen and temporal, up to the things that are unseen and eternal, through the word to catch the revelation, through prayer and praise to hold communion with God. Why trifle with your nature’s deepest wants? Why mock the everlasting love? There is a reality in prayer. There is an expression of gratitude which inspires praise. There is a Saviour of sinners. Come to Him. He only, appearing and speaking through the means He has appointed, can take away the burden and the sting of sin, and give to the weary rest. (*Ibid.*) *The danger of formal worship*:—The best commentary on our text is just the history of the reigns during which Isaiah prophesied. I. IT WAS NO SLIGHT CRIME WITH WHICH THE PEOPLE OF JUDAH WERE ACTUALLY CHARGEABLE—it was, indeed, a denial of God’s sovereignty, although by that very sovereignty it was that they and their fathers had for seven hundred years been in possession of the land of Canaan. Though they might make an outward profession of respect for the ordinances of God, yet the spirit by which they were actuated was essentially an atheistical spirit, inasmuch as with all the outward observance of Divine ordinances they looked for continued prosperity or deliverance from adversity, not to the wisdom of God, but to their own counsels, and the help promised to them by their idolatrous allies. II. THE JUDGMENT THREATENED was in accordance with the nature and manifestation of their sin. They were not to be overwhelmed with irresistible calamity, in order to punish their flagrant idolatry; but they were to be left to the effect of their own devices. They were to work by their own skill, and in so doing to be working their own ruin: and when all their plans were brought to their completion, the effect was to be to bring utter desolation on the land (ver. 14). III. MANKIND, WITH ALL THEIR VARIETIES OF CHARACTER, ARE ESSENTIALLY SO MUCH THE SAME IN ALL AGES, and the Scriptures do, on the one hand, so graphically portray the leading features of human nature, and, on the other, set forth so clearly the great unchange-

able principles of the Divine administration, that none who read that book with soberness and attention, and look around them on the world with ordinary observation, can fail to see that the sins of individuals or of nations there reprovèd are, with some modifications it may be, the same sins which are still prevalent, and that, if unrepented of and unforgiven, their consequences must in the end be the same. No nation, it is true, is precisely in the same circumstances with the kingdom of Judah, but still the great principles of the Divine government are unchangeable and eternal. It is one of these, that sin is the reproach of any people. If there be among us, possessing as we do a full revelation of the will of God, a disposition to deny or overlook His supremacy as Sovereign Disposer of all events, and to trust to the wisdom of human counsels for national deliverance or prosperity, without any devout recognition of absolute dependence upon Him, are we not chargeable with the very sin with which Judah of old was charged, and which was the source of all their multiplied offences? And if, along with this, there be a profession of faith—an external compliance with the ordinances of the Gospel, are we not in the condition of drawing near to God with our mouths, and honouring Him with our lips, while our heart is far removed from Him? (*R. Gordon, D.D.*) *A wrong religious attitude*:—This spiritual insensibility of the people is the outcome of its whole religious attitude, which is insincere, formal, and traditional. (*J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Plain speaking*:—Let us use these words (ver. 13) as Jesus Christ used them in Matthew (xv. 7). There are three points—1. The importance of plain speaking on all questions affecting the interests of truth. Jesus Christ was pre-eminently a plain speaker. 2. The far-seeing spirit of prophecy. Jesus Christ said to the men of His day, “Esaias prophesied of you.” Observe the unity of the moral world; observe the unchangeableness of God’s laws; see how right is ever right and wrong is ever wrong; how the centuries make no difference in the quality of righteousness, and fail to work any improvement in the deformity of evil. If any man would see himself as he really is, let him look into the mirror of Holy Scripture. God’s book never gets out of date, because it deals with eternal principles and covers the necessities of all mankind. Let us then study the Word of God more closely. No man can truly know human nature who does not read two Bibles,—namely, the Bible of God as written in the Holy Scriptures, and the Bible of God as written in his own heart and conscience. Human nature was never so expounded as it is expounded in holy writ. 3. The high authority of the righteous censor. When Jesus Christ spoke in this case He did not speak altogether in His own name. He used the name of Esaias. All time is on the side of the righteous man; all history puts weapons into the hands of the man who would be valiant for truth. The righteous man does not draw his authority from yesterday. The credentials of the righteous man are not written with ink that is hardly dry yet. It draws from all the past. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *True prayer*:—The power of a petition is not in the roof of the mouth, but in the root of the heart. (*J. Trapp.*) *Lip-service*:—Panchcowrie, a Hindu convert, thus spoke one day in the market: “Some think they will avert God’s displeasure by frequently taking His name on their lips, and saying, ‘O excellent God!’ ‘O Ocean of Wisdom!’ ‘O Sea of Love!’ and so on. To be sure, God is all this; but who ever heard of a debt being paid in words instead of rupees!” (*Sunday at Home.*) *The best treasure*:—A rabbi, who lived nearly twenty years before Christ was born, set his pupils thinking by asking them, “What is the best thing for a man to possess?” One of them replied, “A kind nature”; another, “A good companion”; another, “A good neighbour.” But one of them, named Eleazer, said, “A good heart.” “I like your answer best, Eleazer,” said the master, “for it includes all the rest.” (*Christian Age.*) *Heartless prayers*:—“I met in India an intelligent Sikh from the Punjab, and asked him about his religion. He replied, ‘I believe in one God, and I repeat my prayers, called Jappi, every morning and evening. These prayers occupy six pages of print, but I can get through them in little more than ten minutes.’ He seemed to pride himself on this rapid recitation as a work of increased merit.” *Fashionable church-going*:—M. went to church because it was the right thing to do: God was one of the heads of society, and His drawing-rooms had to be attended. (*G. Macdonald, LL.D.*) *Their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men.—A fear of God taught by the precept of men*:—I. THERE IS A FEAR TOWARDS GOD WHICH IS TAUGHT BY THE PRECEPT OF MEN. It is unquestionable that, although it is nothing but the recklessness of infidelity which would speak of religion as an engine of state policy, still no state policy

can be effective which looks not to religion as an auxiliary. If there could be taken off from a community those restraints which are imposed on it by the doctrine of the soul's immortality, and of a future dispensation of rewards and punishments, there would be done more towards the introduction of a universal lawlessness and profligacy than if the statute-books of the land were torn up and the courts of justice levelled with the ground. But if religion be thus susceptible of being employed with advantage as an auxiliary, there is a corresponding risk of its being resorted to as a human engine and not as a Divine. All inculcations of religion which are dictated by the conscientiousness that it is politic to stand by religion would turn into inculcations of infidelity the moment it should appear that it would be politic to stand by infidelity. It is a possible case that rulers might do on the political principle what Hezekiah did on the God-fearing principle—they might busy themselves with exacting from their subjects attention to the laws of the Almighty, and so might bring round great outward conformity to many commands of the Bible. The result in the two cases might be similar: the tokens of the absence of God's fear might be swept from the land; and there might, on the contrary, be seen on the whole outspread of the population, appearances of the maintenance of that fear. What is to be said of that fear of God which seems to discover itself in its attention to ordinances, but which is only dictated by habit—or respect for appearances—or concern for religion as an engine of state? If we could mark each individual, as he enters the house, who is only brought hither by custom—by the feeling that it is decorous to come—by the sense that it is right that old institutions should be upheld, why, since in the whole assemblage of such motives there is no real recognition of the authority of Jehovah, we should be bound to say of all those who thus render to God a spurious and inferior homage, that their fear towards Him was "taught by the precept of men." The motive or sentiment which is the prime energy in producing that fear towards God which is not according to His word is the opinion of merit, the attachment of worth to this or that action, which is ordinarily described as self-righteousness. The cases of the fear towards God, which is taught by the precept of men, might be further multiplied. If you went the round of even the religious world you would find much of a restless endeavour to bring down godliness to something of the human standard. II. THE FEAR TOWARDS GOD, TAUGHT BY MAN'S PRECEPT, IS MOST OFFENSIVE IN THE SIGHT OF THE ALMIGHTY. We conclude the fact of the offensiveness from God's express determination of punishing the Jews with a signal punishment. Our simple business is therefore to search after the reason of this offensiveness. 1. The fear must be a defective fear. If you take your standard from aught else than the Bible, you will necessarily have a standard which is low and imperfect; and although you may act unflinchingly up to this standard, where it is the standard of other men's opinions or long practice or custom, you stand accountable for the adoption of the standard. 2. This fear involves a contempt of revelation; and on this account as well as on the former most peculiarly incurs the wrath of Jehovah. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) "*Their fear toward Me*":—R.V. "Their fear of Me," i.e., their piety, religion. "Is taught by the precept of men." Better as R.V.: "is (or, "has become") a commandment of men which hath been taught";—a human ordinance learned by rote (*Matt. xv. 1-9*). This pregnant criticism expresses with epigrammatic force the fundamental difference between the pagan and the biblical conceptions of religion. Religion, being personal fellowship with God, cannot be "learned" from men, but only by revelation (*Matt. xvi. 17*). (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*)

Vers. 15, 16. Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord.—*The jolly of acting separately from God*:—I. THEIR POLITICS DESCRIBED (ver. 15). The consultations they had about their own safety they kept to themselves, and never asked God's advice concerning them. See what foolish, fruitless pains sinners take in their sinful ways; they seek deep, they sink deep, to hide their counsel from the Lord, who sits in heaven and laughs at them. A practical disbelief of God's omniscience is at the bottom both of the carnal worship and carnal confidences of the hypocrites (*Psa. xciv. 7; Ezek. viii. 12, ix. 9*). II. THE ABSURDITY OF THEIR POLITICS DEMONSTRATED (ver. 16). Your inverting the order of things, and thinking to make God's providence give attendance on your projects, and that God must know no more than you think fit, which is perfectly "turning things upside down," and beginning at the wrong end,—

"it shall be esteemed as the potter's clay"; i.e., God will turn and manage you, and all your counsels, with as much ease, and as absolute a power, as the potter forms and fashions his clay. They that think to hide their counsels from God—1. In effect deny Him to be their Creator. 2. Or, which comes to the same thing, deny Him to be a wise Creator. (*M. Henry.*)

Vers. 17-19. Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field.—*The fruitful field and the forest*.—The comparison is evidently not between the high and the low, but between the cultivated and the wild, the field and the forest. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *The first last and the last first*.—The only natural interpretation of the verse is that which regards it as prophetic of a mutual change of condition, the first becoming last and the last first. If the previous context has respect to the Jews under the old dispensation, nothing can be more appropriate or natural than to understand the verse before us as foretelling the excision of the unbelieving Jews and the admission of the Gentiles to the Church. (*Ibid.*) *Jew and Gentile*.—I. I shall show HOW THE LORD HAS BEEN PLEASED TO VERIFY THIS SCRIPTURE GENERALLY. II. THE SIGNS THAT MUST ACCOMPANY THE WORK IN THESE LATTER DAYS. 1. The deaf shall hear the words of the book. 2. The blind shall see out of obscurity and darkness. 3. "The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord," &c. III. IMPROVE THE SUBJECT. (*F. G. Crossman.*)

Vers. 18, 19. The deaf . . . the blind . . . the meek . . . the poor.—*The Gospel day*.—I. We may regard these words as containing a DESCRIPTION OF THE STATE IN WHICH THE GOSPEL FINDS THOSE TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED. The epithets are designed to be descriptive of their spiritual character. II. THE PLEASING INTIMATION WHICH THE TEXT CONTAINS OF THEIR RECOVERY TO A BETTER AND HAPPIER CONDITION. "In that day the deaf shall hear, and the blind shall see." That is, the spiritual ignorance and insensibility of men shall be subdued, and the delusion and stupidity of idolatrous Gentiles in particular, shall be succeeded by a clear and saving knowledge of the truth. 1. This prophecy may be considered as receiving its fulfilment, in part, in every instance in which an individual is savingly converted to God. 2. But the prophecy refers to something on a more extensive and general scale. 3. The words, besides intimating the fact of their recovery, appear also to intimate the means by which their recovery shall be effected. "They shall hear the words of the book." What is "the book" the hearing of whose "words" is connected with results so wondrous and delightful? (1) Is it the book of nature? Alas, that book, all radiant as it is with the Divine glory of its Author, conveys little or no instruction on spiritual subjects to those whom sin has covered with its dark and stupefying shade. (2) Or is it the book of human philosophy and arts and sciences? The history of all past ages, to say nothing of the present times, laughs to scorn all such pretensions on the part of "the wisdom of this world." (3) An inspired apostle tells us that "the mystery" of God is to be "made known to all nations for the obedience of faith, by the scriptures of the prophets"; and "the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth: to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (4) And though not designed, perhaps, to intimate so much, yet does not the expression "they shall hear the words of the book" serve to remind us of the mode in which, chiefly, this "book" is intended to diffuse among mankind the experimental knowledge of the "truth and grace" which it reveals? Does it not remind us that, for that purpose, it is to be proclaimed by the oral teaching of a living ministry? III. THESE LATTER WORDS WE MAY SUPPOSE TO BE DESCRIPTIVE OF CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES WITH WHICH THE SPIRITUAL RECOVERY OF MEN IS FOUND TO BE CONNECTED. 1. As well as the preceding words, they are applicable to cases of individual conversion. In this view they remind us of the state to which the sinner's heart is humbled when, having heard "the words of the book," he is made to tremble under the threatenings which it thunders forth against the guilty and impenitent; and when, having begun to "see out of obscurity and out of darkness," he discovers the tremendous ruin on the brink of which he has been standing. 2. But then, besides describing the state to which the sinner's mind is humbled in the first instance, these words remind us also of the blessedness of that state to which, when he is once made truly meek and poor in spirit, he is designed to be exalted. For the "meek shall increase their joy in the Lord." At first, indeed, this joy may not be anything beyond the joy of hope. But this joy he "shall increase." It shall grow "brighter and brighter

to that perfect day" in which it shall become a "fulness of joy" at God's right hand for evermore. 3. If these words be more extensively applied, as having reference to those nations and communities of men amongst whom the Gospel is already known, or as having reference to the whole of that world throughout whose wide extent it must ultimately be proclaimed, they still point out the circumstances under which this Gospel shall be "the power of God unto salvation," and the delightful effects which shall ensue on its reception, in the increase of human happiness, and in the turning of men from a vain confidence in "lying vanities," to faith in the one living and eternal God. 4. It would appear also to be intimated, that these delightful results of evangelical instruction should be especially exemplified in the case of the most despised and degraded of mankind. For they are "the poor amongst men," who shall especially "rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." 5. These things are delightful to contemplate; but let us not forget, in the pleasure of such contemplations, the personal and practical interest which we are called to take in them. (*J. Crowther.*)

**Ver. 19. The poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.**—*Reasons why the poor may rejoice in God*:—One of the most striking proofs of the Divine origin of Christianity is its universal adaptation to the condition and the wants of the whole family of men. It is not designed to be the religion of a sect or an age, but the religion of the whole world. The universality of its character proves that it comes from Him who sustains all, preserves all, feeds and blesses all. We propose to assign reasons why the poor may well "rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." I. BECAUSE CHRIST IN HIS HUMILIATION CONDESCENDED TO BE POOR, AND THUS HONOURED AND HALLOWED THE CONDITION OF THE POOR. Who of all the legislators, moralists, and teachers that have appeared in the world ever conferred such honour on humanity, or displayed such regard for the poor? Who, after this, shall dare to look down upon honest poverty? Who, after this, shall dare to convert want into a crime? Let the poor, then, "rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." He can enter into your sorrows, and feel for your wretchedness. II. BECAUSE THE BLESSINGS OF CHRIST'S SALVATION ARE PROVIDED AND BESTOWED GRATUITOUSLY, AND ARE THUS PECULIARLY ADAPTED TO THE CONDITION OF THE POOR. 1. Money has been paid down for the imperial purple of Rome,—the empire of the Cæsars has been sold to the highest bidder; but were salvation only to be purchased with money, or did it require resources in man himself, black despair might seize and petrify the heart of every poor man. 2. Or were salvation a work that required expensive and tedious elaboration at home,—were it like the erection of a palace, or the building of a pyramid, or the construction of such vast works as those by which you cross a gulf or span a sea,—alas for the poor! for then their souls must perish. But let the poor among men rejoice, for the salvation which the Holy One of Israel provides and bestows is a salvation "without money and without price." 3. There is another circumstance which ought mightily to enhance these Gospel blessings in the estimation of the poor; namely, the exclusion from many earthly privileges to which poverty subjects them. It is very true that many of the simpler, purer, and more exquisite pleasures of life are as free to the poor as to the rich. But in this world poverty does exclude from some privileges. But, oh! how does my heart, as that of a poor man, exult in the free salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ! Here, in the Gospel of Jesus, is full compensation for all the contumely and scorn cast on humble poverty. III. BECAUSE, IN ADDITION TO ALL THAT HE HIMSELF HAS DONE FOR THEM, HIS AUTHORITY, AS A LAW-GIVER, ENJOINS SPECIAL ATTENTION, CHARITY, AND SYMPATHY TOWARDS THE POOR. IV. BECAUSE THE CONDITION OF POVERTY IS MORE FAVOURABLE THAN THAT OF RICHES TO THE RECEPTION OF CHRIST, AND TO THE DISPLAY OF RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLE. The Saviour's language seems fully to warrant this sentiment when He says, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!"—and again: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." Poverty seems to be the favourite element in which religious principle is produced and nurtured. It is in the atmosphere of the poor that the light and heat of Divine truth love to radiate. (*J. French.*)

**Vers. 20, 21. For the terrible one is brought to nought.**—*Scorners and their punishment*:—Observe what had been the wickedness of these scorners, for which they should be cut off. 1. They ridiculed the prophets and the serious

professors of religion. They despised them, and did their utmost to bring them into contempt; they were scorers, and sat in the seat of the scornful. 2. They lay at catch for an occasion against them. By their spies they watch for iniquity, to see if they can lay hold on anything that is said or done that may be called an iniquity. Or, they themselves watch for an opportunity to do mischief, as Judas did to betray our Lord Jesus. 3. They took advantage against them for the least slip of the tongue; and if anything were never so little said amiss, it served them to ground an indictment upon. They made a man, though he were never so wise and good a man, though he were a man of God, an offender for a word, a word mischosen or misplaced, when they could not but know that it was well meant. They cavilled at every word that the prophets spoke to them by way of administration, though never so innocently spoken, and without any design to affront them. They put the worst construction upon what was said, and made it criminal by strained innuendos. 4. They did all they could to bring those into trouble that dealt faithfully with them and told them of their faults. Those that reprove in the gates, namely, reprovers by office, that were bound by the duty of their place as prophets, as judges, and magistrates to show people their transgressions, they hated these, and laid snares for them. It is next to impossible for the most cautious to place their words so warily as to escape such snares. 5. They pervert judgment, and will never let an honest man carry an honest cause; they "turn aside the just for a thing of nought," *i.e.*, they condemn him, or give the cause against him upon no evidence, no colour or pretence whatsoever. They run a man down, and misrepresent him by all the little acts and tricks they can devise, as they did our Saviour. But wait a while, and God will not only bring forth their righteousness, but cut off and consume these scorers. (*M. Henry.*)

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### CHAPTER XXX.

**VERS. 1-3. Woe to the rebellious children.—A foolish mission:—**In chapter xxx. the negotiations with Egypt are represented as having reached a further stage: an embassy, despatched for the purpose of concluding a treaty, is already on its way to the court of the Pharaohs. Isaiah takes the opportunity of reiterating his sense of the fruitlessness of the mission, and derides the folly of those who expect from it any substantial result. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) **The only Counsellor:—**These words contain a most important lesson for all such as have anything to do with managing the affairs of nations; and it would be well for the world if its rulers would give heed to that lesson, and keep guard against the sins on account of which the prophet here denounces woe against the rulers of Judah. They entered into an alliance with Pharaoh, with the view of gaining assistance from him which might enable them to cope with Sennacherib in the field. This is just what a statesman, who plumed himself on his wisdom in these days, would do. Yet it is for doing this very thing that the prophet Isaiah in the text denounces woe against them. Their conduct therefore must have been sinful. Let us try to discover in what their sin lay. 1. They were making use of human means to ward off the danger which threatened them. Not that this in itself is altogether wrong in God's eyes. On the contrary, we are so placed here on earth, in the midst of so many wants and necessities, and so helpless by ourselves, that we are compelled to be for ever making use of human and earthly means. Only, we ought to make use of these means with the conviction that they are merely instruments in the hands of Him who can alone endow them with the power of being of use to us. This is what the rulers of Judah forgot and entirely lost sight of. They trusted in Pharaoh. We are all apt to take counsel of ourselves, of our own understandings, our own wishes, our own convenience, our passions, our interest, our sloth, our purses, our appetites. Or we take counsel of our friends, of our neighbours, of such men as are esteemed to be quick and far-sighted, of every person, and of every thing, except of God. His counsel is the last we seek. Therefore does the prophet's woe fall upon us also. And why is it that we are so loth to take counsel of God? Our unwillingness can only proceed from an evil heart of unbelief; from that unbelief which loses sight of the Ruler and Lawgiver of the world, and which is prone to worship

whatever dazzles the senses and flatters our carnal nature. 2. But there was another feature in the conduct of the princes of Judah which deepened their sin. They were not merely putting their trust in an arm of flesh,—they who had been so strongly forbidden to trust in such vanities, and who had the living God to trust in: but the arm they were trusting to was the arm of Egypt. Egypt had from the first been the deadly enemy of the Israelites, and of their God. Egypt was the source from which all manner of idolatrous abominations had flowed in upon them: out of Egypt they had been called; and they were no longer to hold any intercourse with it. Therefore the prophet goes on to cry, “Woe to those who walk to go down into Egypt, to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!” and he declares that, because they do so, “the strength of Pharaoh shall be their shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt their confusion.” Nor will it be otherwise with us. If we are guilty of their sin we shall not escape their woe. And alas! how often in moments of fear, of distress,—when some danger starts up suddenly in our path, when the enemy seems to be hard at hand, and just ready to overwhelm us,—do we feel tempted to go down into Egypt, in the hope of strengthening ourselves with the strength of Pharaoh, and of sheltering ourselves with the shadow of Egypt! Satan at such moments is always close at our ear, whispering to us, that, if we will but take counsel of him, and do as he bids us, he will help us out of our difficulty. It should be borne in mind that, every time we sin we weaken our souls, we cripple our good feelings, we blunt our conscience, we drive away the Spirit of God from our hearts. Therefore, instead of our being better able to meet the next temptation, the odds against us are increased. (*J. C. Hare, M.A.*) *The Jews' dependence on Egypt.*—The advantages which the Jews promised themselves from their alliance with Egypt were these—1. The Egyptians abounded in chariots and horses, which the Jews were destitute of. For Palestine, being a country full of steep hills and narrow difficult ways, was in many places impassable by horses, and therefore their beasts of burden were camels, asses, and mules, which are not apt to start, but tread sure in dangerous ways. These served them very commodiously in times of peace. But when they were invaded by armies of the Assyrians and Chaldeans, who had troops of horse, and multitudes of chariots, they wanted the like forces to oppose them; and such the Egyptians could very well supply them with. 2. Besides, the Assyrians and Chaldeans were at that time the most formidable Powers of the East, ambitious of universal monarchy, and threatening to subdue Egypt as well as other rich kingdoms. On which account the Egyptians were jealous of them, and therefore were most easily prevailed upon, and more cheaply engaged to assist the Jews, or any other people in their wars against them. (*W. Reading, M.A.*) *God's prohibition of alliance with Egypt.*—The reasons why God prohibited His people to confederate with the Egyptians, are these—1. He had delivered their forefathers out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, stretched out from Heaven, and unassisted by any human means. He had manifested Himself to be far above all their gods, in that He triumphed over them in the ten plagues, and drowned their king and army in the Red Sea. Notwithstanding all which sufficient convictions, the Egyptians still persisted in their gross idolatry; which might justly provoke God to forbid His people any dealing with them. 2. Their applying to Egypt for aid against their enemies, was derogatory to the honour of God, who having anciently demonstrated His ability to save His people, and having promised still to vouchsafe them His protection in proportion to their obedience, these idolaters might be apt to conclude that His former power was now decayed, and that their gods had gained the ascendant over Him, since they were called in to the protection of His people. 3. An Egyptian had proved fatal to Israel in their happiest state; I mean the daughter of an Egyptian king, who was one of the wives of King Solomon, and helped with other strange women to entice him to idolatry. The immediate consequence of which, by the just judgment of God, was the division of the twelve tribes into two kingdoms, who often waged unnatural wars one with another. 4. God had, in general, forbidden His people to make confederacies with any of the nations round about them, lest they should defile themselves with their idolatrous principles and abominable practices; or lest they should put their trust in man and make flesh their arm, and their heart depart from the Lord. (*Ibid.*) “Cover with a covering.”—Perhaps, “weave a web,” hatch a scheme. (*A. B. Davidson, LL.D.*) R.V. marg. gives two translations between which it is difficult to choose. The latter is perhaps preferable, although the noun



does not occur elsewhere in the sense of "libation." The allusion would be to drink-offerings accompanying the conclusion of a treaty. (*J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Adding sin to sin*.—The sin of forsaking God, and trusting in the arm of flesh. to their sin of drunkenness (chap. xxviii. 8), and their other sins. (*W. Day, M.A.*)

Ver. 7. Their strength is to sit still.—A policy in an epigram.—Sometimes a policy is summed up in an epigram, or in an easily quotable sentence; and it can be used as a war-cry or as an election-cry; it can be adapted to political uses of many sorts. Thus it was said of the Bourbons that "they forgot nothing, and remembered nothing." It was said of an illustrious statesman in Europe that his policy was "blood and iron." In relation to many persons we are recommended to use "masterly inactivity"—to be appearing capable of doing miracles, and yet to take infinite care not to attempt the performance of one of them. This is precisely the spirit of the text. The peoples to whom the words were addressed were mocked, and the paraphrase which the spirit of the text would justify is this:—They have great mouths, but say nothing; the hippopotamus cannot make his voice heard; the ox-mouth is closed: their energy is inaction; when they are about to come forward to do wonders they shrink back and do nothing. It is a taunt—an exclamation wholly ironical, thrown in the face of a detested enemy, or an absconding friend, or one who has great appearance of energy, and yet is unable to move the tiniest of his fingers. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) "*Rahab, that sitteth still*":—So full were Egyptian politics of bluster and big language, that the Hebrews had a nickname for Egypt. They called her Rahab—"Stormy-speech," "Blusterer," "Braggart." It was the term also for the crocodile, as being a "monster," so that there was a picturesqueness as well as moral aptness in the name. Ay, says Isaiah, catching at the old name, and putting to it another which describes Egyptian helplessness and inactivity, I call her "*Rahab sit-still*," "*Braggart-that-sitteth-still*," "*Stormy-speech stay-at-home*." Blustering and inactivity, blustering and sitting still, that is her character. "For Egypt helpeth in vain and to no purpose." (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *Strength and stillness*.—The context reveals two things. (1) A great national danger. (2) A great national sin. Wherein is the truth of the statement, that man's strength is in sitting still? or, rather, what is meant by sitting still? It is not the stillness of indolence. Indolence is weakness—is ruin. Activity is the condition of strength. Industry is essential to progress in all that is great and happy. What, then, is the stillness? It is the stillness of unbounded trust in God. I. STILLNESS OF CONFIDENCE IN RELATION TO GOD'S REDEMPTIVE PROVISION IS STRENGTH. The sacrifice of Christ is all-sufficient. II. STILLNESS OF CONFIDENCE IN RELATION TO YOUR FUTURE HISTORY IS STRENGTH. "Take no thought for the morrow," &c. III. STILLNESS OF CONFIDENCE IN RELATION TO PRESENT PROVIDENTIAL TRIALS IS STRENGTH. The Israelites, with piled mountains on each side of them, the sea rolling before them, and Pharaoh and his host approaching them, were exhorted by their leader to "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." Peter slept between two soldiers; and Paul said, "None of these things move me." (*Homilist.*) *Strength in sitting still*.—I. SOME THINGS TO WHICH THE SENTENCE OF THE TEXT WILL NOT APPLY. 1. It will not apply when we have to get our daily bread. We are to be diligent in business, as well as fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. 2. Neither do we say so when learning is to be acquired. This is to be sought by application, and earned by incessant toil. Neither is our preaching by sitting still. If any think to enter the ministry that they may sit still, and spend a life of ease, they utterly mistake the office. 3. Nor when any temptation is to be resisted, or any evil overcome. You are to resist the tempter. And you are to maintain that particular virtue, which is in direct defiance of the particular temptation. If you are tempted, there is another thing which you can do. You can flee. Safety is often in flight. Joseph fled. "Flee youthful lusts." 4. Nor does the text apply when duties of any kind are to be done. Idleness is a base condition. Better dig a hole and fill it up again. Better roll a stone up and down a hill, than pass your time in listlessness and languor. There are duties belonging to every state of life. Let them be attended to in promptitude and despatch. 5. Nor is the text applicable when good works are to be undertaken. We have many instructions in Scripture on this subject. "Be not weary in well-doing," &c. "Be steadfast, unmovable," &c. "These things," says St. Paul, "I will that ye affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God,

may be careful to maintain good works." 6. We do not say it when the heavenly prize of eternal life is to be contended for. II. STATE THE CONDITION OF THINGS TO WHICH THE AXIOM DOES APPLY. 1. It will apply to many important questions concerning the salvation of the soul. It will apply to the expiation of guilt. So respecting regeneration. "Ye must be born again." There must be wrought an inward change. It will be wrought of God. And the Spirit of God works when, how, and where He pleases. 2. There are some matters belonging to our daily and nightly life, in which the principle is likewise of great value and importance. For example, the evening is come. The day's labour is finished. It is time to cease. God says to you, Lie down; go to sleep. And when you sleep, "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Be not afraid. God will keep both the city and the watchman. Then, here is God's own day. This is the day when God emphatically says, "Sit still"; and in quietness and rest is your strength. Be not afraid. Commerce will be uninjured, and none the worse for your being quiet on this day. You will return to your occupations with augmented might and vigour on the morrow. 3. Then, again, there are providential conjunctures, in which we can do nothing, in which every effort and interference of ours is of no avail. And now the end of all this is manifest. Man's chief wisdom is—(1) To be active and diligent in all his appointed fields of labour and exertion. (2) To be tranquil, and resigned, and passive in matters over which he has no control. (3) To trust God, and acquiesce in the Divine will in everything. (*J. Stratten.*) *Passive hours* :—I. The ATTITUDE enjoined by the text. What is it to "sit still"? 1. It indicates a condition of silence. Times occur for silence before men—when it is best to refrain from all vindications touching our character and doings. There are seasons for silence before God—times when our lips are neither opened in complaint nor importunity. "Rest in the Lord (be silent to the Lord), and wait patiently for Him." 2. A condition of resting is suggested. We must resign our opinions, anxieties, merit, strength, and resources, looking simply into heaven. 3. It is also the attitude of waiting. "I bide my time," is the motto of one of our noble families, and he who can bide his time, or, to speak more accurately, can bide God's time, is perfect in the sublime art of sitting still. 4. The text also sets forth a condition of expectation. Sir Thomas Lawrence painted the portrait of the Duke of Wellington, and when the portrait was half finished, the Duke was represented as holding a watch in his hand, waiting for the Prussians at Waterloo. When the great soldier understood what the watch was intended to indicate, he observed, "That will never do. I was not waiting for the Prussians at Waterloo. Put a telescope in my hand, if you please, but no watch." The temper here enjoined is very different to stoicism, involving no sacrifice of sensibility; it is distinct from fatalism, because it recognises the good and righteous God freely acting in all the government of the world; and it cannot be confounded with despair, for its inspiration is faith and hope. II. THE SEVERAL OCCASIONS when the admonition before us is specially applicable. 1. In the development of our religious life we may sometimes remember the text with advantage. Spiritual life commences in the passive mood. 2. But "justified by faith" we often forget we must "live by faith," and by pure and simple faith pass into the highest stages of spiritual life. 3. There are two sides to a complete Christian life—the contemplative and enterprising, the hearkening and speaking, the receptive and communicative—and it is of prime importance that both sides receive full attention. 4. Distressed by the problems and tribulations of life we may justly rest in the passive mood. Sometimes we are bitterly bereaved. In these days when our eyes are full of heart-break let us not go down into the Egypt of carnal reason for light or help—only be still. God does not even expect us to say big words in such crises—only to be still. Sometimes we are prostrated by extreme physical suffering. Said a poor afflicted woman, "All that God requires from me now is to lie here and cough." Yes; simple suffering and quiet confidence—that, and nothing more. Sometimes we are defamed. When our reputation is unjustly eclipsed, are we to agitate and worry ourselves? Let us rather exemplify the maxim of Lavater: "I can wait"; let there be no impatience, no fretfulness, no bitterness. In the days of sorrowful surprise, of overwhelming misfortune, of sore dilemma, let us not go down into Egypt for wisdom to explain, or strength to bear, or consolation to soothe, but looking up to the everlasting Love, a whole army of fiery cars and coursers shall shelter and deliver us. 5. The counsel of the text is applicable to us when oppressed by spiritual conflict and

darkness. "Who is there among you that feareth the Lord," &c. (chap. 1. 10). 6. This monition is applicable to us also when we are discouraged in our evangelistic enterprises. The Indian juggler is said to contrive to make a flower grow from a seed to maturity before the eyes of the spectators in a few moments; and thus we expect the truth we sow to spring forth speedily bearing its rich crown of beauty and fruit. But alas! we wait, wait long, and sometimes sink into a state very like despair. Then again, when the triumph of the truth is delayed, workers are tempted to alloy it, with a view to its speedier popularity; hoping that in its debased form it may secure an entrance denied to pure doctrine. And yet once more, when the faith of Christ has not forthwith run and been glorified, the Church has been tempted to form political, artistic, and worldly alliances, which in the end only betray and mock. Paradoxical as it may seem, it is a grand thing for workers to "sit still"; having with both hands toiled for God, calmly and confidently to wait the issue (James v. 7, 8). The difficulty of rendering obedience to this injunction is really great. There is a sitting still easy enough and common enough, but to rest in God with an absolute faith is neither easy nor common. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *Over-solicitude injurious*:—Our solitudes, intermeddlings, overdoings ruin us, or, at least, bring us into many and sore distresses. 1. They do in regard to our character. When shall we understand we are clay in the Potter's hand, and our grand business the simple yielding of ourselves to the fashioning of God's sovereign Spirit? How often our overweening care, our intrusive curiosity, our vanity and self-will have spoiled God's grand handiwork, and arrested the growing completeness of our spirit! 2. And so in regard to our circumstances—our safety is in quietness. In days of tempest the helm is safest in charge of the pilot; in moments of alarm the reins are best in the driver's skilful grasp; and if the man overboard will only be still all the waves of the sea shall not drown him. Oh! when shall we learn the blessedness of resignation, the power of passivity, the victory of faith? (*Ibid.*) *The secret of spiritual power*:—I. REST IN ANOTHER NECESSARILY IMPLIES THAT WE MUST LEARN TO REST IN OURSELVES. No man has a right to say that he is living the Divine life, without faith, without patience, without trust in God, without that spirit of waiting upon God, to which all the Scriptures exhort and encourage us. The patient places himself in the hands of a physician, but he will keep meddling with the physician's prescriptions; he will keep taking nostrums of his own. And the physician says very properly, "Not so; this must not be. I can do nothing for you if it is so." And men who put their salvation into God's hands, as Israel ought to have done, must stand by that—stand by it always. II. As arising from this, WE ARE STRONG IN LIFE JUST AS WE LAY HOLD OF THIS PRINCIPLE and learn to restrain ourselves. (*W. Baxendale.*) *The stillness of faith* (with ver. 15):—Does this expression embody a universal principle—one applicable under all possible circumstances? The least consideration will convince us that this cannot be the case. 1. You are naturally, it may be, somewhat apathetic. I fear we all are so in religion—in the concerns of the soul. And this natural indolence is sometimes greatly strengthened by a false theology, a one-sided, overstrained evangelism, which, by for ever insisting on the one point of human inability, has a tendency to lull men asleep. And thus it is that multitudes sit down with folded hands, in an attitude of waiting, as they say, for I know not what mysterious influence from on high to visit their souls. The error is a very grievous one. Scripture bids us awake out of sleep, it bids us flee from the coming wrath, it bids us turn from sin unto God, avoid temptation, resist Satan, restrain our own evil tendencies; it bids us repent, and believe, and pray, and use the means of grace. 2. There is another class, however, who are likely to fall into an opposite error. They are not apathetic, their natural constitution of mind is the very reverse of this. These are your active, bustling, restless people. There is no quietness about them, no repose, no calmness. You read their character in their very look. There is an uneasy air, a feverishness, a fretfulness, characterising them and all their actions, which distinguish them from others, and place them in a class by themselves. When the Gospel comes to one of this class, saying, Cease from all efforts of your own for acceptance;—"your strength is to sit still, to rest in God, to believe in Jesus; in returning and rest thou shalt be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength,"—is there no risk that there be a temporary recoil from a system that thus comes so directly into collision with his individualism of character? His first prompting is to something quite different.

Let him have his own way, then; it is humbling he needs. It is not necessary we should follow him in his efforts; they are the same as the efforts of those who "go about to establish their own righteousness." We know what the result must be; nor are we mistaken, for by and by we find him by the Cross—he has sunk down there exhausted. Yet there are other occasions on which his natural constitution—strong, because deeply rooted—will rise up, and place itself in antagonism with the dealings of God; and chiefly, perhaps, in these two ways—duty and suffering. (1) Suffering. He is now a child of God, but not on that account exempt from chastisement; nay, rather on that very account exposed to it as part of that salutary discipline by which he is training up for Heaven. Perhaps such a man as he needs a severer discipline than that of a more quiet, subdued, restful disposition, to humble him, and wean him from all vain confidences; and so affliction comes in some shape or other—such as will touch him most acutely. We need not think it strange if he go down to Egypt for help; if he have recourse to false physicians; if, instead of looking to God, he trust in an arm of flesh to deliver him; if he weary under God's chastening hand, and wish it removed ere the end in view has been answered. He finds no rest till he returns to God, and says, He hath put me into the furnace, and here will I lie quietly till He take me out again. (2) Passing now from the sphere of suffering to that of duty, we find him maintaining the same conflict between the Divine authority and his own will. Remember he is essentially active. He loves a conspicuous position. It is not exactly that he is vain or ambitious, but something within him stimulates him to come forward; he feels as if he were formed for a position of usefulness and eminence; and perhaps he is right. Only he must wait God's time for this; he must suffer God to choose for him; and this is what he is rather unwilling to do. (*A. L. R. Foote.*) *The strength of the Church in troublous times*:—I. NEGATIVELY. 1. The strength of the Church in troublous times is not in listening to carnal counsel. 2. Nor in trusting in carnal confidences. II. POSITIVELY. 1. The strength of the Church in troublous times is to sit still in the way of seeking and obeying Divine direction. 2. To sit still in the way of exercising a humble dependence upon Divine aid (ver. 15). 3. To sit still in the way of holding fast all her scriptural attainments. 4. To return to the Lord in those respects in which she has departed from Him. 5. To go forward in the performance of whatever work God is laying to her hand. (*James Patrick.*) *Strength perfected in weakness*:—When we sit down, God stands up; when we are silent, He speaks; when we have laid down our needs, He Himself becomes our shield and salvation. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *Difficulty of spiritual passivity*:—Theatrical performers affirm that to play at statues, which, of course, require perfect motionlessness, is the hardest trial of human nature; and all who have sat for their photograph know something of this experience. The difficulty of physical stillness may serve to represent the extreme difficulty of spiritual passivity under the truth and discipline of God. (*Ibid.*) *The albatross a symbol of power*:—The albatross sailing over the sea with vast unstirring wings is a symbol of power, not of weakness; and the soul which sustains its flight in the empyrean without noise or flutter, does so in the fulness of power, in the perfection of life. (*Ibid.*) *Waiting may contribute to victory*:—The Duke at Waterloo ordered certain regiments to form and wait. For many hours this order remained in force, and only late in the day were the obedient warriors led to victory. We may be sure those hours of waiting were the hardest hours in those soldiers' lives. In that space of anxious suspense the Duke was winning the battle for them, but they would much rather have been doing something to the winning of it for themselves. So is it frequently with us in the strife of life. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 8. Note it in a book.—*Keeping a journal* (for children):—I. THE JOURNAL YOU MAY KEEP. You may spend your pocket-money in a book, pen and ink, and set up a journal. If so—1. Its nature. (1) Not about self. Do not write much about yourself, your own thoughts and feelings. Let there be but few capital I's. (2) Not a dreary, lifeless chronicle. If you can do no better than the following, day after day, do not keep a journal at all: "Got on all right through the day, went for a walk at night, came home and went to bed at nine," which was the constant entry in the diary of a boy I know. (3) But a record of facts and events. Do as did Doyle and Dickens when lads—record in a journal fresh places seen and persons met:—the substance of new books read, things heard

new to you, sights and scenes in town and country. 2. Its use. (1) It assists observation and expression. Two most important things to you. Develops faculties of attention, memory, reproduction. Prepares you for science, poetry, writing, and speech. (2) It is helpful in after-life. Not only from above considerations, but also because it will awaken tender and pleasant memories, evoke gratitude to God, and keep you in touch with boys when a man. II. THE JOURNAL YOU MUST KEEP. 1. For yourself. Your brain is a self-acting journal. In its cell lies hidden, all unknown to you, a register of all your past deeds, words, and thoughts. Sometimes the door of recollection flies open, and you see this record of the past. The record is written in invisible ink, but the fire of memory brings it out. And if sometimes now, how much more at the last! 2. And partly for others. Every day you also write something down in the brain—journals of others, of parents, brothers and sisters, playfellows, teachers. The words and deeds which they hear and see. Be careful to write down for them good and pleasant things—things sweet and helpful. III. THE JOURNAL GOD KEEPS. 1. Instance in the text. Prophet to write that Jews were “lying children—children that will not hear the Word of the Lord” (ver. 9), and to write it “that it may be for the time to come, for ever and ever” (ver. 8). A terrible entry in God’s journal. May no such entry be written concerning us! 2. God’s journal complete. He makes no omissions. He puts all in, good and bad. We make selections to our own advantage. We may deceive ourselves—we may hide much from our friends, but not from Him. “Thou God seest me”; and when at the judgment “God’s books are opened,” His will be a check-diary to supply all our omissions. Therefore, let us wisely number our days, and see that our names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. (S. E. Keeble.)

Vers. 9-11. This is a rebellious people.—*Dislike to ministerial fidelity*:—The Jews have very many followers under the Christian dispensation. I. STATE THE TRUTHS WHICH ARE USUALLY OBNOXIOUS TO SUCH PERSONS. There are many doctrines to which every faithful preacher of God’s Word feels bound to give ample room in his stated ministry, that are by no means welcome to many of his hearers; such, for instance, as the spirituality and unbending strictness of the Divine law, the deep depravity of human nature, the exceeding sinfulness of man’s conduct, the universal necessity of regeneration, the inefficacy of works for justification, and the indispensable obligation to a separation from the world. The Scriptures, not only of the Old Testament, but of the New, abound with the most appalling descriptions of the Divine displeasure against sin. It is a striking fact, that He who was love incarnate—who was named Jesus, because He was to be the Saviour of His people—delivered, during the course of His personal ministry, more fearful descriptions of Divine justice and the punishment of the wicked, than are to be found in any other part of the Word of God. No man can fulfil his ministry, therefore, without frequently alluding to the justice of God in the punishment of sin. But such a subject frequently calls up all the enmity of the carnal mind. II. THE CAUSES TO WHICH WE MUST TRACE THIS DISLIKE OF MINISTERIAL FIDELITY, and this love of smooth and delusive preaching. 1. In some cases it is occasioned by absolute unbelief. Multitudes who admit in gross the authority of the Bible, deny it in detail. 2. The refinements of modern society and taste lead many to ask for smooth things. There is no respect of persons with God; before Him the distinctions of society have no place. 3. Wounded pride is with some the cause of a dislike of faithful preaching. They hate the doctrine which disturbs their self-complacency, and revile the man who attempts to sink them in their own esteem. 4. But in by far the greater number of instances, this dislike of the truth, and this love of smooth things, is the result of painful forebodings of future misery. III. THE FOLLY, THE SIN, AND THE DANGER OF A DESIRE TO SUPPRESS THE FAITHFUL VOICE OF TRUTH, and to be flattered with the soothing language of deceit. 1. Its folly is apparent from the consideration that no concealment of the situation of the sinner can alter his condition in the sight of God, or change the relation in which he stands to eternity. 2. The sin of this disposition is equal to its folly. It is sinful alike in its origin, its nature, and its consequences. Why does a person wish to have a false representation of his state? For this one reason, that as he is determined to go on in sin, he may be left to sin with less reluctance and remorse. As it is sinful in its origin, it is manifestly so in its nature, for it is the love of falsehood; a desire to confound the distinction between sin and holiness. Nor

is this all ; in aiming to suppress the voice of warning and the note of alarm, he acts the part of that infatuated and cruel wretch, who would bribe the sentinel to be silent when the foe is about to rush, sword in hand, into the camp ; or would seduce the watchman to be quiet, when the fire had broken out at midnight, and was raging through the city. For thus saith the Lord, "O son of man, I have set thee a watchman over the house of Israel," &c. (Ezek. xxxiii. 7, 8).

3. The danger of such a disposition to the individual himself, is as great as its sin and its folly. The man who is unwilling to hear of approaching misery, is not likely to use any means by which it may be averted. By way of APPLICATION I infer, how great are the importance, responsibility, and difficulty which attach to the ministerial office, and how anxious should those be who sustain it, to discharge its duties with uncompromising fidelity.

1. The conversion of sinners should be the leading object of every minister of Christ.

2. This must be sought by suitable means. The means for awakening the unconverted are, of course, various. What might be called the alarming style of preaching is most adapted to convert the impenitent.

3. Ministers are under a great temptation to preach smooth things, and to shrink from what may emphatically be called the burden of the Lord. A false charity leads them, in some instances, to be unwilling to disturb the peace or distress the feelings of their hearers ; or, perhaps, there are some in their congregation who may feel an objection to what they contemptuously call the harrowing style. But most of all are those in danger of compromising their duty, who are appointed to minister to well educated and wealthy audiences.

4. A word of admonition is here needed for professing Christians. Are there not many who are dissatisfied with everything but words of comfort and statements of privilege ? They object to everything of a searching and practical tendency. (*J. A. James.*) *Church and world*.—I. A chief part of the work of the pulpit is THE PLAIN AND FERVENT TEACHING OF DAILY-LIFE MORALITY. There is no Gospel without morality, and the morality of Christ, i. e., a morality whose inspiration is the Spirit of Christ, is a very large part of the Gospel indeed. What of our Lord's own teachings ? Are they chiefly moral teachings or theological ? It is needless to answer the question. What do we mean when we talk of being saved from sin ? Just what the words say,—that sin shall be taken away ; that is, that men shall obey God's law instead of the devil's ; that is, that they shall live pure, virtuous, and moral lives.

II. And do not MORALS OCCUPY A VERY FOREMOST PLACE IN THE WELFARE OF MANKIND ? What is it makes the world often so miserable ? It is sin, that is, immorality ; and if we can do away with the sin and immorality, and bring in virtue and morality, then we shall do much to diminish the miseries of our fellow-men. And if it is important that morals should be taught for the welfare and happiness of mankind, who are to teach morals, if not the ministers of religion ? It is for us to educate the public conscience, until men feel each moral distinction as a solemn fact, until the force of public opinion fall heavily upon him who violates the moral law, until a fairer morality take its place among us.

III. But why have we succeeded so ill ? WHY IS THE GENERAL MORALITY SO LOW ? It is because the people have said, "Speak unto us smooth things," and we have yielded to their words. If you tell men the faults which are diseases in their characters, slowly but surely bringing them down to the grave, they cannot bear it, but keep the disease and dismiss the physician. Whether it hurts or not, the truth must be said, if men are to be saved from the error of their ways. (*W. Page-Roberts, B.A.*) *Speak unto us smooth things.*—*The smooth things by which men are apt to be deceived*.—I propose to instance a few of those smooth things which teachers may address to the people who love to be deceived, or wherewith the people themselves lay a flattering unction to their own souls.

I. The first of these, which though not generally ranked among the smooth things, I hold to be the universal deceit, and that in virtue of which we so MAGNIFY THE PRESENT WORLD, give such an exaggerated importance to things present and things sensible, regard time as if it had all the worth and endurance of eternity, and look on eternity as a thing of remote and shadowy insignificance, the care and consideration of which may be indefinitely postponed.

II. A MEAGRE AND SUPERFICIAL IMAGINATION OF THEIR GUILT, AND PROPORTIONALLY TO THIS, A SLIGHT APPREHENSION OF THEIR DANGER.

III. A man who feels his disease so slight, will be satisfied with a very slight remedy ; and accordingly the remedy which men are satisfied with, is RESTING ON THE GENERAL MERCY OF GOD. God is represented as a Being full of tenderness, thus making it the whole character of the Godhead, and in

this way lulling themselves into a deceitful security—not thinking of one set of attributes, justice, truth, and righteousness, but keeping these in the background, and bringing in the foreground, God being of universal tenderness and benignity, and who will not be severe on the follies of His poor erring creatures.

**IV. A CERTAIN ANTINOMIAN SECURITY** which they connect with the doctrines of grace and justification by faith. When we see people reposing on their orthodoxy, and making use of it as a soporific to lull themselves, we should ply them with questions founded on the true representation which the New Testament gives. Are they running so as that they may obtain? Are they fighting so as that they may gain a hard won victory? Are they striving so as that they may force an entrance at the strait gate? (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*) *The craving for the entertaining*:—What did the speakers want? They wanted what is desired by every age, namely, to be entertained. It is entertainment that is often frittering away the noblest courage and finest faculty of the Church. There may be parts of the service which are instructive, and they are tolerated that the entertainment may be enjoyed: entertain us with ritual, with music, with stories, with something that will give us intellectual excitement and even a degree of intellectual delight: but do not prophesy, do not teach, do not become rigorously moral: let the day of judgment alone; if we have to go to hell let us go down a bank covered with velvet moss. The people make the pulpit. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The demand for smooth things*:—What was the utility of the Hebrew prophet, and what were the errors to which he was more particularly exposed? I. **IT WAS THE DUTY AND THE PRIVILEGE OF ISRAEL** to keep alive monotheism in the world. It was no less the duty of the prophetic school to preserve in the chosen nation itself the spirituality of religion. Both agents were in the same relative position—a hopeless minority. And both had but an imperfect success. Yet the nation and the institution served each an important purpose. Monotheism languished, but did not die. And though the prophets were not very successful in imbuing the nation generally with their own spirituality, yet they kept the flame alive. They served to show to the people the true ideal of spiritual, not ritualistic, Judaism, and thus supplied a corrective to priest-taught Judaism. II. **WHAT WAS THE GREAT SOURCE OF ERROR IN THE PROPHET'S UTTERANCES?** What was the great pressure that pushed, or tended to push him aside from the path of duty? The text has told us. “Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things.” The desire of man—king or peasant—to hear from the prophet, or the courtier, or the demagogue, not truth, but flattery,—it was that fatal longing which led them to put a pressure on the prophet which often crushed the truth within him. III. **FLATTERY EXISTS STILL.** If nations have not prophets to flatter them, they have those whom they trust as much. Far from attempting to correct their faults, the guides whom they trust are constantly labouring to impress on them that they are the most meritorious and the most ill-used nation in the world. Eyes blinded to present faults; eyes sharpened to past wrongs,—there is no treatment which will more completely and more rapidly demoralise the nation which is subjected to it. There will be no improvement where there is no consciousness of fault; and no forgiveness where the mind is invited, almost compelled, to a constant brooding over wrong. With the growth of such feelings no nation can thrive; and he who encourages them is not the saviour but the destroyer of his country. (*J. H. Jellett.*) **Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.—The Holy One of Israel repudiated**:—The meaning is not, of course, that the people disown Jehovah as the national Deity, but that they repudiate Isaiah's conception of Him as the Holy One of Israel, and the teaching based on that conception. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Flattery*:—Smooth talk proves often sweet poison. Flattery is the very spring and mother of all impiety. It unmans a man, it makes him call black white, and white black; it makes a man change pearls for pebbles, and gold for counters; it makes a man judge himself wise, when foolish; knowing, when he is ignorant; holy, when he is profane; free, when he is a prisoner; rich, when he is poor; high, when he is low; full, when he is empty; happy, when he is miserable. (*J. Bate.*) *Truth sometimes unpopular*:—An animated debate took place whether Martinelli should continue his “History of England” to the present day. Goldsmith: “To be sure he should.” Johnson: “No, sir; he would give great offence. He would have to tell of almost all the living great what they do not wish told.” Goldsmith: “There are people who tell a hundred political lies every day, and are not hurt by it. Surely, then, one may tell truth with safety.” Johnson:

"Why, sir, in the first place, he who tells a hundred lies has disarmed the force of his lies. But besides, a man had rather have a hundred lies told of him than one truth which he does not wish to be told." Goldsmith: "For my part, I'd tell the truth, and shame the devil." Johnson: "Yes, sir; but the devil will be angry. I wish to shame the devil as much as you do, but I should choose to be out of the reach of his claws." Goldsmith: "His claws can do you no harm when you have the shield of truth." (*Boswell's Johnson.*) *Harmless preaching*:—Two Chinese jugglers have been making a public exhibition of their skill. One of these is set up as a target, and the other shows his dexterity by hurling knives which stick into the board at his comrade's back, close to the man's body. These deadly weapons fix themselves between his arms and legs, and between his fingers; they fly past his ears, and over his head and each side of his neck. The art is not to hit him. Are there not to be found preachers who are remarkably proficient in the same art in the mental and spiritual departments? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Faithful preaching*:—Our preaching must not be general, but particular. "It is not lawful for thee to have her to wife." This was John Baptist's style. We must collar men. "Thou art the man—I mean you, sir." We are not half enough convinced of the evil of general preaching. The beef must have the salt of truth, and the saltpetre of life, but it must be rubbed in by particular application, and rubbed into every part by a comprehensive mind, and rubbed in by clean hands. (*R. Cecil.*)

Ver. 13. As a breach ready to fall.—*A retributive crash*:—The best translation seems to be: "Therefore this guilt shall be to you as a rent descending (literally, "falling") (and) bulging out in a high wall, whose crash comes," &c. The slight beginnings of transgression, its inevitable tendency to gravitate more and more from the moral perpendicular, till a critical point is reached, then the suddenness of the final catastrophe,—are vividly expressed by this magnificent simile. Comp. *Psa. lxii. 3.* (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Nemesis*:—1. The people, on account of the eminence and grandeur to which they were elevated, are compared to a high wall. 2. The sin whereby they despised the Word of the Lord, the instructions of His servants, and even the name of the Holy One of Israel, and sought assistance from Egypt, was to prove ruinous to them, as the swelling out in a high wall. The breach, or bulge, which is supposed to have been in the lower part of the wall, as often happens in old buildings, might signify the insolence and pride whereby the posterity of Israel were puffed up in the confidence of being aided by the Egyptians. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Nemesis*:—I. WHO IT IS THAT GIVES JUDGMENT UPON THEM. "The Holy One of Israel" (ver. 12). See ver. 11. Faithful ministers will not be driven from using such expressions as are proper to awaken sinners, though they be displeasing. II. WHAT THE GROUND OF THE JUDGMENT IS. "Because ye despise," &c. (ver. 12). III. WHAT THE JUDGMENT IS THAT IS PASSED UPON THEM. The ruin they should bring upon themselves should be—1. A surprising ruin, coming suddenly. 2. An utter ruin, universal and irreparable (ver. 14). (*M. Henry.*)

Ver. 14. He shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel.—*A pottery mound*:—One of the most curious objects in Rome is a huge artificial mound called Monte Testaccio. It stands near the gate of St. Paul's, between the Aventine Hill and the Tiber. . . . It is a conspicuous object, being nearly one-third of a mile in circumference, and about a hundred and fifty feet high, commanding from its top an extensive view of the most desolate and historical parts of the Eternal City, and the Campagna beyond. It is an easy task to climb it, for on different sides there are well-worn tracks from the base to the summit. The surface is covered in a few places with a little sprinkling of soil, and a sparse vegetation of grass and coarse weeds; but a close examination reveals the remarkable fact that the mound is almost entirely composed of fragments of broken earthenware. Specimens of ancient pottery of all kinds may be found lying loosely on the surface of the heap, or by digging a little way into the mass. . . . Not one vessel was whole, nor could the broken pieces be united to form even the least important part of any vessel. The mound, from the nature of its materials, is evidently of very ancient origin, nothing having been added to it since the early Christian ages; but it must have taken many centuries to form it by slow accumulation. Various theories have been proposed regarding it; but the most plausible conjecture is that which connects it with the neighbouring emporium or custom-



house, where all the goods that were landed at the ancient quay of Rome were stored up for a time. It was the practice in those days to import not only wine and oil, and other fluids, but also corn and solid articles of food and of domestic use into the imperial city in earthenware jars for more convenient carriage. In the act of unloading, immense quantities of these fragile vessels would be broken, and the fragments carried away to this spot, where they would accumulate in course of time into the huge heap which now astonishes every spectator. This explanation, however, is only a partial one; for were it complete we should expect to find in the mound only vessels of one kind, fitted for storage purposes. But it contains, as I have said, fragments of the most varied assortment of vessels for household use and for ornamental and even for sepulchral purposes. . . . It became, in fact, the general receptacle for the broken pottery of the whole city. That this was carefully collected into this one spot, instead of being thrown out anywhere, and that no other rubbish was allowed, except accidentally, to mingle with it, shows clearly that the heap was intended for some economical use. We have indeed reason to believe that this broken earthenware, ground into smaller fragments and pulverised, formed an ingredient in the famous Roman cement employed in the construction of buildings whose hardness and durability were proverbial. But it is not in Rome only that such ancient mounds of broken pottery are found. Similar heaps of potsherds, not on quite so large a scale, may be seen outside the walls of Alexandria and Cairo. The sites, indeed, of many ancient towns, especially those built of crude, sun-dried bricks, are often covered with great quantities of such fragments exposed to view and collected together by the disintegrating action of the weather upon the ruins, giving them the appearance of a deserted pottery rather than that of a town. Parti-coloured heaps of broken pottery are common in the neighbourhood of old villages and towns in Palestine. They are especially abundant in one or two places near Jerusalem. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) *The shivering of the potter's vessel*:—The passage is literally, "And its shivering (שֶׁפֶר shever, from which perhaps comes our 'shiver') shall be like the shivering of a potter's vessel, a shattering unsparringly; so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a potsherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water out of the pit." Bearing in mind the size and strength of many potters' vessels in Palestine, it is clear, that a mere dashing out of the hand upon the ground would fail to effect a "shivering" anything like this. To what then do the prophets refer? We think the matter admits of a very clear explanation. One of the most constant features of the land is the well or "beer," which, as no rain falls for many months together, and springs and streams are rare, becomes an essential adjunct to every house. In these large underground structures rain-water is collected from surface drainage, and stored for use during the year. The "Moabite stone" records an act, passed by Mesha, King of Moab, so far back as the days of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, directing every man to make a "beer," or rain cistern, in his house. But such testimony would not be needed to establish the great age of these huge artificial cisterns. They abound everywhere, and many of them, in fine preservation, mark the sites of very ancient cities, where no other structure remains. There are no less than thirty of them, some of vast size, built on piers, and arched like the crypt of a church, to be found within the precincts of the temple area at Jerusalem. They are specially numerous in the fine olive grove to the north of the city, where they are in such a ruinous condition, apparently from extreme age, that they now form a series of dangerous pitfalls. In addition to these wells is to be found a system of immense artificial pools, or rain reservoirs, which are often referred to in the Bible, and of which no less than seven may now be traced in and around Jerusalem itself. To all these cisterns and reservoirs, whether cut in the rock, or built of rough masonry, one thing is common. To render them perfectly water-tight, a peculiar cement has to be used. This cement is composed partly of lime and partly of a large admixture of what is called in Arabic, "homrah." This "homrah" is nothing else than broken pottery of every description, ground down generally into very small pieces, and sometimes into powder. It answers excellently the purpose for which it is employed. Every year it grows harder; until, in the case of those wells and pools where it is presumably many hundred years old, it is as firm as the rock to which it adheres. This "homrah" is consequently an article of daily commerce throughout the country. Its preparation by the peasants still remains the same simple and striking sight that must always have been familiar to the dwellers in every Judean

town, but especially to those who lived within the waterless precincts of Zion. (*J. Neil, B.A.*) *Shivering the potter's vessel*:—It may be seen now every autumn in the valley of the son of Hinnom. Upon the upper terrace, on the side adjoining the city, several "fellahin" (peasants), both men and women, sit on the ground in front of small brown heaps. They have under their hands a huge stone or rather rough piece of rock slightly rounded, about a foot in diameter, which they push backwards and forwards over the mounds before them. These mounds consist of broken pottery, which they have purchased in the city, or picked up from the heaps outside. Here we may see the whole of this simple but very effective process of shivering or crushing the "potter's vessel." (*Ibid.*) *The potter's vessel*:—It could hardly be expected that a custom so ancient and so suggestive as this should have remained unutilised by the spiritual teachers of Israel to point a moral. It lent itself so easily and naturally to the peculiar didactic method of instruction which the Orientals affect, that it was early taken advantage of for this purpose. Throughout the Bible there are numerous direct and indirect allusions to it. In the second Psalm it is said of those who oppose the Messianic kingdom of God that they shall be dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel; and Isaiah foretells that a similar fate should happen to those who despised God's Word and placed their confidence in Egypt. They should be like one of those high mud walls—like the cob-walls of Devonshire, said to be derived from the East—which so often decline from the perpendicular, and bulge out in different parts. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*)

Ver. 15 In returning and rest shall ye be saved.—*The vanity of earthly help in time of trial, and the profit of patient waiting*:—I. THE INSUFFICIENCY OF ALL HUMAN DEPENDENCE. The records of the Jewish nation, which have come down to us, abundantly prove this truth. 1. These words were especially spoken to the Church of old time. We must gather therefore great instruction herefrom, in respect to the community of God's people in all after time, and perhaps in our own days especially. 2. What is true in respect of the Church, considered as a community, is equally true in respect of all its members, if we consider them in their individual character. God teaches them separately, as He teaches the Church collectively, that upon Him they are to depend, and not upon human help. And in order that they may learn the lesson the more certainly, and that it may stay with them the more abidingly, God oftentimes brings them down into circumstances where human assistance can render them no avail. II. THE NATURE AND THE PROFIT OF PATIENT WAITING. In this way it is that God gives the instruction which the hearts of His people want. He suffers them oftentimes to lean upon other helps, and to cast their dependence upon other agencies, than His appointed one. Then, when they have found that these have been but as a broken reed to trust to, they come back again to Him—their faith confirmed—a precious lesson learned in the time of their wandering, which henceforth they shall find in the establishment of their souls. Faith has indeed oftentimes its best exercise in the time of the heaviest trial. It is made to bring forth its richest and rarest fruits. (*S. Robins, M.A.*) *National salvation*:—Let us ponder the four words which the prophet here uses to indicate in what direction their salvation lay, and upon what terms they might be sure of the Divine interposition and abiding protection. 1. "Returning." Instead of going to Egypt for help, and impoverishing themselves by an alliance forbidden, senseless, and unprofitable, they might be assured of God's forgiveness and favour by returning in brokenness of spirit to Him. The place of confession is the place of forgiveness. 2. "Rest." The meaning is, of course, such a resting in God as would prove the genuineness of their return to Him. Vain was their reliance on the multitude of chariots and the strong body of cavalry to which they would point as a valuable addition to the fighting strength of Judah (chap. xxxi. 3). 3. "Quietness." How the very word rebukes the haste, excitement, and trepidation with which they had prepared for the siege of their city! 4. "Confidence." (*J. G. Mantle.*) In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.—*The strength obtained from quietness and confidence*:—I. THE STATE OF MIND HERE NOTICED. 1. Consider "quietness" of mind. It means strength of purpose, combined with calm collectedness of thought as well as of word and act. 2. Consider "confidence" as another feature of true Christian character. Confidence is something more than a dead theory of belief; it is faith in exercise. And is there not something very sublime and beautiful in "confidence," as we see it linking the heart of man to the Creator

and Redeemer of the world? II. THE ADVANTAGES TO BE DERIVED FROM THE STATE OF MIND DESCRIBED. 1. The promise expressed in the words, "shall be your strength," is very encouraging and full of meaning. It points to the Deity as the only source of strength. 2. The strength here spoken of is Divine, granted to us through the instrumentality of quietness and confidence. 3. This strength, too, implies safety. 4. But the strength promised is conditional. (*W. D. Horwood.*) *The promise associated with quietness and confidence* :—I. THE FRAME OF MIND which God encouraged His people to have under all these circumstances—"quietness and confidence." 1. Observe what the fault of Israel had been. God had said one thing, and Israel thought another. God had told them that He would be their refuge. 2. Their warrant for their confidence was the Word of God. Here is the distinction to be made between what is presumption, and what is faith. 3. Observe, next, the peculiar relation in which Israel stood to Jehovah, which made their unbelief so reprehensible. The Lord seems to bring this before their minds, as that which should cause the most stinging conviction in their hearts. "Thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel." II. THE PROMISE THAT IS HERE ANNEXED. God says, "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." Take, for instance, Hezekiah's history (2 Kings. xviii.). Again, remember the story of Israel's deliverance, as recorded in Exod. xiv. I might refer you to other passages, such as that beautiful narrative in Dan. iii., where we are told of three believing men being cast into a burning fiery furnace. Look at their quietness and confidence, which was their strength. There is a direct promise upon this subject in Deut. xxxii. "The Lord shall judge" (avenge, or come to the help of) "His people, and repent Himself for His servants, when He seeth that their power is gone." If you want a New Testament promise to the same effect, you have it in that word which was spoken by our Lord—"Come unto Me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Do you say then, are we not to use means? There may be as much unbelief when men despise means, as there may be in their over-anxiety to use means. (*W. H. Krause, M.A.*) *The duty of conservatives in a time of theological conflict* :—1. It is our duty to recognise the inevitable margin of difference among those who substantially agree. It is only in the exact sciences that a formula has absolutely the same value for all men and for the same man at all times. But theology is not an exact science. 2. It is the second duty of conservatives in a time of theological conflict to recognise the margin of error in all human views of truth. If the writers of the Bible were infallible, the readers of it are not. But have we not, it may be asked, the promise of the Paraclete to lead us into all the truth? Yes, and wonderfully has the promise been fulfilled. But here again two things should be observed. (1) That promise was not given to any particular branch of the Church. (2) It guarantees infallibility to no one. 3. It is especially the duty of conservatives at the present moment in the history of the Church to discriminate between those who are seeking to defend and those who are seeking to overthrow the fundamental principles of Christianity. Criticism must be met by criticism, scholarship by scholarship. 4. We should beware of testing the views in regard to the Bible, which are now more and more freely expressed, by what seem to be their tendencies. (1) One of these is the tendency to unsettle the minds of simple and devout believers. They certainly have such a tendency, and it is much to be regretted. But the questions are here. We are not responsible for their presence. They are forced upon us. (2) Another thing concerning which no little apprehension is entertained is that these discussions may tend to diminish the reverence which is felt for the Bible, and to weaken the faith of men in Christianity itself. The apprehension is natural. So Erasmus felt concerning what he called "the noisy quarrel of religion" that had broken out in his day, when (as he says) "I wrote frequently and industriously to my friends, begging that they would admonish this man (Luther) to observe Christian meekness in his writings, and to do nothing to disturb the peace of the Church." The true conservative is always prone to apprehend the worst results from anything that disturbs the ancient order of ideas and practices. But how many times over has experience shown these fears to be groundless? In quietness and in confidence is our strength. Let us be honest. Let us not be afraid. "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will be overthrown: but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God." (*E. B. Coe, D.*) *Quietness and confidence* :—"Quietness" is just collectedness, repose, equanimity, freedom

from excitement and boisterousness. "Confidence" is trust, reliance upon God, producing, if not implying, a calm and steadfast courage. I. "Quietness and confidence" are STRENGTH OF CHARACTER. They bespeak the existence of thought, reflection, judgment; they evidence self-control; they mark a nature that is not superficial; they show a superiority to influences which rouse the stormy passions of other men, and leave them the victims of blind impulse; and all this implies true strength of character. II. "Quietness and confidence" are STRENGTH FOR WORK AND ACHIEVEMENT. The quiet, steady, hopeful man—other things being equal, and sometimes when they are very unequal—will prove, far away, the best workman. For one thing, such a man will lose no time in vain speculation, in day-dreams about his work, in clearing away self-imposed hindrances, the result of his own hurry or forgetfulness or pre-occupation. Calm and thoughtful, he will always settle to his employment at once, while another man will have to give himself time to acquire the proper mood for it. "Confidence" will also yield him resolution, and that will make him proof against interruption, which often defers the results of men's endeavours and chafes their temper as well. Nearly all the men who have won renown in the sphere of successful toil, whether secular or sacred, have been men of quiet energy, rather than men of powerful impulses; of steadfast reliance upon a Power above them, rather than of mere human enthusiasm. And in fact, such are the discouragements and trials that wait upon all kinds of labour, whether for ourselves or others—such the sameness, the dryness, the weariness, that only quiet confidence will enable a man to persevere. It was this that kept Moses at the head of the chosen tribes till they reached the borders of Canaan. It was this that carried St. Paul through his almost superhuman toils and exertions. It was this that sustained such men as Columbus and Newton, Washington and Wellington, and a host of others, in carrying out enterprises, differing, indeed, in their objects, but all encompassed with difficulties that would have driven weaker men to despair at their outset. And, if we would do any real work for God and our fellow-men, we must seek more to possess "the quietness and confidence" of the text, than those more shining qualities which gain popular applause, but often leave no real impress upon a man's age and sphere. III. "Quietness and confidence" are STRENGTH FOR ENDURANCE. Restlessness, impatience, distrust, do but aggravate trials, and intensify suffering. Like the struggles of a prisoner in his fetters—like the beating itself against the wires of the poor caged bird, they only serve to augment pain, and to bring on the dejection and weariness that follow fruitlessly expended energy. But to have a mind stayed on God is to take the most certain method to lighten every burden, to diminish the bitterness of every sorrow, to modify and transmute every curse into a blessing, and to make even the path of tribulation pleasant and attractive. IV. "Quietness and confidence" are specially the STRENGTH OF SPIRITUAL ADVANCEMENT. All religious progress depends, primarily and efficiently, upon the grace of God. But the order of God's working is such that this process may be very much helped or hindered by ourselves. The growth of plants and flowers depends materially upon the nature of the soil in which they are set, and upon their capacity for receiving the influences of air and sunshine, dew and shower. And it is much the same as to the growth of holy character; it is checked or advanced by our prevailing moral dispositions. Now, "quietness and confidence" imply a state of mind the most favourable to Divine operations. The subject may be viewed in another light. In the endeavour to live a holy life, we are all conscious of our exposure to hindrances, arising from our lapses and failures. We go on, it may be, somewhat well for a time; but a temptation overtakes us, unwatchfulness supervenes, and we fall, not into any great sin, but from the vantage-ground that we thought ourselves to have reached. Now, what will be the effect of this upon a Christian person of excitable, impulsive, unsteady mind? Why, commonly, he will be discouraged and dismayed. But it will not be thus with the Christian who is marked by "quietness and confidence." He will say, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy; for though I fall, I shall rise again." (*C. M. Merry.*) *Rev. John Keble's motto*:—In Poet's Corner, at Westminster Abbey, there is a medallion erected to the memory of John Keble, upon which is inscribed the prophetic utterance which was the motto of his simple, beautiful, well-ordered life: "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." (*R. Hebborn.*) *Faith and introspection*:—In quietness and confidence is our strength, but not in thinking of quietness and confidence, or grieving that we have

so little of either, but in simply assuring ourselves of the ground that we have to believe that God is our Friend now and ever, and that He can be nothing else, and that the forgetfulness of this and nothing else has been our sin and our shame. (*F. D. Maurice to his mother.*) *The triumph of simple trust* :—I am to be like General Gordon in Khartoum during the last weeks of the long siege. He built himself a tower of observation, from the top of which he could command the whole country round. At dawn he slept; by day he looked to his defences, and administered justice, and cheered the spirit of his people; every night he mounted to his tower, and there, as one of his biographers says, "alone with his God, a universal sentinel, he kept watch over the ramparts, and prayed for the help that never came." He could not work out the deliverance himself, but he had child-like confidence in God. And the Divine help did come—the martyr's crown, the everlasting rest, the good soldier's welcome from his Commander-in-chief. (*A. Smellie, M.A.*) *Settling down upon God* :—What can explain the confidence of Judson and many another noble missionary, working steadily on for years without any sign of visible success, but the settling down of the spirit upon God—an attitude which had, with them, become a habit of life? (*J. G. Manille.*) *Working with Divine resources* :—"I used to think I had to do it," says one of the most successful evangelists of the nineteenth century, "and the result was great physical strain and exhaustion; but now I feel He has to do it through me: the responsibility His; the message His; the strength His." (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 17. Till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain.—*Israel's past, present, and future* :—I. THE PAST. 1. Sins of God's people (vers. 1, 2, 9, 10, 11, 12). Rejecting His Word; trusting in arm of flesh. 2. Judgment on them (vers. 16, 17). 3. Mercy to them in things spiritual and temporal (vers. 19, 20, 21, 26, 29, and 23, 24). Deliverance from their enemies (vers. 30-33). Especially destruction of Sennacherib's army (ver. 31). 4. Glory to God, who is "exalted"—in His judgments—in His mercies. II. THE PRESENT. 1. The people now left as a "beacon" upon the top of a mountain (margin, "tree bereft of branches"). Condition bare, and seen of all. And "as an ensign on an hill." Word for ensign same as "sign" in Numb. xxvi. 10. The people "cannot be hid." 2. Now God waits for the set time; for the filling up of His people's sins (Hos. v. 15); for the filling up of His judgments; for the fulness of the Gentiles to be come in (Rom. xi. 25); for the showing mercy in the end. III. THE FUTURE. It will be as the past, but greater. 1. Sin still continues in unbelief of Messiah, in pride, worldliness, and self-righteousness. 2. Judgment on these sins up to the end. 3. Mercy when they "cry." Deliverance from their enemies, as prophesied in Isa. lxvi. 13-16. 4. Glory to God, the "God of judgment," the Father of mercies. He shall be "exalted," as prophesied in Isa. ii. 10, 11, 17-22. 5. "Beacon" and "ensign"—refer to again. Israel conspicuous now, will be more so in the last days, as a landmark amidst waves of trouble and strife. "Ensign," the same word as rendered "pole" in Numb. xxi. 8, 9. See again in Exod. xvii. 15, "Jehovah-Nissi." See Isa. xxxi. 9, xi. 11, 12, xviii. 3, xlix. 22, lxii. 10. Israel the rallying centre of the nations, in the midst of them the royal standard of the King, high on "God's hill, in the which it pleaseth Him to dwell" (Psa. lx. 4; see Zech. viii. 2, 3, 22, 23). IV. THE BLESSING. 1. "To the Jew first." 2. "And also to the Gentile." 3. Note the correspondence between God's waiting and His people's waiting. (*Flavel Cook, B.A.*)

Ver. 18. And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you.—*The waiting hours of life* :—We are all familiar with the waiting hours of life, when the stream hardly seems to move, or the air to stir; when the heart grows sick with deferred hope. There are hours on languid summer days when all nature seems to have become stagnant—the aspen leaf does not quiver; the fish does not rise in the pool; the hum of the bee becomes less frequent and more drowsy; and the shadow hardly moves on the dial—and these hours in nature find their counterpart in the monotony of life's common round, the commonplace routine of its daily task. Such waiting times were wearily passing over the godly at Jerusalem while the invader was drawing his coils ever nearer to the doomed city, and the ambassadors were being cajoled in Egypt by false hopes; and ceaseless prayers to God were apparently bringing no response. To such the prophet addressed these words, encouraging them to believe that God was not unmindful of their case, but was waiting that He might act more graciously towards them

than He could by answering them at once. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *God's delays*:—He waits that He may be gracious; *i.e.*, until there is such a combination of circumstances, and such a refining of character, that He can do ever so much better than if He had interposed in the first moments of our agonised appeal. I. HE DOES NOT DELAY BECAUSE OF ANY CAPRICE. Heaven has no favourites, who are always served first. II. HE DOES NOT DELAY BECAUSE OF ANY NEGLECT. A woman may forget her sucking child, but our Saviour cannot forget us. III. HE DOES NOT DELAY BECAUSE HE DENIES. The remittance is not sent as asked; yet that does not prove that it is not there in our name, but only that it is being kept at interest, accumulating till it reach a higher figure, and be more of service, because coming at a time of greater need. (*Ibid.*) *Reasons for God's delays*:—What results are served by this prolonged delay? 1. The energy of the flesh dies down. There is nothing which so tames and subdues us as waiting. And there is no kinder thing that God can do for us than to destroy the egotism, the self-assertiveness of our life, and to bring its pride to the dust. Waiting with mountains on either side, the sea in front, and the foe behind, is enough to empty the stoutest heart of its self-confidence, and to make it cry out to the strong for aid. 2. We often cease to want the very things on which we had set our hearts. Thus it has happened, as the years have passed, that we have seen reason to admire and adore the wise love which withheld that on which we had set our hearts with passionate intensity. 3. Our character also becomes riper by waiting. It is better for the young man to accumulate his fortune slowly, because he learns to value his money rightly, and to spend it well. Better for the student to acquire knowledge by degrees, because he gains habits of industry which are simply invaluable. Better for the saint to grow to goodness by long and insensible progress, that he may be able to sympathise with those who are beginning to take the upward path. 4. Moreover, we secure larger results by waiting. If the Egyptian farmer is too impatient, and sows his seeds before the Nile has reached its full flood, they will not be carried to the furthest limit of his ground, and his harvest will suffer. So often there is a result which may be gained by patient waiting, which would defy us if we snatched at it. (*Ibid.*) *God's gracious purposes towards His people*.—I. THE GRACIOUS PURPOSES OF GOD TOWARDS HIS PEOPLE. He "waits, that He may be gracious"; He is "exalted, that He may have mercy." The Jewish people are here supposed to be in a state of suffering; and they are assured that when the design of these sore judgments was fully answered, God would have mercy upon them. In what manner the Lord will be gracious unto them, the prophet unfolds (vers. 19-21). To these promises of spiritual blessings and permanent prosperity others are added; and the passage closes with this munificent prediction,—“The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun,” &c. (ver. 26). This splendid prophecy points to a period which is yet future, and to which the Church is still looking forward. II. THE CHARACTER OF GOD IN REFERENCE TO THESE PURPOSES. In all our undertakings we have encouragement from the character of God. The text speaks of Him as “a God of judgment,”—a title which is calculated to awaken the most useful reflections. He does as He pleases, and all He does is right. The word also implies deliberation—prudence: the will of God is not an arbitrary determination, but the will of deliberation. The word is opposed to haste and inconsideration. The term is applicable to all God's proceedings. III. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH WE SHOULD LOOK FOR THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THIS PURPOSE. If the question be now asked, What is the posture the Church, which has been gathered from among the Gentiles, should assume in reference to the rich provision made for the Jews? the answer is, They should “wait for Him.” 1. In a spirit of patient expectation. 2. In the use of diligent exertions. 3. In the exercise of fervent prayer. (*T. Thomason, M.A.*) *Mercy acknowledged*.—God sets forth Britain amid the nominal Christian nations, as He set forth Israel of old amid the heathen world, as a mighty field in which He displays His dispensations and dealings towards nations in professed and visible covenant with Himself. We are, therefore, not only warranted, but bound to take the words addressed to the ancient people of God, and to apply them to His people in modern times. I. The spirit and attitude which God is here represented as sustaining toward a guilty and corrected, though not forsaken people, is AN ASPECT AND ATTITUDE OF LONG-SUFFERING AND PATIENT FORBEARANCE. II. But there is yet another feature in the attitude and aspect of God towards a land that He waits to see repenting—for GOD IS A GOD OF JUDGMENT. III. LET US APPLY ALL THIS VIEW of the aspect of God towards nations to His recent dealings with

ourselves. IV. Let us not pass lightly by what constitutes THE GREAT MORAL LESSON that springs from the view of God we have been taking. "Blessed are they that wait for Him." We are not to become impatient under God's hand; we are not, because His chastisement yet remains, to forget His mercies. (*H. Stowell, M.A.*) *Strange, but true*:—Some have thought, "Oh, how I wait upon God." It will be nearer the truth if you think, "How marvellous it is that God should wait upon men!" I. THE STRANGENESS of this Bible truth. 1. It is quite contrary to our common experience, that favours should be kept waiting out of doors. Favours do not generally wait for clients, but clients have to wait for favours. 2. You will be struck with the strangeness of this statement if you keenly watch the early experiences of an anxious soul. The man determines to be a seeker after God, and you would suppose that immediately the soul turned to God it would be flooded with light, whereas it very often happens that God never seems so far away from a man as when, first of all, the man begins to seek Him. Yet, all the while, God upon His throne waits to be gracious. 3. I doubt whether we Christian men are not a little to blame for the strangeness of this beautiful text. Do we not often pray as if we were praying into an unwilling ear? Do we not often cry as if we were crying to a hard heart? We have failed fairly to represent in our prayers the great readiness of our Father's heart, and so we have in the matter of our Christian standing. How few of us know well our standing in Christ Jesus, and have a life and death confidence in it. And then in our relationship to others, where are the abounding compassions of Christ? where the undying energy with which a man who knows the heart of the great Father, will seek to reclaim His erring sons and daughters, His children far away upon the wild? II. THE BLESSED CERTAINTY of this Bible truth. 1. We have first of all the testimony of our Isaiah, a testimony given with a boldness that indicates that behind this testimony there is, first of all, a Divine inspiration: that behind it there is, in the second instance, a God-given experience. Here is a man whose testimony ought to be received. Of all the men of the Old Testament I believe there was not one who was more sensitive to the nation's sin than Isaiah. Not a man who was more sensitive to the righteousness of God, who went down lower into himself, who rose higher unto God, than Isaiah. For spiritual insight he stood upon a par at least with his contemporaries. He was the salvation of Jehovah: that is his name. The man ought to know. 2. His testimony, too, is abundantly and blessedly confirmed, not by detached experiences or single events. If you judge about God you must have something more than a single experience; you must take some experience that has been rounded off and Divinely finished. We have such experiences in this book. We may come down to more modern times and more recent experiences. Take the poets of the past century, the men whose hymns we sing service after service. They do not all belong to one Church or to one school of thought or theology, but their testimony is uniform upon this great subject. 3. We have evidence that God waits to be gracious in this present service. His Word is near to us this moment; the Gospel is here with its pleadings and its overtures of mercy. (*J. R. Wood.*) *The waiting Lord*:—Notice two or three times in which God is compelled to wait that He may be gracious unto us. I. THE TIME OF DISOBEDIENCE. II. THE TIME OF FALSE CONFIDENCE (vers. 7, 15-18). III. THE TIME OF APATHY. (*J. Brash.*) *A waiting God and a waiting people*:—I. A WAITING GOD. 1. A wonderful reason for waiting. "Therefore"—mark the word! The Lord Jehovah does as He wills both in heaven and earth, and His ways are past finding out; but He never acts unreasonably; He does not tell us His reasons, but He has them; for He acts "according to the counsel of His will." God has His "therefores," and these are of the most forcible kind. Full often His "therefores" are the very reverse of ours: that which is an argument with us may be no argument with God, and that which is a reason with Him might seem to be a reason in the opposite direction to us. For what is there in this chapter that can be made into a "therefore"? Whence does He derive the argument? Assuredly it is a reason based on His own grace, and not on the merit of man. (1) The chapter contains a denunciation of the false confidences of the people, and because of these one might have concluded that the Lord would cast them off for ever. If they will have Egypt to lean upon, let them lean on Egypt, till like a spear it pierces their side. (2) Further, these people were rebels against God, and the Lord was waiting to let them fully manifest their rebellious spirit, and be made ashamed of it. The chapter begins that way: "Woe to the rebellious children." Further on He calls them "a rebellious people,

lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord"—was that a reason for waiting to be gracious? Yes, with the Lord sin shows the need of grace, and so becomes a reason for grace. I think the Lord permits many sinners to go to the full length of their tether in order that they may know in future what stuff they are made of, and may never trust in themselves. (3) The Lord would wait for yet another reason, namely, to let them suffer somewhat the effect of their sin. It is well that they should see what kind of serpent is hatched from the egg of evil. Perhaps some of us were left in the same way, and we shall never forget what we thus learned. We put our hand into the fire until it was burned, and now we dread the fire. (4) I do not doubt that the Lord waited in this case to be gracious until the people should begin to pray, for that seems to be the turning-point in this affair. The prophet says, "He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry." The Lord is listening for the sinner's prayer. 2. The singular patience of God in that waiting. What does it mean when we are told that the Lord waiteth that He may have mercy upon us? (1) It means that He kept back the sword of justice. (2) It means the continuance of privileges; for the Lord told these people that, although He might give them the bread of adversity and the water of affliction on account of their sins, yet He would not take away their teachers from them any more; they should still be instructed, and warned, and invited to come to Him. (3) So singular was God's patience that He even increased His holy agencies to lead the people to Himself. He says, "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." Do we not remember how when the public ministry seemed to miss us we began to be bestirred by an inward force more powerful than visible ministries? Conscience cried aloud and accused us from within doors. (4) This is not all; for for all this while God was passing by our rejections of Him, blotting out our sinful refusals, and insulting despisings of His goodness. (5) Please remember that all this while God has been waiting but everything has been ready, ready for the sinner to come to Him. 3. A most remarkable action which follows upon the waiting. After the Lord had displayed His patience to His people, He resolved to go further, and proceeded to a most notable matter which is thus described—"Therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you." You and I would have turned the text round the other way, and said, "Therefore will He have mercy upon you, that He may be exalted": that would be true, but it is not the truth here taught. The picture represents the Lord as it were as sitting still, and allowing His people through their sin to bring suffering upon themselves; but now, after long patience, He arouses Himself to action. Methinks I hear Him say, "They will not come to Me, they refuse all My messengers, they plunge deeper and deeper into sin, now will I see what My grace can do"! It also bears this meaning. When a man is about to deal a heavy stroke he lifts up himself to give the blow: he exalts himself to bring down the scourge more heavily upon the shoulder. Even so the Lord seems to say, "I will put forth all My might, I will exercise all My skill, I will display all My attributes up to their greatest height, that I may have mercy upon these hardened, stiff-necked sinners—I will be exalted that I may have mercy upon them." 4. There is a final success to all this waiting (vers. 19-22). See what free grace can do: it is no enemy to holiness, but the direct cause of it. II. We have a WAITING PEOPLE. "Blessed are all they that wait for Him." 1. God's waiting people wait upon God only. 2. Expectantly. 3. What are they waiting for? For many things. Sometimes they wait for the tokens of His grace. Sometimes for the fulfilment of His promises. Every promise will be kept, but not to-day nor to-morrow. God's word has its due season, and His times are the best times. We may also have to wait for answers to our prayers. Frequently we may have to wait for temporal blessings. There may be somewhat in your character which cannot be perfected except by suffering and labour; and it is better that your character be perfected than your substance increased. Wait cheerfully. If God sees fit to say "Wait," do not be angry with Him. (C. H. Spurgeon.) The Lord is a God of judgment.—"A God of judgment is the Lord" is an unfortunately ambiguous translation. We must not take "judgment" here in our familiar sense of the word. It is not a sudden deed of doom, but a long process of law. It means manner, method, design, order, system, the ideas, in short, which we sum up under the word "law." Just as we say of a man, "He is a man of judgment," and mean thereby not that by office he is a doorman, but that by character he is a man of discernment and prudence; so simply does Isaiah say here that "Jehovah is a God of judgment," and mean thereby not that He is



One whose habit is sudden and awful deeds of penalty or salvation, but, on the contrary, that, having laid down His lines according to righteousness and established His laws in wisdom, He remains in His dealings with men consistent with these. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *The Lord is a God of judgment* in the several important senses in which the word is used in Scripture. 1. His understanding is infinite; so that He is intimately acquainted with all the characters, the actions and circumstances of mankind. 2. The decisions which He forms, concerning their condition and conduct, are perfectly equitable and just. 3. All the punishments which He inflicts and the deliverances which He works, are conducted with the highest wisdom and prudence, executed at the fittest season, in the most proper measure and for the best purposes. When He corrects them for their faults, He does it not in anger but in judgment, with affection and moderation; not in His hot displeasure, with unrelenting severity, but with kindness and forbearance. They may therefore be assured that, at the very time wherein He knows His own glory and their real benefit will be most effectually promoted, He will interpose in their behalf and send them deliverance. (*R. Macculloch.*) *The God of judgment*:—What are all our histories but God manifesting Himself, that He hath shaken and tumbled down and trampled upon everything that He hath not planted! (*Oliver Cromwell.*) Blessed are all they that wait for Him—*Waiting for God*:—1. In steadfast faith. 2. In living hope. 3. In patient humility. 4. In active preparation. (*Homiletic Review.*) *The spiritual waiter and his blessing*:—I. DESCRIBE THE REAL WAITING CHARACTER, AND ENDEAVOUR TO SHOW WHAT IS REAL WAITING. 1. The real waiter is a person who does not possess something he wants. A real waiter is a real beggar. 2. But, then, the real waiting man must not only be poor but needy. 3. When a man is thus brought into experimental poverty, and experimental need, he will also be led into experimental helplessness; he is delivered from looking to his prayers, his Bible reading, his alms doing; he is brought to feel he needs another refuge, he is brought to feel these waters cannot cleanse away his pollution, that these webs cannot become garments, that these are works with which he cannot cover himself. But what is true waiting? 1. Not working. 2. Nor sleeping. 3. Nor stealing. There are many who do not trust in works, but like a thief take the blessings into their hands the Lord has never put there. How many presume all is well without having had the atonement applied, or even without ever having been truly brought to feel the need of reconciliation to God by the blood of Jesus. 4. Neither is it despairing. II. WHERE DOES THE TRUE WAITER WAIT? He goes to the means, saying, "Oh, let not the oppressed return ashamed; let the poor and needy praise Thy name." Mercy's door is the place at which he waits. III. WHAT DOES HE WAIT FOR? "Blessed are all they that wait for HIM." IV. THE BLESSEDNESS OF TRUE WAITERS. (*S. Sears.*) *Waiting for God*:—I. THE NATURE OF RIGHT WAITING UPON GOD. 1. There must be continual waiting. "Turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually." "Thou art the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day." Not that we are always to be engaged in formal acts of devotion. Waiting upon God is not wholly comprehended in praying to Him. By inward meditation, by heartfelt desires, by continual supplications as suggested to us in the Church, or as carried on in the closet, or the family, we must never fail to wait upon God for those blessings generally, which He has promised; or particularly, which we know that we individually require. We must be constant expectants; unawed by the suggestions of Satan, the coldness and apathy of our own hearts, or the low and unchristian standard of those around us. 2. There must be importunate waiting. We are not to suppose that "waiting" implies a sitting still in listless supineness, as if no exertion were to be made. The waiting upon God which will prove successful, is a waiting that will take no denial. It springs from a heartfelt sense of the necessities of the soul; and it calls into exercise all the energies of the whole man. 3. There must be patient waiting (*Psa. xl. 1, xxxvii. 7*). 4. There must be a waiting on the name of Jehovah. David has a remarkable expression: "I will wait on Thy name; for it is good before Thy saints." The name of God imports His attributes and perfections. A calm, serious contemplation of the Divine character is an important part of waiting upon God. 5. The soul must wait upon God. Many mistake here. They satisfy themselves with the external homage of the body, without the inward bending of the soul. 6. There must be waiting only upon God. 7. We must wait God's own time and way. II. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THUS WAITING UPON HIM. 1. "The Lord is good to them that

wait for Him: to the soul that seeketh Him." 2. He is good beyond conception. 3. The blessedness of waiting upon God appears likewise in the increase of spiritual strength. 4. They who thus wait shall at length take up the language of holy triumph. "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him," &c. Application—1. Our subject condemns many amongst you. 2. Let the faithful learn their duty. (*Carus Wilson.*) *Waiting should be expectant*:—We must not cower in the dark closet, but climb to our watch-tower and scan the horizon. We must look out for God's carrier-pigeons; lest they come to the cote with messages under their wings which we may miss. We must go down to the quay; or God's heavily freighted ships may touch there, and go away again without discharging their cargoes. We must imitate the shipwrecked sailor, who keeps the fire lit by night, and is incessantly on the outlook for passing ships: else a search expedition may come near his poor islet and miss him. Those who wait thus cannot be ashamed. It is impossible that God should disappoint the hope which He has instilled and nourished in the heart of His child. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

Ver. 19. He will be very gracious unto thee.—*Encouragements for faith*:—Observe the kind of prayer which is here said to move the Divine pity and win the Divine favour. It is designated a cry, i.e., it is a very fervent, earnest, importunate prayer. It is a prayer that comes out of the depths of the heart. It expresses a very deep sense of need. It utters a very longing desire after God. There is very good reason why our prayers should very often take this form. Our sins are such that they should work in us a penitence that may fitly take expression in a cry. Our spiritual needs are so urgent that we may give utterance to them in a cry. The strife is, sometimes at least, so hot, and the battle seems so going against us, that it may very reasonably be expected from us that we should cry unto God for His help. And God is such a necessity to these natures of ours, and God as a possession is so sufficing, that our desire for Him may well be intense enough to require this language to give expression to our prayer. I. There is encouragement for faith in prayer to be found in THE NATURE OF GOD HIMSELF, as we cannot help conceiving of it. Goodness enters into His very nature. We find it necessary to believe that. It is too dreadful to believe the contrary. If I apprehend Him as perfectly good He must be pitiful, He must be tender in His pity; and if so, He is surely likely to be very gracious when He hears the voice of our cry. II. There is encouragement, too, in THE RELATIONS WHICH WE MUST CONCEIVE GOD AS SUSTAINING TO US. He is our Creator, and there is no reason at all in the suspicion that He who has made us is looking with indifferent eyes upon us or listening with indifference when the voice of our cry reaches His ear. He is our Father. He has communicated to us of His own nature, and so has become our Father as He is not the Father of other creatures that live on the face of this earth. But how does He fill up your idea of Father if, when you are in want, He does not heed? if, when you express your want of Him and of His help by a cry, He is not moved? III. THE INSTINCT OF PRAYER which we have offers encouragement to us that He will be moved when we call. We are in pain; some One is near who can relieve us, and we instinctively cry for relief at His hands. Your child is in imminent peril, and there is a man near who can rescue him; you instinctively call for the help of that man. And so we feel great wants which God only can supply. We are in great peril, from which God only can deliver us. There is something which instinctively moves us to appeal to God, to cry to Him. If God has put that instinct in our nature, He must have intended to gratify it. There is no instinct of human nature for the gratification of which God has not in some way provided. IV. We have encouragement, too, in THE ANALOGY TO ALL HUMAN RESPONSE GIVEN TO GREAT NEED. It is not to children only that we give our compassion when they appeal to us in great distress; we are moved by the lower animals when in their great trouble they make an appeal to us. But you are not more pitiful than God. There is no love or pity in man that was not first in God. V. We have the highest encouragement to this faith in God in THE REVELATION OF HIM IN THE SCRIPTURES. It is a positive command of His that we should call upon Him when we need Him, that we should cry unto Him when we are in distress. His command means His purpose to hear; His command involves a promise in it. What do we find given in the revelation? Explicit promises without number, and in every form—proofs and illustrations and examples without number of God's readiness to be very gracious unto those that cry unto Him. What do we see in the revelation

of God in the Christian Scriptures? God showing what He is through a man. He went about in the form of a man. The sinning, and the needy, and the suffering came to Him, surrounded Him, tracked His steps, and cried to Him for His pity and for His help. And was He not very gracious? When He was suffering, dying Himself, there came a cry from another who was in great distress, saying to Him, "Remember me"; and He was very gracious at the voice of that cry. But some are thinking that it is all true about the nature of God, but that they are guilty, and there are God's law, and God's government, and God's justice, in the way of His nature expressing itself in His pitifulness to them in answer to their cry. Whatever hindrance they put in the way has been taken away by Christ. (*D. Thomas, B.A.*) *Encouragement to trust and pray*:—I. THIS ASSURANCE IS PARTICULARLY SUITABLE TO CERTAIN CHARACTERS. 1. This is applicable and comfortable to all afflicted people. 2. To those who are troubled on account of sin. 3. To backsliders filled with their own ways, who are alarmed and distressed at their grievous departures from their God. 4. To all believers in Christ who are at all exercised in heart. II. THE ASSURANCE HERE GIVEN IS VERY FIRMLY BASED. The words of our text are no old wives' fable, they are not such a pretty tale as mothers sometimes tell their children, a story made to please them, but not actually true. What is the ground of this assurance? 1. The plain promise of God. 2. The gracious nature of God. 3. The prevalence of prayer. "He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry." 4. Personal testimony as to the result of faith in God and supplication to Him. III. THE ASSURANCE OF THE TEXT BEING SO WELL CONFIRMED SHOULD BE PRACTICALLY ACCEPTED AT ONCE. 1. Let us renounce all earthborn confidences. 2. Refuse despair. 3. Try the power of prayer and childlike confidence in God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 20. Thine eyes shall see thy teachers.—*Trouble making the heavenly Teacher real*:—The siege shall surely come, with its sorely concrete privations, but the Lord will be there, equally distinct. . . . Real, concrete sorrows,—these are they that make the heavenly Teacher real! It is linguistically possible, and more in harmony with the rest of the passage, to turn "teachers," as the E.V. has it, into the singular, and to render it by "revealer." The word is an active participle, "moreh," from the same verb as the noun "torah," which is constantly translated "law" in our version, but is, in the Prophets at least, more nearly equivalent to "instruction," or to our modern term "revelation" (ver. 9). Looking thus to the One Revealer, and hearkening to the One Voice, "the lying and rebellious children" shall at last be restored to that capacity for truth and obedience, the loss of which has been their ruin. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *Unseen teachers*:—There are troubled hours in life, in which we long to see our teachers; to know what certain things mean; and to have it explained why some special trials have been put upon us, and to what end events, now inexplicable, are tending. Devout men and women suspect, or feel sure, already; they think that the hand of the Lord is in all this. They rest assured that what seems wrong now will be made right by and by: that all is for the best; and, more than this, they are persuaded that some time or other, perhaps as death approaches, perhaps in the shadowy and thoughtful place of departed spirits, perhaps at the last great day of God, they shall see their teachers, and comprehend it all. (*Morgan Dix.*) *The blessing of Christian teachers*:—Though the Gospel first began to be preached by the Lord, yet, as it was expedient that He should go away, He has instituted, and in every age preserved an order of men, for guiding others in the way of faith, of holiness, and of peace. I. A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE ADVANTAGES WHICH MEN DERIVE FROM THIS INSTITUTION. 1. Attend to the thousands who devote themselves to the service of the sanctuary, and whose characters are improved and ennobled by their previous studies. With what diligence and success, prompted by motives of piety and benevolence, do they search for the good way, that they may walk in it themselves, and teach and recommend it to others with advantage! Their gifts ripen and expand; their moral and religious excellences become distinguished. Giving themselves to the Word of God and to prayer, and, in subserviency to these, to inquiries after truth, to meditation, and to the perusal of useful human writings, their good resolutions strengthen; and their knowledge, wisdom, activity, and usefulness increase. 2. Public teachers often refine the taste, improve the genius, civilise the manners, and pro-

mote the literary pursuits of a nation. 3. Instructions from the pulpit greatly promote a virtuous behaviour. 4. Attend to the gentle, penetrating, beneficent effects of pastoral instruction, on the sorrowful, the disconsolate, the tempted, the doubting, the feeble-minded, the sick, and the dying. 5. Teachers are profitable as they spread and defend the doctrines of religion, and excite and cherish just sentiments of Divine things. 6. Pastoral instruction is a chief means which God hath appointed to rescue sinners from the ruins of their apostasy, and to interest them in His favour and friendship. II. But, must it not be acknowledged that CONGREGATIONS SOMETIMES DERIVE LITTLE OR NO BENEFIT FROM SERMONS, and that to their teachers much of the blame belongs? 1. Bad men regard the effect of what they preach with cold indifference, except in so far as worldly honour or interest is advanced by their seeming success; and efforts naturally are feeble and ineffectual, where desire is languid. 2. Sometimes a clergyman's behaviour is not visibly influenced by the doctrines and duties of religion. Men of small sagacity discern it, infer his craft and disingenuity, or conclude that they may imitate him without hazard. 3. The natural abilities, extent of knowledge, and persuasive talents, highly important in a teacher of religion, do not always accompany true piety. (*J. Erskine, D.D.*)

Ver. 21. And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee.—*The Bath kol*.—The voice is evidently that of a faithful guide and monitor; according to the Rabbins the *Bath kol* or mysterious echo which conducts and warns the righteous. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *A voice behind thee*.—The direction of the voice “from behind” is commonly explained by saying that the image is borrowed from the practice of shepherds going behind their flocks, or nurses behind children, to observe their motions. A much more natural solution is the one proposed by Henderson, to wit, that their guides were to be before them, but that when they declined from the right way their backs would be turned to them, consequently the warning voice would be heard behind them. (*Ibid.*) *The way of life and the ways of death*.—This world is full of ways, as it is of men; and one way only is right. One only is the straight way of God's commandments, that leadeth to eternal life. The rest are the ways of men, that lead to destruction; and the most deceitful of them all are those which branch off from this one, going, some of them more, some of them less in its direction, and then by a sudden turn forsaking it. So that amid the multitude of ways many travellers through life never find the right one at all. And too many, after they have been graciously set upon it, forsake it for the many byways of sin. But the promises of God are found on His one way only; there alone their light guides amid darkness, on that alone will men meet their Saviour. (*R. W. Evans, B.D.*) *Care needed in going through the world*.—We should never forget our true position in this mortal life. We have to pick our way in it. The best known road in the world may be missed by such want of proper attention. (*Ibid.*) *Good company in the right road*.—What words do we hear behind us? what company is following us? If it be not good company, can we be on the right road? If a person going (as he thought) towards London, heard persons behind him talking as if they were going towards Manchester, would he not be alarmed, suspecting that he had missed his way? How then can he be on the right road to Heaven, who hears the company that treads on his steps, talk of very different places, of very different ends of their journey? (*Ibid.*) *The guiding word*.—I. THE SINNER'S ATTITUDE BEFORE GOD IS UNSEEMLY AND DANGEROUS. “A word behind thee.” A man who hears a word behind him has his back to the speaker. He is, for some reason, not in a friendly attitude. 1. The fact is implied, in the context, that the sinner has not only his back turned to God, but is actually going away from Him. And that the going away is not an inadvertency or oversight, but the result of a set purpose. 2. That he is self-willed, stubborn, and persistent in his efforts; he continues his course of separation, in spite of the constant overtures and entreaties of love. II. GOD'S WARNINGS AND OVERTURES ARE SIMPLE AND EASILY UNDERSTOOD. “A word behind thee.” Not a confusing, rapidly uttered discourse—not a cold philosophical, or logical treatise; not a metaphysical disquisition, couched in scientific phrase—bewildering and vague, but, “a word.” Not a mysterious echo from the hill-tops, or an unknown voice speaking from afar, but, “a word behind thee.” “Thine ears shall hear.” God is not unreasonable in His demands. When He calls, man possesses the God-given capacity

to hear and obey. III. A KNOWLEDGE OF HIS DUTY IS NOT OPTIONAL WITH THE SINNER. "Thine ears shall hear." A man's knowledge of his duty is not conditioned by his conduct, as are the blessings of religion. God never gives any man up until he becomes so wedded to his sins that he indignantly spurns all efforts for his salvation, both human and Divine. IV. GOD'S WARNINGS AND INSTRUCTIONS ARE ADEQUATE AND AMPLE, THEREFORE THE SINNER IS WITHOUT EXCUSE. "This is the way, walk ye in it." In His teachings, Jesus Christ always presents duties as well as doctrines,—practice as well as principles. 1. Here we have doctrine. "This is the way." Not one of a number of ways, or an improvement on the old. No; it has neither duplicate nor substitute. 2. We have also the practical. "Walk ye in it." V. THE LIFE OF THE SINNER IS NOT NECESSARILY FIXED AND MONOTONOUS. "When ye turn to the right hand, or to the left." The tremendous prerogative of free agency leaves it with every man to formulate and determine his own activities. 1. Notice the broad sphere open to the sinner, and from which he is to select the pathway of his activities. (1) He may go straight ahead. This may involve very little that is specially good or bad. (2) He may "turn to the right hand." There is such a thing as right-hand sins. "Popular, paying iniquities," which evoke but little human condemnation. (3) He may also turn to the left. There is such a thing as "left-hand" sins, awkward, unseemly, embarrassing. Conduct that destroys reputation, health, character, destiny. The forger, the liar, the thief, the drunkard, the sensualist, all come in here. Everything sacred, noble, manly, valuable, is sacrificed to the absorbing demand of the present. 2. Notice the grandest possibility within reach of the sinner. Right about face. This grand movement at once brings to an end both his conduct and character as a sinner. (*Thomas Kelly.*) *The guiding word.*—Man is a traveller. He has lost his way. He needs a guide, both to bring him back to, and keep him in, the right path to the end of the journey. Where is that guide to be found? It is referred to in the text. "A word behind thee." The following remarks are suggested concerning this guiding word. I. It comes to man from WITHOUT. There are inner guides placed there by our Maker in our constitution. Reason. Conscience. But both these have failed us. They themselves are lost in the haze of depravity. Hence the need of a guide from without; such a guide as "the word." It comes from God to man—1. Through nature. 2. Through Christ. II. It comes to man in EXPLICITNESS. "This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." There is no indefiniteness here, no vagueness, and no uncertainty; no suggesting a choice between different ways. The word reveals the right and only way, and that way is Christ. "I am the way"—"Follow Me." III. It comes to man from MYSTERY. "Behind thee." Thou dost not see the speaker. The voice breaks out from the dark past. It comes from "behind." Behind all that is seen and heard, behind all the phenomena of nature, behind the universe, from God Himself, the Mysterious One. IV. It comes to man, BUT HE MUST LISTEN. "Thou shalt hear." This hearing is the want. Men's spiritual ears are deaf. The guiding word is everywhere. "There is no speech nor language where His voice is not heard." Open thine ear: listen, and thou shalt catch the guiding directions. (*Homilist.*) *Divine guidance and admonition.*—The text may be applied to the abundant means of grace, and the plentiful effusion of the Holy Spirit, under the Gospel dispensation—to the privileges which we enjoy, and the assistance promised to us. 1. THE WAY, referred to in the text, may be applied—1. To God's method of saving sinful men, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was said of the apostles, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who show unto us the way of salvation." We must walk in it, actually choosing Him to be our Redeemer and Advocate, committing ourselves entirely to Him, and earnestly seeking the continual supplies of His Spirit, that we may be saved from sin. 2. The text may be applied to the way in which the sanctification of the believer is, through Divine grace, effected. We are not only to receive Christ Jesus the Lord, but also to walk in Him; and to prove that we live in the Spirit, by walking in the Spirit. It is by daily prayer, and the daily improvement of Scripture, of Divine ordinances, and providential occurrences, and a steadfast adherence to the will of God, that we must expect to grow in grace, and go from strength to strength. 3. It may be applied to that particular course of service to which each Christian is called, by the circumstances in which he is placed, the talents committed to him, or the relations he bears to others.

Knowing that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps—how liable he is to mistake the path of duty on various occasions, he will pray, "Teach me Thy way, O God" (Psa. xxvii. 11, cxix. 33-37).

**II. THE PROMISE** meets all the cases which have been mentioned. 1. It is a promise of the direction which God will afford to all who really seek it. 2. It is a promise of Divine grace to incline us to walk in God's way. "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee," &c. 3. It is a promise that He will quicken us in the path of duty. 4. It is a promise that the Lord will preserve His people, and enable them to endure unto the end. (*Essex Congregational Remembrancer.*) *The teachings of the past*:—I. THE VALUE OF EVERY EXPERIENCE THAT BEFALLS US. II. THE SOLE ROAD TO BLESSEDNESS, TO PEACE, TO JOY, TO TRUE PROSPERITY OF LIFE, IS RIGHTEOUSNESS. III. GOD'S GUIDANCE OF THE FAITHFUL SOUL. (*H. Varley, B.A.*) *The word behind thee*:—I. THE MONITOR IN THESE WORDS. "Thine ears shall hear a word," &c. II. THE ADMONITION ITSELF. "This is the way," &c. III. THE OCCASION. "When ye turn to the right hand," &c. (*T. Horton.*) *The Divine monitor*:—It is a promise—1. Of ministerial opportunities. 2. Of the continuance of spiritual suggestions. (*Ibid.*) *The voice behind*:—1. It is a pursuing and overtaking word; a word that follows us and comes at our heels. 2. A revoking and recalling word. A word of restraint. 3. An impulsive and provoking word. A word that puts thee forward, that furthers thee and promotes thee in thy way. (*Ibid.*) *The admonition*:—"This is the way, walk ye in it." 1. A word of correction and reformation in case of miscarriage. It is very fitly said to those who wander and are out of the way, to bring them again into it. 2. A word of direction and instruction in case of ignorance. 3. A word of strengthening and confirmation in case of unsettledness. It is very suitably said to those who are doubtful and wavering and uncertain in themselves whether they be right in the way or no, to encourage them to persevere and go on in those good ways which they have made entrance upon. (*Ibid.*) *Turning to the right hand or to the left*:—The expression plainly intimates that there are dangerous bypaths on both hands, into which the people of God are apt to turn aside. I. ON THE RIGHT HAND, there are erroneous principles and practices which are mistaken for that truth and holiness whereof they are really destitute. Such are—1. Professed confidence in God's pardoning mercy, disjoined from the acknowledged necessity of His sanctifying grace. 2. High pretensions to faith which are not verified by solicitude to maintain good works. 3. Flaming profession of piety toward God, unaccompanied with the exercises of justice, mercy, and charity toward men. 4. Great pretended zeal against public vices, attended with indifference as to secret personal transgressions. 5. Loud approbation of discourses that expose infidelity, hypocrisy, and iniquity, whilst these sins are indulged in heart and life. II. ON THE LEFT HAND there are also pernicious principles and dangerous practices into which men are prone to deviate. Such are—1. The confession that holiness is indispensably requisite to the enjoyment of God, whilst the necessity of atonement for sin is denied or overlooked. 2. Strenuous assertions of the importance of good works, separated from a proper regard to faith, the active principle from which they proceed. 3. High respect for the duties of justice, mercy, and charity, joined with criminal indifference and neglect of the exercises of piety and devotion. 4. Partiality to their own favourite sins and unaffectedness with the transgressions of other people, whereby God is offended, His law transgressed, and His truth dishonoured. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Virtue* lies in the middle, between two extremes, which are equally to be avoided. (*Ibid.*) *The voice behind thee*:—I. THE POSITION OF THE WANDERER to whom this special blessing comes. How does God find men when He declares that they shall hear a word behind them? 1. With their backs turned to Him. The wanderer seeks not God, but God seeks him. Man turns from the God of love, but the love of God turns not away from him. 2. They were going further and further away from Him. Of course, when you have once turned your back upon the right, the further you travel the more wrong you become. 3. They were pursuing their course in spite of warning. Read the twentieth verse: "Thine eyes shall see thy teachers": there they stood, good men, right in the way, entreating their hearers to cease from provoking their God and destroying their own souls. 4. They had many ways in which to wander. Sometimes they roamed to the right hand, at other times they wandered to the left, but they never turned face about. Some men have right-hand sins, respectable iniquities which challenge little censure from their fellows.

Others have left-hand sins; they plunge into the sins of the flesh; no vice is too black for them. II. THE CALL OF MERCY. 1. It is a call that is altogether undesired, and comes unsought to the man who has gone astray. 2. "A word behind thee": it is the voice of an unseen Caller whose existence has been almost forgotten. It is not the teachers that speak in this powerful way. The teachers you have seen with your eyes, and they have done you no good; but some One calls whom you never saw, and never will see, till He sits on the throne of judgment at the last great day; but still He utters a word which cannot be kept out of your ears. It will come to you mysteriously at all sorts of hours crying, "Return, return, return." 3. This voice pursues and overtakes the sinner. 4. That voice when it comes to sinners is generally most opportune, for they are to hear this voice behind them when they turn to the right hand or to the left. 5. It is absolutely necessary that the potent word should be spoken, and should be heard. For the man had seen his teachers, but they had not wrought him any good. III. WHAT WAS THE WORD OF THAT CALL? It is stated at full length. "This is the way, walk ye in it." 1. It contains within itself specific instruction. "This is the way." There is a kind of preaching which has nothing specific, definite, and positive in it: it is a bit of cloud-land, and you may make what you like out of it. 2. This definite instruction may also be said to be a special correction. It as good as says the opposite path is not the way. 3. It is also a word of sure confirmation. "This is the way." 4. This is followed up by a word of personal direction. Do not merely hear about it, but "walk ye in it." 5. This takes the form of encouraging permission. "This is the way." Do not sit looking at it: "walk ye in it." "But I am so big a sinner." "Christ is the way; walk ye in it." There is room enough for big sinners in Jesus. "But I have been so long coming." Never mind: this is the way, "walk ye in it." "But I am afraid my feet are so polluted that I shall stain the way." "This is the way, walk ye in it." IV. THE SUCCESS OF THE WORD. "Thine ears shall hear." God not only gives us something to hear, but He gives us ears to hear with. This is effectual grace. 1. This means that the message of Divine love shall come to the man's mind so as to create uneasiness in it. 2. After awhile there gets to be a desire in his heart. 3. As that voice continues to sound, it pulls him up and leads to resolve. (C. H. Spurgeon.) This is the way, walk ye in it.—*The right way* is possessed of every qualification and advantage that you can possibly desire. 1. It is a highway, open to persons of every description. 2. It is the way of holiness, wherein the unclean shall not walk. 3. It is a patent way, wherein the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err. 4. It is a safe way, wherein you shall be protected from the hostile attacks of your enemies. 5. It is a pleasant way, wherein you shall enjoy sacred peace. 6. It is an infallible way to arrive at fulness of joys, and rivers of pleasures for evermore. (R. Macculloch.)

Ver. 23. Then shall He give the rain of thy seed.—*The effusion of the Holy Spirit*:—These words are, in their literal sense, a promise of a bountiful supply from God of the showers of dew and rain, by which the earth would be made abundantly fruitful. The promise is given with reference to the casting away of their idols by the Jewish people. But the words are capable of a larger interpretation. The whole chapter looks to blessings greater than any that can be counted by the numbers of time. The plentiful effusion of the Holy Spirit of God, which is so often spoken of under the emblem of "rain" and "dew," is hereby intended. As the rain and dew could elicit no fertility without preparation of the ground, and industrious tilling upon the part of man,—as the concurrence of both these conditions is requisite in order to secure a produce,—so is it true likewise with regard to spiritual husbandry. There must be on the part of man the use of means, as well as the bestowing of His gifts on the part of God. But it may be asked, How is God's grace to be obtained? Have any means or channels been appointed for its supply? 1. Prayer is one appointed channel. 2. So is hearing the Word of God. 3. The sacraments. (H. J. Hastings, M.A.)

Ver. 26. The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun.—*Faith's astronomy*:—It is worthy of closest observation that the Bible standpoint is as distinct from the astrologer's position as it is from that of the modern observer. It differs equally from each in this respect, that God's believing

children are ever taught to regard these mightiest natural powers as our servants, and not as our sovereigns. Instead of their regulating our destiny, it is our destiny which regulates their continuance and perpetuity. So in this passage we have an example of faith's astronomy. I. We have here A VISION OF INTENSE GLORY. We are told that even now the moonlight in the lands with which Isaiah was familiar is far more brilliant than that with which we are favoured. It is the strength of those moonbeams that gives significance to the promise, "The sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night." And yet the prophet, with all his acquaintance with brighter heavens than ours, ventures upon the conception of still fuller splendour both by night and by day. It is evident that he is not looking at these things from a bare mundane standpoint. But he is in an ecstasy over the blessed intents of love which God has for His people, and he finds all the ordinary accounts of well-being too scant and meagre to portray the good which is in store; and so, in a bold flight of descriptive eloquence, he tells of sevenfold suns and of sun-like moons diffusing through renovated skies all the myriad benefits of their beams with unflinching profusion. We observe that this forecast of increased glory is the reverse of that which natural calculation would give. The natural theory that finds favour is that the sun once shone more potently than now he does, and that in the future his ray will become still feeble, until night and death settle down upon the entire solar system. While science, then, tells us of exhausting power and expiring energy, it is the province of revelation and of faith which accepts it to speak of superior founts of being, those original sources from which the sun itself and all on which it shines first derived their existence. We observe, again, that human calculation, if it did foresee such an augmentation of sunlight, would be ready to account it disastrous rather than welcome. A sevenfold sun would only emit one flash, and anon this globe would be drawn into its flaming vortex, and the brightness would be but that of conflagration and ruin. Again, then, we have to hail another wisdom besides that of men, which contemplates exaltation where sense only detects degradation, and which effects felicity where carnal reason would only anticipate evil. For "the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man." There was as much disposition in Isaiah's day as there is in ours to think that the world and the sun are wearing out and growing old, and also to think that an intense blaze would be obnoxious rather than welcome. But Isaiah was moved by the Holy Ghost to tell us of a light that should be at once of surpassing effulgence, and yet of sweet and benign influence; a light that should shine, not upon a trembling and alarmed race, but upon those whose breach had been bound up and whose wound had been healed. A vision this, then, of fuller light, of fairer sight, and of people with capacities of beholding and revelling in these sun-like moons and sevenfold suns. Intellectually this promise is accomplished in our days by our discoveries in the structure of the heavens. The moon is for us a grander object than the sun was to the beholders of ancient days, and the sun now strikes our minds as sevenfold, yea, as we speak now, a thousandfold, more magnificent than they thought him then. But the benefit of these discoveries to our spirits was all vouchsafed to Isaiah when the Holy Ghost moved him to contemplate in believing rapture the great resources of God and the beneficence with which He would unlock those resources for the enrichment of men upon whom He would shine with other light than that of suns and moons in the day when the Lord shall bind up the breach of His people. The sevenfold sun is the visage of God Himself; the moon equalling the sun is the glory of the Lamb illuminating the Holy City. II. This glory is set forth as TARRYING FOR A CERTAIN DAY. Our temptation is to think that our circumstances make our characters. But there is more of truth in the contrary thought, that our characters make our circumstances. The land of Palestine has become barren, but this did not produce the degeneracy of her people, but the people degenerated first and the land subsequently. God "turneth a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." So material things may lend their aid to spiritual results, but really it is the spiritual that regulates the material. The first great change must happen in us, then we shall be qualified to behold and to enjoy the splendour that God will disclose without us. "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun" on a certain day at a date which is determined, not by the chronology of suns and moons, but by that of quickened spirits and broken hearts in the day that the Lord shall bind up the breach of His people. III. Notice, ON WHAT IT IS THIS VISION OF GLORY IS THUS SUSPENDED.



There is "joy amongst the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth," and it is no exaggeration to say that the events that transpire within human hearts are of more account in God's eyes than the vastest convulsions of nature. And the wonder is that sin has not altered that. The story of Joshua's command over the heavenly orbs is not too severe a demand upon my faith when once I have a firm grasp of the truth that the sun has a personal Maker and Master. But that when we have erred and offended, when the constancy and regularity which the heavenly masses show is found wanting in us, and we become like shooting stars, wandering on a devious way without settled orbit or consistency of course, that God should still track us with His pity, that He should still reserve lines of gracious attraction for us, and that even for such offenders as we He should submit an entire universe to reconstruction—is not this the most incredible thing of all? Two practical interpretations may be assigned to this imagery. (1) The joy of the new convert may be depicted thus. The exultation of the delivered one often causes all outward sights to appear brighter because of the soul's quickened enjoyment. (2) Or, again, the prosperity that attends upon Christian union and concord may be delineated by this imagery. (*J. M. Stephens, B.A.*)

*The sevenfold light of the sun* :—There is a glory above the brightness of the mid-day sun; it is the more excellent glory of the "Sun of Righteousness." There is a beauty softer and more tender than the pale splendour of the queen of night; it is that of the Church, walking in the beauty and light of her Lord. Taking it all in all, the Church, even now, is the glory of humanity, and the light of the world. And better days are in store for her, when the clouds and shadows shall flee away, and a more glorious illumination shall break forth upon her and from her. This promise, in common with many other texts of Isaiah, shines out like a sun from an angry and troubled sky. But the gathering clouds only add to the intensity of the splendour. God's richest love ever shines on the blackest clouds of sorrow and sin. We have here—I. THE CHURCH'S UNHAPPY CONDITION. "The breach of His people, and the stroke of their wound," may represent more than internal division or disunion; but it may well stand for that, as being among the most grievous of the Church's wounds, and the invariable outcome and index of other maladies. 1. As a cause of pain. All the Christians of most Christlike spirit have mourned over these divisions, and have had great searchings of heart because of them. 2. There is also the disfigurement of a wound, in the marring of a most perfect and glorious creation by these internal divisions. 3. There is also fatal weakness for work and service from these wounds. II. GOD'S GRACIOUS VISITATION OF HIS CHURCH. "The Lord shall bind up the breach of His people, and heal the stroke of their wound." We know that the wounds of the body are healed, not by external applications, but by the vigour of the vital forces within itself pouring out their overflowing life, bringing the parts together, and making them whole; and the Church's wounds are to be healed by the Lord's infusion of a larger measure of spiritual and Divine life; of more piety, more power, more zeal, more affection. III. THE BLESSED CONSEQUENCES OF THE HEALING OF THESE WOUNDS. "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun sevenfold, as the light of seven days." 1. These images denote an immense increase of the Church's light, or future glory, as the consequence of the healing of the Church's wounds. Where there is more love there will be more light. 2. The healing of the breach would bring an immense increase of light to the Church within her actual boundaries. This light of the various portions of the Church when brought together, will be more intense—will shine with a mightier fullness, than when separated. 3. The healing of the Church's wounds would bring increase of light beyond the boundaries of the Church. The Church is destined to be the light of the world. "Sevenfold!" There are days that have a sevenfold fullness of light in comparison of other days, when the summer sunshine has a splendour, and a glory, and a fullness, that are equal to the light of many cloudy and dark days. And what is it that makes the difference? It is the intervening atmosphere that is different; it is the thick and murky air that intercepts and weakens his light. Only let the Church be in a right condition, and the revealed Christ will shine forth in gladness, and the revelation will discover itself in all its fullness. There is no glory of the Church that is not made up of individual excellence, and the only way to promote its splendour and glory is to elevate individually the Christian spirit. (*J. Riddell.*)

*The transfiguring power of righteousness* :—As men grow in godliness and righteousness so will the glory of all things be revealed and heightened. Just

as men realise the grace of God will human nature itself be uplifted and all things be transfigured with it. I. The text finds an illustration in the direction of NATURE. How wonderfully science has enlarged our conception of the magnitude of the universe; it is always pushing back the sky. How wonderfully, too, has science raised our conception of the orbs which fill the infinite abyss! To us also the sea has become mysterious and magnificent as an inverted sky. And the earth itself has become a veritable wonderland. The microscope, the spectroscope, the telescope, have discovered unexpected treasures. But some one asks, What have godliness and righteousness to do with that science which is ever more fully interpreting the world? I reply, Godliness and righteousness make science possible. Godliness creates that infinite curiosity of soul which is the life of science, and righteousness secures that condition of things which makes the prosecution of science possible. Galileo was a Christian, and it was whilst he was worshipping in the Cathedral of Pisa that the swinging of the lamp set him thinking aright about the sublime forces and laws of the universe. Which historical fact is a parable, for again and again has science lit her torch at the lamp of the temple. Faith and righteousness make science possible. And the more pure in heart men become the more vividly do they see and appreciate the beauty and grandeur of the world. II. The text will be illustrated in THE PERFECTING OF HUMANITY. As the Spirit of God frees us from unbelief, fear, passion, and puts us into fellowship with our Heavenly Father, so does our nature unfold all its wonderful faculties. Just as men become spiritual and righteous so do they gloriously realise themselves. 1. The fact is that our bodily organs are growing, they are ever becoming enlarged in range and heightened in ability. Our senses are becoming sevenfold. What a wonderful ear the telephone has given us! What a penetrating quality the telegraph has imparted to our voice! What a splendid eye the telescope, the microscope, and camera have given us! What marvellously manifold and facile hands we have acquired in the scientific and mechanical apparatus of our times. All this is equivalent to the enlargement of the bodily organs themselves. 2. A higher moral and spiritual life will realise most gloriously our intellectual faculties. Ruskin assures us that none of the great masters had faults of character but those faults told in their work, mysteriously staining and darkening the prismatic splendours of their masterpieces. 3. Man's highest moral possibilities are being attained in Jesus Christ. III. The text finds fulfilment in THE TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIETY. By the action of the Spirit of God society is being purified and uplifted; instead of being a mere convention for selfish ends it is becoming a brotherhood, its spirit the spirit of kindness, its law the law of love. And how wonderfully will this change, silently, deeply working, ennoble and glorify everything. Nothing glorifies like unselfishness. How a noble, unselfish spirit will exalt government! And ennoble commerce! And all industrialism! And so everything else will be uplifted and beautified as you get more of the spirit of love into it. All culture, all pleasure, all domesticity, all friendship. I heard a brother say in a love-feast that when he walked home after his conversion he thought that all the sign-boards in the street had been freshly painted. Yes, indeed, love will paint everything freshly, both the commonplace and grand; paint them with the hues of heaven, gild them with untarnished gold. To-day we have to apologise for government whenever we mention it; we have to confess the vulgarity of trade and industrialism; we have sorrowfully to acknowledge how much there is in social life that justifies cynicism and satire; we have to blush for pleasure; there is little poetry and greatness in these things, but it shall not be always so. Poor sentiments are yielding; nobler thoughts are prevailing; and the prophecy in our text is being fulfilled every day. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *The Christian should cherish large expectations concerning the Church and the race.*—God has done wonderful things, but He will do greater yet. A brother in York told me that one day he noticed an American eagerly scanning one of their ancient buildings. Said the visitor: "I am looking at your grand cathedral." "Our cathedral," said the citizen; "Stranger, come with me," and taking the pilgrim a little distance, he pointed him to the magnificent pile, and said, "That is our cathedral, sir." We are always being tempted to pause at some miserable shanty or other as if it were the final shrine of God. We look at our nation as if it were about the embodiment of ultimate civilisation. We look at our Church as if it were the perfected Church of God. But the Spirit is ever showing us beyond all the poor present an idea home, Church, nation, an ideal full of righteousness. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 29. **Ye shall have a song.**—*Communion memories.*—These Jewish wayfarers returned to their several homes to resume their usual occupations. So it is with us. After the most sacred festal and sacramental seasons, the world's business and cares necessarily reassert their claims. But, would these old Jewish worshippers in casting off their holiday attire, cast off also their holiday and festive spirit? In the midst of the coarse contacts of daily existence, would the recollections of the Jerusalem festival no longer linger in their memories? Nay, rather, would not these songs of Zion still haunt their ears and hang upon their lips?—would not the shepherd be heard chanting them in the midst of his fleecy charge by green pastures and still waters?—would not the fisherman warble them in his night-watch on the lake? and the sailor as he bounded over the great sea, and the dim mountains of his fatherland were receding from view?—would not the cottager, as he reached his home among the hills of Kedesh or on the spurs of Hermon, evening after evening, in returning from his toil, gather his little ones by his knee, and rehearse to them the joyful remembrances of the holy season? Be it ours, while we leave the New Testament feast, and engage in our daily avocations, to carry the hallowed memories of it along with us. (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*) *The song of God's redeemed.*—I. A GLORIOUS ANTICIPATION. This is represented under two figures. 1. A holy service. "The night when a holy solemnity is kept." (1) Observe the time, the "night." It is not until the day of life is past and the turmoil of earth is done, that the great and solemn assembly shall be convened. (2) Observe the character, "holy." Impurity is done away. There shall nothing enter which can pollute or mar or injure. (3) Observe the proceedings, "a solemnity." Our meetings with God lack proper solemnity. But how great and solemn will be the eternal service! 2. A joyous meeting. "As when one goeth forth with a pipe to come to the mountain of the Lord." Here are subjects going forth to meet their King, who is good and great. Here are friends going forth to meet their Brother, whom they have long desired to embrace. Here are guests going forth to the banquet of their Beloved. II. A SUITABLE STATE OF MIND. "Ye shall have a song and gladness of heart." 1. Ye shall have a song. There are two things involved in this. (1) There is a subject to sing of. "He hath put a new song in my mouth." (2) There shall be a disposition to sing. The redeemed soul will be filled with praise. 2. Ye shall have gladness of heart. It will be caused by—(1) The presence of God. (2) Happy surroundings. (3) Blessed re-unions. III. A PRESENT ENCOURAGEMENT. This future promise may be now realised by faith. And what a different aspect will this give to the present life! We may not sing the full chorus of the songs of Heaven, but we can hear the echo. We cannot see our Lord, but we can feel His arms and hear His voice. IV. A DESIRABLE CONDITION. The text affords a most urgent stimulus to our present life. It speaks of a song which the people of God will be enabled to sing with confidence when their Lord's judgments are abroad. Let us endeavour to realise the confidence, the peace, the happiness of that future time. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 33. **For Tophet is ordained of old.**—*The annihilation of the Assyrian power* is graphically set forth as one great funeral obsequy, such as were well known among Eastern nations. The Divine command prepares the Tophet or pyre; and in its flames all the glory of Assyria shall consume away. What had been prepared by human wisdom for the idolatrous worship of Moloch, shall now by Divine decree be used for Assyria's destruction: her king shall be the great victim. (*Buchanan Blake, B.D.*) *The destruction of Assyria in Tophet.*—The description is, of course, figurative; and the details, as is often the case in prophecy, are not to be understood literally; they merely constitute the drapery in which the prophet clothes his idea. No such scene as is here described was ever actually enacted; Sennacherib, in point of fact, perished twenty years after his invasion of Judah, in his own land being assassinated by his own sons (chap. xxxvii. 38). (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *The wicked man warned.*—I. The first doctrine that we have is—that **THERE IS A HELL.** 1. Justice requires it. If a man sins, doth not justice require that he should be punished? 2. But more than this, doth not Divine benevolence require it? Would it be benevolent in any man to propose to take away our police, to pull down our gaols, to abolish our penal settlements, and to stop for ever all imprisonment and punishments for sin? It might appear to be liberal and charitable, but the fate of the rest of the community would be so direful that verily we might say, "Build up the gaols

once more ! Let it be seen that sin cannot go unpunished here, and that the ruler beareth not the sword in vain !” 3. We ask, If there were no hell for the wicked, where are they to be put to ? The answer is, “ Why, let them all go to Heaven.” But have you never heard me expose the absurdity of the idea of a wicked man being carried to Heaven as he is ? 4. O sinner ! why need I argue that “ Tophet is ordained of old ” ? Is there not something within thyself which tells thee that there is such a place ? 5. How is it that so many people in the world are always laughing at the idea of hell ? I will tell you. The worse men are, the less they like hell. Scorning is sweet to the mouth, but it is bitter afterwards. **II. THE SIZE OF THIS PLACE.** It is “ deep and large.” We do delight in the thought that Heaven is great and large; that there will be more saved than there will be lost. But this is a sad thought to us—that hell is “ deep and large.” Persons say that “ if the heathen lives up to his light and knowledge, will he not be saved by the blood of Christ ? ” The heathen does not live up to his light and knowledge, and, therefore, it is an assumption that is not correct. Tophet is deep and large. There is room for you great sinners, room for you rich sinners, room for you proud, stiff-necked sinners, room for the whole mass of sinners, for though you should join in hand, yet shall not the wicked go unpunished. **III. THE FUEL OF IT.** “ The pile thereof is fire and much wood.” The wicked are their own woodmen ; they find their own fuel for their own flame. **IV. THE FLAME OF IT.** “ The breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.” What kind of breath will that be ? 1. It will be His condemning breath. God on high will breathe out sentences of condemnation against the wicked perpetually. 2. His reproving breath. For He will be always saying, “ Son, remember, remember such a time you heard a sermon ; such a time you sinned ; such a time your conscience smote you ; such a time in your life you attended Sabbath school ; such a time you cursed Me to My face ; such a time you blasphemed My day ; such a time you spoke ill of My servants ; such a time you did this ; such a time you did that.” 3. The eternal life of God Himself shall kindle the flame. **The breath of God shall keep the flame burning.** (C. H. Spurgeon.)







